

Netting a new niche market through social

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Niche brands reach changing markets through social media.

Admit it, as a niche (luxury) brand you probably scoff at social media. What, you wonder, does your brand have to do with some pimply kid on a skateboard messaging his friends?

But you'd be wrong on two counts. A [KISSMetrics](#) report reveals that social media users are both wealthier and older than you think. Among the social platforms, [Twitter](#) has the most high-income earners (27% earn over \$75 000 p.a.). An impressive 37% of Facebook users are over 45.

And they're not monitoring their kids either. They're ditching their satellite news channel for a more well-rounded perspective (Twitter), and they're polling their friends, who know their likes and dislikes, for advice on what to get a loved one for Christmas ([Facebook](#)).

It's obvious, then, that social is an underestimated and underrepresented medium in niche brands' marketing mix - a fact borne out by said brands' conspicuous absence from social platforms.

Besides the surprising facts quoted above, here are a few things you probably didn't know about social, things that ought to ease your fears and suspicions about the medium.

New authority

Forget [Google](#) and brand websites - social media is fast becoming recognised as an authority on topics across the board.

If someone is looking for a really great wine or to form an opinion on a topical affair, chances are they'll poll their friends or poke around the 'walled garden' of Facebook rather than wade through search engine results or undertake an arduous trawling of websites.

So if you're not on social media, you're missing out on some highly qualified audiences doing some very targeted comparative shopping and acting on very powerful recommendations.

Not the niche your nana knew

It used to be that niche brand consumers were silver-haired, country club-frequenting oldies. Today, industries like IT are producing younger and younger millionaires, who bring a new casual luxury segment to the market, a segment perhaps not fully recognised yet by the high-end brands.

Gangsta rappers with their penchant for ostentatious wealth - luxury cars, bling and designer wear - bring a different stylistic chic again to the consumption of luxury brands.

With this democratisation of luxury brands, aspiration is keener than ever - 'ordinary' companies are toasting their successes with Dom Perignon; kids and other low-income earners simply must have the latest iPhone.

As a result, the face of niche brand communities is changing, and brand owners can no longer only focus on the media chosen by an ageing group that is becoming more statistically marginal.

Won't social destroy the brand's exclusivity?

Given these developments, going social is not a move away from exclusivity - it is simply an extension of the brand community.

Today, brand communities form around groupings that actually consume the brand - not abstract metrics such as wealth. (Besides, with the above examples of young IT professionals and upwardly mobile rappers, the correlation between disposable income and age is being steadily eroded).

Niche brands should take social media channels seriously as a portfolio of tools, technologies and platforms facilitating the discovery and sharing of their content by an increasingly discerning social community.

It can be done

Where to from here? While it is not a widespread phenomenon yet, niche brands are increasingly flocking to the social Web. From Cartier's [MySpace](#) account to Tiffany's Facebook page and the Jimmy Choo treasure hunt on [Foursquare](#), brands are figuring out how to do it.

To follow in their footsteps, other niche brands investigating the benefits (and potential damage) and appropriate channels of a social strategy should engage the services of a technology and creative team that has been there and done that.

Decide what you want from a social campaign or presence, find the local and global examples that inspire you, and track down the team that can deliver.

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