

BREAKING THE STEREOTYPES: NEVER IMITATE, ALWAYS MISFIT!

By Vanessa Harrington March 2023

SCREENSHOT: CARTIER/YOUTUBE



Cartier – a luxury brand which through their latest creative is embracing the world we live in, a world which is more kooky, more diverse, and more inclusive.

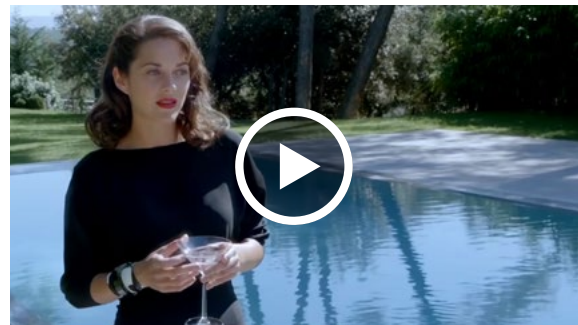
Over the years, luxury advertising has tended to conform to certain category codes. To get across the aspirational world which, we all desire, there “needs” to be certain components which are there to whisk us away into a world which may seem beyond our reach.

For a long time, luxury advertising would only portray beautiful young models or celebrities, dressed in couture, featuring a stunning setting. Let’s take Marion Cotillard in Dior’s “Enter the Game” as an example, an exquisitely dressed Marion, in a dream house, including the obligatory, stunning outdoor pool, it is clearly an artistic masterpiece but is it just too unattainable?

The world we live in has changed drastically and the tide is turning for many brands,

with appropriate representation and relevant storytelling high on the list of musts for advertising.

Dior “Enter The Game”



vimeo.com/239649821

Some global brands started taking a stance to be more inclusive and representative as far back as the 1990s if we think of Benetton. They were true “Misfits” in their own right. Other global brands quickly followed suit to show models who were closer to reality and did not reflect the stigma of perfection that we know so well from the catwalks and in most advertising.

The Rimmel Kind and Free campaign is a modern-day example of how a beauty brand has embraced diversity and inclusivity.

Many luxury brands have been slower to follow suit, as they are expected to be exclusive and aspirational which seemed, until now, to be linked to physical perfection in advertising. But in their most recent campaign for Tank Française, Cartier has decided to take a risk and focus on aspirational spokespeople, and less so on what may be considered specimens of physical perfection.

The two main characters speak volumes.

Rami Malek is perhaps not considered the stereotypical “beautiful” man, Catherine Deneuve, undeniably beautiful, yet non-stereotypical at the age of 79 years old.

Yet, Cartier found that these two actors (along with the magic direction from the highly talented Misfit, Guy Richie) would be perfect to bring the spotlight back onto their Tank watches.

The creatives at Publicis Luxe cleverly chose, arguably, one of the greatest actresses France has ever produced and for a very specific reason. The story they want to tell. It spans the greatest moments of Mme Deneuve’s career from The Umbrellas of Cherbourg to Place Vendôme, using both AI & CG along with body doubles resembling Mme Deneuve to create the illusion of the beloved actress throughout her career.

These unclassical characters bring not just inclusivity but a reason for it, which is key to the storytelling. We observe that people today quickly spot diversity for the sake of diversity,

but here these actors are an integral part of the story, which could not be told without having these characters.

So, what of the storytelling?

United Colors of Benetton



Rimmel “Kind and Free”



www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg8ldTSqpVI

Cartier “Tank Française”



www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9doXIK-TW4

MISFITTING TO TURN THE CLOCK BACK TO THE ERA OF “UNDERSTANDABLE” ADVERTISING IN THE LUXURY CATEGORY

Of course, the characters chosen to represent a brand are important, but what of the storyline? With luxury advertising we often observe beautiful but rather nonsensical plots. One could sometimes even argue that there is no plot, just a continuum of aesthetically pleasing elements, strung together leaving people at best, a touch confused, at worst totally lost.

What Cartier does well is to reinvent the classic with a modern twist, telling a relatable story, depicting the relationship between the characters over the period of Mme Deneuve’s life, using her films as a reference in each scene, all in a beautiful Parisian setting.

Although this storytelling element may be considered somewhat “typical” for other

non-luxury categories, in this world, it is more of a rarity and therefore could be considered a Misfit approach to advertising for a luxury brand.

But how did people react to Cartier Tank Française?

To answer this question, we used our best-in-class advertising evaluation solution Creative**Spark** to test the effectiveness and we found that it was a top scoring ad.

Speaking to people in the US, who were affluent, and had a strong interest in luxury watches, we saw that the creative ticks all the boxes that advertisers want to tick.

SCREENSHOTS: CARTIER/YOUTUBE



UNIQUE STORYTELLING AND DIVERSE CHARACTERS SUPPORT BOTH LONG- AND SHORT-TERM GROWTH

We clearly observe that this Cartier campaign is a success story. The storytelling and characters make it highly memorable and drive strong interest in considering a Tank Watch, but we also see that the ad built a stronger emotional and rational long-term relationship with the audience, a highly important element for luxury houses to build market share.

But why were they able to achieve this? And did M. Malek and Mme Deneuve along with the storytelling play a role?

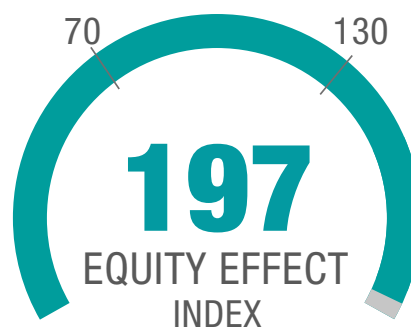
Of course, the answer is a resounding yes!

Creative Effect Index



Creative Effect Index is Ipsos' proprietary measure for effectiveness combining brand attention and short-term behaviour change with our best-in-class method CreativeSpark.

Equity Effective Index



Equity Effective Index is Ipsos' proprietary measure for effectiveness combining brand attention and long-term equity.

THE MAKE OR BREAK OF HAVING CELEBRITIES

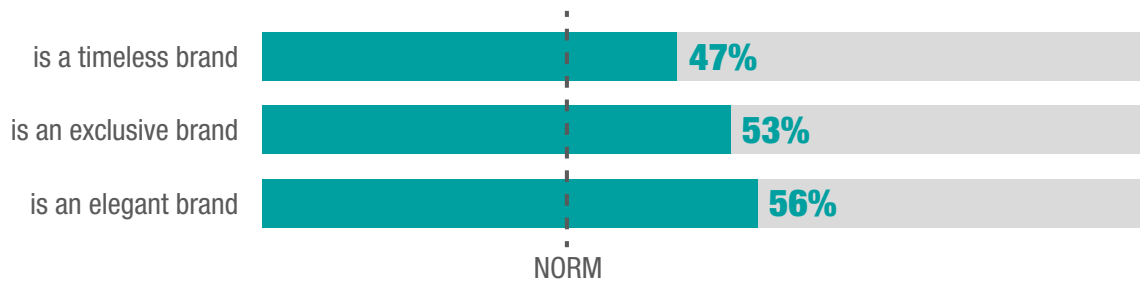
From evaluating thousands of ads, at Ipsos, we know that including celebrities can be a delicate decision, with a need to ensure that they fit with the brand and, in cases like Cartier, that they embody the heritage, values and qualities of the brand. They need to be the reason for the storytelling, not just placed for the sake of having celebrities. But even more importantly, they need to play a supporting role letting the brand take centre stage as the hero. Despite being somewhat non-stereotypical both M. Malek and Mme Deneuve fit perfectly

with the brand, exuding elegance, exclusivity, and timelessness both through their physical presence but also the roles they play in the storytelling.

Indeed 73% of the audience found Mme Deneuve to be the epitome of elegance and 66% of the audience felt similarly for M. Malek. One could say, they add a certain "je ne sais quoi" in their roles representing the Tank Française. This led to an incredibly strong halo onto the sentiment around the overall Cartier brand.

TOP BOX BRAND RATINGS

Brand attribute ratings representing a significant difference to our norm shaded in green



Source: Ipsos CreativeSpark ad evaluation solution

In fact, this is not the first time we see either Mme Deneuve or M Malek as a spokesperson for Cartier, with Mme Deneuve representing the Tank Française for many years, and M. Malek partnering with Cartier for the re-issued Pasha watch back in 2020; could they start being considered as a much-coveted brand asset, helping the audience to subconsciously attribute the ad to Cartier? If the brand decides to continue with them, it could be of huge benefit, in a world where attention is stretched, and the noise of many brands is distracting.

So, non-conforming characters, original storytelling of an unencountered muse over the years, a truly French ambience, strongly supported by the atmospheric soundtrack “Lilies of The Valley” by Jun Miyake, all delivering a remarkable audience experience.

Could this be the ultimate in Misfit advertising?

In Ipsos’ “Misfits” recent analysis, author Adam Sheridan identified that advertising which delivers a unique, entertaining creative experience underpinned with empathy for its audience, is most likely to contribute to strong sales effects for brands. When we look at the Tank Française, it ticks all the boxes to be a top performer. Often, when an advert excels in one aspect, it lacks in another. This is not the case for Cartier’s ad, which shows a very strong positive all-round reactions from the audience. Despite the clearly aspirational elements, and dream world context, people clearly find the copy to be likeable, entertaining, and emotional, with a great fit to the brand, helping to drive the strong affinity and consequently a strong impact of the copy.

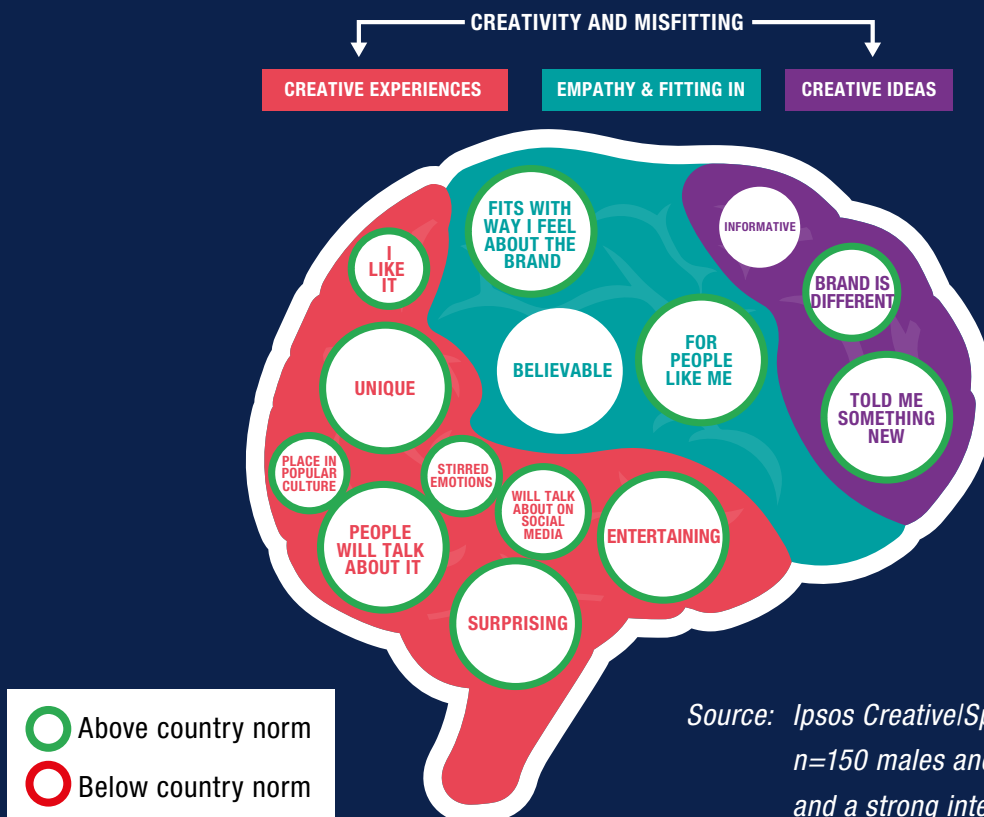
TANK THE WATCH

Clearly, we can see that the creative storytelling and the experience for the audience excel, but what about the impact on the Tank Française watch, the “raison d’être”, if you will, of the communication? Often in luxury advertising we see the phenomenon of “book-ending”, the brand or product at the beginning and the end to allow the space for the aspirational storytelling in the middle.

Here we see that the agency has taken a clever approach, with the Tank Française being placed at the heart of the advert, not just through the

creative idea of evolution of time but playing a key role in creating that evolution.

If we take for example the scene from Place Vendôme, where Mme Deneuve is undergoing hair and makeup, the eye is immediately drawn to the assistant who is fixing her watch, her Cartier Tank Française watch. Or M Malek in the director’s chair with his watch, his Cartier Tank Française watch, clearly in the centre of the scene. Subtle product integration, but highly memorable. This could possibly be considered a masterclass in integration of the brand in luxury advertising.



Source: Ipsos Creative/Spark ad amongst sample of n=150 males and females with a high income and a strong interest in luxury watches

IS THIS A GUIDE TO THE FUTURE OF LUXURY ADVERTISING?

Firstly, it is important to note that the world of luxury has notably evolved over the past decades, moving from a world purely for the top percentile, to becoming more accessible, almost a democratisation of luxury.

The virtual world has allowed the shy consumer to browse their dream world from the comfort of their own home. Accessibility through new collaborations between more mainstream brands and luxury brands – most recently Nike x Tiffany. The consumer who wants to be a part of this world and chooses to scrimp and save to own just one piece of luxury of their choice, the Rolex watch, the Louis Vuitton handbag. Not to mention the reconditioned vintage market.

Tiffany & Co x Nike



We are no longer in a world where only the rich are engaging in luxury products and the brand along with the advertising needs to reflect this new reality: luxury brands need to consider a more eclectic audience. However, having said this, aspirational will always remain key, and for that there will always be some key elements to tap into the top level of the hierarchy of needs, self-actualization.

To succeed it is no longer only about having a consumer buy into a luxury brand but making that connection which will boost sales in the short-term and market share growth in the long term. Advertising can play a major part here - in grabbing their attention and convincing them of the values which are associated to the brand, ensuring all the time that those values need to reflect the consumer's expectations.

In summary, considering this new evolution, there is finally a need to move away from the traditional idea of perfection and into a need to embrace a different type of aspirational world, where inclusivity and empathy are key for effectiveness.

Vanessa Harrington is an expert in advertising effectiveness and is a senior leader in the Creative Excellence Service Line in Switzerland. She brings a wealth of experience having worked across major brands and companies in the industry. Vanessa is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Misfits is an Ipsos-publication that demonstrates how creativity in advertising can spark brand growth.



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