

An Analysis of Marketing Techniques Used in the Textile Scene

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AN ANALYSIS OF MARKETING TECHNIQUES

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An Analysis of Marketing Techniques Used in the Textile Scene

Foresti Home Collection Group occupies an elite position in the Italian textile industry. Founded in 1964 and established in 1997, the group represents what is today one of the most complete product ranges in the textile market. Its textile collections are characterized by exclusive designs and refined quality fabrics, complemented by coordinated trimmings and an enormous collection of sheers. In the last few years, the company has established an international presence with distributors in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Greece, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, and the United States. The intern position involves marketing the company's products over the Internet by helping set up a blog and maintaining a constant presence on social media. Fabric distributors use social media to market its goods and services because it allows clients to see the company's products for convenience, adds a creative flair to attract the client's attention, and allows clients to form a closer relationship to the company by receiving updates with new products and upcoming events.

Creating Convenience for Clients

Fabric distributors use social media to market its goods and services because it creates more convenience for the client. Girendra Persaud, the author of the online article, *Why do YOU need a website? 10 Benefits of having a website*, states, "Having a website for your business means that your customers and clients can access (information on) your products and services at any time even when you are sleeping" (Persaud, 2013, para. 5). Persaud labels the heading for this topic as, "You are open for business all day (and every day)." because she is strongly emphasizing the convenience business owners are creating for its clients if they were to construct a company website. Although Foresti Home Collection Group has offices in Rome, Paris, London, Madrid, Dubai, Washington, Mosca, Hong Kong, and Singapore, the company has an

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official website that lists its collections of fabrics, posts pictures of each article of fabric, and includes information relevant to the origination of the company, distributors, and contact information of the company's executives for convenience. Clients from different countries and time zones can easily view the company's collections at their leisure (Foresti Home Collection Group).

Carlo Boecklin, the Export Manager of Foresti Home Collection Group, was asked in an informational interview, "What was the company's most strategic decision made in the last year? Describe how you came about this decision." Boecklin states that creating the company website was the most strategic decision the company made because it became one of the first to retail online in Italy. Boecklin also mentioned that he wanted to duplicate what the biggest competitors were doing online to improve the company's standing in the textile scene (Boecklin). Marco Foresti, the owner of the company, adds by stating the best decision the company made was having, "A complete catalogue of high level products with a deep range of fabrics and concerning design/shortage of colors" (Foresti).

Along with the company website, Foresti Home Collection has a free "Foresti" App available for the iPhone, iPad, and soon for Android devices. Priya Viswanathan, a professional in telecommunications, states, "Creating a mobile Website is the best way you can develop and build your mobile presence, thereby strengthening the chances of success with your business venture" (Viswanathan, 2013, para. 1). The amount of consumers purchasing Smartphones is increasing due to its ability to hold social networks and improve communication therefor fabric distributors approach Apps as an opportunity to market its goods and services much faster and more conveniently to its clients. When using the "Foresti" App, the client is able to easily view each fabric collection and can make orders using the "Contacts" form shown at the bottom of the

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screen (Masotti, 2013). Using social media for convenience will increase customer loyalty, repeat buying, and good word-of-mouth for the fabric distributor.

Attracting the Client's Attention

When fabric distributors use social media, creativity is incorporated to attract the client's attention. Foresti Home Collection Group produced a promotional video on YouTube to grab the client's attention in a unique and memorable way. Cody Osborne, an expert in creating ads for Nike, Activision, and K-Swiss, gives advice in his article, *How to Create an Effective Promo Video*, on how to market creatively to instill the "top-of-the-mind" brand perception in consumers. His first step is to start with a strategy; Osborne suggests knowing the target audience and asking questions such as, "What's the demographic?" or "How is your product something they need?" (Osborne, 2013, para. 4). In Foresti Home Collection Group's promotional video, it targets architects, interior designers, and furniture designers by displaying pictures of raw materials from the mill and the finished products (Foresti, 2012). The company shows that its fabrics are what the consumer needs because the photos strongly accentuate the intricate patterns and sewing techniques used to weave durable and tasteful fabrics, two attributes architects and designers highly value during the selection process.

The next step Osborne states is to come up with a winning idea. He notes, "Think of ideas that clearly, and simply, tell people how your product works" (Osborne, 2013, para. 7). Foresti Home Collection Group uses photos of raw materials to indicate that the company specializes in distributing fabrics needed to create furniture. The video then transitions to images of the finished products to emphasize the diversity and superior look the furniture emanates with the use of the company's products (Foresti, 2012). The "winning idea" Foresti Home Collection Group wants to portray is that the company's products give a classic and trendy appearance to a

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piece of furniture that cannot be replicated. The company uses its promotional video to display that it is present throughout the beginning and final stages of production by first distributing the fabric, then having that piece of furniture be the statement piece in a space.

Another step Osborne lists is to set up decorations. He elaborates, “The stuff on the walls, shelves, etc. should just be there to help with the vibe and not draw attention away from the subject” (Osborne, 2013, para. 23). In the company’s promotional video, it shows chairs, curtains, bedspreads, and other household ottomans that represent fabrics from other selections. Each ottoman is placed in areas with nature, in the countryside, or in modern homes to accentuate the fabric’s color, appearance, diversity, and the trendy or classic vibe it is portraying. For example, the company includes a picture of a lavender colored curtain placed outside of an old country home with wilting vines and a cast iron window treatment (Foresti, 2012). The goal the company is achieving is that its curtains can add color, character, and life to a home that lacks proper furnishings. Foresti Home Collection wants to prove that its fabrics can accommodate every style and taste of its clients therefore taking pictures of furniture from other collections and placing them in different scenes proves its versatility and function of adding, “Emozione, qualità, ed eleganza senza tempo, nel rispetto della cultura tessile Italiana” (Foresti Home Collection Group Official Company Website).

Lastly, Osborne notes the importance of sound design, the second to last step of his article, *How to Create an Effective Promo Video*. He rightly argues, “When you start paying attention to it (the music), you’ll notice the prominence of sound design in just about everything you watch” (Osborne, 2013, para. 36). Throughout the Foresti Home Collection promotional video, smooth and calming music is playing to demonstrate level transitions from picture to picture. The music is very subtle and not overpowering because it wants to give the viewer a

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modern, tranquil feeling that can be felt in either a modern home or an old country house (Foresti, 2012). The company sells its products to showrooms, hotels, and cruise ships, to name a few, so playing soothing music will make the client feel as if they are relaxing in a hotel, cruise ship, or attending an event in a lavish showroom. As a result of Foresti Home Collection Group using YouTube to market its goods and services, the video has generated 787 views. When fabric distributors use social media creatively, it not only makes it easier for clients to share company content and create a vision in their minds, but can increase sales because people are more likely to invest in the product if it is promoted in a way that is memorable and easy to understand.

Forming Closer Relationships

Finally, fabric distributors use social media to allow clients to form a closer relationship with the company by receiving updates with new products and upcoming events. Brian Honigman, the Digital Marketing Executive at Marc Ecko Enterprises and a freelance writer, states that in order to make customers “fall in love with your business,” one must use social media that focuses on the culture of the customer; It is important to satisfy the customer’s needs because they pay more attention to bad word-of-mouth than good (Honigman, 2012, para. 1-4). Social media outlets that Foresti Home Collection Group is using to form closer relationships with clients are Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Through each social media platform, the company posts images to show the client what the product looks like as raw material and the finished product. Posts also include a small description of the fabric to explain its various functions and give the client a vision of how they could incorporate the fabric in their space, and mentions events the company will be participating in so clients can recognize the company’s activity and possibly attend events to view the products in person.

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Facebook as a “Storytelling Medium”

Lorie Konish, the author of the article, *Building Client Relationships Through Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter*, analyzes the functions, causes and effects of using Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to create client relationships. Konish begins the article by discussing the function of Facebook as a “storytelling medium,” and gives an example of the success Wells Fargo obtained from creating a Facebook page. Wells Fargo financial advisors post images of employees attending events or mention personal events occurring within the employees’ lives to personalize the Facebook page and draw its clients closer to the company and its employees (Konish, 2012, para. 8). Konish quotes Senior Vice President Renee Brown and her perspective of using Facebook to reach clients. Brown remarks,

“What we’re trying to figure out is how we can tap into the passion point of consumers, because Facebook, unlike LinkedIn, is the passion component... You have the opportunity to learn and grow in relationship with clients and customers in a deeper way” (Konish, 2012, para. 6).

After discovering the deeper effect Facebook has on clients, around 40 Wells Fargo advisors are beginning to test social networking devices to build more client relationships.

Foresti Home Collection Group has achieved the same outcome of using Facebook as a storytelling medium. The company posts pictures of fabrics and products, along with including vivid descriptions, to give the client the feeling as if they were physically in that space. An example is a post Foresti Home Collection Group made on November, 6 of this year, when it promoted the *Collezione Uniti Preziosi* line of curtains. The description is of someone living in a countryside cooking on a Sunday afternoon, and they open the window, covered by the *Collezione Uniti Preziosi* curtains, to let a breeze enter the kitchen (Alvarez, 2013). The “passion point” of the description is to allow the client the ability to replicate the warming feeling of being in a similar kitchen in the comfort of their own home. As a result of the company using

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Facebook to generate client relationships, it has collected 22 followers, and its followers have been “liking” the posts and sharing them on their Facebook pages to pass on good word-of-mouth of Foresti Home Collection Group’s products and services.

LinkedIn as a Business Card

Next, Konish explains how companies use LinkedIn as a business card. She mentions Natalie Taylor, Vice President of Marketing at Wedbush Securities, a financial company, and her perspective of using LinkedIn as a “business essential;” Taylor states how connecting with people on LinkedIn is a form of giving one’s business card and confirming to clients that one is a true professional (Konish, 2012, para. 13). LinkedIn is versatile because a user can make connections to other users personally, create advertisements, follow other companies, and join groups based on their line of work to meet more professionals within the same field. Konish also mentions Fay DeBellis, Senior Vice President and Wealth Advisor at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, because she was able to successfully make connections with people she wanted to advance business relations with through LinkedIn (Konish, 2012, para. 15). LinkedIn is convenient and easy to use because users can type in key words of work fields or professions of people they would like to connect with, making the process of forming business relationships quicker.

Foresti Home Collection Group uses LinkedIn as a form of extending its business card to professionals in architecture, interior design, and furniture design. Since the company wants to focus more on expanding its client base in the United States, LinkedIn’s search engine filters the results by listing areas in the United States in which the company can connect with professionals in this part of the world. On the company’s LinkedIn account, potential clients can view its contact information, a list of products and services, who the company is connected with, which

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companies it is following, and groups that the company is a part of to show clients how interactive the company is on social media (Foresti Home Collection on LinkedIn, 2013). Foresti Home Collection Group makes posts in the general newsfeed, group discussions, and directly contacts its connections not only “as a business card extension,” but to be straightforward with professionals and show that the company is serious in expanding its client base in the United States. As a result of using LinkedIn, the company has made 116 connections, and three connections have shown their interest in purchasing the company’s products.

Twitter as a Newsfeed

Finally, Konish declares that Twitter is used as a newsfeed. She quotes Douglas Ellington, Senior Vice President of Digital Marketing at Bank of America; he states, “It’s by far the platform where we get the most chatter or feedback from our followers or in public in general” (Konish, 2012, para. 19). Twitter is a suitable source of communication because people can easily update the newsfeed, or “tweet,” from the convenience of their Smartphones. Konish states that Financial Planner Jamie Cox’s clients join Twitter once they purchase iPhones because, “This tool has allowed me the ability to engage with these people at scale,” Cox states (Konish, 2012, para. 25). Because Twitter is a fast medium of communication, business people are beginning to join this form of social media to post immediate updates about the company and to communicate more effectively with clients on news and updates.

Foresti Home Collection has a Twitter account to participate in fast communication with its followers. The company updates the account to promote products, notify followers of the company’s free “Foresti” App, promote its existence on YouTube and Facebook, and inform followers on upcoming events in which the company participates (F_H_C_G, *Twitter.com*). Unfortunately, compared to the success of using Facebook and LinkedIn, the company was not

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effective in attracting many followers on Twitter. Reasons as to why the company did not attract many followers is because users were not interested in the company's "tweets," it was difficult finding architects, interior and furniture designers that use Twitter, and not many companies in the upholstery textile scene use Twitter to communicate to its clients. When fabric distributors are successful in using social media to form closer client relationships with the company, it gives the company a personality that differentiates compared to the competition, allows the fabric distributor to know the customer better, and creates long-lasting client relationships.

Conclusion

Fabric distributors use social media to market its goods and services because it allows clients more opportunity to view the company's products, draws attention by incorporating creativity with social media, and forms closer client relationships with the company through receiving updates on new products and events. Foresti Home Collection Group has a large presence on social media through its official company website, YouTube video, and accounts with Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The most successful social media outlet that has drawn the most attention to the company is LinkedIn. By using direct communication, posting updates daily, and using LinkedIn as "an extension of a business card," it has made 116 connections. As a result of Foresti Home Collection Group's marketing efforts, three connections have responded showing an interest in the company's products. Connections and users from group discussions often "like" the company's posts, write comments, or send personal messages expressing their interest in the company. LinkedIn has allowed Foresti Home Collection Group to establish relationships, form a company personality that separates itself from the competition, and spread good word-of-mouth amongst clients in the United States.

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Informational Interview #1

Carlo Boecklin

06-574-4214

1. What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to the competition?

Our strength within the company, along with its employees, is flexibility and our capability of multi-tasking. On the other hand, our weakness is that we are not as focused.

2. How would you describe your company's culture and leadership philosophy?

The company's culture deals with the evolution of a family company. We apply a worldwide scenario because we used to be a small company in Rome, but now we apply the idea of management of a small company in a national and international setting.

3. If you were to retire, what are the 3 main factors you will be using to determine the right person for this job?

Precision, flexibility, and xen (be calm)!

4. What was the company's most strategic decision made in the last year? Describe how you came about this decision.

The best decision the company has made within the last year is including almost all the articles of fabrics on the company website. We did this not only to copy what the biggest competitors did, but to be the first company to retail online in Italy.

5. Can you give me an example of how and why one of your staff made a major mistake? What was your response to it?

One of our employees sent out the wrong samples, including the wrong colors, to a customer. In response to this mistake, we sent the right samples with a delay and apologized deeply.

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Informational Interview #2

Marco Foresti

06-574-4214

1. What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to the competition?

A complete catalogue of high level products with a deep range of fabrics and concerning design/Shortage of colors. We could have more if we were a bigger company.

2. How would you describe your company's culture and leadership philosophy?

Our Mission is to offer to our clients an exclusive textile collection for the interior decoration. Our architect team follows developments in design, fashion, lifestyle, art and music in order to have a strong vision of the future color trends and consumer behavior. This inspire us about the 3 faces of our collection: Classical, Trendy and Contract.

3. If you were to retire, what are the 3 main factors you will be using to determine the right person for this job?

A manager Brand oriented, with a strong know how of internationalization and well introduced with main architect studios worldwide.

4. What was the company's most strategic decision made in the last year? Describe how you came about this decision.

*To specialize the company on classic style segment for high end users. This decision was taken after a deep SWOT analysis considering:
Strengths; Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in this market.*

5. Can you give me an example of how and why one of your staff made a major mistake? What was your response to it?

One of my previous agents complained one of our customer in front of other people during a meeting; after that I issued in my company policy the rule to avoid any kind of complain and/or amendment in public.