



VIDEO connects

Brands and independents increasingly use highly produced or Web 2.0 videos to build image and establish an emotional connection.

**By Jeff Weinstein,
editor in chief**

The magic word hoteliers want to hear from guests is “affinity,” and building it with today’s consumers is not easy with all the media messages and choices bombarding them at every turn. So with a prediction that video will represent 90% of all online consumption by 2013, forward-thinking independent hoteliers and brand operators are creating more sophisticated videos — even films — to reshape their image, make an emotional connection and build business.

Some videos and films are created with big budgets, while others are produced on a shoestring. Either way, marketers seem to think video is worth the gamble — even if its bottom-line worth is often hard to measure.

New brands simply trying to gain eyeballs see clever videos as a great way to cut through the clutter. Take, for example, the new Bloomrooms brand, Delhi, which is using offbeat video as its first touchpoint for everyone from potential leisure guests to corporate

clients. “This has really allowed us to simplify our approach to selling the brand and maintaining a consistent message,” says Tom Welbury, bloomrooms’ director of marketing and strategy. “In a place like India, where there is so much noise and confusion, it is really helping us engage with people. As a start-up not looking to spend ridiculous dollars, we managed to pull something together that ticked all the boxes and didn’t break the bank.”

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, Le Saint-Sulpice Hôtel Montréal in May presented *La Valise*, a 15-minute film about four characters and one valise entering the hotel. The film about “obsession, ambition and beauty” was produced by a new media company for about US\$45,000, according to Alexandre Tessier, the hotel’s sales and marketing director. And coincidence or not, hotel sales the month following the film’s debut were the best ever, Tessier adds.

“It was more a notoriety campaign,



“Here” was directed by Waris Ahluwalia and Luca Guadagnino, stars Agyness Deyn, was co-written by Tilda Swinton and features music by Jason Schwartzman.



and it did generate a lot of press, which is so important for an independent,” says Tessier, who moved money out of traditional marketing programs to manage costs that included a splashy premiere and local media campaign. “It was worth it. When I returned to New York, travel agents remembered me because of the film. It was a priceless story to tell, and you have to be famous within your own city, too, to be successful.”

Perhaps the boldest video endeavor was undertaken by Starwood Hotels & Resorts’ Luxury Collection, which created a much bigger-budget film called “Here,” employing an acclaimed director and a supermodel actor, among others. There were no panorama shots of the lobbies, pools or bedrooms. There were no overt marketing messages. It was simply an elegant story shot at three hotels in the United States using the brand’s mantra, “Life Is A Collection of Experiences. Let Us Be Your Guide.” It featured a traveler “who explored the unexpected joys of a cross-country journey.” The end game for Starwood was “to inspire travelers to discover destinations in a unique and authentic way.”

“The challenge The Luxury Collection faced for long time was with a connection between the value of the

brand and the individual properties,” says Paul James, global brand leader, St. Regis and The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts. “The brand has always been story-rich, but traditional marketing challenged that with a flat website and flat brochures. With a shift to social media, it better allows us to tell our brand story.”

An accompanying social media campaign for “Here” generated coverage in publications as diverse as the *Hollywood Reporter*, with James estimating 1 million social media interactions resulting from the film. In addition, a communication plan highlighting the big Hollywood names attached to the film generated another 2.5 million media impressions. “I look at share of voice for a brand that hasn’t historically had a loud voice in the traditional media space, and ‘Here’ was able to drive that in a way we have not done before,” James adds.

For Hilton Worldwide’s luxury brands, Global Head of Luxury and Lifestyle Brands John Vanderslice has introduced — among other cutting-edge video marketing campaigns — “The Luxury Manifesto,” a web-based video series featuring conversations with luxury influencers in fashion, media, hospitality and the arts.

“The process started two years ago as

luxury came back (from economic turmoil) differently,” Vanderslice says. “My challenge was to figure out how customers will approach luxury, and I decided to reach out to leaders in luxury and find out what they were thinking.”

Vanderslice estimates The Luxury Manifesto has been viewed via Facebook more than 30,000 times through Hilton’s Conrad brand and 41,000 times via Waldorf Astoria. He adds that Hilton is just starting to get active via YouTube, where he expects to build an even stronger presence.

The takeaways for Vanderslice, who says costs for The Luxury Manifesto were not as much as one might think using just one camera and some lighting, are to articulate your brand’s voice, not to over-produce, nor get caught up on measurement, “because you can measure cost per thousand exposures, but not all exposures are equal.”

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