



Brand Marketing Plan For OUNASS

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Introduction

Established in Dubai, the new fashion capital, Ounass is a luxury e-commerce brand operating within the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council housing the Middle East's widest range of top-tier designers. The platform has just passed its fifth anniversary and has an estimated growth rate of 30% to 40%, outperforming competitors (Assomull, 2022). They offer a wide array of products from 300 diverse luxury brands since its debut in December 2016 as Al Tayer Group's first luxury e-commerce platform. Five years after its debut, Ounass has established itself as the preferred luxury e-commerce brand in the Gulf, luring the region's affluent consumers online. Ounass operates digitally through a tailored website, app and personal shopping service, polished and tuned to offer a personalized experience.

This report carried out a brand marketing analysis and plan of Ounass and offers further insight into their market, competitors, challenges, opportunities, target market, and application of brand marketing. This report analyzes its brand situation through PESTEL, SWOT Analysis Model and Positioning Map.

Opportunity Analysis

Market & Industry Analysis

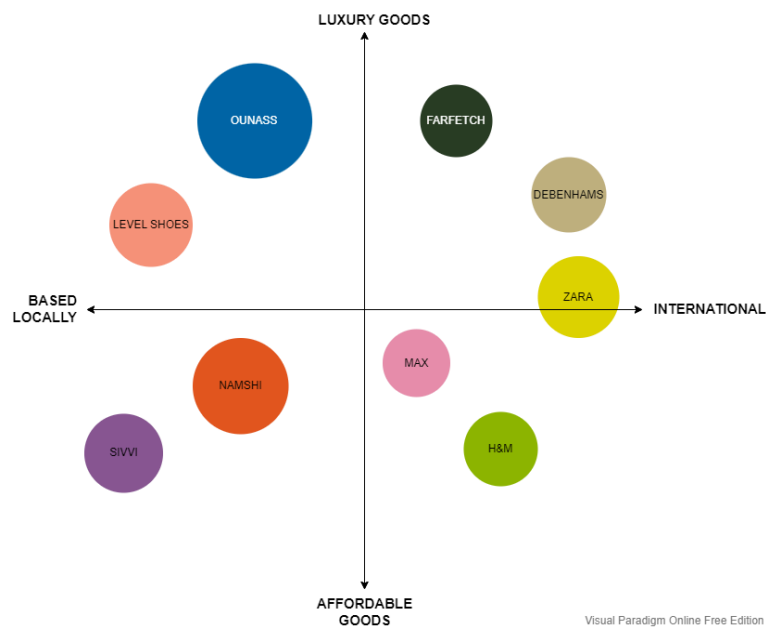
OUNASS is the first e-commerce platform that targets luxury shopping at a touch of a button. The e-commerce market in GCC regions has been evolving as per the reports presented by the Dubai Chamber of commerce. There has been an increase in e-commerce sales from \$2.6 billion in 2019 to \$4.8 billion in 2021 (*UAE E-Commerce Market Forecast to Reach \$9.2 Billion by 2026 – Dubai Chamber of Commerce*, n.d.)

There is constant growth in the e-commerce industry, not only in the Middle East, but even internationally, due to the rise and availability of different platforms that offer a variety of transactions. Along with this, the increase in income results in developing the purchasing power hence evolving the online infrastructure and e-commerce market.

Before 2016, there was a gap in the e-commerce market for luxury focused retailers, which was the opportunity OUNASS took. OUNASS has the unique selling point of understanding the persona of those who purchase luxury brands and those who involve themselves with the e-market. What makes them different from other intermediaries is that not only do they include luxury brands but they also showcase local GCC brands that aren't found elsewhere. (Nast, 2022)

The CEO of OUNASS, Khalid Al Tayer, has stated that the move from in-store shopping to online shopping was a strategy implemented because of the success of his stores in malls such as Bloomingdales and Harvey Nichols. (Nast, 2022)

Figure 1: OUNASS Positioning Map



Company's Life Cycle

In December 2016, Al Tayer group launched the first online luxury brands platform catered to the GCC regions.

As of recently, OUNASS has been ranked #11 in terms of most visited sites for fashion and apparel in the UAE, while holding the position of #387 overall ("Similarweb", 2022).

The main challenge faced by OUNASS as they were starting was the opportunity to attract customers that relied on in-store shopping for many years, it is hard to create credibility for luxury products that are sold solely online as many consumers will want to physically see the products before making such a big purchase. On the same hand, it was easy for OUNASS to get a hold of luxury brands because of the big name attached to it - Al Tayer Group.

During the pandemic, there was a sudden decrease in the luxury goods demand which did not have any impact on OUNASS because of the strong luxury goods purchasing power their consumers maintained.

SWOT Analysis

Below are the internal strengths that OUNASS contains while being a luxury e-commerce, along with the areas they lack in. While developing the marketing plan, it is essential to identify the potential opportunities in the e-commerce industry as well as the threats that OUNASS may face in the future.

Figure 2: OUNASS's SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Accessibility to different luxury brands such as Gucci, Valentino, SKIMS, Balenciaga, & much more.- GCC region's first luxury e-commerce has allowed it to build credibility.- Exclusively digital (via website & app) which decreases certain costs.- Same-day delivery to most cities within UAE.- Expert opinions on current fashion trends and influencer interviews for a better shopping experience.- Customer care support provided 7 days a week.- Option to pre-order before the official launch of certain collections.- Variety of payment methods, such as credit/debit cards, apple pay, COD, monthly instalments.- Price difference policy on discounted items purchased before discount.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of affordable brands.- Only available in GCC regions.- Some brands and products perform better in sales than other brands.- Payment instalments are only available in UAE and KSA.- Does not accept Samsung pay yet.- Taxes and duties will vary due to the delivery location.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Purchase power of the target market is constantly increasing as their income and employment betters.- E-commerce industry has been evolving since all operations shifted online due to the lockdown.- Ability to target more consumers by hosting pop-up stores and including influencers to promote the products displayed.- Content sponsorship and social media presence to increase brand knowledge of lesser-known luxury brands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reliability and comfort of in-store shopping due to being able to try on before purchase may pose as a barrier between those who prefer shopping in store and OUNASS.- E-commerce can lead to fraud and scams when it comes to bulky orders and COD payment methods.- Competitors such as LEVEL shoes which has a stand-alone store is a major threat to OUNASS if they continue to remain fully digital.- Breach of data and privacy concerns arise.

PESTLE Analysis

Figure 3: Summary of OUNASS's PESTLE Analysis

P O L I T I C A L	<p>The UAE has a strong political image with a stable government that aids e-commerce with growth and efficient delivery of services.</p> <p>They have strong trade relationships with many international governments which will potentially allow OUNASS to expand and operate in different countries</p>	T E C H N O L O G Y	<p>Many tech-savvy users that have created a huge increase in the e-commerce industry in UAE by relying on online shopping.</p> <p>Due to the strong political and economical state of UAE, they can purchase and provide businesses with new and improved technological developments and knowledge.</p>
E C O N O M I C A L	<p>The GDP per capital in the UAE is exceptionally high which increases the purchasing power of potential OUNASS consumers.</p> <p>With a high employment rate as well, UAE is an attractive country for newer generations.</p>	L E G A L	<p>Many factors such as privacy issues and regulations of e-commerce affect how a business runs in this industry.</p> <p>UAE has made it easier for businesses to start operating online with different licensing procedures.</p>
S O C I A L	<p>Residents of UAE have well-paying jobs with a comfortable lifestyle that aids their luxury spendings.</p> <p>Due to globalization, the diversity in UAE has been increasing recently.</p>	E N V I R O N M E N T	<p>UAE has shown a huge interest in sustainability and eco-friendly business operations, hence an e-commerce business does well because it is more carbon-efficient than retail stores.</p> <p>Being located near coastal areas, will allow OUNASS to expand their operations and conduct trade by sea.</p>

Target Market

The purpose of this target market analysis is to specify the demographics, geographics, psychographics and behavior of OUNASS's target market. Ounass is the largest luxury e-commerce platform in the Middle East, providing consumers with a website, a mobile app and personal shopping service (Ounass, 2016).

OUNASS's target geographic area is the GCC which includes UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. However, their main target is the UAE and Saudi Arabia as the two countries make up the majority of luxury consumption and have higher disposable income (Dey, 2022). Ounass owns two warehouses, one in Dubai, UAE and the other Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This gives users living in these cities the option to receive their orders in 2 hours. The platform offers both English and Arabic language options to cater to both locals and expats without language barriers. Additionally, users can enable their location to receive results with local designers or trending international designers in their city.

In regards to demographics, OUNASS targets upper-middle-class Emirati and Saudi Arabian customers by providing high-quality curated products and services. The company has successfully adopted a niche differentiation strategy as an exclusive and luxury e-commerce brand in the region's market. OUNASS offers a wide array of diverse brands including exclusive capsule collections from both local designers such as Sandra Mansour, and International luxury brands such as Balenciaga (Assomull, 2022).

OUNASS caters to women, men and children but has received the most traffic from women, in particular Saudi Arabian women ("Similarweb," 2022). This is because they now make up a third of the country's workforce, nearly twice the percentage from five years ago, thus, leading to increased spending on luxury products (Banda & Likhovid, 2022).

OUNASS offers a wide array of diverse products and consistently monitors market trends along with user's spending habits which then satisfies their target of GCC women. For example, Emirati and Saudi Arabian women in particular enjoy their abayas, modest wear and Ramadan collections.

In regards to psychographics, OUNASS's target markets are researched and informed shoppers that are aware luxury prices in the region are higher than abroad. Because of this, they are not loyal to brands and will order from international platforms abroad to get the best price. To combat this, OUNASS has introduced price matching to level the playing field (Nichol, 2017).

Values of this segment include modesty as majority of Emirati and Saudi women are Muslim and use OUNASS for Eid outfits, modest wear and abayas. This segment also shows high interest and positive attitudes toward influencers. According to a survey, 73% of Emirati and Saudi Arabian respondents purchased from a brand or tried a service mentioned by an influencer (Khamis, 2019). Additionally, attitudes toward technology and internet penetration in the GCC is positive with more than 98% of residents being internet users. Consumers in the region have also grown to be more comfortable with e-commerce as 65% are buying more online than before the pandemic circa 2020.

In terms of behavior, consumers in this segment expect personalisation and uniqueness. This segment finds that the benefit sought from a luxury purchase is to stand out. A study performed by Banda & Likhovid (2022) found that consumers in the UAE and KSA also expect luxury e-commerce brands in the region to provide limited editions and personalized products like platforms abroad as seen in Figure X. Additionally, they have become more experimental with 60% of luxury consumers in the region being interested in pre-loved (Banda & Likhovid, 2022).

Figure 4: Consumer's expectation of luxury e-commerce brands (Banda & Likhovid, 2022)



Typical persona example:

Fatima is a 31-year-old Emirati woman. She lives in Jumeirah with her husband and 2-year-old daughter. Fatima works as HR generalist for a large technology company in Business Bay where she makes 30,000 dirhams. Her salary is almost entirely disposable income as her husband is the main provider of the family. She likes to spend her time meeting friends at coffee shops in Jumeirah, Dubai Design District or Dubai Mall to shop. However, she has been going to malls less lately since she adapted to the comfort of e-commerce during the pandemic. She found out about Ounass through her friends and had seen Dana Wolley, an influencer, upload a review of the products she had bought from the platform. Fatima now uses Ounass to purchase modest wear for work, dresses and accessories for Eid, and products for her daughter. When she wants to spoil herself, she likes to purchase luxury bags on Ounass as they offer 2 hour delivery in Dubai and she can avoid lines in the mall. She does not feel hesitant to make large payments on the platform as in the case she is unsatisfied, Ounass offers a simple return process.

Competitive Analysis

This section will cover the closest 2 competitors of OUNASS which are Level shoes and FARFETCH. Starting with OUNASS itself, it is the ultimate home of luxury, and the Middle East's finest luxury website, offering over 300 world's most exclusive brands in a globally relevant but locally-led content environment. (Ounass, 2016) The core values include the quality, reliability, and sustainability due to eco-friendly packaging. Furthermore, what makes OUNASS different from its competitors is that it has one of the region's shortest delivery times, delivering within Dubai in two hours and just introducing a three-hour delivery service in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This emphasis on speed has emerged as a fundamental distinction. Additionally, OUNASS has also established a reputation by collaborating with renowned companies on unique capsule and limited edition collections. For instance, every season, the London luxury footwear brand Malone Soulier collaborates on an exclusive with OUNASS. (Assomull, 2022)

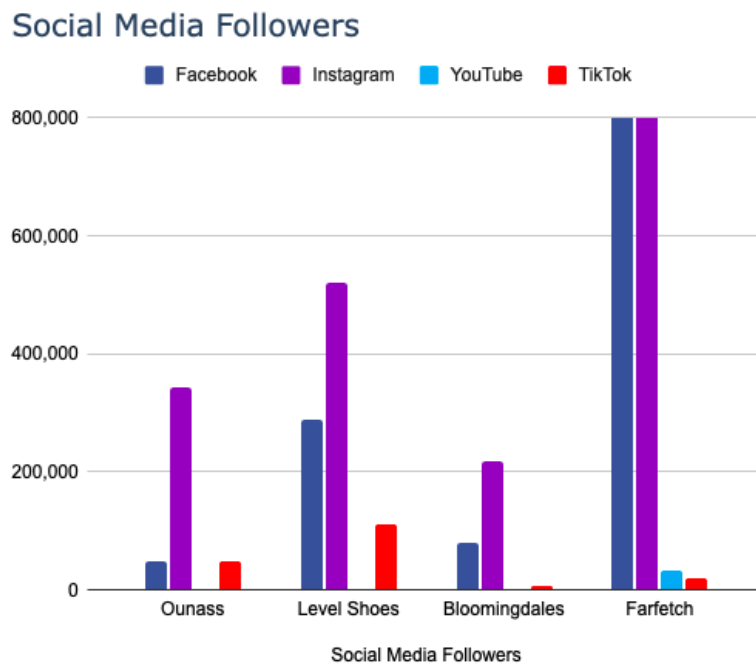
Generally speaking, in the Middle East 70% of consumers are comfortably shopping online, what made OUNASS grow very fast was due to the advantage of being part of Al Tayer Insignia, that is the retail subsidiary of holding company Al Tayer Group and a prominent participant in retail in the region for over 3 decades. According to Sujata Assomull, “OUNASS growth rate is above 30 to 40 per cent, which is faster than the overall online market (25-30 per cent)”. (Assomull, 2022)

The target audience of OUNASS is 55.13% male and 44.87% female, with the largest age group of visitors being 25 - 34 year olds. Geographically speaking, they are mainly based in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. The interests of these target audiences include Fashion, Beauty & Cosmetics, and Social Media as per the age group. (“Similarweb,” 2022)

Moving on to the marketing channels distribution in the Middle East, search traffic is the most important source of traffic to OUNASS.com, accounting for 53.97% of desktop visitors last month, followed by direct traffic (34.42%) via their official website. Mail is the most underutilized channel. Therefore, it needs improvement via email marketing.

The promotion strategy that is used by OUNASS are print ads, social media platform ads and the use of influencers for paid sponsorships. Additionally, they tend to have sales along with coupon codes with discounts up to 70%.

Figure 5: Visual representation of OUNASS competitor's social media followings

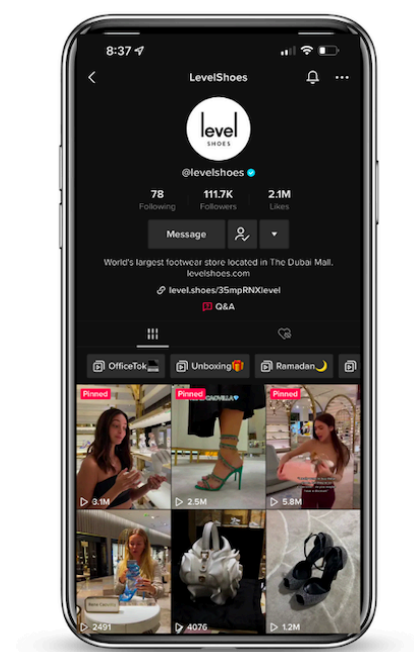


The first competitor of OUNASS is Level Shoes, which is a leading concept shop and has 40 designer boutiques as well as four core zones with a variety of brands: Women's Designer, Contemporary, Men's, and Trend. The 96,000 square foot space houses the world's largest shoe companies, from Adidas to Converse, as well as smaller-production and high-end names like Gucci and Christian Louboutin. What makes Level Shoes more successful is the distribution of channels, as they sell via their official website and are opened in one of the busiest stores in the world, Dubai Mall. (Level Shoes, 2022)

The unique selling point of Level Shoes is their wide range of one-of-a-kind services, including shoe experts, foot spas, gourmet pleasures, a specialized concierge service, and a regional internet purchasing platform which is something OUNASS lacks in. (Dmenta, 2021) Furthermore, customers have a choice of paying in installments, along with offering 90 minutes delivery within Dubai to online shoppers.

The target audience of Level Shoes is quite broader as compared to OUNASS due to the advantage of being available in the mall. It includes both men and women from the age 18 up to 55 years old, with interests towards different shoes for any occasion. The promotion strategy for Level Shoes is via Influencer marketing and social media advertisements particularly on TikTok. Level Shoes have seasonal discounts on selected products as some brands like Louis Vuitton, never offer discounts. As of 2022, Level Shoes's TikTok account has 111,700 thousand followers, with a viral video having around 6 million views. According to the general manager of Level Shoes, she stated that it helped the brand to fully emerge in current trends, allowing them to reach an entirely new audience globally. (Sessions, 2022)

Figure 6: Snapshot of Level Shoes's TikTok Account



Moving on to the last competitor, FARFETCH, founded back in 2007, is a global e-commerce marketplace for luxury boutiques from over 190 countries with items from over 50 countries and nearly 1,300 of the world's best brands, boutiques, and department stores, providing a truly unique shopping experience and access to the most extensive selection of luxury on a single platform. (FARFETCH, 2021) What's different about FARFETCH in comparison with its competitors is that it is internationally known, accepts payments in Cryptocurrency, is striving towards sustainability and has a broad range of products.

For instance, there could be different buyers in each country offering six or seven selections of products, but with FARFETCH, you could find not double but triple the amount of products. From a consumer's perspective it is convenient since they can shop and style a specific brand or designer rather than having a limited amount of products.

According to similarweb, the target audience of FARETCH is 42.59% male and 57.41% female, aged from 25 to 34 that access the website via a desktop. Their interests include shopping and fashion. ("Similarweb," 2022)

The distribution in the Middle East is throughout their official website, unlike in London acquiring the Browns store. Furthermore, the promotional strategy includes influencer marketing, user-generated content, visual try on, etc. This is done mainly through social media platforms. (Farfetch Digital Strategy, 2021)



Lastly, Search traffic is the most important source of traffic to FARFETCH.com, accounting for 58.40% of desktop visitors last month, followed by direct traffic of 26.8 %.

("Similarweb," 2022)

Figure 7: Visual try on: One method of FARFETCH's promotional strategy



Figure 8: Summary of Ounass's Competitors

Brand	OUNASS		
Founded	2016	2012	2007
Core Values	Quality, Reliability, Sustainability	Product curation, innovation, authenticity	Be Revolutionary, Think Global, Amaze Customers
Competitive advantage	Offers over 300 world's most exclusive brands, Region's shortest delivery times, and limited edition collections	Wide range of one-of-a-kind services for different categories, 90 minutes delivery in Dubai, and flexible payment options	Internationally known, accepts payments in Cryptocurrency, is striving towards sustainability and has a broad range of products
Target Audience	Males & Females aged 25-34 based in the Middle East	Males & Females aged 18 up to 55 years old, with interests towards different shoes for any occasion.	Males & Females aged 25 to 34 with interests in fashion
Distribution in the Middle East	Official website	Dubai Mall Store and Official Website	Official Website
Promotion	-Print ads, social media platform ads, influencer marketing . -Tend to have seasonal sales up to 70%	-Influencer marketing and social media advertisements particularly on TikTok -Sales on specific pieces	-Influencer marketing, user-generated content, visual try on via social media platforms -Sales on different categories

Marketing Positioning Strategy

OUNASS's Current Market Positioning

To create a market positioning strategy for OUNASS, customer-based brand equity must be established. Brand equity is needed so that consumers have a better perception of the brand when compared to competitors in the same market. Without brand equity, consumers will not have any information about the brand, creating an unknown position in the market.

Customer-based brand equity is the differential effect brand knowledge has on the consumer's response to the marketing of that brand. Therefore, to build brand equity to create a market positioning strategy, creating good brand knowledge for OUNASS is essential.

Brand knowledge consists of both brand awareness and brand image. Since OUNASS is a fast-growing company with returning consumers, it has already built strong brand knowledge. For instance, OUNASS built its brand awareness through memorable advertising methods like billboard advertisements found on busy streets (figure 9). These billboard advertisements can make consumers aware of the brand through recognition and recall since they will frequently see the brand as they drive by. Furthermore, OUNASS was able to build brand awareness during the pandemic by taking advantage of automated tailored search advertisements, this not only increased their brand awareness but also helped OUNASS's revenue grow by 60% (Hull, 2020). OUNASS also has built a strong brand image by providing consumers with brands that are already well-known in the market for their luxury products and strong brand positioning. When consumers see that OUNASS sells well-known brands like Fendi and Gucci, they associate OUNASS with being high-end too, creating a fitting brand image.

Figure 9: Image of OUNASS Billboard in Dubai, UAE street (OUNASS Brand Campaign, 2017)



Creating a brand market positioning strategy also requires identifying and establishing the target market and the nature of competition, which has been mentioned previously in this report. However, another element needed to create a good market positioning strategy is to find the company's points-of-parity and points-of-difference. OUNASS does a good job of mixing the appropriate points-of-parity while adding points-of-difference that make the company stand out. For instance, the quality of the products found on OUNASS is a point-of-parity since they are selling pre-existing brands that consumers already know and love. However, OUNASS's points-of-difference, like two-hour delivery in Dubai, UAE, is what makes OUNASS stand out and can be a consumer's reason to believe in the brand. With all of these elements combined, OUNASS has created a successful position in the market.

Recommendation for Market Positioning Strategy

While OUNASS has established and positioned its brand in the market well, there are still recommendations that can be implemented to further amplify its positioning. The first recommendation is to maximize their points-of-parity (PoP) and points-of-difference more (PoD). OUNASS uses very simple advertising ideas, for instance, having only their logo and a picture of the clothing on a billboard (as seen previously in figure 9). While this matches OUNASS's sophisticated brand image, it does not take advantage of the company's PoPs and PoDs which is what makes OUNASS different from any other luxury intermediary in the market. One way to share this information elegantly with their target market is to create social media advertisements with a swipe-up feature that contains more information about what OUNASS has to offer. This way the advertisement itself can still look as classy as OUNASS's billboards while still providing potential customers with relevant brand knowledge which can help OUNASS's positioning in the market. An example of this advertisement can be seen in figure 10. The swipe-up feature can be found at the bottom, which can lead potential customers to the website or a page that can contain more information about OUNASS's PoPs and PoDs.

Figure 10: Example of OUNASS's Social Media Advertisement



Application of Brand Marketing

Relationship Marketing

OUNASS could use brand marketing tactics to further establish its position in the market and build brand equity. The first way they could do this is by using relationship marketing to create a stronger bond with the consumer. Relationship marketing is when brands provide a more personalized brand experience to keep consumers loyal. Online one-to-one marketing is one-way OUNASS can use relationship marketing to create ties with the brand and the consumer. This can be in the form of an online chat that can be found on the OUNASS website. Another way is to create a loyalty program to keep consumers returning. This program will also be handed to a select number of loyal customers, which will make the OUNASS program seem more exclusive. This would be fitting for OUNASS since exclusivity is typically linked to luxury. Relationship marketing is also a great tactic because obtaining new customers can cost five times more than retaining current customers (Wilder, 2022). Moreover, experiential marketing can be used in conjunction with relationship marketing to create a relate marketing tactic. Relate marketing is when brands create experiences that benefit a person's desires to be a part of a social context, like being a part of a subculture or brand community. OUNASS can use this marketing method by hosting small, exclusive events for people who are a part of their loyalty program to show off their new collections. Again, this does not only build a close-knit relationship between the brand and the consumers, but it also helps contribute to OUNASS's place in the market as a luxury e-commerce store.

Indirect Online Channel - Push Strategy

OUNASS is considered an indirect online channel since it is an online intermediary for luxury products. Therefore, OUNASS can take advantage of the push strategy so that they can receive products for a cheaper price and sell it for a higher profit. Pushing products can be done in many different ways, for example, by advertising it on the home page of their website or through a story post on their social media (online marketing communications).

Mobile Marketing

OUNASS can use geo-targeting by sending messages (through mobile carrier companies) about new drops and collections to consumers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia who live in areas that contain the typical target persona, for instance, Jumeirah in Dubai, UAE. Furthermore, OUNASS can also use opt-in advertising which is when consumers allow brands to use personal information to send them targeted advertisements. For instance, OUNASS can have personalized emails based on the consumer's personal preferences (e.g. if a consumer is interested in shoes they will receive email newsletters only promoting OUNASS's shoe collections).

Leveraging

OUNASS has used different means that can leverage brand association, for instance, the company has leveraged through geographic location, endorsements, and other brands. OUNASS pride itself in being founded in Dubai, UAE by currently operating exclusively in the Middle East and providing two-hour delivery in Dubai. This is a form of leveraging since Dubai is known for being a luxurious city, which helps consumers associate this perception of the city with the brand. Furthermore, since OUNASS is an intermediary (a channel of distribution), it naturally leverages brand association using the brands they offer on the website. Since the brands they offer are higher-end, OUNASS as a brand also gains this perception from consumers.

Conclusion

As our report states, OUNASS has been leading the luxury goods industry for years due to the country and market it was established in. The competitors Farfetch, Level Shoes, and Bloomingdales, have their own unique points that sets them apart from OUNASS.

OUNASS was able to launch a luxury goods portal at the right time when a lot of commerce was shifting online. Although, a recommendation was stated towards the marketing positioning strategy and on growing its social media platforms as the two closest competitors have a larger following.

Furthermore, OUNASS acts as an intermediary between luxury brands and consumers, they set themselves apart by providing fast delivery services. It is an indirect channel of distribution with a range of prices that vary from product to product and brand to brand.

They have made great use of their social media marketing to enhance brand awareness in potential clients. It is an established e-commerce platform due to the Al Tayer name as well as the different brands that have put their trust in this brand.

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