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Resort builds buzz with books

Craig McGuire - 29 May 2006 10:53

Promoting the installation of a swimming pool might not be the sexiest PR assignment, even if it is at Little Dix Bay, the luxury Caribbean resort envisioned by Laurance Rockefeller in 1964.

To build buzz for this new amenity, Nike Communications conceived an effort diverting attention from the actual pool itself.

"Since people read by swimming pools, we asked top publishing houses to give advance copies of books to the resort so that guests can read the books before they are available to the general public," says Amanda Christine Miller, VP at Nike Communications.

Strategy

Sure, the campaign coincided with the resort's 40th anniversary, and yes, it's a really swanky pool. But that's not enough to catch *Fortune's* attention these days.

Little Dix Bay is a resort with no TVs in its rooms and where many of the guests spend their days relaxing and reading on the beach. Nike created the "Hot Type" book program to appeal to the resort's sophisticated guests, offering them bragging rights to advance copies of novels that were not yet available to the public.

"In lieu of just promoting the new feature, we decided to create a service amenity linked to the pool that would represent the key messages and service ethics of the Rosewood Hotels & Resorts," Miller says.

Tactics

Nike contacted the top publishing houses in the country - including Hyperion, Random House, Harper Collins, Knopf, and Simon & Schuster - and requested advance copies of novels be sent to the resort at the same time they were sent to reviewers.

The resort created a turndown amenity in the form of a bookmark to announce the program to guests and offer a book menu.

Meanwhile, Nike launched a national media campaign. "We offered an exclusive to *Fortune*, a medium-lead publication, which allowed us to line up long-lead and newspaper coverage to break about the same time," Miller says.

The aim was to create a layer effect of coverage in lifestyle, consumer, travel, and business press.

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Results

The media campaign produced coverage in national and regional outlets from *Fortune* to *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, and *USA Today*.

Robert Boulogne, Rosewood Hotels & Resorts COO, says, "The result of Hot Type has been outstanding and has exceeded all our expectations, growing from one resort to all the resorts," including Jumby Bay and Las Ventanas al Paraiso.

Also, "Nike Communications has been able to leverage the success of the initial Hot Type campaign into a second campaign, Hot Type Author Series, which brings authors to the resorts to speak to guests about their books," he adds.

Future

The program continues in its second year, now in its second phase, Hot Type Author Series. Michael Gross, author of *740 Park*, recently hosted a series of dinners at Las Ventanas to talk about his new book. By the fourth day, eight people were reading his book by the pool.

PR team: Rosewood Hotels & Resorts (Dallas) and Nike Communications (New York)

Campaign: Hot Type

Duration: 2005-ongoing

Budget: \$10,000

PRWeek's view

This campaign could have turned out very differently had Nike decided to focus on the pool itself. Instead, with a very limited budget, Nike created a program providing a free marketing opportunity to create buzz in influential circles for the publishing houses partnering with Rosewood, as well as their authors. In turn, those companies provide Rosewood Hotels & Resorts with unique amenities for guests that are only accessible at its properties. By taking a different angle, Nike actually enhanced the guest experience while forming a valuable business relationships for the resorts.

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