

Clarins

ORGANIZATION

Founded in 1954, Clarins is a French luxury skincare, cosmetics, and perfume company, and the #1 prestige skincare brand in Europe.

LOCATION

Neuilly-sur-Seine, France

INDUSTRY

Retail/CPG

PRODUCTS USED

Hootsuite Enterprise

Hootsuite Ads

Brandwatch



How a Retail Experience Leader Went Digital

Faced with lockdowns, Clarins used Hootsuite and social media to bring its renowned in-store experience online

Ask anyone familiar with Clarins to describe the brand and they'll probably start with its highly crafted in-store experiences, where expert advisors walk customers through the benefits of each product and help create the perfect skincare regime for their individual needs.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the subsequent lockdown meant Clarins had to flip its sales strategy on its head—and completely reinvent how it communicated with customers.



30,000

website visits from social during store closures

42%

week-on-week increase in product line sales attributed to social ads

450+

bookings in first month for Clarins & Me service



The challenge

Traditionally, most of Clarins's retail sales and profits have come from their numerous stores, all of which had to close immediately. The company needed to shift its focus to ecommerce while continuing to provide the expert guidance it's known for—but without the face-to-face in-store interactions.

The team at Clarins quickly decided that social media would be the ideal platform to deliver engaging customer experiences in a digital format, leveraging Hootsuite's tools and ecosystem. But before they could start, they would need to completely redesign their existing social content programs to reflect their customers' changing needs and preferences in light of the emerging pandemic.

The team realized they needed to:

- ✓ Create a completely new content pipeline that reflected what was happening in the world
- ✓ Find new ways to engage and inform their customers online
- ✓ Provide guidance and support to customers in lieu of them being able to go in store

All this needed to be done fast—and with little to no additional budget.



“Working with Hootsuite gave us the insights needed to quickly shift our entire strategy to suit the change in customer demand that came with lockdown. Adapting our content accordingly has proved hugely successful and there are many positive initiatives, like the Clarins & Me service, that we will continue to provide long after lockdown.”

DEBORAH HOLLOWAY

Digital Media Manager, Clarins

Letting customers rewrite the rulebook

Using Hootsuite’s social listening partner, Brandwatch, Clarins reviewed and analyzed customer conversations related to the brand and realized that their previously planned communications were no longer relevant. During lockdown, interest in makeup faded rapidly as people went back to basics for their skincare needs. Data gathered via Brandwatch also revealed that customers were using lockdown as a fresh opportunity for self-care.

This shift in preferences meant the company’s previously planned content would miss the mark—but the new insights also presented substantial new opportunities.

“When COVID-19 hit, we took our rulebook and completely reinvented it,” explained digital media manager Deborah Holloway. “We knew we had to be agile and create relevant content that could speak to what was happening in the world and the huge impact it would be having on our customers.”

Using insights from Brandwatch, Holloway and her team determined that they needed to create content that would promote skincare products and regimens tailored at combating the effects of stress. However, without any additional budget to create new ad campaigns or content, they decided to look beyond existing content to use the assets they already had—starting with the Clarins beauty coaches.



Reimagining the offline experience for online shoppers

The team called on Clarins beauty coach Rebecca Jones ([clarins_rebecca](#)) and quickly settled on a low-cost approach tailor-made for social media: Rebecca would share her expertise with customers by posting new videos daily—from her own bedroom—via Instagram Stories.

Replicating the insights and techniques that customers would have experienced in store, Rebecca showed off skincare rituals designed to address the different sensitivities that consumers were finding in their skin. The home-based, DIY nature of the stories resonated with customers, who identified with Rebecca and enjoyed watching her perform her skin care rituals in her own home. The results were immediate and positive, with story completion rates jumping from a previous average of 20% to an impressive 75%—the highest the team had seen on social channels.

While in-store retail remained out of the question, Clarins still wanted to provide the one-to-one consultancy the company is renowned for. The team developed and launched a new service called Clarins & Me, allowing customers to book a free video consultation with a Clarins beauty advisor. Launched just two weeks into the lockdown, the new service was successful from the start, with more than 450 bookings in the first month alone.



Allocating ad spend to top performing strategies as they emerge

As consumer demand shifted, Clarins shifted its marketing budgets accordingly, cutting spend related to makeup due to lack of demand and focusing on skincare. With new content already succeeding in driving engagement, the marketing team turned its attention to looking for ways to drive traffic to the Clarins website and drive additional ecommerce sales.

Based on trending conversations in search and social channels, the team worked with Hootsuite to develop a social advertising strategy. With consumers facing growing economic uncertainty, the team decided to focus on highlighting deals on existing skincare offers that would appeal to cash-strapped customers.

The strategy was a resounding success, with social ads quickly becoming one of the key media investments for the Clarins brand. By the end of the quarter, social ads drove 30,000 website visits, with a low cost per click and click-through rates well exceeding the benchmark of 0.2%. For example, a single lip oil ad achieved a CTR of 0.7%—and a 42% week-on-week increase in sales performance attributed solely to social ads.

Soon after launching the Clarins & Me consultation service, the team noticed that the service was resonating with customers, with average order volume from consultations much higher than from customers browsing and shopping on the Clarins website. By quickly putting ad spend behind the consultations and investing in people discovering the service, Clarins was able to further amplify the effectiveness of the campaign, achieving a CTR of 0.6% with low CPC compared to its other media campaigns.



What's next

Upending its existing strategy amid budget cuts and uncertainty wasn't easy, but Clarins made it work. By listening to customers, adapting quickly, and shifting its tactics, the company was able to build and grow new revenue streams online despite store closures. And while the overall aim of the wider strategy shift wasn't to drive engagement, campaign results were impressive, with a total paid reach of 5.1 million in the quarter, with 30,000 total paid clicks and a paid engagement rate of 6%.

Even as stores began to reopen, the team at Clarins decided to continue offering the Clarins & Me consultations, and to allocate spend behind the initiative. The success of its strategy has enabled the marketing team to prove just how important and cost effective social media is to the business, and to encourage increased future investment in social from the wider business.

The future of in-store retail experiences remains uncertain—but by listening to customers and adapting rapidly to meet their needs, Clarins has successfully cemented its role as an experience leader for many years to come.

“Having the ability to truly understand our customers' likes and needs through their online presence is something that will continue to change the way in which Clarins interacts. We are so proud of our stores and what we can offer to customers who visit us, and the fact that we can now reach our customers with the same insights and consultancy via social channels is game changing.”

DEBORAH HOLLOWAY

Digital Media Manager, Clarins



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