

MAIL

Ghurka presents relaunched women's line as long-term travel companion

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Ghurka Woman campaign image

By SARAH JONES

U.S. leather goods maker Ghurka is introducing its first women's collection in more than 15 years with a campaign that centers on the relationship between a woman and her handbag.

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The imagery, which will run in digital mediums as well as in a direct mail catalog, shows classically dressed women to represent the timeless appeal of the designs. As a brand that has a female following but has not been speaking directly to them, this approach will likely appeal.

"A woman's handbag is her constant companion," said Pam Bristow, executive vice president of marketing and brand strategy at [Ghurka](#), New York. It contains all her secrets, it never leaves her side.

"This is markedly different from the relationship men have with their bags," she said. "We knew that we needed to tap into this closeness to have the collection resonate with the Ghurka woman.

"This campaign, while rooted in our East Coast tradition of elegant travel and sporting, is

all about this intimacy. You can feel it in the photographs."

Budding romance

Ghurka's catalog opens with a close-up of a tan handbag perched on a woman's lap, with her hand resting on the top, one of the images shot by photographer Guy Aroch.



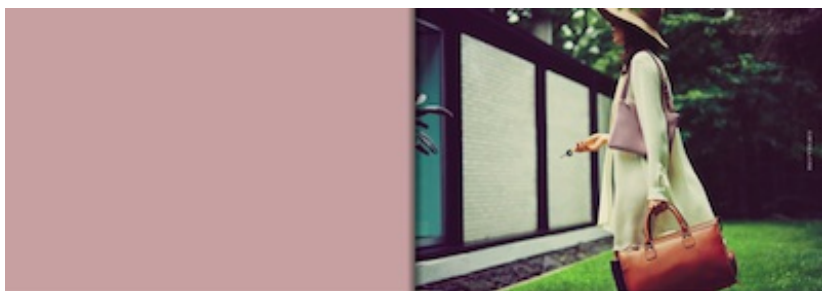
Ghurka Woman catalog

The next page shows a campaign image from 1982, with text explaining that the collection "exists outside of time," remarking that the bags will become an ever-present companion wherever the woman takes them.



Ghurka Woman catalog

Illustrating this, a model is shown toting a weekender across the lawn to a house, key in her other hand, apparently returning from a trip.



Ghurka Woman catalog

Next, Ghurka explains that the patina on its handbags is a "blank canvas" for the consumer to tell their story through "inspired living." This is followed by the concept that the relationship with one's bag is a "romance that endures."

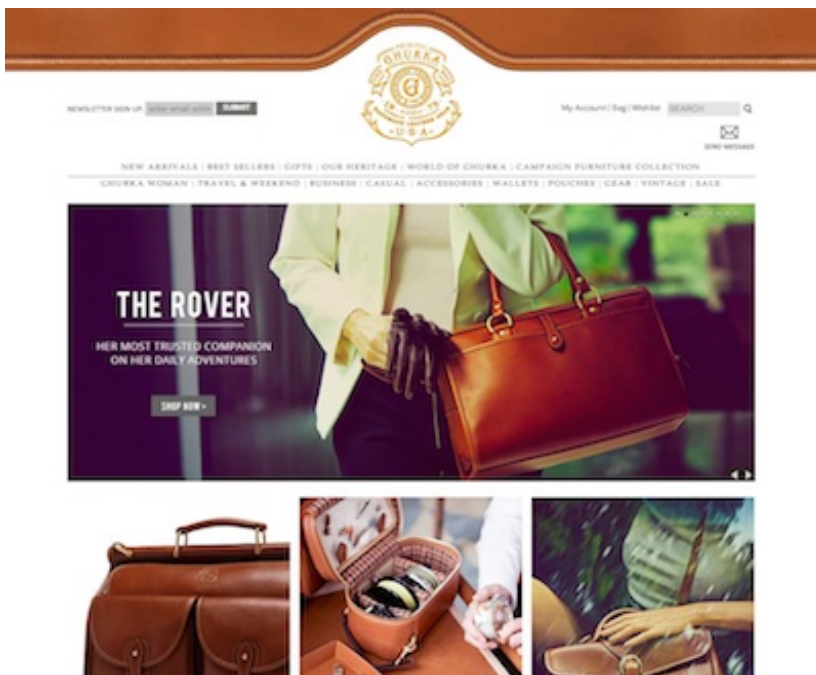
Furthering the sense of travel, models are seen driving in cars wearing leather gloves, with a tote bag sitting on a shoulder or with a larger holdall as the front seat passenger.



Ghurka Woman catalog

When the catalog turns to small leather goods, Ghurka speaks to consumers via text about the details, saying “it’s the little things that make the big things happen.”

In total, the Ghurka Woman capsule has 12 styles of handbags and accessories, which are available online and in-store. On its Web site, the collection is featured prominently on the homepage to draw attention.



Ghurka homepage

The individual relationship a consumer has with their handbag is something Ghurka focuses on through its registration process. Each bag is stamped with the style name and serial number, which can be entered to the brand to officially tie a leather good to its owner.

Even though it has not had a women's line for a number of years, Ghurka's heritage is tied to females. The first bag from brand founder Marley Hodgson was crafted for his son, and is still used by his granddaughter today.

Close ties

The relationship between a woman and her handbag is special, and a topic that is explored often in marketing efforts.

French leather goods maker Lancel is using a multimedia narrative about a chance encounter to introduce its latest handbag collection, Charlie.

“Who are you Charlie?” makes parallels between discovering a new handbag and new romantic interest, as it follows a woman through Paris. This playful take on a first encounter will help consumers build up their own desire for the bag ([see story](#)).

Other brands have highlighted how their bags fit into a well-traveled lifestyle.

French leather goods house Louis Vuitton attached personas to select models from its men’s bag collection to showcase the products’ utility.

Louis Vuitton’s “A Man, a Voyage, an Iconic Bag” video series captures vignettes of the rooms belonging to three bags’ fictional owners. Through these short films Louis Vuitton is able to showcase the broad appeal of its bags ([see story](#)).

Ghurka waited to develop a relationship with women through its unisex and men's collections before establishing a line specifically for them.

"Since the brand's acquisition by our CEO in 2011, the single question we hear most is 'When will you launch a women's collection?'" Ms. Bristow said. "To-date women have been snapping up our men's, unisex and travel bags in droves, so the demand was clearly there.

"The fact is we have a beautiful heritage in women's bags and accessories as well as in men's, but we wanted to make sure the brand was mature enough at this stage in our relaunch to support the reintroduction of a women's business," she said. "The reception over the past few years has made us confident of this.

"We've never stopped speaking to women, if not directly. We are very aware that they love our men's bags and so we really think of the collection as unisex. There is nothing more attractive than a woman who can appropriate menswear and own it with femininity."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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