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## Contemporary logo push revitalized interest in Gucci, says CEO

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*Gucci fall/winter 2015 campaign, Gucci Blossom motif*

By JEN KING

VERSAILLES, France Serving as a bond to a brand's past, the logo has long been debated, but contemporary updates can cement brand iconography in fashion's future, according to Gucci's president/CEO at The New York Times International Luxury Conference on April 5.

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Since becoming president and CEO of Gucci in March 2015, Marco Bizzarri has brought on board Alessandro Michele as creative director, promoting him to the lead position after 12-years of working for the house. With Mr. Michele's appointment, the designer has re-envisioned Gucci's iconic GG logo, a move that did not sit well with brand purists but that has been embraced by a younger consumer who had previously moved away from the house's designs.

"The idea behind the [reimagined logo] was to recreate the dream," said Marco Bizzarri, president/CEO of **Gucci**.

"The easiest thing for me would have been to look at the processes and figures, but in our business the figures are just a sequence of choices," he said.

"We needed to recreate emotion, we needed to recreate brand equity, we needed to recreate creativity in the broader sense."

### Staying power of GG

Mr. Bizzarri was straightforward with his opinion on the logo, saying that the logo still works to embody luxury, as it maintains the important link to a brand's heritage. With that, he shared that luxury has become too heavily dependent on talks of heritage and craftsmanship.

Consumer's logo fatigue resulted in consumers becoming disinterested in Gucci's offerings, causing the brand to feel a sense of shame for its frequent incorporation of its GG logo in virtually all its product categories.



*Gucci handbags at its Milan boutique*

Gucci's promotion of Mr. Michele did not seek out to erase the brand's 95-year history, but rather to relate to that past in a new way. Mr. Michele has worked to modernize Gucci's GG and restore the codes of the house in a contemporary way, keeping its framework close at hand.

"We need to treat [the logo] in a fairly lively way that can be applied to all the markets," Mr. Bizzarri said. "We say, The Chinese consumers don't like the logo, they don't want to buy into the logo.'

"I don't think that's absolutely right," he said. "It's the way we present the logo, and the way in which people embrace it, in terms of what the logo represents [such as] spontaneity, craftsmanship, heritage [and] modernity.

"In fact in the last few months, we saw a jump in Chinese [consumers] buying back into Gucci after many months of decline."

Although not all Gucci fans are on board with the brand's new aesthetic, Mr. Bizzarri's strategy for the house is to speak to the "fashion dreamers." To do so Gucci, since Mr. Michele's appointment, has collaborated with a number of retailers including Hong Kong-based Lane Crawford and Dover Street Market ([see story](#)), to communicate the brand's new direction.



*Gucci at Dover Street Market, fall 2015*

On social media, Gucci has presented a consistent perspective of its updated look through its own campaigns as well as inviting artists to further reinterpret the brand's iconography.

For example, #GucciGram asked visual artists to reinterpret the brand's new Blooms and Caleido prints into works of art, which were then posted to Instagram for Gucci's followers to view.

Mr. Michele introduced the concept saying, "#GucciGram is a starting point to tell different stories, which are all united by great freedom. Today creativity is often born and finds its voice in digital media, a vital source of visual culture" ([see story](#)).



*Consumer-generated artwork for #GucciGram*

Since the new aesthetics introduction, Mr. Bizzarri has been impressed with how quickly Mr. Michele's vision for Gucci has been embraced. Mr. Bizzarri feels that this acts as confirmation that the logo is not over, but brands must evolve their use of it, finding different ways to incorporate established iconography.

"In just six months, [Gucci] got nearly half a million new consumers," Mr. Bizzarri said. "We sold more than 600,000 products of the new Alessandro collection.

"I think that [shows] the way in which Alessandro approached the brand and the logo," he said. "I think it is fairly inspiring."

Using logos logically

Brands committed to authenticity in value and messaging are ones that resonate best with consumers. Gucci has been consistent in its approach to introducing and supporting Mr. Michele's designs for the house.

"With Alessandro's vision, it is the fact that regardless of where the consumer sees Gucci, Gucci will show up and it will be consistent," said Andrew Keith, president of [Lane Crawford](#).

"I think that's what is driving a lot of costumers' belief in the fact that that they can create their own identity, especially in a market like China where self' is becoming incredibly important," he said. "We're over this idea of to be relevant or to have achieved success you're wearing a brand head to foot."

Embracing logos also opens space for the misuse of a brand's symbols. As with counterfeiting, the misuse of logos points to a brand's success.

While this is true, Mr. Keith believes that the misuse of logos is actually a reflection of consumers' personal relationships with a particular brand.

Mentions in popular songs may be the most common use of iconography to leverage a personal connection to a given brand. For better or worse, these mentions work to maintain brand relevance in a pop culture context and may influence purchases.

A number of brands such as Gucci, Michael Kors, Tom Ford, Versace, Richard Mille, Maybach, Mercedes-Benz and others have been mentioned in hip-hop, rap, pop and rock songs that have topped the charts. By being mentioned in these lyrics, musicians are giving an organic endorsement of a brand that may encourage consumers to buy certain brands instead of others ([see story](#)).

Though there has been resistance and degrees displeasure in the misuse of brand iconography, Maurice Levy, chairman/CEO of Publicis Groupe, believes that it is better for brands to move alongside the use. Instead of being contrite and attempting to control brand references and logo usage, Mr. Levy suggests embracing consumers' interpretation as they are the ones truly in control of brand status and positioning.

"When we see the logo is rejected, it is because it has to become so overwhelming on everything," said Maurice

Levy, chairman/CEO of [Publicis Groupe](#).

"People get really fed up, and come back and say, Okay, no logos. I don't want to have any logos. I don't wear logos," he said. "We have to be mindful of the evolution [of the logo] and be extremely authentic."

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