

RETAIL

Lyst looks to quell Olympics' Zika fears with Zikini prank

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Lyst's Zikini for men and women

By STAFF REPORTS

Amid fears of contracting the Zika virus, ecommerce platform Lyst has come up with a sartorial solution to ease concerned consumers attending the summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

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Never being one to shy from controversial marketing efforts, Lyst launched the "world's first Zika-safe bikini," dubbed the "Zikini" ahead of the start of the Games on Aug. 5. Concerns over poor water quality paired with the mosquito- and sexually transmitted Zika virus has stunted optimism and anticipation for the games to officially begin, with many athletes and media choosing to sit this one out.

Zika chic

While concerns over Zika, Brazil's compromised infrastructure and a poorly executed Olympic Village are all well-founded, consumers have expressed the most duress over the Zika virus due to its connection to birth defects among pregnant women who contract the disease, despite it presenting itself as a mild cold ([see story](#)).

For Olympic athletes who otherwise would have attended the games, the virus curtailed many of their hopes for gold. As of press time, 17 golfers and a number of tennis players, divers, basketball players and cyclists have declined participation.

Through its promotions for the Zikini, Lyst is injecting itself into a serious conversation, but with a dash of satire that will surely keep the ecommerce platform top of mind.

Lyst jokes that the Zikini was designed by a team of fashion designers and medical experts to offer wearers, athlete or Olympic attendee, full-body protection against mosquitoes that could carry the Zika virus.



Lyst's Zikini

The retailer's choice of a bikini spoof is well founded, as Brazil is known for its barely there bikini bottoms on some of the world's most beautiful beaches. According to Lyst, the Zikini offers "much more protection from both the sun's UV rays and the Zika virus, the Zikini looks set to challenge those trends."

"What a brazilliant' idea," said Katherine Ormerod, editorial director at Lyst, in a statement. "Safety first and Zika-chic, the Zikini is set to be the hottest trend on the Copacabana beach this summer."

Lyst's mock-up Zikini is a full-length body sleeve and features a statement bikini or swimwear print over a metallic gold base. The Zikini is also citronella-scented for added protection.

While the Zikini is all in good fun and was created for a limited-edition social media giveaway, Lyst has said that if enough interest is expressed it will produce the suit. But, until then, Lyst suggests consumers shop its more than 100,000 other swimwear options.



Lyst's Zikini for men and women

As news of Lyst's Zikini joke reaches consumers some will find humor in the effort, while others will be displeased with the retailer's ploy.

This was also the case when Lyst's "Canine Collection" went viral earlier this summer. The controversial launch saw a collection marketing dogs as fashion accessories.

After unveiling its Canine Collection on May 9, the ecommerce site drew criticism from the RSPCA and concerned consumers, who were worried about the seemingly flippant attitude shown towards the dogs' well-being. After sticking to its narrative, Lyst revealed that the stunt was fake, and used its increased attention and mentions to spotlight the issue of "handbag dogs" ([see story](#)).