

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Thomas Pink unites rugby fans in members-only club

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Brian O'Driscoll for Thomas Pink

By SARAH JONES

LVMH-owned apparel label Thomas Pink is establishing a branded community around rugby, engaging with consumers over a shared love of the sport.

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To draw attention to its position as the official outfitter of the British & Irish Lions, Thomas Pink has launched The Pink Lion Rugby Club, with membership including chances to attend events, news and information about promotions. For Thomas Pink, this club may attract a wider audience of enthusiasts who may turn to its hub for exclusive content and access.

"Luxury brands are defined by the brands with whom they associate," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami, FL.

"Brands collaborate to reinforce their DNA and to expand into new ecosystems," he said. "Fans of rugby will soon become fans of Thomas Pink as their ecosystems merge."

Mr. Ramey is not affiliated with [Thomas Pink](#), but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Thomas Pink](#) was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Addressing athletes

Thomas Pink renewed its partnership with the British & Irish Lions this year, ahead of the team's 2017 Tour to New Zealand. Gearing up for this event, the brand has created an apparel collection based on its outfits for the team that spans business and casual attire.

Included are an Athletic Fit shirt, a Rugby shirt, gold plated cufflinks engraved with a lion and a red silk tie with gold lions. There are also ties, pocket squares, socks, boxers, a velvet dinner jacket and a quilted gilet.

The brand has also named former Lion Brian O'Driscoll as its new ambassador and face of the campaign.

"The right brand ambassador adds authenticity, as well as elevates and enhances an already symbiotic relationship," Mr. Ramey said.

Mr. O'Driscoll is a central figure on Thomas Pink's Pink Lion Rugby Club microsite.

Here, the athlete is introduced in a short film. As he tries on pieces from the collection on the set of a photo shoot, he shares memorable moments from his career and the best piece of advice he has received.

Thomas Pink presents Brian O'Driscoll, its British & Irish Lions ambassador

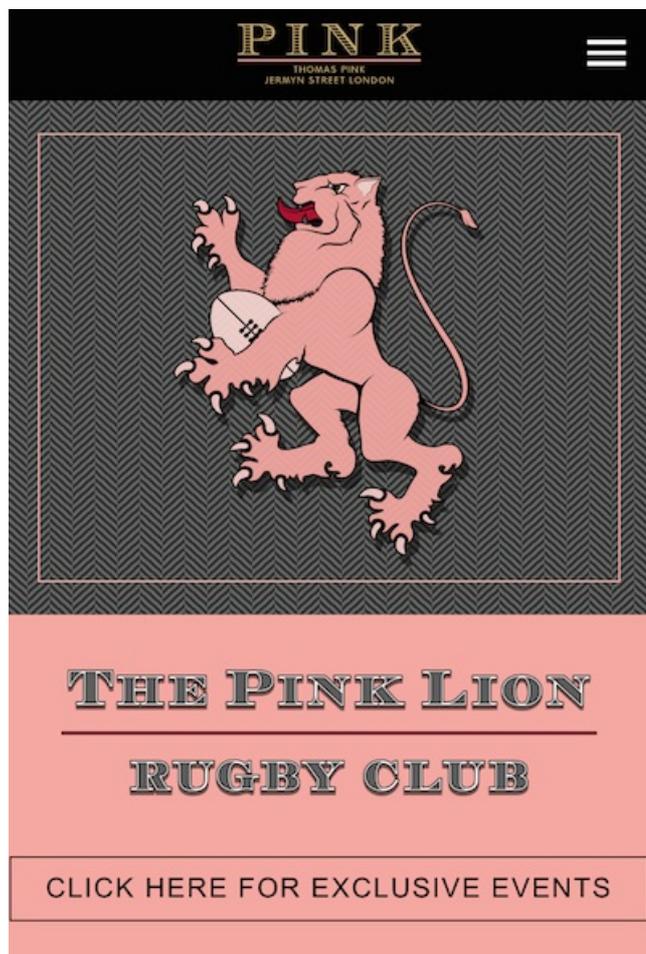
In Thomas Pink's promotions for its collection, it implores men to "Dress like a lion, not a lamb."

From the microsite, consumers can enter their information to become a member of the club. This will entitle them to enter for a chance to attend special events from Nov. 8-10.

One of these events is a talk between Lions head coach Warren Gatland and retired player Andrew Sheridan, who is now a wine connoisseur. Guests will be introduced to the Thomas Pink rugby collection while trying wines.

On another occasion, Mr. O'Driscoll will join other former players Martin Bayfield, Scott Gibbs and Gavin Hastings to share memories of their time on the team.

Nov. 10 will see Matt Dawson, 2003 Rugby World Cup winner and former Lion, competing in a rugby trivia contest against super fans.



Pink Lion Rugby Club Web site

Via Thomas Pink's microsite, fans can also create a fantasy team by dragging and dropping players to their positions on the field. After they are finished, those who are registered can submit their lineup for a chance to participate in a Lions touch rugby event.

Winners will be chosen based on how close their own board came to Mr. O'Driscoll's picks.

Taking its effort beyond digital channels, Thomas Pink had a trio of its Cheeky Fox mascots drive around London in a specially outfitted car wearing the collection. Those who shared a photo of the dapper vehicle with the hashtags #Outfox and #LionsNZ2017 were entered to win a piece from the line.



Thomas Pink's Cheeky Foxes on the move

On the field

Sports initiatives offer luxury brands the chance to engage an audience beyond their immediate followers and customers.

Audi of America is making it easier for fans of Major League Soccer to follow and track players' statistics in real-time.

The league-wide Audi Player Index is now integrated into the MLS Match Center and MLS mobile application, allowing soccer enthusiasts to see a numerical breakdown of player actions as they happen. Taking its sponsorship of Major League Soccer beyond brand placement, this data-driven touchpoint enables Audi to become part of fans' viewing experiences ([see story](#)).

Also, LVMH-owned watchmaker Tag Heuer is continuing focus on its connected timepiece through a partnership with German football league Bundesliga.

Bundesliga is the first partner outside Tag Heuer's ambassadors to work with the watchmaker on an exclusive for the Tag Heuer Connected watch. Tag Heuer announced the Tag Heuer Connected timepiece, a project between the watchmaker, Intel and Google, at last year's Baselworld in Basel, Switzerland before formally introducing the product in November 2015 ([see story](#)).

"The Pink Lion Rugby Club drives engagement by creating a community," Mr. Ramey said. "An immeasurable opportunity to sell those most passionate about the team and now, the Thomas Pink brand.

"It's a textbook process to create a community of committed fans."