

RETAIL

La Rinascente caters to bike aficionados in storewide affair

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La Rinascente's window display for its Love to Ride campaign

By SARAH JONES

Italian department store chain la Rinascente is driving foot traffic to its flagship Milan store with a celebration of two-wheeled transportation.

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The retailer's "Love to Ride" initiative is the first ever off-site event for Eicma, the International Bicycle and Motorcycle Exhibition, bringing together brands as diverse as BMW and Belstaff to spotlight the biking lifestyle. Hosting this campaign concurrently with the expo will provide la Rinascente with an interested audience in-town for the event.

"Our mission is to be the main reference point for anyone visiting the cities our stores occupy we already have the largest "souvenir" shops around the world and to do this we need to promote all major cultural events happening around us," said Tommaso Radice of la Rinascente's marketing department. "There are three major international events held in Milan: Design Week, Fashion Week and Eicma.

"After being heavily involved in the Design Week for over 10 years now with major window installations from established designers, architects and artists," he said. "This year we decided to be the first promoters of a true off-site event for Eicma, the oldest fair in the world which sees more than 600,000 people descend upon the city."

Full throttle

La Rinascente's store in Piazza Duomo is the hub of this event, which opened Nov. 8 and will run through Nov. 14.

For the occasion, the flagship's store windows are host to a project by architect Gianmatteo Romegialli. In these displays, limited-edition and signed first-edition bikes are removed from their home on the ground and suspended, allowing their beauty and collector status to be better perceived.



BMW C650GT in la Rinascente window display

Two panes set aside for Eicma depict the future of mobility.

"The amount of people stopping to admire the window installations by architect Gianmatteo Romegialli is really incredible," Mr. Radice said. "Motorcycles make people dream and people are mesmerized and curious seeing them in a department store's windows.

"We not only want to be the main promoters of our cities but also innovators offering something new and unexpected to everyone that visits or passes by our stores."

Throughout the week-long campaign, la Rinascente will host events, parties, performances and activities centering on the biking theme.

Aryk is letting consumers customize their DMD helmet, while Federazione Motociclistica Italiana will give children aged 6-10 a workshop on mini motorbikes.

On Nov. 9, publication Moto.it, a collaborator of Love to Ride, helped inaugurate an exhibition of Gigi Solidano photography, which captures celebrities and his own adventures from the world of Moto GP.

BMW will be giving consumers the chance to preview and virtually test ride its G310 R model, while Samsung will be giving an early look at its Smartbike by Italjet and Samsung Gear wearables.



Samsung's Smartbike

Belstaff, which has motorcycling as part of its DNA, will be showcasing its latest collection, while Eicma's newly launched apparel and accessories brand Milano 1914 will also be offering road-ready gear.

The customized bike that Ottavio Missoni, grandson of the brand's founder of the same name, rode in the Athens-Gibraltar Race earlier this year will also be on display.



Ottavio Missoni's jumpsuit and Ducati bike

On Saturday, Nov. 12, la Rinascente will host a Love to Ride Party with a DJ set by Saturnino.

In addition to the in-store events, the retailer's collaboration with Eicma will give la Rinascentecard holders a discounted entry ticket to the show.

"Motorcycle sales have grown in the past few years. U.S. sales were up in 2015 about 3.5 percent," said Gustavo Gomez, senior advisor at [Envirosell](#), New York. "BMW global sales are up around 3 percent. Honda and Polaris also see gains in sales. This points to the overall growth of the industry.

"Besides the actual riders, many people that don't ride are fans of bikes," he said. "Everyone that attends Eicma is not a rider, but the fantasy lifestyle that comes along with riding is a big appeal to everyone. It signifies freedom and escape from the mundane.

"La Rinascente sees this as a way to lift the brand, appeal to the free-spirited audience and possibly expand the store's customer base. With the biker style designs that are out, this seems like a natural partnership to make.

"Much if not all of the biker apparel is not purchased in luxury department stores but specialty shops. Their hope is that this can bring in a new customer segment and at the same time introduce a little rebel-like image to the department store."

Current events

Other retailers have tied in-store events to external happenings in their cities.

New York-based luxury retailers celebrated having the Super Bowl in their hometown for the first time in 2014 with football-inspired events of their own.

Bergdorf Goodman, Bloomingdale's and Saks Fifth Avenue all created events and online content that catered to the out-of-town traveler. By creating a welcoming atmosphere surrounding the Super Bowl, these retailers were able to harness some of the weekend foot traffic and create a lasting impression on visitors ([see story](#)).

Similarly, British department store Fortnum & Mason turned its Piccadilly flagship into a contemporary gallery ahead of the Frieze Art Fair.

Before Frieze London opened in October, Fortnum & Mason partnered with avid art collector Frank Cohen for a celebration of British modern art. Opening Sept. 13, the month-long "Fortnums X Frank" saw more than 60 works from artists such as Charming Baker and Paula Rego displayed across the store ([see story](#)).

"Retailers have to study what makes sense for their brand and customer base," Mr. Gomez said. "La Rinascente had an opportunity because designers have the styles this season that fits the rider lifestyle and the event was local.

"This is the perfect storm of opportunity," he said. "Retailers should not deviate from their brand in hopes of gaining a customer that they can't cater to beyond the event. This is a loss of money and risks diluting the brand and losing current customers.

"But when the opportunity is good, they need to engage the audience and invite them to the store and to learn about the brand. The retailer has to be more than a sponsor. It needs to give the audience a reason to get in the store and explore. That is the only way to gain from the partnership. Most sponsors are forgotten if they don't engage the event audience."