

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Ghurka gathers independent thinkers to characterize handbags

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Alex Grossman for Ghurka's "Qualities of a Ghurka"

By SARAH JONES

U.S. leather goods maker Ghurka is uncovering the key attributes that define those who carry its accessories in a content series.

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Profiling personalities in the lifestyle space, from a stationery entrepreneur to a restaurateur, "What Makes a Ghurka" shows these individuals in everyday scenarios, pointing to the form and function of its carryalls. Through these short films, Ghurka is able to establish its own perspective by association.

We worked with an Australian and newly landed stateside ad agency Cummins & Partners to establish a brand identity that spoke to the character and craftsmanship of our bags and to the character and spirit of our customers," said Justin Sellman, vice president of ecommerce and digital at [Ghurka](#), New York.

"Qualities of a Ghurka' established a unifying theme around which to feature both product and people," he said. "Blackbook Media assisted us in the creation of the videos and the selection of the individuals.

The individuals we chose demonstrated an appreciation for the curation of art, food and literature in addition to exhibiting an adventurous spirit. Ghurka makes products for people who believe in exploring the world around them to the highest degree, near or far, and we believe that these videos allow our current and future customers to make an emotional connection with our brand ideals."

### Handbag heroes

Ghurka is sharing this content on Maker, a platform that provides a social setting for brands to tell their stories. This gives Maker an audience with individuals outside of its approximate 50,000 social followers.

The first film profiles Alexa Hirschfield, the co-founder of Paperless Post. Carrying the brand's Smyth II tote, the businesswoman is shown entering her office and unloading the items she carefully packed for her busy day.

She explains her choice to walk an hour to work, as well as sharing the courage she had to find to found a business knowing that it could fail.



*Alexa Hirschfield for Ghurka*

Alex Grossman, the creative director of Bon Appetit, explains his "Worldly" qualities as he is shown gathering ingredients into a leather tote. His travels have allowed him to test his culinary limits and pick up new skills in the kitchen.

Portraying "Resilient" qualities is Phil Winsor, the owner of The Fat Radish. An explorer by nature, he keeps images of Sir Ernest Shackleton's adventures around to remind him that he too can get through trials.

Fairfax Dorn, the founder of Ballroom Marfa, communicates an enduring spirit as she tours the art center in Texas.

*Qualities of a Ghurka: No. 4 Enduring Fairfax Dorn, Founder, Ballroom Marfa*

In action

While consumers often buy handbags for their looks, marketing efforts that also deliver an understanding of an accessory's use value can help make a sell.

For instance, British leather goods maker Mulberry showed off the practicality of its Maple bag, but still emphasized its style in a new campaign.

Mulberry's new video entices viewers by styling the Maple bag with a chic and trendy outfit. But the bag also supports a wardrobe change from its ability to hold an extra pair of shoes ([see story](#)).

Previously a brand that only focused on men's styles, Ghurka relaunched its women's collection in 2014 ([see story](#)). With half of the four profiled individuals female, this foray into content may help Ghurka further connect with this handbag hungry audience.

Female consumers in the United States spent approximately \$11.5 billion on handbags in 2015, according to a new report by The NPD Group and Stylitics.

The product category itself grew 5 percent in 2015 compared to the year prior, driven mainly by the discretionary spending power of the baby boomer generation. Handbag purchases made by millennials, ages 18- to 34-years old, however, only increased by 2 percent due to the shopping behavior the demographic exhibits, favoring a more considered buy rather than impulse or purchasing based on brand stature ([see story](#)).

"Content is king in digital commerce," Mr. Sellman said. "We are working on a parallel strategy of creating user generated content and curated content.

"We are able to leverage maker technology to capture and to share authentic and unfiltered content from our loyal fans and customers, and we are able to curate and to share our brand vision by working with individuals who

demonstrate an excellence in their field through the Quality of a Ghurka videos."

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