

MARKETING

Mother's Day inspires authentic, experiential appeals

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Image source Bergdorf Goodman

By SARAH JONES

Luxury brands are incorporating experiential and emotional elements into their Mother's Day efforts as the holiday's honorees increasingly prefer memories over gifts.

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According to data from the National Retail Federation, consumer spending for Mother's Day this year is set to break records, with U.S. consumers collectively expected to shell out \$23.6 billion to honor the special women in their lives. Looking for a piece of the holiday's gifting pie, brands are meeting consumers with in-store events, gift guides and campaigns.

"Brands are always looking for gift-giving holidays," said **Gustavo Gomez**, a retail consultant based in San Diego. "Mother's Day is one of those days which no one wants to forget or skip over.

"While the date of Mother's Day varies around the world, the largest bulk of countries celebrates the holiday on the same date as the U.S. This includes the biggest markets for consumer goods China, Japan, many European countries and South American countries," he said. "That makes the U.S. date important and allows for multilingual and multi-cultural messages that can translate globally.

"For the U.S. market specifically, marketing the holiday is very important to inspire new gift ideas beyond flowers and cards. Jewelry and experiential gift seem to be receiving the biggest boost in this respect. The idea is to expand the market. I don't think florist need to worry much about decreased flower purchases on Mother's Day."

Love story

For Mother's Day, which falls on May 13 in the U.S. this year, Nordstrom decided to feature real mothers and their children. Building off its "Love is a Gift. Give Freely" campaign for Valentine's Day, the retailer repurposed the tagline to discuss maternal affection.

Model and writer Hari Nef and her mother go back and forth sharing what they love about each other, while stylist and writer LaTonya Yvette Staubs and her toddler son recite the ABCs or play hide and seek.

Love Is a Gift | LaTonya Yvette Staubs & Oak Staubs | Nordstrom

David Yurman similarly focused on the relationships between mother and child, highlighting the different roles mothers play in their kids' lives, including hero, mentor and soulmate. Mothers talk about their experiences in voiceover as they are shown with their children in candid scenes, whether baking cookies or styling hair.

Mother Loves Best

Bergdorf Goodman's blog photographed Elle magazine accessories director Maria Dueas Jacobs at home with her daughters, spotlighting Chanel's fine jewelry. The editor notes that the pieces function not just as accessories, but as heirlooms for the next generation.

For Mother's Day, Baume & Mercier promoted its Classima timepiece, encouraging consumers to engrave the solid case back to make the gift more memorable and sentimental.

Taking the holiday beyond fashion, Diane von Furstenberg included a floral gift with purchase for ecommerce orders of \$550 or more until May 7. The bouquets could be sent to the recipient of the shopper's choice, allowing them to treat their mom or another female figure.

Barneys is also looking to draw in-store traffic with an event at its New York flagships. During Love Mom: A Mother's Day Celebration, consumers who visit the Madison Avenue store can receive consultations from experts from La Mer and Bobbi Brown, while the downtown store will be host to a florist pop-up on the main floor.

Consumers can also have denim items customized for a personal touch.

Also looking to include more meaning around Mother's Day was Marc Jacobs. For the organization Every Mother Counts, the brand developed a t-shirt featuring the nonprofit's orange rose emblem, with all proceeds going to its cause.



Marc Jacobs tee for Every Mother Counts

"There needs to be an emotional angle especially for brands that want to expand the category," Mr. Gomez said. "Jewelry brands have to show why a daughter or son should buy mom a watch or earrings.

"Why is that apparel appropriate? Without an emotional reason, many will default to flowers," he said. "Experiential brands probably have an easier story to tell because the experience is for mom. A get-away, a good time, a shared experience with her children -all these center around the mom and her role as mom.

"Consumer items that focus just on the overt product will not make the connection that the product is special to the mom. They need an emotional story to bridge the product to the mom."

Making memories

A poll from ChargeItSpot found that 20 percent of mothers would rather share family time over dinner than receive a

gift. However, 32 percent like to receive jewelry, while 14 percent enjoy being given jewelry and 12 percent like clothing as gifts.

NRF similarly found that 28 percent of moms want an experience, compared to the 24 percent who said the same last year. Additionally, 24 percent would like a personal service, such as a spa day.

Mandarin Oriental is reaching out to expectant mothers with a babymoon package at its Boston property. Included in the package is a David Yurman shopping experience, a no-soak pedicure at the spa and other touches such as mocktails and breakfast in bed.

Taking the spa to the store, jeweler John Hardy assisted consumers shop for moms ahead of Mother's Day with an in-store partnership.

The Balinese jeweler partnered with Sjl skincare for a complimentary gift with purchase and in-store treatments at the John Hardy boutique in New York's SoHo. On May 6-7, in-store customers visiting the John Hardy SoHo store in New York were treated to a spa treatment inspired by the healing properties of crystals and the jeweler's unique stones ([see story](#)).

Four Seasons is also meeting the desire for experiences at multiple properties. In Chicago, the hotel is hosting a special buffet, while its Jakarta location invites guests to experience a royal treatment that includes chauffeur service, spa services and brunch.

A growing trend that appears to be lasting, the trading in of things for experiences was noted in a YouGov report from 2015.

When asked about their holiday plans, 82 percent of respondents expressed a desire to "give gifts that create lasting memories," thus lending support to experiential and personalization trends. This was supported further by 48 percent of respondents saying that rather give "experiences" over a material item as a holiday gift ([see story](#)).

"In Unity Marketing studies Mother's Day is the third most gifting event, following Christmas and birthdays, so marketing efforts focused on this holiday are sure to produce results," said Pam Danziger, president of [Unity Marketing](#), Stevens, PA. "We also find that gift giving is an important reason why people trade up to luxury offerings, so again the focus of marketing luxury brands around Mother's Day makes sense.

"But the fact that gift giving is becoming more experiential means that people are opting more often for gift experiences, like dining out, spa experience, etc.," she said. "One idea is to link the two, by bundling a gift experience, for instance a massage, with an item, like a bottle of lotion, to become a lasting memento for the experience."