

MARKETING

Luxury brands broaden definition of love in Valentine's promotions

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Tod's Valentine's Day effort tells a story of shoe love. Image credit: Tod's

By SARAH JONES

Taking the theme of Valentine's Day beyond the romantic, luxury brands are using the holiday as a platform to celebrate other forms of love.

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In honor of the holiday, a number of brands have created original content or product offerings that speak to affection for friends or self-love. While some brands pushed date night attire or traditional gifts, others are recognizing the diversity with which consumers celebrate the day.

"Luxury has always been seen as a business that is important, highly emotional and steeped in tradition, one that I think often takes itself a little too seriously," said Fred Reffsin, president of **Brandgrowth**, a luxury brand consultancy, Baltimore, MD.

"The latest efforts by these brands brings a refreshing and overdue take on this and Valentine's Day is the perfect vehicle for brands to loosen their ties, and change out of their heels into something more fun and approachable," he said. "It's also an opportunity for brands to share a different and unexpected facet of their personalities while still selling 'love.'

"Valentine's Day is not a holiday for brand awareness and brand building. That's what the rest of the year is for."

Valentine's for everyone

For Valentine's Day, Fendi teamed up with singer Joan Thiele to launch its holiday capsule, which features its Mon Tresr handbag and charms. In a short film, the artist performs her new single "Polite" to a crowd that is carrying Fendi's accessories.

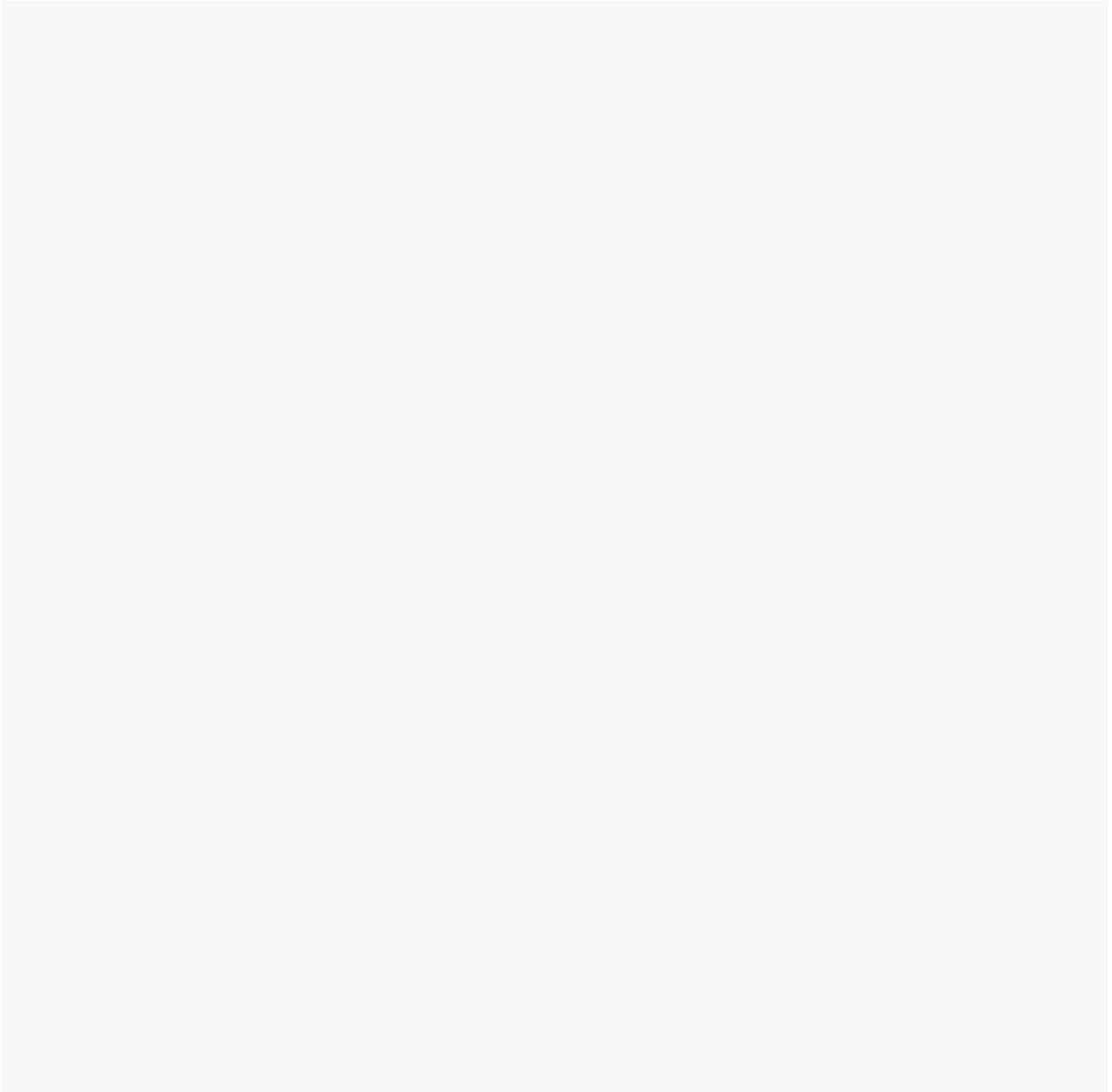
Fendi Mon Tresr featuring Joan Thiele

Versace is encouraging consumers to be a "modern Valentine" through a collection of vintage logo T-shirts. Inspiring consumers to buy gifts "for him, for her, for whoever," the label filmed a group of young models at an amusement park.

Directed by Luca Finotti, the campaign depicts the posse riding a Ferris wheel or steering bumper cars. Reflective of the brand's dedication to diversity, the effort features couples of differing sexual orientations and ethnicities connecting within the energetic atmosphere.

Versace Valentine

Also recognizing that every love is different, Chaumet is asking consumers what color their love is. A promotion for its Jeux de Liens collection of brightly hued earrings, watches, bracelets and necklaces.



There is more than one colour of love. What's yours? #Chaumet #ChaumetLiens #AbsolutelyChaumet #GraceandCharacter #ChooseYourValentine #ValentinesDay #SaintValentin #JeuxdeLiens

A post shared by Chaumet (@chaumetofficial) on Feb 6, 2018 at 6:12am PST

Rather than celebrating a human couple, Tod's decided to focus on shoe love. In a short film featuring animations by illustrator Ana Strumpf, the brand shows two pairs of the driving shoes falling for each other at its store.

A personified Gommino handbag sets the stage for a meeting, as she trips a sales associate, sending a shoe box tumbling. A pair of women's Gommino loafers lands beside a pair of men's shoes, sparking love at first sight.

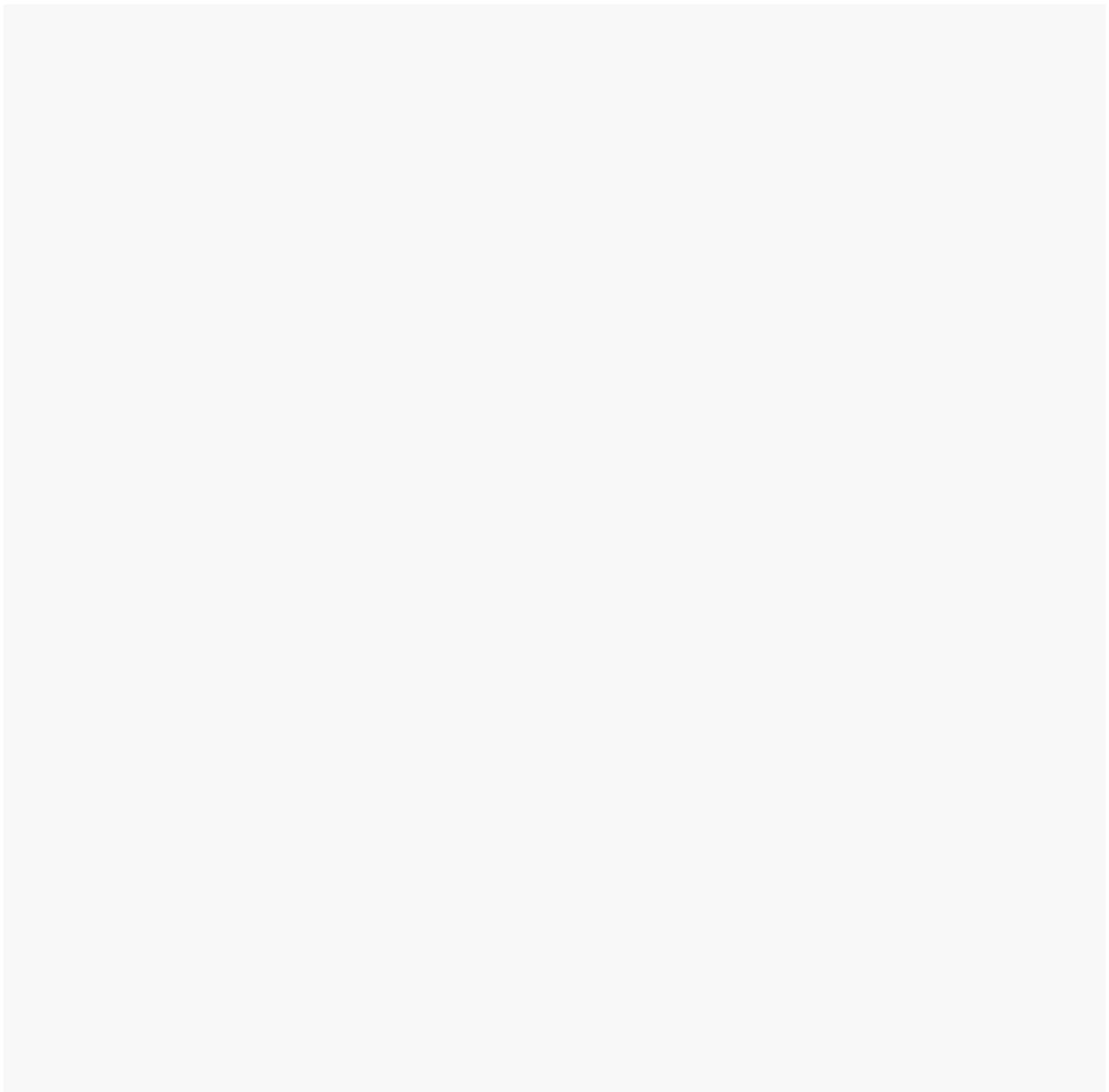
After imagining their romance, the shoes are separated as a female customer walks out with one pair. However, the shoes' sadness at their parting is short-lived as they are soon reunited, spurring a romance between their two human owners.

Tod's Falling in Love

Italian leather goods label Valextra is similarly promoting itself as a Valentine's Day gifting destination through a game that speaks to a love of shopping rather than romantic themes.

The brand's Shopping Craze mobile application asks players to dodge other shoppers and compete for virtual handbags. For Valentine's Day, many brands opt for messages about relationships, which may help Valextra's homage to leather goods love stand out ([see story](#)).

Tamara Mellon's stance on Valentine's Day is that women do not need significant others to complete them. Rather than pushing an idea of aspiration for romance or notoriety, the brand is showcasing a number of styles with the word "love" integrated into the design, reminding wearers to have self-love.



The limited-edition Love shoe is all about loving yourself it's a form of self-care no woman should ever feel shame about.

Taking the idea of loving yourself to the next level, those who purchase the brand's Love sandal through its ecommerce site will receive a vibrator as a gift with purchase.

"It's difficult to separate a brand centric approach from a product centric approach," Brandgrowth's Mr. Reffsin said. "They work hand-in-hand. A product centric strategy works best when it leverages the emotional power of an iconic brand.

"I don't see the role of promotions in the traditional sense as a useful strategy," he said. "Instead, luxury brands should use Valentine's Day to create a sense of urgency as a promotional tool of that's what to call it.

"Promotions like limited editions or products with a limited shelf-life that build on the exclusivity of luxury can be highly effective. It makes no sense to compromise brand image for an opportunistic, 'small holiday' like Valentine's Day."

Modern love

Even though luxury brands are typically grounded in history, they have shown a willingness to evolve to reflect more consumers' experiences.

For instance, U.S. jeweler Tiffany & Co.'s spring 2015 advertising campaign featured a same-sex couple for the first time in the brand's history.

The "Will You" campaign includes seven photographs of different couples in various stages of their romantic relationships, captioned with text that expresses their love for one another. One of the images is of a homosexual, male couple about to commit to marriage and exchange engagement rings ([see story](#)).

Others have responded to a growing sense of independence among consumers, changing the tone of their Valentine's marketing to include messages successful singledom.

Precision-cut crystal maker Swarovski celebrated both romantic and platonic love in an interactive WeChat campaign.

Swarovski's pick your own adventure-style effort allowed consumers to choose a story that most closely reflected their personal plans, whether spending Valentine's Day as part of a couple or single. While Valentine's Day markets heavily to those who are sharing it with a significant other, including this nod to independence may help the brand's messaging resonate with a larger audience ([see story](#)).

"In my experience, Valentine's Day was never about turnover and sales," Mr. Reffsin said. "Come February, consumers are often financially exhausted, even in the luxury space.

"That said, given the current state of retail, brands shouldn't be so cavalier as to ignore an opportunity to drive revenue," he said. "If your product is well suited to gifting, go for it.

"Add-on accessories, new color ways, accessible relatively speaking price points. And of course anything that reveals an unexpected quirkier image."