

MARKETING

Luxury labels showcase inclusivity, support during Pride Month

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Marriott is bringing its #LoveTravels campaign to Washington's Pride Parade. Image credit: Marriott International

By SARAH JONES

In honor of Pride Month, luxury brands are showing their support for the LGBT community through charitable initiatives, merchandise and events.

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Pride Month is an annual celebration of the impact that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals have had on history. Luxury brands are getting involved this year, reaching out with messages of inclusivity and encouragement.

"According to a recent LGBTQ study by Community Marketing Insights, 84 percent of LGBTQs believe Pride events are more important than ever and 88 percent perceive corporations' support of LGBTQ equality is also more important now than ever before," said Raul Rios, vice president of strategy at **Walton Isaacson**, Los Angeles. "Pride provides a significant moment for targeted consumer engagement and to show support for consumers who identify as LGBTQ, along with their family, friends and allies."

LGBT luxury

Pride Month is celebrated in June in memory of the Stonewall Riots in New York in 1969 that sparked the gay rights movement.

Today, the month is commemorated with initiatives including marches showcasing gay pride and memorials for those who died of AIDS.

As Pride Month kicks off, luxury brands are becoming part of the conversation.

Department store chain Bloomingdale's is working with Native Son, a platform and movement that aims to inspire and support Black gay men. Native Son's founder Emil Wilbekin is working with the retailer to launch an exclusive capsule collection that features messages of love and equality along with rainbow imagery.

Retailing at select Bloomingdale's stores and on its ecommerce site, the collection will donate 10 percent of the proceeds to Native Son's mentoring program. On June 20, Bloomingdale's will also host a launch party at its 59th Street flagship store during NYC Pride Week with cocktails, music and shopping.



Bloomingdale's x Native Son T-Shirt. Image courtesy of Bloomingdale's

Gilt is also launching a line of apparel and accessories to benefit The Trevor Project.

Marriott Rewards and Starwood Preferred Guest are giving loyalty members the opportunity to ride on their float in the Washington D.C. Capital Pride Parade on June 9. Those who successfully bid on the experience will also take home pride-themed gear with the tagline #LoveTravels.

W Hotels, part of Marriott, is working with Cond Nast's *them.* to produce LGBTQ+-friendly travel guides. Through this initiative, W is looking to portray its inclusivity while also becoming a go-to resource for these travelers.

These guides will focus on the LGBTQ+ history and communities present in places such as Mexico City, which legalized gay marriage in 2010. Personalities including Carmen Carrera and *them.* editor Philip Picardi will share travel diaries and videos on W's The Angle content site.

Outside of events and causes, other brands are engaging with those celebrating Pride Month on social media.

For instance, Este Lauder put an inclusive spin on the swatch, showing three hands interlocked with swipes of lipcolor making a beauty rainbow up their arms. The beauty marketer paired this image with the caption "Paint on the love with #Pride."

Paint on the Love with **#Pride** Play up your pout with amazing shades & glazing finishes from our **#PureColorLove** Liquid Lip collection, made for all our **#EsteeBeauties!**
pic.twitter.com/PuTdla5cAv

Este Lauder (@EsteeLauder) **June 1, 2018**

LGBT individuals are major forces in retail, spending more than their peers and making 10 percent more shopping trips. These consumers also represent a more than \$5 trillion market, according to LGBT Capital, making them a consumer segment that luxury cannot afford to ignore ([see story](#)).

"This segment has significant buying power and is known for loyalty," Mr. Rios said. "A recent study by Harris

Interactive found 78 percent of LGBTQs, and their friends and family, would switch to brands known to be LGBTQ-friendly and 70 percent of LGBTQs would pay a premium for a product that supports the LGBTQ community.

"Ogilvy also found through another study that 64 percent of LGBTQ allies would spend money with brands they perceived to be LGBTQ inclusive and 85 percent of LGBTQ allies believe LGBTQ inclusive brands are good for the economy," he said. "Brands can also benefit from the word-of-mouth opportunities driven by the national interconnectedness of the LGBTQ community, particularly through groups like The Human Rights Campaign."

Inclusive approach

Outside of Pride Month, many luxury labels have reached out to the LGBTQ+ community.

For instance, British fashion house Burberry's Christopher Bailey dedicated his final runway collection for the brand to organizations that provide outreach for LGBTQ+ individuals.

On the runway for its February 2018 show, the brand debuted a new rainbow-hued version of its iconic check pattern, referencing the gay pride flag.

Making the statement of support through more than design, Burberry is also donating to three organizations that support the LGBTQ+ population: the Albert Kennedy Trust, the Trevor Project and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Toyota Corp.'s Lexus shared inspiring messages of struggle and hope through an online series in collaboration with the It Gets Better Project.

Returning for its third season, "It Got Better" told the stories of LGBT celebrities, as they discussed both their challenges and successes, showing LGBT youth that their lives may seem bleak right now, but they will improve. Airing on Lexus' L/Studio digital content channel, this series enabled the automaker to engage consumers with programming that extends beyond automotive topics ([see story](#)).

"Don't just show up at Pride show that you are committed beyond the month," Walton Isaacson's Mr. Rios said. "Get into the community, be experiential and celebrate your LGBTQ staff, leaders and advocates."

"Remember targeted social media and digital is an important way to reach this segment and non-stereotypical story telling is paramount," he said. "Progressive approaches go beyond the rainbow and focus on the realities of LGBTQs, placing them as the focus in messaging and showing not only their challenges, but also their triumphs."

"Lastly, be sure to dial up the diversity across the community. Too many brands only reflect white LGBTQ imagery, but the community is diverse, expansive, expressive and living vivid lives."