

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Rimowa seeks to offer more than suitcases to its "purposeful travelers"

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*Still from Rimowa's "NeverStill" campaign featuring Yoon Ahn. Image courtesy of Rimowa*

By SARAH JONES

German luggage maker Rimowa is aiming to become a brand that is more globally and culturally relevant through a marketing and design strategy that leans on community and collaborations.

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Since joining conglomerate LVMH Mot Hennessy Louis Vuitton in 2016, Rimowa has been undergoing a transformation to make the 120-year-old house's heritage and craftsmanship resonate more with modern travelers. Along with changes throughout the organization, such as retail and development strategy, Rimowa is updating its branding to reflect contemporary values and channels.

"We are a lifestyle brand and a travel brand, so there has to be a bit of an adjustment in terms of brand behavior, to have a role in what's happening today," said Hector Muelas, chief brand officer of **Rimowa**.

### Transformational journey

Founded in 1898 in Cologne, Germany, Rimowa is known for its aluminum suitcases.

From Mr. Muelas' perspective, Rimowa is separated in the market firstly through its history and craftsmanship. Rather than outsourcing production, suitcases are still made at a Rimowa-owned factory, enabling the company to oversee all aspects of development.

He also sees the brand's timelessness and functionality in its design as a differentiator. Even with this practical approach, Rimowa has found a home among a creative community through an emotional appeal, as suitcases are able to reflect the user's story through stickers, scratches and dings added over the years.

Rimowa's story entered a new chapter in 2016 when it was acquired by LVMH, joining a stable of brands that includes Dior and Louis Vuitton.



*Rimowa is up and away with luxury travel opportunities. Image credit: Rimowa*

Mr. Muelas joined Rimowa in 2017, coming to the brand with a resume that included branding roles at DKNY and Apple. His hire added to the youthful leadership at the brand, which is helmed by 26-year-old CEO Alexandre Arnault.

This perspective has been reflected in Rimowa's marketing strategy. The brand is the first in the LVMH stable to forgo paid print advertisements.

While Rimowa does partake in other traditional media such as out of home and cinema placements, digital channels are at the core of its efforts.

Social media in particular enables Rimowa to connect with both its existing and potential community.

"We don't use the word digital on our team. It's like calling it color television. It's a bit of a redundancy," Mr. Muelas said. "It's 2018 that's just the way the world works today."

Rimowa is celebrating its 120th birthday with help from a diverse group of brand ambassadors as it rolls out its first global integrated campaign this month.

Featured in the campaign are leaders in sport, design and food who are known for continuing to push forward in their careers. Their individual journeys tie into the heritage brand's reputation as a valuable tool for travelers ([see story](#)).

*Rimowa's "Never Still" campaign featuring Roger Federer*

This campaign reflects the profile of Rimowa's core customer base, which Mr. Muelas describes as the "purposeful traveler," someone who journeys frequently with a goal in mind.

Aside from communication, Rimowa's branding strategy leverages collaboration. Rimowa has recently worked with labels including Fendi, Supreme and Off-White to transform its suitcases.

Mr. Muelas says that these alliances are not aimed at driving awareness, but are instead about building the brand's place in culture. When picking collaborators for campaigns or co-designed capsules, the label seeks out brands and figures who have an existing relationship with the company and shared values for a more organic fit.



*Rimowa x Off-White suitcase. Image credit: Rimowa*

"How can we contribute to culture in a meaningful way through our collaborations," Mr. Muelas said. "Or in other words, how can we make one plus one equal three?"

#### Travel touchpoints

Beyond marketing, the company is thinking of ways to better serve its consumers throughout their journey.

Quoting Mr. Arnault, Mr. Muelas points out that a suitcase is only with a consumer for about one-tenth of their trip. This is also the portion of traveling that is least enjoyable, as the tourist is moving through the airport or catching a cab.

Rimowa is looking to create more ways that it can engage consumers during more points in their journey, whether through products or services.

This goal is also reflected in Rimowa's store environments. Aside from expanding its bricks-and-mortar footprint, the brand is renovating its existing stores, moving them in a more experiential direction.

A prime example is Rimowa's first Parisian flagship, opened in Paris in 2017.



*Rimowa's Paris flagship. Image credit: Rimowa*

The five-level store at 73 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honor houses retail space and areas for customer assistance, repair services and exhibition within its 6,500 square feet. The flagship offers an opportunity for Rimowa to do more than sell, establishing a home for brand education and engagement ([see story](#)).

"The brand is on a journey to become a meaningful, culturally relevant brand," Mr. Muelas said. "That is going to take a lot of work, but the journey looks at being more than a luggage manufacturer and becoming a brand that is at

the center of the travel experience, and that offers a meaningful ecosystem around the travel experience."

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