

SPORTS

Luxury brands put their game faces on for Super Bowl efforts

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Automakers are the most visible luxury brands during the Super Bowl. Image credit: Lexus

By SARAH RAMIREZ

As hundreds of thousands of football fans arrive in Atlanta for Super Bowl LIII, luxury brands are taking advantage of a captive audience with special marketing efforts.

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In addition to the traditional premium automakers involved with the Big Game, other luxury brands will be airing commercials or hosting special events in the city of Atlanta ahead of Feb. 3. In the United States alone, hundreds of millions of viewers watch the Super Bowl, making it appointment television in an era of fragmented audiences and an invaluable opportunity for brands.

"The Super Bowl is a fabulous platform for drawing in the easy-sell-anything crowd, especially the bling," said Rob Frankel, branding strategist and expert at [Frankel & Anderson](#), Los Angeles. "Sports fans in general are big spenders and conspicuous consumers, who subscribe to the bling culture' in which professional sports is drenched."

Super luxury

Luxury fashion labels, hospitality companies and upscale beverage and automotive companies will all be participating during the Super Bowl festivities in some manner.

Italian fashion label Versace is working with rapper 2 Chainz on a limited-edition sneaker collection. For added exposure, the rapper, born Tauheed Epps, will be revealing the capsule collection in his hometown on Feb. 1 at a pop-up boutique in "Atlanta's Wish Gallery."

Collaborating with the label, 2 Chainz's sneakers include elements such as a chain-link sole and Versace's Grecian frieze. The shoe collection, dubbed 2 Chain Reaction, will also be released in Atlanta's Versace Phipps Plaza boutique before being made available globally.

"If a brand can execute and afford [pop-up events], it would likely be the most impactful marketing initiative given fan demographics," said Fred Reffsin, president of [Brandgrowth](#), a New York-based brand strategy firm.

"The Super Bowl attracts the highest income fans and fans willing to spend the most money," he said. "It is a luxury marketer's dream come true."

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#2chainreaction dropping Super Bowl weekend , I'm very thankful , ATL gone be legendary #versacehightops #raporgotothel league on another hand it's hard to be hype about this with the government shutdown I plan on helping those that I can in need , and if it still persists feb 1 which is the date these drop I will give whatever I negotiated off sales of the shoe

A post shared by 2 Chainz Aka Tity Boi (@2chainz) on Jan 17, 2019 at 6:49pm PST

2 Chainz announces his Versace collaboration that coincides with the Super Bowl

Private aviation firm Sentient Jet is offering special in-flight experiences for guests traveling to the Super Bowl. The Boston-based company already has a relationship with the New England Patriots, who will be playing in their third straight Super Bowl, and has flown hundreds of passengers to recent Super Bowls.

Fans of the Patriots and Los Angeles Rams will be able to pre-game en route to Atlanta with a special in-flight menu of tailgate classics such as seven-layer dip and potato skins, as well as local favorites New England lobster rolls or Los Angeles-style poppers. Sentient Jet is also connecting its most valuable clients with the best available ticketing and hotel options for a well-rounded experience.

Beyond Atlanta, department store Saks Fifth Avenue is marking the championship game with a collection of 70 exclusive items with an emphasis on streetwear.

The collection includes gold Versace sneakers, Fendi logo sneakers and Marcelo Burlon T-Shirts. To promote the edit, online publication Highsnobiety created a video with Atlanta dance duo Ayo & Teo wearing exclusive Saks

pieces around city landmarks, including Piedmont Park.

"It would be a much smarter use of funds to interact with the fans in and around the game from billboards at the airport to events and partnerships throughout the city," Mr. Reffsin said. "And do not underestimate the role of social media to engage the luxury customer."

Atlanta natives Ayo & Teo sharing Saks' exclusive Super Bowl items

LVMH-owned cognac brand Hennessy is embracing the spirit of competition in its first Super Bowl advertisement.

While the National Football League ended its ban on liquor advertisements during games starting with the 2017 season, spirits commercials remain limited due to other network television regulations and contract stipulations, allowing Hennessy the chance to stand out in its category during the prime marketing event ([see story](#)).

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is touting its crossover SUV and updated safety features in a tongue-in-cheek video as audiences turn their attention to the upcoming Super Bowl.

In a departure from its campaigns emphasizing craftsmanship, Lexus is sharing a humorous look at a mock safety system inspired by its UX sport utility vehicle. By finding inspiration from a hot topic among sports fans, the campaign can engage with a mass audience ([see story](#)).

German automaker Mercedes-Benz will be returning to the airwaves during the game after sitting out Super Bowl LII. The automaker reportedly paid \$324 million for a decades-long naming rights agreement for Mercedes-Benz Stadium, the site of this year's matchup.

Sports and luxury

Luxury brands from various sectors use large-scale sporting events as opportunities to reach broad consumer bases. Global competitions are vehicles for luxury brands to reach a tuned-in audience.

In the summer of 2018, the FIFA Men's World Cup drew billions of viewers from around the globe. Responding to football fever, labels including Hublot, Louis Vuitton and Aston Martin appealed to the spirit of competition and national pride with special products, events and marketing ([see story](#)).

Stateside, the 50th anniversary of tennis's U.S. Open drew record crowds and thousands of viewers. Mercedes-Benz, Rolex and Ralph Lauren were among the luxury brands forging or continuing their relationships with the United States Tennis Association, seeking out affluent fans of the sport ([see story](#)).

"The Super Bowl is totally counterintuitive from a luxury brand's perspective," Brandgrowth's Mr. Reffsin said. "How do you promote a brand whose core value is based on exclusivity in an event that is the definition of mass market?"

"Think ahead, be strategic, engage the customer, execute perfectly, align with existing events, create something new, start early and make sure that whatever they do must be consistent with the brand's core message."