

MARKETING

Luxury celebrates Chinese New Year with cartoon collections

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Etro's collection features Jerry. Image credit: Etro

By SARAH JONES

For the 2020 Lunar New Year, luxury labels are leaning into the Chinese zodiac with lines that are playfully inspired by the rat.

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Famous or brand-created fictional rodents are at the center of numerous luxury campaigns this year, as brands sought to make the animal more palatable to shoppers. Falling on Jan. 25 this year, Lunar New Year is a prime opportunity for brands to engage a Chinese audience through a shared cultural experience.

"The success of Peppa Pig-related Lunar New Year products last year definitely influenced brand initiatives this year," said Renee Hartmann, cofounder of [China Luxury Advisors](#). "Cuteness is typically rewarded by Chinese consumers if done in an aspirational manner, and most of the Year of the Rat products have hit the mark pretty well with Chinese consumers this year."

Rat race

Gucci aligned its Chinese New Year efforts with one of the most famous mice, Mickey. The brand dropped a collection featuring Mickey Mouse and a corresponding campaign set at California's Disneyland ([see story](#)).

Along with Gucci, Mickey and Minnie were also given a high-fashion touch courtesy of Chinese designer Guo Pei. The mice mascots were given new outfits in red and gold in honor of the occasion, and Disney parks are selling themed merchandise such as apparel and plush figures featuring Mickey and Minnie wearing their Lunar New Year attire.



Guo Pei gave Mickey and Minnie a makeover. Image credit: Disneyland

Moschino also paid homage to Mickey Mouse, but with a twist. The label's capsule collection centers on the parody character "Mickey Rat" by cartoonist Robert Armstrong, which features an elongated nose that humorously transforms the famous character.

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#Repost @miakong999 Celebrating Chinese New Year with @moschino & !! Thank u @itsjeremyscott for entrusting me to creative direct & model for @moschino s new #CNY collection campaign! Shout out to my amazing crew in NYC! Photographer @shxpir Creative Director @itsjeremyscott @miakong999 Video @jaredryder Production & set design @betterstudionyc Model @miakong999 @junkai.qi Make-up @akikoowada

Hair @dimitrishair Manicurist @nailsbymei Production assistant @redenkeew Fashion assistant @gabemcfadden
Location @denbkstudios Lion Dancer @liondancen_ . Also my loves @julieshyu @clarengai @reginadetails . TM &
2019 Robert Armstrong #MOSCHINO #JeremyScott #TheYearofRat #MickeyRat #CNY2020 #HappyCNY #CNY

A post shared by Moschino (@moschino) on Jan 13, 2020 at 2:14am PST

Instagram post from Moschino

Etro chose to center its Chinese New Year collection on a literal cat and mouse duo: Tom and Jerry. For the Year of the Rat, the focus is on Jerry, with the animated rodent making an appearance on handbags, pocket squares and shirts.

Creating its own character, Kenzo nodded to comic books and kung fu with a cartoon mouse versed in martial arts.



The Kenzo Kung Fu Rat. Image credit: Alibaba, Kenzo

Burberry's Chinese New Year collection includes an update of the brand's monogram with an abstract rat-inspired twist.

The label took the zodiac tie-in a step further with an online game. Ratberry is a version of the previously released B Bounce game that challenges consumers to hop a cartoon Burberry-clad character between platforms.

Marc Jacobs looked back into its own design history in a partnership with the brand StrayRats. The collection of sweaters featuring the silhouette of the animal is inspired in part by the brand's "Stinky Rat" line from the early 2000s.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

We collaborated with Miami/NYC-based brand @StrayRats on a Lunar New Year capsule for the Year of the Rat. The graphics pay homage to Marc Jacobs' line "Stinky Rat" from the early 2000s. Available now in limited quantities. Photographed by @CollierSchorrStudio Hair by @TamasTuzes Makeup by @HollySilius

A post shared by Marc Jacobs (@marcjacobs) on Jan 21, 2020 at 11:14am PST

Instagram post from Marc Jacobs

Fendi's capsule includes merchandise embellished with an abstract rat.

"So far most brands have received high marks for their Lunar New Year product and most have avoided major faux pas," Ms. Hartmann said.

"Chinese consumers want products that look good and ones that they want to use, not just products commemorating the animal of the year," she said. "They are looking for new interpretations of the animal in ways that are aligned with Chinese culture, but have an interesting twist or newness to them."

Along with zodiac pushes, other luxury brands sought to connect with Chinese shoppers through campaigns that focus on the shared experiences surrounding the new year.

A short film from Miu Miu finds two models discussing their favorite parts of the holiday.

Miu Miu's Lunar New Year campaign

Selfridges created a video that asks Chinese creatives such as a poet and a choreographer about what makes them happy.

Prada's Chinese Lunar New Year campaign finds top model Chun Jin and her family members recording the traditional reunion in a documentary.

The 60-second-long film captures Ms. Chun on her journey back home decked out in Prada gear, apparel and accessories. The journey to come back home and stay with the family is at the heart of the Lunar New Year ([see story](#)).

Brands are also tapping celebrities and key opinion leaders as the faces of their Lunar New Year efforts.

Longchamp has renewed its partnership with influencer Mr. Bags. In a rat-themed collection, the flap closure on handbags has been given the appearance of having been nibbled at by a rodent.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

Take a bite out of Le Pliage. #MrBagsXLongchamp #LongchampCollaboration #LePliageCuir

A post shared by @ longchamp on Jan 23, 2020 at 9:37am PST

Instagram post from Longchamp

Meanwhile, Yang Mi serves as the spokesmodel for both Stuart Weitzman's and Este Lauder's advertising.

"So long as consumers like and respect the KOL or celebrity, they are okay with them endorsing more than one brand if the brands are believable and in-line with the celebrity's image," Ms. Hartmann said.

Homecoming

Travel is a central component to the celebration of Lunar New Year, with Chinese consumers making about 3 billion trips during the holiday.

Hotels are preparing for an influx of travelers with themed spa, grooming and dining experiences.

Shopping thoroughfares are also courting Chinese tourists.

For instance, Hawaii's Ala Moana Center is hosting dragon dance performances, red envelope gifting and kung fu demonstrations.

The Madison Avenue Business Improvement District in New York will have a traditional wishing tree on the street, enabling consumers to add a ribbon on a branch to receive a red envelope, which will contain a gift from one of 19 participating retailers.

Shopping is a popular travel activity for Chinese tourists, with 38 percent of respondents in a Hotels.com survey selected luxury shopping as their favorite travel activity ([see story](#)). Research from YouGov found that 51 percent of Chinese travelers look to purchase luxury goods while they are away ([see story](#)).

However, an outbreak may dampen travel within China and outside the nation.

The spread of the coronavirus in China, especially during the busy Lunar New Year season, may affect tourism and luxury consumption in that market, threatening near-term revenue for leading European luxury houses.

An estimated 200 people in Chinese city Wuhan and overall more than 400 in mainland China have been infected with the affliction a pneumonia-like virus which jumped from animals to humans with cases reported in the southern province of Guangdong, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, Japan and the United States ([see story](#)). Seventeen deaths have been reported so far.

As part of an effort to contain the spread of the disease, the Chinese government has halted travel to and from Wuhan and at least four other cities.

"There is no question that the virus scare will affect the Lunar New Year travel period," Ms. Hartmann said. "With the city of Wuhan already closed down, travel patterns in and out of the city will be affected, and it remains to be seen how the scare will affect other Lunar New Year travel plans."

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