

JEWELRY

Swarovski marks 125 years with anniversary collection to attract millennials

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Swarovski watch, part of the 125th Anniversary Collection. Image courtesy of Swarovski

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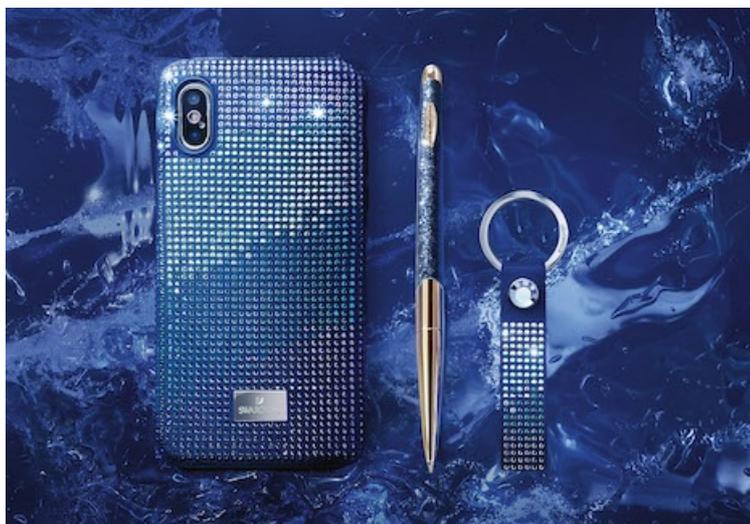
Swarovski, known for its cut crystals, gemstones and jewelry, is turning 125 this year. To celebrate this milestone, the company has unveiled an anniversary collection in a move to position its heritage and attract affluent consumers to revisit the brand.

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The new collection pays homage to Swarovski's iconic cuts, blue shade and swan logo. These elements can be seen across the product line that includes figurines, watches, necklace, bracelets, rings and phone covers.

"For a milestone as important and memorable as this, we felt it was the perfect occasion to pay homage to Swarovski's iconic blue shade and to celebrate the power of color by injecting it into a series of some of our favorite products," said Nathalie Colin, creative director of Swarovski, Wattens, Austria, in a statement.

"The 125th Anniversary Collection embodies attributes reflecting the essence of Swarovski's sparkling spirit."



Swarovski accessories, part of the 125th Anniversary Collection. Image courtesy of Swarovski

Cut and thrust

The strategy appears to use the occasion to seduce and pique customer interest at point of sale, said Fred Reffsin, president of Brand Growth, a Baltimore, MD-based luxury brand consultancy. He is not connected with Swarovski.

"The collection pays homage to the past through the use of cut and color, though it may not be apparent to the regular customer," Mr. Reffsin said.

"Also, the collection communicates the skill and technicity that comes from interpreting the designs of the past," he said. "The disconnect as I see it comes from accessibility and relevance. These price points are great, but will not work positioning the brand as high jewelry."



Swarovski ring, part of the 125th Anniversary Collection. Image courtesy of Swarovski

From outfitting the Oscars greenroom to exploring lab-grown colored diamonds, the company is known for being on the cutting edge of new cuts, colors and sizes that imagine just how far crystal can be carved.

The company was founded by Daniel Swarovski in Bohemian Georgethal, a region known for glass and crystal cutting at the time.

While learning the crystal cutting trade at his parents' company he visited an eye-opening electrical exhibition in Vienna, where he dreamed up his crystal cutting machine. Thus was born the world's leading manufacturer of crystal. This brand's heritage has been kept alive through five generations of family spirit.

The company made its first crystal figurine in 1976 and created its first jewelry collection in 1977. The iconic swan logo was introduced in 1989 and was followed by Christmas ornaments.

In 1999, the company's first watch collection was born.



Swarovski's crystal mouse, part of the 125th Anniversary Collection. Image courtesy of Swarovski

Last year, the brand opened the first concept store. The Crystal Studio retail concept aims to blend the best of online, mobile and bricks-and-mortar shopping.

The first store opened in Milan, followed by a rollout in Paris, Beijing, Shanghai and in the South Coast Plaza shopping mall in Costa Mesa, CA. The concept store attempts to match the needs of millennials and Gen Z shoppers who prefer technology with mobile ease of checkout as they browse product ([see story](#)).

"Separate and apart from this collection, the brand has done a good job refreshing its image and appeal to a new generation of customers, while not alienating brand loyalists," Mr. Reffsin said.

"Jewelry, when well done, should be timeless with a touch of whimsy to keep it on-trend," he said.



Swarovski swan, part of the 125th Anniversary Collection. Image courtesy of Swarovski

CRM is key

As the brand blows out its candles this year, it also looks ahead to what is next.

With a foundation based on customer service, the company plans to focus on creating seamless experiences, both online and through its physical stores.

Additionally, it will continue to build on its online presence with a focus on CRM.

While emphasizing longevity, staying relevant in the evolving retail market is key.

"It's been my experience that customers do not care how old you are," Mr. Reffsin said. "They do, however, care about authenticity and credibility and can they connect with a brand's core values."

Expert point of view on Swarovski's 125th Anniversary Collection and the push behind it: Q&A with Rebecca Miller, principal, Miller&Co:

What do you think is the strategy behind this new collection and the campaign promoting it?

Swarovski is taking the stance that blue is to be the new black.

Showcasing various hues of blue in the 125th Anniversary Collection is a strategic nod to the founder's original venture to find a location, which had the water source required to support his dream.

It also signals the founder's fervent understanding of the importance and well being of its employees by fostering and enriching a balance between nature, culture, sports, social and leisure activities in the community.

The "Swarovski Spirit" lives on today as demonstrated by the global contributions the company has made, particularly to the Waterschool initiative honoring nature's most precious resource: water.

Consequently, the use of the color blue, representing water, is featured with the brand's Gustav Klimt-inspired swan logo originally shown in black, now in white and silver.

How do you think this effort supports the brand's overall brand push?

Swarovski's 125th year campaign credits the evolution of the brand's innovation and commitment by reinforcing their dedication to their heritage of making a positive impact not only honoring their global creative endeavors, but by sharing their love stories visually for nature and beauty featuring their accomplishments in art and science as evidenced across collaborations with fashion houses, their jewelry collections, architecture, interior design and social initiatives.

Why does celebrating legacy help luxury brands?

Legacy is important to be shared and honored for luxury brands.

Those that have survived have, from day one, embraced the importance of consistency and dedication to their craftsmen, to innovation, and to the world community at large.

Who better to share their story than the brands themselves, utilizing the same disciplines upon which they have built their reputations than through their chosen and varied venues?

Celebrating legacy reminds customers of what a brand manufactures and sells, but perhaps as important in today's climate, how they conduct business and the continuous contribution the brand is making to mankind.