

RETAIL

UK Mother's Day could not have come at a worse time

March 19, 2020



Selfridges' Mother's Day campaign. Image credit: Selfridges

By DIANNA DILWORTH

This Sunday, March 22 is Mother's Day in the United Kingdom. But instead of taking Mom out to lavish meals and spoiling her with luxurious gifts, consumers are being told to stay home and not to visit elderly relatives.

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Still, some luxury marketers are trying to bring up the mood and reminding consumers that they can send their mothers something special by ordering online.

"Campaigns driving footfall are being re-routed to digital if not paused," said Livia Stefanini, London-based head of Luxhub at Havas International. "Some brands are choosing to capitalize on a more digitally engaged audience, while others are looking to delay advertising until the world emerges from COVID-19 quarantines."



Harrod's Mother's Day campaign

Digital promotions

Harrod's Web site is still promoting Mother's Day. The microsite suggests a floral Dolce & Gabbana tote bag, Neill

Strain Floral Couture's bespoke Mother's Day bouquets, Roger Vivier satin pumps and Cle de peau beaute lipstick, among other items.

Harrod's stores remain open with reduced store hours, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Selfridges closed stores beginning on the evening of March 18, directing consumers to its online store and apps.

The store's Web site is promoting Mother's Day front and center. The site suggests spoiling mothers with Moet & Chandon Champagne, Dyson hair straighteners, Guerlain skin care and Diptyque candles.



Selfridges' Mother's Day bouquet. Image credit: Selfridges

The holiday could not have come at a worse time.

While the U.K. has not completely shut down in the same way that Italy, France, Spain, Canada and the United States have, many consumers are limiting their outings to shop for non-essential items.

Time will tell if consumers are willing to splurge on these indulgent items during such uncertain times.

"We know that non-essential purchases declined during China's quarantine, so expensive gifts might take a hit," Ms. Stefanini said. "Yet, thoughtful gifting will be more important than ever through ecommerce and deliveries in order to bring families together in lieu of physical gatherings.

"Ecommerce searching and researching increased in China, as did brand interest," she said. "Time will tell if shutting-in leads to a spike in ecommerce sales in the West. Quarantines could lead to an increase in wish-listing, while the summer will give way to post COVID-19 revenge shopping.

"That said, even affluent consumers are fearing the loss of their discretionary incomes. No doubt ecommerce platforms will turn to additional sales and promotions to lure in a more cautious consumer."

Embrace ambassadors

As retailers and brands brace for tough Mother's Day returns and look forward to what is certain to be a slow spring, marketing is more important than ever.

Companies should be sympathetic to what consumers are going through and communicate in such a manner.

"Now is not the time for ego," Ms. Stefanini said.

"Humor, kindness and empathy are in demand," she said. "This is the perfect moment for brands to invest in their community by enlisting their designers, creative directors and brand ambassadors to share inclusive organic content.

"Then as corona fatigue kicks in, the more people are confined, inspiration and escapism will be key, showing the light at the end of the tunnel."

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