

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Luxury brands are pushing handbags in this downturn and downtime

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*Bulgari's new fall-winter collection. Image courtesy of Bulgari*

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By DIANNA DILWORTH

Brands such as Bulgari, Gucci, Moschino and Louis Vuitton are running digital marketing campaigns promoting handbags in a move to promote classic luxury at a time of economic uncertainty.

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In a way, the rush to plug handbags in emails, social media and on Web sites is because the merchandise lends itself to the mediums. And it is eye-candy and an indulgence when the news is nothing but dark.

"With more time on their hands, consumers are bored and they might be a bit depressed and anxious and sometimes spending money, and buying yourself something nice makes you feel better," said Allen Adamson, cofounder of Metaforce and adjunct professor at NYU Stern School of Business, New York. "A handbag is a safe bet, a good emotional outlet. And you can never have too many handbags or too many shoes.

"The more evergreen or classic the luxury item, the more the investment makes sense, and remember many affluent people are still shopping," he said.

"Buying classics is better than buying frivolous things. There is a piece of rationalization going on with consumers who realize that classic luxury items keep their value more than other trendy and seasonal things."



*Moschino's latest handbag push. Image credit: Moschino*

### Digital case

Handbag emails are overloading inboxes and social media feeds.

Bulgari has launched a new campaign for its Serpenti handbag collection that offers up a fresh perspective to consumers who have been on lockdown for the last several weeks.

The LVMH-owned brand's latest tagline for the new digital marketing campaign is "New Season, New Skin," a suggestion that consumers will shed the feelings of the pandemic and will emerge with a new skin.

"The latest Serpenti bag and accessories collection once again shows its endless ability to reimagine color and versatility - essential pieces perfect for any occasion," reads the email promoting the collection.

LVMH's Louis Vuitton is also promoting its Twist bag that combines the original bag with a miniature version in its Instagram posts that link to [a dedicated shopping page](#).

Model Kaia Gerber stars in a film in which she wanders around Miami in vibrant colors donning a selection of the latest Louis Vuitton Twist Bags. The videos document the Craig McDean photo shoot.



*Gucci's Horsebit campaign. Image credit: Gucci*

Gucci sent out a campaign that tells the history of its Horsebit bag which has debuted in 1955.

"They are promoting handbags because that is what was moving in the past before coronavirus," said Pam Danziger, president of [Unity Marketing](#), Stevens, PA. "I think they are just falling back on what worked before, but that may not be what is going to work in the future.

"China apparently is opening up for business, so there may be some opportunity there, but when we look at Europe and the United States, handbags and anything fashion-related or anything luxury-related is not on consumers' minds and I don't think any promotion of any kind is going to work," she said.

Still, the RealReal is promoting "The perfect handbags for any weekend."

And there are many more brands and retailers pushing bags for warmer weather and fun times.

U.S. department store Neiman Marcus' new obsession; colorful handbags.

Prada is pushing its spring/summer raffia bags for its combination of materials and colors with a summery mood.

Moschino is playing up its exclusivity with "The Most Wanted Logo" email campaign.



*Lanvin's small square bags and curved heels campaign. Image credit: Lanvin*

Lanvin's small square bags and curved heels campaign.

LVMH-owned Fendi recently dropped a new episode of its social media video series #BaguetteFriendsForever a couple weeks back amid lockdown chaos ([see story](#)).

"To some extent, people are spending more time online than ever, even as they are on Zoom calls in one screen, they are shopping on another screen," Mr. Adamson said.

"These brands are looking at people spending lots more time online and this may be the time to get people who haven't made a purchase in a while to buy again," he said.

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New behavior?

The current context of lockdown is opening consumers up to buying categories online that they may have reserved for in-store purchases in the past.

Not knowing when the stores will reopen or lockdown orders will lift, some affluent shoppers are more open to what it is that they order online.

"Adversity is the mother of invention," Mr. Adamson said. "We see people buying more online than normal, and they are going out of their normal range and trying new categories online.

"While they may have gone to a store to buy a handbag before, they are now taking a chance and buying it online, especially with lots of retailers now offering free shipping and returns," he said. "There is less friction than ever to online shopping."

Handbags, in particular, are easier to buy online from a photograph than apparel, which needs to be tried on, or jewelry, which a shopper may want to hold before clicking buy.

"A handbag is perhaps easier to market online than other accessories," Mr. Adamson said.

If consumers are willing to spend, handbags could be the answer. But even leather goods could take a major hit if the economy continues to suffer.

"Luxury has been the first in and will ultimately be the last out in what is shaping up to be a recession," Ms. Danziger said.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

Set in Los Angeles, the #GucciSS20 campaign stars horses and their human friends in paradoxical scenarios. #OfCourseAHorse is conceived by @alessandro\_michele, art directed by @christophersimmonds and directed by @yorgoslanthimos. Watch the full video through link in bio. #AlessandroMichele Music: "Everybody's Talkin" Harry Nilsson (F. Neil) (P) Originally Released 1968. All rights reserved by RCA Records, a division of Sony Music Entertainment. Third Palm Music / BMG Platinum Songs US. Courtesy of: BMG Rights Management (Italy) srl American Humane monitored the animal action on the set of the #GucciSS20 campaign. No animals were harmed . (AHD 09274) #ChateauMarmont

A post shared by Gucci (@gucci) on Mar 3, 2020 at 4:24am PST

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