

MARKETING

Who the devil wears Gucci? Why the luxury brand's relaunch carries markers of success

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There are not many examples of luxury brands being proverbial phoenixes, but Gucci has most new luxury attributes to make it back big this year. Image courtesy of Gucci

By [Erwan Rambourg](#)

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Last year was always going to be a tricky one for Gucci even before the pandemic hit as the brand was coming out of five years of groundbreaking growth, close to tripling its sales during that time.

The duo of CEO Marco Bizzarri and creative director Alessandro Michele worked its magic with a phenomenal rejuvenation of the image and desirability of the brand based on a floral, romantic, 1970s, hippie vibe clearly an unconventional posture which drew in many [young first-time purchasers](#) looking to fit in.

Again, without the pandemic, 2020 would have been tricky. And then the pandemic hit. And then Italy became the epicenter of concerns for a while on COVID-19 issues: sadly, what India and parts of Latin America are going through now. And Gucci disappeared from the radar, it became muted, almost as if the team has [pressed the off button](#) at a time when maybe the consumer would stop being engaged.

Yet, given the success of [Louis Vuitton](#), Chanel and Dior, clearly, she was still there. The motto that Kering's CEO, and the kind writer of the foreword for *Future Luxe*, Francois-Henri Pinault, has used for Gucci this year is "always on," an acknowledgement of how the brand had lowered the volume a tad too much last year.

Acknowledging issues is always part of the solution. And a combination of scale, creativity, and data could make Gucci the talk of town again this year.

A product bonanza, an anniversary, and a blockbuster

This month, if you are just a bit plugged into fashion, you will have noticed the Gucci "Ouverture" collection hitting the stores and whether you like him or not, you will have seen short videos with James Corden inviting pretend guests to a pretend talk show ([Dakota Johnson is my personal fave](#)) to celebrate "Beloved Lines," Gucci's most iconic handbag ranges.

Separately, you will have watched the stunning 15-minute show presenting the "Aria" collection destined to be launched for the brand's 100th anniversary.

And if you have not, you will see that true to what new luxury is about, expect the unexpected.

First, the soundtrack was all about hip hop and rap tunes where the word "Gucci" appears. Luxury brands have thrived in rap lyrics for decades and this is a great way of giving back.

Second, the collection includes many **Balenciaga-Gucci pieces**, you think it is a collab, they call it a "hacking," whatever happens, you did not see that coming.

Third, you start the journey entering what feels like a nightclub and you end up in a reverie, in a natural setting with flowers and horses.

Yes, Gucci has long been associated with horse-riding. It all sounds completely out of the box crazy, but that is the purpose. You do not buy luxury for function you purchase for fun.

And if we are entering an era of Roaring Twenties with a purpose it is way time to have some of that fun and entertainment.

Speaking of entertainment, "House of Gucci," a star-studded Ridley Scott production with Lady Gaga, Adam Driver, Al Pacino and friend of Gucci, Jared Leto, comes out right ahead of the holiday season to cap an eventful year.

Anatomy of a rebound

Leaving creativity and excitement aside and the reality that consumers reward the bold, what will fuel this rebound? Essentially two elements in my view:

1. Scale and Gucci's capacity to use a loud voice in a very crowded, fragmented market.
2. Data and how you use it. Gucci critics tend to think the brand goes through boom-and-bust phases that can last a while and this time will not be any different. But it will. Because **the use of data** will inform you on what the consumer wants, how she wants to shop, and how to adapt to her local needs.

Do not write off the brand just yet, and if you are asking yourself "Who the devil wears Gucci?" Well sit tight, you are about to find out.

The Gucci Aria film

Erwan Rambourg has been a top-ranked analyst covering the luxury and sporting goods sectors. After eight years as a marketing manager in the luxury industry, notably for LVMH and Richemont, he is now a managing director and global head of consumer and retail equity research. He is also the author of "Future Luxe: What's Ahead for the Business of Luxury" (2020) and "The Bling Dynasty: Why the Reign of Chinese Luxury Shoppers Has Only Just Begun" (2014).

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