

RESEARCH

Christian Louboutin most sought-after luxury footwear brand: study

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By RACHEL LAMB

With more than 45 percent of searches for the footwear giant, Christian Louboutin is the most sought-after shoe heritage brand, according to findings from a study by Digital Luxury Group.

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Louis Vuitton is the king when it comes to brands with a history in footwear, but competitors Prada and Gucci combined make up more than 50 percent of searches for brands that do not specialize in shoes. Furthermore, Alexander Wang and Brian Atwood generate 60 percent of the demand in the new players category.

“When consumers buy luxury footwear, they buy more than shoes,” said Marc-Olivier Peyer, head of marketing at the Digital Luxury Group, Geneva, Switzerland. “They buy the image, the emotion and the status linked to the brand they have chosen.”

Digital Luxury Group split 57 luxury brands into three categories: maison, brands whose footwear revenue does not make up more than 50 percent of total sales; shoe heritage, brands whose original focus was on shoes, even if they have since expanded; and new players, brands that were created after 2000.

Well-heeled

Approximately 91.68 percent of searches are brand-related.

The seven-most searched brands in the luxury category are Prada at 23.2 percent, Gucci at 22.8 percent, Louis Vuitton at 11.8 percent, Ralph Lauren at 5.8 percent, Dolce & Gabbana at 5.7 percent, Chanel at 5.4 percent and Yves Saint Laurent at 3.8 percent.

The remaining brands including Balenciaga, Bottega Veneta, Marc Jacobs, Stella McCartney and Valentino had a combined percentage of 21.4.

In the shoe heritage category, Christian Louboutin ranked on top by a landslide with 44.89 percent of searches.

Jimmy Choo, Salvatore Ferragamo and Tod's came next with 11.1 percent, 7.42 percent and 6.96 percent, respectively.

Bally, Kurt Geiger and Manolo Blahnik rounded out the most-searched for brands with 6.07 percent, 4.81 percent and 4.6 percent, respectively.

Other brands including Hogan, Giuseppe Zanotti, Fratelli Rosetti and Stuart Weitzman combined with a percentage of 14.14 percent.

The most-desired brand of the last category, new players, was Alexander Wang at 29.57 percent.

The second-most searched brand was Brian Atwood at 27.19 percent, followed by Charlotte Olympia at 18.16 percent and Nicholas Kirkwood at 10.79 percent.

The remaining brands such as Camilla Skovgaard, Alexandre Birman and Derek Lam were searched 4.62 percent, 3.41 percent and 2.62 percent of the time. Remaining brands such as Gianvinto Rossi and Jonathan Kelsey combined at 3.64 percent.

Internet clicks

Luxury brands must also take demographics into consideration.

For example, the United States is the most important market for the industry right now. Individuals from the country make up more than 40 percent of the searches.

Following is Britain with 17 percent, France at 9.6 percent, Italy at 8.3 percent, Germany at 7.9 percent, Brazil at 5.7 percent and Japan at 2.9 percent of searches.

Approximately 3.38 percent of searches are related to style.

Most searches pertained to styles, with sneakers being the most popular followed by boots, pumps, sandals and heels, according to the study.

However, just search is not enough.

"While some channels may be more effective than others to target specific segments, for example social media to engage with younger consumers, brands should leverage on all marketing channels to be really effective and avoid any siloed approach," Mr. Peyer said.

Brands such as Louboutin and Jimmy Choo have made a name for themselves on social

media. In fact, the two labels' combined communities on Facebook are still four times larger than the rest of the shoe heritage brands combined.

This factor could attribute to Jimmy Choo and Louboutin's desire in search engines, since the two brands are selling not just shoes, but a lifestyle.

"The pair of shoes you are wearing defines the way you walk, it impacts your style, your posture and changes the perception you have of yourself," Mr. Peyer said.

"In other words, what makes a shoe label more desirable is probably that consumers feel more desirable when they wear it," he said. "It's not only about the shoes."

Final Take

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