

MARKETING

From cartoons to superheroes, luxury entices millennials with nostalgia

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There are only 25 pieces of the Pikachu Fragment available. Image credit: Baccarat

By KATIE TAMOLA

Luxury brands and retailers are reveling in being young again with a breadth of recent entertainment-based pushes.

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For many brands, portraying their rich histories and highlighting their classic ethos keeps consumers coming back, but in a time of constant innovation and entertainment, these organizations are looking to maintain loyal audiences while also expanding to the next generations. From French crystal maker Baccarat's Pokmon collection, to Kering-owned Balenciaga collaborating with beloved television show "The Simpsons" and Toyota Corp.'s Lexus inserting itself into the Marvel Universe, the vast appeal to younger audiences with a focus on older millennials and Gen Z is palpable.

"Fashion and luxury brands have always taken inspiration and cues from youth culture, the difference now is that we are embracing the connection and being open from it," said Alex Sturtevant director of brand at [Stink Studios](#).

The future meets the past

Brands continue to remain relevant by reaching new generations of consumers. In reaching these next generations, there are many appeals to consider.

Lately, many brands have been getting nostalgic and collaborating with beloved television shows and movies that appealed to younger audiences decades ago and are still reaching young people today.

The first episode of the wildly popular television series and longest-running American animated series "The Simpsons" premiered on December 17, 1989. About 32 seasons later, the series still holds weight with its cartoon appeal, with Statista reporting the latest season drew in an average of 4.44 million viewers.



Marge Simpson was the star of the show for Balenciaga in a hilarious, emotive vignette. Image credit: Balenciaga

In October, fashion house Balenciaga gave a luxurious makeover to television's most iconic animated family through a heartfelt and humorous campaign.

The short episode of "The Simpsons," running 10 minutes, simultaneously stays true to the program's revered clever, sarcastic humor and the transformative power of high-end fashion. The film, commissioned by Balenciaga, takes a smart and unique approach in highlighting the brand and attempting to expand its audiences ([see story](#)).

Keeping cartoons in mind, French crystal maker Baccarat went launched a new collection and campaign celebrating 25 years of iconic Pokmon.

The new vignette shows the meticulous creation of the Baccarat Pokmon figurines, a celebration of the video game series' 25th anniversary. The collection consists of two figurines, the Pikachu Fragment, with a limited release of 25 pieces, a Pikachu figurine and a crystal Pok Ball ([see story](#)).

The Pokmon franchise is no stranger to luxury, having teamed with French fashion label Longchamp in 2020 in an electric limited-edition collection of handbags ([see story](#)).



A 2020 Longchamp collection was inspired by Pikachu. Image credit: Longchamp

Pokmon has released several feature-length films, including 2019's *Pokmon: Detective Pikachu*, which earned \$433 million at the global box office.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is another popular franchise that has attracted luxury brands.

Popular movies continue to serve as another outlet for luxury brands in reaching younger consumers.

Lexus the exclusive automotive partner of Marvel Studios' *Eternals*, directed by Academy Award-winning director Chlo Zhao and starring several A-listers designed 10 concept vehicles, based on all 10 superheroes starring in the new film ([see story](#)). The automaker also tasked *Eternals*' Kumail Nanjiani, actor with finding a safe parking spot for the new Lexus IS 500 sports sedan ([see story](#)).

From shows to video games to films, luxury brands keep their eyes on the prize: utilizing popular culture in reaching new and younger consumers.

"The trend at the moment appears to have luxury brands forging collaborations with popular television shows, video games, and films," said Rebecca Miller, founder/CEO of [ARTful Communication](#), New York.

"Critical is making sure brands know what is important to their audiences," she said. "They cannot guess or go just with the trend, they must conduct the appropriate research, understand how to use the research collected and respond accordingly."

Tapping every medium

In reaching new audiences, brands have set out to meet younger consumers where they are, and for many, that is at the heart of the music industry.

Balenciaga has tried to reach younger audiences several times this year, having tapped Grammy-winner Justin Bieber in July as the new face for its fall 2021 campaign ([see story](#)).

Several other brands have tapped musicians in the hopes of connecting with their loyal and dedicated fans.

In August, LVMH-owned jeweler Tiffany & Co. tapped one of the most famous and universally adored couples in the world in its newest campaign, "About Love."

Music legends and married couple Beyonc Knowles-Carter and Shawn Carter, known professionally as Jay-Z, star in the new campaign, a shared vision between the musicians and jeweler, depicting the universal beauty of love. The couple's first campaign together has been slowly revealed over through several films ([see story](#)).

Across sectors, luxury brands have a breadth of entertainers and franchises to tap in reaching the next generation of affluents.

"You can certainly make well informed, and in many cases correct, arguments about how brands are engaging with youth culture to capture the disposable income of a new generation" Mr. Sturtevant said. "I think that it's a broader shift in terms of pop culture in general.

"Codes for what define luxury in fashion, art, music, hospitality are fundamentally different from 10 years ago," he said. "[Things like] the Hiroshi Fujiwara x Baccarat X Pokemon \$25,000 Pikachu certainly is unexpected and silly, but it's also absolutely beautiful."

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