

HEALTHCARE

Luxury offers support, extends reproductive benefits in wake of Roe decision

June 28, 2022



Gucci "My Body, My Choice" shirt from the 2020 cruise collection. Image courtesy of Gucci

By KATIE TAMOLA

The U.S. Supreme Court voted to overturn Roe v. Wade last week, subsequently dominating global headlines, sparking protests, feedback from politicians and prompting official statements from luxury brands.

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Brands and retailers across luxury sectors, including Gucci, Hugo Boss and Tesla have issued official statements offering support for reproductive rights and/or announced financial assistance to employees seeking abortions and gender-affirming care. Official stances from brands remain varied, as many are openly showing support for choice and their own associates, while also attempting to toe the line of not alienating potential customers.

"Brands are trying to respond to a very sensitive issue that has controversy on all sides without getting into the politics," said Milton Pedraza, founder/CEO of the [Luxury Institute](#), New York. "It's a tough situation because brands want to support associates without isolating anyone, especially valued customers."

"Some brands are saying if an employee makes a choice, and has a need, they will fund the travel and perhaps other costs to assist," he said. "Some brands are making clearer statements on where they stand on what is a very personal issue, while most are supporting employees, men and women who may be involved in a personal decision, without stating their own official brand views."

Landmark rulings

Roe v. Wade was a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case from 1973 which ruled that, in the interest of privacy, the Constitution of the United States protects a woman's right to choose to have an abortion prior to the viability of a fetus.

The ruling on June 24 found there is not a constitutional right to abortion, leaving authority to individual states to decide if abortion should or should not be legal.

The case that overturned Roe v. Wade is Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, a case that stemmed from a 2018 Mississippi state law that banned abortions after 15 weeks. The Supreme Court ruled that abortion was not a constitutional right, thus reversing Roe v. Wade and leaving abortion legality decisions to state jurisdiction.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by phillip lim (@therealphilliplim)

Phillip Lim is among the designers speaking out about the Dobbs decision

Several luxury brands and retailers, along with companies connected to the sector, have issued public statements of support for women and their own employees following the court's decision.

Italian fashion house Gucci released a [statement](#) advocating for freedom of choice.

"At this critical moment for reproductive rights in the United States the fight for gender equality has never been more urgent," the statement read. "Gucci remains steadfast in its belief in freedom of expression, freedom of identity and freedom of choice."

With the statement, the fashion house posted a photo of a woman in a hat with her back turned, fashioning a jacket from creative director Alessandro Michele's 2020 cruise collection that reads "My Body My Choice." The collection also referenced Italy's Law 194, which in 1978 legalized abortion in the first 90 days in the European country.

Gucci had recently reaffirmed its support for reproductive rights and highlighted similar efforts through its Chime for Change global initiative.

In May, Gucci announced it will provide travel reimbursement to U.S. employees who need health care that is not available in their home state after a leaked memo revealed the country's highest court intended to overturn Roe v. Wade ([see story](#)).

German fashion house Hugo Boss also released a [statement](#), fostering a voice of solidarity.

[#WomensRightsAreHumanRights #hugoboss pic.twitter.com/MM5Z0bDUMx](#)

HUGO BOSS Corporate (@HUGOBOSS) [June 26, 2022](#)

A statement of support for reproductive rights from Hugo Boss

"We stand with every woman who is prevented from making her own decisions about her body, her life and her future," the statement said. "Individual autonomy is a human right that must be protected."

Abortions are also legal in Germany up until the 12th week of pregnancy after a mandated consultation. The day Roe v. Wade was overturned, Germany ended a ban on the advertisement of abortion services.

Women's Wear Daily reported the updated statements and policies of Este Lauder Companies, Capri Holdings and Cond Nast.

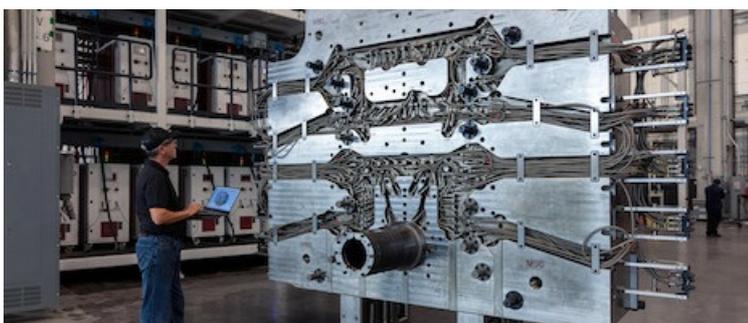
U.S. beauty group Este Lauder Companies joined those brands highlighting their reproductive health coverage, stating it would be covering travel and lodging needs for employees who need to access reproductive health care.

U.S. fashion group Capri Holdings also announced it was expanding its reproductive benefits in a statement.

"In light of the recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, we have expanded our reproductive rights benefits in the U.S. to support women in obtaining abortion services not available in their home state," the group said. "We are proud to take this important step in support of our female employees."

Roger Lynch, CEO of Cond Nast, also released a statement saying the media company would reimburse employees who have to travel out of state for abortion or gender-affirming care.

With luxury brands holding physical stores, offices, warehouses and more in states where abortion is expected to be outlawed, some brands are offering to pay for employees' transportation to other states to receive care.



Gigafactory, Tesla's official headquarters, is located in Austin, Texas. Image credit: Tesla

CNBC reports that U.S. automaker Tesla is reportedly among the companies that have stated they will pay for employees to travel out of state to receive abortions. Tesla notably houses its global headquarters in Texas, a state where Governor Greg Abbott has long vowed to outlaw the procedure.

Ecommerce giant Amazon also released a statement, saying it would pay up to \$4,000 in travel expenses for abortion.

French luxury conglomerate LVMH confirmed it would cover travel for healthcare services

Contemplating ethics

Regarding ethical concerns and the greater society at large, luxury brands are thoughtful when choosing between commenting on a contentious topic or refraining altogether.

Earlier this month, controversy teed up fast within the sports world, as the Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf series and its roster of professional players drew scrutiny.

Many of the players who abandoned the PGA Tour for LIV, including golf great Phil Mickelson, work closely with luxury brands as ambassadors. These brands are rarely quick to disavow their ambassadors or actions, however, out of concern for wading into controversy, losing loyal consumers and other untapped profit opportunities ([see story](#)).

As time goes on, consumers are ostensibly looking to brands to make continued social stands, hoping to shop from organizations that align with their values.

In 2020, luxury brands took to social media to support Black Lives Matter in the U.S. in a move to show solidarity for human rights after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody.

Business analysts have called on brands to take things one step forward and engage in these conversations about racism to make progress in social justice within their companies because staying silent will not help ([see story](#)).

As always, every issue is different, and brands will continue to navigate if and when to speak out and offer their support.

"There is no easy answer for brands on many of society's large issues," Mr. Pedraza said. "Brands are navigating the terrain knowing there are no perfect solutions and that no matter what they select to do, the brand is going to

disappoint someone or create negative feedback."

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