

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Lifestyle collections to drive holiday season sales as luxury bets on pets

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Novelty pet products are popping up across all feeds, skyrocketing social impressions and engagement. Image credit: Prada

By AMIRAH KEATON

As luxury consumers embark on the never-ending search for personalization, brands like Gucci, Celine, Prada and even Herms have all begun heavily promoting picks for pets in the lead-up to the holiday.

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The novelty products present the perfect opportunity to market to an audience of owners who increasingly view their dogs, cats, and other animals as members of the family and extensions of their expressive selves. With high margins on the table for brand names carrying social cachet, the category is proving popular among shoppers and luxury players alike.

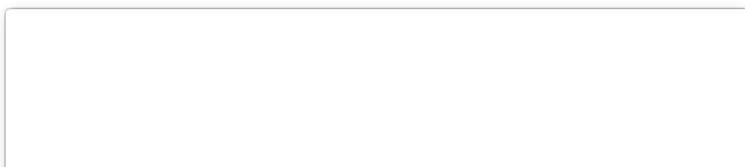
"This year has witnessed the return of luxury in a big way globally, since post-pandemic release hit strong, initially on new wardrobes and accessories that fit the intensified travel trend and event-going binge, to now pampering your closest creatures, your pets," said Rony Zeidan, founder and creative director of [RO New York](#), New York.

Cat, canine collection push

A new survey on holiday spending shows U.S. shoppers are going into the season with intentions to purchase gifts for their pets over in-laws, nieces, nephews and community figures.

34 percent of dog owners cited a gift to come for their pet, and 22 percent of cat owners said similarly, as compared to the 19 percent of respondents planning to gift their in-laws, according to [data](#) commissioned by wealth management company Personal Capital and conducted by Morning Consult.

The survey saw dogs and cats placed above coworkers, service professionals such as postal workers and front desk workers, and even teachers in holiday popularity, showcasing just how adamantly owners view their four-legged friends as an extension of their families.



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A post shared by Herms (@hermes)

The sentiment ladders up to luxury, as a recent uptick in marketing for pet collections around the holiday makes way for analysis. Aspirational, yet functional, these accessorial collections are marking luxury's next frontier.

Interestingly, pet collections straddle the fence between categories.

These items are functional, in a way lifestyle lines are positioned, and are also capable of home dcor associations. Luxury selects such as Gucci's \$7,500 pet bed, for instance, do work to match an interior space's ambience, while other commodities like carrying bags serve a purpose outside of the home.

Pet care listings on Herms site take its \$1,725 **harness**, for example – are labeled by way of a "Home, outdoor and equestrian" section versus a \$690 **collar** from Celine is strictly relegated to a "Celine Maison Collection."



An assortment of Prada pet products. Image credit: Prada

"Pets and home go hand in hand: in a simplified way, a pet needs to look like it belongs in a luxury home environment and is an extension of self-expression to the owners," Mr. Zeidan said.

"A pet says a lot about you as a person, the same way your home says a lot about you as a person," he said. "Retail prices across luxury goods have increased by an average of 20% this year, so it is no surprise that pet products are hitting the floor with a high ticketed price point."

The categorical fluidity featured on Prada's site, wherein pet items are strategically positioned alongside athletic mainstays like yoga mats and family activities such as checkers and playing cards, creates a scenario in which consumers view these luxury goods as strong seasonal holiday gifts, making them even more apt to opt for a novelty pet purchase.

Lifestyle category items also allow luxury players to capitalize on higher margins.

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A post shared by CELINE (@celine)

Typical of items such as small leather goods and other accessories, pet collection picks by and large feature low production costs, with the addition of a brand name or logo sure to make for profit margins well above industry standard.

Opportunities to personalize gifts with pet names and monograms, or signature colors, further add to aspirational elements of exclusivity and appeal.

"Luxury brands, especially those of large luxury conglomerates have a keen way of identifying high margin opportunities and capitalize via their marketing powerhouse to garner attention and sales for the holidays," Mr. Zeidan said.

Canine case study

Besides the aforementioned perks, looking toward the digital sector, pet campaigns offer extended engagement opportunities for social, outperforming traditional content by far.

Italian fashion house Gucci's October pet campaign proved that there is no limit for former creative director Alessandro Michele when it comes to remixing house codes, collars, coats and carriers included ([see story](#)).

Under an ethereal haze, or dreamlike patina as the brand aptly calls the photography style, a lineup of lucky house guests had their portraits taken.



The full capsule of ready-to-wear, accessories, and decor objects is available online and at select stores worldwide. Image credit: Gucci

Though a designer dog outfit may strike the mind of a viewer as impractical upon initial sighting, perhaps the tension between practical and personal is where the collection's true magic lies, as is often the case with the high-end lifestyle category, which plays toward emotion inherently.

Ultimately, no luxury item is truly necessary per se, but conspicuous consumption remains unconcerned with function alone, as one could argue that Mr. Michele's penchant for pet dressing captures the ultimate essence of the category's ethos.

For proof of humankind's inability to resist a favorable reaction to images of these counterparts taking on traits traditionally associated with their owners, look no further than publicly-visible social metrics present on the brand's Instagram page. Of note, engagement for Gucci Pet posts outpaced previous releases, and not by an inconsequential margin.

At time of publication, the brand's last three static posts included superstar musician Lizzo, a gallery of repeat red carpet muses Jodie Turner-Smith, Natasha Lyonne and Park Chan-wook, and Global Brand Ambassador Mina Shin, and averaged 27,100 likes and 377 comments.

Canine and cat content far exceeds those of friends of the house, at an average like count of 66,000 likes at time of publication, with comment counts in the high hundreds.

"This is not a new trend for the luxury sector, but it is timely yet again due to the opulence in spend," Mr. Zeidan said.

"It is no surprise that the pet category is expected to thrive this holiday season."

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