

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Louis Vuitton, Lionel Messi celebrate travel season in jet-setting campaign

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Mr. Messi takes off with the heritage brand in the house's latest campaign, which brings together the world of sports and luxury craftsmanship. Image courtesy of Louis Vuitton

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

French fashion house Louis Vuitton is debuting a redesigned house classic in tandem with FIFA World Cup champion Lionel Messi.

The Argentine soccer legend set off on an adventure with his Monogram Canvas luggage in tow for the first chapter of the house's "Horizons Never End" effort. Campaign imagery captures the brand's treasured contemporary trunk collection first rolled out in 2016, longtime collaborator Marc Newson is continuing to help Louis Vuitton reinvent the house's founding product.

"I think the timing of this campaign is a mix of factors first, there's a surge in leisure travel," said Pauline Brown, author of *Aesthetic Intelligence: How to Boost It and Use It in Business and Beyond* and marketing professor and executive-in-residence at [Columbia Business School](#), New York.

"Second, I think luxury spending by men is growing faster than women, especially in certain segments," Dr. Brown said. "This ad is clearly geared toward male consumers."

"And, lastly, Messi's lifestyle counter-balances the more urban, eclectic and experimental aesthetic that was driven by Virgil and will continue under Pharrell I suspect Louis Vuitton is looking to this campaign to appeal to its more traditional luxury buyers."

Dr. Brown is not affiliated with Louis Vuitton, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Travel channeling

Louis Vuitton has a long history of trunk-making, having cemented its name in high-quality, bespoke travel luggage. Artisans at the maison still handmade the luxury trunks today ([see story](#)).

The brand is now carrying on this tradition, using techniques that have been passed down through the years. Its latest campaign slot brings this history into the present day.

#LionelMessi for #LouisVuitton: Horizons Never End. Discover the Maison's new campaign starring football

legend [#LionelMessi](https://t.co/1Ql3P5QfwY#LVHorizon) at <https://t.co/1Ql3P5QfwY#LVHorizon> pic.twitter.com/UOFzBLLg1n

Louis Vuitton (@LouisVuitton) April 14, 2023

Mr. Messi, with his Louis Vuitton luggage at his side, is shown traversing an airport in a carefree fashion. He meditatively takes in the sunlit windows and fellow business travelers, finding a lone seat in which he takes rest he uses his swivel monogram suitcase as his footrest.

"Messi doesn't appear to be traveling for leisure," Dr. Brown said.

"He appears to be coming from or going to a business trip," she said. "Perhaps Vuitton is forecasting an uptick in business travel, or they're pointing to the convergence between business and leisure."

Evoking the spirit of travel, Louis Vuitton's new campaign is an homage to its heritage

Lightweight, functional, spacious and durable, the Horizon collection was originally envisioned by Mr. Newson. The trunks are made from travel-friendly mesh, cowhide and canvas, and offer complete swivel freedom the case can spin 360 degrees, minimizing clunkiness.

After kicking back, Mr. Messi appears on the airport's tarmac beneath a blue sky.

He walks calmly into the distance as the late English singer David Bowie sings "Heroes" overhead, and a Louis Vuitton Horizons suitcase, his one travel companion, wheels loyally beside him.

[#LionelMessi](#) for [#LouisVuitton](#): Horizons Never End. The new campaign evokes the Maison's spirit of travel starring football legend [#LionelMessi](#). Discover the Horizon collection at <https://t.co/xj9zrvw2yo#LVHorizon> pic.twitter.com/egKml0ZGRI

Louis Vuitton (@LouisVuitton) April 14, 2023

Thanks to the setting and narrative, the effort is deeply adventurous, anchored in the independence of a global traveler.

Mr. Messi has traveled all around the world to compete in soccer tournaments and to participate in celebrity events. He shares this passion for travel that Louis Vuitton has built a business on, rendering him a true partner in the messaging.

"For me, the horizon is looking to the future, letting my imagination carry me and thinking about what could happen, what the future holds all its possibilities," said Mr. Messi, in a statement.

Louis Vuitton has often released travel-focused campaigns and collections due to its rich heritage in the sector. Each drop has communicated a sense of self, offering an inside look at the brand's historic, practical and emotional connection to the act of taking a journey ([see story](#)).

On top of the ball

In honor of Mr. Messi's participation, there is a monogrammed soccer ball included in the campaign's images, captured by British photographer and filmmaker Glen Luchford.

"Messi is, by several accounts, the highest-paid athlete in the world," Dr. Brown said.

"He can afford to align himself with any brand," she said. "The fact that he's aligned with Vuitton catapults that brand to the top."

Louis Vuitton has worked with him before, releasing the "Victory is a State of Mind" campaign that starred Mr. Messi and Portuguese football player Cristiano Ronaldo in 2022 ([see story](#)).



Mr. Messi's prestige aligns well with the high-luxury brand, offering international recognition and support from fans. Image courtesy of Louis Vuitton

With soccer being the world's most popular sport, collaborating with Mr. Messi offers a wide audience that spans across borders.

"Messi is not only rich, but, even more importantly, he's self-made," Dr. Brown said.

"He came from fairly humble beginnings, and that makes him all the more heroic to his fans and to LV customers," she said. "He's a man of the world.

"An Argentine national, who lives between Paris, Barcelona, Miami and other locations, his own lifestyle feeds right into Vuitton's mission to own global travel."

Other luxury brands have been taking note across sectors.

Marriott International's Bonvoy Hotel started out the year by offering members a direct line to England's top football team through its rewards program ([see story](#)).

Additionally, just this month, LVMH-owned German luggage brand Rimowa became the official luggage provider of the German National Football Association (DFB). The two parties entered into a multi-year partnership, extending the luxury-to-football relationship ([see story](#)).