

EVENTS/ CAUSES

Fendi funds fountain restoration to reinforce Roman heritage

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By SARAH JONES

Italian fashion house Fendi is the sole benefactor of the project to restore the Trevi Fountain and the Four Fountains in Rome.

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The “Fendi for Fountains” initiative allows the brand to reinforce its Roman heritage by giving back to the city that has supplied inspiration to the label over the years. Due to the foot traffic at the Trevi Fountain, the brand will likely see a rise in brand awareness from tourists.

"Fendi is trying to align themselves with seriously classic Italian design, and to align themselves with the great masters," said Rob Frankel, branding expert at marketing consultancy firm [Frankel & Anderson](#), Los Angeles. "They're basically trying to say they are the latest in a long line of centuries of Italian master design.

"The fact that there's going to be a plaque at the Trevi Fountain, it's not going to be so much the fact that Fendi is looked at as a supporter of the arts, but it has much more to do with the fact that American tourists are going to come around and look at all these tourist sites," he said. "So Fendi has a lot of exposure outside of the market where they already are just in terms of media.

"Everybody comes by the Trevi Fountain, everybody throws a nickel in and everybody takes their picture in front of it and everybody spends time there. I imagine it's going to be the same way at every other project that they associate with.

"They're basically leveraging the tourist trade to get whatever market expansion they can, and get it in a environment that is classic and not cheap, which is a pretty good move."

Mr. Frankel is not affiliated with Fendi, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Fendi was unable to comment directly.

The Fendi support is similar to that offered by the founder of Italian footwear maker Tod's to restore Rome's Colosseum.

Fountain of youth

The city of Rome had to carry out an emergency fix on the fountain, which cost it approximately \$433,500. When they investigated the structure more thoroughly it was decided more work was necessary.

Rome put out a call for help to local businesses and individuals, and Fendi answered, becoming the sole patron for the project and donating almost \$3 million to the cause. Fendi's heritage is deeply embedded in the Italian capital and the city has been a constant source of inspiration for the brand, so it felt strongly about aiding the project, according to a brand statement.



Press conference for Fendi for Fountains

The Trevi Fountain restoration is set to be completed by the end of 2015, but Fendi plans to make this initiative an ongoing project, moving on to other landmarks in its hometown.

In a prepared statement, Fendi CEO Pietro Beccari said that the label felt it was important for Rome to show regrowth, and also how important it was that the project come from a Roman brand.

For up to four years following the project's close, a plaque will be hung next to the fountain, telling passersby that the city of Rome thanks Fendi for its help in restoring the

fountains. Besides the plaque, there will be no advertising with Fendi's name attached to the fountain.

Fendi has set up a section of its Web site dedicated to the fountain projects, with video footage of Mr. Beccari and designers Karl Lagerfeld and Silvia Venturini Fendi talking about what the project and the city of Rome mean to them. In the video, Mr. Lagerfeld can be seen taking photos of the Trevi Fountain for a book that he is compiling about the landmark.



Fendi for Fountains Web page

Helping hand

Supporting a cause that is in line with a brand's heritage and image can be beneficial and raise awareness among consumers.

For example, Italian fashion house Gucci continued its film restoration project with The Film Foundation and Warner Bros. Entertainment that showcased the brand's appreciation for and support of cinematic arts.

Facilitating the restoration of director Nicholas Ray's film "Rebel Without a Cause" allows the brand to show its enthusiasts a side not based in fashion. Artistic collaborations give brands a way to connect with and change the perceptions of consumers outside their niche ([see story](#)).

Also, U.S. fashion brand Ralph Lauren showed its commitment to restoring historic Paris arts school École des Beaux-Arts by staging its first runway show Oct. 8 outside the United States at the venue.

The restoration project gives brand enthusiasts a glimpse of what is important to Ralph Lauren in a way that diverges from normal fashion-focused initiatives. Collaborations that protect historical places or objects resonate with culturally-inclined consumers ([see story](#)).

When choosing a project to support, it is stronger for the brand alliance if the cause shares a tie to the brand.

"Almost every brand is trying to win popular support by contributing money and time to some philanthropic endeavor," said Al Ries, founder and chairman of [Ries & Ries](#), a Roswell, GA-based marketing strategy consultancy.

"Fendi's choice of the fountains in Rome is a particular good idea for several reasons," he said. "Fendi is alliterative with fountains, so it is a memorable idea. Furthermore, the fountains in Rome, especially the Trevi fountain, are world famous, thanks in part to the motion picture and song, 'Three Coins in the Fountain.'"

"Fundamentally, Fendi is trying to say it is a good citizen.

"'Country of origin' is an important element of every brand. Fendi, Prada, Armani and other brands benefit greatly by being associated with Italy, a country most people perceive to be the best makers of fashion products.

"So the Fendi fountains project helps reinforce the idea that Fendi is an Italian brand and one of the best fashion brands in the world."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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