

Gucci

ABOUT

Category:

Apparel – luxury apparel, jewelry & watches; FMCG Personal care & beauty – fragrances, make-up; Retail – fashion stores, e-retail

Owner of the brand:

Kering (previously PPR)

Key competitors:

Louis Vuitton, Prada, Hermès, Ralph Lauren

BRAND STRATEGY ANALYSIS

Brand essence

An Italian luxury brand representing contemporary sensuality and refined elegance.

Brand values

Luxury, craftsmanship, sensuality.

Brand character

Italian, luxurious, timeless, sensual.

Dominating archetype



The Lover

EVIDENCE

Comments

1

Gucci is a luxury fashion brand with a heritage dating back to 1921. It was founded in Florence, Italy, by Guccio Gucci, who initially sold imported leather luggage products. Over time, with the help of local craftsmen, Gucci started producing its own leather goods and expanded the brand's offerings to include other materials and fabrics. The Gucci family ran the brand until 1993, when Maurizio Gucci, the founder's grandson, sold the remaining 50% of the company to Investcorp, a private equity firm based in Bahrain. Six years later, Gucci was acquired by Pinault Printemps Redoute, which has since become Kering.

2

Gucci is a brand with a volatile history of spectacular ups and downs. It faced the most challenging period in the 1980s and 1990s, when it almost went bankrupt due to family disputes and poor brand management practices such as excess supply, unnecessary discounts, and numerous licensing agreements.

The brand was saved in the 1990s in part due to the efforts of two individuals: Dawn Mello, a fashion retail executive, who helped restore Gucci's exclusivity by reducing the number of stores and products offered; and Tom Ford, the artistic director, who made the brand famous for its sensuality and glamour. During Ford's tenure, Gucci's communication was characterized by a bold, sexually provocative, and controversial style. After Ford's departure, Frida Giannini became the creative director, shifting the brand's focus towards a more toned-down aesthetic and updating Gucci's classic pieces for contemporary audiences.

3

Another major change occurred at Gucci in 2015. Marco Bizzarri and Alessandro Michele were appointed Gucci's CEO and brand's creative director respectively. Under Bizzarri and Michele, Gucci went through what fashion publications describe as a revolution: the brand was repositioned, a new consistent aesthetic was introduced, the supply chain improved and the company's culture turned around, resulting in the most prosperous period for the brand to date, both in terms of financial performance and brand relevance among fashion influencers. The main problem Gucci faced before 2015, according to Bizzarri, was that the brand had lost its cool factor among fashion journalists, influencers, and, increasingly, customers. Therefore the key objective of all changes introduced in and after 2015 was to make Gucci a "fashion authority" again.

4

Interestingly, the brand approached this challenge not by focusing on fashion and seasonality, but on a more timeless and consistent style. In this way, Gucci has extended the longevity of its collections, making it acceptable for its consumers to buy and wear clothes from older collections as they all represented a similar aesthetic ("collections as chapters of the same book"). Gucci also started placing a stronger emphasis on the younger generation. The brand began highlighting its progressive and contemporary character, communicating its positive stance on sexual fluidity (e.g., similar collections for men and women presented during the same show, and gender-neutral models in ads), refreshed its logo, and made it more prominent on its products. The image of the brand was changed almost overnight from sleek, glossy, and sexual to raw, quirky, progressive, romantic, and geeky. Gucci's CEO described this strategic approach as speaking to the "fashion dreamers." However, what didn't change was the core of Gucci's brand strategy—its "Italian-ness", commitment to craftsmanship, and extravagant style as well as Gucci's most distinctive brand assets including double-G monogram, the rhombus motif, the green-red-green stripe, and some iconic clothing items (e.g., loafers, the Jackie bag, the bamboo bag, etc.).

5

At the end of 2022, Alessandro Michele stepped down as the creative director of Gucci. Although there has been no official announcement explaining his departure, analysts speculated that it was the result of different strategic and creative visions held by Michele and Kering. Reportedly, Michele wanted the Gucci brand to maintain the status of a fashion authority and target a younger audience, while the parent company executives wished the brand to appeal to a more traditional luxury customer. NSS Magazine commented: “the traditional luxury customer (...) wants to dress well without risking with exaggerated proportions, ubiquitous logos, and hyper-opulent embellishments”¹.

In 2023, Sabato De Sarno (previously at Valentino) joined Gucci as the new creative director. Since then, he had been guiding Gucci towards a more classic luxury brand image, appealing to traditional luxury consumers. De Sarno’s approach emphasized a minimalist style and understated elegance, marking a distinct shift from the vibrant and ornate designs of his predecessor. In 2025, it was announced that De Sarno would be leaving Gucci.

6

Although Gucci’s image is much less sexual than it was during Tom Ford’s tenure, the brand still represents the Lover archetype as it stands for romanticism and a contemporary version of sensuality.

Tagline

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Official brand statement

“Founded in Florence, Italy, in 1921, Gucci is one of the world’s leading luxury brands. Following the House’s centenary, Gucci forges ahead continuing to redefine luxury while celebrating creativity, Italian craftsmanship, and innovation.

Gucci is part of the global luxury group Kering, which manages renowned Houses in fashion, leather goods, jewelry, and eyewear.”²

Interesting facts

Kering, the holding company that owns 100% of Gucci, also owns brands such as Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta, Balenciaga, and Alexander McQueen.³