





TALKING GUCCI

What makes Gucci a brand like no other –
we tell you all about it

Neeharika Satyavada

It is the early 1900s, the turn of the century. The Savoy, London employs a porter, an Italian immigrant who is to later create one of the most powerful brands of the 21st century - Gucci. A brand so big that it opened its own museum to document its history as part of its 90th birthday celebrations. Owned by the Kering Group, Gucci sits alongside a portfolio of other powerful luxury brands and rakes in a whopping six thousand million euros a year in revenues from its 550 stores across the world and its e-commerce business.

Gucci's story began nearly a hundred years ago, in Florence, Italy. Guccio Gucci, the erstwhile porter in The Savoy and the founder of one of the most valuable brands in the world today, had his moment when he noticed the luggage - of the rich and influential - that he was handling. He had an idea, a business in mind. He returned to his hometown of Florence and began to work for Franzi, a successful Italian Leather Goods company then, now defunct. By 1921, he set up his own shop on Via Vigna Nuova - which is today the heart of Florence's luxury shopping district - manufacturing and selling high-end leather goods. Soon it was World War II and Italy found itself unable to import leather, as a consequence of an embargo placed on the country by the League of Nations. The enterprising Mr. Gucci saw an opportunity. He crafted luggage from a specially woven fabric of hemp printed all over with a pattern of dark brown interconnecting diamonds on a tan background, heralding the beginning of a new era for Gucci, the brand he had now created. That material and the pattern went on to become Gucci's first signature style. Exquisite hand-crafted high quality luggage became Gucci's calling card.



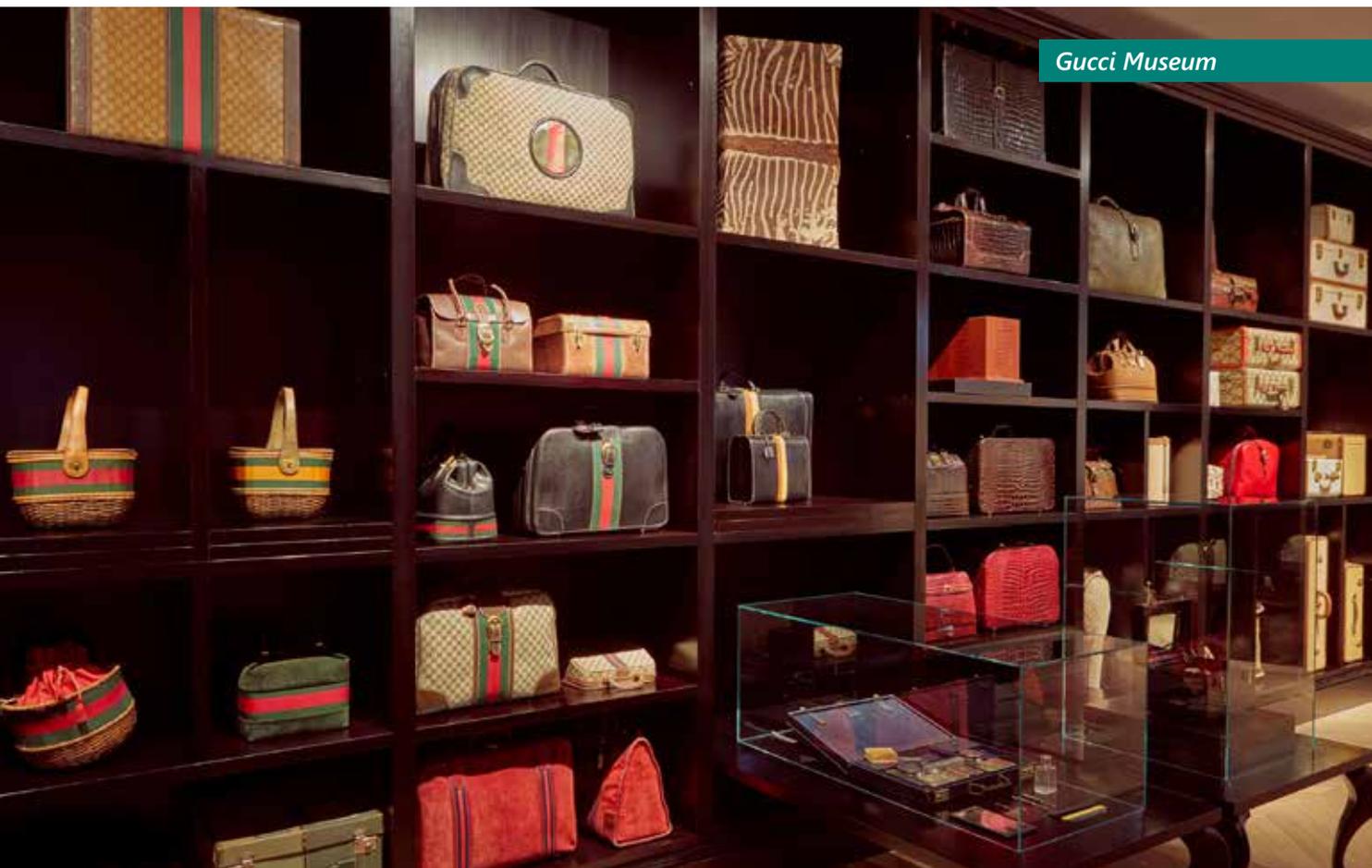


Inside Gucci
Museum

This first success was soon followed up by another. The Gucci Loafer with the metal horse bit was launched by Guccio's son Aldo. The Gucci Loafer soon achieved cult status that has only grown stronger over the 65 years of its existence. Not only is this loafer the only shoe to have found a place in the permanent collection of MOMA in New York, but it is also somewhat of an icon when it comes to being associated with the 'Jet Set'. From The Talented Mr Ripley to The Wolf of Wall Street, every glamorous and powerful character in Hollywood has sported the Gucci Loafers. Quite a few pieces from the house of Guccio achieved similar runaway success and continue to remain a fashion favourite even today. Be it the Bamboo Handle Bag made famous by Jackie Kennedy and Princess Diana or the Genius Jeans which once held the record for being the most expensive jeans sold. Also along the way, Guccio's brand identity evolved and its Double G logo and green-red-green web came to be much loved and recognised.

Though a successful brand, Guccio has had its share of lows too. Infighting in the family - among Guccio's three sons and their sons who held ownership of the brand jointly and the tragedy and scandal of the murder of Guccio's grandson Maurizio Guccio arranged by his

Quite a few pieces from the house of Guccio achieved similar runaway success and continue to remain a fashion favourite even today. Be it the Bamboo Handle Bag made famous by Jackie Kennedy and Princess Diana or the Genius Jeans which once held the record for being the most expensive jeans sold



ex-wife - heralded the beginning of outside investments coming in that eventually led to the end of the Gucci family's involvement in the firm. This family opprobrium coupled with designs that overused the Double G Logo and mass production and over distribution of their canvas luggage line brought on the dilution of the Gucci brand value. Gucci lost its allure and sales quickly plummeted. Till Tom Ford, the American designer who now owns a hugely successful eponymous brand Tom Ford, joined the company and revived its fortunes with edgy designs. During his decade long stint with the brand, he managed to steer back Gucci to the forefront of luxury fashion, from its forgotten and dusty decades; even re-launching the celebrated 'Jackie Bag' to an overwhelming response from brand loyalists and critics alike. But soon enough, Gucci got embroiled with LVMH in a bitter takeover battle now known as 'the handbag wars' until it ended with its current owner Kering buying a 42 percent holding in 1999. The hostile takeover ushered Tom Ford's exit and the brand languished again, barring the one time that it hit bull's eye with the opening of its own museum in Florence, firmly establishing itself in the annals of fashion history. Till it reinvented itself - under the aegis of Marco Bizzarri and Alessandro Michele, the current CEO and creative director duo of Gucci - from being the strictly classic 'Made in Italy' brand to a luxury brand of the future, bold and inclusive enough for the new age millennial to fall in love with and accept.





From a time when it dreaded and vehemently shunned being associated with the rap stars and gangsters of the 90s to now when it voluntarily seeks collaborations and even establishes ateliers in Harlem, Gucci has come a long way. It doesn't seem to mind being all over the lyrics of rappers across the world, international and Indian (Gucci entered the Indian market nearly 10 years ago). Even its latest collection, Gucci - Dapper Dan points to this. But this is just one aspect of how Gucci came back into popular culture. The first step to this was running their very first television campaign and building from there on, going live from one of their shows, opening a pop-up and even picking up popular hashtags like Guccification and incorporating them into the brand. Even the Gucci Museo which opened in 2011 in the imposing 14th century Palazzo della Mercanzia in Florence has dedicated a room to Guccification in its latest avatar as Gucci Garden, in a bid to engage with its millennial audience and position itself for the future. Aside from the Gallery that houses archives showcasing the brand history and temporary exhibits of contemporary fashion and art pieces, Gucci Garden also has a store that retails unique Gucci fashion pieces and a restaurant by a Michelin-star chef making the museum a definite stop-over for all the fashion enthusiasts visiting the city.

This influential Italian fashion house has charted a long journey that is nothing short of spectacular in the world of luxury. It has today, brilliantly made its move from classic couture to maximalist street style that is even bizarre and outlandish at times, all the while keeping intact the legacy of its rich heritage and brand image. Today's modern and eclectic Gucci has even recast the much ridiculed fanny pack and turned the bum bag into a six hundred euros worth must-have accessory of the season. Today Gucci has six stores in India, including an exclusive made-to-measure concept store in Gurgaon.