

Rimowa Doubles Down on Dented Chic With BlackPink's Rosé and Lewis Hamilton

For a man who drives race cars for a living, Lewis Hamilton has more going for him than a turbocharged V6. Since joining the Formula 1 circuit in 2007, the British sportsman has racked up 105 Grand Prix wins, made a cameo in Disney's Cars 2, bought a stake in the Denver Broncos, sung on a Christina Aguilera record, and been knighted by the Prince of Wales.

You'd think the dude could afford some new luggage.

He can, of course. But in the latest installment of Rimowa's "Never Still" campaign, the 40-year-old competitor appears with an anodized aluminum pilot case marked by scratches, scuffs and dents, along with a collage of stickers including his racing number (44) and his bulldog Roscoe.

Luxury fashion marketing proved long ago that a pretty face can sell almost anything, so if showing a \$1,550 case that looks like it's tumbled around the baggage carousel seems like an unorthodox approach, well, it is.

It's also one that Rimowa has pioneered in the luxury segment for two years now.

In 2023, the 127-year-old luggage maker (part of the LVMH stable since 2016) debuted a campaign called "A Lifetime of Memories," which portrayed perfect-looking people traveling with less-than-perfect valises. Scrapes, nicks and dents in the aluminum bore testimony to years of travel. The message was that, like rings on a tree or a rip in blue jeans, wear equates to character.

K-pop phenom Rosé refers to her Rimowa case as her “good friend.”*Rimowa*

Rimowa’s latest marketing effort takes that idea a step further with stills and videos featuring similarly well-worn cases, but ones belonging to celebrities: K-pop breakout star Rosé and singer-songwriter Jay Chou, along with Hamilton, who’s arguably Formula 1’s highest profile driver.

The new ads are technically the fifth chapter of Rimowa’s “Never Still” campaign, introduced in 2018, and the first to shift the spotlight from the brand’s products to its ambassadors. But both “Never Still” and “A Lifetime of Memories” are essentially variations of the same theme—that travel experiences are the building blocks of individualism, and that wear and tear are badges to be worn proudly.

“The campaign that’s coming out is synonymous with what we’ve been doing with our suitcases—showing that they are symbols of your transformation, your journeys,” Rimowa’s senior vice president of product and marketing Emelie De Vitis told ADWEEK. “They are witnesses to your evolution. Every dent tells a story of how you’ve developed to be the person you are.”

“This is [also] why we’ve used the suitcases of our ambassadors in this iteration,” De Vitis added, noting that Hamilton, Chou and Rosé appeared in Rimowa ads two years ago. “The suitcases are aging—beautifying with our ambassadors,” she said. “For me, it’s really the sense that you’ve never stopped growing.”

In a category defined by “It” bags on the shoulders of fresh-faced stars, Rimowa’s strategy is a marked departure not just from luxury-segment norms, but from the flavor-of-the-month culture of marketing overall, according to Mike Ford, CEO of data-based marketing optimization firm Skydeo.

“It’s easy (and expensive) to hire a trending face to pump out content. What’s harder (and more valuable) is building a brand story arc over time,” he said. “By showing personalities evolving and tying that evolution to their product, Rimowa isn’t just marketing travel, it’s marketing identity.”

Later this month, Rimowa will also release “Sticker Stories,” a series of videos featuring its brand ambassadors in casual conversation about their lives and travels. Rosé’s video, for example, is a kind of show-and-tell with her sticker-covered Classic Cabin roller, which she calls “a good friend.” Over the past year, she explains, “I’ve basically been living out of my suitcase, so it’s been a big part of writing my album.”

Jay Chou said the stickers on his case represent his life experiences.*Rimowa*

To underscore its positioning still further, Rimowa will also be expanding its popular Re-Crafted program, through which the company purchases well-worn cases from past customers and reconditions them functionally but not aesthetically: The cases close, lock, and roll as though they're showroom fresh, but all of the dents and dings and stickers from the previous owners remain untouched. Tested in 2023 in Germany and Japan, the sales were so popular—stocks in Japan sold out in seven minutes—that they will now be a quarterly event in the U.S.

“In a world of disposable, throwaway, cheap products, there is a sense of authenticity to Rimowa's sturdy but dented luggage,” said Charles J. Skuba, emeritus professor in

marketing and international business at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business. "The dents are a badge of travel combat for the sophisticated traveler, as is the continued endorsement by some people who have also had some real-life experiences over the years."

Experiences such as Lewis Hamilton's appearance at the Grand Prix in Azerbaijan last September with a Rimowa Crossbody Bag casually slung over his shoulder. Within hours, Esquire declared it "the sickest bag of the year." Hamilton's fluted aluminum purse was new out of the box, so it had no dents or scratches yet. Give it time.

Lewis Hamilton travels a lot, adding weight to a luggage endorsement.*Rimowa*

Recommended videos

<https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/rimowa-blackpink-rose-lewis-hamilton/>