

Defining Global Modern Luxury



FIFTH AVENUE COACH HOUSE, NEW YORK, US



BORN IN 1941 AS A FAMILY-RUN WORKSHOP IN NEW YORK CITY, THE COACH BRAND STANDS FOR AUTHENTICITY, INNOVATION, AND RELEVANCE, ALWAYS STAYING TRUE TO THESE KEY BRAND EQUITIES. HERE, RLI SITS DOWN WITH IAN BICKLEY, PRESIDENT, GLOBAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & STRATEGIC ALLIANCES TO DISCUSS THE LATEST BRAND INNOVATIONS AND TO FIND OUT WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE FUTURE.

Pioneers in the leather goods and accessories space, Coach established itself as the original American house of leather during the second half of the 20th Century and has gone on to define 'accessible luxury'.

Delivering an alternative to traditional luxury, Coach has expanded beyond its home in North America to become the first American company in its category to bring international relevance to an American leather goods brand.

Today, Coach directly operates over 1,000 locations over five continents; this consists of 962 Coach stores, 81 Stuart Weitzman locations and 275 Kate Spade stores, after Coach acquired the company back in July.

The last 12 months has represented the culmination of a three-year transformation plan, to elevate the perception of the Coach brand in the hearts and minds of consumers.

"This year we have continued to gain traction with our Coach brand transformation, reporting five consecutive quarters of positive North America comparable store sales," says Ian Bickley, President, Global Business Development & Strategic Alliances. "Stuart Weitzman has delivered double-digit sales growth and we have completed the acquisition of Kate Spade, establishing Coach as

the first New York-based house of modern luxury lifestyle brands."

Recently the company has launched stores on Fifth Avenue in New York City and on Regent Street in London, and in both locations a separate Stuart Weitzman store was opened next door. In New York, a 1,858sq m retail space has been launched which is dedicated to the Coach brand and showcases the brand's distinctive modern luxury positioning. The three-level flagship is a mix of eclectic and bespoke furniture and objects which are accented by custom-designed cabinetry, warm lighting, proprietary carpets and fine millwork. The London store on Regent Street is a 504sq m space which offers a new and exciting experience in retail and is an engaging journey of discovery for consumers.

"In the near future, we will be focusing on new locations primarily in Europe and Mainland China which our fast growing markets. We also see Europe and notably the UK as a very exciting opportunity for the Kate Spade brand, which recently launched a location in Paris on Rue Saint-Honoré," explains Bickley.

It was announced in May that Coach would be entering Russia through an exclusive partnership with BNS Group, a distributor of international luxury brands. Four stand-alone Coach stores are forecast for opening in Russia between 2018 and 2021, which are to be opened in conjunction





with further expansion in wholesale.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with BNS Group to bring Coach to Russia. We're confident that our modern luxury store environment, showcasing Coach's rich heritage and commitment to craftsmanship, along with the latest designs by Creative Director Stuart Vevers, will be embraced and coveted by the fashionable Russian consumer."

With such a unique and recognisable brand, Coach stays at the cutting edge of the market by understanding it needs to surprise and delight customers across all consumer touch points, product, stores and marketing, and through the work of Stuart Vevers the brand has become 'hip' again with his unique twist on American cool.

The brand's take on modern luxury translates remarkably well globally and Coach continues to make products that are relevant to its consumers' lifestyles, whether they are in Shanghai, Tokyo, Paris or New York.

Coach is a brand that has embraced the new social media experience, shown through the company's partnership with Selena Gomez, the most followed celebrity globally on Instagram with over 126 million followers.

"We are extremely pleased to be partners with Selena given our shared values and belief in a view of fashion and luxury that is approachable to many across the globe. Selena's authenticity, confidence and approachability are great values that Coach holds dear," says Bickley.

The customer range of Coach is fairly broad, due to the brand's global reach and multi-channel distribution model. This will only increase with the addition of the Kate Spade brand, which attracts a high-level of millennials.

Loyalty from its customers has been built over time, with more than 75 years of history and heritage. It is this authenticity that separates the brand from some of the newer accessible luxury brands. "Through the brand's transformation in the last three years, we've also built fashion credibility, becoming part of the 'fashion conversation'", explains Bickley.

The brand's success over the years has stemmed from its unique, differentiated positioning, its strong, global presence with a leadership position in key luxury markets, and the quality and craftsmanship of its products whilst continuing to offer a strong value proposition.

Looking ahead, the opportunities for the brand are boundless, the challenges for Coach are to attract and retain new talent, and continue to drive innovation in an increasingly fast-paced environment in which consumers are given instant access to information.

"The Coach brand represents modern luxury, which is about being true to who we are and evolving our playbook and owning a position that only we have, it's about being true to our democratic New York view of luxury," concludes Bickley.

