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## H&M, Google, Macy's, Depop, IMG Models Support Diversity With Holiday Efforts

Some major companies are focusing more on Black-owned businesses for the holidays.

BY ROSEMARY REITELBERG  
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Buy From a Black Woman founder Nikki Porcher has partnered with H&M for a holiday outpost. *Courtesy of H&M*

As shoppers are gearing up for what is expected to be a competitive buying season, some retailers and businesses are supporting Black-owned businesses and organizations.

While some fashion companies' calls for greater diversity in advertising, employment and merchandise assortment have petered out and no longer reflect the social justice movement that took hold in much of the U.S. last year following the police killing of George Floyd, others are still trying to make headway with diversity and inclusion.

Forty-five percent of consumers in the U.S. agree that companies should pledge to support Black-owned brands, suppliers and vendors, according to McKinsey & Company's October 2021 inclusive consumer survey. And 68 percent said their social values shape their shopping decisions.

In addition, Gen Z shoppers and Black households, two groups that each influence more than \$800 billion on retail spending each year, are increasingly asking for inclusivity in retail stores, according to the survey. And some major brands are getting more in tune with that demand.

Depop and IMG Models just teamed up for a monthlong exclusive online shop that will benefit the Black in Fashion Council, which is committed to creating a foundation for inclusivity in the industry.

Good American, the five-year-old apparel company started by Emma Grede and Khloe Kardashian, will soon be bringing back its open casting. The go-see in New York will be held on Dec. 1 in partnership with Klarna and IMG Models. Female applicants over the age of 14 will have the chance to be cast in the brand's diverse #GoodSquad, and winners will be featured in Good American's spring campaign.

To help shoppers find and support Black-owned businesses, Google has partnered with U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. for the second consecutive Black Friday for a #BlackOwnedFriday campaign.

A shoppable music film showcasing 100-plus products from more than 50 Black-owned businesses are featured as part of the campaign. Grammy winner and Nappy Boy Entertainment founder T-Pain wrote an original music track for the flick that also features American singer Normani. In addition to the #BlackOwnedFriday campaign, shoppable murals are being unveiled in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City as another way for passers-by to discover local businesses in their communities, according to Google Shopping's director of marketing Stephanie Horton.

"The Black community has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and it's never been more important to ignite a conversation that will drive people to support Black-owned businesses." Horton said. And visitors to the LiveRocket space at The Seaport will find a portrait of boundary-breaking fashion leader Bethann Hardison that was painted live by artist Bradley Theodore. LiveRocket will be hosting other Instagram Live events and fashion chats, including a weekly one led by Mickey Boardman and Lynn Yaeger that also covers current events. Next month, LiveRocket and several of the Black designers and entrepreneurs whom Hardison has mentored through the CFDA-supported Designers Hub, will collaborate on programs to highlight their work and sell their designs live on two channels.





Bethann Hardison recently had her portrait painted at the LiveRocket space at The Seaport by artist Bradley Theodore. *Courtesy of LiveRocket*

After a successful run in 16 cities, H&M is getting ready to open its first “Buy From a Black Woman Holiday Market” in its highly trafficked Times Square flagship.

The H&M initiative is part of a one-year partnership with the nonprofit Buy From a Black Woman, started by Nikki Porcher in 2016. The organization connects more than 500 Black women-owned businesses, with the aim of helping Black women build their businesses and gain exposure.

Porcher said in previous holiday seasons her organization has pointed shoppers to its online directory of Black-owned businesses. The response to the “Inspire” tour that got underway with H&M in March led to the Times Square opportunity.

“Of course, we said yes,” she said. “[We are interested in] anything that we can do to help bring awareness to Black women business owners, to continue our partnership with H&M and to continue to be a great example of what it looks like for grassroots organizations to partner with national companies — we’re here for it.”

Debuting on what is known as Small Business Saturday, Nov. 27, the H&M x Buy From a Black Woman outpost will run through Dec. 24. An assortment of merchandise from 26 Black woman-owned businesses will be sold during that time. Shoppers will be able to meet some of the vendors and find holiday gifts in such categories as skin care, stationery and home decor.

Energized as Porcher is about H&M’s partnership, she said looking at the industry in a more general way, many companies “are definitely going back to what they were before.”

“It’s unfortunate that there have been companies that, when it was beneficial for them to support Black businesses and Black women, they jumped on the wave. They did it for them[selves] and not for supporting the mission. Now you can’t find them anywhere,” she said. “In June and July 2020, there was an uptick in supporting Black businesses, and buying from them. A year later those people are not still doing the same thing. That’s why it’s important to amplify partnerships like we have with H&M.”

Continuing, she said, “Not only are they saying they want to do something, they’re doing it and they keep doing it. They’re being very intentional asking how can they do more and how they can get better at this, because they understand the value in this.”

Other companies that make public declarations about supporting Black businesses need to know the public will still hold them accountable for that, Porcher said. Companies have to be ready to do the work and should reach out to organizations that are already on the ground talking to the community to have real impact, she added.

Planning to continue to work with H&M and potentially extend the partnership, Porcher said the retailer has listened to Black women and is using its tools to amplify what Black women are doing. BFABW has had 20 to 25 businesses join its organization since the summer. Three other companies, including the Office of Angela Scott, have reached out to Porcher about potentially aligning with her organization along the lines of what H&M has done.





Robin Wilson will soon be selling her collaborative Clean Design Home x Martex home line at Macy's.  
*Evan Rummel/Courtesy of Robin Wilson Home*

Next month, Macy's will start selling the Clean Home Design x Martex nationwide through a collaboration with Black female founder Robin Wilson.

The collection will preview online on Dec. 27 and in 165 stores on Jan. 2, including stores in Hawaii, Guam and Puerto Rico. In 2000, Wilson started her company and has built a brand that specializes in hypoallergenic products geared for the 60 million Americans who suffer from asthma and allergies. All sheeting and utility products are made with Better Cotton Initiative cotton and are certified in Made-in-Green by Oeko-Tex certified products. Towels retail starting at \$15 and utility products go up to \$275.

Wilson expects to sell "hundreds of thousands" of units for her brand's items as part of the collaboration. And she has expansion plans that include new product launches, including pajamas and casual wear, plus a rollout in Japan and the U.K. in the second quarter of next year.

Quilts will also be introduced as an homage to her seamstress paternal grandmother Pauline, skilled in the African-American tradition of quilting. Four designs have been transferred, printed and quilted with great detail. Mud cloth, a traditional African textile style, takes its inspiration from Wilson's earliest traceable African ancestor who came to America enslaved, through Louisiana. Another style, Mosaic, reflects the modern family with a nod to Wilson's English and Irish ancestry, "a family connected as Americans," she said. "The rough stitch within many quilts represents families — stitched together — reminding us that we are imperfect, yet connected."

Having attended Macy's workshop program in 2012, Wilson recalled learning all about retail there. "Here, we are nine years later in their stores. It's a dream come true," she said. "We will also be in their home catalogue, which is being mailed to all of their card holders in a couple of weeks."