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Louis Vuitton Korea branded irresponsible

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People queue in front of a Louis Vuitton store that operates connected to a Lotte Department Store, Myeong-dong, Seoul, May 13. / Korea Times photo by Lee Han-ho

By Kim Jae-heun

Louis Vuitton has come under fire over apparent carelessness regarding its South Korean employees as the country fights COVID-19.

Some also criticized the French luxury brand saying it is only interested in turning a profit and was taking advantage of timing related to the easing of social restrictions as customers seek opportunities to spend money.

An employee working at the French luxury brand's boutique in Lotte

last week.

The employee aged in his 30s visited nightclubs in Itaewon, the international district in downtown Seoul, on May 3 and 5 and allegedly worked at the store May 6 and 7.

Customers who visited the boutique at Lotte World Tower may have come into contact with the confirmed patient yet none of them were notified by the company about this raising concerns that shoppers could also have contracted the virus and may further spread the pandemic without even knowing.



Louis Vuitton Korea CEO Thierry Marty

Twelve other staff who worked at the Louis Vuitton store with the patient have been quarantined, but no one knows the extent of further COVID-19 transmissions in the workplace before they were told to stay home.

When the staff member first visited the nightclub HIM in Itaewon on May 3, it was before the government loosened guidelines for social distancing here.

Despite his job serving hundreds of customers at the boutique inside Lotte, every day, Louis Vuitton did not give any detailed guidelines, internally, to advise workers about clubbing or private gatherings, while other companies have instructed their employees to work from home and keep themselves quarantined as much as possible.

Five days prior to confirmation of the Louis Vuitton employee's COVID-19 infection, a different employee working at a boutique of Italian luxury brand, Gucci, in Lotte Department Store, Myeong-dong, Seoul, tested positive for the virus May 9.

The Gucci store closed down that morning and the department store announced a suspension of its business for a day for disinfection that afternoon.

Louis Vuitton continued to operate its Lotte Tower boutique despite reports confirming the infected employee.

Lotte Department Store officials said they will keep the department store open as they have carried out disinfection of the entire premises on three occasions: May 7, 10 and 13.

"Our cleaning ladies are sterilizing handrails of escalators in the building consistently in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease inside," a Lotte Department Store official said. "There is nothing we can do about Louis Vuitton employees because they are not our employees. We just ask them to share information about confirmed cases if their employee is infected with the virus but they do not always do so," the official added.

The Lotte Department Store official said Louis Vuitton gave unclear answer on the exact dates of which its employee worked at the boutique in Lotte World Tower and the department store cannot confirm the Louis Vuitton employee's attendance record.

half of the year.

Many are criticizing it for taking advantage of consumer sentiment to spend money.

The markup for the French brand's luxury products ranged from 5 percent to 10 percent.

Louis Vuitton Korea give no specific reason for why its head office in France decided to increase the price so early this year.

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