

EVENTS/CAUSES

INYT Luxury Conference to uncover industry's crucial challenges, hidden opportunities

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Waldorf Astoria-owned Hotel Trianon Palace in Versailles, France

By JEN KING

As suggested by recent Bain & Co.'s recent research, it is a complicated time to be in luxury, as brands are faced with changing technologies, market disruptions and evolving consumer behavior.

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Now in its 15th year, the International New York Times' annual Luxury Conference, dubbed "Luxury Beyond Product" for 2015, aims to address the critical challenges and unexpected opportunities brands in the luxury sector are facing as they jockey for consumer sentiment and market share. Hosted and moderated by New York Times fashion director Vanessa Friedman, the two-day conference will offer attendees strategic insights, new ideas and best practices as shared by distinguished delegates.

"The idea is to look at the different ways brands are trying to create value systems around themselves to better engage with a consumer base, particularly over the long term," said Vanessa Friedman, fashion director and chief fashion critic, [The New York Times](#), New York.

"Each session will look at different ways brands are doing that whether it is through strategic sustainability initiatives; cultural initiatives; employment support; film or technology," she said. "Everything will touch on different facets of this issue."

Where will luxury go next?

The conference was originally scheduled to take place in November, but the Nov. 13 Paris attacks mere days beforehand forced a rescheduling.

The attacks, which took place days before the conference was originally scheduled, rattled the world and continue to emit shockwaves in global policies as well as the economy. On the evening of Nov. 13, armed ISIL militants and suicide bombers attacked a number of Parisian venues, killing 130 people, including 89 at the Bataclan Theatre, and injuring an additional 360.

Because of the rarity of terror attacks in the western world, many consumers responded by canceling or rescheduling trips to Paris or other parts of France, and the country fell out of the world's top 10 travel destinations ([see story](#)). Tourism accounts for 8 percent of the French economy, much of which is generated from purchases of

luxury items, meaning the attacks could have a noticeable economic impact.

From a brand strategy standpoint, the attacks served as a sobering reminder of the role geopolitical instability and terrorism can have on an economy. As new markets are sought out, issues of safety and tourism may be especially important in the continued aftermath of the tragedy in Paris.

In the four months since the attack, the resilience of Parisians and the French people have made it a vital, inviting and safe global hub for both residents and visitors.

Luxury Beyond Product will now take place April 5-6 at Waldorf Astoria-owned Hotel Trianon Palace in Versailles, France. An opening cocktail reception will be held on the evening of April 4 at Hotel Trianon Palace.

Sessions will be lead by Ms. Friedman and award-winning New York Times journalists in the form of panels, keynotes presentation and roundtable discussions. Each session will delve into how luxury is changing and how brands in the sector can win the hearts and minds of affluent consumers.



View of Versailles from Waldorf Astoria's Hotel Trianon Palace

The opening keynote will be a discussion between former global CEO of Chanel Maureen Chiquet and Ms. Friedman. Luxury Beyond Product's first day continues with a look at luxury in a global context from troubles in Russia to China's new conservative attitude.

Day 1 includes a session dedicated to logomania led by Marco Bizzarri, president/CEO of Gucci while a mid-afternoon talk looks at strategic sustainability and "greenwashing" in the form of a case study and panel discussion.

As the day nears its ends, attendees will hear from panelists who will discuss the link between luxury brands' national identity and connoisseurship. Moderated by Deborah Needleman, editor of T Magazine, this panel includes executives from Bedrock Manufacturing, Eataly and Herms.

After the conclusion of the day's sessions, attendees are invited to a pre-gala cocktail reception at Trianon Palace Versailles' Salon Clemenceau. The reception will be hosted by actor Colin Firth, a brand ambassador of Chopard, the conference's principal sponsor.

The night continues with a private visit of the Chateau de Versailles and seated gala dinner in the palace's Salon d'Hercule and Vestibule Haut de la Chapelle.

"[Versailles] embodies the theme, it is a heritage site, clearly, but it is luxury as an environment," Ms. Friedman said. "It is luxury as an idea. In itself it represents a certain kind of view of how you live a life in this space.

"I think [Versailles] is another dimension of what we're looking at it," she said. "It is not a product, it is a context. I think that context is particularly appropriate, certainly conceptually, for what we are talking about.

"Also, Dior is underwriting the restoration of Versailles, which is again, another example of how some of the luxury brands are reaching out to the cultural sphere in ways that might not be immediately obvious."

Dior @Dior · May 28

Glimpse of #Dior's Secret Garden III filmed at the Château de Versailles, now on DiorMag: bit.ly/SGIII-Teaser



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Dior staged its "Secret Garden III" campaign at Versailles ([see story](#))

Day 2's opening keynote discussing the intersection of content and creativity as discussed by co-CEO of WME|IMG Ariel Emanuel and Ms. Friedman.

Panels and fireside chat discussions will touch upon the values and images of radical culture in a luxury context, the value of sports and athlete partnerships and the support of next generation talent.

Luxury Beyond Product's sessions conclude with an ending keynote considering the role digital culture will have in the future as luxury brands set out to balance heritage with tech. This discussion, moderated by Ms. Friedman, will include Matt Jacobson, head of market development at Facebook and Instagram and Benjamin Millepied, The Paris Opera's former director of dance.

A full list of speakers and expanded agenda can be found [here](#).

The 2014 edition of the International New York Times Luxury Conference, held in Miami Dec. 1-3, concentrated on the growing convergence of fashion, art and technology and how those in the industry can benefit from these relationships ([see story](#)).

Additional reporting by Forrest Cardamenis

This article is an update of a story that originally ran on Nov. 5 prior to the Paris attacks and the originally planned date. The original article can be found [here](#).

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