

AUTOMOTIVE

Feeling more is an art form: Lexus

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Lexus promotes the new NX as a perfect vehicle for consumers looking to get out and explore their surroundings. Image credit: Lexus

By NORA HOWE

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is celebrating the launch of its new NX by taking a comprehensive look at how the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted consumer values and behaviors.

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In its "Art of Feeling More" report, developed in partnership with global trends forecaster **WGSN**, the automotive brand explores the unique coping mechanisms that have emerged as people look for new ways to feel and heal. As the world begins to reopen, people will incorporate recuperative rituals into their daily lives and seek connection with the world around them.

"We've seen an increase in consumers reconnecting with friends and loved ones to enjoy more meaningful experiences together," said Pascal Ruch, vice president of value chain and business planning office at Lexus Europe, Brussels. "Following a year of isolation and sensory deprivation, people are taking the time to embrace crafting and creativity, prioritizing how, and why, things make them feel the way they do."

Art of Feeling

Lexus asked four "tastemakers" to reflect on its findings, providing insights into what they think the future holds for their disciplines: U.K. fashion designer Daniel W. Fletcher, French photographer Floriane de Lasse, Ukrainian ballet dancer Oleg Ivenko and Italian journalist and chef Benedetta Parodi.

Incorporating the tastemakers' predictions, research from physicists and sociologists and a comprehensive overview of what people purchase and enjoy, the report taps into what drives consumers.

Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of consumers believed that luxury is better defined as "lifestyles of experiences" than the acquisition of goods, according to an earlier Lexus report.

In early 2020, consumers were coveting alone time and digital detoxes, making wellness its own version of a luxury ([see story](#)).

The global health crisis pushed these needs into hyper-drive.

According to the United Nations, levels of stress and anxiety have risen substantially, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists said COVID-19 further induced the current mental health crisis.



With an increased attentiveness to creativity and craft, Lexus commissioned artists to create large-scale murals that reflected their local communities for its "December to Remember" campaign. Image credit: Lexus

Nearly 10 percent of European cities will lose a quarter of their population in the next 30 years, according to the [European Commission](#). Consumers are moving away from metropolises and to second-tier, suburban areas, with many communities encouraging national migration.

In response, urban planners are strategizing new ways to reconnect residents with their local communities, fostering a stronger relationship with the cities and emphasizing sustainable living.

There was a rise in hiking, outdoor recreation and "adventures" to the green spaces as consumers sought to escape the confines of their homes during the pandemic.

WGSN predicts personal cars will remain the preferred mode of travel for recreational and professional activities, as cars cement their status as consumers' "third space."

Additionally, value is increasingly being tied to personal, historical resonance, as consumers look back to their lives pre-pandemic as a coping mechanism.

WGSN suggests consumers' obsession with analog formats, such as vinyl records or CDs, highlights the power nostalgia has in making people feel good, as they look for comfort in connecting with the past.

Despite love for the past, however, technological and scientific advancements move consumers forward.

From new interconnected ecosystems to augmented intelligence, Lexus and WGSN predict consumers will seek smarter offerings that will allow them to transform into enhanced versions of themselves, physically and digitally.



Lexus introduced a concept battery electric vehicle that reflects the technologically advanced and personalized age that awaits the automotive industry. Image credit: Lexus

The development of a physical/digital "metaverse" will welcome the age of "Internet 3.0."

This would be connected space that will impact how people communicate, shop, relax, learn and work. As consumers become more comfortable with digital immersion and using technology to supplement their abilities, there will be an increased demand for hyper-connectivity that will enable streamlined living.

As society emerges from a period of limited freedom, people are also seeking out new avenues of pleasure and freedom through movement. According to the report, the mental health benefits of dancing have been documented in multiple scientific studies, including those of psychologist [Dr. Peter Lovatt](#), better known as "Dr. Dance."

Emphasis on craftsmanship

However, mental respite is equally as important as physical movement, according to Lexus.

As a result of increased free time at home, many consumers reconnected to crafting and creative outlets for self-expression and relaxation. The emergence of do-it-yourself (DIY) activities has led to a new appreciation of craftsmanship.

According to [Crafts Council](#), craft is helping consumers reconnect with the present moment, enabling them to turn their attention inward and improve overall well-being.

Design, tradition and craftsmanship are often centerpieces of Lexus campaigns, as a way for the automaker to differentiate itself from competitors with longer histories.

In November 2020, Lexus honored the mastery of artisans in a craftsmanship campaign targeting drivers in the United Kingdom. The series "In Search of Takumi" drew parallels between the automaker's renowned Takumi team and skilled artisans in the U.K., tasking craftspeople to create bespoke pieces inspired by Lexus vehicles ([see story](#)).

Earlier this year, the automotive company further celebrated its Takumi team and its indelible mark on the brand.

Lexus marked World Poetry Day with a haiku celebrating the craftspeople who have undergone extensive training, led occupations that strive for perfection and ultimately make the brand what it is today. With no higher honor within the Lexus engineering ranks than the title of Takumi, the automaker released a haiku paying homage to the experts and highlighted just how crucial they are to the brand ([see story](#)).

"As consumer palettes continue to change rapidly, it's more important than ever for luxury brands to remain agile and responsive," Mr. Ruch said. "With what is generally a new dimension to how we interact with our vehicles, and how we spend time in them, we felt it's important that we react accordingly to these needs."

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