

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

What is next for Bottega Veneta?

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Bottega Veneta and creative director Daniel Lee surprised the fashion world by ending their collaboration. Here's what the brand did right and wrong. Image credit: Net-A-Porter

By [Daniel Langer](#)

Matthieu Blazy, ready-to-wear design director at Bottega Veneta, has big shoes to fill as he takes over the creative director's position at the Kering-owned fashion and leather goods brand.

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The appointment comes only less than two years after Mr. Blazy joined Bottega Veneta after working with Raf Simons at Calvin Klein from 2016 to 2019. He will present his first collection in February.

Mr. Blazy has big shoes to fill, and with little time for the fashion world to digest what just happened at his employer.

Bottega Veneta and Daniel Lee surprised the fashion world when they announced a "joint decision to end their collaboration."

Mr. Lee made many headlines in the three years since being appointed by the Italian luxury brand as its creative director in 2018. He was instrumental in giving Bottega Veneta and its iconic intrecciato pattern of interwoven leathers a new direction by moving from the "stealth" luxury approach of his predecessor, Thomas Maier, and toward a fashion-forward and heavily hyped strategy.

Consequently, the brand many considered the "most luxurious brand in the world" and worn by "those who knew" **created FOMO** with each collection, attracted rappers and celebrities, and had even established a new color code called "parakeet" a lime green that soon became almost as recognizable as Tiffany's signature blue during Mr. Lee's tenure.

Under Mr. Lee, the brand with the most stealth luxury approach turned into one of the loudest and most talked-about brands in its competitive set.

And the approach paid off financially, with 8.9 percent growth in the **third quarter of 2021** that built on strong acceleration since Mr. Lee took the helm.

However, not everything the brand did was a home run. Recently the brand **moved off social media** a move I have been skeptical about in the past.

Not being on Instagram and other critical social media platforms may signal exclusivity, a move that was celebrated by some. But it also allows others to take over the brand's narrative, which is always dangerous.

Not surprisingly, an independent Instagram handle called [@newbottega](#), reaching almost 900,000 followers, started showcasing the brand. On platforms such as this one, brands cannot interact with customers and fans or curate content.

Today, with up to 95 percent of purchase decisions and almost all brand preference-building being determined online, this move has put Bottega Veneta at a significant competitive disadvantage. I would not be surprised if the brand returns to social media after its new creative director is announced.

Additionally, according to various media reports, the brand never got significant traction with its fashion line as many customers found the clothes unwearable.

To me, that signals a deeper issue with Bottega Veneta's flashy new approach. That is because it fundamentally changed the brand storytelling from incredibly well-crafted pieces of art that reveal beauty and timelessness to seasonal must-haves.

Now that Bottega's creative direction is changing again, the brand must establish clarity around its core brand positioning, otherwise existing and newer customers may get confused.

The departure of the brand under Mr. Lee was one of the most radical repositioning exercises in recent history. But the brand now needs to be less a brand that depends on one person and more one that convinces through its fundamental values and expressions.

Yet, among the critical aspects of successful luxury brands that Mr. Lee's approach confirmed is that a brand needs to inspire, innovate and be influential to be relevant to luxury consumers and Bottega Veneta managed to excel in all three aspects.

Whatever approach Bottega Veneta takes next with Mr. Blazy, maintaining these traits will be crucial as they try and clarify the brand's positioning.

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