

MARKETING

## Personal interaction, data bring small brands into luxury playing field

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Consumers want personal, unique experiences. Image credit: Maison Atia

By NORA HOWE

NEW YORK Major fashion conglomerates like LVMH and Kering certainly attract the most attention from the luxury market, but there are ample opportunities for boutique brands and entrepreneurs to succeed.

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During the final session of *Luxury Daily's* Women in Luxury eConference on June 16, two luxury entrepreneurs provided insight on how they generate demand for their products and compete with larger companies. Despite the luxury market seeing some of its major 2021 gains balance out in the first half of this year, industry leaders remain optimistic that consumers will continue gravitating toward the space.

"The luxury customer is still very interested in unique experiences, in customization and in curated experiences," said Chlo Mendel, cofounder and creative director of **Maison Atia**. "They are still willing to pay for that, and luxury brands have the ability to think outside of the box and provide something special that no one else can something personal.

"Luxury brands have the opportunity to be creative, and to have fun with it," she said. "That is why customers shop luxury."

*Women in Luxury 2022 was produced by Luxury Daily*

### Leading in luxury

At the core, luxury customers still want unique products and experiences, so brands must innovate design categories, invest in data analytics and understand consumer language.

Economist and cofounder of consumer data analytics company **Lily AI**, Purva Gupta, suggested ways her company helps brands adapt these processes to better serve customers and increase returns.



*Lily AI helps brands retrieve clear data points to better serve consumers. Image credit: Lily AI*

"We are seeing a lot of interest in product offerings where we are able to help them with better demand forecasting," Ms. Gupta said. "It is amazing to see that large brands are showing a lot of interest in investing in either current existing processes, or figuring out how they can do forecast better for the upcoming seasons."

"By exploring AI-based solutions, for example, they can dramatically change things."

From the product side, boutique brands are having to come up with unique ways to engage customers and compete with the Louis Vuittons and Chaneles of the world. To do so, customer interaction is paramount.

For Maison Atia, Ms. Mendel relies heavily on small trunk shows and curated experiences to provide personal engagement with her customers, as well as working with small retailers.

"Luxury customers care about the details," she said. "We want to make them feel heard, special and that they will receive a product no one else will have something they can personalize, a place to shop."

"We have pivoted into many small private events, in addition to working with niche retailers and small local stores, which are seeing more success as people want to shop local, small businesses."

In this context, word-of-mouth marketing is the optimal way to spread awareness and attract new customers. That being said, brands should also consider incorporating consumer data analytics to collect measurable information to serve their exact needs.

Maison Atia is also a fashion brand founded on sustainability a major selling point for many consumers today as more conscious buyers enter the market each year. The brand saw major interest in its recent upcycle collection.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

*The brand also designs all collections in-house in New York*

"Nothing gets thrown away or burned," Ms. Mendel said. "We reinvent pieces, we mix materials nothing goes to waste."

#### Sustainability in focus

In the last several years, predominantly due to the collateral effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, awareness of the environmental crisis has grown exponentially.

Considering fashion's detrimental role in global warming, consumers, governing bodies and global organizations began calling on companies to enact concrete changes. In addition to sustainable processes within supply changes and manufacturing, resale, rental and upcycling of materials has become popular.

In March, Richemont's Yoox announced a new space within the Yooxygen edit dedicated to responsible fashion. Rethink with

Shoppers can peruse collections on the Yooxygen edit on Yoox.com, aiming to give pieces that would have been otherwise disregarded a new life ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion house Fendi partnered with Istituto Marangoni on an upcycling project in support of sustainable styles.

Select students from Istituto Marangoni Firenze will be working under creative guidance from New York-based artist Sarah Coleman, a frequent Fendi collaborator. The "Dis-Cycling" project will focus on the recovery of materials used in the brand's window displays ([see story](#)).

"We use materials that we have available to us [in New York], rather than importing," Maison Atia's Ms. Mendel said. "We do everything in-house, and simply focus on craftsmanship and thinking outside of the box."