

RESEARCH

Craftsmanship has a recruitment problem': report

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Backslash, the cultural intelligence unit of international ad agency TBWA, has released its latest Future of Luxury report. Image courtesy of Backslash

By AMIRAH KEATON

A new global personal luxury goods forecast unpacks what is next for the world of luxury.

The latest **Future of Luxury** report, jointly released by Backslash, the cultural intelligence unit of international ad agency TBWA, as well as 18o Luxe, part of the Omnicom network and TBWA\CULT, the new luxury brands division of TBWA\Italy, arrives as leaders navigate shifting consumer preferences and global economic challenges. With the sector facing its first significant slowdown since the Great Recession, the report outlines how brands can adapt by blending tradition with innovation.

"At Backslash, we believe that culture dictates what people will be willing to pay a premium for in the future," said Skyler Hubler, senior cultural strategist at Backslash, in a statement.

"By examining the luxury sector through the lens of cultural shifts, we can better understand what people find truly exceptional and, therefore, what will be worth the highest premium."

Redefining desirability

The report identifies three primary shifts shaping the industry's future, naming the respective chapters "Contemporary Craftsmanship," "Fantasy Machines" and "Limitless Luxury."

Each concept highlights the intersection of evolving technology and age-old traditions, offering actionable strategies for brands to redefine desirability.

"This report marks a turning point for the luxury industry, illustrating how craftsmanship is central to enhancing the perceived value of luxury brands," said Laurent Franois, managing partner at 18o Luxe, in a statement.

"At the same time, social media communities are becoming the new custodians of authenticity," Mr. Franois said. "These platforms not only amplify the stories of artisans but also transform craftsmanship into shared cultural moments."

With craftsmanship at the heart of luxury's value proposition, a notable challenge lies in replenishing the workforce.



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According to reports from Toscana Economia, an estimated 276,000 roles, including 22,000 artisans and designers, will be vacant by 2028 unless proactive recruitment strategies are implemented. Also cited by report authors, 47 percent of Europe's top C-suite executives consider the shortage of skilled labor one of the most significant stressors within the supply chain.

A renaissance of craft is proposed as the antidote to this growing issue.

Research points to case studies such as Italian fashion house Bottega Veneta ([see story](#)) and Italian fashion label Gucci, which have, in recent years, launched artisan academies to safeguard traditional skills while appealing to younger generations with career offers and creative opportunities.



New hires and external students are enrolled in Bottega Veneta's artisan training school, which serves as a permanent workshop for the house. Image credit: Bottega Veneta

The report emphasizes the importance of rebranding manual work as aspirational, positioning these practices as a source of cultural pride. It lists examples such as Chinese artisan Wu Wei, whose traditional Ming furniture brand Suyuan opts to showcase traditional woodworking skills, mixing these methods with modern design elements.

Celebrating craft gives brands an additional opportunity.

"Not sharing information on suppliers will eventually be like not having an Instagram account because consumers are going to be demanding that level of transparency," said William Lasry, manufacturing specialist and creator of consultancy Glass Factory, for the report.

As brands continue to fight counterfeits and “dupe” products, the ability to prove authenticity becomes a crucial selling point.

“For me, the most relevant interlocutor in a major luxury brand is, of course, the scientific director, but above all, the sourcing and purchasing director,” said Valentine Petry, author of “MAKE UP” and freelance senior beauty writer at *Harper’s Bazaar France* and *ELLE France*, for the report.

“That’s what I see as the luxury of the future how I selected, manufactured, or had my ingredients made.”

Embracing experimentation

Chapters on Fantasy Machines and Limitless Luxury delve into how digital escapism ([see story](#)) and exclusive experiences ([see story](#)) will dominate future consumer expectations.

From leveraging generative AI for personalized storytelling to crafting “limitless” aspirations such as immortality-themed wellness offerings, brands are advised to embrace experimentation.

“In a world where algorithms are flattening culture, this highlights the importance of luxury brands rebuilding cultural capital to stay relevant,” said Michael Arpini, chief strategy officer at TBWA\Italy, in a statement.

“We will see how building on the meaning of the brand, their values, heritage, craft and a good dose of openness to innovation are the keys to staying on top of the game.”