

EVENTS/ CAUSES

LVMH shows dedication to Chinese consumers with training program

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By SARAH JONES

LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton is looking to better serve its Mandarin-speaking consumers traveling abroad with a new training program for Chinese Americans.

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The French conglomerate teamed up with Parsons the New School for Design and the Chinese-American Planning Council to design a program to teach recently immigrated Chinese Americans luxury retail skills, which includes an internship at a LVMH brand store. Through this program, LVMH will be able to connect with Chinese tourists in their native language and deliver enhanced customer service.

"LVMH understands the role of the Chinese retail tourist and the impact they are having globally on high-end fashion and design," said Brian Buchwald, cofounder/CEO of **Bomoda**, New York.

"A larger cadre of trained Mandarin-speaking sales associates with the capacity to better liaise with these retail tourists undoubtedly will give the brand a leg-up on their competitors," he said.

"Chinese retail tourists are the canary in the coal-mine for what will prove successful back home. Assuming the program helps LVMH sell more effectively here and the sales

associate proves a badge for that class, it will then undoubtedly aid LVMH's efforts on the [Chinese] Mainland as it seeks to move past logo-festooned handbags to a more sophisticated product line."

Mr. Buchwald is not affiliated with LVMH, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

LVMH was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Training program

The LVMH "Fundamentals in Luxury Retail" program is a 10-week course that begins with classroom instruction at Parsons. Those chosen for the program will be taught by both Parsons professors and LVMH managers and training professionals.

The students will learn about fashion history and consumer trends, retail operations, teamwork and communication skills.

After classroom instruction, the students will be placed in an internship at an LVMH brand retail store.



Bulgari's Fifth Avenue store location's holiday decorations, inspired by Chinese New Year

The first session will begin in March. LVMH has already begun its recruitment.

The program is open to English and Mandarin-speaking individuals who are currently working a low-wage job, or are under- or unemployed. To be eligible, participants must have earned at least a high school degree or the equivalent.

Applicants also have to prove they are passionate about both fashion and retail. The application process goes through the CPC.

LVMH is showing its altruism with this program, which gives underprivileged individuals a chance at a better career by giving them training in marketable skills.

The program is funded in part by The Robin Hood Foundation, a New York-based nonprofit that fights poverty.

Future focused

LVMH has proven its interest in education before with its recent announcement of a competition for young designers.

The company has introduced a new annual international design competition to uncover new talent and assist them in starting their fashion careers, proving the conglomerate's influential position in the fashion industry.

The prize consists of a grant and a mentorship from an LVMH team for a year to develop the winner's company. By creating this contest, LVMH is able to show on a global scale that it is foremost in discovering and nurturing creative minds, as well as point to the creativity of its own designers ([see story](#)).

LVMH has also been recognized for its awareness of current issues.

Bernard Arnault, chairman/CEO of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, was presented April 17 with the Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship at The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars of the United States' Smithsonian Institution ceremony in Washington.

The Woodrow Wilson Awards recognizes leaders in business, government, science and the arts who have embraced the issues of their day on local, national and international levels. The awards have been presented in major cities across the nation and around the world ([see story](#)).

This program mixes the conglomerate's passion for both cultivating talent and philanthropic work.

"The program seems to be equal parts altruism and self-interest," Mr. Buchwald said. "It provides high value and potentially lucrative career training to a population that will value it.

"Importantly, it also taps into a plentiful but raw local resource that would be in tremendous demand when refined," he said. "If successful, it will answer a real current need: serving the largest tourist population in the world that spends more per capita when traveling than any other nationality.

"Right now when the Chinese woman walks into an LVMH store in the U.S. or virtually any other store there is a large language barrier with the vast majority of people she comes into contact with. There is a gap between the tourist's desire to spend and the retailer's capacity to communicate and sell effectively to this willing purchaser. A program like this could lessen that gap and, in fact, make it a core strength of the brand."

Final Take

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