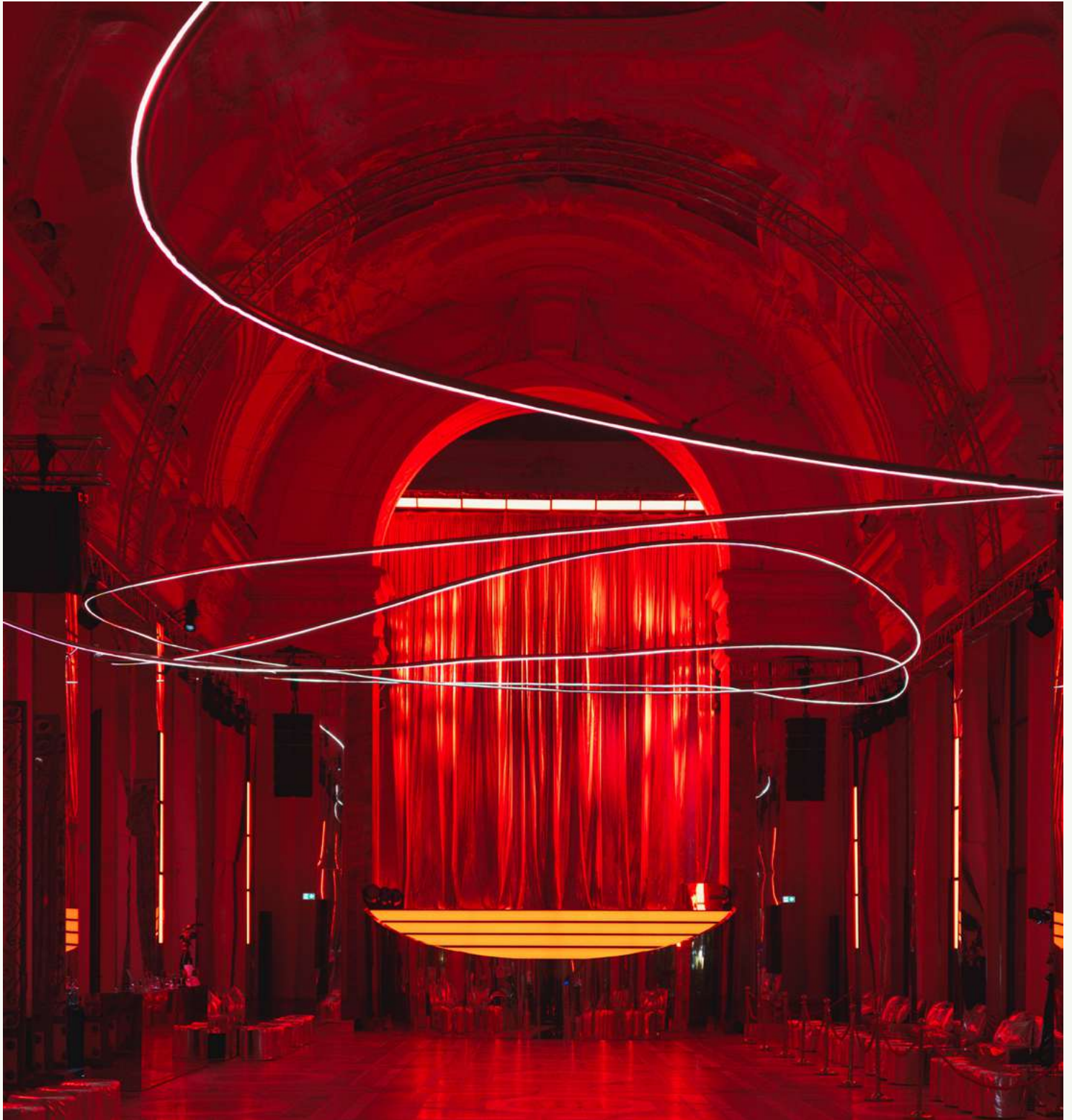


LUXURY'S GREAT RESET



THE INDEPENDENTS

POWERED BY KARLA OTTO

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FOREWORD

Isabelle Chouvet – CEO, The Independents Group



As we prepare for a new year, we at The Independents Group felt it important to reflect on the current state of the luxury industry, which is facing multiple challenges. A mix of global macroeconomic and socio-political disruptors has created an air of uncertainty, leaving consumers feeling cautious, overwhelmed and seeking new meaning. With great challenge, comes great opportunity, presenting the question: how can brands maintain – and even accelerate – desirability in today’s global market?

For our debut group-wide whitepaper, the 16 partners of The Independents Group have come together to decipher what the luxury industry must do to reset and rein-vigorate in 2025 and beyond.

Our experts looked beyond the industry’s internal dynamics to engage directly with the individuals who shape its future: luxury consumers. Through a unique survey, we unveil the mindset and movements of luxury audiences across major luxury mar-kets. Rather than simply defining the ‘today’ we asked them to predict the ‘tomorrow’, enabling us to understand how brands should adapt in a changing world.

One thing is certain: today’s consumers are no longer drawn to brands solely for objects that reflect their identity; instead, they seek brands that shape their life-styles. They are searching for brands that have the ability to tell rich and meaningful stories, brands that serve as entertainment entities, and brands that tap into the local and niche nuances of our ever more diverse cultures and communities. Most impor-tantly, they crave creativity and connection in an era oversaturated with content. To capture their attention, brands will need to work harder, think smarter, and create deeper resonance.

At The Independents, we pride ourselves on embodying the creative excellence and agility required to move at the speed of culture. We have the scale to inspire globally and the know-how to execute locally. Our network of experts and its years of expe-rience in the industry can empower brands to forge deeper connections with their communities through extraordinary experiences and storytelling.

This whitepaper not only examines the challenges and opportunities in this shifting landscape but also highlights how our partners have created and amplified some of the most iconic cultural and creative moments in the sector to date. Our 16 agen-cies, with more than 1,000 creative specialists, are experts in building not just brand moments but entire brand universes.

Join us as we ignite a creative resurgence.

OUR COLLECTIVE

We are a collective of world-leading talents and agencies in communications serving industry leaders in luxury and lifestyle.



ATELIER ATHEM

Workshop specialising in scenography and eco-design dedicated to artistic creation, exploration of new brand territories, and valorisation of architectural heritage.



ATELIER LUM

A Paris and Dubai-based creative agency that designs and produces immersive experiences, event set-up design and ephemeral architectural projects in the world of luxury and culture.



BUREAU BÉATRICE

A luxury multi-media and creative technology company that helps brands connect the dots between people, culture and emotion.



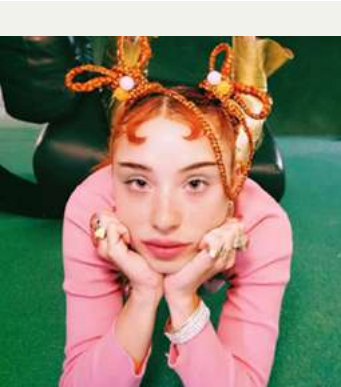
BUREAU BETAK

A creatively led strategic experiential agency powering iconic activations for fashion, luxury, lifestyle and entertainment from Paris, New York, Los Angeles and Shanghai.



BUREAU FUTURE

A full-service agency based in Paris and New York bringing together strategy, creative direction, art buying and production to conceive images, film and experiences.



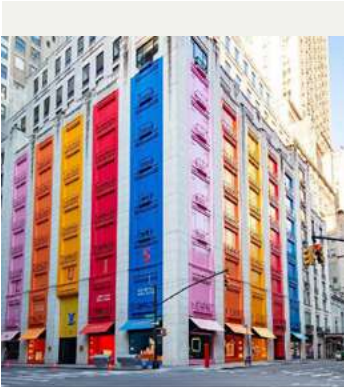
CTZAR

A global social-first strategic and creative agency with integrated production specialising in social media management, influencer marketing and content creation.



INCA

A London and New York based strategic creative and events production agency connecting brands and audiences through live experiences in the luxury and lifestyle space.



k2

A creative agency unlocking the experiential intelligence of luxury brands worldwide.



KARLA OTTO

A full-service brand-building agency specialising in fashion, design, beauty, lifestyle, arts and culture, operating from 15 cities across the globe.



KENNEDY

International experiential consultancy and event production facility, specialising in the conceptualisation and realisation of brand, cultural and entertainment projects.



KITTEN PRODUCTION

A global production agency specialising in stills, motion and digital content, offering full-service from art buying to final delivery for the fashion, beauty and luxury industries.



KITTY EVENTS

Paris-based event agency producing creative events and fashion shows for the fashion, beauty and luxury industries.



LEFTY

An influencer marketing platform that services the growing need for brands to measure the effectiveness of their influencer programs and optimise their operations.



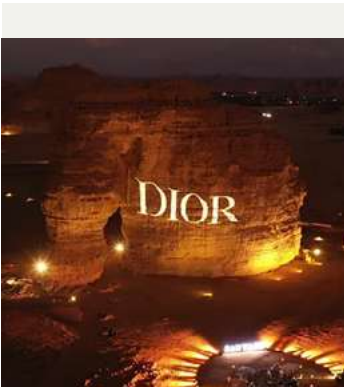
PRODJECT

New York based creative agency specialising in brand strategy, design, and execution for events and content in fashion, music, art, live entertainment, and popular culture.



SUNSHINE

A strategic consultancy, design studio and creative agency specialised in the convergence of brand, culture and entertainment.



THE QODE

A premium, luxury and lifestyle brand communications and events agency offering a specialised approach across the Middle East, North Africa, and India.

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WITH THANKS TO OUR EXTERNAL EXPERTS

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METHODOLOGY

Reports of shifting consumer priorities, economic uncertainty and evolving definitions of luxury have sparked debate, leaving brands questioning how best to adapt and thrive. With its breadth of experience and knowledge, The Independents Group can help businesses navigate a shifting landscape and provide clarity.

The following whitepaper leverages the wealth of knowledge and expertise within our network of agencies. Through round-table discussions and more than 35 hours of expert interviews with market leaders, strategists and creative experts, we have been able to identify the critical themes shaping luxury today.

To ensure our findings were representative, we incorporated a phase of consumer research into the

process. Targeted surveys and interviews with luxury spenders across key markets were conducted to validate and cross-check our expert insights. This dual approach allowed us to trace the luxury consumer’s evolving path to purchase, refine our conclusions, and uncover three pivotal elements that will define the future of luxury brands.

Employing the outstanding expertise of our partners, we designed 10 multiple-choice questions that aimed to draw insights into both current and evolving consumer sentiments. Two distinct methodologies were employed to deepen the analysis and to overcome potential biases found in consumer surveys: Social Survey Circling and 5-Now-3.

1. SOCIAL SURVEY CIRCLING

Traditional survey methods often suffer from self-reporting biases, where respondents unintentionally present an idealised version of themselves. To counter this, our study reframed questions to focus on respondents’ perceptions of their social circles – friends, peers, and communities – rather than their own behaviours. This approach minimises personal biases and yields more accurate insights, supported by research showing that predictions about others’ actions often outperform self-reported data.⁹ Additionally, this method broadens the scope, capturing both individual sentiments and wider social trends, offering a richer perspective on attitudes within key luxury communities.

2. 5-NOW-3

To track shifts in consumer attitudes and forecast future trends, participants were asked to reflect on luxury preferences of their peers five years ago (2019), how they currently feel (2024), and how they anticipate their attitudes will evolve in three years (2027). This timeline offers a comparison of pre-pandemic norms, present behaviours, and future expectations. This longitudinal approach provides a dynamic view of the shifting luxury consumer mindset and purchasing behaviour over time.

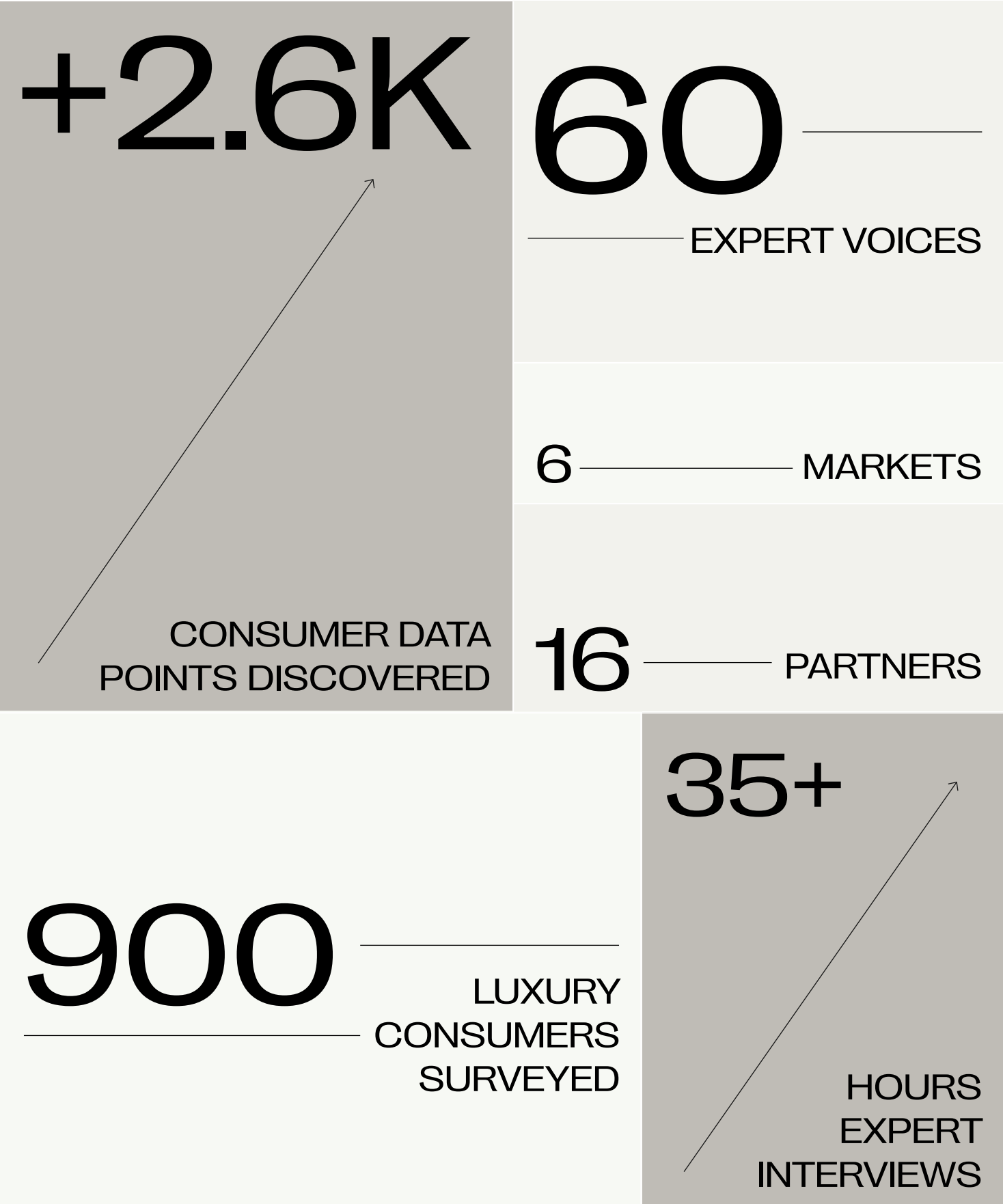
Our study surveyed 900 luxury consumers in six key markets: China, France, Italy, the UAE, the UK, and the US. Relevant screener questions filtered all respondents by qualifying their spend on luxury goods in the last 12 months, ensuring the validity of our desired audience.

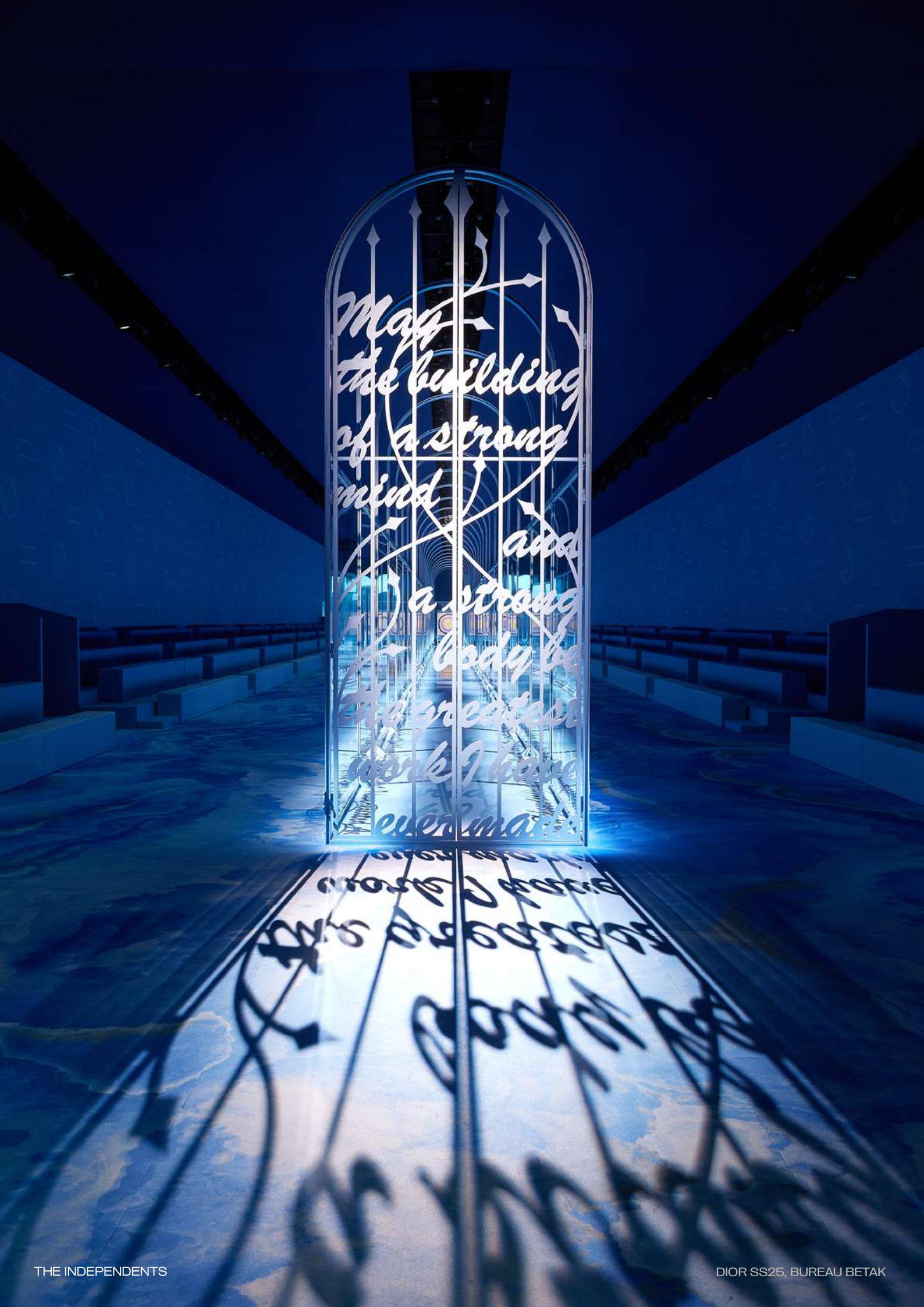
By capturing how participants predict their sentiments will change in the next three years across these key regions, the study builds a forward-looking perspective, backed by The Independents’ expertise gained from years of working at the forefront of the luxury industry across experiences and events, communications, VIP & Influence and cultural strategy. Through this research, the group has composed actionable insights for luxury brands to align with evolving consumer priorities and market dynamics, helping craft the future of the industry.

WHAT IS pt.?

‘pt.’ is an abbreviation for percentage point, which is a unit used to calculate the difference between two percentages. For example, if a rate increases from 10% to 12%, it has increased by 2 percentage points.

With thanks to our data consultants, Early Studies.





UNDERSTANDING ———

THIS REPORT

Through hours of round-table discussions and consumer surveys, we have unearthed prominent shifts in the luxury landscape. Our report presents an upfront of the core drivers shaping consumers' desires for luxury, followed by a clear 'path to purchase' model.

01.
WHY FUTURE DRIVERS: WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS CHALLENGING LUXURY TODAY AND TOMORROW?

02.
WHAT ENRICHING OBJECTS: WHAT WILL CONSUMERS BUY AND WHY?

03.
WHO A PARADIGM OF PERSPECTIVES: WHO ARE THE VOICES INSPIRING THEIR PURCHASE JOURNEY?

04.
WHERE SHAPING SPACES: WHERE WILL PEOPLE WANT TO EXPERIENCE BRANDS IN THE FUTURE?

LUXURY’S GREAT — RESET

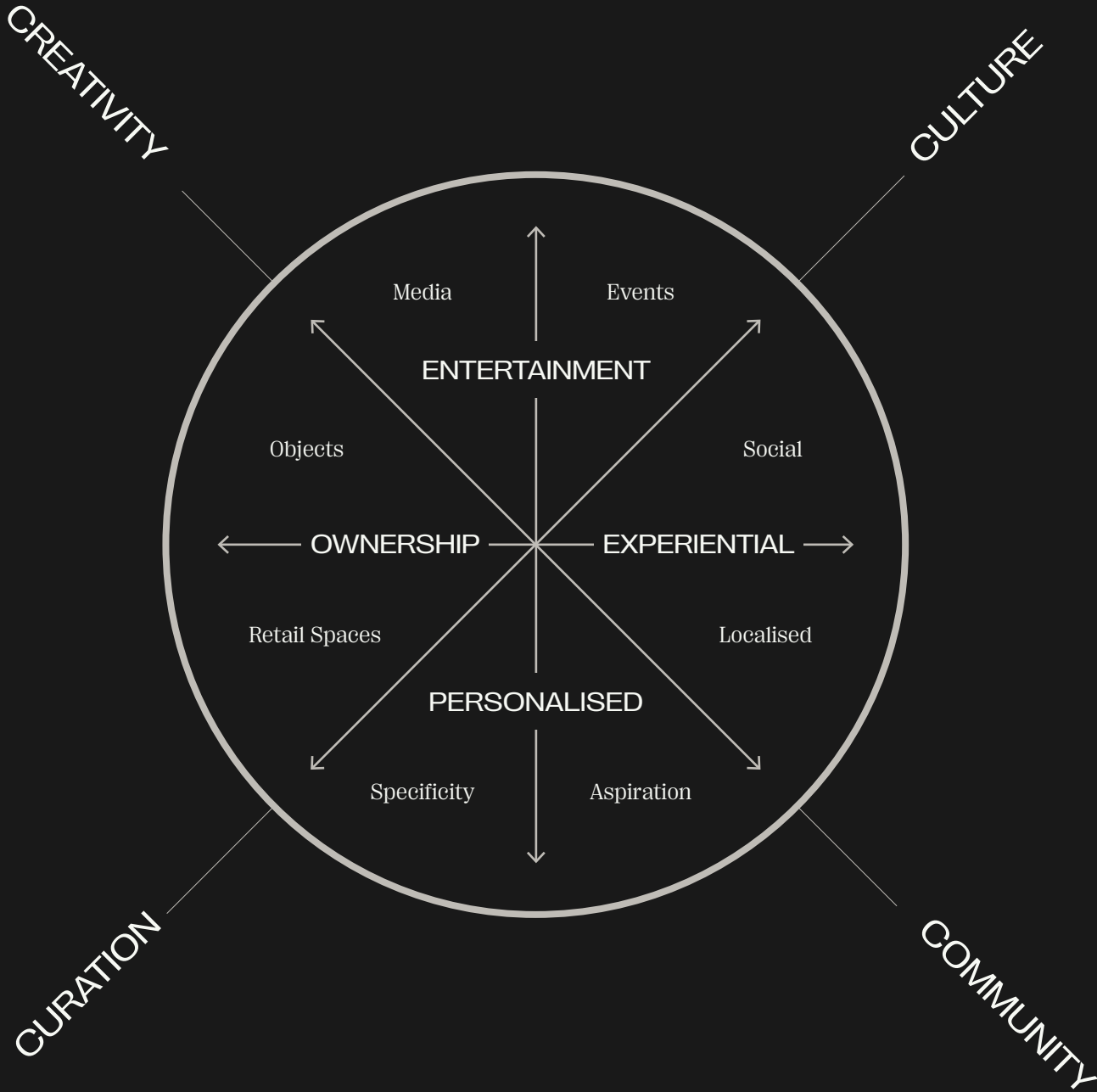
Historically, luxury goods have served as markers of status and identity. The clothes we wear, the experiences we participate in, and the objects we covet have long signified our social standing, taste, affluence, and personal values. But what happens when these drivers shift?

Today’s global landscape, marked by economic volatility, social upheaval, environmental urgency, rapid digitisation, and political change, has prompted a significant shake-up in luxury consumers’ expectations and behaviours. Across the six key markets surveyed, traditional drivers of luxury consumption are evolving from surface-level status symbols to deeper, more meaningful connections. What consumers desire is also changing – from designer clothes and handbags to appreciating assets such as art, watches and jewellery, and interior design, alongside experiences and travels that enrich their lives.

In the future, consumers will seek luxury goods with meaningful stories and identities, looking inward and demanding that their purchases positively shape who they are. They will aim to deepen their understanding of, and relationship with, the artefacts they surround themselves with and the events they immerse themselves in. They will seek not only beauty but personal resonance and cultural enrichment when they spend on luxury. And, they will demand that brands behave as entertainers, as visionaries for creative excellence, and as protagonists who actively shape and curate culture and the community around them, placing greater emphasis on a human touch.

For luxury, this presents an abundance of challenges – and also a wealth of opportunities. Opportunities for rich storytelling, creativity, and powerful partnerships to reinvigorate and reset a stagnating luxury market. Our study presents findings that forecast long-term change across the sector. The Independents Group, alongside our community of industry thought-leaders, has translated these data findings into insights that embody the collective mindset and creative expertise of our partners.

WHAT’S SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LUXURY COMMUNICATIONS?





15 FUTURE

16 DRIVERS

FUTURE DRIVERS: _____

_____ THE FORECAST

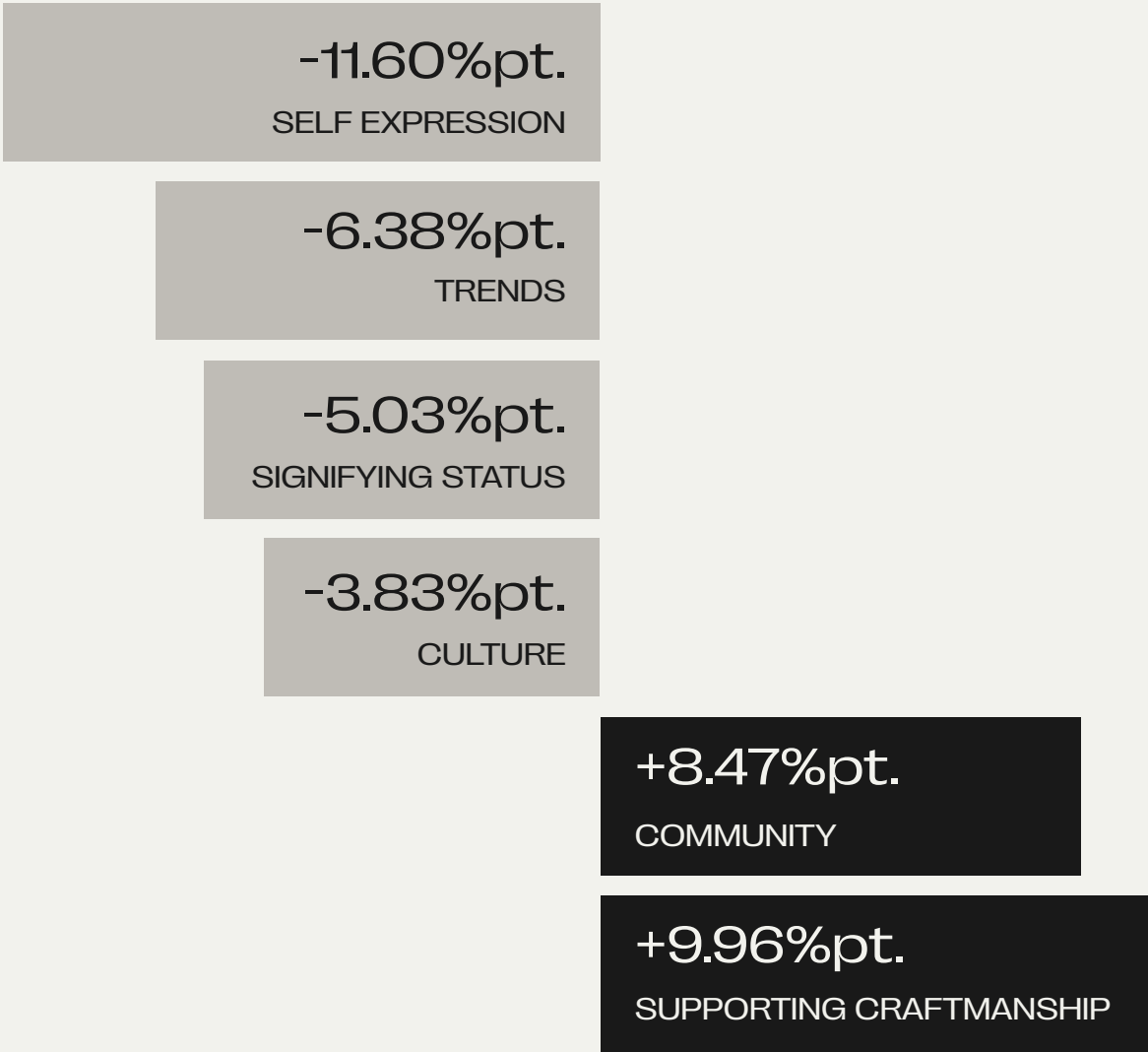
The traditional drivers of luxury goods are forecast significant change by 2027. The codes of status and self expression are evolving, with consumers gravitating towards a more collective experience. As a result, demonstration of access to luxury is no longer implied via ownership, but a sense of belonging. Consumers are looking inward, focusing on the human sentiment of community when they seek a luxury experience.

Overwhelmed by our digital landscape and an era of hyper-abundance in product, they are fine tuning their purchase choices. ‘Trend’ has become a throwaway word and sees consistent decline, whereas craftsmanship and creativity are heightening as core motivators. They are seeking objects that

provide creative enrichment and support makers and designers over micro-trends that place speed over process.

Some curious detractors: whereas, between 2019-2024, ‘Culture’ grows as central motivator, the concept is forecast to decline. Similarly to trends, brands should be wary about using culture as a one-size-fits-all strategy, instead, looking inwards about what defines their own culture and community to thrive in this modern landscape.

BY 2027, IT IS PROJECTED THAT CONSUMERS WILL SEEK*...



*Global average. Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

i.i TRENDS: SPEED OVER PROCESS

Prior to digitisation and the rise of social media, the cyclical nature of cultural trends moved at a more digestible pace. Trends trickled down via tastemakers or bubbled up through countercultural movements. They carried more permanence and provenance, enabling authentic communities to form around shared identities and beliefs. Being part of these groups required lifestyle alignment – through, say, liking the same music or going to the same places – and ownership of items that signalled a sense of belonging.

Fast forward to now, and our digital world has accelerated the trend cycle. Whereas trends might once have evolved organically within niche communities, the sophistication of algorithms now creates a vacuum effect, diluting individuality in culture while streamlining the information and media we consume. The result is less diversity and faster turnover of micro-trends. Our survey shows how this has impacted the luxury consumer: globally, the driver to be ‘in the know with trends’ has declined consistently since 2019 and is expected to drop by an additional 6.38%pt. by 2027.

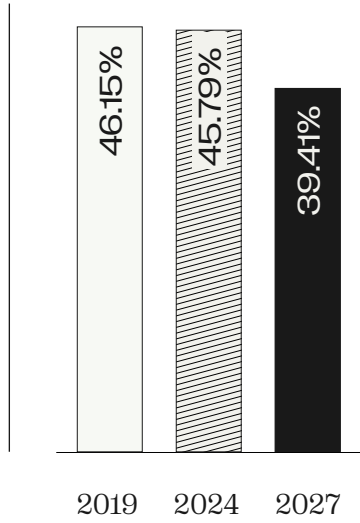
‘You used to find your style and community more readily through systems such as editorials or fashion shows, which were trusted, curated intermediaries,’ says Jenna Barnet, CEO of next-generation strategic agency Sunshine. ‘This has become conflated by social media, which has little to no criteria.’

Our digital lives expose us to an endless stream of information: the consumer is overwhelmed, and brands need to work harder to stand out. As a result, ‘trust’ and ‘curation’ are critical words.

Reacting to the pace of micro-trends has become a north star for many brands looking to tap into the cultural zeitgeist, but our experts’ advice comes with a warning: while trend-hopping can place you on the map, it can be seen as lacking substance – especially in an age when the consumer is increasingly overwhelmed by content. ‘Tapping into trends on social media shouldn’t be done in an opportunistic way,’ warns Camille Olivier, co-founder of leading social media agency CZTAR. ‘It should be about creating a moment of connection. It’s an opportunity to deepen the brand’s identity.’

Algorithms now create a vacuum effect, diluting individuality in culture while streamlining the information and media we consume.

THE DRIVER FOR TRENDS DECLINES*



*Global avergae. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.

i.ii CULTURE IS STATUS NOW

As trends become more accessible, luxury consumption is increasingly driven by culture, where luxury serves not just as a signifier of status but as an entry point into a meaningful community. Our data indicates that while ‘Self-expression and identity’ and ‘Signalling status and wealth’ remain important, both are forecast to decline collectively by 16.63%pt. by 2027. Instead, ‘A cultural connection’ has risen as a primary motivator towards luxury, growing 8.54%pt. between 2019-2024.

‘This illustrates culture replacing the older model of trends – and those trends being set by someone else,’ says Ed Warren, Chief Creative Officer of Sunshine. ‘Consumers are beginning to see luxury as a culture they can participate in.’ Indeed, the word ‘culture’ has become a currency in the luxury ecosystem and a way for brands to grow their affinity among consumers, who now have a plethora of trends at their fingertips. But how does commercialism work in the vast concept of culture?

‘The key for brands is understanding the difference between categories and cultures: a culture has depth, it has lore. You can get nerdy in it,’ says Warren. ‘That requires consumers to be hyper-literate in that culture in order to participate – representing a shift from status being represented solely through an object or price point to being represented through knowledge.’

As a result, many leading brands have jumped to broaden their reach into lifestyle and culture, with a range of cross-converging strategies and activations, designed to amplify brand affinity and foster deep community. Yet many have faced challenges in 2024, revealing the complexities of cultivating cultural capital and commercial revenue in the current market.

With that in mind, it is of note that ‘cultural interest’ is forecast for a slight retraction of 3.83%pt. into 2027, so although it remains higher than ever on the consumer index, there are early indications of a downturn, mirroring the homogeneity and declining power of trends. Importantly, in order to resonate in today’s market, brands can’t simply ‘show up’ in culture. They must author their own relevance rather than simply join an existing conversation. ‘Culture is a big word, it can mean a million different things,’ says Sunshine’s Barnet, who suggests brands should, ‘Think deeply about how they craft their unique cultural universe.’

Today’s most successful luxury brands are creating layered, engaging universes with a distinct meaning and message. Sunshine likens this to world-building in the entertainment industry, as seen in franchises, such as Star Wars and Marvel, which construct worlds with both depth and continuity, allowing them to tell new stories while maintaining identity, encouraging consumers to connect and form deep communities. ‘We don’t need big ideas; we need rich ideas that lead people into an environment directly tied to the brand’s world from the beginning,’ explains Warren. ‘The more vivid and deep you make your ecosystem, the more you draw people into it.’



ALAÏA SS25, BUREAU BETAK

i.iii COMMUNITIES BECOME
CAREFULLY CURATED

As consumers step back from the mass concept of trends and deeper into the cultural worlds they choose to participate in, community is integral. Pitched to grow by 8.47%pt. globally, ‘Belonging to a community or group’ growing as a driver showcases that idea that consumers fundamentally seek a sense of belonging via luxury.

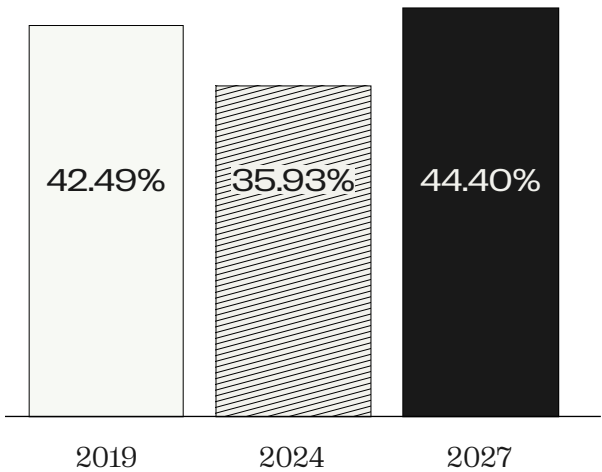
But what does the human need for community mean in a world which is increasingly digital first? ‘With social media, you have access to new communities,’ says CTZAR’s Olivier. ‘This differs from the days of traditional media where everything was more standardised.’ The digital world has opened new doors for building emotional ties between people. Indeed, although the internet can feel expansive, it has given rise to an underbelly of niche and novel communities; in this new landscape, brands should harness the power of both the digital and physical worlds to amplify this growing need.

‘Everything is about community,’ says Clémentine Tarnaud McEwan, Chief Business Officer at The Independents Group, ‘In a changing world, this concept will get even stronger.’ For Tarnaud McEwan, the future of brand communities goes against the current goal of mass reach and virality and will move into a more curated approach, prioritising experiences that promote intimacy over exposure. She predicts brands will harness communities with a more localist approach, ‘Brands should look to activate more locally, via talent and local sensibilities to create better connections and deeper relationships to future-proof.’

Consumers want the purveyors of culture to reflect their community’s values and needs. As this strengthens, brands will have to extend beyond consumerism and product, into something deeper, where experience is central. ‘What are you offering them that they cannot buy?’ asks Tarnaud McEwan.

‘Everything is about community.
In a changing world, this concept
will get even stronger.’

THE RISE OF COMMUNITY*



+8.47%pt.**
Community is
forecast to grow
into 2027

*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category.
All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.
**Percentile point change between 2024-2027.



GUCCI ‘CHIME’, SUNSHINE

PART I

ENRICHING — OBJECTS

ENRICHING OBJECTS: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I.I DESIGN VIA DIFFERENTIATION

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **LEATHER GOODS AND APPAREL DECLINE:** Overwhelmed by choice and rising prices, traditional luxury categories like handbags are forecast to drop 13.69%pt. by 2027.
- **DEMAND FOR INNOVATION:** Younger generations seek bold, differentiated designs aligned with their values.
- **WINNERS LIKE MIU MIU:** By blending cultural relevance, creativity and hit products, Miu Miu climbed by 105% YoY in Q3 2024, contributing to 25% of sales for the Prada Group.⁵

LOOKING AHEAD:

²⁵ While the ‘quiet luxury’ trend may resonate, brands shouldn’t be afraid to take risks, offering unique designs that will stand out and be remembered.

I.II THE CURATED SELF

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **LUXURY VINTAGE GROWS:** Consumers value individuality and heritage, driving a forecasted 11.47%pt. growth in luxury vintage by 2027.
- **THE INDIVIDUALITY BOOM:** Designer archive pieces are a way to showcase fashion knowledge and sense of unique style in a saturated market.
- **THE HERMÈS FACTOR:** Timeless craftsmanship and exclusivity, exemplified by Hermès, position brands for success in both primary and secondary markets.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Add cachet to your brand’s designs by going behind the scenes, showcasing the craft that goes into making your collections.

I.III THE ART OF APPRECIATION

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **RISING INVESTMENT IN COLLECTIBLES:** Art and Photography are forecast to grow by 9.48%pt. and Interior Design by 8.44%pt. from 2024–2027, reflecting a desire for enriching, curated objects.
- **THE LUXURIFICATION OF ART:** Art and Design events are now platforms for cultural capital and social visibility.
- **APPRECIATING ASSETS:** Appreciating assets like watches and jewellery are heirlooms for the future, taking over as the number one luxury category.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Luxury is evolving toward meaningful investments, with consumers seeking emotional, cultural, and financial value in their purchases. Look out for new cultural fairs with less saturated brand activations and create immersive experiences that align with their audiences.

I.IV THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **EXPERIENCE FIRST:** Travel (+14.19%pt.) and fine dining (+11.81%pt.) are overtaking material goods as status symbols.
- **BOUTIQUE APPEAL:** Social media is impacting tourist destinations. Luxury consumers are looking for less-crowded, more boutique experiences.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Future luxury will focus on curating meaningful, shareable experiences over ownership.

APPARATUS, KARLA OTTO



ENRICHING OBJECTS: _____

THE FORECAST

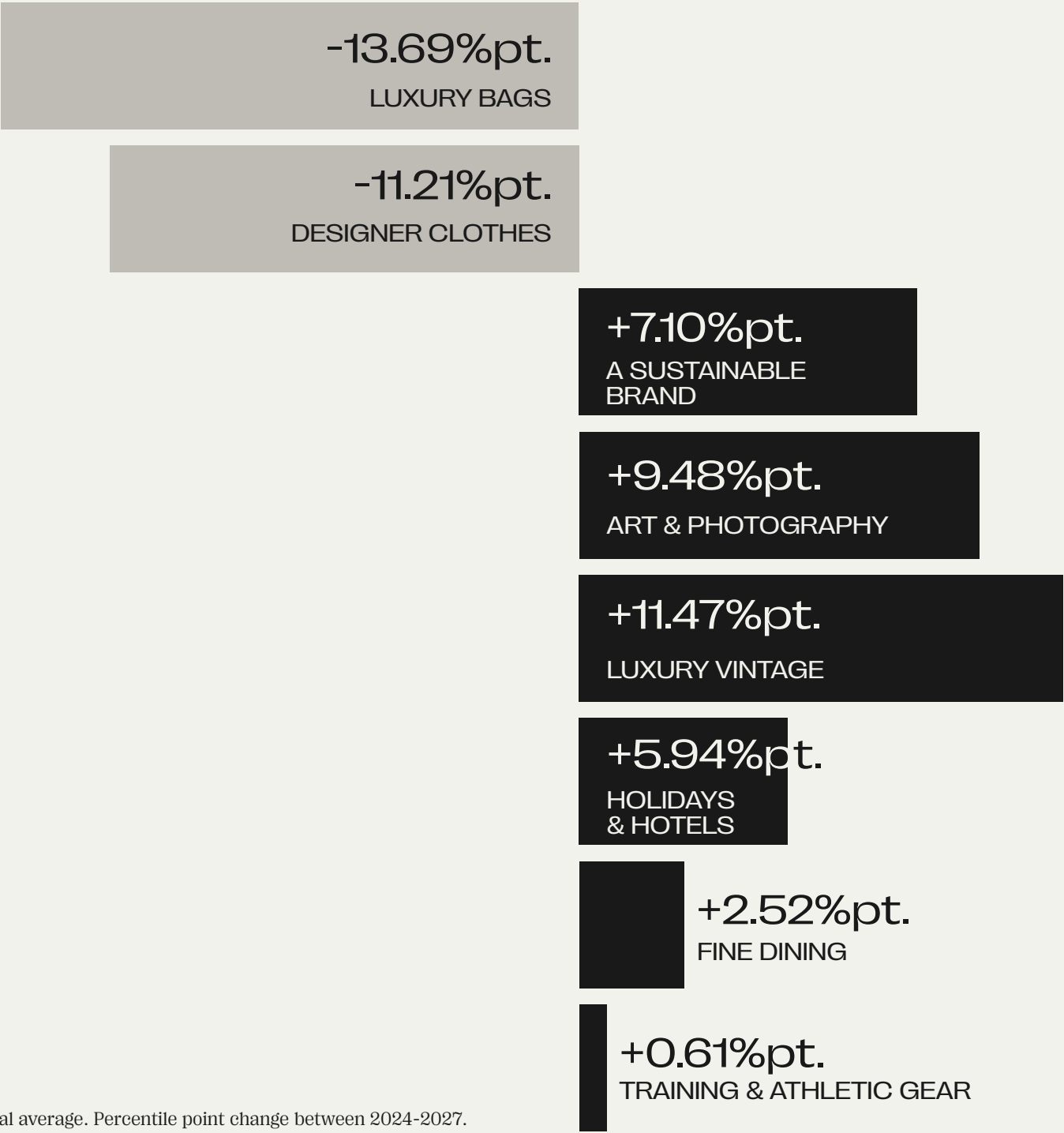
Historically and today, what we buy reveals as much about our culture as it does about our individual personalities or tastes. The objects we own become artefacts to future generations. But what does that mean when culture becomes homogenous? What will our consumption habits today say to the generations of tomorrow?

Our data shows luxury consumers are spending more selectively, placing greater value on objects that demonstrate creative excellence or have a history that displays our knowledge and individuality. Art, design and photography provide such cultural gravitas, as well as possible appreciation in value. Our drive for immediacy is declining in favour of longevity: consumers still have a desire for luxury goods, but they require differentiation.

Meanwhile, experiential sectors continue to boom. ‘Experiences over possessions’ has become a catch-all phrase in luxury strategy and although this has had some influence on the slowdown in goods-centric verticals such as fashion, it is not the sole factor. Experience has been amplified as a commodity thanks to social media: experiences now have permanence. This shows no sign of slowing.

The future will see a balance between the immediacy of experiences and the impression they leave, as well as objects that persist in both time and memory.

BY 2027, IT IS PROJECTED THAT
CONSUMERS WILL BUY*...



*Global average. Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

I.I DESIGN VIA DIFFERENTIATION

THE DECLINE OF LUXURY GOODS

We live in an era of product abundance. Consumers now have access to an endless stream of choice and fleeting trends. Our data points to signs of retraction in the traditional luxury goods sector, suggesting that consumers could be beginning to feel overwhelmed or uninspired by categories such as luxury bags and apparel. Although they remain high in the index, both see current peaks that are forecast to decline in the next three years, with luxury bags seeing the most significant reduction of 13.69%pt. universally across the six markets surveyed.

A winning formula in the luxury sector of the past was to stoke desire in an object through design differentiation and creative excellence. However, as culture has broadened and been digitalised, the pressure of competition has led many brands to create commercial failsafes. ‘We’re seeing an overload of offering without enough variability or differentiation,’ says Elisabetta Tangorra, Chief Brand Officer of brand-building agency Karla Otto. ‘Bags used to be iconic symbols that embodied the identity of a brand – now, a shortage of creativity coupled with a lack of distinctive styles have made it very difficult to find a new must-have.’

LUXURY BAGS AND CLOTHES DECLINE*



*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.



MARNI SS25, VIA SPOTLIGHT



LORO PIANA FW23, VIA SPOTLIGHT

LUXURY’S RISING PRICES

Make no mistake that luxury fashion’s recent dip is partly due to economic factors. Skyrocketing prices have alienated fashion’s aspirational consumer and made the high-net-worth consumer increasingly wary. According to a report from HSBC, today’s prices are on average 54% higher than before Covid, and the average price of a luxury handbag has increased more than 32% in the past three years in China.^{2,3} It is no surprise that, according to our research, the most significant decline in appetite for luxury bags lies within the Chinese market, where an almost 16.95%pt. decrease is forecast in the next three years. ‘Consumers here are thinking twice before buying luxury goods,’ says Kaisang Chu, Vice President, Business and Operations, China, at experiential agency Bureau Betak. ‘Even entry-level bags are unaffordable for many – they are switching priorities to opportunities like travel.

WILL QUIET LUXURY LAST?

Economic uncertainty affects fashion: there is a natural stigma against flaunting luxury items in tough times. Similar to the rise of minimalism, spurred by the great recession in 2008, the recent ‘quiet luxury’ trend sees consumers choosing understated designs that have an ‘If you know, you know’ exclusivity.⁴ But unlike in 2008, today’s iteration of ‘quiet luxury’ has been amplified by social media and pop culture, such as hit TV series ‘Succession’, resulting in a trend that has quickly gained mass awareness. While the appetite for ‘Luxury basics’ is forecast a small growth of 1.56%pt. by 2027, when placed alongside the other consumer categories in our survey, ‘luxury basics’ slides down the consumer agenda. This showcases that although the concept of beautifully made, timeless will remain buoyant, there are longer-term signals of change at large.

-16.95%pt.*
Forecast Spend
Decline of Luxury
Bags: China

*Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

A DESIRE FOR DIFFERENCE

The consumer is hungry for difference: 42.55% of those surveyed said that by 2027, ‘A new designer doing something different’ would be the second most bankable option for the future consumer. ‘A younger generation in particular is more inclined to seek something fresh and look for something in line with their own values, such as individuality, inclusivity and sustainability,’ says Lissy Von Schwarzkopf, Chief Business Officer at Karla Otto. ‘Younger designers are both creative with their product and the way they market: they’re often social first and have an engaging way of approaching that younger customer base.’ Von Schwarzkopf cites designers such as Collina Strada as a brand whose storytelling, values and product clearly resonates among its community; according to Lefty data, the brand saw a 303% season-on-season increase in Earned Media Value (EMV) for its SS25 show.

LUXURY PRODUCTS NEED CREATIVE REIGNITION

Self expression remains a key motivator for consumers in luxury and it is the task of the design house to provide a vehicle for expressing identity through unique product offers. ‘Designers must take risks and invest in the design process,’ says Alexander Werz, CEO of Karla Otto and Partner at The Independents Group. ‘Fashion should also be considered as a much bigger picture – a brand needs to be a whole lifestyle.’

‘Fashion should also be considered as a much bigger picture – a brand needs to be a whole lifestyle.’

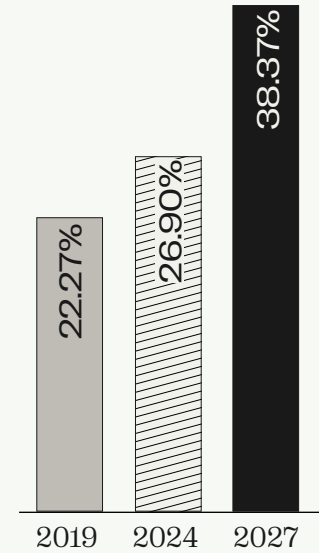
31 PRODUCT ICONS DRIVE MIU MIU’S +105% GROWTH

Amid this downturn, some companies, such as Miu Miu, remain buoyant. The brand has consistently posted impressive growth: in Q3 it climbed by 105% YoY, contributing to 25 percent of sales for the Prada Group.⁵ Much of its success can be attributed to its presence at various cultural events as a lifestyle brand with a clear point of view. However, as Werz points out, its tangible growth has largely been driven by hit products, such as the micro skirt and its sneaker collaboration with New Balance. The Prada group’s report credits the success to ‘dynamic creativity that leads to increased desirability’, a rare feat in a market of hyper-abundance.



MIU MIU, VIA SPOTLIGHT

I.II THE — CURATED — SELF



THE RISE OF LUXURY VINTAGE*

In a world where the flux of micro-trends is causing trend fatigue and novelty is highly valued, consumers are looking to luxury vintage as a vehicle for self-expression, alongside environmental and economic factors. Our research identifies a growing desire for collection over consumption, with the goal of curating a wardrobe of archival pieces and iconic designs, which are vehicles for individualism. As a category, luxury vintage is forecast 11.47%pt. growth between 2024–2027, with more than 38% of those surveyed saying it would be their priority category by 2027.

BACK TO THE ARCHIVES

The rise in luxury vintage is also due to consumers wanting to display their knowledge. ‘You need to have a certain education to wear vintage,’ says Karla Otto’s Werz. ‘It’s about showing that you are doing something different; it is a demonstration of your taste level.’

Alongside the desire for difference, heritage remains top of mind: 44.16% of those surveyed said this would be the number one reason why they would invest in a luxury brand by 2027. We are stuck in a parallel universe, both nostalgic for the past and paradoxically seeking newness – vintage is something that provides both.

The UAE has a particularly high forecast for luxury vintage, seeing a 10.66%pt. forecast increase in interest by 2027. Again, a collector’s mentality is top of mind: ‘Our region has the biggest collection of couture out of any market,’ says Ayman Fakoussa, Managing Partner of The Qode, a premium luxury and lifestyle brand communications and events agency, based in Dubai. ‘They may be expensive but they’re one of a kind. They have a special story or meaning.’ Once again, the story is critical to consumer desire.

44.16%*

Say heritage would be the number one reason why they would invest in a luxury brand by 2027.

*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.

HERMÈS’ FOCUS ON CRAFT AND HERITAGE

One house that stands out for its prevalence in the archival market is Hermès. The brand emphasises its devotion to craftsmanship, with every product purporting to embody a rich history that adds layers of meaning over time, as well as value. The success of the Birkin as an object of desire shows how good design not only endures but also improves with age, weaving personal stories into its legacy to achieve heirloom status.

Rita Nakouzi, Global Head of Content at Christie’s auction house points to Hermès as exemplary of design which stands the test of time. ‘It’s the craftsmanship behind Hermès that means it can’t produce that many, creating a business of exclusivity,’ she comments. ‘Plus, the price keeps rising – making for a hotbed of a secondary market.’ The retail price of the Birkin 30 in Togo leather increased 7.8% from 2019 to 2024 – secondary market prices tend to follow this rate of increase, while selling for 2.2 to 2.4 times the primary market price.⁶ Solidifying its products not only as storied pieces, but also as failsafe investments, Hermès has positioned itself at the intersection of artful legacy and financial prudence.

We are stuck in a parallel universe, both nostalgic for the past and paradoxically seeking newness – vintage is something that provides both.



HERMÈS, VIA SPOTLIGHT

I.III THE ART OF APPRECIATION

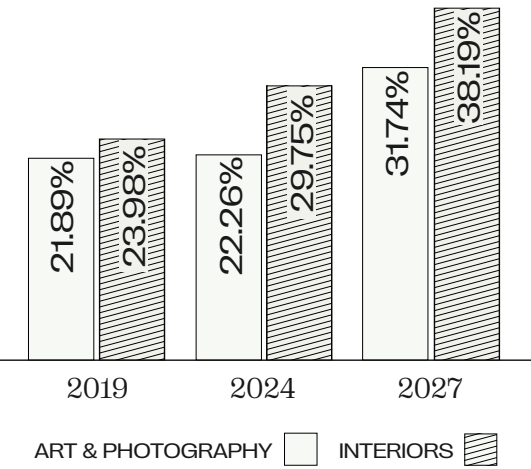
FROM CONSUMPTION TO COLLECTION

One of the most fascinating shifts seen in our study was the forecast rise in intention to invest across art, photography and interior design categories. Art and photography are forecast 9.48%pt. growth between 2024–2027, while interior design is projected to increase by 8.44%pt. This demonstrates that luxury consumers are moving from a mindset of consumption to one of collection. There’s an almost ‘pre-historical’ instinct at play – just as early humans marked their existence through carvings and artefacts, today’s collectors use their homes to signify a life well lived, creating heirlooms for their own experiences. But, beyond the pandemic, what has caused the shift?

THE LUXURIFICATION OF ART

One line of thought is that interest across these categories has been amplified by thought-leaders across other luxury sectors such as the fashion world. Nakouzi refers to the phenomena as ‘the luxurification’ of art. ‘There are certain creative directors in adjacent worlds who really embrace art and design, and by bringing these inspirations into their work, they introduce their audiences into these more niche worlds and make the unattainable feel more palpable.’ Nakouzi points to fashion industry figures, such as Marc Jacobs and Raf Simons, as masters of these types of cultural convergence. ‘If you have someone familiar in the fashion world incorporating art into their work, you become more confident in your own understanding of these categories.’

THE RISE OF ART AND INTERIORS*



*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.



LORO PIANA AT MILAN DESIGN WEEK 2024, VIA GETTY



INTERNI VENOSTA AT MILAN DESIGN WEEK 2024, VIA GETTY

NEW CULTURAL HOTSPOTS

Coincidentally, footfall has been rising across art, design and photography events globally. Salone del Mobile 2024 saw a 20.2% increase in attendees over 2024 and Karla Otto’s Werz points out the recent buzz around events such as this year’s Photo Paris.⁷ ‘I’ve been attending for 12 years, and I’ve never seen so many people there,’ says Werz. Our three-year forecast shows evidence of that rise in interest: both Art Basel (+3.69%pt.) and the Venice Biennale (+3.71%pt.), saw increased interest, with several clients of The Independents activating at each event. For instance, Karla Otto client Belmond unveiled a new carriage of the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express train, designed by street artist JR and titled ‘L’Observatoire’, during this year’s Venice Art Biennale, generating a total \$387K EMV on social media according to Lefty data.

‘Tapping into the world of art isn’t new – but it seems like brands are pushing their strategies further,’ says Marc Le Pitre, Founder of Atelier LUM, an agency that designs and produces elevated scenography and architectural projects. The agency has worked alongside brands, such as Louis Vuitton, to bolster its presence in the art world, including creating an artistic concept highlighting the house’s city guides and the works of Yann Kebbi at Art Basel 2023.

These fairs have evolved significantly from their initial purpose as bustling marketplaces for press and buyers to spaces where consumers can show their cultural capital, social visibility, and awareness of cultural trends. Miu Miu’s partnership with the Public Programme of Art Basel Paris this year through the ‘Tales and Tellers’ exhibition is a key callout. ‘It worked because the brand is very consistent in its approach and links to art, making it the best way for Miu Miu to promote itself,’ says Karla Otto’s Tangorra. ‘They are the reference point for how brands should get into this platform – being there with meaning.’ The activation felt authentic as part of the brand’s ongoing narrative of intellectualism and femininity and through Miu Miu’s use of frequent collaborator, artist Goshka Macuga, to direct the exhibition.

Bearing in mind the retractions across other verticals, the interest in art, photography and design demonstrates consumers adopting an investment attitude, seeking assets that appreciate over time. ‘If a bag and an art piece are the same price, consumers are veering towards the better investment opportunity,’ says The Independents’ Clémentine Tarnaud McEwan.

Art fairs have evolved from their initial purpose as bustling marketplaces to spaces where consumers can show their cultural capital.



LOUIS VUITTON, ART BASEL POP-UP, ATELIER LUM

I.IV THE EXPERIENCE ————— ECONOMY

EXPERIENCE IS THE NEW COMMODITY

Our study shows that consumer demand for the experiential remains insatiable. On average, the desire to spend on holidays and hotels saw a forecast eight-year rise of 14.19%pt., while ‘fine dining’ saw growth of 11.81%pt. in the same period. These findings align with broader market trends that suggest a prioritisation of culturally enriching activities and shared experiences. ‘Customers are getting bored with products, with their interest shifting towards more exclusive categories such as fine art, or experiences, such as travel or fine dining,’ notes Tangorra. ‘Of course, we all still want to participate in the game of fashion, but only when products feel truly meaningful.’

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media continues to be a major driver behind travel choices, with certain destinations and experiences going viral. Sunshine Chief Creative Officer, Ed Warren, says: ‘Holidays and hotels now bring status through social media. Experiences become as valuable as tangible objects because consumers are commoditising them, making them visible to many more people than just those they are travelling with.’

‘Holidays and hotels now bring status through social media. Experiences become as valuable as tangible objects because consumers are commoditising them, making them visible to many more people than just those they are travelling with.’

But, social media also means some tourist destinations are ever more crowded. To escape, the luxury consumer is seeking unique stays away from the masses. Embodying the need for community and culturally rich experiences, Karla Otto client Kisawa Sanctuary, a resort in Mozambique, hires 80% of its construction workforce and 90% of its operational team locally, while guests can engage in purposeful experiences, such as shark-tagging and whale song recording. This also aligns with our survey’s projected +6.68%pt. interest in boutique hotels by 2027, meaning consumers are seeking enriching experiences through smaller hotels that will curate bespoke and unique activities for them.



KISAWA SANCTUARY, BEGUERRA ISLAND, KARLA OTTO



PART II

A PARADIGM OF PERSPECTIVES

A PARADIGM OF PERSPECTIVES: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

II.I BECOMING ENTERTAINMENT

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **COMPELLING CONTENT:** Consumers increasingly value compelling brand content, with 39.92% preferring brands with strong storytelling over celebrity endorsements, a trend set to grow by 2027.
- **BRANDS AS ENTERTAINERS:** Shift from product placements to creating full entertainment experiences. Content should have a narrative, featuring relatable characters and aspirational lifestyles.
- **SHOP AS YOU WATCH:** Leverage new tools that let viewers discover and shop products directly from film and TV content.
- **BUILDING FANDOMS:** Well-crafted entertainment can create social media buzz, building loyal fan communities.

LOOKING AHEAD:

The future lies in creating entertainment-driven content, such as mini-series or documentaries, that embody your brand’s ethos. Platforms like TikTok offer ideal formats for experimenting with serialised story-first strategies.

II.II ASPIRATION OVER INFLUENCE

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **SUCCESS STORIES:** CEOs and athletes are becoming key figures of aspiration, valued for real achievements and talents, shifting focus from superficial influence to authentic stories.
- **THE ATHLETE EFFECT:** Sports remain a strong focus for luxury brands, offering aspirational and authentic alignment.
- **A RETURN TO LONG-FORM:** Podcasts are predicted to grow by 3.67%pt. by 2027, providing luxury with a deeper narrative exploration.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Position your brand’s founder and key figures as aspirational storytellers, using podcasts or long-form content to share authentic journeys. Sports partnerships remain a strong avenue to associate with values, such as resilience, hard work, and reward, resonating deeply with modern luxury consumers.

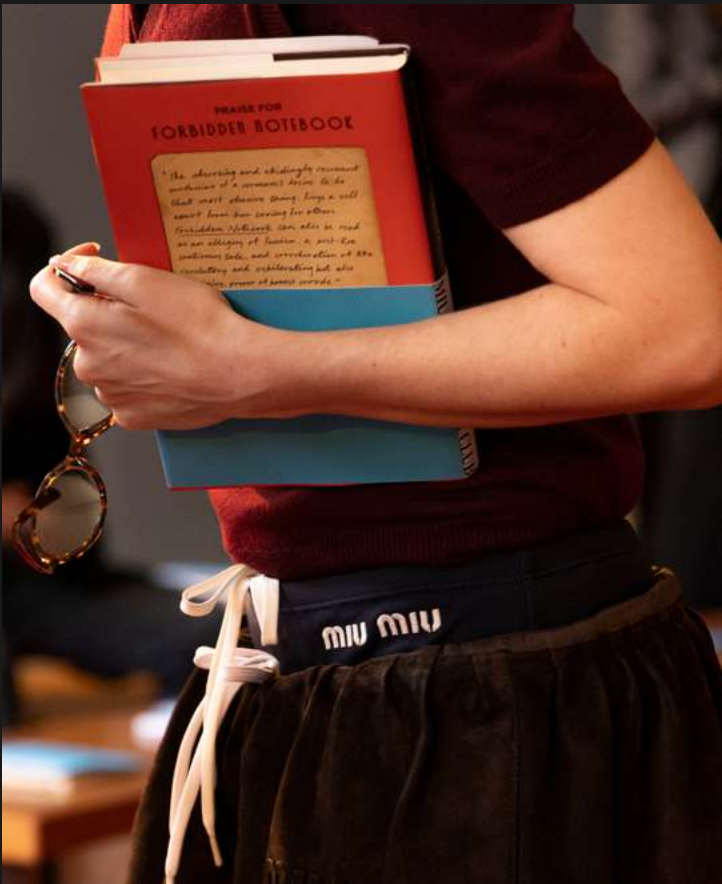
II.III CURATING INFLUENCE

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **INFLUENCE IS CHANGING:** Luxury consumers continue to find resonance with niche creators, who deliver higher engagement rates than celebrities.
- **POWER OF LOCALITY:** The influence of local influencers is expected to grow by 8.43%pt. by 2027, as brands recognise the power of local expertise in creating authentic, culturally relevant experiences.
- **BRAND CURATORS:** Tastemakers, such as stylists, editors, and artists, inspire and inform online audiences, shaping creative discourse and product assortments.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Build a carefully curated network of tastemakers who align with your brand’s values to amplify your message. Avoid blanket strategies; instead, tailor content to local markets and niche communities for a deeper connection and higher engagement.



MIU MIU LITERARY CLUB, KENNEDY

A PARADIGM OF PERSPECTIVES:

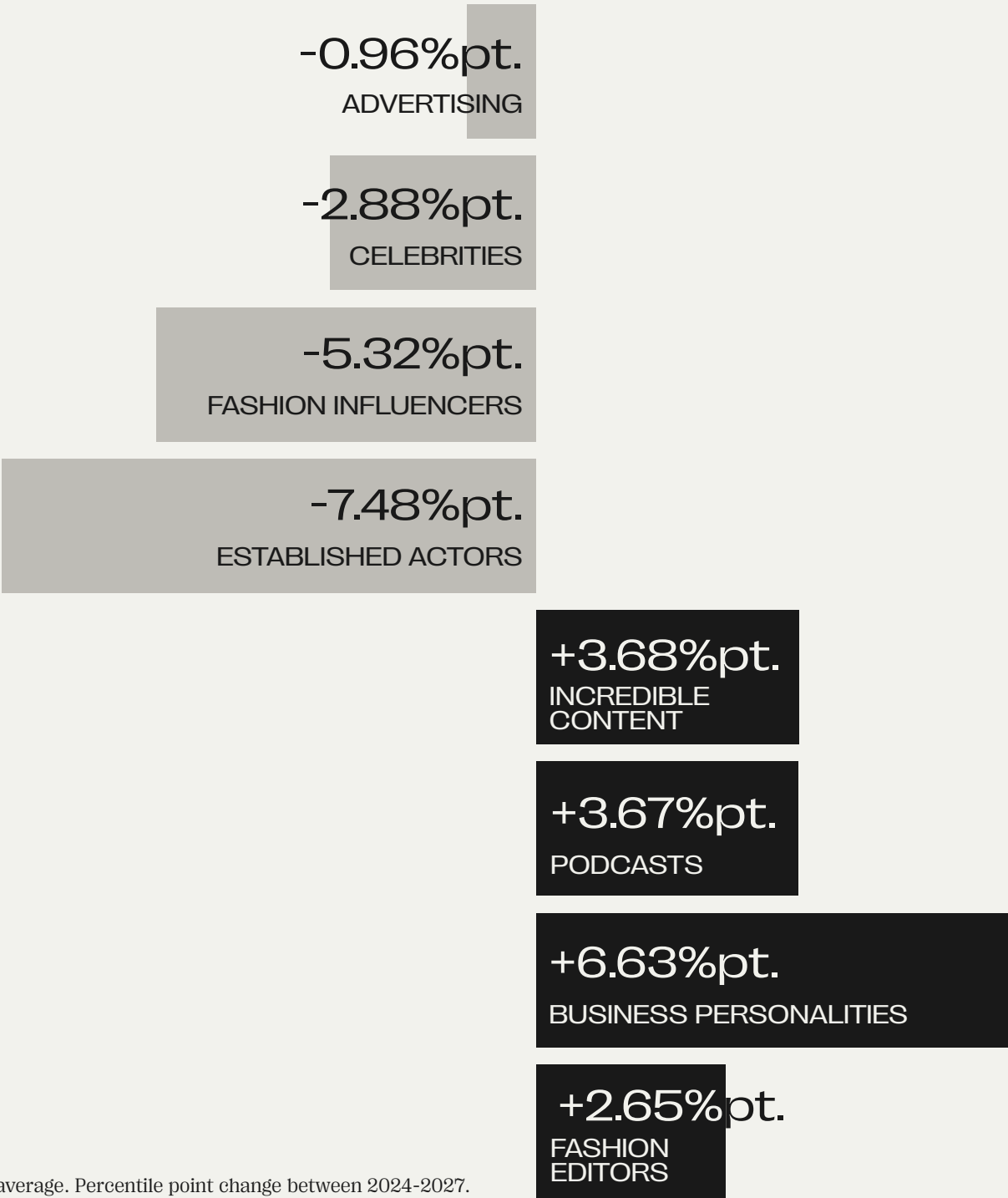
THE FORECAST

As humans, we seek connections with others to form our identities and opinions. People today want to discover new objects and experiences through informed dialogues. They’re interested in brand content, provided it is authentic and offers something new or different. Brands are finding innovative ways to tell their narratives and world-build through entertainment, where each touchpoint is curated to uncover a new layer of storytelling.

Today’s consumers carefully study those who inspire them via long-form interviews and process videos, unearthing the heritage and history of a brand and their archives. This shift to story-rich content is also reflected in how the media is evolving: leaning into podcasts, new magazine formats and

individualistic platforms such as Substack, which saw a 41.95% growth year-on-year in early 2024 according to the company.⁸ While celebrities still drive buzz, we see a rise of micro-influencers, who have honed in on their niche expertise, producing genuine, often hyper-localised content. People of influence become multi-hyphenate makers who add to our creative discourse, while influence itself has moved beyond surface level and becomes geared towards deeper aspiration.

BY 2027, IT IS PROJECTED THAT CONSUMERS WILL BE INSPIRED BY*...



*Global average. Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

II.I BECOMING ENTERTAINMENT

BRAND CONTENT IS STILL IMPACTFUL

In a landscape flooded with content, consumers seek meaningful connections that deepen emotional ties with a brand and its products. As a result, compelling storytelling across platforms is critical.

Content produced by brands still resonates: 39.92% of surveyors responded that their friends would invest in ‘A brand with incredible content’, over brands from celebrities and influencers, by 2027 – which represents 3.68%pt. increase from now. ‘Content’ is a vast word that means everything,’ says Sunshine’s Founder and Chairman, Al MacCuish. It spans everything from brand and social campaigns, out-of-home advertising, through to features published across streaming platforms and TV. But in order for the brand not to dissolve its message, it must stay true to its core DNA. ‘Only brands that truly understand their full potential can tell a successful story,’ continues MacCuish.

A recent wave of documentaries, such as Mugler’s ‘Inside the Dream’, have lifted the veil on some of the most iconic luxury houses, ⁴⁷echoing the interest in archival fashion uncovered in our ‘Enriching Objects’ chapter. Consumers are expecting ‘designer interviews’ to grow 6.32%pt. in interest by 2027 globally, demonstrating their desire to get under the skin of a brand.

LUXURY X ENTERTAINMENT: MORE THAN PRODUCT PLACEMENTS

Consumers are increasingly interested in diving into their favourite houses’ universes. Enter the world of entertainment.

Product placements within the entertainment system are a well-versed strategy. Luxury items often find their way to ‘it’ status thanks to strategic placements: think Fendi’s iconic baguette bag in ‘Sex and the City’, or, more recently, the ‘ludicrously capacious’ bag in ‘Succession’. However, this is accelerating beyond product placement and into owned-entertainment worlds.

‘In the future, luxury brands will become media entities,’ says Jan Kennedy, Founder of experiential agency Kennedy. ‘There are a number of outstanding brands, and the more successful ones are obsessed with lifestyle, they’re obsessed with the cultural zeitgeist and they reference traditional media voraciously.’

39.92%
Of Surveyors Would
Invest in ‘a Brand with
Incredible Content’

+6.32%pt.*
Interest in ‘Designer
Interviews’ by 2027

*Global average. Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

‘Instead of being relegated to the sidelines as sponsors, brands are becoming integral partners in creating entertainment – crafting cultural moments that not only resonate with audiences but foster genuine fandom and loyalty,’ says Megan Wells, an award-winning filmmaker who works on branded entertainment. Balmain took this on board when it tasked Sunshine to develop, in partnership with Channel 4, the world’s first TV series by a brand, called ‘Fracture’, later distributed by Netflix. The scripted story is about family, identity and the power of creativity, showcasing a deeper, more intellectual side to Balmain. ‘The craft of making a story that people want to watch is complicated – it’s all about deep development,’ says Sunshine’s Jenna Barnet.

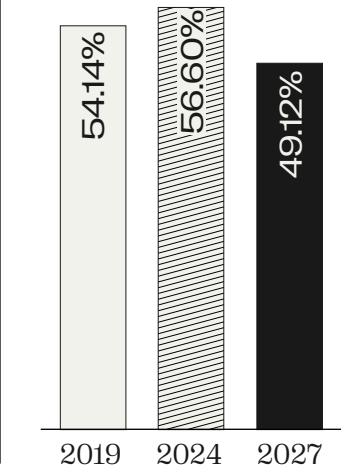


BALMAIN X CHANNEL 4, FRACTURE, SUNSHINE

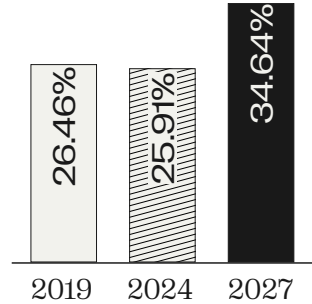
WHO ARE THE TALENTS THAT WILL FURTHER YOUR MESSAGE?

Talent is key in this medium, as actors will portray your brand’s aspirational lifestyle in a way that feels relatable. ‘Fracture’ featured actor and singer Jesse Jo Stark, who wrote original music for the series, alongside rising actors Charles Melton, Tommy Dorfman and Ajani Russell, who rose to fame after popular shows released on Netflix and Apple TV. ‘Technology dictates who we are paying attention to,’ says Roman Berenstein, Co-Founder of Lefty, an influencer marketing platform that empowers brands to optimise their talent strategy. ‘Streaming platforms like Netflix are a key factor here – we have seen the impact of actors across data where the profiles with highest engagement are often emerging ones.’

FOLLOWING ESTABLISHED ACTORS*



FOLLOWING EMERGING ACTORS*



*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.

In our study, we found that while following ‘established actors’ is predicted to go down, ‘emerging actors’ are on the rise, with a 8.73%pt. growth predicted globally by 2027. To stay relevant, brands must capitalise on the rising stars that are dictating the zeitgeist.

SKIMS has quickly established itself as a leader when it comes to tapping emerging names. Last year, it cast ‘The White Lotus’ newcomers Simona Tabasco and Beatrice Grannò, fresh off the back of season 2 airing. Since then, the brand has consistently starred of-the-moment talents: its latest campaign with Charli XCX, shared at the height of ‘Brat Summer’, made headlines for its reactivity.



CHARLI XCX X SKIMS, KARLA OTTO

‘Audiences gravitate toward authenticity, and this is often strongly felt with emerging talent, especially when people feel they’ve discovered someone early on and have an opportunity to participate in their journey to success,’ says Tracy Romulus, EVP Communications at SKIMS. ‘This sense of discovery fosters a feeling of being part of something special, allowing emerging talent to connect with communities. Established talent can also cultivate this through their work, which allows them to stay connected and strengthen their fanbase over time. Regardless, it is crucial for brands to develop partnerships that connect with audiences through authenticity.’

BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT RECEIVES CINEMATIC ACCOLADES

Proving its commitment to the world of entertainment and long-term investment in the space, Saint Laurent announced it was launching its own film production company in 2023, led by the house’s creative director Anthony Vaccarello. Saint Laurent Productions premiered three movies by renowned directors during the 2024 Cannes Film Festival. ‘Emilia Pérez’, directed by French director Jacques Audiard, saw its leading talents Karla Sofía Gascón, Selena Gomez, Adriana Paz and Zoe Saldaña all win the prestigious ‘Best Actress’ award at Cannes, cementing Saint Laurent’s place as a key player in the industry.⁹

‘Emilia Pérez positions Saint Laurent at the heart of a significant cultural moment – premiering a film at Cannes and setting it on a path to the Oscars,’ comments Edouard Benadava, Global Head of Content and Entertainment at The Independents. ‘This also creates an exceptional opportunity for the brand to build around this landmark event through red carpet events, exclusive dinners and press coverage.’



EMILIA PÉREZ, COURTESY OF SAINT LAURENT PRODUCTIONS

THE POWER OF DISTRIBUTION

‘Effective content distribution ensures maximum reach,’ says Benadava. ‘A notable trend is the evolving relationship between brands and content platforms, whether TV networks or streaming services. Partnerships like those seen with ‘Emily in Paris’ highlight how platforms like Netflix and Amazon are fostering innovative brand collaborations.’

Mugler’s recent documentary exemplifies this evolution, being distributed globally on Prime Video, Tencent and Canal+. This multi-platform approach ensures widespread reach and allows brands to leverage the momentum with brand activations.



LILY COLLINS, VIA GETTY

THE TRICKLE-DOWN EFFECT OF ENTERTAINMENT

The nature of long-form content requires bigger budgets, but it also offers myriad content cut-outs for a seamless integration on social media. ‘There is a trickle-down effect: for instance, trailers to post on social media, or snippets posted by fan communities, which build hype around the story you’re about to launch,’ says Kevin Alderweireldt, Co-Founder and CEO at Bureau Béatrice, a luxury multi-media and creative technology agency. Social media in these scenarios becomes an essential complimentary platform, creating an afterglow effect on the original investment.

For M·A·C Cosmetics, Bureau Béatrice created a game inspired by nostalgic, stackable puzzle Tetris. The concept was designed to be shared by the community online, prompting them to redeem products in stores or on e-commerce platforms.

Social media is also a place where communities congregate to debrief: fans of a movie or TV show will share details about characters and their outfits online. Take for instance @everyoutfitonsatc, which grew from an Instagram account sharing iconic ‘Sex and the City’ clothing into a much wider community discussing themes explored in the series.

THE SHOPPABLE TV OPPORTUNITY

‘[The purpose of entertainment] is to be subliminal and subtle, establishing brands’ universes before selling products,’ says The Independents’ Clémentine Tarnaud McEwan. New tools are emerging to help consumers find the products seen in film and TV without having to use blatant product placement. NBC Universal is reportedly incorporating a makeup detection tool while Amazon’s ‘Shop the Look’ landing page enables users to find and purchase outfits seen in their Prime Originals features.¹⁰ ‘Technologies like makeup detection go beyond serving up sales messages,’ says Wells. ‘They provide audiences with tools to seamlessly borrow from entertainment and cultural moments in a way that feels authentic and accessible. When done thoughtfully, these integrations can create a sense of inclusion and belonging, allowing audiences to see themselves as part of a larger story – one that the brand helps to co-create rather than control.’

Now with a new TikTok-Amazon integration that allows users to browse and purchase Amazon products directly within the TikTok app, there are new exciting avenues for brands. ‘Such seamless shopping experiences offer brands an innovative way to connect with audiences, combining entertainment and commerce to enhance engagement and drive conversions,’ says Benadava. ‘These strategies showcase the increasing potential of entertainment as a dynamic vehicle for brand storytelling, audience engagement and innovative partnerships.’

The entertainment industry offers a way for luxury brands to create richness and depth around their ethos, identity and values. It also provides opportunities to create multi-faceted relationships with talents that go beyond brand ambassadorships. TV and film can directly portray the lifestyle you seek to represent and invite your existing and target consumers to dive in head first.

‘[The purpose of entertainment] is to be subliminal and subtle, establishing brands’ universes before selling products.’

II.II ASPIRATION OVER INFLUENCE

AUDIENCES CRAVE CEO CONTENT

The age of influence is changing, prioritising inspiring stories over name alone.

The influence of ‘entrepreneurs and business personalities’ is predicted to grow 6.63%pt. by 2027. The secret here lies in the fact that these people are more than just influencers; they have day jobs and can give actionable tips to their followers. Through our research, names like Ryan Gellert, CEO of Patagonia, have come out as key figures that have established a strong relationship with their consumers, forging community through transparency.

37.68%*

Forecast Following of Business Personalities by 2027

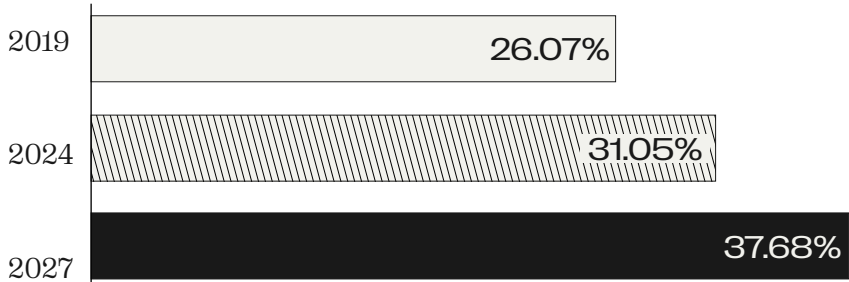


ANTOINE AND BERNARD ARNAULT WITH ANNA WINTOUR, VIA GETTY



RYAN GELLERT, VIA GETTY

FOLLOWING ENTREPRENEURS RISES*



*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.

‘We want to celebrate real-life influencers – those who stand out for their talent and achievements, not just their social media presence,’ explains Camille Olivier, Co-Founder of social media agency CTZAR.

An increasing number of docu-series about inspirational CEOs mirrors what we’re seeing in the fashion industry, speaking to modern audiences’ obsession with success, and their appetites for long-form content.

LONG-FORM FORMATS GROW IN INFLUENCE

‘People are interested in finding out about the ins and outs of how brand founders built their empires, what exactly made their idea take off, and anecdotes they wouldn’t otherwise know,’ says Zoe Patoff, Senior Vice President, Creative and Digital Strategy at Karla Otto. ‘Podcasts are a very intimate form of media that allows for these stories to be told in a conversational manner.’ The team at Karla Otto calls out the ‘Acquired’ podcast series as a prime example of such narratives. Referring to the LVMH episode specifically, Karla Otto’s Alexander Werz says, ‘They go back to their beginnings – it’s the modern day fairytale.’

Consequently, in our study, podcasts are predicted to grow 3.67%pt. by 2027, and expected to influence 23.60% of our survey respondents, when asked ‘What will most likely make you engage and interact with a fashion or luxury brand?’. ‘Podcasts are profound – people can chase their own niche passions in a way that wasn’t possible before,’ notes Sunshine’s Warren. ‘Podcasts are also personal. It’s like you are with friends, eavesdropping on a conversation.’

The podcast industry is now also making moves towards video content – adapting the format to translate into social media platforms. Spotify recently unveiled ‘Spotify for Creators’, where podcasters can share video clips and thumbnails of their recordings, tapping into the 64% of users who prefer video podcasts, according to new company figures (a jump from 43% of users in 2021).⁴¹

‘Podcasts are profound – people can chase their own niche passions in a way that wasn’t possible before.’

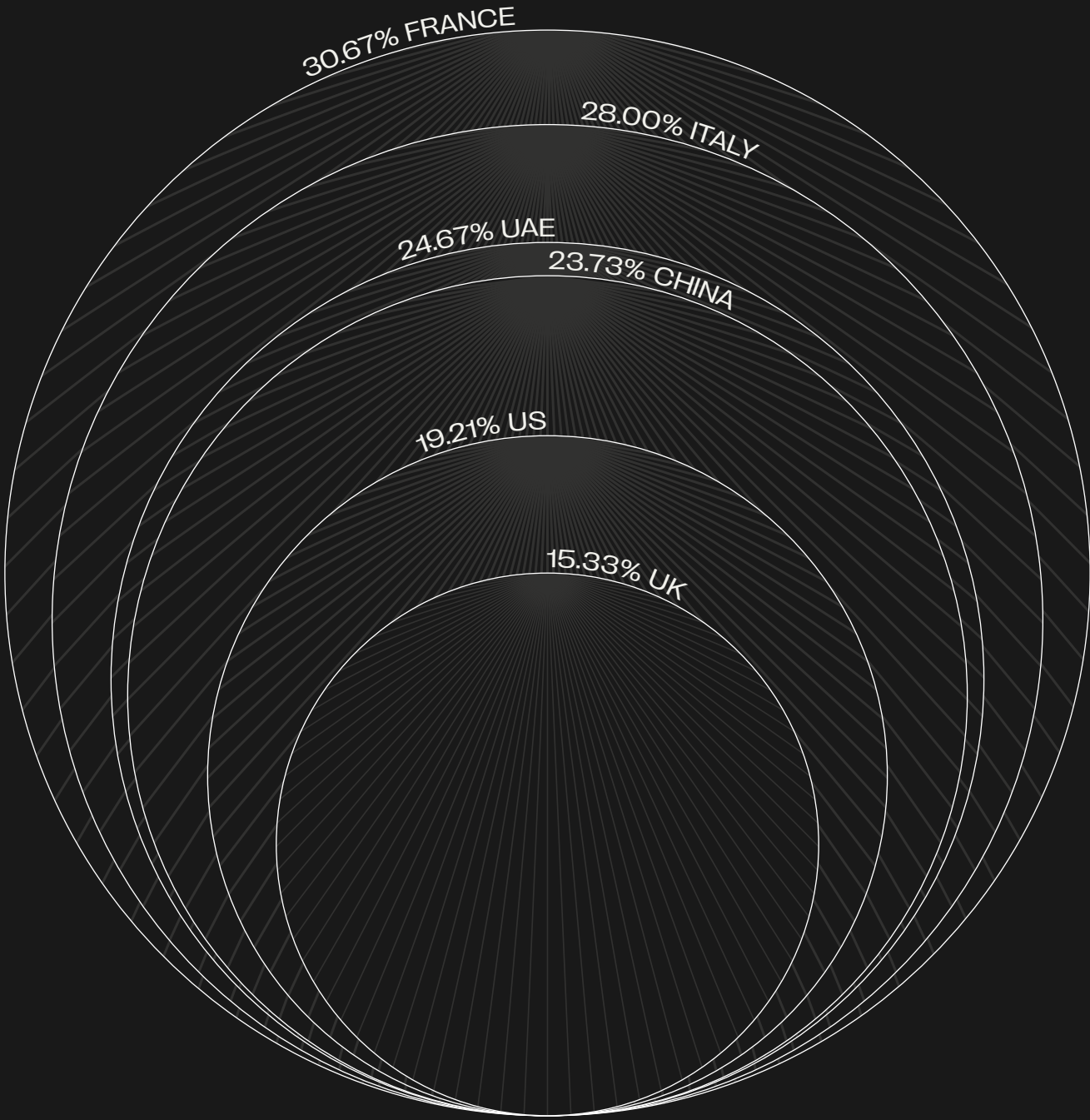
In China, the medium is extremely powerful: our survey shows podcasts there are predicted to jump 9.32%pt. by 2027. Our experts in the region suggest it’s a format that especially resonates with younger audiences, who are willing to spend time learning more about their niche interests. There, podcasts are more about the talents hosting, which means people are more inclined to follow an influencer’s podcast than a brand’s. Popular topics are specific to a local community or niche interest – think a watch collector talking through how they acquired each piece.

+9.32%pt.

Forecast Growth of Podcasts
in China by 2027

*Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

IMPACT OF PODCASTS BY 2027





NIKE 'GODDESS AWAKENED', KARLA OTTO | IULIA MATEI

57

23.05%

Of Surveyors Predict they will be Influenced by 'Athletes' by 2027

THE ATHLETE'S APPEAL

In the same vein, we see athletes' influence on purchase growing – and predicted to jump another 2.76%pt. by 2027. 'When athletes and other cultural figures are positioned as storytellers or change makers, they elevate not just the brand, but also the emotional stakes of the story, forging connections that are authentic, memorable and impactful,' says Wells.

Last year, Nike's 'Goddess Awakened' event, held during Couture Week, featured a collaboration with Parris Goebel, a choreographer known for muscular moves as seen in Rihanna shows and videos (including her viral Super Bowl halftime show). Nike's event leveraged Goebel's cultural pull while blending the worlds of performance, fashion and entertainment, positioning the brand highly across all three sectors.

The growth in influence for athletes is an expectation across all six regions surveyed, but especially in the UAE (+6%pt.) where sports such as football are on the rise. 'The region is also seeing a big rise in female athletes and more women in politics,' says The Qode's Fakoussa, nodding to why there could be more luxury consumers paying attention than before. The Qode leveraged this with client Kayanee in Saudi Arabia – a lifestyle and fitness brand seeking to help empower women – by highlighting figures such as Tunisian professional tennis player Ons Jabeur in recent campaigns.

LUXURY DEEPENS ITS TIES TO SPORTS

'We're seeing that the mix of fashion and sports continues,' say Jonathan Boyer and Romain Blanquet-Ferrero, Co-Founders of creative agency Kitten Production. 'Brands are investing a lot of money in the space in their search for authenticity.' The pair point to a new sport-meets-fashion magazine by French editor Carine Roitfeld and her son Vladimir Restoin Roitfeld, due to launch in 2025, with its first issue to be guest-edited by former basketball player Dwyane Wade.¹²

Kitten Production has worked across various sports x fashion campaigns, showcasing the potential for storytelling in the space. Its video for Ralph Lauren's Team USA sponsorship for the Paris 2024 Olympics' Opening Ceremony portrayed some of the athletes taking part, such as volleyball player Chiaka Ogbogu, highlighting in their own words the feeling of putting on the uniform. The agency also produced a The Broken Arm x Adidas campaign for the Euros 2024 in Germany, tapping into the established football community via distinct visual codes.

But, luxury and sports partnerships are about more than just widening reach; they feed into entertainment – as seen with the spectacle that was Vogue World 2024. 'The world of sport is permeating,' say Charlotte Clark and Nina Ferguson, co-founders of creative events studio INCA. 'Just look at the recently announced Chanel sponsorship of The Boat Race between Oxford and Cambridge.' With its roots in sport-inspired clothing that gave women greater freedom of movement, Chanel is showing a cultural alignment to a prestigious event that is known for promoting excellence.



BROKEN ARM X ADIDAS, KITTEN

II.III CURATING INFLUENCE

THE RISE OF NICHE

Luxury consumers are being more considered about what they consume, where they consume, and indeed, who inspires their purchase journey. We see signs of them becoming disillusioned with traditional forms of influence (‘Fashion influencers’ are expected to decline by 5.32%pt. by 2027) in favour of a wider notion of familiarity, such as friends and, most importantly, community. ‘Peer-to-peer is much more influential,’ notes Patoff. ‘If you know a friend with great skin or hair, their endorsements of products are more powerful.’

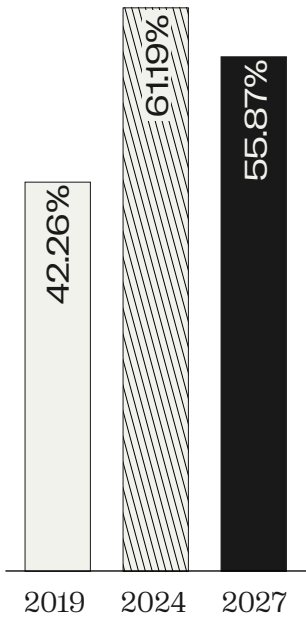
‘As brands seek to be more genuine and to be closer to their audiences, they’re turning to creators over celebrities.’

‘As brands seek to be more genuine and to be closer to their audiences, they’re turning to creators over celebrities,’ says Lefty’s Berenstein. Lefty allows its clients to discover new and niche creators to enrich influencer activations, measuring success via metrics gathered through unique proprietary data. Berenstein notes that success differs based on the type of key opinion leader (KOL) activated: a micro, or niche, creator tends to have higher engagement rates over reach metrics like Earned Media Value (EMV), and brands should reconsider their targets when putting together an influencer campaign.

HARNESSING COMMUNITIES

Miu Miu has successfully established a presence within existing niches recently, such as the literary community that grew through #Booktok. Through The Independents’ agency Kennedy, the brand has toured its Literary Clubs around the world, including a two-day event hosted during Milan Design Week, celebrating the work of writers Alba De Céspedes and Sibilla Aleramo through conversations, live performances, and entertainment. Jan Kennedy says, ‘It’s very interesting trying to find a language that’s agile and adaptable but also has some sense of continuity and therefore has a potential for momentum.’ Kennedy’s ongoing work with Miu Miu Clubs weaves into the format local nuances relevant to where they’re held. Last year, the brand’s activation in Tokyo spotlighted the country’s traditional art of Noh theatre, followed by events at hotspots Two Rooms and Wall&Wall, with performances from local musicians CHIDA and DJ Otsuka.

FASHION INFLUENCERS ARE FORECAST TO DECLINE*



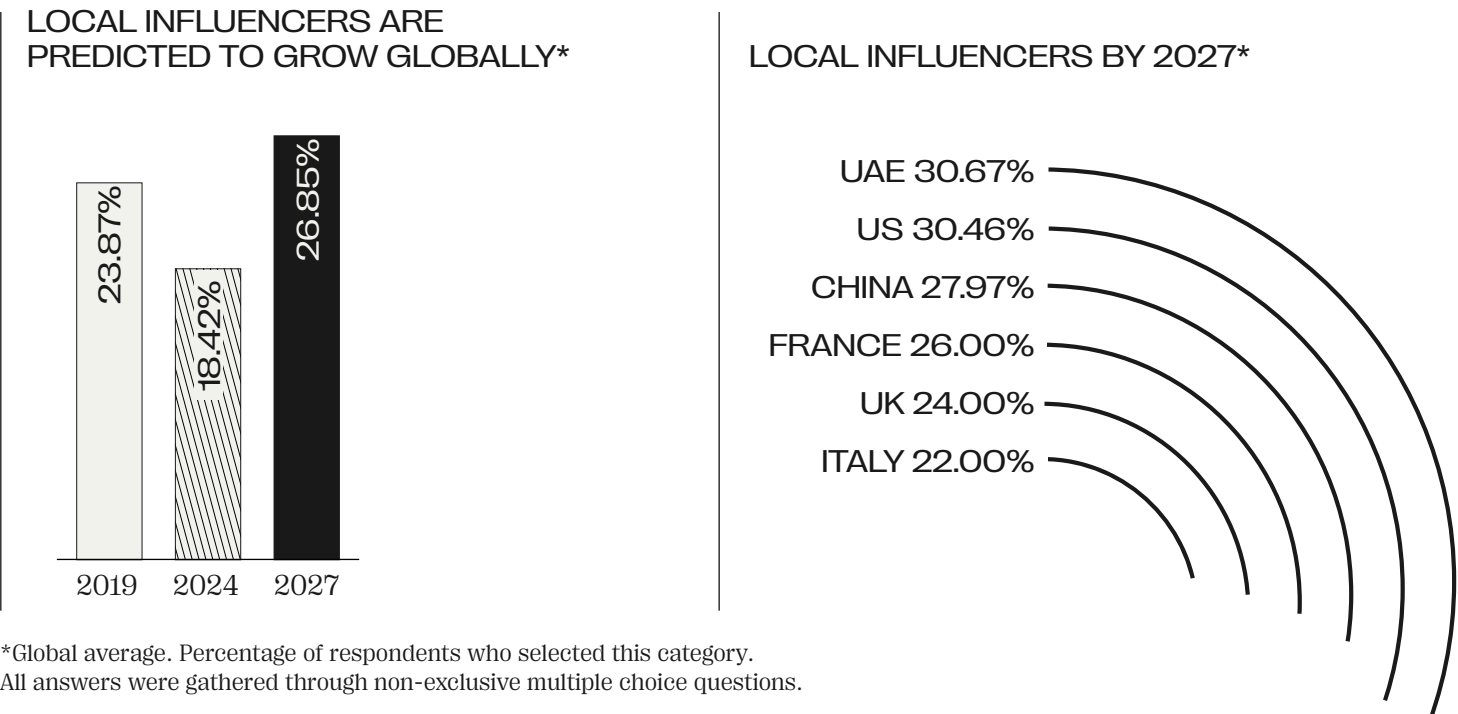
*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.



MIU MIU LITERARY CLUB, KENNEDY

MEET THE LOCALS

With knowledge and cultural awareness driving consumers, what could be more culturally relevant than someone who is hyper-local to your desired audience? According to our experts, celebrity placements will still have a place in creating global impact, but brands working on a more local scale will see their storytelling resonate more deeply. It is unsurprising then that our survey showed the influence of local people is expected to grow 8.43%pt. by 2027.



‘It’s all about relevance – being exactly where your audience truly is,’ explains CTZAR’s Olivier. But it’s also about knowing the nuances specific to a country.

Olivier notes how the influence of local thought-leaders is particularly powerful in the hospitality and travel industries. One of the agency’s projects, currently being developed for a leading airline, leverages the unique perspectives of locals to reveal their cities in ways that are both authentic and unexpected. In today’s world, influence is about being an insider with the power to truly connect and guide travellers.



SKEPTA, DECLAN RICE, D DOUBLE E AND RIO FERDINAND, BURBERRY SS25, GETTY



Burberry is cementing its British heritage through iconic figures from the country. From leveraging brand ambassadors Olivia Colman and Barry Keoghan in campaigns to inviting Joanna Lumley to its Harrods store opening, the house consistently taps into actors who embody Britishness. This strategy is often reflected in its fashion week front row, most recently with the likes of London-based rapper Skepta, England national team football player Declan Rice, and comedian Amelia Dimoldenberg, widely known for her British humour.

But it’s about more than the local influencers a brand activates. Collaborating with local eateries, knowing where people congregate, and who are the latest local talents driving conversation will all strike a chord with your target audiences. ‘Brands need to be extremely cosmopolitan; they need to be culturally literate – that can involve high culture or popular culture,’ says Kennedy. ‘When they’ve established an authentic point of view, the process of activating is assisted by some notion of familiarity.’

‘Brands need to be culturally literate. When they’ve established an authentic point of view, the process of activating is assisted by some notion of familiarity.’

GETTING LOCAL NUANCE RIGHT

Understanding your consumers also means appreciating the local cultures they as-similate with, which is even more powerful across continents, where traditions differ.

In China, our survey respondents placed greater emphasis on ‘local influencers’ than ‘friends’ when looking for inspiration. There, brands that work with local talents are resonating more deeply as they’re in touch with the local culture. k2’s Xavier Cagnion, Managing Director for Greater China, highlights Loewe as a brand that has mastered how to speak to the all-important, and increasingly disenfranchised, Chinese luxury consumer, across Chinese social media platforms with the right KOLs who resonate in the region. Similar to the way Loewe’s TikTok strategy is different from its Instagram strategy, the brand has adapted a unique, localised narrative across its Chinese social channels.

Similarly, in the Middle East, The Qode’s Fakoussa singles out Cartier as a leading example when it comes to regionalised storytelling. ‘The brand always goes into a unique aspect of its history and overarching culture per region. Cartier was the first to pioneer content around Ramadan.’ Across Asia, the brand was celebrated for an activation on the Great Wall of China, produced by k2, starring the Maison’s ambassa-dor Gong Li, while its events in South Korea with Blackpink’s Jisoo have successfully targeted local fandom communities.



L’ORÉAL MIDDLE EAST, 25TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW, BUREAU BÉATRICE



CARTIER, GREAT WALL OF CHINA, k2



ARKET X PENNY MARTIN, KARLA OTTO

EDITORS’ CURATORIAL EYES ARE IN DEMAND

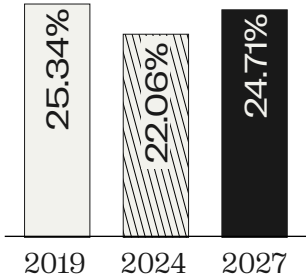
With trends dialling down on their radar, luxury consumers are seeking out more micro forms of influence and not only local nuance but more curated content and trusted voices to inspire them. In turn, successful brands today have a curatorial eye when it comes to whom they work with – both across their own content and imagery, through to product collaborations, and the creators who amplify their stories.

‘Curation is the new exclusivity,’ says costume designer and celebrity stylist Karla Welch. ‘It’s how brands’ creative directors really establishes their own community – it shines through especially with Jonathan Anderson and Matthieu Blazy who both work with unique talent that feel like ‘them’.

‘Stylists are also powerful thanks to their own communities – and they are intrinsically connected with culture.’

Trusted media intermediaries – and their individual curators – are par-amount. Through our study, we found that editors and stylists have now become influencers in their own right. Fashion editors’ influence on purchases is predicted to grow 2.65%pt. between now and 2027 globally. Their social media accounts can be powerful platforms to tap into, hence the success of new long-form platforms, such as Substack, where individual personalities prevail. ‘Stylists are also powerful thanks to their own communities – and they are intrinsically connect-ed with culture,’ says Karla Otto’s Lissy Von Schwarzkopf. Partnering with the right fashion personnel can do wonders for a brand, instantly propelling it to ‘it’ status – something brands like Arket have tapped into through product edits by the Financial Times HTSI editor Jo Ellison and Penny Martin of The Gentlewoman.

FASHION EDITORS’ INFLUENCE ON PURCHASE*



*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.

CONSIDERED PRODUCT COLLABORATIONS

Collaborations offer a curated experience, uniting distinct creative visions into one – they’re also a strategic way for designers to bring freshness to their brands. Collaborations also remain a powerful driver of purchase intent, forecast to increase by 5.29%pt. globally between now and 2027.

A standout example in recent years is Moncler’s annual Genius event, most recently held in Shanghai. The brand has set a unique practice when it comes to creative collaborations, handing over the reins to creative protagonists who lend a fresh approach to the brand codes each season. This year, Moncler showcased collaborations with 10 guest designers, including Jil Sander’s Lucy and Luke Meier. This large-scale event leveraged the moment of Shanghai Fashion Week to invite 8,000 attendees – including Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky – and stream the event to 57 million viewers.

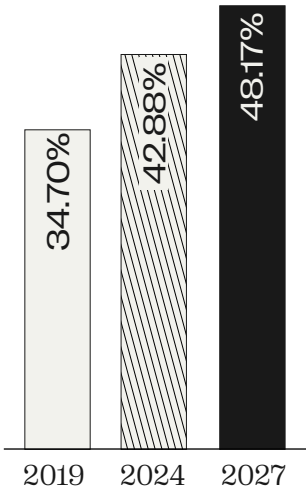
As part of its ongoing collaboration with Karla Otto client Mercedes-Benz, Moncler launched a new edition of the G-Class car, designed by NIGO. With both parties having a link to heritage and the outdoors, the collaboration felt authentic and innovative, with the expertise of each brand elevating the product.

Building a curated community of talents and artists around a brand helps to communicate its unique aesthetic and set of brand codes, resulting in consumer interest and loyalty. Brands attempting a creative reset should start by looking at who inspires them and how other curators can help their unique perspective to stand out.



A\$AP ROCKY FOR MERCEDES BENZ, MONCLER GENIUS, KARLA OTTO

COLLABORATIONS’ IMPACT ON PURCHASE*



*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.



MERCEDES BENZ, MONCLER GENIUS, KARLA OTTO



PART III

SHAPING — SPACES

SHAPING SPACES: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

III.I RETAIL REVISITED

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **HUMAN TOUCH:** While e-commerce continues to shape luxury shopping with an overall forecasted growth of 48.05%pt. across online retail formats, physical retail is expected to remain key.
- **BRAND THEATRE:** Consumers need memorable experiences driven by brand theatre. They want to engage in spaces where experience comes first and transactions second.

LOOKING AHEAD:

In the future, brands will survive if they shift their focus from transactions to experiences, designing a broad variety of innovative spaces that invite consumers to spend time engaging with the brand and its narrative.



HOMO FABER, ATELIER LUM

III.III COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **TIERED ACCESS STRATEGIES:** Luxury is evolving from exclusivity to community-driven engagement, offering accessible experiences that foster belonging while preserving aspirational value.
- **SERVICING THE VIC:** High-value clients remain critical, with tailored, hyper-local experiences and exclusive events ensuring loyalty and prestige during economic uncertainty.
- **FINDING BALANCE:** As a select few lean into anti-amplification to gain cut-through, be stringent in defining your strategy, finding the right balance between exclusivity and inclusivity.

LOOKING AHEAD:

In 2025 and beyond, look to create moments in which like-minded people can gather and celebrate their shared passions that align with your brand ethos.

III.II EXPERIENCE AMPLIFIED

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **RUNWAYS REMAIN VITAL:** Fashion shows and exhibitions, up 10.68%pt. and 6.20%pt. respectively, continue to be a powerful platform, where brands can showcase the breadth of their DNA to a wider audience.
- **BRANDS AS EXHIBITIONS:** Luxury brands are focusing on creating immersive, memory-driven experiences that go beyond transaction. Brand exhibitions become new centre points to showcase heritage.
- **INSPIRED BY HOSPITALITY:** As consumers demand greater experience from brands, look to the world of hospitality – successful at capturing consumer attention – for inspiration.

LOOKING AHEAD:

To meet the future consumer, share your story across multiple touchpoints in new ways. Build interactive and creative environments that invite deeper customer engagement across diverse spaces.

SHAPING SPACES: _____

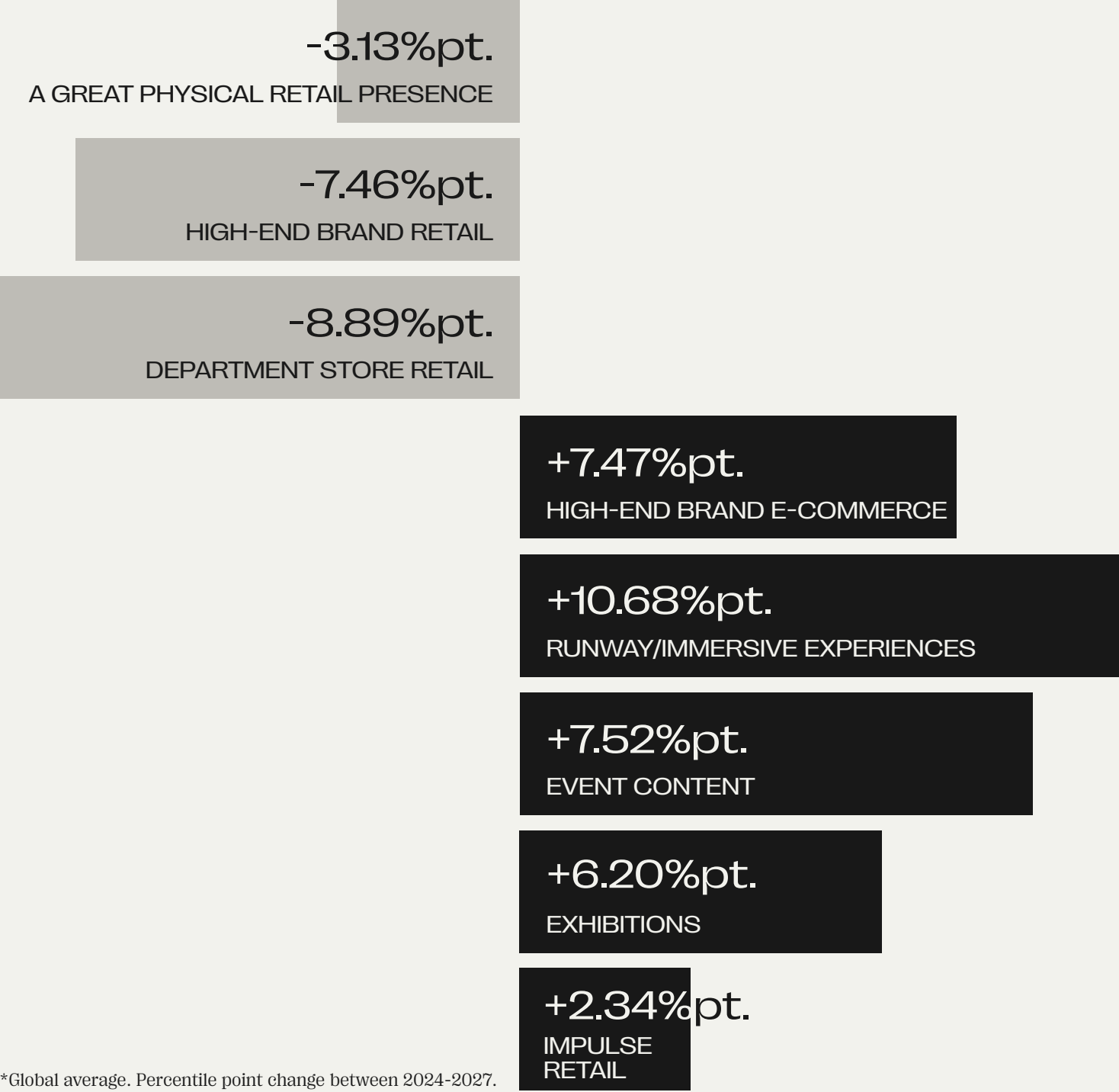
_____ THE FORECAST

The places where we discover brands and their universes have never been more complex and multi-dimensional. Consumers are spending more time engaging with brands in digital and e-commerce environments, while the influence of traditional brick-and-mortar spaces wanes.

To thrive and develop in this evolving landscape, brands must ensure that they are creating a seamless 360-degree experience that captivates and inspires consumers at every stage of their journey. But it’s not just about the transactional experience – today’s consumers crave more immersive, meaningful interactions to feel aligned with brands.

From traditional retail environments to dynamic digital ecosystems, immersive experiences, and cultural events, we’ll illuminate the diverse spaces where consumers are investing their time, energy, and, crucially, their wallets. As we unpack these trends, we’ll highlight the shifting paradigms that are redefining consumer behaviour and brand interaction in the modern marketplace.

BY 2027, IT IS PROJECTED THAT CONSUMERS WILL DISCOVER BRANDS VIA*...



*Global average. Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

III.I RETAIL: —————REVISITED

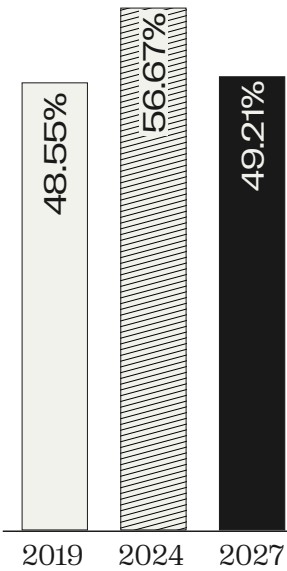
Currently, our study shows consumers are highly engaged with high-end brand retail (56.67% of consumers surveyed said you would find brand-owned retail in their receipts) but the category has a predicted reduction of 7.46%pt. between now and 2027. It is clear that shopping in its most traditional sense has reached a tipping point whereby the format will still remain important, but must intersect with e-commerce and amplify the experiential desires of consumers.

DIGITAL PLAYGROUNDS VS THE HUMAN TOUCH

The convenience of e-commerce will persist in shaping consumer behaviour but where people once placed their bets on the retail experience becoming entirely digitised, the brief rise and fall of online spaces like the metaverse has proven that we still crave physical experiences and communities. Sunshine’s Jenna Barnet has attributed the decline of the metaverse to the desire to engage in spaces that feel nourishing for one’s identity: ‘It is the physical experience that we all crave,’ she says, ‘This is a hard feeling to replicate in the metaverse and it is even harder to make it feel valuable or aspirational. Fashion and clothing are a sensual experience, something that we don’t want to digitise. Representing the human body in its individualism and the beauty and multiplicity that this represents is not going away.’

Bureau Béatrice’s Kevin Alderweireldt agrees. ‘Online now is being used as a showcase for discovery. And the best way to improve this experience is by adding a human touch. ⁷³ For luxury brands in particular, it is considering how you sell your most exclusive things online without depreciating the brand and the exclusivity of the product.’ To eliminate the need for expensive insurance and international shipping, Bureau Béatrice designed bespoke film studios within Cartier boutiques, enabling clients to view specific pieces of jewellery remotely, bypassing the need for travel. This approach reflects a key shift: blending the personal touch of in-store experiences with the efficiency of digital technology.

LUXURY BRAND RETAIL IS IN FLUX*



While luxury brand e-commerce is predicted a growth of **7.47%pt.**** between now and 2027.

*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category. All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.
** Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

Physical retail still has a role to play in catering to our want for experience. And when done right, Bureau Betak and Bureau Future’s Guillaume Troncy believes that consumers are willing to jump head first to create memories with brands. ‘What is the value of the store if there’s no experience? Consumers are craving experiences that don’t appear to be immediately transactional, but ultimately are conduits for them parting money with a brand.’

Micheal Rock, Founding Partner and Executive Creative Director at agency 2x4 says that to facilitate this new strategy, ‘The store must transition from being the site of a transaction to the site of a relationship. The shop must do what e-commerce cannot do: dimensionalise the product and the experience.’ He says, ‘Consumers want to participate in the drama and story of a brand. The physical space is the location where all the various metonymic elements of a brand – that appear scattered across media – are braided together.’

CRAFTED BY EXPERIENCE

In the luxury sector, it is the memories crafted in these spaces that draw people back, making the brand an integral part of their personal narrative.

Kitty Events’ recent work to celebrate Uniqlo’s 40th anniversary is a great example of this dynamic approach. The exhibition, ‘The Art of Science and Lifewear: What Makes Life Better?’ focused on the brand’s commitment to innovation and thoughtful living with interactive installations, brand presentations and a panel discussion featuring brand ambassadors such as Roger Federer and Creative Director Clare Waight Keller.



UNIQLO, THE ART OF SCIENCE AND LIFEWEAR, KITTY EVENTS



‘Consumers want to participate in the drama and story of a brand. The physical space is the location where all the various metonymic elements of a brand – that appear scattered across media – are braided together.’

CREATE MEMORIES THROUGH BRAND THEATRE

A number of our experts across The Independents Group referenced the impact of the Dior store located on Avenue Montaigne in Paris. The space, which recently reopened as the ‘spiritual home’ of the brand, features a museum, a restaurant, and an apartment for overnight stays. ‘It is completely about the discovery of Dior,’ says Troncy. ‘It is very efficient in terms of delivering a message that is beyond the commercial aspect of selling bags, shoes or ready-to-wear.’

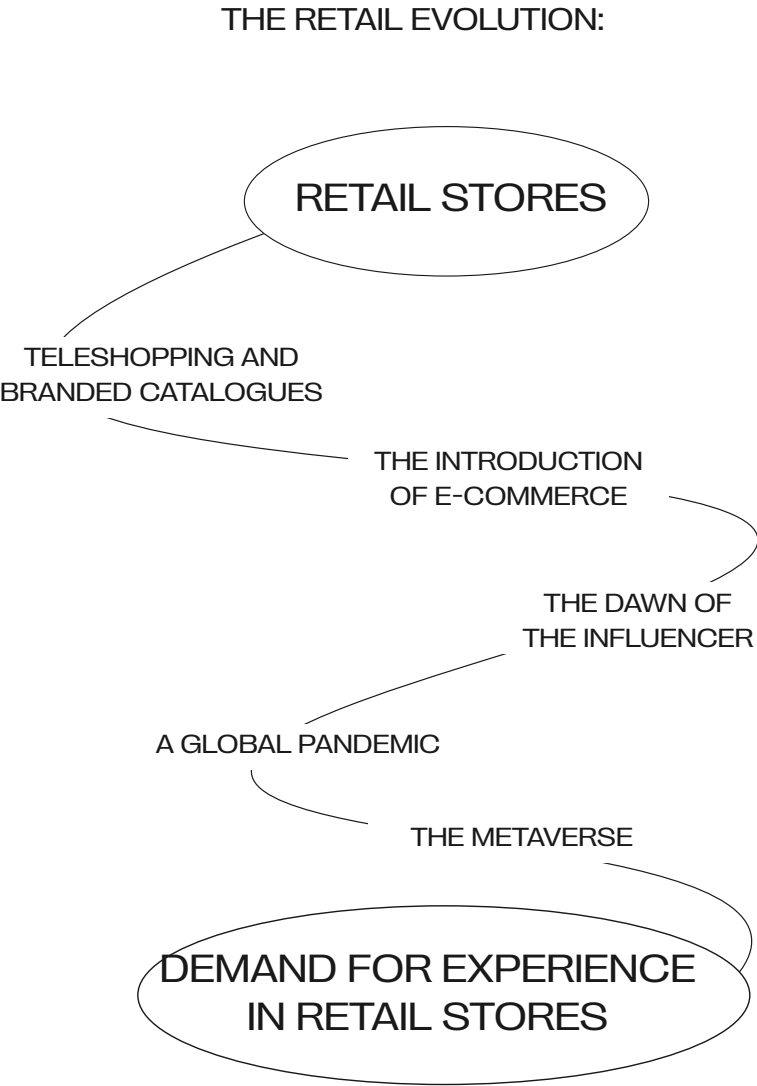
Brand theatre emerges as a powerful tool for businesses looking to craft a compelling and memorable narrative in retail spaces, as exemplified by Korean eyewear brand Gentle Monster. Each of its stores is unique, where art exhibitions, sculptures and robotic animatronics turn a visit into a sensory journey.



GENTLE MONSTER X MUGLER LAUNCH, KARLA OTTO

A consideration of experience is also key for brand Cartier, whose work with Atelier Athem considers scenography as a way to drive footfall. Its Christmas store facades and in-store scenographies create the ‘wow’ experience that consumers can only get in person, showcasing more than just the products and encourages an in-depth interaction.

INCA’s Charlotte Clark says, ‘Brands should dig deep, defining their key message before three-dimensionalising. Nothing can look alike. It is a genuine ideation every time, considering the emotional impact of every design element and how it contributes to the overall brand story.’



CARTIER, ‘THE FABULOUS JOURNEY’, ATELIER ATHEM

LEARNING FROM PRINTEMPS

Considering the department store experience as a whole could be the strategic key to stemming the predicted decline of the format. Our data shows that department stores saw an average decrease of 8.89%pt. between now and 2027. This was particularly severe in the UK, where the decline was 24%pt. and department stores have become overloaded with inventory yet lacking a distinctive point of view. The consumer enters expecting to find everything they need under one roof, but in reality the experience has become diluted, fragmented, and often impersonal.

Today’s consumer is less impressed by scale and more drawn to the idea of experiences that feel bespoke, immersive, and tailored to their needs. To succeed, department stores should create spaces where customers feel understood and recognised. Heritage French brand Printemps, for example, has married its longstanding history with contemporary zeitgeist moments, cementing its place as a cultural destination in its own right.

Laura Lendrum, CEO at Printemps America, shared insight regarding the store’s upcoming New York project, which will provide ‘global teams a lab to test new formats, business models, partnerships and collaborations bringing the Printemps heritage to New York in a surprising new way.’

‘The challenge is to strike a balance between innovation and human connection. After evaluating the current landscape, we concluded that what was missing was something more simple, human and basic, related to true connection and community. People want places to go, to feel welcomed and included, to be a part of the conversation. Retailers can leverage physical spaces to make this connection and invite discovery, bring joy, and enrich people’s lives. With that in mind we have created a ‘hospitality project,’ an ecosystem rather than a store; a place to spend time, discover, relax, eat, entertain, learn, shop, play, and be inspired.’

‘Retailers can leverage physical spaces to [forge] connection and invite discovery, bring joy, and enrich people’s lives.’



ONE WALL STREET, COURTESY OF PRINTEMPS

III.II EXPERIENCE

AMPLIFIED

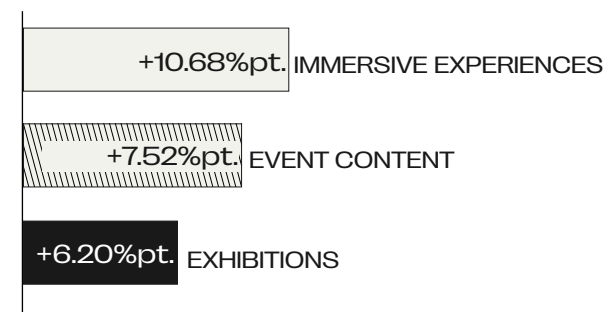
As consumers increasingly seek richer, more immersive brand experiences, the demand for dedicated spaces to facilitate these interactions becomes paramount. This is reflected in our data, whereby immersive experiences (+10.68%pt.), event content (+7.52%pt.) and exhibitions (+6.20%pt.) all see a rise in influence between now and 2027. It is clear that consumers are seeking new ways to engage, underscoring a growing expectation for brands to create rich, interactive worlds that span both physical and digital spaces, inviting exploration and fostering deeper connections.

CRAFTING A BRAND CULTURE

‘Physical spaces are first and foremost about community, about connection and we will see the renaissance of interesting locations that make you want to go there time and time again,’ says Nakouzi of Christie’s. She feels that the true takeaway is of course transaction. ‘But this is not the true essence of being. It is all about being a space for your community – to be an expression of you as a brand.’

This changing expectation has seen a rise in the diversification of the spaces in which brands show up or shape. As explored in the ‘Enriching Objects’ chapter, brands have been fast showing up in cultural moments to drive brand affinity, but many are shaping cultural moments of their own to carve out long-term identity. ‘To bring these consumers together around a culture, you have to start to create experiential entertainment that invites people in,’ says Sunshine’s Al MacCuish. ‘Relying on exclusive mediums such as fashion shows is no longer enough. That medium where only selected people could access is getting old and brands that have their own narrative-led experiential spaces are the most successful.’

THE GROWTH IN EXPECTATION FOR BRANDED CONTENT*



*Global Average. Percentile point change between 2024-2027.



HERMÈS AT SALONE 2024, KARLA OTTO



DIESEL X NTS TRACKS, SUNSHINE



Sunshine’s recent project with Diesel is a great example of bringing together multidimensional experiences to build an owned brand world. The brand partnered with global music platform and radio station NTS to leverage the pull of music, club culture, and the sense of connection built at events. DJs from a number of regions curated playlists dedicated to up-and-coming local artists and a series of docu-videos provided a spotlight for talent across Egypt, Vietnam, Brazil and France. By weaving together sound, storytelling, and local cultural influences, Diesel isn’t just riding the wave of club culture – it’s actively shaping it.

‘To bring these consumers together around a culture, you have to start to create experiential entertainment that invites people in.’

BRANDS AS CULTURAL EXHIBITIONS

We are witnessing a shift, whereby brands are moving beyond the traditional pop-up format to create full-scale world-building initiatives. Widely discussed and immersive experiences, such as Gucci’s recent London exhibition, ‘Gucci Cosmos’, tap into the consumer’s deeper desire to become an integral part of a brand’s narrative. This collaboration from Gucci, k2 and Karla Otto shows that successful strategies of this kind create living, breathing brand universes that invite consumers to step inside and engage with the story on a more profound level.

Dior also successfully utilises this approach and its recent exhibition ‘Christian Dior, Designer of Dreams’ at the Saudi National Museum in Riyadh used storytelling to engage audiences on a local level by creating a space where a diverse range of people could feel involved and inspired.

EXCLUSIVE MOMENTS

The concept of feeling part of an exclusive brand world becomes more complicated when the goal of these events is to make the brand and its message more accessible and ultimately to go viral. To overcome this, brands are no longer just curating events for attendees; they are simultaneously crafting experiences for a virtual audience, blurring the lines between the in-person and digital realms. Pop-ups and events now live in two distinct categories: those who will physically attend and those who will engage through social media.

Take, for example, H&M’s recent city-based events, conceived and produced by Kennedy and hosted by Karla Otto, which tapped into the viral energy of Charli XCX and Troye Sivan’s ‘Sweat Tour’. Opening in London with Charli XCX, the events then travelled across Europe with new artists and collaborators per location. These events were highly successful in their own right, but virality was down to a highly engaged and relevant social strategy that encompassed live streaming, social content and influencer collaborations.



H&M, PRELOVED ARCHIVE LAUNCH, KARLA OTTO



GUCCI COSMOS, k2 AND KARLA OTTO



VALENTINO SS25, BUREAU BETAK

THE FUTURE FASHION SHOW FORMAT

This is also a key consideration when thinking about the fashion show format. The recent Couture show from Maison Margiela went viral because the broader audience was considered from the outset. In an interview with Vogue, John Galliano emphasised that by designing an experience specifically for the at-home viewer, the atmosphere of the event was translated online, effectively giving everyone a front-row seat.¹³

The show was widely viewed, with more than two million views on YouTube, and shared internationally across social media channels, again emphasising the role of experiences as a participatory sensation that in turn become iconic cultural moments.

Bureau Betak's Troncy agrees that the fashion show model is still a particularly strong way to engage broad audiences. 'There is no other format that allows you to shoot as many images and show as many looks in 12 minutes. The content you can create, which gets shared on social, the layering of environments and the story this tells about a brand. You get all of this amazing talent in one place and they all have to work together.'

Bureau Betak's SS25 show with Valentino is a prime example of the amplification of a brand story through the fashion show format. Alessandro Michele created a fully sensory world, where guests found themselves walking into a long-abandoned house, with covered furniture and a cracked mirror floor created by artist Alfredo Pirri. As models walked the runway, it was as though excavating treasures or witnessing beautiful apparitions earning the brand \$19M in EMV according to Lefty data.

This strategy of shareability was also a consideration for the recent Bureau Betak-produced Bottega Veneta show, which was created around a menagerie of animal-shaped bean bag chairs. Each guest was assigned a personalised animal or insect promoting a joyful sense of nostalgia, which many shared across their social channels.



BOTTEGA VENETA SS25, BUREAU BETAK

'There is no other format that allows you to shoot as many images and show as many looks in 12 minutes.'

+4.29%pt.*

Forecast Runway
Influence by 2027

*Global Average. Percentile point change between 2024-2027.

HOSPITALITY’S WINNING FORMULA

The convergence between luxury brands and hospitality groups continues to soar. For inspiration, luxury brands can certainly look to this industry, where innovators are mastering the art of crafting immersive, almost otherworldly experiences for their guests.

Nakouzi recalls a recent visit to Eleven Madison Park, a plant-based fine dining restaurant by chef Daniel Humm. The restaurant aims to create systemised memorable moments through attentive service and has even gone as far as to employ someone with the job title ‘Dream Weaver’ to execute personal touches for guests.

‘It was done so thoughtfully, it wasn’t just that we were transacting, but felt very curated and personal. And that to me, is true luxury today.’

‘They figure out who you are before you walk in the door and then tailor the experience for you. When I went, they gave us a tour of the kitchen and the pastry chef made a dessert in front of us. It was all about sharing the experience. It was done so thoughtfully, it wasn’t just that we were transacting, but felt very curated and personal. And that to me, is true luxury today.’



ELEVEN MADISON PARK | YE FAN

This idea of excellence is why luxury brands are orchestrating a growing number of partnerships with the hospitality sector. ‘It’s an incredibly strong connection point,’ says Karla Otto’s Lissy Von Schwarzkopf. ‘Fashion brands, for instance, want to show up where the customers are.’ This type of cross-category convergence ranges from buzzy branded beach pop-ups, such as One&Only Aesthesis’ (of Kerzner Group) pool takeover with Balmain, to dedicated physical hospitality presences, such as the boutique Christian Louboutin hotel in rural Portugal. For more strategic insight and growth opportunities, [download the dedicated Hospitality Partnerships report, in collaboration between Karla Otto and Lefty.](#)



ONE&ONLY AESTHESIS X BALMAIN, KARLA OTTO

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Fine dining also remains a growth sector, with investment projected to increase by 11.81%pt. from 2019 to 2027. Predominantly an intimate social activity, its growth aligns with the uptick of ‘belonging to a community or group’ as a driver for luxury spending.

The food and beverage sector itself is becoming an increasingly popular way for consumers to flaunt their cultural credibility – something luxury fashion brands want a slice of. Loro Piana for example ran a series of activations throughout Milan to highlight the Japanese influence on the brand’s recent collections. In Via dei Giardini, they transformed a kiosk into a beautiful Japanese bakery, serving traditional ‘wagashi kasutera’ wrapped in furoshiki fabrics that could be re-used as scarves.

Such experiences have permanence thanks to social media. For consumers who participate, these curated moments become part of their personal portfolio and communicate their status, insider knowledge, and elevated tastes.

III.III COMMUNITY

GUIDELINES

BRAND DEMOCRATISATION

Before the social media era, luxury was cemented in exclusivity. Owning something rare meant you were part of an intimate circle, and spotting someone else in the same piece was a subtle yet powerful signal of shared status and taste. Now, as shown in our survey, that once impenetrable sense of exclusivity has become increasingly fluid as community matters more than status and a sense of belonging becomes the driving aspiration.

Keith Baptista, Founder and Managing Director of creative agency Probject, has witnessed this shift. ‘Brands have pivoted to engaging consumers directly. Events that would have originally been reserved for press and celebrities now have a large consumer component, giving broader communities an opportunity to wear something or attend something to give them purpose for what they are buying.’

This change in approach is evidenced in Probject’s recent work with Chanel to create the ‘Lucky Chance Diner’. To celebrate its fragrance launch, the fashion house created a vintage-inspired pop-up concept, which was open to the public and offered interactive games, a diner-inspired menu and a number of photo opportunities for optimum social sharing. ‘These events present brands with an opportunity for content creation,’ notes CTZAR’s Camille Olivier. ‘A pop-up for VIPs and influencers, followed by public participation, creates a virtuous circle: it boosts social media visibility while fostering a sense of community belonging.’

SHOWING UP WHERE IT MATTERS

For brands looking to expand and deepen their communities, the winning strategy lies in striking the right balance between accessible entry-level experiences and the introduction of core products designed for a more specific, niche audience. It’s about creating a gateway for new consumers to engage, while still keeping the essence of the brand intact for those who have more discerning taste (and more spending power).

k2’s Xavier Cagnion recognises the importance of locality and community when it comes to branded spaces in Chinese regions. ‘Brands target a neighbourhood, driving traffic by connection to a community. There isn’t a sense of fatigue around something new, just around something irrelevant. The key is in connecting with the local audience.’

He believes that the success of local, niche brands, such as high-end fragrance brand Documents, can be attributed to their connection with their local roots. ‘Local brands are starting to grab the attention of luxury clients. The Chinese are very patriotic people and when they can buy local, quality items, they will switch brands to do so.’

‘There isn’t a sense of fatigue around something new, just around something irrelevant. The key is in connecting with the local audience.’



CHANEL 'LUCKY CHANCE DINER', PROBJECT



89 LORO PIANA, INTO THE WILD, INCA

SERVICING THE VIC

As witnessed, when the economy is unstable and the aspirational luxury consumer has been outpriced by rising costs, it will be crucial for luxury brands to focus specifically on their top 1% – or even 0.1%, retaining the wealth they bring to the business.

While some luxury brands have democratised to build broader communities, others have doubled down on their VIC strategies, nourishing their most influential circle. By offering dedicated and exclusive services from invitations to fashion shows, gifts sent to hotel suites and membership to private sororities, brands can cultivate and target their HNWIs, even gamifying the experience for them.

Karla Otto's Von Schwarzkopf, speaks to the importance of engaging with the VIC in new ways. 'They want to be part of the full story. What we are seeing is the creation of hyper local ways of working with VICs, finding them where they are and creating experience there. It is super important, not just to rely on the retail experience but also to provide them with surprising moments.'

Loro Piana focuses on all-encompassing VIC experiences that invite like-minded people to immerse themselves in its world, creating engagement with not only the product, but the brand. The brand enrolled INCA to celebrate the launch of the 'Into the Wild' collection, which saw 15 top press and influencers as well as a selection of Loro Piana VICs flown to Aspen to take part in a restaurant takeover, mountain biking, hiking and Michelin-starred food, all based in an exclusive private home in the valley.

What we are seeing is the creation of hyper local ways of working with VICs, finding them where they are and creating experience there.



90 LORO PIANA, INTO THE WILD, INCA



VIC programmes of this nature are particularly successful in Asia, where department stores act as the key destination for luxury shoppers. Department stores in the region have very successfully cultivated their VIC service offers, providing special benefits for their most influential customers. This is reflected in our data, where the influence of department stores in China in particular rises 15.26%pt.

Louis Vuitton has a similar initiative. Atelier Lum has worked with the brand to take over the terrace of the Cheval Blanc hotel in Paris for the last few years. These spaces become elevated showrooms, entire scenographies created to showcase the best of the brand to the most important clients.



LOUIS VUITTON, SAVOIR-RÊVER, ATELIER LUM

ANTI-AMPLIFICATION

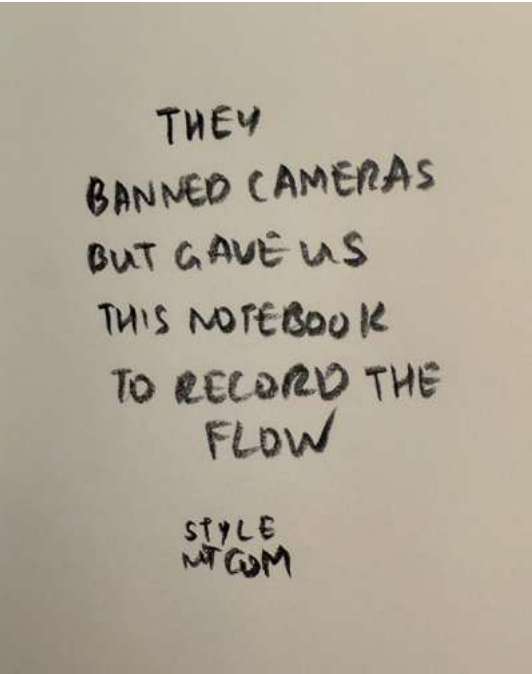
Social media has no doubt played a key role in the propagation of luxury brands and can be seen as a hindrance for those looking to maintain their most exclusive of communities. Brands such as The Row, which bans the use of mobile phones at its events, and Bottega Veneta, which does not utilise social media, use anti-amplification tactics to build a very strict, invite-only community for ultimate exclusivity.

This community-first approach challenges luxury brands in particular to find a balance between exclusivity and inclusivity, engaging broad communities, while simultaneously maintaining prestige for high-value clients.

This balancing act extends to the strategy behind retail spaces and events. The line between consumer events – open to all, large-scale experiences – and exclusive events – intimate, invitation-only affairs – is increasingly blurred, and luxury brands in particular must navigate this with nuance. In a world where access is the new luxury, the smartest brands will find ways to create meaningful, bespoke engagements while still ensuring broad appeal.



LOUIS VUITTON, SAVOIR-RÊVER, ATELIER LUM





CLOSING — STATEMENT

CLOSING STATEMENT

BUILD YOUR BRAND UNIVERSE WITH THE INDEPENDENTS

Through hours of round-table discussions and expert interviews we have sought to understand the shifting luxury market to predict what is to come in 2025 and beyond.

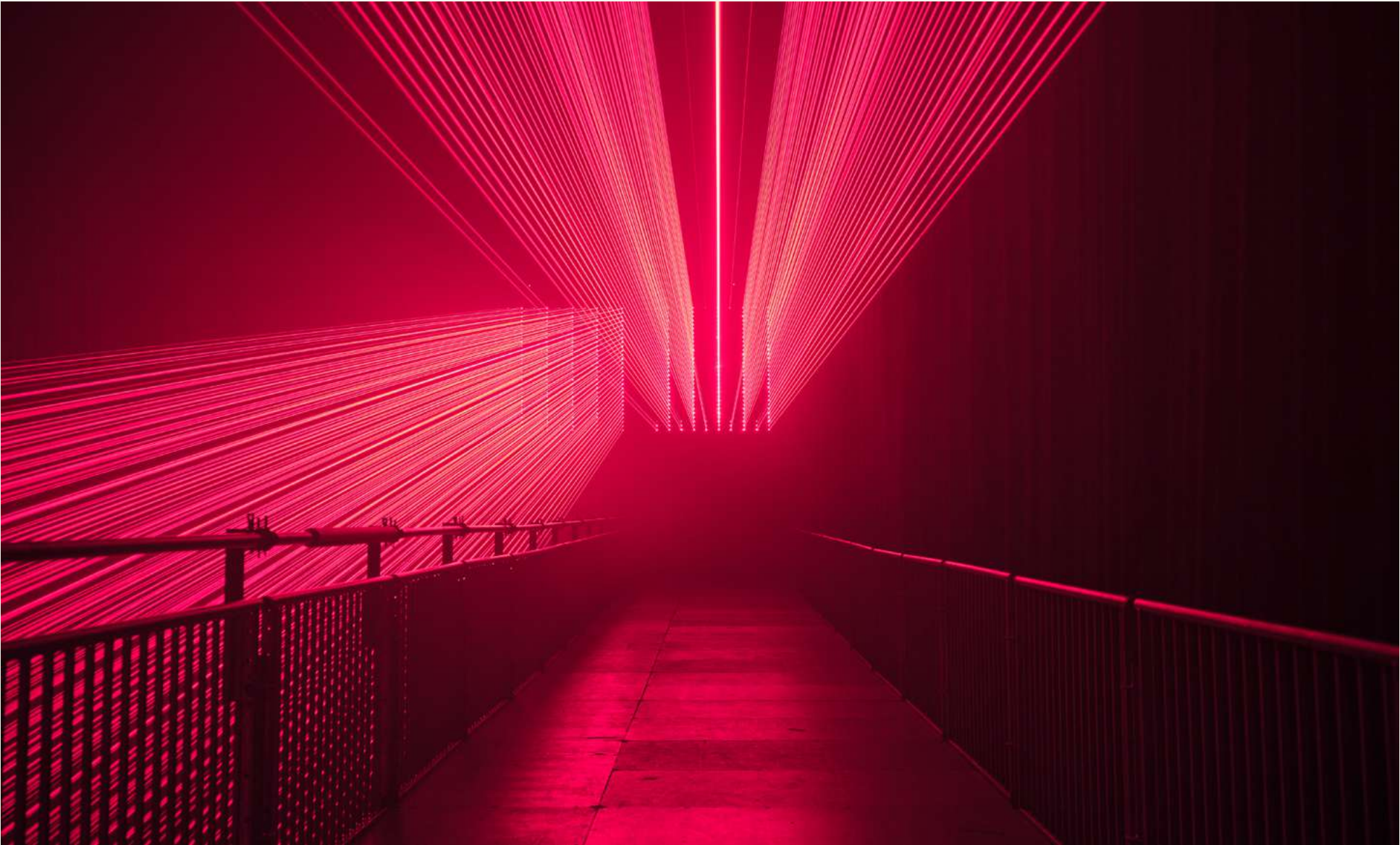
The modern luxury consumer is demanding more from brands. People want brands that can enrich their lives and experiences, actively creating a culture they want to be a part of. People want brands that bring them creative objects, but also new universes to dive into and innovative spaces in which to meet like-minded people.

The purchase matrix is changing: while we once sought status-signifying objects, we now look for culturally rich artefacts and experiences. As such, interest in designer clothing and bags is predicted to decline by 2027, in favour of art, watches and jewellery, as well as bespoke experiences found in hospitality.

The way we discover and engage with brands is also changing, from traditional methods of advertising to more subtle branded content via the world of entertainment. Luxury consumers want brand stories that place narrative before the product, inviting them into unique universes where they can get lost.

And that is also reflected in the spaces where we buy products and engage with brands. Luxury means experience, replacing traditional selling tactics with approaches that forge meaningful connections – both in person and online. Luxury also means best-in-class and unforgettable, which should be key words when crafting events and experiences.

The unique set-up of The Independents can help empower your brand to navigate the future, implementing these findings across all touchpoints. World-building is a 360-degree exercise, at which our experts are deeply skilled, spanning collaborations, content creation, community, and experiences.



H&M & MAXIMO RECIO & WEIRDCORE, KENNEDY

CRAFTING A 360 BRAND UNIVERSE

[CONTACT THE INDEPENDENTS](#)

ACCESSIBILITY —————> AWARENESS —————> ASPIRATIONAL —————> CULTURAL CREDIBILITY —————> EXCLUSIVITY

PRODUCT PORTFOLIO

1. HIGH STREET COLLAB



H&M x Mugler

2. LIFESTYLE PRODUCT



Saint Laurent, Rive Droite Coffee Mug

3. BEAUTY EXTENSION



Balmain Beauty

4. CORE LINE



UGG

5. SEASONAL COLLECTION



Valentino SS25

6. PRODUCT COLLAB



Miu Miu x New Balance

7. LIMITED EDITIONS



Miu Miu Upcycle


8. VIC EXCLUSIVES



Hermès


CONTENT

1. SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT




Jacquemus

2. OUT OF HOME




One&Only One Za'abeel

3. EDITORIALS




Adidas

4. LONG-FORM CONTENT




'Acquired' Podcasts

5. PRINT MEDIA




Loewe Magazine

6. DOCUMENTARIES




Mugler's 'Inside the Dream'

7. PRODUCT PLACEMENT



AMI in 'Emily in Paris'

8. BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT



Balmain x Channel 4 'Fracture'

COMMUNITY

1. LOCAL & NICHE COMMUNITY



Miu Miu Clubs

2. COLLABORATIONS



Moncler Genius

3. ASPIRATIONAL PARTNERS



Nike x Parris Goebel

4. BRAND AMBASSADORS



Lanvin

5. BRAND CURATORS



Penny Martin x ARKET

6. CULTURAL PROTAGONISTS



SKIMS

7. RED CARPET DRESSING



Taylor Hill x Loewe

8. CELEBRITY PERFORMANCES



Céline Dion for Elie Saab

RETAIL & EXPERIENCE

1. LIFESTYLE POP-UP



Prada Caffè, Harrods

2. RETAIL POP-UP



Prada Paradoxe at Milan Fashion Week

3. FLAGSHIP RETAIL




Dior, Paris

4. AIRPORT RETAIL



Gentle Monster, Incheon International Airport Seoul

5. HOSPITALITY ACTIVATION



One&Only x Balmain

6. CULTURAL POP-UP



Loewe, Salone Del Mobile 2024

7. EXCLUSIVE SHOWCASE



Cartier, The Great Wall of China

8. VIC EXPERIENCES



Chanel, Salons Privés

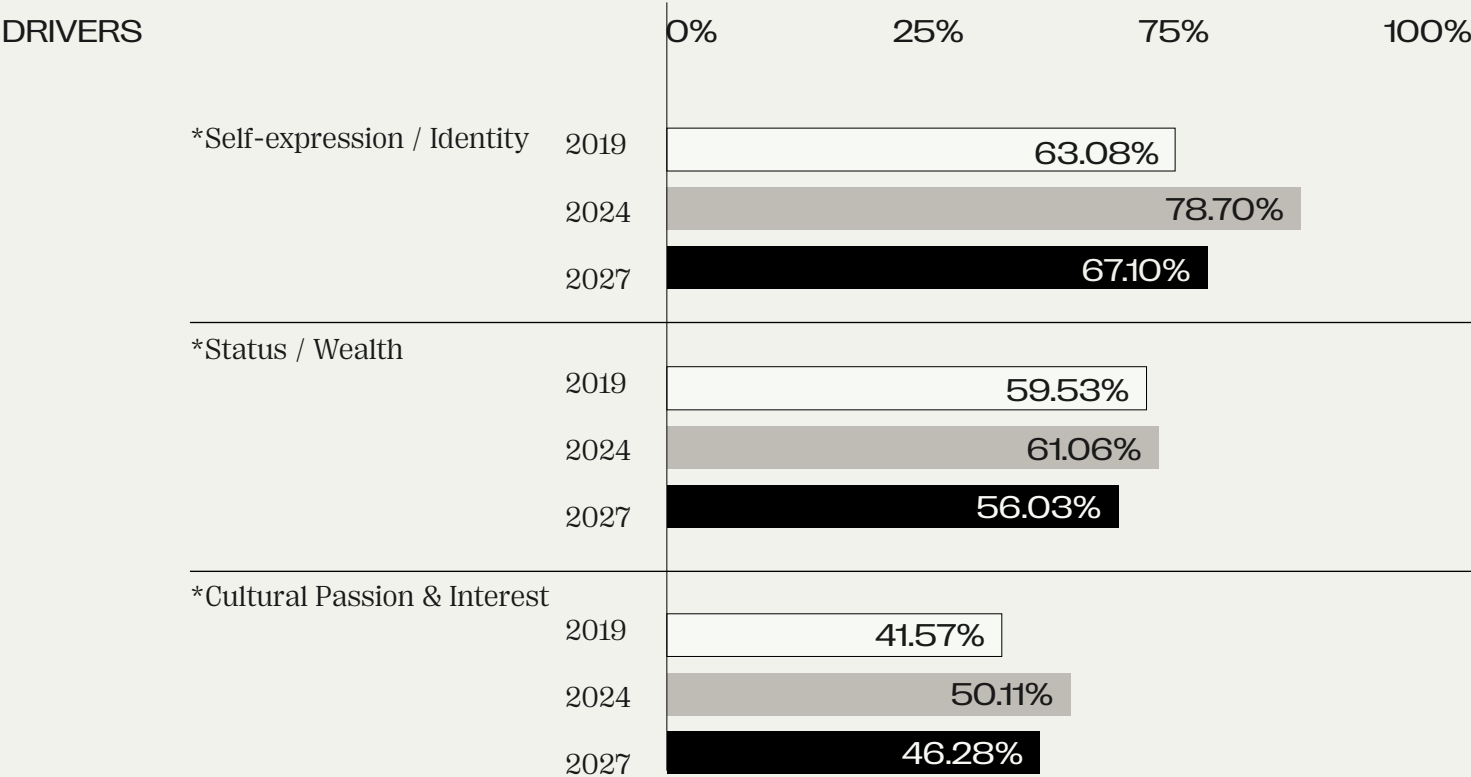


APPENDIX

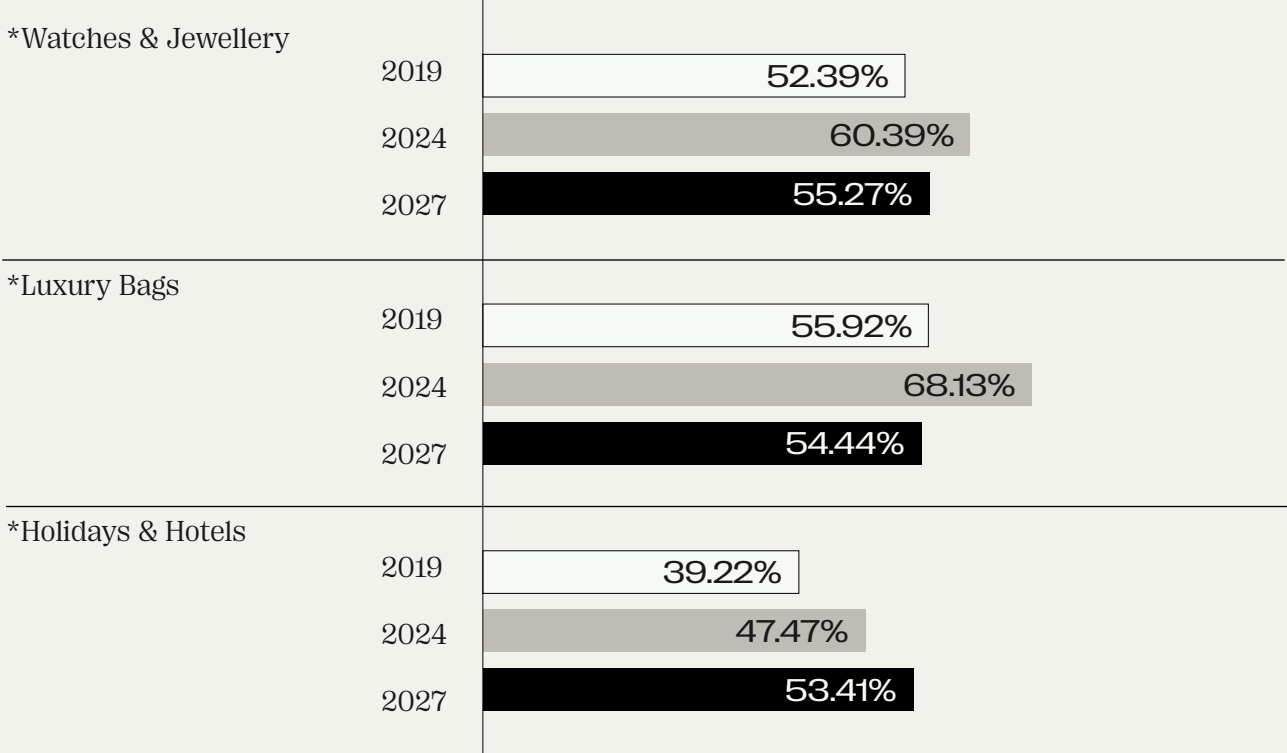


BELMOND X JR 'L'OBSERVATOIRE', KARLA OTTO

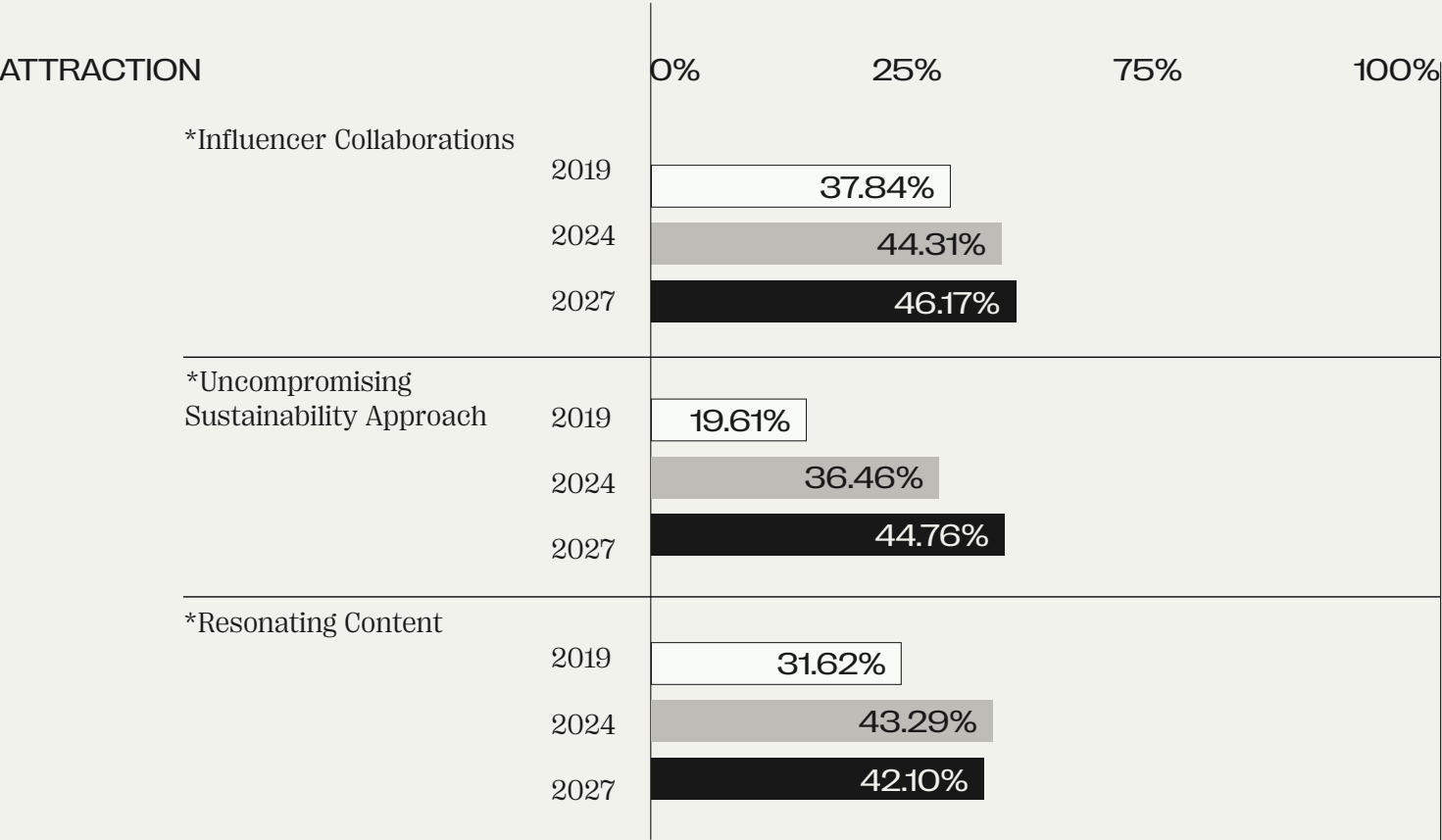
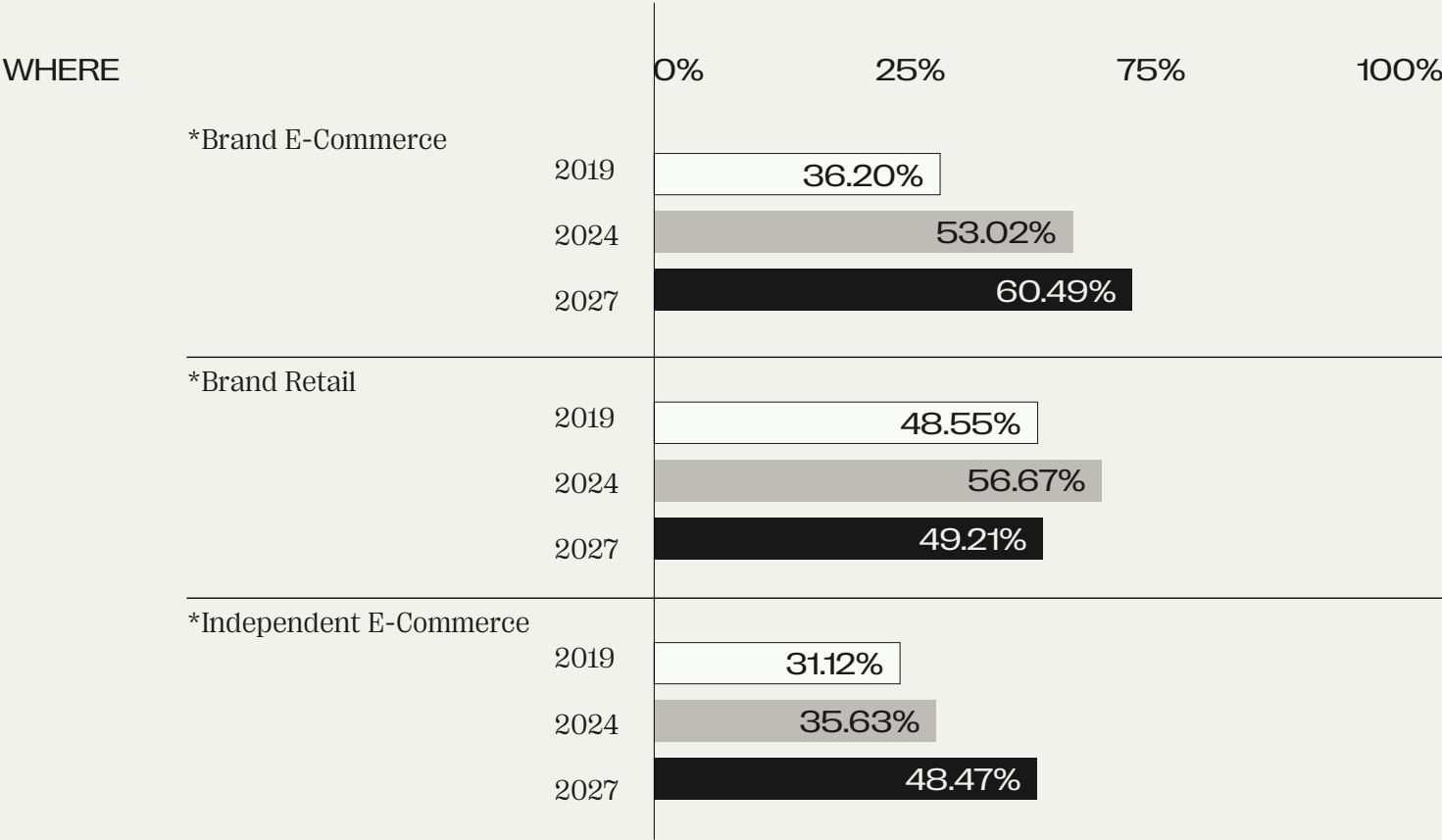
CONSUMER FORECAST: CHANGING DRIVERS AND MOTIVATORS 2019-2027
Top 3 most important future factors in % *For full dataset contact insights@karlaotto.com



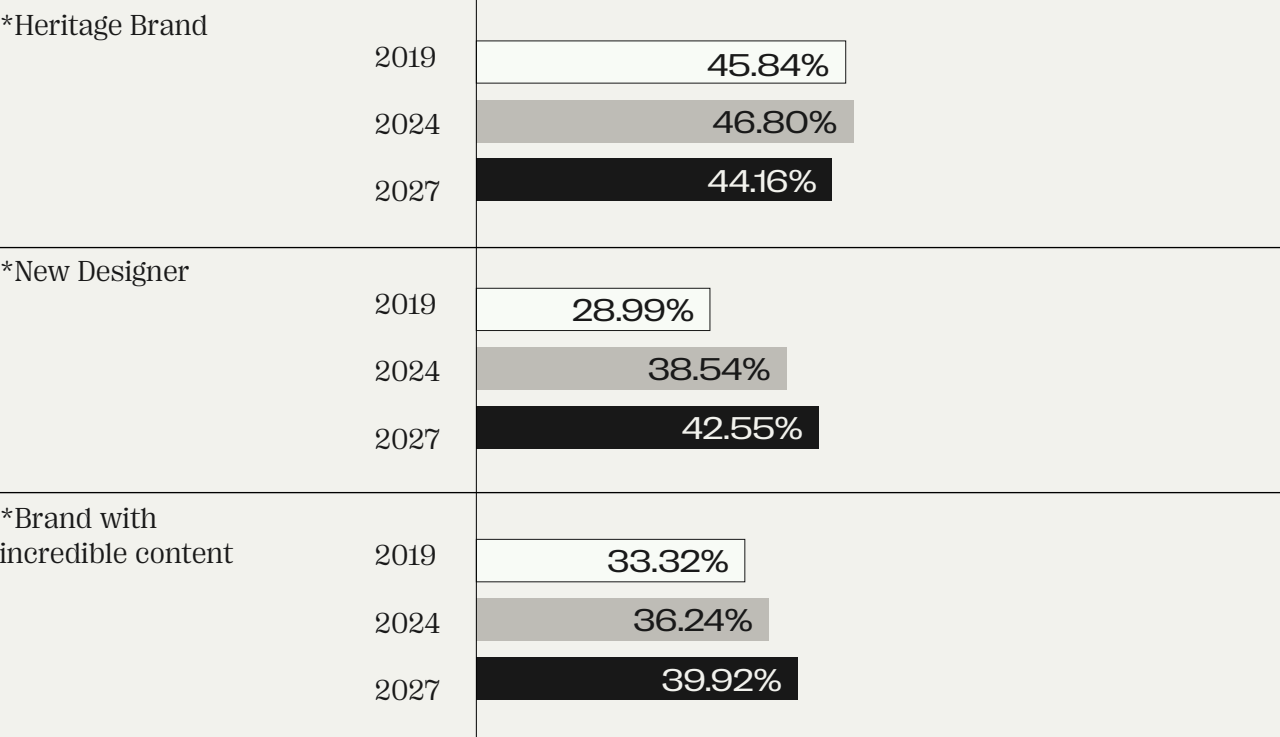
LUXURY INVESTMENTS



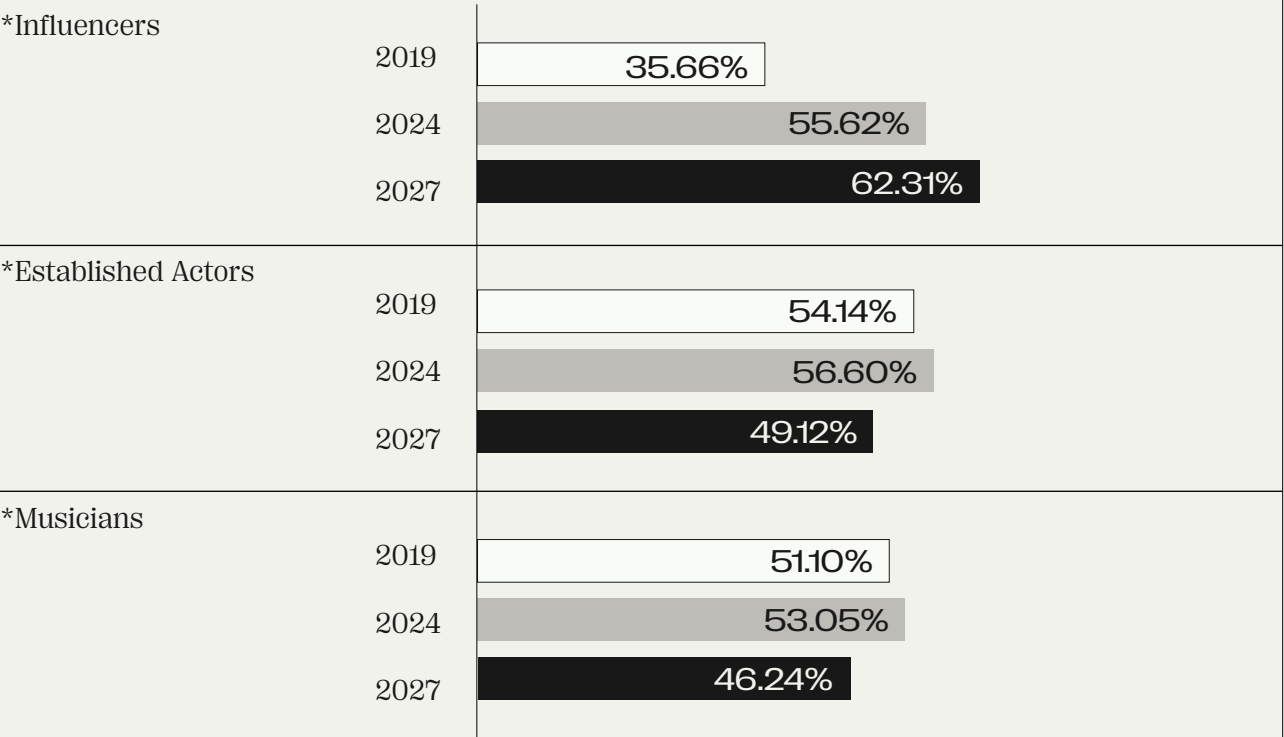
*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category.
All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.



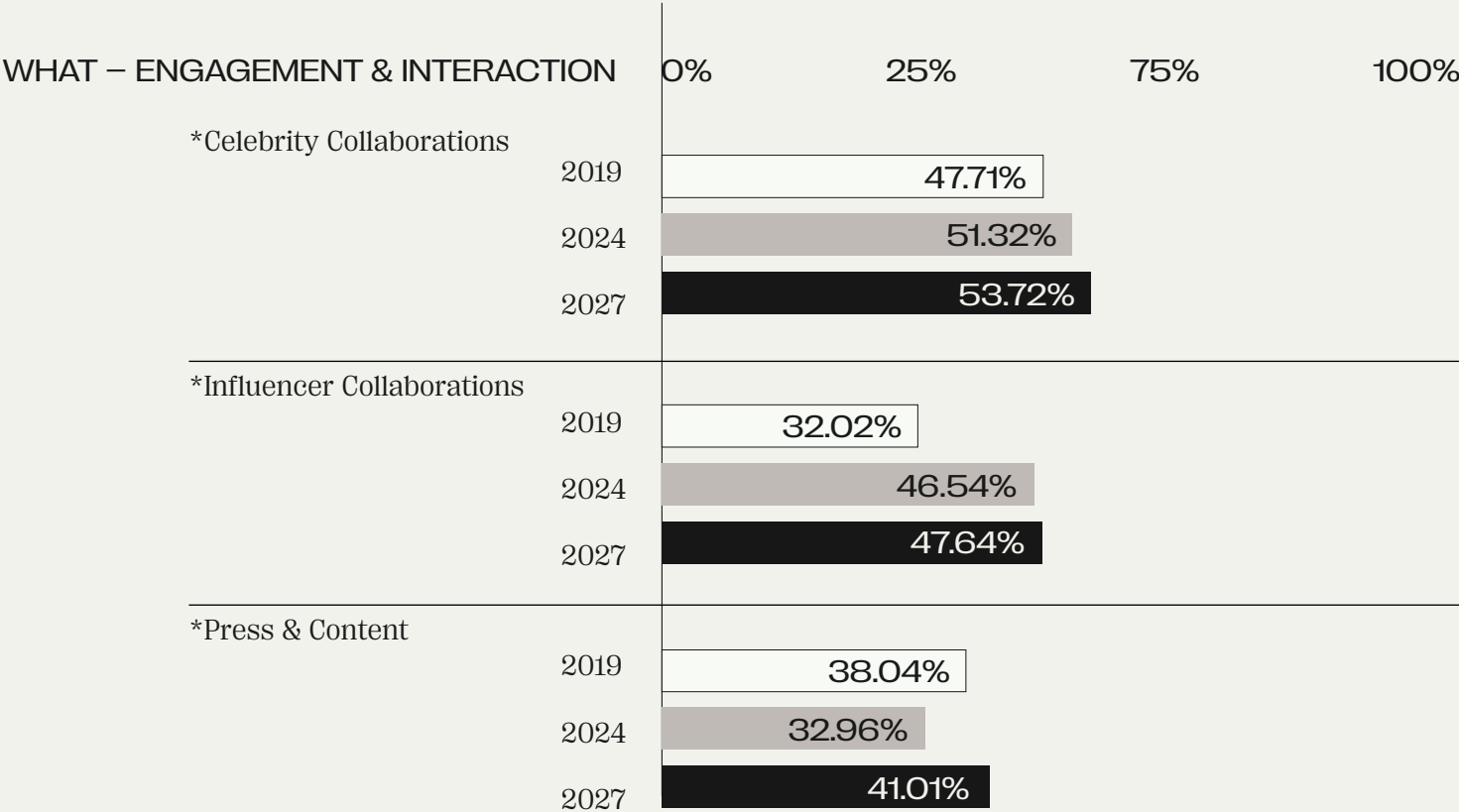
LUXURY INVESTMENT – BRAND PERSPECTIVE



WHO



*Global average. Percentage of respondents who selected this category.
All answers were gathered through non-exclusive multiple choice questions.



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ARMANI SS25, PRODJECT

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