

PwC Research 2025: Secondhand Luxury Rises as Gen Z and Millennials Redefine Fashion Consumption

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Luxury fashion is evolving — and it's the younger generations leading the charge. According to PwC's latest **"Trends in Luxury Fashion: Consumer Survey 2025"**, **Gen Z and Millennials** are reshaping what it means to buy luxury, with growing emphasis on **secondhand, rental, and personalised fashion experiences**.

The survey, conducted among 268 consumers across Italy, Germany, the UK, France, and Spain, reveals a clear generational divide. While **40% of Gen Z and 28% of Millennials** have already purchased secondhand products on platforms like Vinted, **over half of Baby Boomers (53%) and Gen X (49%)** have never done so — reflecting a persistent cultural resistance toward pre-loved luxury.

Yet, what was once niche is now mainstream. "Luxury fashion is undergoing a profound and irreversible transformation," says **Erika Andreetta**, Partner at PwC Italia and EMEA Fashion & Luxury Leader. "The new generations want more than just a product — they want to understand its story, value, and impact. The future of luxury speaks the language of awareness."

Fashion leads luxury purchases

The report shows that **clothing remains the most purchased luxury category**, with **69%** of consumers buying at least one luxury garment in the past year. This is followed by **accessories (53%), shoes (32%), and bags (16%)**.

Gen Z consumers show the widest variety in their luxury purchases — **66% choose clothing, 62% accessories, 43% shoes, and 18% bags** — underlining their eclectic, trend-driven approach. Millennials mirror this variety, while older generations focus more on classic clothing pieces.

A conscious approach to consumption

When prices are perceived as too high, **29% of consumers wait for discounts**, while **Gen Z opts for secondhand or rental options**, and **Millennials turn to more affordable alternative brands**. Interestingly, **Baby Boomers** appear less price-sensitive, with many admitting they rarely abandon a purchase for financial reasons.

The motivations behind a luxury purchase are also shifting. **Craftsmanship and quality of service (37%)** remain key drivers, followed by **environmental sustainability (32%), 'Made in Italy' value (31%), brand status (31%), and peer recommendations (28%)**. Meanwhile, **39% of Gen Z** emphasise the importance of **personalisation**, reflecting a growing appetite for unique, custom experiences.

Heritage meets modern values

Despite the evolving mindset, Italian craftsmanship and boutique shopping continue to hold strong. **71% of consumers** have purchased luxury items from **Italian multi-brand boutiques**, both online and offline. However, the meaning of “luxury” itself is expanding — it’s no longer only about exclusivity, but also about **sustainability, inclusivity, and digital storytelling**.

For brands, this evolution offers both a challenge and an opportunity. As Andreetta notes, “Consumers are more informed, more demanding, and more curious. They’re asking brands to invest in experience, circularity, and trust — not just in logos.”

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