

knit

Published
November 2025

The New Markers of Status: How Consumers Define Luxury in 2025

How craftsmanship, community, and cultural relevance are reshaping prestige for a new generation





The Great Redefinition

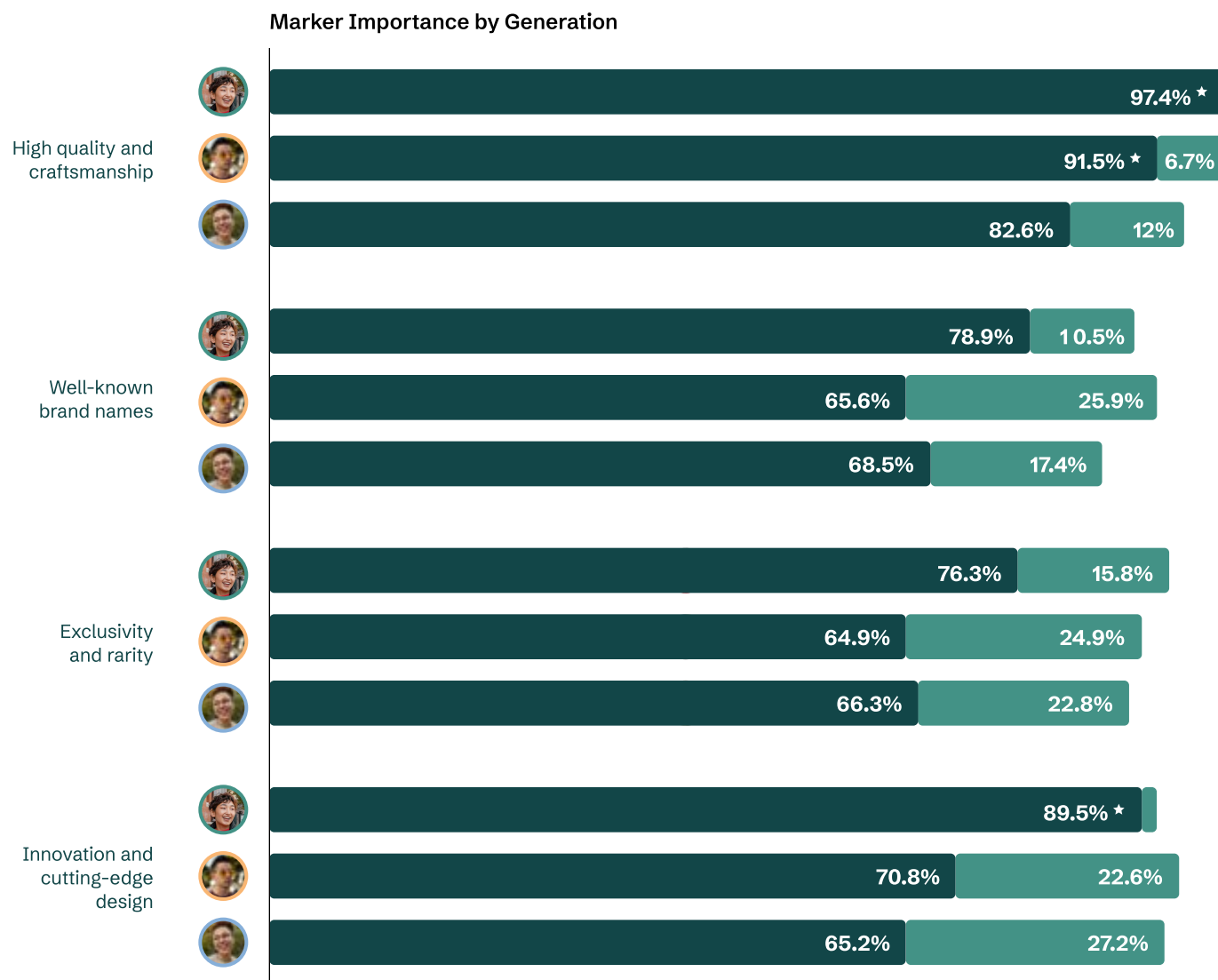
For decades, prestige was defined by distance — the logos, the velvet ropes, the price tags that separated the few from the many. But in 2025, that distance is narrowing. The markers of luxury are evolving from symbols of exclusivity to expressions of identity.

For **Millennials**, **Gen Z**, and the emerging **Gen Alpha**, luxury still means quality. But increasingly, it also means values: craftsmanship that feels authentic, personalization that reflects individuality, and innovation that signals creativity and progress.

The challenge for brands? Staying emotionally relevant in this new landscape — where the same consumer who covets a heritage watch may also see a digital membership or limited NFT drop as a status symbol.

This study, conducted in August 2025 among 520 U.S. consumers aged 13–44, explores how younger generations are redefining luxury — what they buy, why it matters, and how it makes them feel.

Marker Importance by Generation



MarkerImportance. How important are these qualities when you evaluate a luxury brand? N = 520



Gen Alpha



Millennial



Gen Z



Very important (T2B)



Moderately important

Craftsmanship Remains, But the Meaning of Luxury Has Moved

Across generations, one truth endures: luxury begins with craftsmanship.

More than nine in ten Millennials (91.5%) and nearly all Gen Alpha respondents (97.4%) define luxury through high quality and superior craftsmanship. Yet what that craftsmanship represents differs dramatically.

For Millennials and Gen Z, quality craftsmanship signals authenticity — a respect for artistry, durability, and legacy.

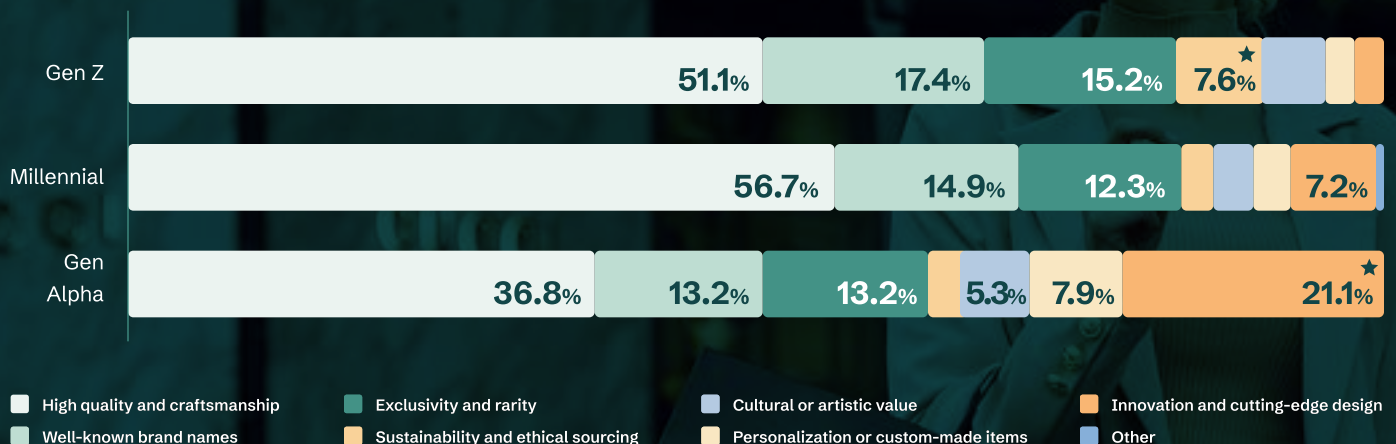
For Gen Alpha, it's a marker of innovation and brand vision — a future-facing interpretation that blends luxury with technology and design-forward aesthetics.

This divergence reflects a deeper shift: younger consumers aren't rejecting tradition; they're remixing it. They want the timelessness of heritage, but only if it's accompanied by innovation, transparency, and creativity.

Personal Definition of Luxury - by Generation

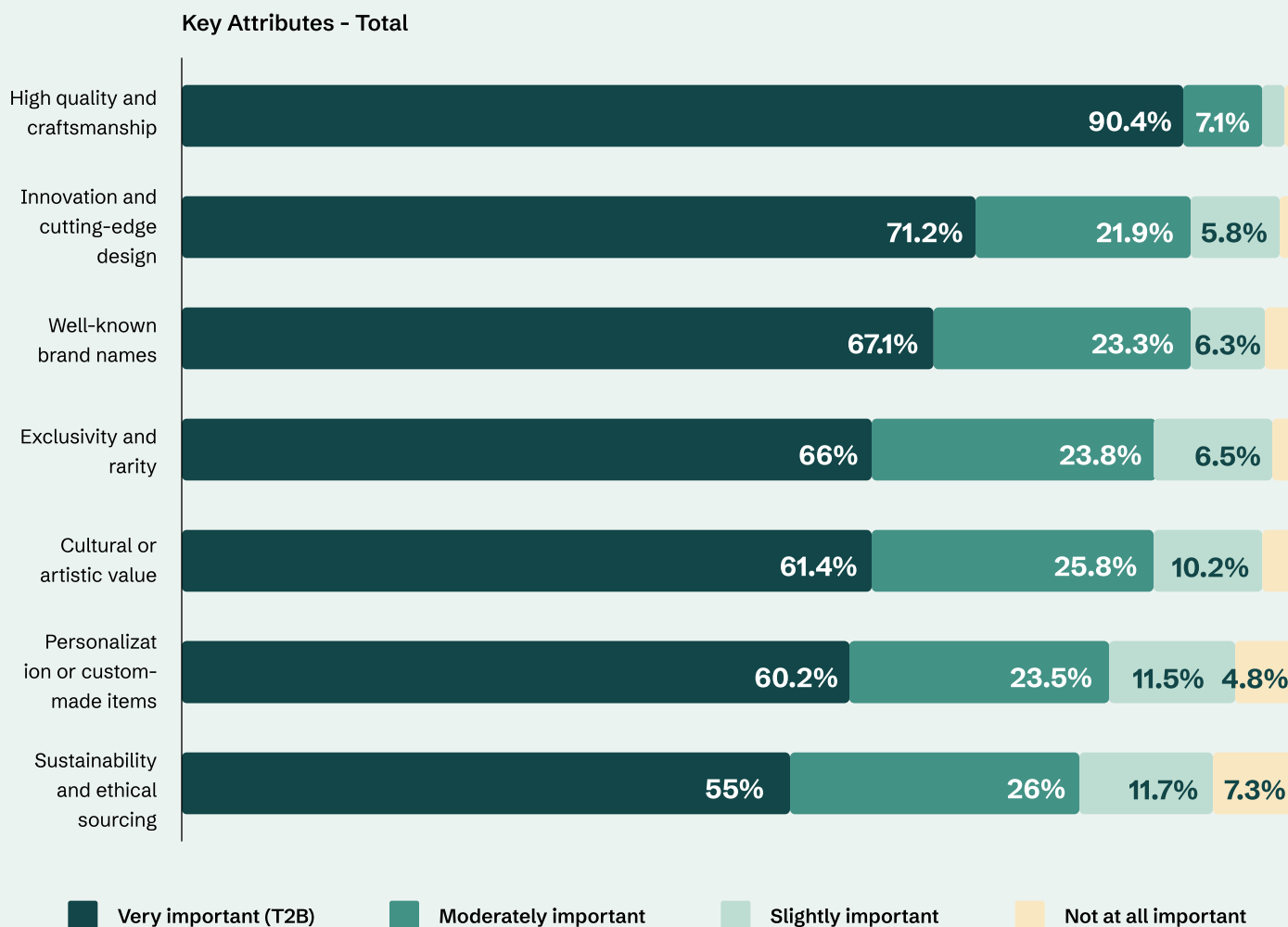
For millennials and Gen Z, luxury continues to be rooted in traditional markers - superior quality, craftsmanship, and durability, in contrast, Gen Alpha - growing up fully immersed in digital culture - associates luxury with innovation, technology, and futuristic aesthetic.

Personal Definition of Luxury - by Generation



Luxury is most strongly linked to high quality and craftsmanship, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z, for Gen Alpha, however, luxury is more closely tied to innovation and cutting-edge design.

Importance of Brand Qualities



MarkerImportance. How important are these qualities when you evaluate a luxury brand? N = 520

“Luxury isn’t about how old the brand is — it’s about what it’s doing next.”

— Millennial male



Quiet vs. Visible Luxury: The New Duality of Prestige

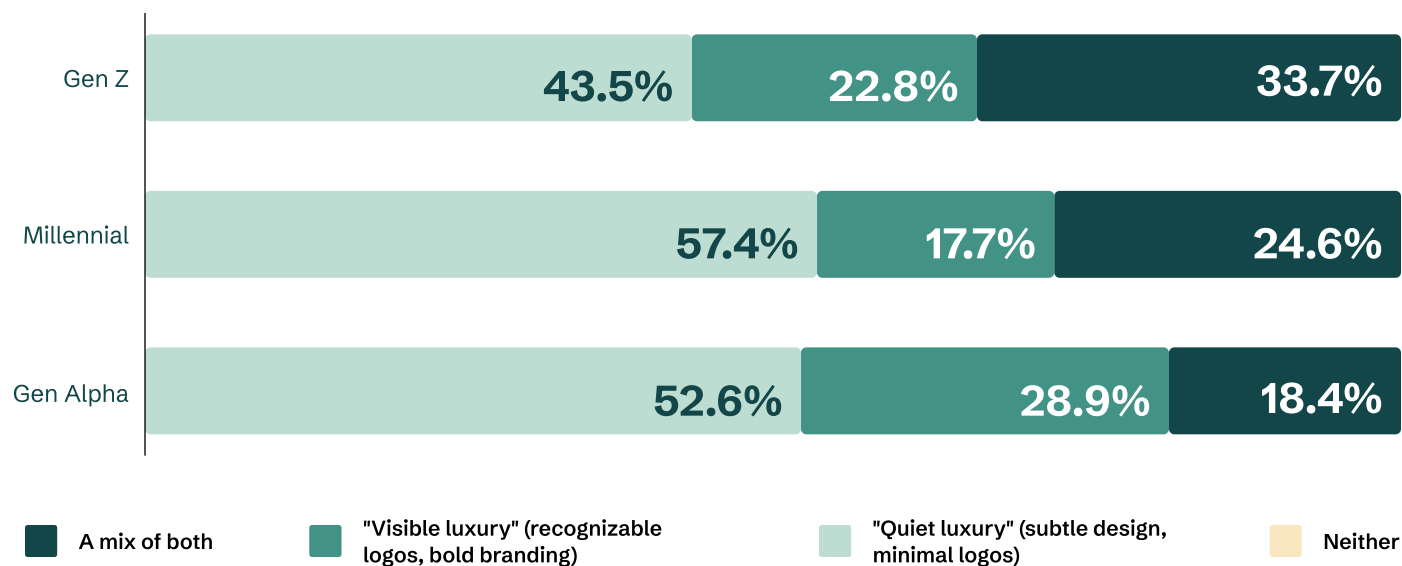
Luxury today exists in two languages — one whispered, one worn loud.

Nearly half of respondents (46%) say they prefer a balance between quiet and visible luxury, a sentiment led by Millennials. Gen Z, influenced by minimalist aesthetics and a desire for subtle distinction, leans toward quiet luxury — **“not showing off”, “subtle elegance”**, and an absence of overt branding were the most common descriptors.

Gen Alpha, however, is reviving visible luxury with unapologetic confidence. They associate it with bold logos, cultural relevance, and social recognition — a new kind of status signaling shaped by digital visibility.

This duality underscores a broader truth: luxury has become less about conformity and more about code-switching. The same consumer may buy Bottega for its discretion and Balenciaga for its boldness — both expressions of taste, just through different volumes.

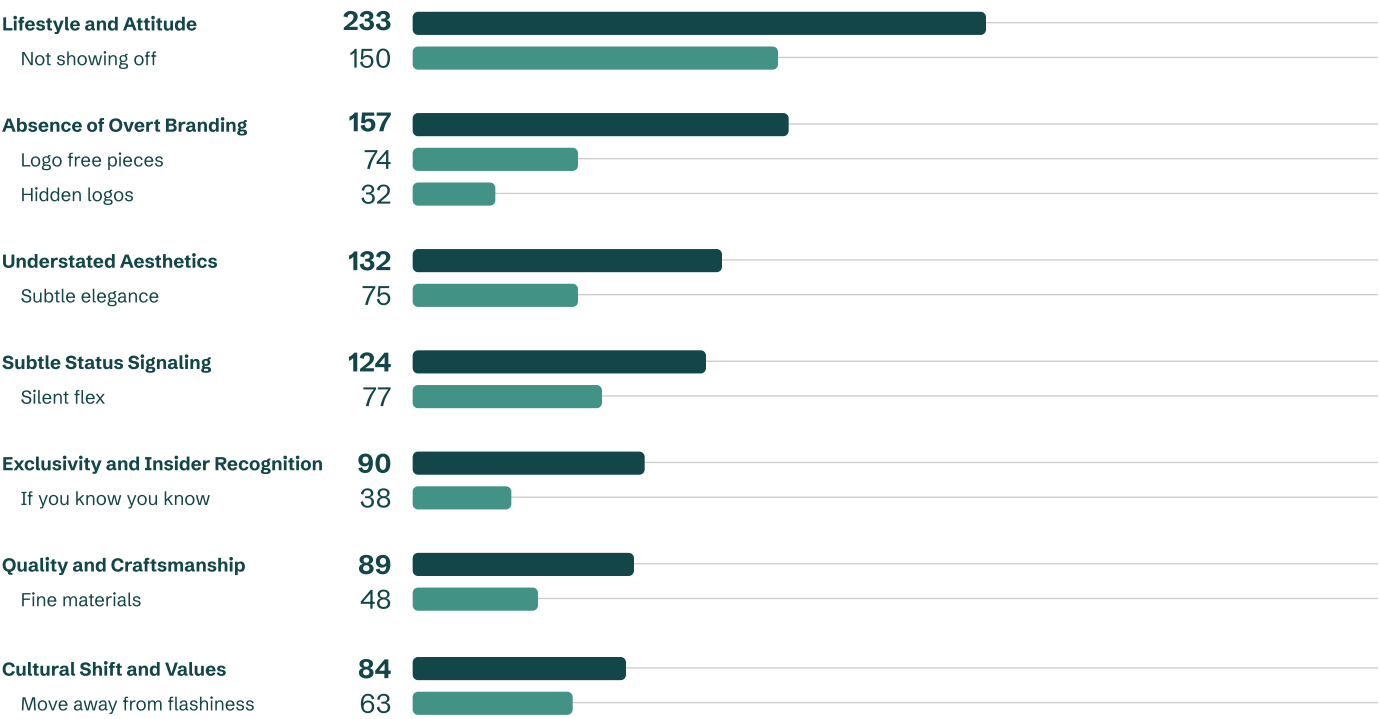
Quiet vs. Visible Luxury – Appeal by Generation



StyleOfLuxury. When you think of luxury, which appeals more to you? N = 520



Cultural Meaning of Quiet Luxury



QuietLuxuryMeaning. How would you describe the cultural meaning of quiet luxury today? N = 520

Cultural Meaning of Quiet Luxury

Not showing off

“A quite luxury means to me that not many people may know you live a luxurious lifestyle.”

“Expensive stuff but no one knows it’s expensive.”

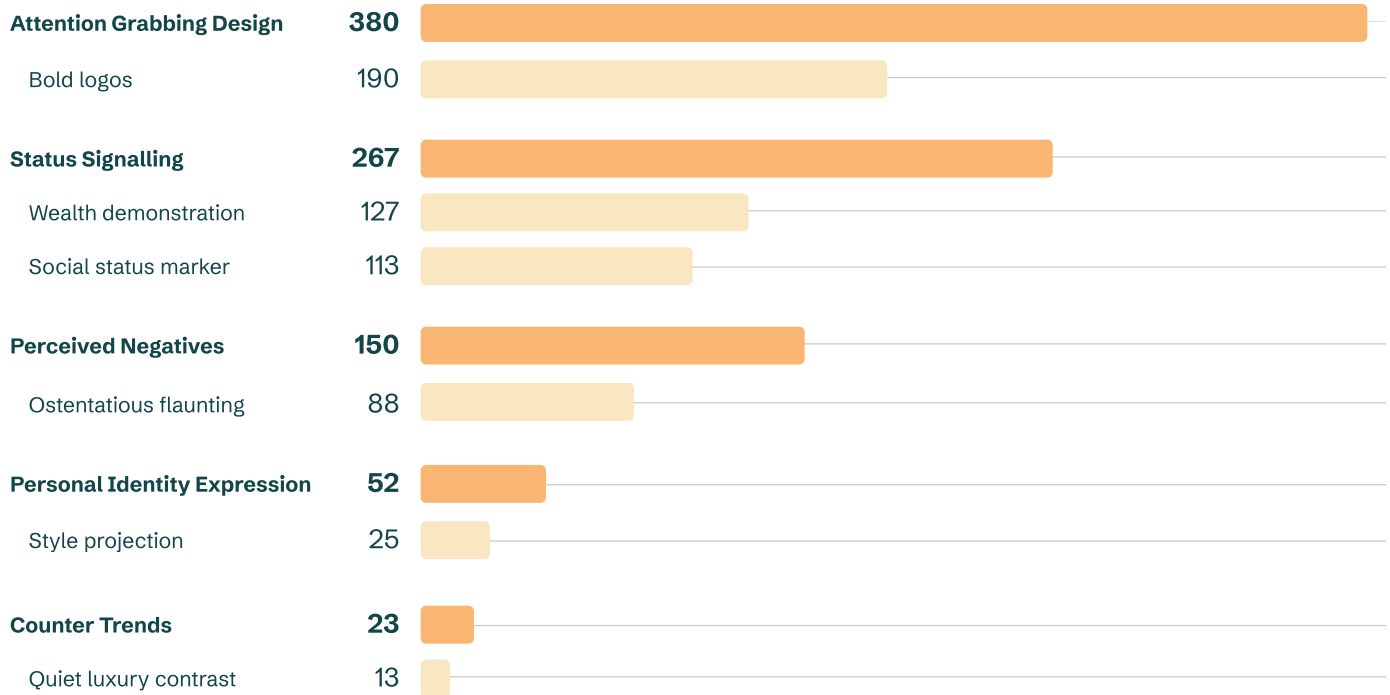
“The subtleness makes it more attractive, people who flaunt their luxury makes them seem inauthentic.”

Subtle Elegance

“I would say it means standing out but without making a splash, or being modest but still shinning brighter than others and other things.”

“A more polished and refined aesthetic, as opposed to flash and style.”

Cultural Meaning of *Visible Luxury*



VisibleLuxuryMeaning. How would you describe the cultural meaning of visible luxury today? N = 520

Cultural Meaning of Visible Luxury

Bold Logos

“Clearly representing brands by showcasing their labels in their products.”

“Everyone knows and recognizes the brand.”

“I think it might be a little more old fashion having big logos everywhere, but it still holds up today.”

Status Signaling

“People wanting others to see hey I’ve got a luxury outfit on. It’s worth this much money.”

“That it’s flashy and you want everybody to know what you have on.”

The New Status Symbols: Rarity Meets Personalization

Exclusivity hasn't disappeared — it's just become more personal.

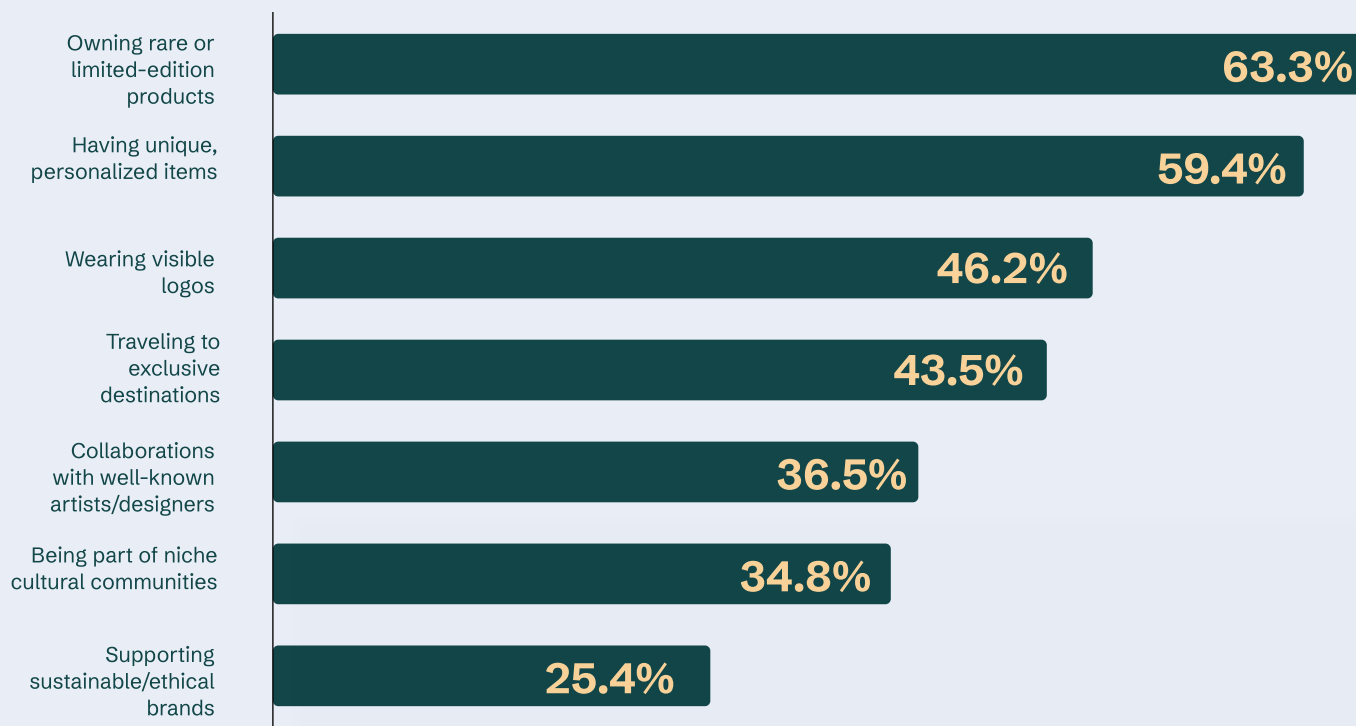
Owning rare or *limited-edition* products (63.3%) and *personalized* items (59.4%) are now the top markers of status, outranking traditional cues like price or brand fame.

For Millennials and Gen Z, that personalization expresses individuality — a way to say, “*This is mine.*” For Gen Alpha, it's about creative control: customization feels like co-authorship.

Designer handbags remain the single strongest symbol of luxury ownership across generations, but what's changing is the *why*. It's less about recognition and more about resonance — about feeling seen, not just being noticed.



Status Symbols in 2025

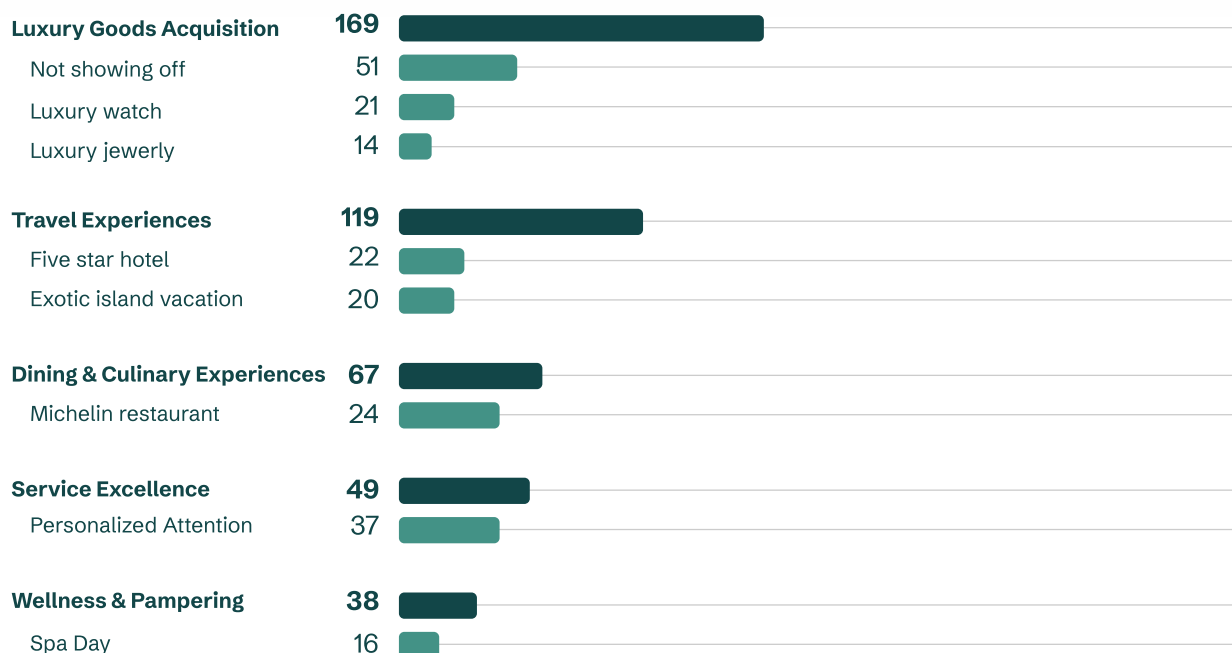


StatusSymbols. Wich of the following feel like signs of status or prestige today? Select all that apply. N=520



Luxury Moments - Qual

Moment of Luxury



LuxuryMoment. Describe a recent moment that felt truly luxurious to you. What made it feel that way? N=520

“Today’s luxury is less about what you own — and more about what feels made for you.”

— Gen Z Female



The Emotional Drivers of Luxury

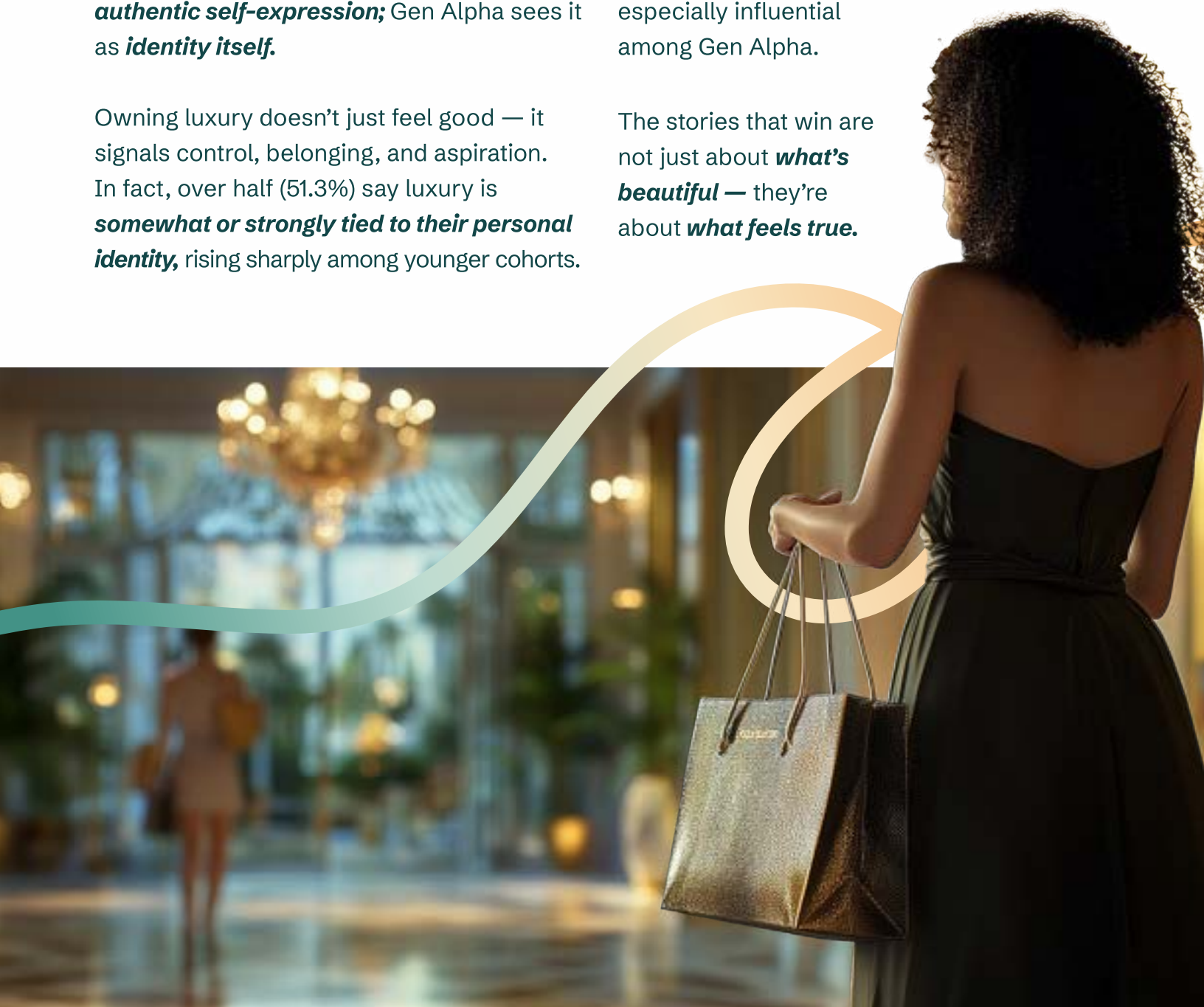
Behind every luxury purchase lies an emotion — accomplishment, identity, reward.

Luxury's emotional dimension is becoming more visible across generations. Millennials describe it as a symbol of hard-earned success; Gen Z views it as a reflection of ***authentic self-expression***; Gen Alpha sees it as ***identity itself***.

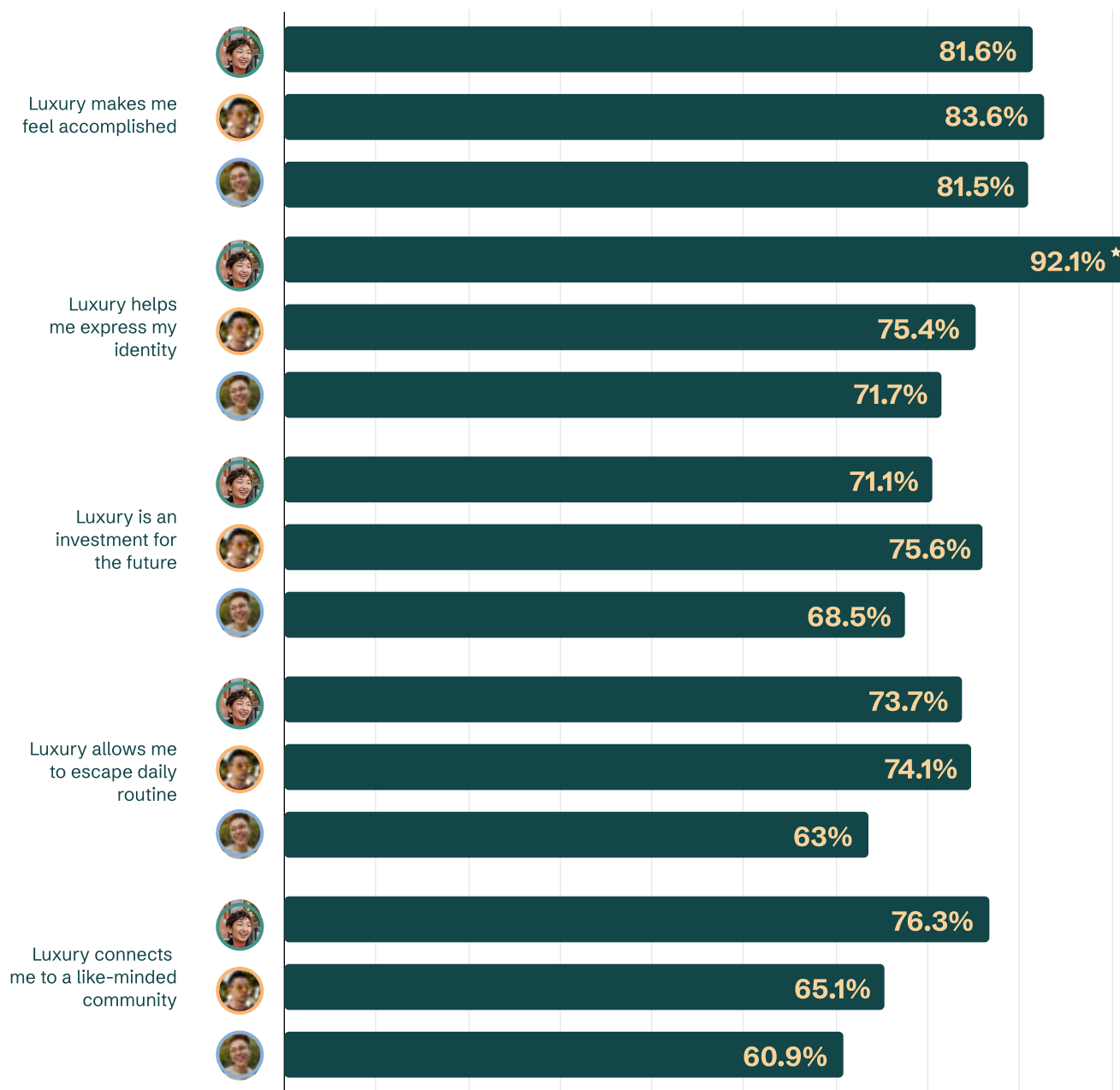
Owning luxury doesn't just feel good — it signals control, belonging, and aspiration. In fact, over half (51.3%) say luxury is ***somewhat or strongly tied to their personal identity***, rising sharply among younger cohorts.

Social media amplifies this emotional currency. Instagram remains the leading platform shaping perceptions of luxury, while TikTok and YouTube are especially influential among Gen Alpha.

The stories that win are not just about ***what's beautiful*** — they're about ***what feels true***.



Emotional Benefits – Why Consumers Pursue Luxury



Gen Alpha



Millennial



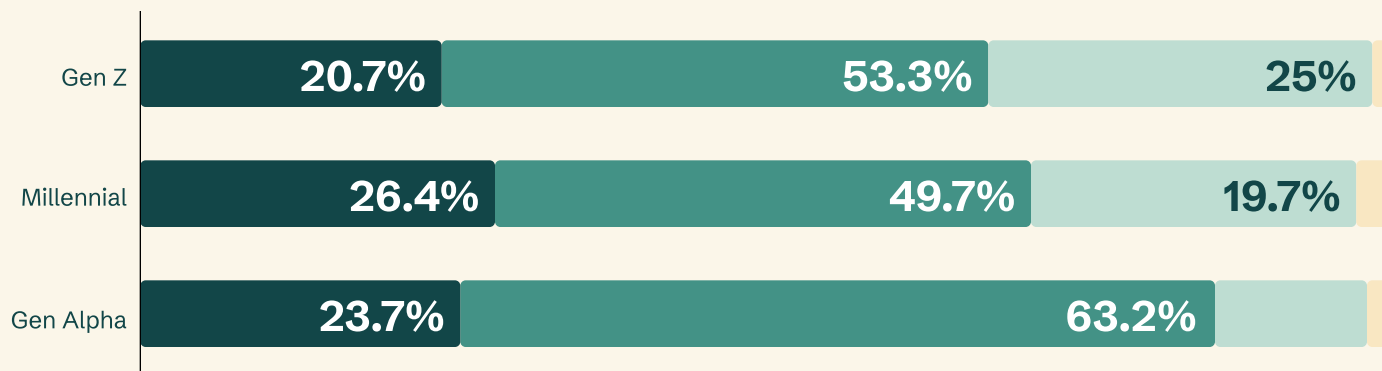
Gen Z

Agree (T2B)

EmotionalBenefits. How much do you agree with the following statements about why you pursue luxury?



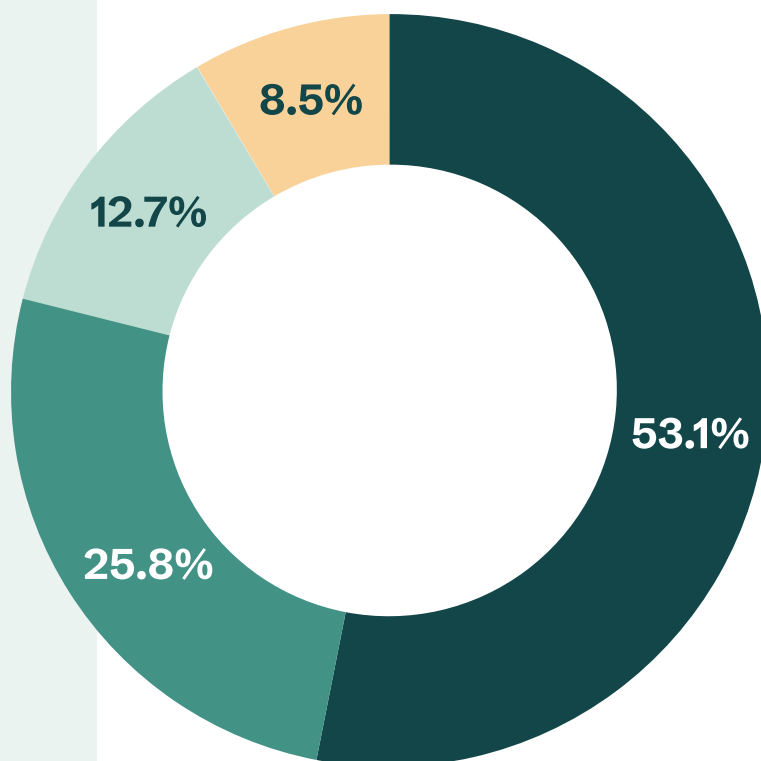
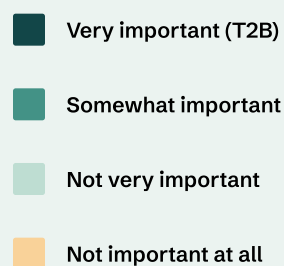
Luxury and Identity Association



PersonalLuxury. In your view, how closely is luxury tied to personal identity today?

Very closely tied - luxury reflects who I am
 Somewhat tied - luxury reflects parts of me
 Not very tied - luxury is more about function or quality
 Not at all tied

Social Media Platform Influence



SMImportance. How important is social media in shaping your perceptions of luxury?



The Digital Dimension: Experiences as the New Ownership

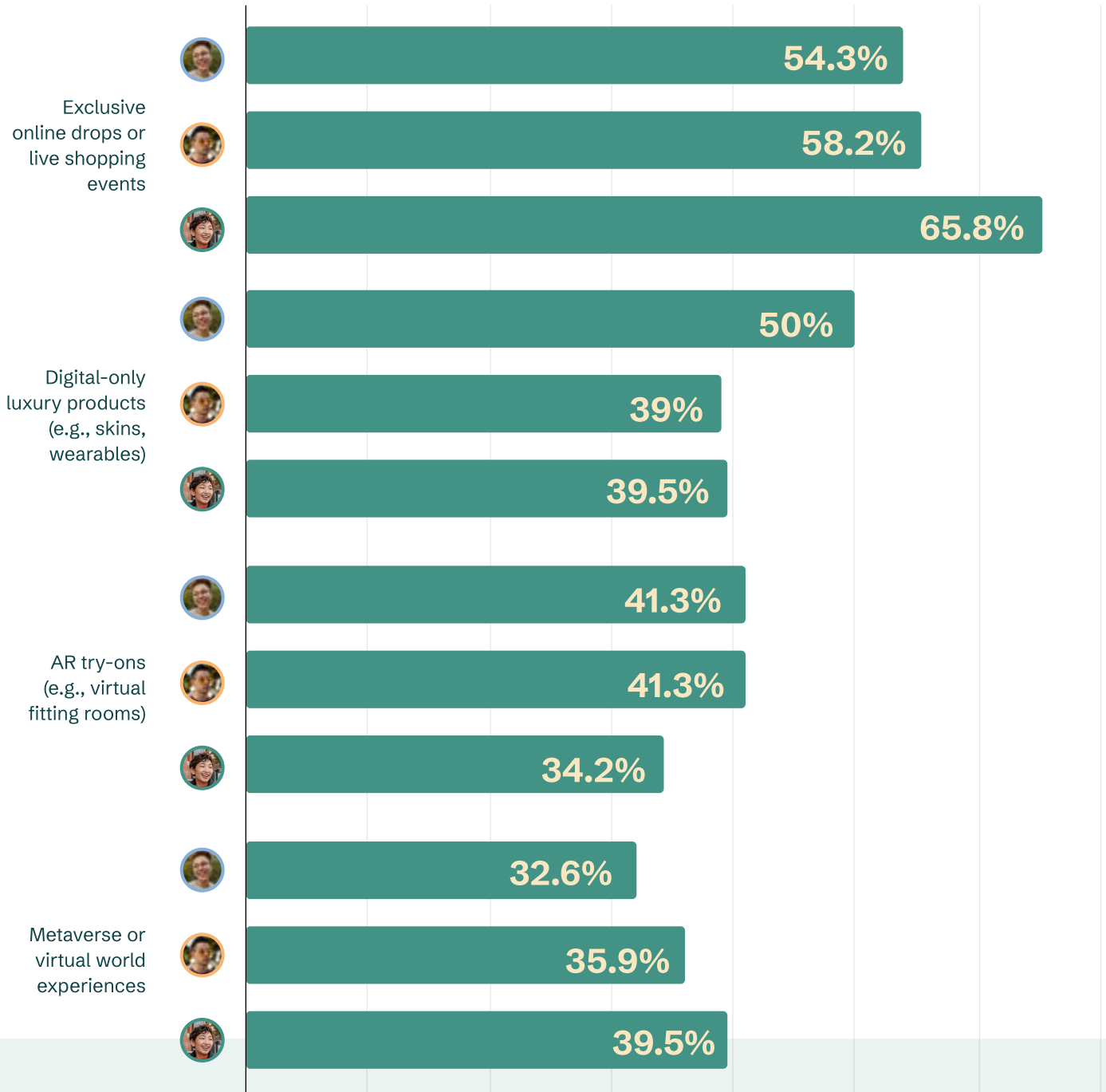
For the next generation, luxury is not only *what you wear* — *it's how you interact*.

Digital-first experiences are now core to the luxury ecosystem. The majority of younger consumers engage with online drops, livestream shopping events, and digital-only luxury products. AR try-ons and immersive brand worlds are increasingly viewed as legitimate extensions of craftsmanship.

Gen Alpha, raised in fully digital environments, expects luxury brands to bridge physical and virtual seamlessly. They see as much status in access as in ownership — the ability to participate in limited communities or digital-first launches carries as much prestige as the item itself.



Digital Experiences - Engagement by Generation



DigitalExperiences. Which of the following digital experiences have you engaged with or would consider engaging with for luxury brands? Select all that apply.



Gen Z



Millennial



Gen Alpha

The Future of Luxury: Personalization, Community, Transparency

Looking ahead, three trends define luxury's evolution: **hyper-personalization, community access, and transparency.**



Hyper-personalization tops the list of 2025's defining trends, chosen by the majority of respondents as the leading marker of modern luxury.



Community and membership access rank second, especially among Gen Alpha — for whom belonging to the right circle (physical or digital) is a new badge of honor.



Transparency follows closely for Gen Z, who increasingly view ethical supply chains as part of brand prestige.

Fashion and technology are expected to drive the most innovation in the years ahead, with brands like Gucci and Louis Vuitton at the forefront — combining craftsmanship with personalization and digital integration.

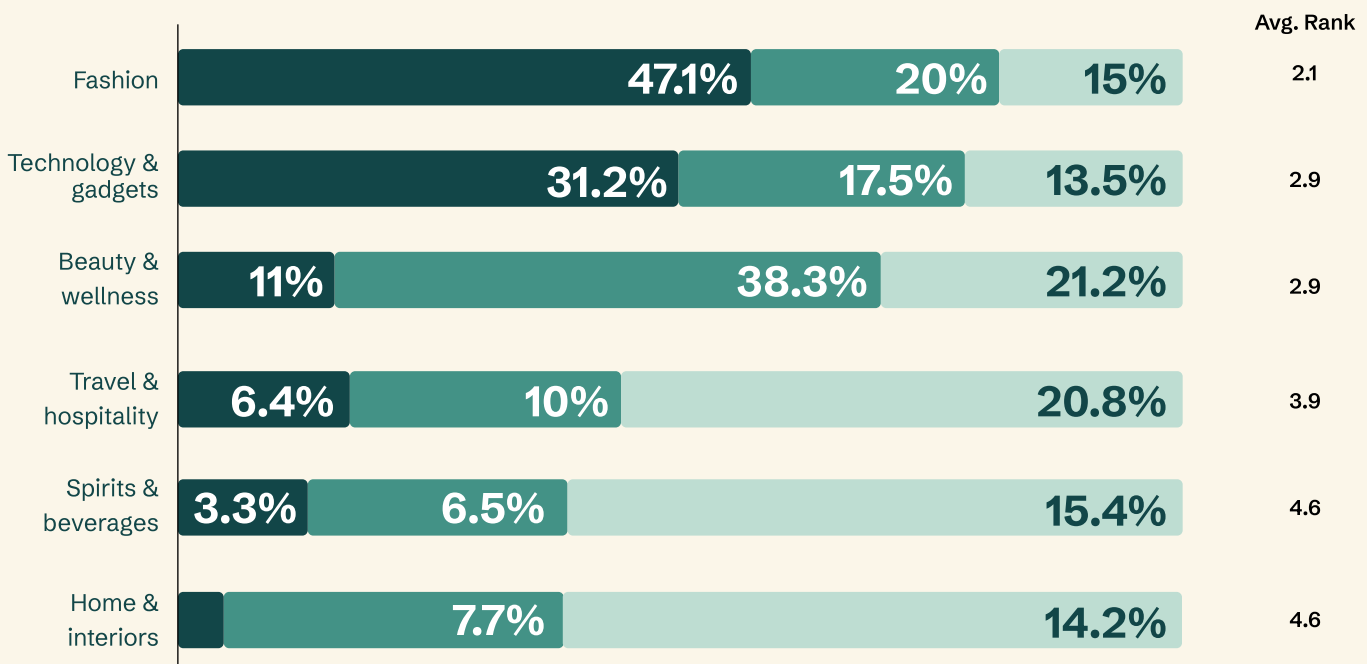
Future Signals - Top Trends Defining Luxury 2025



FutureSignals. How likely are these factors to become essential markers of luxury by 2025? N=520

Likely (T2B)

Category Innovation Expectations - Fashion and Tech



CategoryEvolutio. Rank the categories you expect to see the MOST innovation in luxury over the next 3 years (#1 = most innovation). N=520

1 2 3

The Brand Imperative: Emotion Over Exclusivity

Luxury brands stand at a crossroads. The old formulas — limited access, high price, loud logos — still work, but they no longer inspire. To win in 2025 and beyond, brands must evolve from **exclusive makers to emotionally intelligent storytellers**.

That means:



Redefining exclusivity

as emotional resonance, not economic inaccessibility



Designing for participation,

where community and co-creation enhance desirability.



Investing in digital craftsmanship —

blending artistry with innovation.



Elevating sustainability

into a true prestige marker, not a corporate checkbox.

This isn't the death of aspiration — it's its reinvention. Luxury is no longer about having more; it's about belonging to **something more meaningful**.

Methodology

Study fielded: August 20–26, 2025

Sample size: 520 U.S. consumers (ages 13–44)

Qualitative video subset: 103 participants

Generations: Millennials (n=390), Gen Z (n=92), Gen Alpha (n=38)

Criteria: Participants had purchased or seriously considered a premium or luxury brand in the past 12 months.

Research objectives:



Define how younger generations perceive luxury in 2025.



Identify the most influential markers of status.



Explore generational attitudes toward craftsmanship, exclusivity, and digital engagement.

Closing Thoughts: Luxury isn't fading — it's just finding a new frequency.



It's less about recognition and more about reflection. Less about logos, more about meaning. In 2025, the true marker of status isn't what you own — it's how well what you own expresses **you.**

Want access to the full study?

Reach out to the Knit team to get access to the full study to see how Knit's AI Platform brought this data to life and to dig deeper into the findings yourself.

Included in the full study, you'll get access to Knit's full report including:

Additional Key Takeaways & Recommendations

VOC Video Showreels

Theme Trees and Verbatims

And more

Contributors



Dillon Jacob
Research



Logan Lebouef
Content



HKO Agency
Design

About Knit

23

Knit is the end-to-end consumer research platform top brands use to get deep quant and qual insights at scale in a single survey. The Knit AI-native platform automates key phases of the research process from scoping to storytelling, so you can do more research in less time and at a fraction of the cost.



[Learn more](#)

[Book a demo](#)

