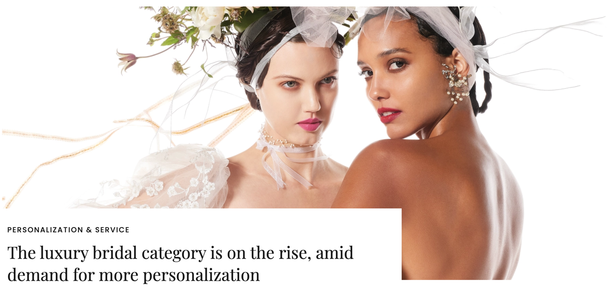

PERSONALIZATION & SERVICE

The luxury bridal category is on the rise, amid demand for more personalization

BY ZOFIA ZWIEGLINSKA | JUN 5, 2023

To break through the wedding noise, couples are going the extra mile to specialize their wedding looks, rings and experiences. As a result, modern bridal companies are updating their offerings to meet consumers' rising expectations.

Bridalwear is expected to reach $69.9 billion in annual sales by 2026, according to the Global Bridal Wear Industry Report. The U.S. is the largest market, accounting for 44% of the market with nearly $26 billion in 2021 sales. Amid the wedding boom, brides are thinking beyond popular destination locations and finding new ways to personalize their weddings. That includes with couture wedding dresses, custom jewelry, and unique wedding favors and experiences on the wedding day.

"For luxury clients, it's all about experience and customization right now," said Dana Constantino, brand manager at Lynden Lane Co. The company focuses on organizing unique luxury weddings, among other events. Based on crowding in the space, Lynden Lane Co. is now exploring unique partnerships to further differentiate itself in the market.

In May, Lynden Lane Co. partnered with Oscar Massin, a legacy French jewelry brand. Oscar Massin was relaunched in February 2022 by three former executives at popular wedding jewelry brands Cartier, Harry Winston and DeBeers. Through the partnership, Lynden Lane clients get exclusive, complimentary access to a selection of Oscar Massin's styles to wear on loan on their wedding day and all accompanying events. They also have the opportunity to work directly with Oscar Massin's designer, Sandrine de Laage, to create custom jewelry or adapt existing pieces for themselves and their loved ones.

A trend of creating custom pieces for weddings was born out of the pandemic, with luxury customers looking to differentiate their occasion from what is out there and across their social media. According to The Knot's Real Weddings report, 2022 saw a boom in weddings in the U.S., with an estimated 2.6 million couples getting married.

There is also a shift among luxury shoppers toward one-of-a-kind, couture gowns. These typically cost $10,000 and up. Demand in this category has gone up significantly, according to executives at luxury marketplace Farfetch and wedding dress brand Morilee. As such, bridal designers have been launching couture-adjacent bridal styles in the states. Madeleine Gardner, bridal designer and head designer at Morilee, launched Morilee's "Madeline" couture collection last month. Made up of two $10,000-plus gowns, the collection serves as a new category for the company. It's set to sell at 150 couture stores in the U.S. and 50 stores internationally. Terri Eagle, CEO of Morilee, said that, alongside the launch, the brand has focused on hosting elevated, customized events to target the modern luxury bride. For example, it's offered private meetings with the designer at the stores of its top retail partners.

On the same note, French couturier Stéphane Rolland announced in April the launch of his first bridal collection, titled Epure, which made its debut at New York Bridal Fashion Week.

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"Brands are going above and beyond," said Betty Huang, vp of the Farfetch Fashion Concierge service. The marketplace has been working on more concierge weddings this year, including those of famous athletes. It offers VIP customers a bespoke end-to-end service that includes working closely with French couture maison. "I don't even think the clients expect that the lead designer or the head of the maison will be sketching and designing the dresses, but that is how these luxury brands are differentiating themselves."

"We've asked clients why they choose brand A over brand B, to understand their needs. Most of the time, it is about getting access to the designer and feeling like they're important enough that they would put a personal touch on your wedding dress," she said,

Huang said that European couture houses are increasingly traveling to the U.S. to deliver dress sketches and organize fittings. "Those sketches and the experience in itself are so valuable as a keepsake and memory, even if the client doesn't end up going with that dress," said Huang.

Despite Sofia Richie's clean wedding style, showcased during her wedding last month in the South of France, "quiet luxury" is not a significant consideration for most affluent brides. "There's more of a trend toward wearable, sexy bridal dresses," said Huang. "And obviously, there's a minimum of three dresses for the occasion."

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