

Selling to Consumers in Uncertain Times: What Executives Need to Know

At The Business of Fashion's roundtable in London, executive members and the editorial team explored why shoppers' behaviour has become more unpredictable, and how brands can adjust.

By Mya Bungar



LONDON — At a roundtable hosted by *The Business of Fashion* for its executive members, senior leaders from a range of global companies shared insights and strategies about how to engage with consumers who are sending volatile and sometimes contradictory messages about where and how they're willing to spend.

BoF's recent executive memo about selling to consumers in uncertain times served as the framework for conversation. Written by senior correspondent Sheena Butler-Young, the memo offers strategic solutions about how to win over customers in a time of geopolitical and economic unrest.

Executive editor Brian Baskin led the discussion alongside Butler-Young and chief sustainability correspondent Sarah Kent. They unpacked the mindset of today's consumer and the evolving levers of trust, value and emotional connection that drive purchasing behaviour in unpredictable conditions.

While addressing the challenges of the current market, the team also highlighted that the bad times will pass, and avoiding panic and trusting your business and consumer are key in finding success during this time.

The intimate, closed-door breakfast was attended by senior leaders from **Selfridges, Ralph Lauren, Coach, Givenchy, Tapestry, Amazon Fashion and Sports** and many more. Below, we share condensed, anonymised insights with the BoF community and wider industry.

Consumers Who Feel an Emotional Connection Will Keep Spending

Although consumer sentiment is decreasing in the US and EU, that isn't yet reflected in many brands' sales figures. What it shows is that shoppers are getting more deliberate about where they spend; companies need to focus on building emotional connections to ensure they are at the top of the list.

Strong customer experience, both in-store and online, is a defining factor in whether a brand feels "worth it." That can mean releasing the "it" product of the moment, but it can also come in the form of being a





“safe” brand that consumers know will be long-lasting and reliably on trend for years to come. Heritage, quality and emotional value can help consumers view your product as a trustworthy, staple purchase rather than a risky trend.

Loyalty Schemes May Not Effectively Engage Your Community

Many brands leaned on cookie-cutter points-based loyalty programmes to develop a connection with customers. They’re discovering these incentives aren’t driving retention at the rate they’d hoped. Attendees on July 3 discussed how community-first engagement, early access and in-person experience consistently outperform traditional reward systems.

Many brands prefer to use the term “membership” for their schemes, fostering loyalty through the idea of community rather than passive rewards.

Solve Logistical Problems With Logistical Solutions

Brands are rethinking pricing strategies as margin structure is constantly being challenged by tariffs and inflation. While brands such as **E.l.f** have communicated directly to customers about why they’re raising prices, BoF’s discussion found that a little goes a long way. Consumers may appreciate a heads-up about a price hike, but they don’t want to be burdened with tariff jargon or constant email or social media blasts on the subject. Modest pricing changes don’t always need to be communicated, and brands can maintain transparency through protecting hero products and reinforcing why their products are worth the buy.

