

RETHINKING THE PLACE OF THE CLIENT IN LUXURY MAISONS: A NEW IMPERATIVE?

REPORT 2026

COMITÉ COLBERT
Depuis 1954

MAD

RETHINKING THE PLACE OF THE CLIENT IN LUXURY MAISONS: A NEW IMPERATIVE?

REPORT 2026

ABOUT

COMITÉ COLBERT
Depuis 1954

Created in 1954 at the initiative of Jean-Jacques Guerlain, the Comité Colbert is a unique collective.

It brings together 96 French luxury Maisons, 16 cultural institutions, and 6 European luxury Maisons, representing 14 sectors: from perfumery to jewellery, fashion to silversmithing, gastronomy to wines and spirits, as well as design and home decoration.

To passionately promote, sustainably develop, and patiently pass on French savoir-faire and creativity in order to inspire dreams. This is the Comité Colbert's mission and the guiding principle behind all its actions.

These actions aim to contribute to the international influence of the French art de vivre, to the preservation of craftsmanship and creativity, and to their transmission to future generations.

www.comitecolbert.com

MAD

Founded in 2009, MAD is an independent consulting firm dedicated to the luxury sector.

It supports Maisons in their strategic, cultural, and operational transformation at a time when clients are constantly evolving.

Structured around three entities, MAD Strategy, MAD Academy, and MAD Talent, the firm brings together 60 multicultural talents. It operates across the entire value chain of the sector, from strategy to training, including the recruitment of tomorrow's leaders.

Combining analytical rigour with emotional intelligence, Magic & Logic, MAD champions a unique consulting approach. Its aim is to enhance the influence of the Maisons and the luxury industry as a whole.

www.mad.fr / contact@mad.fr

AUTHORS



Bénédicte Épinay
President and CEO Comité Colbert



Laurent Dhennequin
Director of Cabinet Comité Colbert



Delphine Vitry
Founding Partner MAD



Jean Révis
Founding Partner MAD



Véronique Le Bansais
Senior Partner MAD



Chloé d'Avout
Associate Partner MAD

AGENDA

SYNTHESIS 8

INTRODUCTION 9

PART I

PLACING THE CLIENT AT THE CENTRE: A SHARED AMBITION 11

1.1 FROM INTUITIVE RELATIONSHIPS TO CLIENT CENTRICITY 12

1.2 CLIENT RELATIONSHIP: A STILL UNDERLEVERAGED DRIVER OF PERFORMANCE 13

1.3 FROM PRODUCT TO CLIENT: DIFFERENT LEVELS OF MATURITY ACROSS SECTORS 15

PART II

UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING CLIENTS: NEW TOOLS FOR A MORE RELEVANT RELATIONSHIP 19

2.1 MEASURING CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS: A NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT CONDITION 20

2.2 CLIENT PERSONAS, OR HOW TO ENRICH TRADITIONAL SEGMENTATION 22

2.3 CLIENT RELATIONSHIP TOOLS: CLIENTELING AND OMNICHANNEL JOURNEYS 24

PART III

EMBEDDING CLIENT CENTRICITY: AN ORGANISATIONAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION 27

3.1 EVOLVING ORGANISATIONS: A TRANSFORMATION GATHERING PACE 28

3.2 A CLIENT-CENTRIC CULTURE TO ANCHOR THE TRANSFORMATION 32

3.3 AI IN SUPPORT OF CLIENT CENTRICITY 35

CONCLUSION 38

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 39

METHODOLOGY 40

SYNTHESIS

/ The topic of client centricity has now become central. 85% of respondents consider it to be extremely important to the success of their Maison. Its main objectives are improving the client experience and driving growth through client retention and increased client spend, each cited by 92% of respondents.

/ The level of maturity across luxury players remains uneven. 58% of respondents consider their Maison's level of maturity to be intermediate, low or very low. The main barriers identified are a lack of data and tools, cited by 58% of respondents; a lack of client culture, cited by 52%; and a lack of staff, cited by 37%.

/ Client knowledge remains incomplete and unevenly shared. Only 58% of respondents say they have a clear view, both quantitative and qualitative, of their Maison's clients. Similarly, only 34% have a client strategy that is clearly documented and communicated to all teams, while 34% indicate that their strategy is still being developed.

/ Client experience measurement is progressing but remains fragmented. 66% of respondents use mystery shopping to measure the client experience, while 42% have a Voice of Client programme covering all channels. For 35% of respondents, however, the programme is deployed only on certain channels.

/ Clienteling has become a central focus. 79% of respondents track the share of revenue generated through clienteling, 61% track the average basket of appointments, and 47% track the number of prospects converted.

/ Customer Lifetime Value, by contrast, remains underused. Only 31% of respondents use CLV in their Maison. It is primarily used to segment clients; only 16% treat it as a central indicator for guiding strategic decisions and allocating resources.

/ Client data is not yet unified across all Maisons. 59% of respondents report having a unified client database covering all channels and geographies. This situation still limits Maisons' ability to recognise a client as a client of the brand, rather than as a client of a specific channel.

/ Client personas are being developed to complement traditional segmentation. 48% of respondents now rely on this tool. However, differentiation of the client experience according to client profile remains limited: it is considered in-depth by only 16% of respondents.

/ Organisations are restructuring around client experience. 90% of respondents say that their Maison has a department dedicated to the client experience, although resources are considered limited by 37% of them. More broadly, 95% believe that their organisation has evolved in recent years to strengthen client centricity.

/ The main challenge remains embedding client culture in everyday practices. 39% of respondents still consider their processes and ways of working to be not very or not at all client-centric, while 48% believe that their Maison is not sufficiently client-oriented. Only 52% say that client satisfaction is regularly monitored at Executive Committee level, on a par with commercial, financial and brand image objectives.

/ AI is first and foremost seen as a lever for understanding and engaging clients. In the next three years, respondents cite improved client knowledge (65%), better use of CRM data (56%), hyper-personalisation (50%) and improved client service responsiveness (50%) through AI. In-store experience (10%) and client retention (7%) are cited less often, while 11% do not yet know what its impact will be.

Source : Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Luxury has always maintained distinctive relationships with its clients. Long before client centricity became a management concept, Maisons knew how to recognise their clients, understand their preferences and personalise their attentions. For a long time, this relationship was intuitive and embodied in the memory of the different teams. It is one of luxury's legacies, inseparable from the art of hospitality and the ability to create a personal emotional connection around a product.

Yet the context in which this relationship takes place has changed profoundly. Over the past few years, the personal luxury market has lost a significant number of clients, while value has become increasingly concentrated among the wealthiest clientele. Standards have evolved, and clients now compare the experience offered by Maisons with that of the most advanced players in services, digital and hospitality.

Placing the client at the centre means neither abandoning creativity nor diluting the identity of Maisons. It is about articulating their vision and savoir-faire with a more precise knowledge of clients, in order to strengthen performance, loyalty and desirability.

It is from this perspective that the Comité Colbert and MAD set out to examine the place of the client in luxury Maisons. The study, informed by a survey conducted among Comité Colbert members, shows that client centricity has become a strategic imperative but remains unevenly embedded in processes, governance and behaviours. While leveraging data, defining client personas and harnessing AI can all strengthen the relationship, the decisive challenge remains client culture, that must be present from leadership to frontline teams.



PART I

PLACING THE CLIENT AT THE CENTRE: A SHARED AMBITION

1.1

FROM INTUITIVE RELATIONSHIPS TO CLIENT CENTRICITY

Client centricity describes a business strategy and culture that place the client at the heart of every decision. As early as 1954, Peter Drucker, one of its principal theorists, argued that the purpose of a business was to "create and keep a customer"[1]. Here, the client comes before the product. This philosophy has been championed by the giants of retail and consumer goods. At Amazon, customer obsession sits at the very top of the company's leadership principles. Leaders are expected to "start with the customer and work backwards"[2]: rather than starting with what the company already makes and looking for ways to sell it, they begin with what the client needs and work back to determine what should be built. It rests on a simple but demanding principle: you do not begin with technology, product or internal capabilities. You begin with the outcome you want to deliver for the client, then work methodically back to the decisions, resources and actions required to produce it. A reversal already captured by A.G. Lafley, then chairman of Procter & Gamble, in a phrase that has endured: "the *consumer* is the boss"[3].

In luxury, the philosophy is quite different. At the origin of every Maison lies the creativity and savoir-faire that give life to a product. The founder brings a personal vision of the world, an aesthetic that is entirely their own. These are the elements that form the foundation of a Maison's identity and draw its first clients. Hermès offers a compelling illustration of this, even today: the Maison long cultivated the absence of a marketing directorate and championed a creative process guided by "intuition and creativity." Its former president, Jean-Louis Dumas, distilled this conviction into a single sentence: "*We don't have a policy of image; we have a policy of product*"[4]. To this day, what Hermès places at the centre of its promise is precisely "*to create necessary objects*".

Yet this primacy of creativity does not exclude the client. Luxury Maisons have always maintained a particular bond with their clients — a relationship that began as deeply personal, and one that has fed both creativity and the evolution of products over time. Knowing their best clients intimately, serving them with distinction, personalising the relationship and the product itself: these have always been central to the Maisons. Client centricity is therefore nothing foreign to luxury; it is luxury's own tradition.

For a long time, this relationship remained intuitive and personal. The client book, kept in the advisor's own hand, stands as its emblem: the handwritten ancestor of clienteling, it rested on individual memory rather than shared data. It is precisely this heritage that Maisons have sought to structure without stripping it of its soul. How can this ambition be translated into concrete change while remaining true to what makes luxury Maisons singular? How can a Maison be client-centric without becoming client-led? Long treated as an implicit given, client centricity is gradually becoming an acknowledged pillar of the strategy of French Maisons.

Client centricity is therefore nothing foreign to luxury; it is luxury's own tradition

1. Peter F. Drucker, The Practice of Management, Harper & Row, 1954
2. Colin Bryar & Bill Carr, Working Backwards: Insights, Stories and Secrets from Inside Amazon, St. Martin's Press, 2021
3. A.G. Lafley, The Game-Changer: How You Can Drive Revenue and Profit Growth with Innovation, 2008
4. Jean-Louis Dumas to Vanity Fair, 2007

1.2

CLIENT RELATIONSHIP: A STILL UNDERLEVERAGED DRIVER OF PERFORMANCE

The global personal luxury market lost nearly 50 million clients between 2022 and 2024[1]. After a decade of expansion, organic growth is losing momentum, and some Maisons are reaching a plateau. Value has become increasingly concentrated: in 2024, HNWIs (*High Net Worth Individuals*) and UHNWIs (*Ultra High Net Worth Individuals*) accounted for 46% of global luxury sales, compared to 30% in 2019. Conversely, significant price increases by luxury players have pushed aspirational clients away, driving them towards the pre-owned market, among other alternatives[2]. Expectations have also shifted: experience now takes precedence over ownership, the sensory dimension is becoming decisive, and new modes of access are redefining how clients relate to luxury goods[3]. What clients now expect from a Maison is what service brands already deliver outside luxury: personalisation, immediacy and an omnichannel experience. No Maison truly evolves in isolation. When a leading player moves, the industry follows: the sectoral ripple effect quickly turns an initiative into a standard.

85%

of respondents think client centricity is extremely important for their Maison's success[4]

The accelerating shift towards greater client centricity is driven by the tangible benefits it delivers, in an increasingly challenging economic environment. 85% of respondents consider client centricity to be extremely important to the success of their Maison. When asked about the objectives they associate it with, they cite first and foremost the improvement of the client experience (92%) and business growth through client retention and value (92%), far ahead of brand image benefits (50%)[4]. Retention as an economic driver: the landmark 2024 Forrester study, conducted among US consumers across 13 different industries, shows that companies recognised as "customer-obsessed" achieve 51% higher retention rates and 41% higher revenue growth than those that are not[5]. This dynamic is self-reinforcing: a loyal client shows a propensity for cross selling that is 11 to 30 percentage points higher depending on the sector[6], and becomes an acquisition channel in their own right; one of the most effective, because it costs nothing and carries genuine credibility.

Client knowledge as a proprietary asset: retention begins with identification. Yet due to inadequate tools, 70% of potential VICs are not correctly identified by Maisons[7]. Conversely, Maisons that protect and develop their best clients stabilise their business during periods of slowdown. First-party client knowledge cannot be replicated by competitors: it is one of the rare proprietary assets the market cannot copy. A virtuous circle that extends beyond the client relationship: teams engaged in a client culture show 21% to 51% lower turnover, 10% higher client loyalty and 23% greater profitability[8].

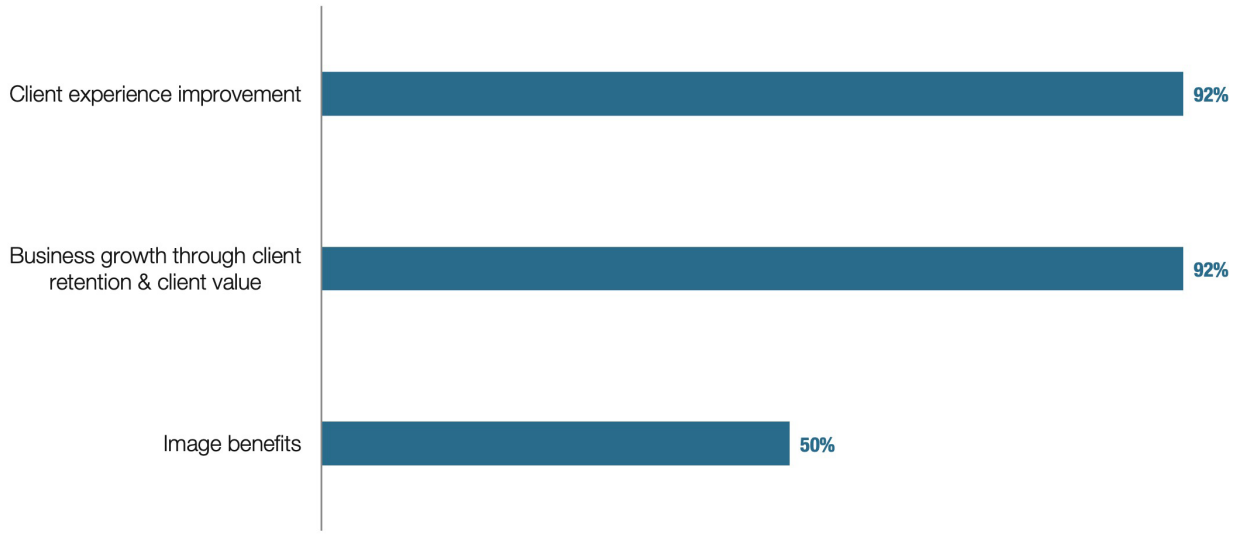
1. Bain & Company x Altagamma, Luxury in Transition : Securing Future Growth, 2025
2. "Why Louis Vuitton is struggling but Hermès is not", The Economist, 2024
3. Kantar x Altiant, « *Le luxe se délinéarise : nouvelles aspirations, nouveaux accès, nouveaux imaginaires* », 2025
4. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
5. Forrester, 2024 US Customer Experience Index, 2024 (*study conducted with 98,000 US customers across 223 brands and 13 industries*)
6. McKinsey & Company, Fueling Growth Through Moments of Customer Delight, 2024
7. BCG x Altagamma, True-Luxury Global Consumer Insights, 11th Edition, 2025
8. Gallup, The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organizational Outcomes, 2024
   NB : We invite you to read our previous study on retail talent to learn more.

These benefits lie at the heart of the business models of technology and entertainment players. Netflix has made recommendation a retention engine, shaping expectations of personalisation that luxury now inherits. A 2025 study estimates that simply reverting to popularity-based suggestions on Netflix would reduce client engagement by 12%[1]. In hospitality, service personalisation built on a deep knowledge of client preferences has long been established as a standard. At Four Seasons, excellence in service means anticipating clients' desires before they even express them. Teams consult a global record of past stays to personalise their welcome for example, replicating a birthday celebration that took place in Tokyo the previous year, this time in Paris. Meanwhile, the detection of weak signals encourages all staff to pick up on the smallest cue in the course of a conversation, making it possible to share that information instantly across departments and orchestrate a bespoke moment of surprise[2]. This sector has set a new threshold of expectation: in the client's mind, personalisation is no longer a privilege, it is a promise. The question is no longer whether Maisons will structure client relationships more deliberately, but how coherently they will do so while remaining true to their own DNA.

The question is no longer whether Maisons will structure client relationships more deliberately, but how coherently they will do so while remaining true to their own DNA

Which objectives do you associate with client centricity? [3]

Top 3 responses



32% associate client centricity with an objective to improve cross-team collaboration

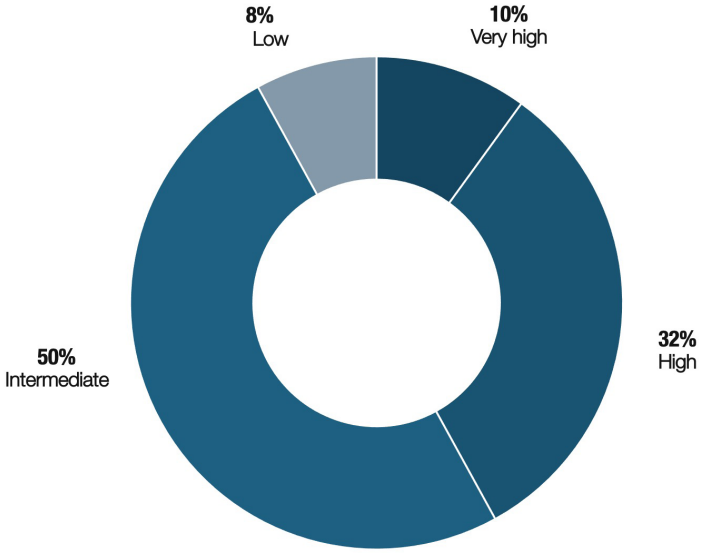
1. Kevin Zielnicki et al., The Value of Personalized Recommendations: Evidence from Netflix, 2025
2. Four Seasons, *Tailored to You*, 2025
3. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

1.3

FROM PRODUCT TO CLIENT: DIFFERENT LEVELS OF MATURITY ACROSS SECTORS

Whether in luxury or beyond, organisations can be broadly categorised into three types: those that are "product-led", those that are "client-informed", and those that are truly "client-centric". Within luxury, Maisons also vary in their relationship to client centricity, depending on their sector, their degree of digitalisation, and whether or not they belong to a group. Today, across all luxury sectors, 42% of respondents consider their Maison or Group to be mature or very mature in terms of client centricity.

How would you assess your Maison's (or Group's) level of maturity in terms of client centricity? [1]



Wines and Spirits, due to their wholesale model, have limited knowledge of their end-clients. It is the distributors who hold client portfolios, which limits the Maisons' ability to follow the full client journey and extend the relationship beyond the transaction.

Watches and, to a lesser extent, Fine Jewellery occupy a distinctive position: they are simultaneously distant from the end client, given a distribution model that has been predominantly wholesale, yet very close to them, through the deeply personalised relationships they have built with their best clients, sometimes across generations. In these Maisons, the product remains at the heart of the culture, even as a shift towards greater client centricity is underway, particularly driven by the move towards direct retail; a transformation that MAD has helped Maisons navigate for some years now. By progressively regaining control of their distribution, Maisons seek not only to better protect their image, but also to collect the data necessary to build a more personalised relationship. At Richemont, direct-to-client sales represent 76% of the group's revenue[2]. Audemars Piguet, for its part, now generates more than 90% of its sales through its own channels[3].

Beauty and Cosmetics present a similar paradox: predominantly wholesale, yet pioneers in aspects of client centricity, particularly through loyalty programmes that go beyond rewarding the transaction. The frequency of repurchase and the central role of personal advice foster the development of continuous client relationships, grounded in an understanding of individual preferences and the personalisation of interactions.

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
2. Richemont, Annual Report and Accounts 2025, 2025
3. Business of Fashion, Audemars Piguet's New CEO Could « Stop Growth », 2024

In Fashion and Leather Goods, historically the most retail-oriented sector in luxury, access to client data has both been easier and longer-established. Firstly "client-informed", client data was used to guide decisions and support clienteling activity, but it had yet to transform processes of the organisation. Gradually, these Maisons are becoming more "client-centric", placing the client at an ever more central position.

In this respect, these Maisons have caught up with hospitality, a pioneer of client centricity within luxury. Hospitality was the first to build the client relationship around a deep knowledge of individual preferences, personalised service, the anticipation of needs and the creation of memorable experiences. The client there has always been treated as a person to be recognised and kept for life.

The shift towards greater client centricity is an ongoing process, and one that is set to accelerate in the years ahead. 58% of respondents consider their Maison or Group's level of maturity in terms of client centricity to be intermediate, low or very low. Among the main barriers to client centricity, they cite, in order: a lack of data and tools (58%), a lack of client mindset (52%) and a lack of dedicated staff (37%)[1].

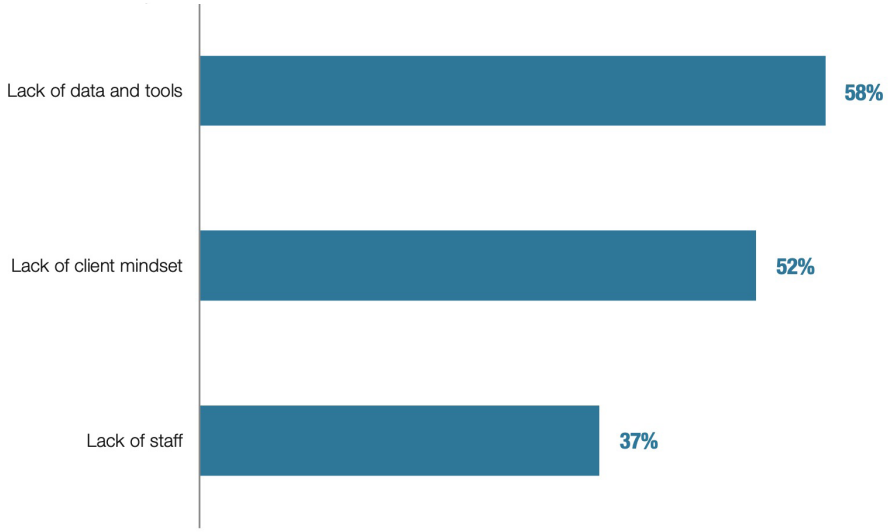
The maturity of Maisons also depends on their size and the extent to which their business has been digitalised.

42%

of respondents consider that their organisation maturity, in terms of client centricity, is high enough (*mature or very mature*)[1]

What do you see as main barriers to client centricity in your Maison? [1]

Top 3 responses



Other responses
31% for « lack of skills »; 10% for « client priority not perceived as critical to success »; 6% for « other »

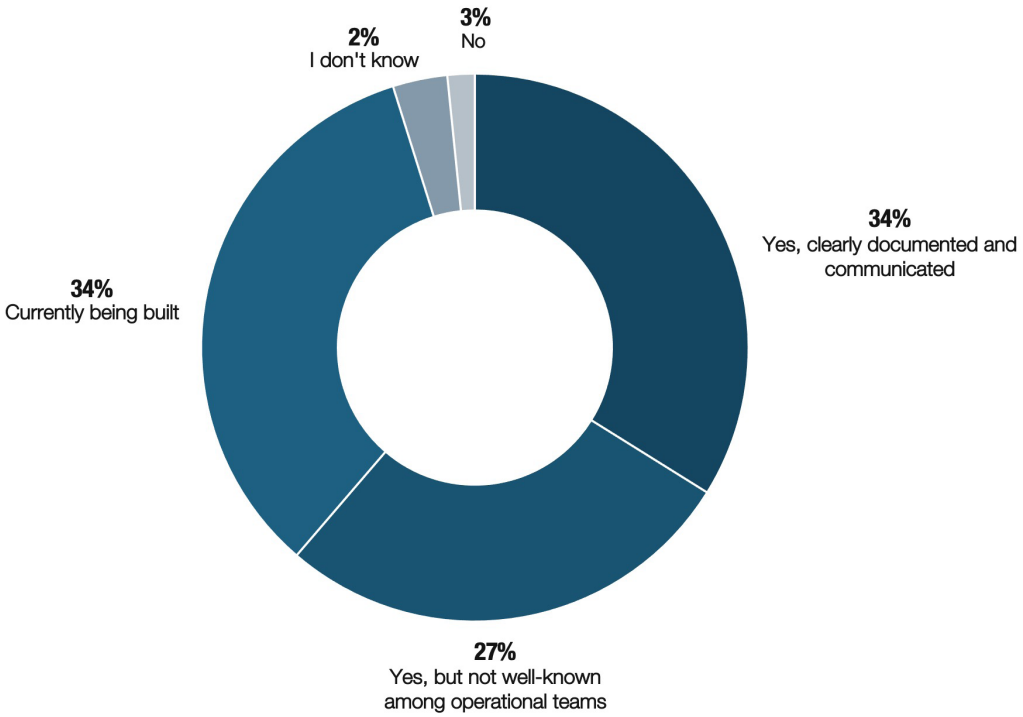
1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

58%

of respondents say they have a clear vision of who their Maison's clients are, on both quantitative and qualitative dimensions[1]

To truly be client-centric, the first step is to know your client. Yet only 58% of respondents say they have a clear vision, both quantitative and qualitative, of who their clients are. This client knowledge in turn feeds the client strategy of each Maison. Here again, while 34% of respondents consider their Maison to have a clearly documented and communicated client strategy, a significant number report having a strategy that exists but is poorly communicated (27%), or one that is still being developed (34%)[1]. These figures echo those shared earlier on the perceived maturity of Maisons in terms of client centricity. How can a Maison truly be client-centric if it does not know its clients well, or its own client strategy?

Does your Maison (or Group) have a formalized Client strategy shared across all teams? [1]



1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026



PART II

UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING CLIENTS: NEW TOOLS FOR A MORE RELEVANT RELATIONSHIP

2.1

MEASURING CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS: A NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT CONDITION

For a long time, Maisons ran their business on primarily commercial indicators: revenue, sales by product and product category, in-store footfall, conversion rate and sell-through. These remain, for a majority, the figures that teams know best. Yet placing the client at the centre means measuring not only sales performance, but the quality of the relationship itself.

Looking more closely at the indicators that help Maisons understand their clients, one must consider not only client indicators themselves, but also clienteling indicators and those linked to the client experience.

Which client-related indicators and tools does your Maison currently use across Client Experience, Clients and Clienteling ? [1]



To measure the client experience, Maisons converge around the following tools: mystery shopping visits for 66% of respondents, and Voice of Client across all channels for 42%. Voice of Client remains unevenly deployed. 35% of respondents have implemented it on certain channels only, while others have for several years adopted a multichannel approach covering every stage of the client journey[1]. Some Maisons are in principle reluctant to use Voice of Client; others leave the decision to individual regions. Where it exists, the tool is designed both to support continuous improvement and to nurture or preserve the individual client relationship. When a client expresses dissatisfaction, managers are expected to follow up within 24 hours to restore the relationship, a follow-up rate that is itself one of the client experience indicators tracked at consolidated level. As for mystery shopping visits, while they measure conformity against internally defined standards, they are best complemented by retail benchmark studies, which reveal potential gaps relative to competitors and highlight the most inspiring practices in the market. Unlike mystery shopping, which is based on a framework specific to each Maison, a retail benchmark objectively positions a brand's performance within its competitive environment. It assesses the main drivers of the client experience, from store attractiveness and journey fluidity to the quality of advice, storytelling and clienteling, and helps Maisons to prioritise areas for action, ultimately supporting retail performance.

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

In terms of clienteling, the most mature players are found in Couture and Fine Jewellery. Across all sectors, however, the vast majority track the following indicators: the share of revenue linked to clienteling (79% of respondents), average basket size (61%) and the number of prospects converted (47%)[1]. While a clienteling culture is firmly embedded in certain sectors, it has grown significantly in others in recent years with the growing recognition that clienteling is not only a performance lever, but a lever for personalising the client relationship. In the economic context of recent years, client behaviour has evolved: it is no longer unusual for a handbag purchase to take place after several visits, much like a watch or a piece of jewellery. Nurturing the relationship with prospects, not just loyal clients, has therefore become all the more important. In the Maisons most committed to clienteling, campaign completion rates and the share of revenue generated through clienteling are tracked on a daily basis.

This reveals a paradox. While clienteling metrics are now well tracked, client indicators themselves are sometimes less understood. Indicators such as age, nationality, country of residence, average basket size, and loyalty are monitored; however, these client analyses are not yet systematically used to inform the thinking and decisions of other departments. Moreover, the key metric of customer lifetime value (CLV), expressed as the cumulative sum of a client's purchases over an extended period, is currently used by only 31% of respondents. And when CLV is tracked, it is used primarily to segment the client base: this is the case for nearly two thirds of respondents who use it. Only 16% treat it as a central indicator for allocating resources and guiding strategic decisions, while the same proportion calculate it without ever really putting it to work[2]. CLV therefore remains more a tool for classifying clients than for steering the Maison.

Whether discussing client or clienteling indicators, the quality of the underlying client database is essential. Yet only 59% of respondents say they currently have a unified client database covering all channels and geographies. Building a unified client view or *Customer 360*, shared across teams and accessible across all channels and markets[3], remains a significant challenge for many players. Yet clients expect to be recognised as clients of the brand, not of a channel. Whether they contact a boutique, consult an e-commerce site or seek an after-sales service, they expect Maisons to consider the full picture of their past, current and future interactions.

59%

of respondents say they have a single, unified client database across channels and geographies[1]

Technology, however, is only one condition for client centricity. The decisive question is how it is used: what is done with data once it has been collected, stored and reconciled? Its value does not lie in its volume, but in the decisions and actions it makes possible. When properly activated, data shifts the centre of gravity of every interaction: the advisor is no longer greeting a stranger but picking up a thread. They are no longer proposing at random but from a position of knowledge. Every visit becomes the continuation of a relationship, not the start of a transaction. Data then makes it possible to re-engage clients in a personalised way, be it on the occasion of a new arrival, a significant date, a restocked item or a product aligned with an already identified interest. It can also help the advisor determine the next-best-action: the most relevant step to take at a given moment, to either recommend a complementary product, introduce a new category, extend an event invitation, or follow up after a visit that did not result in a purchase. In every case, the objective is the same: to extend the relationship through each interaction. It is precisely at this stage that Maisons can fall into the dormant data lake syndrome. They accumulate data from several teams such as retail, digital, loyalty, client service and after-sales, without always managing to connect or activate it. Another symptom of this difficulty appears in the identification of their best clients: nearly 70% of potential very high-value clients are not correctly identified by brands, due in particular to CRM systems that are outdated or too transactional[4]. The problem therefore lies not only in the volume of available data, but in the absence of a unified view, clear governance and tools simple enough to be adopted by frontline teams.

The same principle holds for client data as for client indicators: the key is to prioritise both, in line with the Maison's culture and strategic objectives. Aligning on priority indicators means building a shared language and channelling collective efforts in a single direction.

1-2. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
3. CDP Institute, « *What is a Customer Data Platform?* », 2026
4. BCG x Altagamma, True-Luxury Global Consumer Insights, 11th Edition, 2025

2.2

CLIENT PERSONAS, OR HOW TO ENRICH TRADITIONAL SEGMENTATION

The aim is to better account for the socio-demographic factors that shape the relationship to luxury, from consumption patterns, to purchase triggers, to the relationship to the Maison...

Drawing on their client databases, Maisons have been able to develop their segmentation. A long-established tool, it generally frames client strategy. Structured around spending levels, purchase frequency and product category purchases, client segmentation is not always seamlessly translated and understood across the organisation as a whole. 42% of respondents indicate that a client knowledge framework is currently being rolled out in their Maison, and 21% that it is already actively used by teams. Yet 21% acknowledge that one exists without being truly operational[1]. The challenge is therefore not only to build relevant client segmentations, but to ensure their adoption across different teams. In some Maisons, the sales teams generally know them well because growing the client portfolio in line with segmentation targets is part of the store objectives, tracked at both individual and team level.

To go further, luxury Maisons have incorporated client personas. Initially, certain departments developed this tool in isolation. Merchandising, for example, uses it to support teams during buying sessions. Today, an increasing number of luxury players rely on client personas that are cross-functional and therefore applicable to the whole organisation. Why client personas in addition to client segments? The aim is to better account for the socio-demographic factors that shape the relationship to luxury, from consumption patterns, to purchase triggers, to the relationship to the Maison and more. Current client segments do not yet capture all these elements.

To build client personas specific to each Maison, organisations must generally draw on their client teams, as well as cross-functional profiles such as a Chief of Staff or Transformation Director. This exercise, which MAD has regularly supported, particularly in Leather Goods and Fashion, requires relying both on client databases, with the support of AI, and on the perspectives of different departments. Whether explicitly or not, such departments often already rely on their own working assumptions about client personas. The challenge is to move beyond generic client archetypes and define distinctive ones. When truly cross-functional, client personas are designed to serve as a reference framework for the entire organisation, used for both high-level strategic orientations and more operational decisions. To ensure their relevance, they must represent a minimum threshold of clients and revenue, though by exception, some personas may be retained for image reasons even if they account for very few clients or a minimal share of revenue. A client persona cannot, however, be exported from one market to another without adaptation. Clients are shaped by their culture, social rituals, importance of status and the way they express their preferences.

In a context of increasing market and client polarisation, this exercise is all the more important given that client expectations of relationship personalisation are ever-growing. Today, 63% of respondents say their organisation differentiates the client experience according to client profile partially, 16% do so in depth, and 18% do so minimally[1].

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

To inform client personas, quantitative and qualitative client studies, used by 42% and 19% of respondents respectively[1], provide answers to questions that client databases alone cannot yet answer. They capture weak signals and complement internal analyses. Luxury Maisons that listen to their clients demonstrate greater resilience and agility. While reaffirming their fundamentals and their singularity, they equip their teams, both at headquarters and in markets, with the proper tools to adjust how they connect with clients, and sometimes to repair a relationship that had frayed. Listening to the client means engaging with one's own clients but also going further — to luxury clients and beyond. This approach makes it possible to complement behavioural data with perception data: the aim is not only to understand what the client has bought, but what they think of the Maison, what they expect from it, and what still prevents them from crossing its threshold.

48%

of respondents use client personas within their Maison[1]

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

2.3

CLIENT RELATIONSHIP TOOLS: CLIENTELING AND OMNICHANNEL JOURNEYS

McKinsey proposes organising personalisation around four dimensions[1]: *data*, *decisioning*, *design* and *distribution*. In luxury, this framework translates as follows: data informs the advisor on who the client is before they even enter the boutique; decisioning indicates what to propose and when, could be a complementary product, an invitation, a follow-up after an absence; design ensures the proposal remains consistent with the Maison's identity; and distribution ensures it reaches the client on their preferred channel. Technology orchestrates these four levers. It does not replace the advisor's touch, it gives them the means to exercise it better, and more often.

Data and client personas alone, however, are not enough. They must be translated into gestures and experiences that are visible to the client. This is where technology must find its rightful place. It replaces neither the ceremony of welcome, nor the training of sales teams, nor the art of conversation that are the hallmarks of French luxury. It can, however, make savoir-faire more transmissible by giving advisors the information needed to extend the relationship beyond the boutique.

Clienteling: the first tool of this transformation. It digitalises the client book, making the relationship more proactive and less dependent on individual memory. The aim is to give the advisor the means to better prepare appointments, follow up at the right moment, identify a restocking opportunity or propose a next-best-action consistent with the client's history. An advisor does not personalise a relationship because an application provides more data, but because they know how to interpret that information and turn it into genuine intentional interactions. Technology must therefore amplify what French luxury already does well: recognising a client, remembering a preference, understanding a life moment, proposing without imposing and ultimately turning a purchase into an experience.

The clienteling journeys conceived a few years ago must now be reconsidered in the age of AI. Business priorities have also evolved, calling Maisons to conduct a more granular analysis of their current clients. To go beyond the classic journeys, which remain important nonetheless to capture prospects, new clients and so on, the key is to identify which client profiles are strategic for the Maison in terms of image, value, volume and base renewal, and to build bespoke journeys for each, powered by AI-driven personalised recommendations. In the current context, dormant VICs are among the key profiles to reactivate. Surprisingly, this remains a broadly under-activated client category across Maisons. The new clienteling journeys bring together segmentation, engagement level and client personas. These frameworks do not replace one another, but enrich each other.

Voice of the Client: a mechanism that places each client back at the heart of the relationship by giving them the opportunity to express their feelings, expectations and any dissatisfaction at key moments of their journey, regardless of channel. Beyond collecting ratings or questionnaire responses, it offers an opportunity to rebuild an individual bond with the client: reaching out after a disappointing experience, thanking a client for their feedback, understanding their needs and showing them concretely that their voice matters. This approach is particularly relevant in luxury, where the quality of the relationship rests on the feeling of being heard, recognised and personally valued. It also feeds continuous improvement by surfacing recurring pain points and by identifying starting points for evolving services and practices.

The clienteling journeys conceived a few years ago must now be reconsidered in the age of AI

1. McKinsey & Company, Sean Flavin & Jason Heller, « *A technology blueprint for personalization at scale* », 2019

In practice, Voice of the Client reaches only a limited number of clients, not only because an algorithm often determines who is invited to respond, but because it primarily engages with clients who are highly dissatisfied and, in some cases, those who are highly satisfied. Despite these limitations, it remains useful, provided it is complemented by other tools, such as a retail benchmark. Fortnum & Mason, for example, reports maintaining an NPS above 80 and calling back within 24 hours clients who give a score below 7, with a quarter of those clients subsequently returning[1].

To be effective, however, the mechanism must meet three conditions: collecting simple feedback at the right moment; ensuring personalised and swift follow-up for individual situations (*closed loop*); and translating recurring learnings into concrete actions, with clear ownership and monitoring indicators. Without a response to the client or visible improvement, listening remains a measurement exercise that may even generate additional disappointment. The goal is therefore to create a true learning loop: listen, understand, act and inform the client of progress made to be able to build lasting trust and loyalty.

29%

of respondents consider that the Voice of the Client systematically and promptly feeds into strategic decisions of their Maison[2]

The stakes are all the higher given that the quality of the experience directly influences price acceptance. 68% of consumers say they would pay more for a better client experience[3]. In luxury, this premium does not rest on the product alone. It is built in the fluidity of the journey, the quality of advice, the recognition of the client and the Maison's ability to resolve a problem swiftly.

Client journey: mapping the journey means following the client from discovery to repurchase, through online research, the boutique visit, purchase, delivery, after-sales and recommendation. This tool involves identifying, at each stage, the expected emotions, pain points, channel breaks and personalisation opportunities. The aim is not to map a theoretical journey, but to understand what the client actually experiences. This approach must be decisively omnichannel. 84% of clients are reported to seek inspiration online before buying in store[4].

The journey can no longer be conceived as a succession of independent channels. A client discovers a brand on social media, browses its website, exchanges with an advisor, visits a boutique, sometimes makes a purchase in another country and then continues the relationship through after-sales. Consistency across these moments becomes a condition of perceived quality.

In premium beauty, Lancôme offers an illustration of what a fully integrated journey, from inspiration to loyalty, can look like. Clients can seek inspiration online, benefit from an online beauty consultation or a live shopping session, then visit a boutique for a more personalised experience. With *Teint Particulier*, the skin is analysed at multiple points, an algorithm identifies the most suitable shade, and the foundation is then made in front of the client, in a bottle bearing their name and a unique number. After purchase, reviews and repurchases in turn feed the recommendations made to subsequent clients. Data flows through the entire journey, from inspiration to loyalty, without being reduced to a targeting tool[5].

This principle of an integrated journey is not limited to beauty or fashion. It also applies to Maisons whose experience is built around a place, a savoir-faire and a moment of shared discovery. Ruinart transforms visits to its chalk cellars and reception spaces into a relational experience. The Maison offers different formats combining visits, tastings, lunch or dinner, adapting the journey to the occasion, the language and the profile of the visitor. The reservation process makes it possible to prepare for the visit and personalise the welcome, while the meeting with the teams extends the Maison's story beyond the tasting. The relationship does not stop at the bottle: it is built around a place and a savoir-faire that the Maison sustains over time[6].

The tools of client centricity therefore share a common function: circulating knowledge to the point where it becomes an experience. Clienteling supports the advisor's next action, Voice of the Client enables the organisation's capacity to listen, and client journeys give coherence. Technology does not replace the art of hospitality. It enables more of those within the organisation to practise it with greater precision and depth.

1. Mobile Commons Strategy and Insights Team, "*Fortnum & Mason Case Study: Net Promoter Score of 80*", accessed October 2026
2. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
3. Qualtrics Institute, « *Three-quarters of Customers Would Pay More for a Premium Experience* », 2025
4. Manhattan Associates, *Global Omnichannel Retail Trends 2023: What's Next for Shoppers and Retailers?* A study conducted between March and May 2023 with a sample of 6,000 adult clients across the world
5. Lancôme, « Le Teint Particulier », Lancome Official Website, accessed in 2026
6. Ruinart, Experiences, Visits and Tastings Official Dedicated Website Pages, accessed in 2026



PART III

EMBEDDING CLIENT CENTRICITY: AN ORGANISATIONAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

3.1

EVOLVING ORGANISATIONS: A TRANSFORMATION GATHERING PACE

Client centricity does not rest on tools alone. It is accompanied by an evolution of organisations. The transformations observed in recent years reflect this movement, with the creation or reinforcement of Client Experience, CRM, Clienteling, VIC, Retail Operations, Merchandising and After-Sales departments.

90%

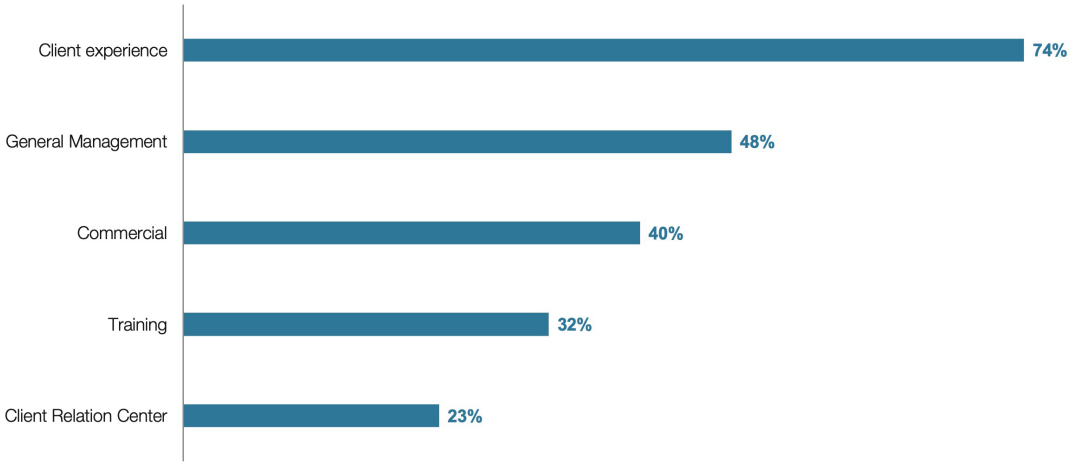
of respondents say their Maison has a dedicated client experience department[1]

The first evolution consists in giving the client a visible and legitimate place in the organisation. Client Experience, CRM and Clienteling departments have accordingly developed across luxury Maisons. In the survey conducted among Comité Colbert members, 90% of respondents say their Maison has a dedicated client experience department, among which 53% say they have a solid central team and 37% say resources remain limited[1].

These functions, however, often remain attached to retail, marketing or commercial, even as client issues now cut across all channels and business areas. In a cross-sector study conducted among large organisations, 62% of respondents report having a senior executive responsible for the client experience across all products and channels[2]. In luxury, some Maisons are beginning to go further, creating client-focused roles at Group level. The appointment in 2026 of a Chief Client Officer at Kering, reporting directly to the Chief Executive and overseeing both Marketing and Commercial[3], sends a strong signal: the client is no longer merely a topic for marketing activation or in-store experience; they become a strategic issue on which brand and distribution strategies depend.

Which areas of the organization have evolved most in recent years to support *client centricity*? [1]

Top 5 responses



Other responses
18% for "communication"; 15% for "product development"; 11% for "merchandising"; 8% for "after-sales"; 5% for "production and supply"; 5% for "other"

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
2. Qualtrics XM Institute, James Scutt and Talia Quaadgras, *The State of Customer Experience Management 2024*, May 2024. A study conducted in the first quarter of 2024 with a sample of 234 client experience professionals in large organisations (more than 1,000 employees in size)
3. Kering, « Kering Creates Two New Group Centers of Excellence to Support the Performance and Growth of Its Houses », press release, March 2026

This evolution represents a genuine governance transformation. It aims to better connect client knowledge, brand strategy, product, distribution and experience quality. Marriott International followed a comparable logic, creating in 2023 a Chief Customer Officer role reporting to the Chief Executive and covering client strategy, brands, marketing, the loyalty programme and the client experience[1].

Client Experience departments have gradually expanded their remit and now define the client promise, formalise omnichannel journeys, evolve training content, collect the voice of the client across all channels and stages of the journey, and put monitoring indicators in place. The traditional mystery shopping tools are now complemented by more granular collection methods, such as the retail benchmark studies conducted by MAD.

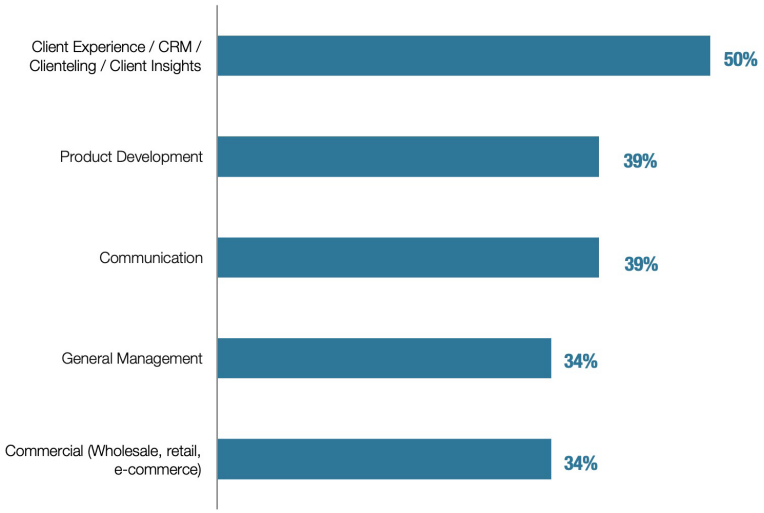
Client Experience teams have also developed in-store service tools: appointment management, welcome, catering, fitting and packaging. The challenge is no longer only to define standards, but to ensure their consistent execution across different markets. This requirement explains the development of operational roles and relays closer to the field.

CRM and Clienteling teams have, for their part, formalised client strategy, revised segmentations, developed personas and structured relationship journeys. Their challenge is to cascade client priorities beyond their own department. Yet client strategy remains unevenly shared: only 34% of respondents say their Maison has a client strategy that is clearly documented and communicated to all teams. Just over a quarter believe one exists but is poorly known to operational teams, while a third indicate it is still being built[2]. Organisational changes must therefore be accompanied by an evolution of how the business is steered.

VIC teams illustrate this dynamic. First developed in Fine Jewellery and Couture, these teams have gradually been structured and extended to other sectors to better translate the Maison's promise into experiences offered to its best clients, to enrich experience catalogues, and to engage regions and markets. Their role is to strike a balance between global consistency and local adaptability. MAD has supported leading players in Watches and Jewellery in this area, with the aim of providing regions and markets with a reference framework that gives frontline teams a degree of latitude in execution, all while ensuring a distinctive and inspiring expression of each Maison. In addition to defining the VIC experience signature, MAD has worked on formalising the architecture of the VIC experience catalogue, covering experiences delivered both as part of events and throughout the year.

In your view, which areas of your Maison's organization would most need to evolve in the coming years to strengthen client centricity?[2]

Top 5 responses



Other responses
19% for "production and supply"; 18% for "training"; 16% for "merchandising"; 15% for "client relationship center"; 7% for "after-sales"; 3% for "other"; 2% for "I don't know"; 0% for "none of them"

1. Marriott International, "*Marriott International Announces Organizational Structure and Executive Appointments*", press release, February 2023
2. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

The pursuit of client centricity has also led Maisons to evolve functions that were historically more distant from the client. Retail Operations teams, for instance, no longer limit themselves to ensuring operational efficiency and compliance with internal controls. They now contribute directly to the client experience, working on store delivery schedules and frequencies, stock and team organisation, process digitalisation, appointment management, queue management, in-store flow and product transfers between boutiques.

In Watches and Fine Jewellery, the emergence of Merchandising functions at central, regional and market level also reflects a shift in perspective. The product offer is no longer conceived solely from past sales, production or supply chain constraints. Merchandising teams seek to cross-reference historical performance with client insights, trends and local specificities, to build assortments that combine the Maison's convictions with client expectations. The creation of these functions thus helps bring the offer closer to the uses and needs of different markets. MAD has supported Maisons with these organisational changes, sometimes working beforehand on identifying the strategic objectives that call for their creation. This evolution has been observed at varying scale, for instance at Cartier at a global level, and in other Maisons at a regional level.

In the same spirit, some Maisons are bringing Client Insights teams closer to marketing, merchandising, creative and product development, so as to better integrate data and cultural specificities into decisions. Marketing is gradually evolving from a brand-push logic towards one that is more grounded in client-pull. This is not about distancing a Maison from its identity, but about better understanding audiences, local contexts and the conditions in which the brand resonates.

After-Sales represents an increasingly strategic organisational priority. Sitting at the intersection of product, quality, finance and client experience, it is now seen as a lever for engagement, loyalty and long-term value. Maisons are progressively building dedicated teams to define a specific After-Sales promise, to review the service offer, to simplify terminology and to make pricing and lead times more legible. Chanel, with the "CHANEL & moi" programme[1], illustrates this ambition of wanting to embed after-sales within a coherent omnichannel experience. To better accompany Maisons in pursuing excellence and distinctiveness in this area, MAD regularly conducts benchmarks of the after-sales experience among competitors. This is a particularly recurring topic for Fashion and Leather Goods Maisons, who have an ambition to bring quality to the after-sales experiences as a way to better align the broader client experience.

Retail Training supports these evolutions by adapting its content and helping sales teams and managers to take ownership of new standards, tools and behaviours. The challenge, however, remains one of execution, requiring a considerable level of coordination between headquarters, regions, markets and boutiques.

56%

of respondents describe the cross-functional collaboration on client-related topics within their Maison, at the HQ level, as "*functional, with room for improvement*"[2]

Generalising these functions, within an organisation, does not guarantee greater client centricity. The Comité Colbert survey results show that collaboration remains a point of fragility: it is rated "functional, with room for improvement" by 56% of respondents at headquarters level and by 53% between central teams and regional or market teams. Conversely, only 15% and 18% describe it as "strong, well-structured and aligned" in these two configurations respectively[2].

Mirroring the development of central departments, equivalent roles have emerged in regions, markets and boutiques. This now covers all client-facing departments: Client Experience, CRM, Clienteling, VIC, Retail Operations, Merchandising, After-Sales and Training. The centre defines the vision, standards, tools and indicators; regions and markets adapt them to cultural and commercial realities; boutiques implement them and relay field needs upwards.

1. CHANEL, « CHANEL & moi », Official CHANEL Website, accessed October 2026
2. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

95%

of respondents say their organisation has evolved in recent years to strengthen client centricity[1]

Client centricity is therefore not about standardising practices or centralising all decisions. It requires clarifying the contribution of each level of the organisation, ensuring information flows in both directions and giving local teams the capacity to adapt the promise. It is this mirrored structure, combined with shared responsibility for the client, that makes it possible to transform a central ambition into an experience that is genuinely lived.

Organisational evolution is set to continue: 42% of respondents expect major changes in the organisation of their Maison in the coming years[1].

42%

of respondents expect major changes within the organisation of their Maison in the coming years to strengthen client centricity[1]

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026

3.2

A CLIENT-CENTRIC CULTURE TO ANCHOR THE TRANSFORMATION

39%

of respondents describe the processes and ways of working within their Maison as neutral and not very client-centric[11]

Structural changes alone are not enough to embed the client's place in the organisation in a lasting way. The transformation must also take root in processes, management practices and, more broadly, in collective behaviours and reflexes.

The survey results illustrate what must still be done: 39% of respondents consider their processes and ways of working to be barely or not truly client centric. These findings show that client centricity remains unevenly embedded in practice.

A client culture cannot be declared. It is built progressively, throughout the entire employee journey. Human Resources have a cross-functional role to play in this regard, by integrating client orientation into recruitment criteria, training programmes, career paths and performance evaluation systems. Client culture must therefore be conceived not as an isolated training module, but as a golden thread running through the entire employee experience.

The Ritz-Carlton model illustrates this approach: the brand recruits first on values, before intensively training its employees in service standards[2]. This practice is a reminder that the quality of the client relationship depends as much on character, attentiveness and the capacity for personalisation as on technical skills. In-boutique immersions, integrated into onboarding or development programmes, can also help teams connect with the concrete realities of client experience.

48%

of respondents consider their Maison's organisation to be insufficiently client centric[1]

Respondents who answered "moderately", rather no", "not at all"

In your view, which levers are the most powerful to strengthen client centricity? [1]

Top 3 responses



Other responses

31% for « dedicated client department »; 24% for « client-related KPIs linked to individual performance»; 21% for « breaking down silos »; 21% for « empowering market and store teams »; 5% for « AI and technology to personalize client experience »

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
2. Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center, « Foundations of Our Brand », site officiel du Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center

Investing in people translates directly into investing in clients. By investing in the development of their teams and enabling them to fully live the Maison's promise, values and codes, the organisation gives them the means to internalise and embody them every day.

Engaged and inspired employees who are aligned with the brand's identity are better equipped to convey its world, create genuine emotion and deliver a distinctive and memorable client experience. The logic is straightforward: bringing the brand promise to life for employees is what enables them to bring it to life in turn for clients.

This ambition requires more than stated principles. Client culture must be translated into observable behaviours that are shared across the organisation and consistently kept alive. It must define what these behaviours actually look like in practice: listening to a client, personalising a relationship, resolving a pain point or creating a distinctive personal gesture.

Managerial rituals play an essential role in embedding this culture. They make expected behaviours visible, create spaces for sharing and help sustain client focus over time.

The Ritz-Carlton formalises this approach through its daily line-up: a daily briefing devoted to service standards and situations encountered with clients[1]. At Amazon, one cannot fail to mention the story of the empty chair: in strategic meetings, Jeff Bezos would have a chair left deliberately empty at the conference table. He would then explain to the executives and engineers present that this chair was occupied by the most important participant in the room: the client.

Beyond Executive Committee meetings, managers, particularly in boutiques, can truly relay this dynamic. By drawing on client feedback, sharing situations encountered and recognising team members who know how to listen, personalise a relationship or resolve a pain point, they help make client culture a daily reflex. Regular briefings can incorporate a client verbatim, a real-life situation or an improvement point to be addressed collectively; a practice also highlighted in MAD's work on embedding the voice of the client within organisations. Recognition must therefore extend beyond commercial results to encompass the quality of the experience created. Tracking the actions taken and their effects makes it possible to establish a genuine learning loop: listen, act, measure, share and adjust.

52%

of respondents say that client satisfaction is regularly monitored at the Executive Committee level and is considered as important as commercial, financial, and image-related objectives[2]

Beyond rituals, culture also rests on exemplary leadership. Senior management must demonstrate that client satisfaction is a genuine priority by integrating it into strategic discussions, investment decisions and performance criteria. The voice of the client cannot remain confined to one department or one measurement tool: it must inform the decisions of the organisation as a whole. Satisfaction, loyalty, the resolution of pain points and the value of the relationship must progressively complement the traditional indicators of revenue, margin and productivity. Yet their consideration at the highest level remains uneven: 52% of respondents say client satisfaction is monitored regularly at Executive Committee level, on a par with commercial, financial and brand objectives. Conversely, 32% indicate that it is tracked only occasionally and considered secondary, while 6% say it is not yet formally monitored at this level[2].

The banking sector offers an example of governance evolution. Société Générale integrates client satisfaction, Net Promoter Score (NPS) and the client experience into the variable compensation of its senior executive officers. Their performance on these dimensions is assessed each year by the board of directors. The bank reports that its subsidiary *BoursoBank* achieved an NPS of +54 in 2025 (on a scale of -100 to +100), ranking first in the banking sector for the seventh consecutive edition[3]. Elevating client satisfaction to the highest level sends a clear message: client experience is not the responsibility of one team, but the contribution of all.

1. Ellis Partners (EPMS Online), « Ritz-Carlton's Gold Standard Service », 2011
2. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
3. Société Générale, *Document d'enregistrement universel 2026*

To make this ambition a reality, the most client-centric players activate a powerful lever: the empowerment of frontline teams. This enables first-line employees to resolve issues instantly and elevate the client experience without the burden of hierarchical approval. At Four Seasons, every employee has full latitude to orchestrate bespoke gestures or address a situation the moment a weak signal is detected. The Ritz-Carlton has likewise institutionalised this culture by granting every member of staff a discretionary budget of up to $2,000 per client per day to resolve a problem or create a memorable moment. Freed from the weight of managerial approvals, teams develop their proactivity, turning each interaction into a highly personalised moment.

Shared responsibility for the client ultimately requires better circulation of information across business areas. Cross-functional initiatives can contribute to this by bringing together representatives from different teams around a shared pain point or a specific stage of the client journey. By adopting the client's point of view, participants can more easily identify the root causes of friction and build responses that go beyond the remit of a single department. This approach also brings the voice of the client closer to the processes, tools and decisions that actually shape their experience.

Client centricity cannot be decreed through structural evolution alone: it takes root in processes, managerial rituals and daily behaviours. It rests on trained and empowered teams, and exemplary leadership.

Client centricity cannot be decreed through structural evolution alone: it takes root in processes, managerial rituals and daily behaviours. It rests on trained and empowered teams, and exemplary leadership.

3.3

AI IN SUPPORT OF CLIENT CENTRICITY

In luxury, the challenge of generative AI is not to replace the human relationship, but to make it more relevant, more fluid and more personalised. It can intervene at every stage of the client journey, from the discovery of the Maison to after-sales, by giving teams better access to information, facilitating recommendation and anticipating needs. AI brings memory, speed and the capacity to process large volumes of data; the advisor retains interpretation, judgement and responsibility for the relationship.

How do you perceive the impact of AI on client relationship in your Maison in the next 3 years? [1]

Top 4 responses



Other responses
11% for "I don't know"; 10% for "enhanced in-store experience"; 7% for "strengthened loyalty"; 2% for "other"; 0% for "we do not plan to use AI to support client relationships"

One of the first changes concerns the pre-purchase phase. With conversational interfaces and large language models (LLMs), the client no longer necessarily needs to know a reference or navigate a catalogue. They can express an intention, an occasion or a desire, searching for a gift, preparing a ceremony or finding a skincare routine, for example, and receive a contextualised and well-reasoned product selection. Sephora is experimenting in this direction with ChatGPT, developing conversational purchase journeys that shift the logic from product search to dialogue[2]. For Maisons, this evolution means making their products, history, savoir-faire and services comprehensible and reliable to LLMs that power generative AI. The challenge will no longer be simply to be visible on search engines, but to be correctly interpreted and recommended within new conversational environments.

1. Survey Comité Colbert and MAD, 2026
2. Sephora, « *Sephora App in ChatGPT Brings a New Personalized Beauty Experience* », March 2026

AI can also transform the advisor into an augmented advisor. It brings together the history of the relationship, expressed preferences and previous interactions, then suggests a next step: re-engaging a client, proposing a new arrival, extending an event invitation, checking availability or preparing an appointment. The cases studied by MAD already show uses of this kind in clienteling: identifying clients with potential, personalising recommendations, generating guest lists or preparing messages aligned with the Maison's tone of voice. The tool must, however, remain a starting point: the advisor confirms, adjusts or sets aside the suggestion based on the interaction context, the client's level of expertise and the quality of the relationship.

This logic extends to client relationship centres. Call centres can become genuine channels for discovery, advice and loyalty, beyond problem-resolution functions. Before a sale, they can help clarify a need, check an availability, arrange an appointment or direct a client to the right expert. After a sale, they can track a delivery, explain care instructions, organise a repair or ensure continuity with the boutique. The LVMH shared service centres illustrate this evolution, operating across several Maisons, multiple channels and different stages of the client journey[1]. More broadly, AI can strengthen these operations by summarising the client history, identifying intent, retrieving relevant information, suggesting a response and facilitating the handover to the right person[2].

In after-sales, AI can accelerate access to expertise and make service more proactive. The visual recognition tool developed for Cartier with Google Cloud helps expert teams and after-sales advisors identify a piece from a photograph and quickly retrieve the associated information[3]. The tool facilitates the search; the expert remains responsible for the diagnosis, the explanation and the trust. Over time, AI can also anticipate maintenance or repair needs by cross-referencing the product's history, its usage and certain risk signals. The Porsche example shows how predictive analytics can detect an anomaly before it becomes critical and preserve continuity of use[4].

AI also makes it possible to better capture the weak signals expressed by clients: searches, requests made to advisors or client relationship centres, returns, drop-offs and shifts in usage patterns. By cross-referencing this information, AI helps identify an emerging expectation, a recurring difficulty or a service opportunity more quickly. The Maison can then adjust its recommendations, assortments or services before a need turns into dissatisfaction. One major Watches and Fine Jewellery player already analyses the keywords that emerge from exchanges with its client relationship centres to identify pain points, particularly around after-sales, at an early stage, enabling the relevant departments to respond. AI therefore strengthens the capacity to respond more precisely, more personally and more proactively, while leaving teams the responsibility for interpretation and decision.

This sharper reading of demand also makes production and product allocation more responsible. AI tools can help refine forecasts, reduce overstocks and stockouts, direct products to the markets where they are genuinely expected and fine-tune production volumes and priorities. In luxury, the goal is not to produce more, but to produce and distribute more intelligently, all while balancing desirability, availability and responsible resource management. AI thus becomes a tool for balancing client excellence, operational efficiency and the Maison's responsibilities.

AI is therefore an opportunity to strengthen client centricity. Its success will depend on several conditions: human oversight, mastery of the brand's language, data protection and the capacity to preserve the rarity and singularity that define luxury. The goal is not to make the relationship more technological, but to enable teams to devote more time to what technology cannot reproduce: listening, interpreting, deciding with discernment and creating genuine emotion.

"What is essential is the ability to quickly detect meaningful signals. The real key then lies in the organization's capacity to respond with agility and speed"[5]

1. Inside LVMH, « *Elevating the remote client experience at LVMH* », June 2025
2. Microsoft Learn, « *Overview of Customer Intent Agent* », updated in May 2026
3. Google Cloud, « *AI in Retail: Google Cloud Transforms Cartier's Product Search Technology* », 2021
4. Porsche, « Embracing AI at Porsche: innovative data analysis ensures high-voltage performance », 2025
5. Response to an open-ended question from the 2026 Comité Colbert and MAD survey: «*In your personal opinion, what is the #1 ingredient for a truly client-centric luxury Maison?*»

CONCLUSION

Client centricity has now become an essential lever for strengthening the desirability and performance of luxury Maisons. In a context where clients expect greater personalisation, seamlessness and recognition, the ability to build a lasting relationship is becoming a key source of differentiation.

The results of the survey with Comité Colbert and MAD point to a momentum that is already underway: 85% of respondents consider client centricity to be extremely important to the success of their Maison, and 90% say they have a department dedicated to the client experience. While progress is still needed, particularly in terms of client knowledge, data sharing and team alignment, the foundations are now in place.

The next step is to turn this ambition into a fully embodied culture, from senior leadership to boutique teams. Technology, clienteling and artificial intelligence can all contribute, provided they remain in the service of what makes French luxury distinctive: creativity, quality of execution, personalised attention and the strength of the human relationship.

The challenge, then, is not to oppose product and client, creativity and data, or heritage and innovation. It is to bring them together, so that every interaction becomes a living expression of the Maison. By placing the client more firmly at the heart of their decisions and practices, Maisons will not only be able to strengthen their performance, but also extend the reach of the codes, excellence and *art de vivre* of French luxury.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Comité Colbert and MAD would like to express their gratitude to all participants in this study. We especially thank the members of the Comité Colbert for their commitment and their responses to the questionnaire. Our thanks also go to the brands, groups, and partners who generously shared their experiences and initiatives, thus enriching this reflection on client centricity. Their contribution has been essential in shedding light on the organizational challenges and issues related to the development and support of these key functions.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted jointly by MAD and Comité Colbert between June and July 2026. It draws on three main sources of data:

- An online questionnaire on current developments in client centricity in the luxury sector.
- Interviews with leaders from the luxury industry, enabling a deeper understanding of current challenges and the initiatives being implemented.
- Various sources of research, together with the MAD expertise, built over 17 years of projects in the luxury sector.

In analysing the questionnaire, the responses of all participants were considered for each question (N=62 participants, of whom 50% state that they have a role in “General Management”). The responses were analysed according to product category (Fashion & Leather Goods, Fragrance & Cosmetics, Watches & Jewellery, Hospitality, etc.), and annual revenue (less than €100 million, between €101 million and €500 million, between €501 million and €1 billion, and more than €1 billion).

COMITÉ
COLBERT
Depuis 1954

MAD