

# Chief Brand Officer New Key Role in Fashion and Luxury

Executive recruiters and marketing experts weigh in on the role of chief brand officer after Moncler's appointment of Nike veteran Gino Fisanotti in that position.

By [Luisa Zargani](#) on June 1, 2021



📷 A look from the Moncler Grenoble fall '20 collection. courtesy image

**MILAN** — While somewhat elusive to a casual observer, the role of chief brand officer is becoming increasingly relevant in the fashion and luxury industry.

Case in point: [Moncler](#) on Tuesday said that Nike veteran [Gino Fisanotti](#) will be joining the company in the newly created position on June 7, reporting to chairman and chief executive officer [Remo Ruffini](#).

As reported, Fisanotti has worked at [Nike](#) for 23 years, rising from retail and marketing roles in South America and Europe to global vice president of sportswear, North America vice

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president of marketing. Most recently, he served as [Nike](#)'s first brand creative officer. An architect by background, he is an Argentinian national.

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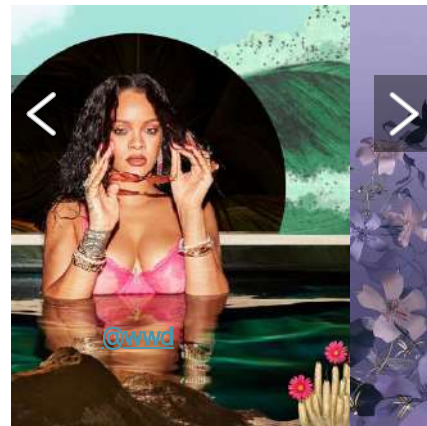
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“Due to his professional background and strong brand-building knowledge gained during his extensive international career, Gino is the ideal candidate to support me in shaping [Mon-](#)

[cler](#)'s further development toward a consumer culture company driven by purpose, experience, and a sense of community, while drawing inspiration from different worlds including entertainment, sports, art and music,” Ruffini stated. “Together with Gino, we will continue to push cultural and creative frontiers beyond fashion and beyond luxury.”

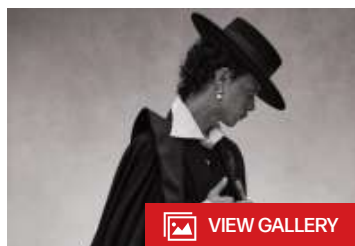
The announcement comes on the heels of Moncler's new structure and scope, which has changed following the [acquisition in December](#) of Sportswear Company SpA, owner of the [Stone Island](#) brand, in a deal valued at 1.15 billion euros.



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In fact, according to Rodgy Guerrero, founder of Rodgy Guerrero and Partners, specialized in the research and selection of managerial and creative profiles in the fashion, luxury, retail and design industries, a chief brand officer becomes even more important after a change in the structure of the group, as for example following Moncler's acquisition of [Stone Island](#), when it became key to protect the “integrity of the brand not only visually, but in order to set in motion strategies that are consistent with the label.”

Guerrero said the chief brand officer role has long been a fixture in consumer goods but is new in luxury and fashion, where labels in the past used to be associated with the founding designer, from [Giorgio Armani](#) to Yves Saint Laurent, “who had a name and an identity that coincided with the brand.”



Taking Nike as an example, she said “the logo is enough to identify the product.”


A chief brand officer usually has a background in marketing, she continued, and is tasked with bringing an identity that is consistent with the brand to the world and customers, across the board, from communication and retail to visual platforms.

“A chief brand officer must know how to communicate to a global community, create a fil rouge, a link between the creativity, the product, the needs of the market and the customer, cross-pollinating through art, music and entertainment,” explained Guerrera. “Creativity is no longer enough and it must be translated to respond to the needs of customers, who are now savvier than ever, and attract new ones to the brand.”

Giovanna Brambilla, partner at Milan-based executive search firm Value Search, also highlighted the importance of connecting with customers. “Companies are aiming to change their organizations to make them more contemporary, with an approach that is increasingly customer-centric,” she said. Given the increased digitalization of the luxury and fashion companies, there is a new need “to speak the same language of the customers on the different touchpoints and these customers are increasingly different. Engaging the customers is now as important as the product.”

Brambilla also believes having “very flexible organizations” is key as the market constantly evolves. “It’s a work in progress and companies need to be ahead of the curve, anticipating their customers’ need and not responding to them.”

Citing the arrival of Davide Grasso as CEO of Maserati from Nike, who was appointed to the top executive team of Stellantis in January, she noted how luxury companies are “intercepting executives from companies that have created constant and long-lasting relations with customers, interacting and engaging with them.” In this context, these skills are more of a draw than the candidate’s affinity with the product.

A Milan-based industry observer who requested anonymity, said that, in addition to Nike, Adidas and Apple qualify as companies offering a strong pool of candidates. But this person warned that “there is not one single model that fits all. Business models are being revised, and so are the organizations, and each company  
ng to fine-tune its organization in order to respond to the  
tion and the changes of the market and the customer,

depending on strategy, goals, brand positioning, and resources available. Everything must be in sync — company, target and customer.”

Paola Calderini, partner at executive recruiter Eric Salmon & Partners, head of fashion, lifestyle and luxury practice globally, said consistency in addressing savvy customers to be aligned with them is key. “The chief brand officer role is in evolution today and communication and marketing are increasingly more integrated with the business,” observed Calderini.

Product is central at [Moncler](#), a brand that has “fantastic collaborations with creative talents, which need to be aligned with the brand.” Calderini believes “there is a logic of integration in communication as much as in distribution, to reach the customer through storytelling and retail experience, and across the board through all the different touchpoints.”

She argued the role of chief brand officer could “be more complex when there is a single and strong creative director” leading.

A Milan-based marketing expert, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said “the more sensitive” fashion and luxury companies realize that the “value of the brand today has an increasingly important role as an intangible asset.” This is estimated to account for up to 90 percent of the market value for companies listed at the S&P 500 Market Index, according to the 2020 Ocean Tomo Study on Intangible Assets.

Brands are “a crucial element indicative of its capacity to attract customers: strong brands are able to better react to difficult moments and return to growth much faster than mainstream brands,” according to the BrandZ ranking by Kantar.

“The brand is a guarantee for the customer and in times of crisis, difficulties or uncertainties it’s also reassuring. A strong brand is an engaging one, it’s an important element of attractiveness and reflects the future performance of the company,” remarked the expert. “Clearly, the companies that are more far-sighted also in fashion and luxury today are considering these issues: the strength of the brand is no longer only the strength of the designer’s creativity — even though it is the starting point and the essential element — but it is also the expression of the ability to connect to the target, build relations and communities with shared cultural values, to have an impact world to improve it. To choose a brand today is to choose approach to the world and so a brand must be increasingly

able to build a brand experience that goes beyond the experience of the product itself, whether it's a garment, an accessory, a perfume, a car or a hotel.”

To orchestrate a brand development plan in an omnichannel world is no longer “a piece of cake: you need skills, focus, creativity and talent: in a very complex world, it is no longer possible to leave anything to chance. For this reason, luxury companies and beyond are reorganizing their marketing division, building skills and integrating functions to express the value of their most relevant intangible asset — the brand.”

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 [Giorgio Armani](#) [Moncler](#) [Stone Island](#)

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