

# L'UOMO

## WORKPLACE



# REMOTE CONTROL

By Zornitza Kratchmarova

**In a post-Covid-19 fashion world, what are the skills our battered sector will most value going forward? Where will the jobs be? As the pandemic causes both trauma and change to the industry, new specialisms and skill sets are emerging as highly desirable.**

These days, the name of the game is to enable remote activities and services. Instagram has developed a guide to virtual fashion shows. Tech giants are scrambling to diversify ways of selling in the era of social distancing. E-commerce is flourishing. In Italy, in the two months of total lockdown, the surge in online purchases equalled growth in the past five years. These are just some of the side effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has upset the economic balance of just about every major industry (and much else besides). Fashion is no exception. According to the Study Centre of Italy's Confindustria Moda, in the first quarter of 2020, companies in the fashion sector recorded an average loss in annual turnover of 36.2 per cent, and orders fell by 40.5 per cent. It's a catastrophic state of affairs. Yet, there are expectations of an albeit limited uptick in the second half of the year. Significantly, UniCredit estimates an overall drop in turnover of 20 to 25 per cent by the end of 2020. And it highlights

Photograph by Steven Meisel, *Vogue Italia*, January 2007.

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the prospect of an almost complete recovery by 2021. Much will depend on how the health crisis develops and whether the much-feared second wave of coronavirus actually materialises. There will also be inevitable repercussions for the world of work, particularly since the textile and clothing industry is one of Italy's pillars of employment, with some 400,000 people working in over 45,000 companies, most of them small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). But whatever happens, big and small businesses will have to prepare for the new looming situation. One strategy will be to review company structures and, where necessary, recruit professionals from outside the sector with the skills to interpret the changes at all levels of the hierarchy. With this in mind, *L'Uomo Vogue* has compiled a brief guide to the key human resources that will be in increasing demand thanks to five broad trends that are shaping the future of the fashion industry. But it's not just a question of the crisis. The success of a company, now more than ever, rests on its ability to attract talent. So here are the professions that will make the difference as the real competition plays out. We have focused on Italy. But the same can apply to every core country in the fashion and luxury world, notably France, Germany and the UK.

**1. The boom in e-commerce.** With the lockdown, there has been an unprecedented growth in distance selling, and everything suggests this trend will continue. Almost everyone is now trying to bring sales previously made on third-party platforms back in-house, with the intention of taking direct control of increasingly strategic online retailing. This is paving the way for positions such as **digital retail specialists** and **online store managers**, specifically tasked with supporting

## WHERE THE MONEY IS: SALARIES IN THE DIGITAL & IT SECTOR

Values in €

Source: OD&M Consulting (Gi Group), 2019.

JOB TITLE	CATEGORY	BASIC ANNUAL INCOME	VARIABLE ANNUAL INCOME
UX/UI ARCHITECT	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	44,167	46,570
UX/UI DESIGNER	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	43,864	45,999
UX/UI DEVELOPER	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	42,366	44,341
FRONT-END DEVELOPER	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	39,145	40,867
DATA SCIENTIST	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	40,569	42,075
DATA ANALYST	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	34,629	35,394
BIG DATA ENGINEER	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	42,718	44,939
DIGITAL RETAIL SPECIALIST	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	39,226	40,906
SOCIAL COMMERCE SPECIALIST	PROFESSIONAL/SPECIALIST	41,134	43,861
DIGITAL RETAIL MANAGER	MIDDLE MANAGER	69,817	76,101
SOCIAL COMMERCE MANAGER	MIDDLE MANAGER	70,376	76,628
PRODUCT COMPLIANCE & SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER	MIDDLE MANAGER	63,771	66,710

key clients and guiding them in online purchases. "These are true 'digital tailors' capable of constructing bespoke paths for individual clients starting from their personal profile: average invoice value, purchase frequency, precise sizes for each product type, and so on," says Carlo Caporale, CEO of Wyser Italia. This implies that painstaking work has to be done upstream on individual databases. That's where **CRM analysts** step in by crunching reams of data to produce a precious list of regular customers, with plenty of pointers regarding their tastes and buying habits. If e-commerce is to develop from a simple online collection of hundreds or thousands of products into a personalised experience that can seduce even the most sceptical, the whole operation has to be organised to a suitably high standard. This explains the race to get hold of **UX/UI architects and designers**, as well as **front-end developers**. These are highly specialised professionals responsible for designing, developing and rolling out the user interface, making the so-called user experience as effective, pleasant and even as surprising as possible. The proviso is that it has to be mobile, because according to the European Mobile Commerce Study, 85 per cent of users of all ages now habitually shop online via their smartphones or tablets. With the growth in online sales increasingly being channelled through social networks, another core figure is the **social commerce manager**. It's up to this hybrid figure – halfway between social media manager and e-commerce manager – to convert users into actual buyers. The aim is to maximise the potential of individual platforms by developing and disseminating engaging content, planning personalised calls to action, and hiring influencers who can capture the

attention of different types of customers. Ultimately, they must create a dialogue with the community that is as direct and profitable as possible. Professionals dealing with logistics are also in high demand, starting with the **supply chain manager**, whose duty is to make sure everything gets where it has to go on time.

**2.**

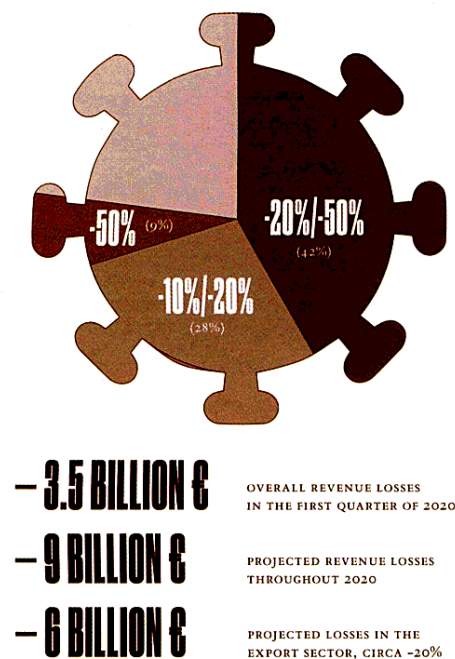
### À la carte manufacturing.

With the right kind of deep learning technologies, customers' orders can be predicted and manufacturing output kept to the strictly necessary. This might be a magic bullet for SMEs, but it can also work for big companies, especially when orders are dwindling. It could be a way to eliminate almost all the wasteful practices involved in the management of dead stock. This includes destroying unsold products

to prevent them making their way into parallel sales circuits and tarnishing their exclusiveness. Pitfalls abound, and it will take some time to progress from the concept of a supply chain to a demand chain. But the sooner we begin the better. Obviously, this will mean recruiting the qualified human resources. "We need to start with **big data engineers**," says Wyser Italia's Carlo Caporale. "Depending on their specific role, these software engineers work as data architects or developers. They're specialists in big data, the use of specific platforms, environments or frameworks, and they're able to manage extremely complex databases. We also need **data scientists**, **business analysts** and **business intelligence analysts**." The latter are

## THE AFTERMATH OF COVID-19

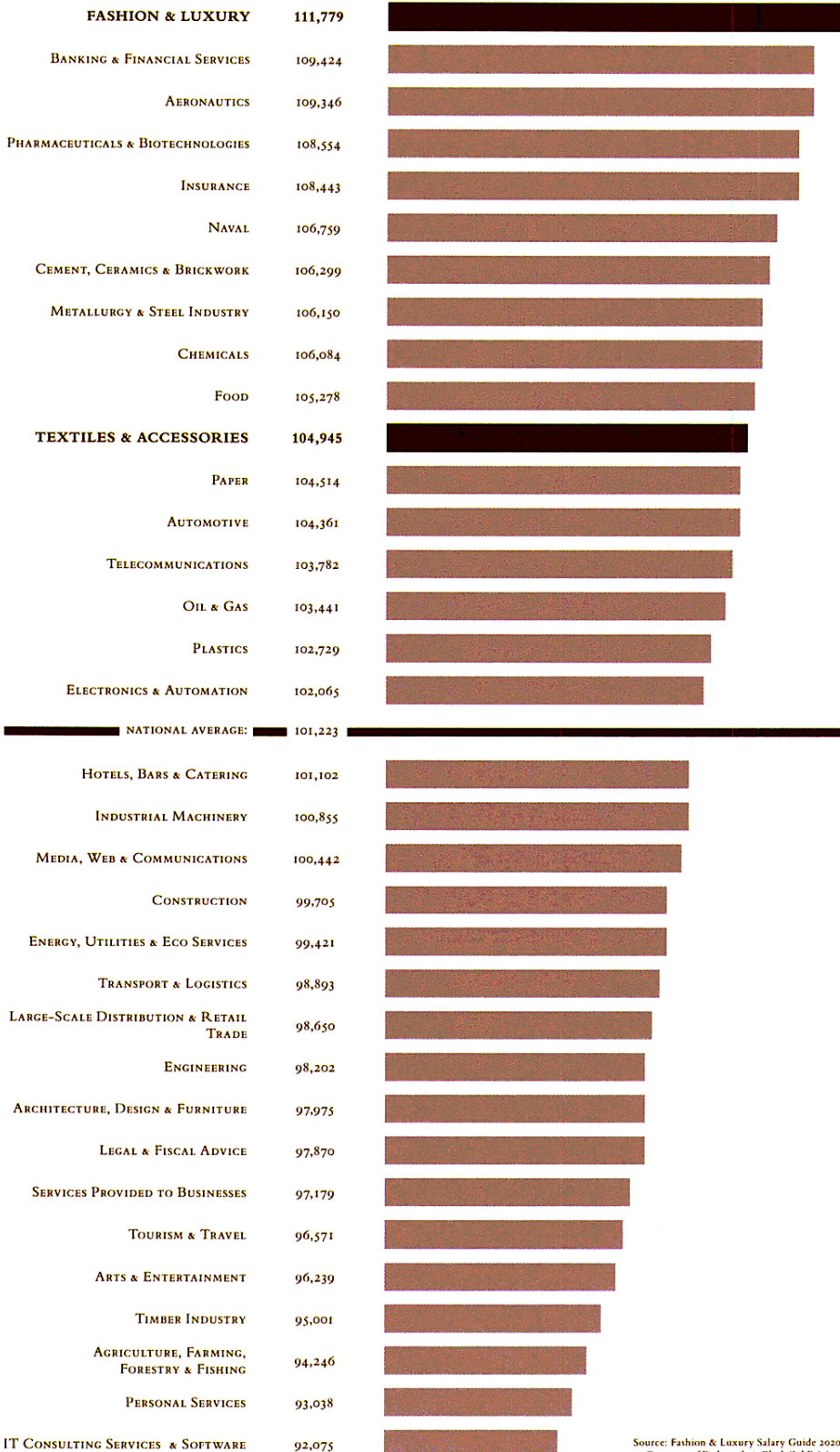
Companies' revenue losses 2020 VS 2019



Source: Fashion & Luxury Salary Guide 2020. Courtesy of Badenoch + Clark/JobPricing.

# EXECUTIVE PERKS: AVERAGE PAY IN FASHION & TEXTILES VS THE REST

L'Uomo Vogue presents its exclusive Fashion & Luxury Salary Guide 2020, compiled by the executive search company Badenoch + Clark in collaboration with JobPricing. One particular point to emerge from the study is that executives in the fashion and luxury sector are the highest paid in Italy, the only ones earning a gross annual salary of over 110,000 euros. This is added to their variable remuneration amounting to 18.6%, which is lower than the national average of 20.2%. "The gross annual salary of executives in this field is 10.6% higher than the market average for executives," explains Luca Tofanelli, executive director of Badenoch + Clark. "But it has to be said that in the last five years it has fallen by 6.5% compared to an average drop of 2.9%. And the damaging effect of the Covid-19 emergency could widen the gap while increasing job mobility."



Source: Fashion & Luxury Salary Guide 2020.  
Courtesy of Badenoch + Clark/JobPricing.

particularly valuable because their strong analytical skills allow them to propose the best solutions for dealing with a given problem. Computer geeks, perhaps, but above all problem solvers. "At the moment these are all rather unusual figures in the organisation charts of fashion companies, but eventually they're sure to come to the fore," says Alessandra Bassetti, senior client partner at consulting firm Korn Ferry. "It's inevitable because there's a lot more than just à la carte manufacturing. The advance of new technologies such as augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), the internet of things (IoT), blockchain, and in general everything that revolves around Industry 4.0 calls for the recruitment of professionals from tech companies."

# 3.

## Sustainability across the board.

A brand's values will become more and more important as consumers increasingly choose one brand over another on the basis of what that brand represents to them. In other words, the product itself will be perceived purely in terms of a commodity, and it will be other factors that tip the balance. With the resulting need to put those decisive "other factors" in the spotlight, official certifications in all fields are becoming a true leitmotif, and not just for big-name brands. Professionals capable of overseeing the often complex procedures to obtain such certificates will become crucial. Two examples stand out: the **regulatory compliance, testing and sustainability specialist** and the **product compliance and sustainability manager**. "For both profiles, experience in environmental and social sustainability programmes is required," continues Caporale. "They have in-depth knowledge of certifications such as SA8000 and ISO 14001, as well as life cycle assessment (LCA), corporate social responsibility (CSR), carbon offsetting, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and so forth." These experts also ensure the compliance of materials and processes used by the individual company and its supply chain, which is where the greatest challenge will emerge. Indeed, implementing and coordinating sustainability projects across the whole supply structure is a decidedly demanding mandate. Regulations change from country to country, and what is compliant in one state might even be illegal in another. Transparency is a significant trend in communication. Unsurprisingly, greater attention is being focused on professionals who can build and maintain a brand's positioning by conveying its functional values. These include sustainability, of course, but not only. In other words, the emphasis is less exclusively on products, discounts and offers, and more on showcasing the brand's distinctive features. As a result, there is renewed interest in corporate communication talent. Confirmation comes from Alessandra Simonella, senior consultant for the Fashion and Retail division of the executive search company Consea. She observes: "The **head of media relations and corporate communication manager** is becoming a crucial and increasingly sought-after role. Their job is to apply the strategies underpinning a company's institutional communication. They develop and coordinate campaigns and storytelling initiatives to project a firm's internal culture and brand values, ensuring a clear and transparent relationship with all internal and external stakeholders. Basically, they're responsible for the company's reputation." In other words, they are key players in what the Harvard Business Review has called "the era of conversational commerce".



4.

**Diversity and inclusion.**

The fourth broad trend in future fashion identified by *L'Uomo* *Figue* concerns the in-house culture of companies of all kinds. To date this has mainly rested on the sensibility of individuals, or at best been restricted to the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment. The results have been limited, as shown by our "Salary Section" report published in the May 2020 issue. But now diversity and inclusion are finally gaining

headway. Naturally, this is partly due to the wave of anti-racism protests that erupted around the world after the killing of George Floyd. But there's much more to it. Diversity is synonymous with richness. When times are hard, firms have to pull all the possible levers to get ahead. A sign of the times is the growing demand for **chief people and culture officers or diversity and inclusion managers**. These positions are responsible for managing and enhancing all initiatives and activities aimed at building an open, fair and inclusive work environment for employees, while seeking to foster the diversity of each. Well-established figures in the organisation chart of US fashion companies, they are now also appearing in Europe. And in this phase of the health emergency, the human resources department is on the front line, starting with **HR managers**. "In the months of lockdown they were the real pivot of the organisation," says Cosma's Alessandra Simonella. "All of a sudden, they were handed the task of finding ways to manage people's talents by adopting forms of organisation that had never been tested before, or perhaps only on a tiny scale compared to what was now required on a company-wide level." This was a far from predictable development, because in Italy, even more than elsewhere, working from home was almost unheard of. Yet it had to be invented practically overnight. HR personnel have the virtue of being a point of reference for all staff members, both for strictly professional needs and for personal and sometimes even psychological support. Almost everyone agrees there is no going back. Now the challenge will be to strike the right balance between remote working and on-site working. This applies especially to white-collar workers, or anyone not closely geared to production cycles. At this point, a rise in demand for HR talent at all levels is an all but foregone conclusion.

5.

**Reshoring.**

This is the reverse process of offshoring where production previously moved to low-cost countries is brought back onshore, especially from the Far East. There has been talk of this for some time, but now it has become a necessity for many. The goal is to regain control over the various production phases and avoid further paralyses or delays in delivery caused by future health or other emergencies. Could this be an

upside to the pandemic? Clearly this trend highlights the centrality of technical resources in the textile and clothing sectors, and therefore of those working behind the scenes to manage the manufacturing processes at individual brands. Their duties include dictating times and methods to ensure quality, budget and delivery times, as well as transforming and assembling individual garments by translating concepts into finished products. Among the most important figures are the pattern makers who turn the designer's idea into a sample ready for production. Their craft skills epitomise the excellence globally associated with Made in Italy. And significantly, they are the only employees whose jobs are guaranteed, as Claudio Minozzi, head of Hecto and president of Confindustria Moda, told *L'Uomo* *Figue*. These artisans are therefore well placed considering the current crisis, which is increasing the likelihood of companies recruiting more and more **freelancers** in the near future, thus avoiding downtime costs and overheads. Freelancers can be enlisted to perform the most varied tasks and are even drafted in at the highest levels, in which case companies adopt temporary management contracts. "We saw the first signs of this during the months of lockdown," says Luca Infanelli, executive director at Badenoch + Clark. "The hiring of temporary consultants is likely to continue growing until the first half of 2021, before returning to forms of recruitment closer to pre-Covid levels. For the top positions, however, we might have to wait until late 2021, or even early 2022." Alessandra Bassetti at Korn Ferry concludes with an appeal to all: "Whatever job you're called on to do, knowledge isn't enough. It takes emotional intelligence. Because the ability to work in a team – being proactive and passionate about what you do – will never go out of fashion." Never a true word spoken.

**THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US**

The average per sector by which an executive salary outstrips an artisan salary by five + 11.

Source: ISTAT, Consulting & Co. Italy, 2019



FASHION & JEWELRY



TEXTILES, GARMENTS & ACCESSORIES



ITALIAN LEATHER

**SPECIALIST EARNINGS: AVERAGE PAYCHECKS FOR SENIOR ROLES IN FASHION**

As fashion and textiles businesses face this post-Covid-19 challenges of restructuring, securing supply chains, pivoting to digital and putting sustainability and diversity at the front and centre of their practice, this is what holders of key positions can expect to take home. While this outlook for many seems bleak in the short term, the future will present opportunities for those flexible enough to seize them.

JOB TITLE	EUR*	JOB TITLE	EUR	JOB TITLE	EUR
PERFORMANCE DIRECTOR	112,254	COMMUNICATIONS & PR DIRECTOR	105,430	SALES DIRECTOR	130,007
PRODUCT DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR	102,510	EVENT & ADVERTISING DIRECTOR	113,043	MARKETING DIRECTOR	114,151
QUALITY DIRECTOR	105,637	PRODUCT DIRECTOR	109,275	RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR	109,720
CREDIT DIRECTOR	124,204	STORE MANAGER	70,951	LOGISTICS & SUPPLY CHAIN DIRECTOR	110,430
HEAD DIRECTOR	91,950	CHANNEL SALES DIRECTOR	115,187	POS & E-COMMERCE DIRECTOR	111,000
TRAINING DIRECTOR	80,632	RETAIL TRAINING DIRECTOR	110,710	ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR	114,252
CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP DIRECTOR	102,007	TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR	110,007		

\*EUR = monthly, netted income

Source: Payscale & Salary Salary Guide 2020: Consulting of Salaries & Costs (Italy) Ltd.