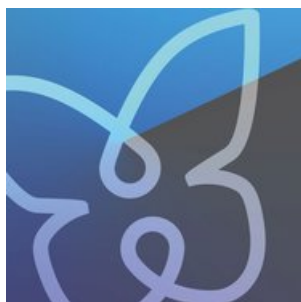Q&A

Positive Luxury's Trust Button offers transparency to luxury goods market

January 28, 2015

Positive Luxury's butterfly mark

By *JEN KING*

Now, more than ever before, luxury consumers are environmentally conscious and aware and have begun outwardly searching for brands with ethical and sustainable business practices.

Industry and brand transparency is valued, but in many cases the consumer, especially one not familiar with the inner workings and practices of a particular brand, may be unaware if products meet a wanted standard of sustainability. London-based Positive Luxury and its interactive Trust Mark uses technology to keep consumers informed of luxury brands' commitments to quality, design, craftsmanship, service and sustainability.

"Sustainable luxury is not an oxymoron, it is two sides of the same coin," said Diana Verde Nieto, co-founder of Positive Luxury, London.

"The definition of luxury has changed," she said. "The new luxury is open - more experience-oriented, innovation centered and more social and environmentally minded.

"Knowledge is the consumer's currency, and with information becoming more readily accessible brands need to realize that what they do is more important than what they say, and trust has become one of the most precious assets."

In this Q&A, Ms. Verde Neito will explain how Positive Luxury was created, the market implications of the Trust Button and how it will instill peace of mind in consumers as they purchase luxury goods online.

Positive Luxury's Diana Verde Nieto

Here is the dialogue:

How did Positive Luxury originate?
Positive Luxury was born from the desire to bridge the gap between companies' social and environmental actions and the consumer, moving sustainability from a niche concept, to become normal and accessible to people.

The greatest cultural shift in the last century is the rise in concern, especially among millennials, over the increased environmental and social problems. Today's world is interconnected, interdependent and transparent, and brands need to embrace this and act accordingly in order to thrive in the future.

Why is direct communication between consumers and brands important?
Social media has made it possible for brands to engage directly with consumers, however over time it has lost its footing and therefore its credibility.

Millennials, who are digital natives, use social media in a completely different way, as a tool for news and initial discovery as opposed to one-to-one communication with brands.

Why should a brand want to be recognized for its best practices will this increase awareness among the affluent?
Consumers are much more aware and discerning than ever before and corporate practices are much more in the spotlight. Increasingly people want to make a difference through their lifestyles, their careers and the products they buy.

Organizations that want to thrive in the future must find a way to communicate their values to engage and inspire today's savvy consumers.

Positive Luxury's Brands to Trust Showcase

What qualifications or standards does a brand need to have to be considered for membership?
We assess brands in a holistic way, and we look at the following areas: philanthropy, environmental, social, innovation, community and governance.

Our unique accreditation process has been developed by a distinguished panel of experts, is reviewed annually and continues to evolve mirroring the social and environmental regulatory, and what is becoming necessary but beyond compliance.

How can the Brand Index and Brand Showcase on Positive Luxury's Web site serve as a consumer tool?
Both serve as an easy to use search tool for consumers, offering the ability to search via brand or industry and giving an overview of those awarded with the Trust Mark, making a positive shopping decision very easy for the consumer.

On each brand profile page consumers can find information about brand history and its products, but above all, they can see the full list of that brand's positive social and environmental actions which reflects the information provided within its application.
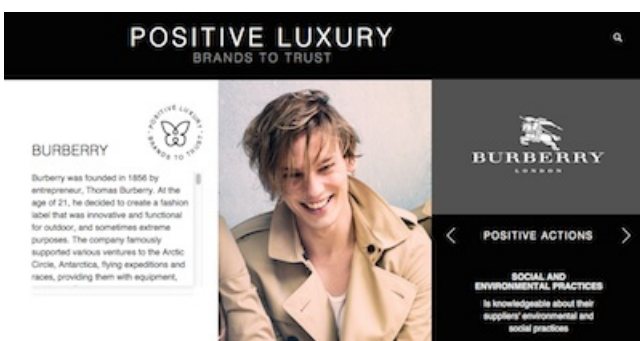
Positive Luxury's Brands to Trust Index, Burberry profile

In what ways does ecommerce and editorial content enhance the consumer's experience when investigating the best practices of featured Positive Luxury brands?
It's about making the brand's investment into bettering their social and environmental impact relevant to the consumer's interests. Including a call to action alongside the best practices of a brand enables a direct purchase decision to be made, based on those relevant actions.

Can you explain how Positive Luxury's Trust Button works?
The interactive Trust Mark communicates a brand's social and environmental positive actions, by simply hovering over the mark, before prompting consumers to click to trust.' Consumers can then feedback in real time to questions asked by the brand.

What is the symbolism behind the Butterfly Mark used for Positive Luxury's Trust Button?
The symbol is inspired by the Large Blue butterfly, one of the most beautiful butterflies in the world, which was driven to extinction in the '70s and has since become the most successful insect reintroduction in Britain.

Symbolizing how the human race has the collective power to make changes in order to positively impact the world.
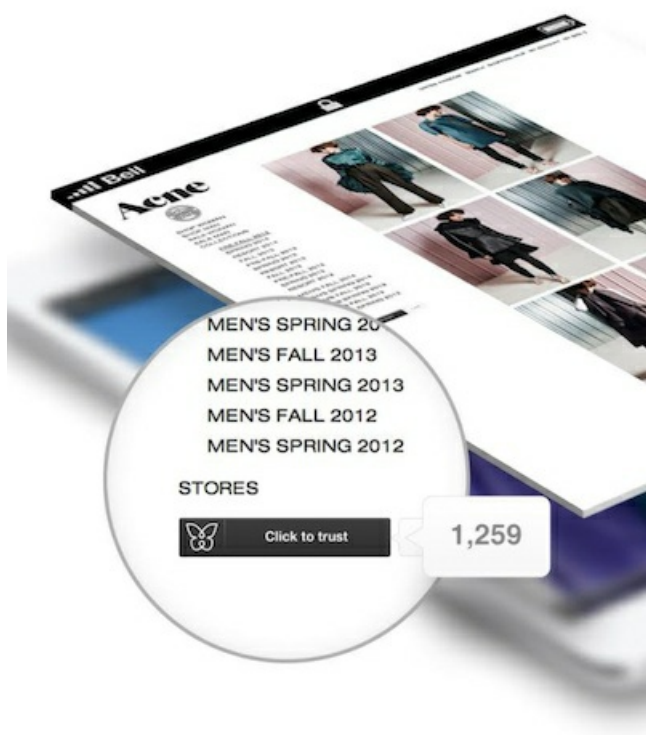
Example of a Positive Luxury Trust Button on apparel brand Acne's Web site

How can luxury marketers measure the ROI/feedback received through the Trust Button what are the benefits?
Brands have access to a dedicated dashboard, which records and aggregates real time interaction with the Trust Mark, giving access to behavioral data for each individual consumer.

The Mark gives brand marketers an opportunity to retarget consumers, using data based, one-to-one communication, bridging the gap that social media has left behind.

What plans do you have to expand the Trust Button program and reach more brands?
Following the opening of our United States office this year we are planning a franchising program in Asia and United Arab Emirates, with an ambition of becoming a global brand by 2020.

What is Positive Luxury's goal for the next five years?
Our goal is that the Trust Mark becomes the definitive standard and globally recognized seal of approval for positive luxury lifestyle brands, and in turn motivates consumers to buy from positive brands that are doing well by doing good.

Brand testimonials
Below, luxury brands that have been awarded with a Positive Luxury Trust Button speak about the implications and what it means for their brand.

"It means a lot to us to have been awarded the Trust Mark. Jewelry is a feel-good purchase, and knowing that it's been manufactured in a responsible way makes it that much more joyful." Monica Vinader, CEO & founder of Monica Vinader jewelry.

"It was a great honor to be awarded the Trust Mark because one of Okapi's main aims was to create a truly desirable yet entirely traceable and sustainable African luxury brand. Being recognized by Positive Luxury means that we are achieving that goal and the hard work that has been put in by our whole team in order to maintain our ethical standards has not gone unnoticed." Hanneli Rupert, founder of Okapi.

Positive Luxury's Brands to Trust emblem

"We are delighted with the recognition and award of the Trust Mark because we are firmly confident that sustainable actions, especially in the luxury watches segment, not only reinforces our brand but also improves our competitiveness." Georges Kern, CEO of IWC Schaffhausen.

"Keeping our messages consistent across all our digital platforms can be challenging, and the Trust Button is a brilliant way for us to communicate our positive ethos through one core narrative across a multitude of channels." Lisa Yearwood, head of marketing at Drake & Morgan Group.

Final Take
Jen King, lead reporter for Luxury Daily, New York