

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Kering enlists 12 start-ups for sustainable fashion accelerator

April 17, 2017



Kering's accelerator for sustainable fashion manufacturing

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French luxury conglomerate Kering Group is dedicating itself to a sustainable future with its new accelerator program for 12 start-ups aimed at coming up with new ways to make the fashion industry more environmentally friendly.

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The project is being developed in collaboration with Plug and Play and Fashion for Good. This project selected 12 start-ups, each of which will have three months to finish developing their ideas to support sustainable models in the fashion business.

"Investing in initiatives that support a brand's corporate philosophies and mission is a great way to demonstrate their community support to causes that their consumers hopefully also embrace," said David Naumann, vice president of marketing at **BRP**, Boston. "A lot of luxury brand consumers are socially conscious and sustainability is a big issue globally.

"Brands that truly walk the talk' on these environmental issues will foster more brand loyalty among environmentally conscious consumers."

Mr. Naumann is not affiliated with **Kering**, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. Kering was reached for comment.

Sustainability

With the climate rising every year and issues of waste management in manufacturing, it is becoming increasingly apparent that sustainability is something we need to be thinking about not just on Earth Day.

Not only is it up to individuals to live their lives more sustainably, but it is also up to the biggest manufacturers and companies to change the way they do things to contribute to a cleaner Earth.

This is the idea driving the latest tech accelerator program being developed in part by Kering.

The Plug and Play Fashion for Good accelerator is tasking 12 start-ups, selected from among hundreds of

applicants, to go through a guided three-month program in an effort to develop ideas that will contribute to more sustainable manufacturing processes for luxury and apparel sectors.

Proposed ideas from the selected applicants range from using new materials that are cleaner and more easily disposed of to complete overhauls of the textile supply chain to reduce waste.

The twelve selected start-ups are Agralooop, Amadou, Dragon, Dropel, ICA Bremen, MySource, MycoTex, Pili-bio, RePack, Sundar, Tersus and Tipa.

Agralooop is attempting to make a more sustainable textile, while Amadou is doing the same but for leather and MycoTex is creating a mushroom-based textile. Dragon and Dropel are both focusing on water: the former is developing a water filtration system and the latter hydrophobic fabrics.

ICA Bremen is adding scannable tracers into the fibers of fabric and MySource is a business network connecting fashion professionals with sustainability guides. Sundar does the same but for fashion manufacturers and suppliers of raw materials.

Pili-bio wants to replace wasteful synthetic dyes with more easily acquired and biodegradable natural dyes and Tipa has already created a 100 percent biodegradable package. RePack is a packaging start-up aimed at reducing packaging's carbon footprint by 80 percent.

Finally, Tersus offers a unique water-free cleaning process for apparel manufacturers, which would normally use up a large amount of water and produce a lot of waste.

These start-ups will be supported by Kering along with Plug and Play and Fashion for Good as they develop their ideas and create plans to scale them up for full innovation.

Kering is planning a second accelerator later in the year.

Fashion for good

Numerous fashion brands have begun embracing sustainability as a noble goal.

Kering has already laid out a road map for its sustainable future, creating guidelines for how all of its brands will tackle sustainability in the future.

For more than a decade, Kering, which owns brands such as Gucci and Stella McCartney, has placed sustainability at the core of its business operations, demonstrating that ethical practices are a necessity and possible within luxury. Kering's new roadmap will lead the company into 2025 using pillars of Care, Collaborate and Create as a guide for the future of its business ([see story](#)).

Kering has also partnered with the Parsons School of Design for a course dedicated to sustainable fashion.

Kering and Parsons' new addition to the curriculum will measure the sustainability impact of designs made during the class ([see story](#)).

While Kering is cultivating new start-ups and technologies that it may employ itself, the object of the accelerator is more altruistic.

"It will be difficult for Kering to measure a return on investment for the Fashion for Good Innovation Accelerator program, however, that is probably not a concern as profitability is not the primary motivator of the program," BRP's Mr. Naumann said. "This is a good cause for the fashion industry, consumers and the globe."