

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Equal Pay Day incites movement that many believe is needed

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Tamara Mellon took a stand with a new Women's March shirt. Image credit: Tamara Mellon

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

As women's empowerment continues to strengthen at a global level, luxury fashion brands are being called out for underpaying the gender demographic that largely supports them.

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Women's fashion is a huge driver for the apparel and accessories industry, but yet many of these companies are not equally compensating the women within their own company. The tide is beginning to turn though, as brands who are committed to equal treatment hold others accountable.

"As female spending power continues to grow in first world economies, fashion brands are expected to have a proportionate representation of women at all levels, including the most senior," said Allyson Stewart-Allen, CEO of [International Marketing Partners Ltd.](#), London. "Those that don't will increasingly feel the pressure by way of easy mobilization of push-back thanks to online channels Facebook, Instagram, et al.

"So even if the lead designer is not female, the board composition will be increasingly scrutinized and answerable to its various publics: shoppers, investors, media, key opinion leaders amongst others," she said.

Equal compensation

Amongst a massive movement for women's rights in all aspects of society all over the world, the United Kingdom is making a dramatic step forward by demanding employers release information on their wage gaps.

The U.K. has discovered that there is a 78 percent gap between what companies pay men and women, which it believes is unacceptable. The country gave employers until April 4 to reveal their hourly gender pay statistics.

Fashion's place in this movement will not be unnoticed, with many brands having to account for their gaps in pay and others helping the fight for equality.

Burberry is one of those brands revealed to have a major discrepancy between its pay given to women and men. Despite having a staff predominantly made up of women, the company's wages have a gap of 26 percent in favor of men.



Burberry has been found to pay its women less. Image credit: Burberry

Media group Cond Nast, a major authority in the fashion world, is another company with unequal compensation, with a mean gap of 36.9 percent, reported The New York Times.

Tamara Mellon is in on the fight to diminish the gender gap with a campaign for Equal Pay Day on April 10. The women's fashion brand released a 20 percent discount to female consumers, accounting to reflect the wage gap stating that women will get the chance to "pay what [they] earn."

It is not just fashion brands that are involved in the conversation. Redfin proudly released its gender data and shared it with followers on social media for greater transparency.

Alice + Olivia has created a special collection specifically for the day, featuring the phrase "Equal Pay" printed on T-shirts. The brand is donating 10 percent from the net proceeds of the shirts to the Global Fund for Women.





Alice + Olivia is donating to the Global Fund for Women. Image credit: Alice + Olivia

Outdoor apparel brand Burton is offering a 20 percent discount, similar to Tamara Mellon, and is also providing 20 percent of its sales to the American Association of University Women.

#MeToo

Last year, German automaker Audi packed a powerful punch for its Super Bowl advertisement by bringing up the hot-button political topic, leaning on interactive tools such as Snapchat for greater impact.

Playing on the automotive sector and using childhood as a theme, Audi's spot "Daughters" put the focus on equality in the workplace during a tumultuous political time. The spot aired during the third quarter of Super Bowl LI, but was also paired with a Snapchat filter to further drive the conversation ([see more](#)).

As the conversation surrounding sexual harassment, abuse and the issues plaguing women across industries continues, two new platforms have sprung up to advocate for models, who are among the most visible yet least protected members of the luxury business.

The newly launched Humans of Fashion Foundation is a nonprofit group dedicated to addressing and preventing the issues of sexual harassment and abuse in the fashion industry, with a particular emphasis on the abuse suffered

by models. Similarly, luxury conglomerates Kering and LVMH are building on their existing co-signed charter to improve models' working conditions with the launch of a model wellness site ([see more](#)).

"It's about women being represented at senior levels in organizations around the world," Ms. Stewart-Allen said. "For most of modern (and ancient) history in most countries, businesses have been led by men, with women joining the workforce in large numbers a recent phenomenon, afforded by social attitudes, the availability of childcare, economic development/evolution amongst other factors.

"Progress has been made in a relatively short time but there is of course still a long way to go," she said.

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