

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

In the future, leather will be animal-free, says Bottega Veneta CEO

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Bottega Veneta's cruise 2018 collection. Image credit: Bottega Veneta

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

LISBON, Portugal Sustainability is so profoundly consequential in luxury manufacturing today that leather in the future will likely be completely synthesized, according to the CEO of Bottega Veneta.

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Despite the fact that the leather goods maker is more than 50 years old, Bottega is extremely forward thinking in not just its marketing processes but also its business practices. During the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference on April 19, the CEO explained in a conversation with International Vogue Editor Suzy Menkes that the brand begins with a digital-first mindset in creating content to reflect modern society, but also focuses on social justice and sustainability within its business for the same reason.

"Whatever we do needs to work online and in digital first, then we do the work to produce all the other elements," said Claus-Dietrich Lahrs, chief executive officer at **Bottega Veneta**. "Digital is always the first thing we look at.

"Most recently we started with a video film perspective," he said. "We took a high performance camera in order to take different scenes out of the video, which became the ad campaign."

Eco-friendly and digital-first

With such a multichannel society, it is important for brands to take an approach similar to Bottega Veneta's, even luxury marketers.

Everything within Bottega Veneta's world in digital eventually trickles down into its store presence. Making sure that content and branded stories are pristine on digital and then moving these pieces out to other channels can ensure substantial quality.



Mr. Lahrs speaks with Ms. Menkes. Image credit: Conde Nast.

Another important theme to stay modern for Bottega Veneta is sustainable business and ethical business.

Mr. Lahrs shocked attendees when he stated that he believed in the far future, leather will no longer come from actual animals, in a more humane form of fashion.

He also discussed the importance of creating an ethical and nurturing business environment.

The leather goods company allows about 80 women to work from home to ensure quality of life and flexibility.

If a brand's employees are happy and nurtured, this will shine through in its products and content.

While Bottega Veneta has not been extremely vocal about its sustainability and business practices, it is learning to find its voice to spotlight these efforts.

The manufacturer has always worked very locally and has had eco-friendly and cruelty-free values within its company, well before it became in vogue to care for the environment.



Mr. Lahrs discusses sustainability. Image credit: Cond Nast.

Consumers now greatly care about where their products come from, and so does Bottega Veneta. This brand knows where the skin for its leather is coming from and has even begun working with chrome-free leather.

Chrome-free leather is a new eco-friendly version of leather that provides alternatives to the traditional but yet extremely harmful tanning system that uses damaging chromium.

Sustainable insight

If the fashion industry continues to improve its environmental and social performance, approximately 160 billion euros, or \$174 billion at current exchange rates, would be added to the global economy by 2030, according to a report from Boston Consulting Group.

BCG's first edition of the "Pulse of the Fashion Industry" report is in collaboration with the Global Fashion Agenda, a nonprofit initiative seeking to transform the way fashion is produced and consumed. The report is a temperature

check of the fashion industry's environmental and social performances, two concepts that are becoming increasingly important for consumers as they shop ([see more](#)).

For decades, exotic furs were one of the highest marks of luxury, but in recent months some of fashion's biggest names have announced they will no longer use animal pelts in their designs.

Kering-owned Italian fashion house Gucci, one of fashion's most storied brands, made waves recently by announcing that it will cease selling furs, and several other big fashion names have dropped fur as well. Despite a broader industry shift toward more ethical and sustainable manufacturing practices, fur, as with any old habit, may just die hard ([see more](#)).

"The entire building where we operate and where we see our artisans, it's about respect for not only ecology but also humanity and resourcing," Mr. Lahrs said. "For instance, we have 80 women who work from home.

"We want to make sure they're living," he said. "Whatever we can do to keep sustainable, we will do it."

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