

MARKETING

Afrocentrism opens up diverse, colorful, inclusive language of luxury

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Maxhosa By Laduma was one of the brands showcased at Luxury Connect Africa. Image credit: Maxhosa By Laduma

By SARAH JONES

LISBON, Portugal The rise of the Afrocentric movement is poised to change the luxury business around the world.

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Africans and those who have ties to the continent represent a population of almost 2 billion who will be a significant force in the luxury market in the coming decades. In a keynote at the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference on April 19, the founder of Luxury Connect Africa explained that this movement happening in fashion, beauty, entertainment and lifestyle goes beyond those with ancestral ties to Africa.

"Afrocentric is a consciousness of the culture that goes with being a black person," said Uche Pzard, CEO of Luxe Corp. Group and founder and chief curator of [Luxury Connect Africa](#). "It is a movement of black consciousness in which there is an intentional and purposeful ownership of all that encompasses being a black person.

"It is multicultural, it is multilayered, it is inclusive, it is colored, it is colorful and it is dispersed around all different channels including fashion, lifestyle and beauty."

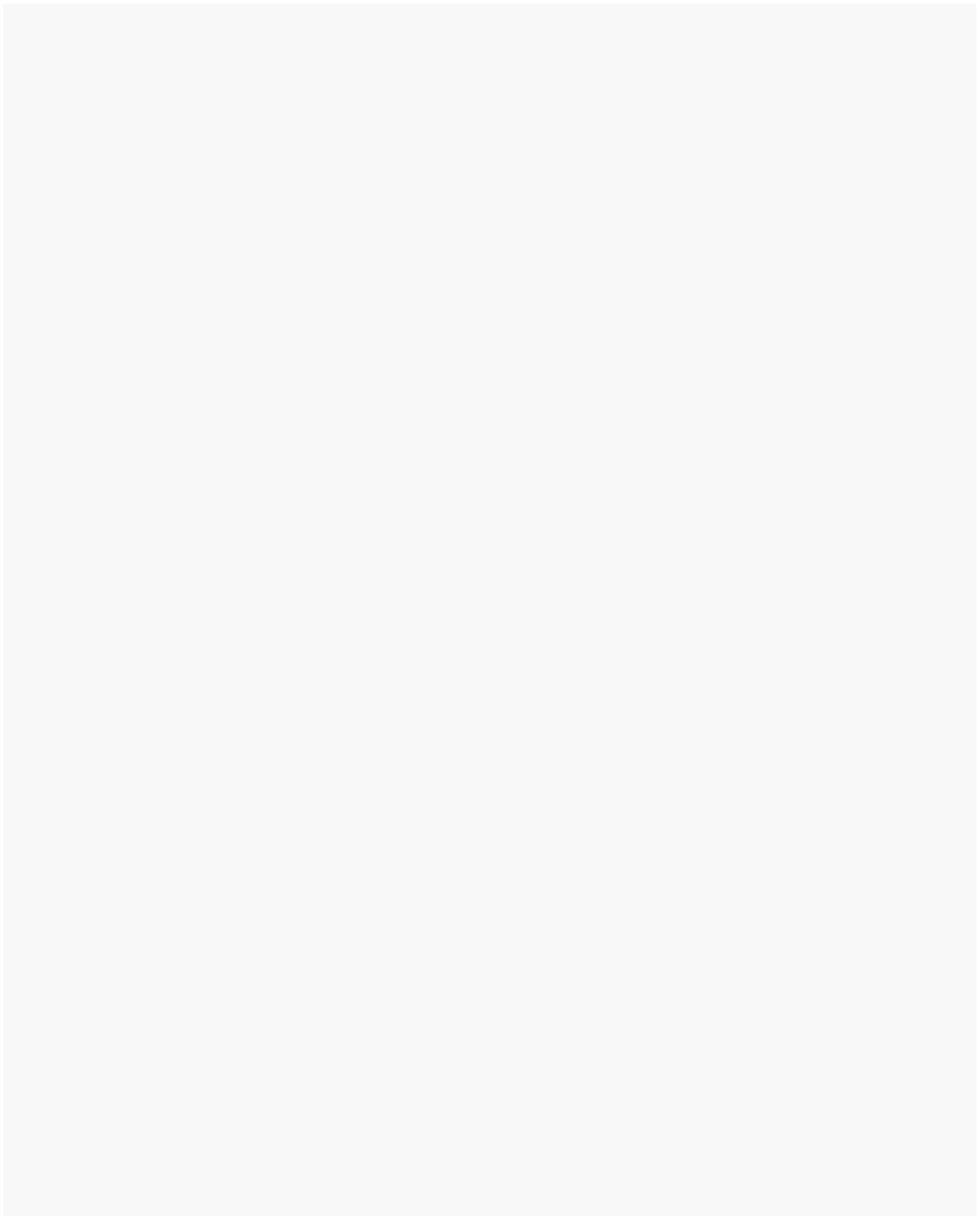
African effect

According to Ms. Pzard, there is a collective cultural consciousness among Africans and those of African descent, as they celebrate what it means to be black.

For those born outside of the continent, this movement is leading them to investigate and connect with their roots.

For instance, actress Tiffany Haddish chose a traditional gown from her father's home country Eritrea for the Academy Awards this year.

Also lending her support to African style, Naomi Campbell walked in Lagos' Arise Fashion Week earlier this month. During the event, the supermodel called on *Vogue* to launch an African edition to celebrate the continent's contribution to fashion.



CONGRATULATIONS ARISE AND LAGOS !! @tiffanyamberg @lejenke @romorganhairstudio @hilakarmand @davidbonnouvrier @akeemjr @missamadi @dnamodels #THANK YOU #NEWDAY @wolfnewstreet

A post shared by Naomi Campbell (@iamnaomicampbell) on Apr 3, 2018 at 12:23am PDT

Ms. Pzard also believes there is an opportunity and a need for a *Vogue Africa* that would speak to both those living in Africa and those who identify as African around the world.

Beyond garments produced in Africa, the impact of Afrocentrism in fashion can be seen in trends including the popularity of brands such as Off-White.

The celebration of African culture crosses borders.

French department store chain Galeries Lafayette underscored the dynamism of Africa's art and fashion scene in a store-wide initiative. Galeries Lafayette's "Africa Now!" touched on art, fashion, design, music and African creativity through in-store events, conferences, pop-up shops and exclusive fashion and homeware collections ([see story](#)).

Additionally, international travel to Africa is expected to reach 18 million travelers this year, marking a significant increase in tourism to the continent.

According to Euromonitor, digitalization and niche tourism are driving travel to Africa in greater numbers than usual this year, presenting an opportunity for travel companies to capitalize on the increased interest. Travel to Africa has grown by almost 7 percent over the last year, signaling a boost in popularity for Africa's many resorts and hotels ([see story](#)).



Niche tourism and luxury travel are fueling growth in African travel. Image credit: Four Seasons

Luxury is not a new concept in Africa, as the richest man ever is believed to be Mali's King Mansa Musa. Translated for inflation, his estimated net worth today would be around \$400 billion.

Instead, Ms. Pzard sees luxury returning to Africa. Eighty percent of Africa's luxury consumers are millennials, reflective of the continent's young population.

Brands looking to enter or expand in Africa need to keep in mind that it is not a homogenous market. Across Africa, there are more than 4,000 languages, with many different cultures.

Looking ahead

Another factor that will change the luxury business in the coming decades is the evolution of skin tones, driven by factors such as climate change and fertility rates.

India, China and Nigeria will have the world's largest populations in the next 30 years, and three-quarters of the global population in one generation will be dark skinned. Beauty makers and fashion labels will therefore adapt to these changes with product design.

Fenty Beauty's entry into the cosmetics arena has shed light on beauty power players' lack of merchandise diversity for complexion products.

Created by frequent luxury collaborator Rihanna, Fenty Beauty launched following months of anticipation and two years of research and development on Sept. 8. The line of color cosmetics, including a staggering 40 shades of foundation, was developed in partnership with LVMH-owned Kendo, the company behind Bite Beauty and Marc Jacobs Beauty ([see story](#)).

"The world is becoming darker," Ms. Pzard said. "In 30 years' time, the skin tones of every single human being on this planet will be different than what it is today.

"Luxury consumers will look different, beauty products will look different, even fashion will look different in its relationship to skin tones."