

MARKETING

Sustainability can no longer be ignored in business

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Prada is also looking to drive a conversation around sustainability. Image credit: Prada

By STAFF REPORTS

As more consumers become concerned with the health of the planet and additional scientific discoveries about environmental risks are made, sustainability in luxury and business as a whole is no longer optional.

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During two panel sessions during Positive Week produced by Positive Luxury moderated by *WWD* London bureau chief Samantha Conti, the panelists stressed the importance of meeting consumers' demands in luxury, which means sustainability.

"I'm thrilled to be here celebrating the seventh Positive Week event," said Diana Verde-Nieto CEO and cofounder of Positive Luxury at the event. "2018 has been a transformational year for the luxury industry. It has decided to be a lot more vocal and transparent and these really are historic times that we are standing in today."

Positive luxury

Arizona Muse, supermodel and sustainability leader, stated during the session that there is a shift in tone online and in social media, where consumers are looking for brands and influencers who are more in line with taking care of the environment.

"Soon we'll start to see companies looking to other companies and asking the question Well we're doing it, so why aren't those guys?" Ms. Muse said. "It's an uncomfortable thing for directors to think about, but right now we're seeing a massive change in voice via the Internet and social media and there's a lot more transparency out there and millennials will soon seek influence from brands and start to pick them apart.

"There's a very fine time period that companies have to get their act together and vocalize what they're doing, before the consumer conversation gets even louder," she said.



Sustainability is also an important part of travel. Image credit: Booking.com.

Partner at Generation Investment Management Mark Ferguson explained that integrating sustainability into a business framework is so important today. This will eventually lead to investment return down the road.

"To make a great investment long-term, you really have to be incorporating sustainability into the framework we're exiting the phase of greenwashing and we are now entering the phase of connecting with the consumers and employees, and the investments will follow later," Mr. Ferguson said.

Others such as Desire Bollier, chief and global chief merchant of Value Retail, jewelry designer Stephen Webster, Janic Lao of corporate sustainability at Hong Kong, chief sustainability officer of Herms Pierre-Alexandre Bapst and CEO of Miller Harris Sarah Sotheram also spoke at the panels, discussing how their businesses focus on sustainability.

In a world where facts and figures are increasingly called into question, luxury brands will need to lead with emotion and values rather than rationality to succeed.

According to a report from Positive Luxury, while storytelling and truth were the buzzwords of 2016 and 2017, respectively, 2018 will be dominated by the concept of "influence through emotion." As millennials' spending power grows, their preference for companies and brands that strive for environmental and social good is moving the needle for luxury brands, making CSR a boon for business ([see story](#)).

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