

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

For luxury brands, holistic sustainability means more than “going green”

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Time for sustainability. Image credit: Baume

By [Meaghan Corzine](#)

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From Burberry’s recent announcement to stop burning unsold goods, to major watch and jewelry companies turning to lab-grown diamonds, time and time again we hear companies talk about sustainability in terms of “going green.”

While being more environmentally aware and proactively protecting our planet is by all means a commendable step in the right direction, real 360-degree sustainability means more than doing what is good for the physical planet. It is also about human connection and the values behind luxury brands.

Working with local communities, supporting jobs and philanthropy all play a vital role if luxury brands want to adapt a truly thorough strategy toward approaching a better world for the future.

The "S" word

The word “sustainability” is a hot-button search term that is seen everywhere, but understood by very few. [Positive Luxury](#) cofounder/CEO Diana Verde Nieto would love to see that change.

“In the near future, I think we will get to the tipping point where the term ‘sustainability’ will be completely embedded,” Ms. Nieto told Luxury Society. “I think this will become normal and we will stop talking about this awful S word.

“For Positive Luxury, how we define sustainability is actually not our definition, but we’ve borrowed it from Gro Harlem Brundtland, the prime minister of Norway back in the ‘80s,” she said. “And she coined the term ‘sustainable development.’”

Sustainable development: It means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

“It’s about doing business today while thinking about what will happen in the future,” Ms. Nieto said.

“It’s not always about the absence of things, sometimes it’s about the introduction of new things, not always cutting down or minimizing, but the innovation of looking for new materials or different ways of doing the same thing that

actually minimizes negative impact,” she said.

Brands who are doing it right

Premium vodka label Belvedere is a prime example of a distillery working with its local community.

For the Single Estate Series, the brand works with just two local rye farms – the lakeside Bartezek and forested Smogóry – and also fosters important relationships with local communities through schemes such as partnering with Lodz University scientists on the Raw Spirit Program.

The Raw Spirit Program is a research project that focuses on reducing the negative impact on the environment.

Belvedere is one of the dozens of brands who has been awarded with the “**Butterfly Mark**” by Positive Luxury.

With a focus on sustainable luxury brands, Positive Luxury celebrates luxury brands across various markets that are making a real impact for sustainable practices.

In the world of Swiss watchmakers, world-renowned luxury brand TAG Heuer is truly an exemplary model of what it means to take a committed approach for good.

TAG Heuer takes an ethical approach when producing its products and is a member of the Responsible Jewellery Council, an organization that not only focuses on the source of materials but also on the promotion of ethics, human and social rights.

Baume, a sustainable watch brand aimed at millennials, was also unsurprisingly awarded with several of Positive Luxury’s stamps of approvals.

While the first thing that comes to mind for those who know Baume is often its use of recycled materials, the company also has committed itself entirely to fair practices. These include, but are not limited to, equal employment, certified chemical-free materials, conflict-free gems and waste reduction.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/YDAwrna1Q0U>

Positive Week 2018: Ronan Keating on "What Does Luxury Mean Today?"

Consumer awareness

While it may seem like a relatively predictable move for well-known brands to adapt more sustainable practices, actions speak louder than words.

Beyoncé, a well-known advocate for girls and women’s rights and supporter of more than 30 charities, was recently accused of using sweatshops to help run her fashion line.

The singer’s activewear line, Ivy Park, is reportedly made in factories in Sri Lanka where workers are paid as little as \$6 per day.

To put it into perspective, a pair of Ivy Park’s leggings go for about \$80.

The company did not respond to requests for details about its code of conduct and did not address the specific allegations made in the report, according to [CNN Money](#).

While there is little doubt that Beyoncé and the team behind her clothing brand intentionally endorsed poor working conditions for young workers in impoverished areas, with corrupt policies at play for many production lines, it is more important than ever that CEOs and key players for luxury brands truly immerse themselves in their business practices to align their brand DNA with core values.

Understanding brand values

“If you listen carefully to the way CEOs speak, you understand purpose,” Positive Luxury’s Ms. Nieto said.

“So what is the purpose of the business or the brand, how do they behave? Supply chain is only a reaction of that,” she said.

“Big-picture perspective is how the company behaves and also what matters the most. I think purpose-driven luxury companies have an agenda of doing good, and I’m not talking about giving money to charity. I’m talking about behaving better as a citizen.”

This means reading between the lines of luxury companies and paying close attention to their actions, even the ones that do not necessarily make headlines.

“For example, Dior is investing in reconstructing Versailles, and that is very powerful because as a French brand this is great because you buy a Dior piece but you know where some of the money is going, it’s actually improving the life of people, not just the immediate business like suppliers and employees,” Ms. Nieto said.

“There are a lot of brands that are actually doing stuff that’s for the community,” she said.

WHILE INCREASED toward sustainability is a chain-reaction of several factors, one thing is for sure: it is good for the world and it is good for business.

“Most luxury brands know that sustainability is a good business, meaning that it impacts the bottom-line,” Ms. Nieto said.

“If you do the right thing consumers will gravitate toward you and therefore you’ll have an impact on the bottom-line and at the same time you’re more attractive to investors,” she said.

“It’s about open collaboration and open source and how we can innovate so we can have a business in the next 100 years instead of cutting elements out because it’s trendy. We need a systematic approach rather an impulsive approach to trends.”

Celebrating its annual “Positive Week,” [Positive Luxury](#) on Oct. 8-12 honored global brands and individuals that care about the planet.



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