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LUXURY AND SUSTAINABILITY – THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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1. INTRODUCTION

Until recently, luxury and sustainability seemed to be two concepts that were not compatible. Luxury, and luxury goods in general, are characterized by the high quality of the product and the concept of being unique. Luxury brands did not believe that sustainability could become part of those attributes, and therefore did not pay enough attention at it. But luxury brands soon understood the importance of the environmental impact and, above all, they noticed how the attention of the consumers was shifting towards brands with more sustainable policies. So, they rethought the whole concept of luxury and sustainability, and tried to create a luxury idea that could fit in this new concept. Today, it is not difficult to think of sustainability as something that increases the perceived value of a luxury product.

The concept of luxury evolves mostly around the high quality of the product, which should be expensive and provide the consumer of some beneficial effects in social terms. Today costumers have changed their perspective, desiring to purchase a product that has some added worth: this is the case of sustainability. The concept of sustainability is the result of the combination of the environmental impact with the economic impact. In the past years, luxury brands have sought to incorporate this into their brand identity, paying more and more attention to the environmental impact of the industry. The fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries and, as consumers started noticing it, their attitude change. And so did the industry's.

Fashion and luxury brands started committing to the transformation of their business models and policies to meet the new needs. At first it was certainly for strategic reasons, but as time passed it became a necessity condition, not only to be able to compete in the market, but to be part of it. They had to rethink of the way in which they operated, from the financial and management area, to the marketing area. This has for sure been the one that, more than the others, had to be torn upside down. The consumer's perception of the brand is, by far, the most relevant when it comes to sales. In addition, brands are doing most of their marketing via social media. And Instagram is one of the most widely used platforms, especially by the youngest customer segment, who also is the one showing the most concern towards sustainability. For this reason, it has become crucial for brands, to communicate their values to consumers in the most straight and clear way possible. Not all luxury brands are succeeding, but many have figured out the right strategies to do it. They are experimenting new techniques every day, mainly thanks to the immediate feedback from their followers.

We will see how six different luxury brands have decided to work on social media marketing, especially in relation to their goals. We will analyze the different policies of the brands, taking into consideration both more sustainable brands and less sustainable ones, making differences between

those whose environmental efforts have been recognized and those who are still working on being recognized for it.

We will soon notice how most brands have oriented themselves in the same direction, following the same path, both in the decision-making process and marketing.

2. LUXURY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Luxury is not easy to define. The concept of luxury, and fashion luxury in particular, have changed over the past decades. It is important to not misunderstand luxury with richness, referring to expensive items only; as this is an idea of luxury that no longer applies, today the meaning of luxury as an exclusive richness symbol has changed. Today the concept of luxury is broader, it involves a unique exclusiveness, as it is no longer only addressed to few people, but rather because it is special. The concept of luxury lays its roots in the research of new experience opportunities, taking place in order to find modern solutions. Luxury can be craftsmanship, purity and class, luxury, as such, means exclusiveness, it has to be sophisticated, not vulgar. Luxury is an opportunity of discovery and research, and sustainability is already built in what is behind luxury. Sustainability is an opportunity, especially for the fashion and luxury industry, as it stimulates both innovation and creativity. The innovation and the research to find more sustainable ways of doing things are themselves luxury opportunities for the fashion industry; using the highest quality of raw materials to make beautiful, long-lasting products, made by skilled craftspeople, combines luxury and sustainability. Moreover, sustainability has become a necessity today, leaving the brands no other option but to be engaged in corporate social responsibility (CSR)¹. First of all, the fashion industry is one of the most polluting industry worldwide. Every industry is facing the global challenges of diminishing resources, the loss of biodiversity and climate change, that are affecting them. Sustainability gives the chance of new business opportunities, helping the reduction of costs in the short term. It is therefore crucial to fully understand the businesses' impact on the environment. Moreover, it is also believed that luxury can contribute to creating a more sustainable world, as luxury sets the trends in fashion, and therefore has the responsibility, as the fashion leader, to champion sustainability.

Today's world is living in an interesting time of volatility and constant change, the impacts of climate change are continuously increasing, and the business have to be adaptable to changes as well. Everyone can make a difference, and the fashion and luxury industry in particular has the responsibility to act. Sustainable design and innovation offer endless possibilities to create real value, and in order to do so the education is critical, especially if looking at the future generation to come. Designers have always taken responsibility for what concerned the aesthetic, the ergonomic, the fit and also the viability of a collection, but as they started to explore a bit further, they soon realized that actually the responsibility of their decisions laid at a far deeper level. As a matter of fact, as soon as they have found out how implicated they were in the toxic mix of both human and ecological destruction, they acknowledged what the implications of their work were and how they could redefine "good designs".

How come has it taken designers and the fashion industry so long to really start to understand the implications of their work? It might be because whilst they were creating really amazing skills in their work – creating patterns, making pieces – they were not necessarily understanding sustainability and the natural cycles. They did not look at the social aspects of their work, which has now changed and become part of the role of a designer or any creative, guiding the transformation in both the meaning of fashion design and its significance.

The Centre for Sustainable Fashion has analyzed the fashion business, education and research to establish a framework that proposes ways for fashion designers, communicators and strategists to navigate the complex landscape of fashion and sustainability. The result is a framework that identifies four ways to understand and gain perspective on fashion and sustainability: social, economic, ecological and cultural.

The social analysis develops from the idea of human equality, according to which all humans are born equal, with inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms. Responding to the matter of people not being all treated as equals, this analysis begins to consider the responses to the reality that human interactions currently create an unjustifiable loss of dignity, are responsible for the increase of social inequality affecting society in negative ways. Considerations relating to this include global inequalities, community and individual relationships, and governance and legislation. Luxury fashion companies have created international supply chains employing people from different parts of the world to take roles in their design, production and retail activities, thus embodying globalization. Human capital and skills are fundamental to this process, yet the remuneration and corporate recognition for worker contributions are often very unequal depending on the country of origin, perpetuating staggering social inequality, cases of negligence, violence and oppression. Even if lower quality and higher volume fashion companies more frequently associated with these problematics, at fashion's luxury level, these issues are somewhat present. Luxury fashion needs to embrace change and honor equality for all people involved in its global operations.

The economic theory considers the whole globe and its resources as fair game for humanity to pursue its interest since all humans are born equal and endowed with inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms. To this end, the international accounting system only refers to the costs incurred by individuals and firms in the pursuit of business prosperity while economic actors do not take into account all environmental and social costs resulting in an unsustainable growth which is exacerbating social inequality as well as global fragile ecosystems. There is a need to redefine what society should strive by modifying the concept of prosperity beyond current business model practices and considering true social value thus luxury must consider a new economic perspective. Part of this efforts should include reconsidering the cost and value models of businesses and governments,

placing human capital at the center of value chains and a sustainable perspective of prosperity. The international economic system relies on businesses growing even if at a low rate, with financial profit growth at 2-3% per year. If businesses do not stand to this standard of growth, they are considered to be a failure. Fashion business operates in this ecosystem of growth-based performance—including all types companies from startups to well established businesses. While they may fail in terms of environmental boundaries and human equality, all companies that grow their profits yearly are considered successful and thus accepted. Luxury fashion should aim at sustainable prosperity and take into consideration the whole range of impacts of its operation in environmental social as well as financial terms.

To start our ecological analysis, we start by considering that era is called Anthropocene because of the palpable impact of human being on the planet which will be permanent and verifiable also in the distant future, in particular human are responsible for changes to global flora and fauna and conditions for life. In this perspective, there are ways to bring back nature to its honored position also through luxury fashion practices. To this end, there must be a deep analysis of our relationship with nature as well as our role as part of nature. Luxury fashion can learn from nature and its ecosystems and honor them in its practices and activities.

Our cultural analysis considers habits and well-established practices that characterize many parts of the world and increasingly more as global wealth increases. Specifically, there is the widespread behavior of failing to treat people as equals as wells as undervaluing nature and underestimating its limits. Cultural trends are based on different two types of markets—those of science, technology and reason, those of art, human capital and intuition. Luxury fashion's contribution to culture is measured according to these markets. In this analysis myths and storytelling are considered as opposed to information rich dialogues.

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The cultural analysis considers habits and well-established practices that characterize many parts of the world and increasingly more people as global wealth increases. Specifically, there is the widespread behavior to treat people as they were not all equals as well as undervaluing nature and underestimating its limits. Cultural trends are based on different two types of trends—those of science, technology and reason, those of art, human capital and intuition. Luxury fashion's contribution to culture is measured according to these trends. Cultural analysis of the luxury fashion industry must distinguish myths and storytelling from information rich dialogues, and focus on changing habits, acceptable behaviors and its role in shaping culture. Over the last decades, this industry's cultural considerations have changed toward an understanding of how fashion is shaped by and shapes culture which implies an augmented role of luxury fashion in driving this nexus. In particular, luxury fashion creates aspirations which are then embodied by popular culture through advertising emulation and social media content. Considering at the same time that luxury itself is a

term that can be interpreted only through an historical understanding and a cultural analysis which now accounts for diverse collections of garments designed for and communicated to greater audiences and generating growing revenues. These increasing public, which is proper also of luxury fashion, gives luxury industries a leadership role in shaping cultures toward sustainability by questioning its definition, its aesthetics and the values it stands for.

Fashion and sustainability are intrinsically related, and their relationship is continually evolving. Given the general instability and high degree of societal change that characterizes the last two decades, specifically at the environmental, societal and political level, fashion impact on cultural changes will be especially relevant. Even if fashion is not the sole responsible for social injustice, human inequality and crossing planetary environmental boundaries, it is one of the biggest and most influential industries which confers to it a critical role in safeguarding environmental and social equilibria. There are many issues with sustainability linked to industrial activities and personal behaviors across fashion's value chain with a broad impact on the problems discussed above which quite frequently are connected to each other through various means.

The most threatening current problem is climate change which is not easy to grasp during day to day routine activities. The level of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere exceeds the point where it is manageable to restore pre-industrial level of pollution. Despite this may not seem a devastating outcome, such changes in atmosphere composition cause one person every second to be displaced because of extreme weather events which are accentuated by climate change. Also as sea levels will continue to rise, coastal cities as well as entire islands will disappear underwater while vast regions will experience drought and ecosystem destruction which threaten food supply. What may well be the most serious impact of climate change will be how it affects world's money supply which is not only central to people everyday lives but also to industrial production and particularly clothing manufacturing. In this context, the fashion industry is projected to increase by more than 60% over the next twelve years, constituting one of the largest and fastest growing industry among consumer goods industry. In fact, garment care constitutes the third largest impact after the production of raw material and manufacturing processes. To tackle this issue, in 2016 the Paris Climate Agreement was ratified by 168 countries which have officially joined the mission to limit the increase of global temperatures. The agreement states that member states pledged to make their greatest effort to stop climate change at two degrees above pre-industrial levels with a further goal of one and a half degrees ceiling.

Another issue is water scarcity. This problem affects fundamental needs of the human body as well as the human right to access clean water as written in the UN Declaration of Human Rights from 1949. Even if most take it for granted, water may become a scarce resource in coming years. 1.1

billion people already do not have access to potable water while 2.7 billion do not have stable access to water throughout the year with at least one month of scarce access. Maintaining these rhythms, by 2025 two thirds of the world's population will have trouble to find potable water. In this aspect, fashion is a very water-consuming industry. It takes 2700 liters of fresh water to make t-shirt, including all the steps from growing cotton, industrial process and washes. In water equivalent, one t-shirt is worth three years of one person's drinking needs. Also, the water intensive processes connected to clothes production often take place in water scarce regions where there is cheaper labor. A striking example is Uzbekistan where unsustainable cotton growing farms had devastating social and environmental impacts among which the shrinking of the Aral Sea. This body of fresh water was once the world's fourth largest lake but from the 1960s to the 2000s it has shrunk by almost 90% mostly because of farm irrigation. Far from being the only example, the Aral Sea has shared its fate with many other lakes while almost 50% of the world's wetlands have disappeared.

Water supply is not only affected by increasing use during irrigation processes but also contaminated by dispersion of hazardous chemicals and other water pollutants. These constitute a third fundamental issues of environmental degradation. Also in this field, the fashion industry has a central role as a polluting industry since it's one of the largest users of chemicals in every step of its supply chain. Cotton alone is one of the most polluting crop accounting for 25% of the world's insecticide use but also one tenth of global pesticides. The chemicals involved in the cultivation of cotton then wash away into water sources with dangerous impacts on the environment and on human health. The environmental impact of the fashion industry causes 20% of total water pollution with the Citarum river in Indonesia, one of the world's largest textile and clothing producers, is considered to be the world's most polluted river due to the hundreds of factories lined up on its shores. In some stretches, the water shouldn't be drunk by animal let alone people but Citarum water is used to irrigate and provides water for hundreds of thousands. Factory mills are strategically located near water sources such as rivers and canals where they disperse chemicals into the water sources. Fashion contributes also to air pollution throughout its value chain from farming to manufacturing and shipping. Synthetic fibers, which have not yet been mentioned, have a central role in the use of nitrous oxide which is hundreds of times more environmentally damaging than carbon dioxide. Also, after production synthetic pieces of clothing contribute to pollution by releasing microfibers during their washing cycles. As recent studies report, every purchased piece of polyester clothing releases 9 000 microfibers end up in waterways and from there enter the food chain.

The fourth environmental issue is concerned with land use and biodiversity which can be considered the essential element to the planet's health and it is measured by the number of different species on earth within all ecosystems. While climate change is putting at risk almost 25% of the world's species

by 2050, fashion industry does its part through aggressive land use which induces habitat loss and thus species extinction. Cotton, together with all other types of agricultural activity, has led to deforestation to clear out land for cultivation including precious and diverse tropical forests. While the world is using natural resource in an unsustainable way, fashion is predicted to increase land use in the next ten years. In addition to loss of biodiversity, devoting land to agricultural activities and forestry as lead to increasing desertification which describes the process by which fertile land slowly loses its organic capabilities and becomes unfertile and deserted. Production of wool and other materials is the cause of overgrazing and overstocking which affects many countries. For example, Cashmere wool retains its qualities only when Cashmere goats graze in specific geographic area and now its production is suffering from the excessive use of its limited amount of natural grassland. In fact, in Mongolia 90% of the vast prairie is risking desertification because of the increase of Cashmere goat herds from the 90s. Desertification means loss of fertile soil which implies that a number of species will be threatened by the change in the environment thus inducing biodiversity loss.

The fifth issue is resource scarcity. Many industries rely on finite resources which are slowly being depleted with fashion taking an important role. Over 50% of all clothes are made with polyester which is a by-product of oil which is a scarce and polluting resource. Even if the amount of oil used for synthetic fibers is not comparable to what is used in power generation, the fashion industry is extremely energy intensive. Next to oil, there are plenty of other resources used in fashion that are more and more scarce and whose extraction generates great social injustice, such as precious stones and metal as well as exotic animal's skin. But also, human capital is diminishing, human resources and skills are disappearing such as hand weaving, spinning, embroidery and printing which are losing their place to cheaper automatized manufacturing options. This process is called the industrialization of fashion which picked up in the 1970s turning around the traditional manufacturing techniques. It is critical that once these traditional skills are lost they are very unlikely to be regained in a short time and even if they can be considered slow compared to the current speed of the industry, it still represents a loss in cultural diversity and in the scope of knowledge of human beings.

The last issue is consumption and waste which characterizes the western world where people consume four times more than they did in the 90s with clothing production doubling in size from 2000 to 2014. High end brands went from traditionally producing two main collections a year to producing five or six, whilst now some high street and online brands introduce new products every week.

In luxury, one of the specificities is the use of natural materials mostly, meaning materials that are made from nature, another obvious specificity to is high quality – the high quality that is inherent to luxury. What ensures the quality of these materials is the health of the natural resources that produce them. Take for example cashmere. Healthy goats have a fine undercoat, and thus produce a fine

cashmere. In order to understand the challenge of sourcing materials, we have to understand that even though most of the products in luxury are made in Italy, the materials they are made of have come from around the world. Leathers usually come from Europe, silk from China, cashmere from Mongolia, wool from New Zealand. So, as a result, the supply chains are global and thus quite complex.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE BRANDS

3.1 Social media marketing for luxury brands

Social media plays a key role when it comes to the success of a luxury brand today. As a matter of fact, in order to survive the technological innovation in communications and marketing, luxury brands have turned toward the new form of communication via social media. Social media is a two-way communication platform, which allows both the direct interaction from brand to consumers and vice versa, and the information and opinion sharing between users.

At first luxury brands have been very skeptical about social media, as they did not believe that this technology could benefit the brand. This issue is also due to the resistance of the luxury market to websites and e-commerce, which was not believed could attract more customers. As a matter of fact, luxury brands still prefer to sell their products in a more traditional way, as the pursue itself is perceived as part of their uniqueness and exclusivity, and therefore takes place in a more controlled distribution environment.

Many studies have focused on use of social media for luxury brands, revealing a significant positive effect. The majority of the positive responses of social media marketing are in regard to brand equity and consumer responses, among which we find brand loyalty, preference and willingness to pay a premium price. The future of luxury brands is predicted to be very dependent to the way they will communicate and market the products to the future tech-savvy generation of buyers. The majority of luxury have each their own specific social media strategy, including the on-line relationships they have strengthened with influencers and niche blogger, which advocate the brand addressing it to the right customer base. Based on this, we can believe that the slow consumer behavior, as well as sustainable consumer habits, will be affected by the consumer perception of sustainable marketing strategies' importance. As shown by the article "studies conducted" sustainable marketing does not directly affect consumer orientation towards slow fashion, but it does affect the change in sustainable consumer habits, having an indirect impact on the consumption of luxury products. For this reason, it is important for luxury brands to strengthen their sustainable marketing activities, as it does have an impact on their consumer growth. Even though the study highlights the different perception of sustainability by customers of Generation Y and Z, it is overall recommended for luxury brands to strengthen sustainable marketing, with particular focus on Generation Y. It is also important to adopt differentiated sustainable marketing strategies based on the characteristics of the target generations. The following analysis refers to six luxury brands, divided into two categories: on one hand we will find brands with more relevant sustainability policies, which will be referred to as "sustainable

brands”, while the second category consists of brands that still take into account the sustainability issue, but are not making it one of their core competences associated to the brand, this second type of will be referred to as “less-sustainable brands”. The “sustainable brands” are Stella McCartney, Moncler and Burberry. Stella McCartney is mostly known for the implementation of innovative materials; Moncler and Burberry have been defined by the DJSI as the most sustainable brands, Moncler in 2019 and Burberry for six years straight until 2018. The “less-sustainable” brands are Prada, Gucci and Hermes. These brands are also very active with respect to the issue of sustainability and impact, but their efforts seem to be less noticed by the public eye. The analysis has been conducted on the basis of the on-line customer response to the campaigns of the brands, in particular on Instagram, which is the most used social network by the target costumer. The research was aimed at collecting the immediate response of the follower base of the luxury brands, in order to see their response.

3.2 Social media marketing of “Sustainable brands”

3.2.1 – STELLA MCCARNTEY

First of all, before starting this analysis, we have to distinguish the kind of strategy that the three brands decided to implement. Stella McCartney’s marketing strategy is more direct when it comes to communicate the level of involvement in the sustainability sector. They offer a wide variety of products, from organic cotton to vegetarian (or even vegan) leather. The commitment of Stella McCartney herself to be a luxury sustainable fashion brand has become the core principle of her company. This has given her the power to create a very influential platform to advocate for sustainability, especially in the fashion industry, which is now being used to spread her vision on how the fashion industry work can change and adapt to the new necessities of our society. It is crucial to insist on how the concept of fashion sustainability, being a relatively new issue, has not been broadly understood yet, and it is even more important to highlight how the communication and campaigns implemented have helped in both the setting this new trend and the right delivery of the knowledge to consumers as well as designers. Stella McCartney has set the challenge of pushing boundaries to make luxurious products both beautiful and sustainable, in a way that both fits the world we live in today and the world in which we will live in the future. The decision-making process is committed at defining what the future of fashion is going to look like, and it is doing so by pioneering new alternative materials, cutting edge technologies while protecting the environment and measuring their impact.

For what concerns the attention paid to the impact of the materials, Stella McCartney provides complete explanations about their materials on their website. The knitwear collections are made using re-engineered cashmere, offering the same distinguishing cashmere quality, such as softness. But it does considerably reduce the environmental impact resulting from animal rearing by 92% (as calculated using the EP&L). Their decision is also due to the environmental impact of virgin cashmere, which is 100 times that of wool. The recycled cashmere used is Re.Verso™, made from the Italian post-made cashmere waste. Re.Verso™ is, for now, the only platform offering a re-engineering service for cashmere materials. Whereas one sheep provides enough fiber to make five wool sweaters, it takes four goats to make a single cashmere one, which is the reason why cashmere is considered a luxury material. In order to keep up with the market demands, farmer have increased the number of goats in their heads, leading to negative environmental impacts.

In order to protect forests and biodiversity, Stella McCartney is committed to making sure that the viscose, also known as rayon, they implement comes from a protected and enriched place. Forests play an important role in slowing down the effects of climate change, as they absorb CO₂. Deforestation, however, is one of the key drivers of climate change, causing a habitat loss for millions of species. These are some of the reasons behind Stella McCartney's commitment to balance their production with respect to the environmental impact of deforestation, and the reason why their viscose supply chain is fully traceable and transparent.

Stella McCartney's innovative materials' implementation includes a very strict Fur-Free policy. They promote an alternative, more ethical and cruelty-free, philosophy aimed at moving away from the old school of fur. They have been committed to this since the very beginning in 2001, and it has represented a major challenge as they have tried to create a product that combined the quality, and that therefore felt and looked like real fur, without the cruelty factor standing behind it. Proving that it is possible to obtain a product having the same look but a better background.

As for fur, Stella McCartney has decided to not use leather from the launch in 2001 and proven that it is possible to do so. The message they are sending is very clear: it is possible to obtain as beautiful and luxurious products that are also cruelty-free and sustainable. The use of recycled polyester instead of leather, for example, creates an environmental impact 24 times smaller.

Moreover, they use organic cotton. Organic cotton farms have developed in order to work with nature and not against it. Organic cotton production pays a lot of attention to the overuse of chemicals and the pesticides, improving soil health and increasing the conservation of water. Even though they do not use organic cotton only, 61% of the cotton used is certified organic, and it is expected to grow. It is always important to stress the significant impact of conventional cotton, accountable for both biodiversity loss and damages to farmers' health.

Stella McCartney's goal for 2020 was to stop using virgin nylon, switching completely to the use of ECONYLON® regenerated nylon. ECONYLON® is made from waste fabrics and fishing nets from oceans, which, through a process of recycle are regenerated into a nylon that maintains the same quality as virgin nylon. Since 2012, Stella McCartney's handbags have been made using recycled water bottles and polyester. Their goal is to be using recycled polyester only by 2025, longer than nylon only for a matter of research, that is not yet available.

Stella McCartney implements wool as it is aware of how more sustainable and beneficial it is, being one of the most naturally technical materials available. It does not require frequent washing, water-repellent, fire resistant and even long lasting. But of course the brand has not stopped here, they are now exploring the possibility of creating a vegan wool, that is predicted to be the future of wool.

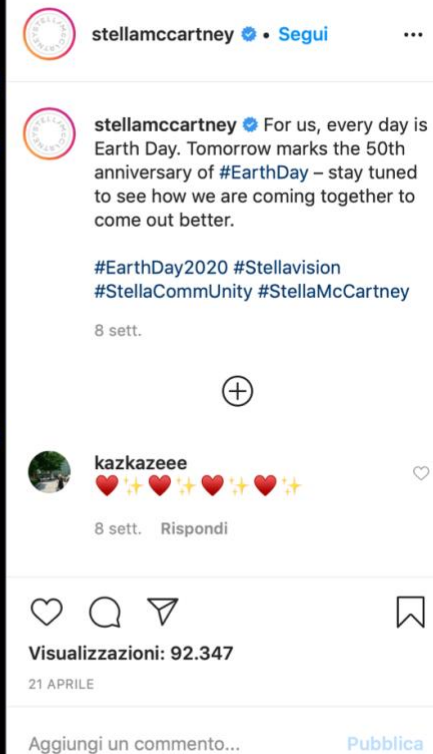
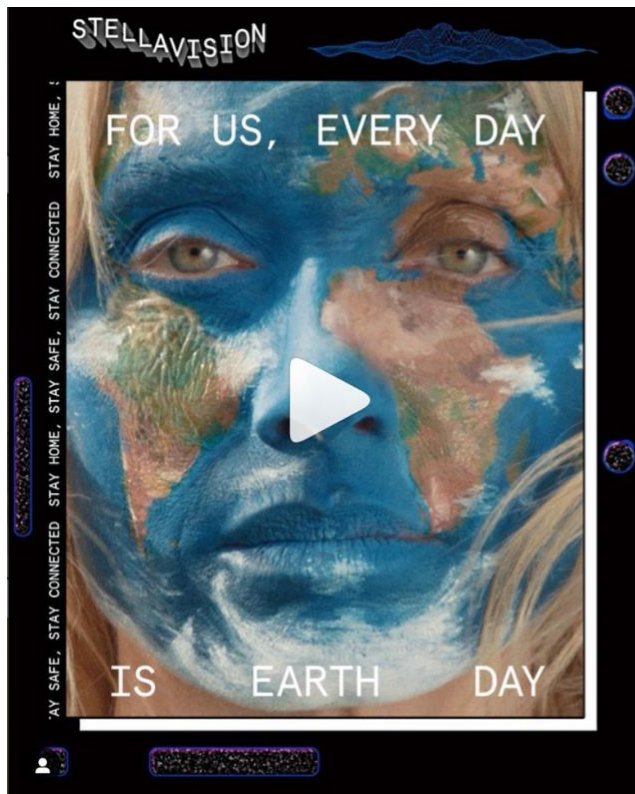
Stella McCartney is also exploring the possibility of developing a silk which will be created by a biotechnology company, Bolt Threads, where they have been studying the relationship between spider DNA and the fibers of the silk they make.

It is immediately clear that Stella McCartney's strategy is to communicate its message directly, highlighting the issues they are referring to and briefly explaining how they are solving the problem, which solution they found and how it is going to benefit the consumer. The benefit does not uniquely come from the purchase of a sustainable product, the customer even feels empowered from their brand loyalty and their purchase result as in taking part in the environmental change.

The consumers' response to the campaign are almost all positive, users tend to be very excited with the brand's innovative techniques and they show their appreciation for the design and material, as well as for the message they are sending.

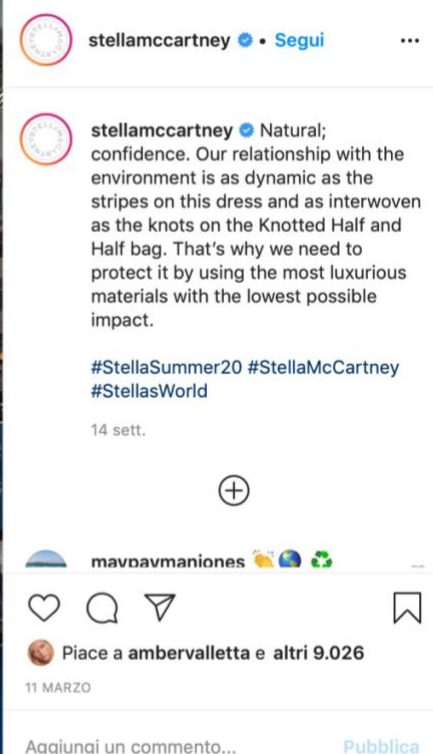
The few negative comments we find – we are usually talking about 3 to 5 comments per post – are related to the issue of pricing. A small, but still significant, number of users agrees with Stella McCartney's policies, but has some concerns with respect to the prices that seem to be too high for some of them.

The overall feedback is very positive, making the brand the most active in the industry of luxury and sustainability, with most following (6.3million followers). The brand social media strategy is to create a constructive dialogue with the follower base, introducing new ways of communications to make sure their message will be completely understood and shared.



Stella McCartney, Instagram

April 21st 2020, for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day

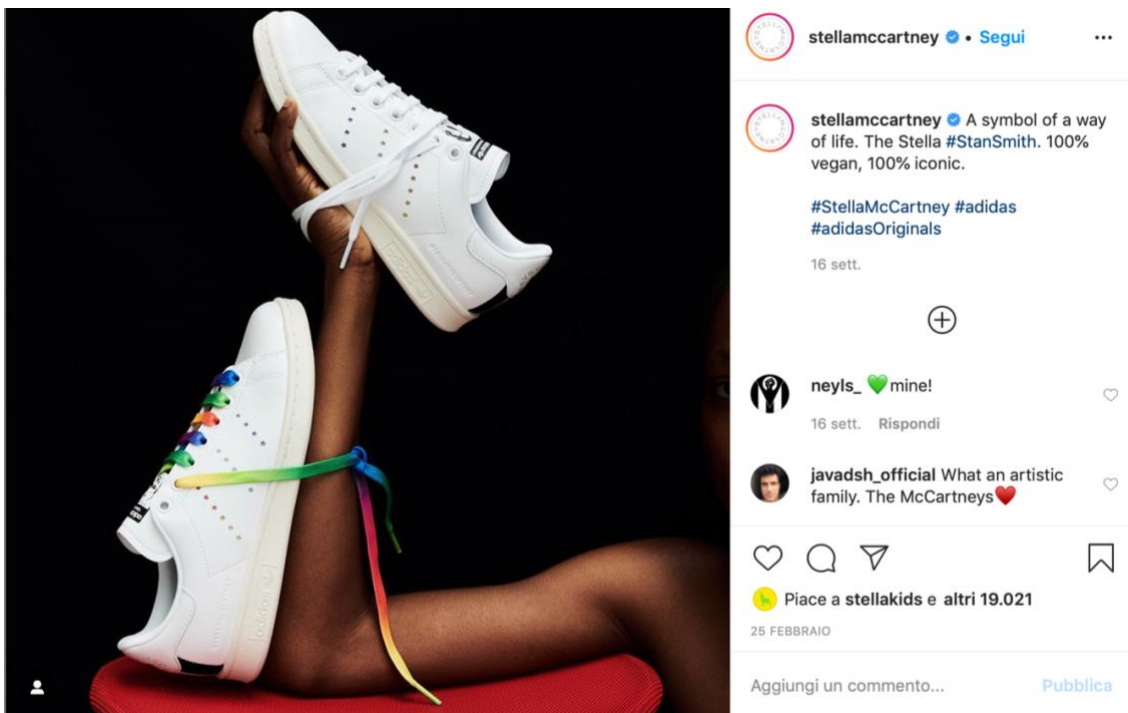


Stella McCartney, Instagram (@stellamccartney)

March 11th 2020, launch of the new SpringSummer 2020 Collection – their most sustainable ever



*Stella McCartney, Instagram (@stellamccartney)
March 5th 2020, picture from the FallWinter 2020 Collection*



*Stella McCartney, Instagram (@stellamccartney)
February 5th 2020, launch of the second Stella#StanSmith, 100% vegan*

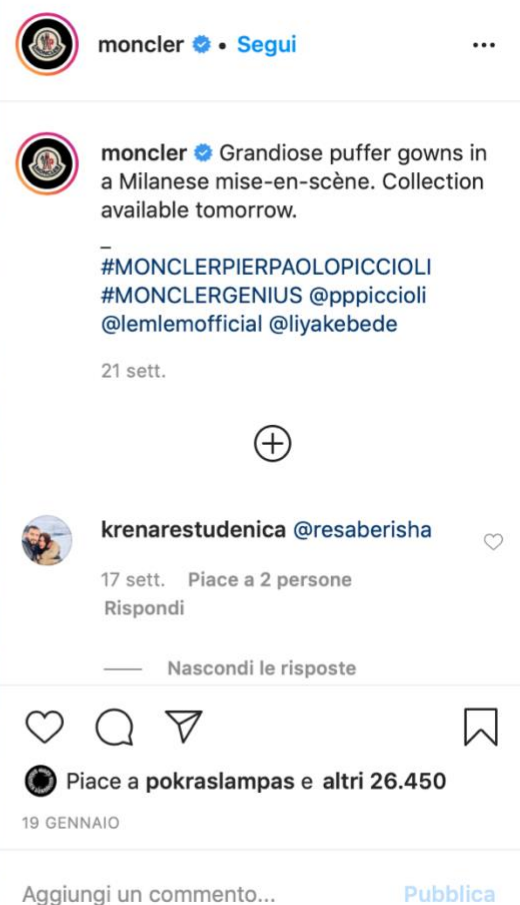
3.2.2 – *MONCLER*

As we will see, Moncler's strategy is very different from Stella McCartney's. First off, their social media marketing campaign does not evolve around the importance of being sustainable, even though they would have every right to insist on the matter, as they have been identified by the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes, both in Europe and worldwide, as "industry leaders" in the textile, apparel and luxury goods.

The Moncler's group promotes respect for the environment and actively contributes to its preservation. Their concern is not only for the environment, but also for future generations, as a matter of fact, they believe that long-term growth can only be achieved through a behavior based on respect and responsibility. Moncler is committed to improve their environmental performance, and they are going to do so by minimizing the impact, not only of their production site and facilities, but also of their activities, services, even products and logistics. Moncler's environmental policy is based on a few cardinal points. The compliance with applicable regulations imposes Moncler to comply with all applicable laws, voluntary agreements and environmental standards which have been defined by the Group. Minimizing of the environmental impact is maybe the major commitment of the company, which is actively contributing not only to the fight against climate change but is also concerned about the preservation of natural heritage and biodiversity. To this end, they shall endeavor to the development and implementation of technical innovations, and be willing to adopt increasingly efficient solutions, promoting the use of renewable energy sources, and the use of a more sustainable packaging. With regards to the environmental risk management, Moncler is committed to eliminate, or minimize, environmental risks on the basis of relevant knowledge and technical progress, adopt a specific plan for the prevention and management of environmental emergencies, and to keep production processes under constant review to monitor their performance and environmental impact. Moncler Group firmly believes that in order to succeed in the implementation of the environmental policies, it is crucial to involve employees and raise awareness towards this issue. They aim at inspiring and motivating their employees to take active part in the process, as by doing so they will promote a responsible and informed behavior at all levels in the group. Moncler wants to raise awareness among its suppliers and partners too, who know the environmental policy. As a matter of fact, it is required by contract that all partners and suppliers comply with the environmental laws and regulations.

The social media marketing strategy implemented by Moncler does almost never refer to the concept and sustainability. The main characteristics of the product that they are willing to highlight are the exclusiveness, the fact that they are caring on choosing the best materials to provide the best performance possible. Their on-line strategy is strictly connected with famous people that interact

with the brand, or capsule collections made with creative directors of other luxury brands (this is the case of the collaboration with Pierpaolo Piccioli for Moncler Genius). They often insist on the concept of “going beyond” and stand out, distinguishing yourself from others, and they do so with advertisement campaigns featuring famous people, known for having done so. It is needless to say that the feedback they receive on Instagram, from what seems to be more of a fanbase than a following, is extremely positive. The users are involved at 360° on the path that the business is pursuing.



Moncler, Instagram (@moncler)

January 19th 2020, launch of the collaboration with Pierpaolo Piccioli for Moncler Genius



Moncler, Instagram (@moncler)
October 31st 2019, Moncler Grenoble Collection



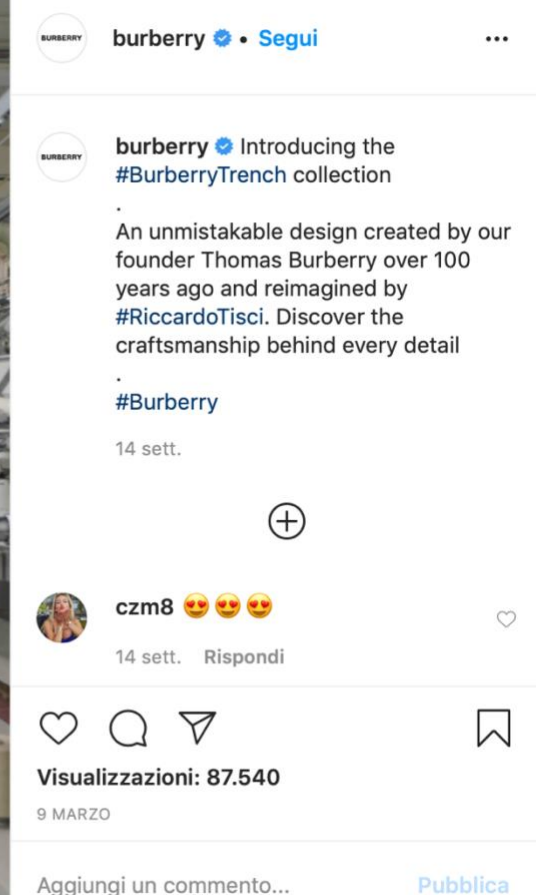
Moncler, Instagram (@moncler)
September 19th 2020, launch of the Urban Footwear

3.2.3 – BURBERRY

Before Moncler became, in 2019, industry leader according to the DJSI, Burberry was included in that list for five consecutive years. Burberry's commitment to sustainability is very significant. They have not only been dedicated to reducing their environmental impact, but also to enable social progress as they are actively taking part in helping the industry's transformation. Burberry is a member of the UN Global Compact, and as such is committed to support the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. Their Global environmental policy has been designed according to the Paris Climate Agreement. The areas of main focus are related to the energy use and associated carbon emissions – in production, transport and also in the programs involving their business partners. In order to reduce the climate change impacts of their operation, Burberry has set the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2022, as they pay particular attention to air emissions, trying to control the quantity and quality of the substances emitted from their structures. This decision will not only result in a reduction of consumption – which is also due to the fact that they will switch to renewable sources – but is also going to improve the energy efficiency and offset the emissions. Another goal of theirs is to find innovative solutions to put an end to the issue of endemic waste of the fashion industry. They keep record of all the waste produced and have with different methods to guarantee the right treatment of different kinds of waste, depending on if it is treated, hazardous or non-hazardous. Moreover, for what concerns the reduction of environmental impacts regarding the supply chain, they are planning on closely working with their partners to better manage the energy and water consumption and try to increase the use of renewable energy when possible. Another way in which they have decided to address this challenge is by completely eliminate, by 2020, the use of chemicals not having a positive impact on the environment, and also to reduce the implementation of water. The clear standards they have set, serve also as guidelines for their partners to assure that they will operate a chemical management assessment coherent with Burberry's. since 2015 Burberry has adopted the Manufacturing Restricted Substances framework (MRSL), released by the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals Group. They keep pushing their partners, stakeholder and businesses and non, interacting with the brand to progress in this area. They have created a very well-functioning community of chemical managers to stimulate the collaboration between the parties they interact with.

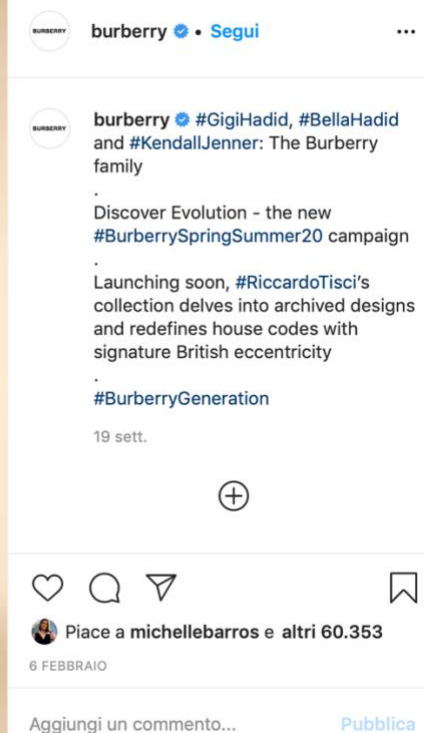
On social media, the sustainability marketing is not as strong as in the case of Stella McCartney's, but it is more than Moncler's. Burberry's Instagram aims at proposing a certain type of lifestyle, paying particular attention to the details and class of their photos. They do not always share informative posts about their sustainability commitment, but rather set the image of a never-aging elegance that has always been a distinguishing trait of the brand. However, we find some examples

of sustainability information for the users. The comments made by users and mostly very positive, with particular attention to the message sent by the brand, which we do not find so clearly in the other cases of Stella McCartney and Moncler. The followers of Burberry seem to be more informed about the history of the brand and appreciate the brand taking it into account.



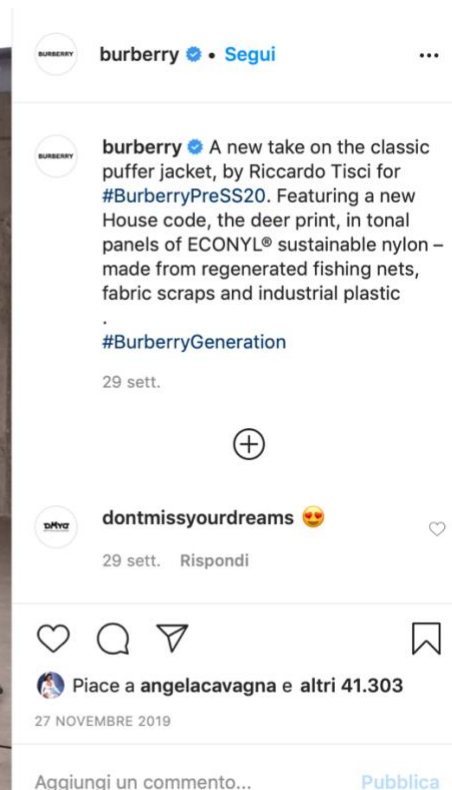
Burberry, Instagram (@burberry)

March 9th 2020, launch of the Burberry Trench Collection



Burberry, Instagram (@burberry)

February 6th 2020, SpringSummer 2020 Campaign



Burberry, Instagram (@burberry)

November 29th 2019, pre-SpringSummer 2020 Collection with sustainable nylon – ECONYLON®

3.3 Social media marketing of “Less-Sustainable” brands

3.3.1 – PRADA

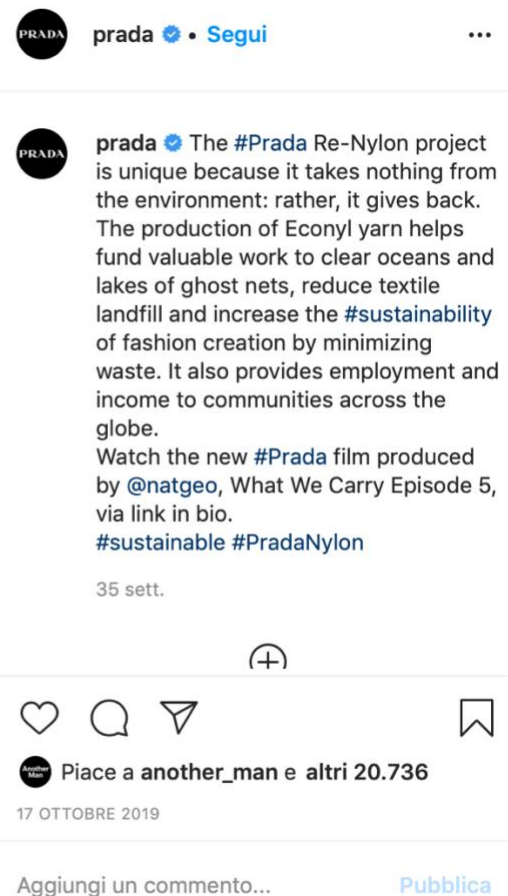
Sustainability is a core competency of Prada’s identity. Their commitment is not only addressed to the environmental impact, but also to people and culture. They have signed the Fashion Pact of 2019, and starting from the Spring/Summer 2020 collection, they have announced their fur-free policy, according to the pre-existent International Fur Free Retailer Program. They have made clear that they will still sell leather products until the inventory will be exhausted. The Prada Group is very aware of the responsibility they have toward the future generations of providing goods that are produced in harmony with the ecosystem and respect to the environment. They have set the goal of reaching a greater efficiency by reducing waste and re-thinking the use of energy. Lately they have launched an investment program with the scope of redistributing the energy in a more efficient way, part of this plan includes projects related to use of sustainable energy supplies and the raise of awareness of employees on the matter.

Prada’s most significant contribution to sustainability has certainly been the use of ECONYL®. This type of nylon is obtained through the cleaning and recycling of plastic waste found in the sea, including fishing nets, and other waste of fibers. Thanks to the recycle process the fiber obtained has the same quality of virgin nylon, and Prada is willing to transition to the use of re-nylon only by 2021. The production process starts with the gathering of waste materials, which are sorted and cleaned to maximize the quantity of nylon. Then, through a chemical procedure, called de-polymerization, the waste is cleaned and regenerated into its original purity. The recycled material is then transformed again through a polymerization process into polymers and threads. This process, for every 10,000 tons of Econyl created saves 70,000 barrels of petroleum, reducing by 80% the impact of petroleum-fuelled nylon-production on global warming and reducing the environmental emissions of CO₂ by 57,100 tons. Prada has collaborated with National Geographic, creating a series of short films in which the process behind this initiative is explained, the project is called “*What We Carry*”. Prada has also partnered with UNESCO on an Ocean Sustainability Programme, “*SEA BEYOND*”, to raise awareness on the ocean impact on our future. The project is aimed at educating the new generations to make more responsible decisions than the ones made in the past. The Prada Group stated that this promotion of culture and education is integral part of their sustainability strategy.

There are other important contribution Prada has made, not only in the environmental sustainability field, but also in the cultural environment. Prada has always been a strong promoter of culture, and this has become a part of the brand identity. The interest toward the cultural and artistic field has deeply challenged the brand to propose new opportunities of sharing and communicating with people.

This “cultural-tool” is the one considered the closest to the brand, that led to the sponsorship of Fondazione Prada; restoration works for *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II* in Milan, various projects with *FAI, Ca' Corner della Regina* in Venice, and the historic residence of *Rong Zhai* in Shanghai.

On Instagram, Prada shares a lot of the involvement in sustainability. They tend to alternate between campaigns that are independent from the concept of sustainability, and campaigns that have it as the main and only theme. Followers' responses are always very positive, they follow the brand's creative and moral path with great interest, but less enthusiasm compared to the one found in Moncler or Stella McCartney's cases.



Prada, Instagram (@prada)

October 17th 2019, Prada re-nylon project with National Geographic

PRADA



prada • Segui

prada Play Responsibly And Dress Authentically: #PRADA. The #PradaSS20 campaign offers a multitudes of views and perspectives that reflect that dichotomy - of the ever-shifting landscape of women that constantly inspire, and of the plurality of definitions of Prada. See the #PradaSS20 campaign via link in bio. Photography @jamie.hawkesworth Creative Direction @ferdinandoverderi Stylist #OlivierRizzo Model @ruiqijiang #PradaAcronyms

18 sett.



Piace a snohaalegra e altri 25.216

12 FEBBRAIO

Aggiungi un commento...

Pubblica

Prada, Instagram

February 12th 2020, launch of Prada SpringSummer 2020 Collection



prada • Segui

prada #GigiHadid sports the #PradaSidonie bag in the newest chapter of #Prada365, #PradaAnatomyOfRomance. Tap the link in bio to discover more. - Photography @willvanderperre Styling #OlivierRizzo Creative Direction @dja_dj #Prada #MiucciaPrada #PradaFW19

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never.in.fashion @iljo.g



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8 LUGLIO 2019

Aggiungi un commento...

Pubblica

Prada, Instagram (@prada)

July 8th 2019, launch of Prada365, FallWinter 2019 Collection

3.3.2 – GUCCI

Gucci has created the platform Gucci Equilibrium, which represents the commitment of the brand to create a positive change for the planet and for people. They are highlighting the fact that their approach to reduce the environmental impact and protection of nature does not neglect the key aspects of luxury of inclusivity and respect. Gucci Equilibrium is the synthesis of these principles and the actions taken to pursue environmental sustainability. In 2015 they redesigned the business model to make it more sustainable, announcing a 10 year “*Culture of Purpose*” sustainability strategy with a series of goals they want to achieve by 2025. The goals are targeted to a change for people, including the promotion of diversity and gender parity, the support of craftsmanship traditions, and the contribution to a positive social impact that supports changes across the entire supply chain. Whereas for the environmental targets, first we must say that they are not only aimed at reducing the impacts but also at creating a supply chain that will remain sustainable to help protect and restore nature in the future. In order to do so, Gucci has implemented an environmental and social strategy that consists in the increase of low-impact materials in their collections, the develop of sustainable sourcing programmes, implementation of renewable energy or energy saving methods in general, reduction of waste and the support of the conservation, if not the restoration in some cases, of ecosystems. Gucci has also signed the Fashion Pact, making a step forward in working along the other luxury brands for climate change, safeguard of biodiversity and oceans. Gucci has also decided to adopt a carbon neutral approach, through which the company is taking a path to urgent climate action. The main objective is to reduce the environmental impact. Their portfolio of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) projects makes sure their commitment will truly mitigate climate change, and help create a positive impact, both economically and socially, to protect wildlife and its habitat.

Gucci has also decided to implement more sustainable raw materials to its collections, especially regarding leather. They closely collaborate with the suppliers to make sure that the leather fits in their standards. To guarantee social and environmental stability, especially in relation to animal welfare, they have decided to be very clear and transparent on everything regarding the origin of raw materials. The manufacturing process is highly prioritized at Gucci’s as part of their commitment to sustainable practices has to do with the industrial process.

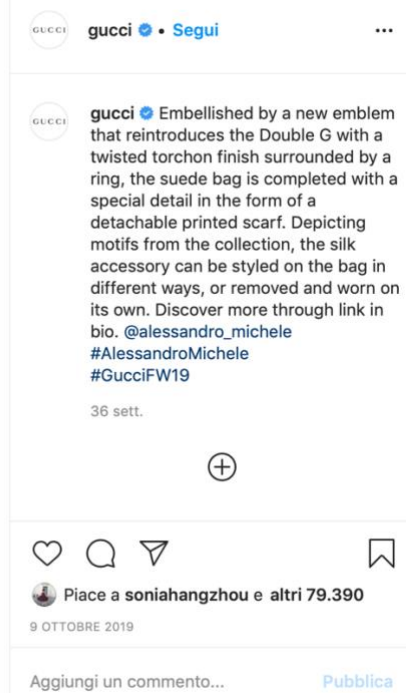
To avoid the environmental impact of air and water pollutions, the brand is transitioning to the use of renewable energy, and they have planned to purchase 100% renewable energy by the end of 2020. An example of the transformation is the installment, on the rooftops of the Italian headquarters in Florence and Milan, of photovoltaic panels that directly provide green electricity.

On social media, Gucci has always implemented a pretty aggressive strategy. They have become leaders, especially for the youngest generations, in setting on-line trends that have made the brand even bigger. They talk about the complex problems of the modern society in a very simple way, making them easily accessible to all. They are openly expressing their point of view, not only concerning climate change issues, but also on social problems such as gender inequality, and even cutting down gender barriers thank to their gender fluid designs. The feedback of their followers is always positive, they are encouraged to think and reason consciously, allowing Gucci to create a strong brand identity, especially with the youngest followers who are seeking it and are hardly finding it with other luxury brands.

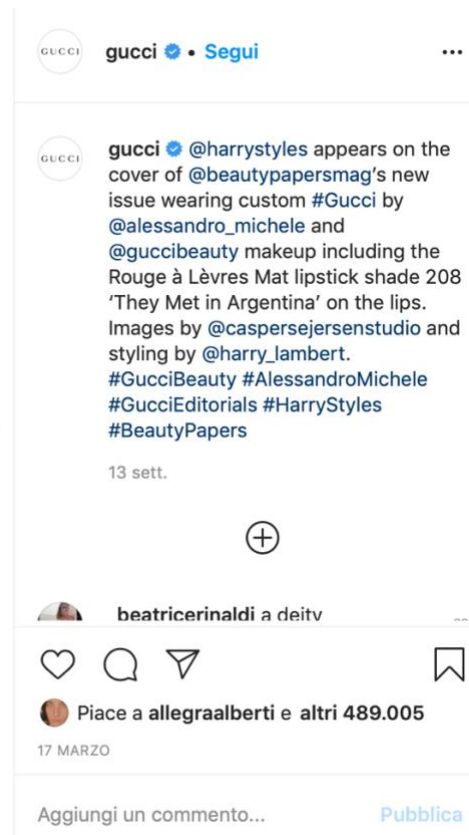
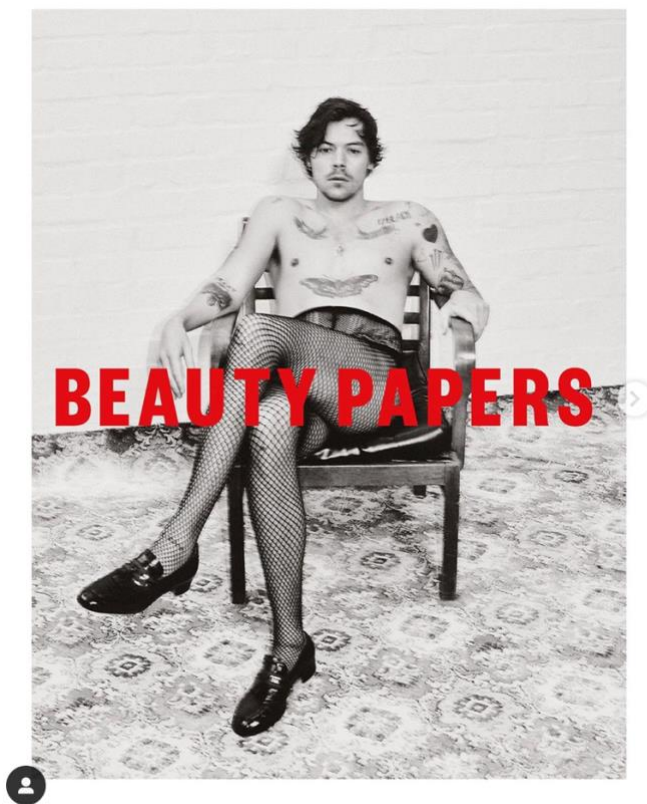


Gucci, Instagram (@gucci)

March 11th 2020, SpringSummer 2020 Campaign



*Gucci, Instagram (@gucci)
October 9th 2019, FallWinter 2019*



*Gucci, Instagram (@gucci)
March 17th 2020, Harry Stlyes for Beauty Papers Magazine wearing Gucci*

3.3.3 – HERMES

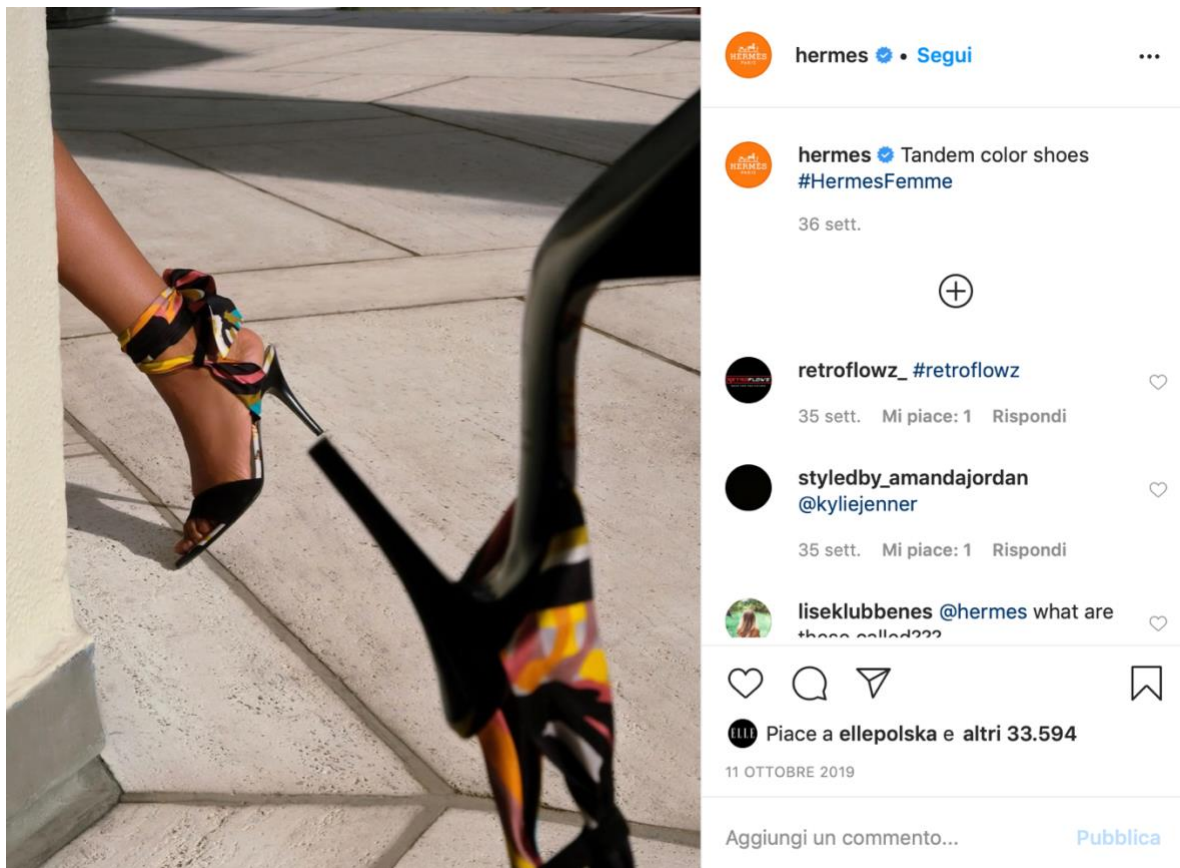
Hermès, among the five brands analyzed so far, is perhaps the least active when it comes to sustainability and environmental impact. They took part in the Global Pact project, which sets its basis on the declaration of human rights, fundamental work rights, for development and environmental impact. In 2019, Hermès took part, together with 64 other companies, in the French project *act4nature*, confirming its commitment to the preservation of biodiversity. The objectives of the project that Hermès is committing to are the integration of biodiversity into their corporate strategy; the engagement in dialogue with stakeholders with regards to their expectation of the brand's impact, actions and progress; the promotion of biodiversity integration, going from the production of natural raw materials, to the final stage of the production cycle; the reduction, or even offset of their impacts by adapting to the needs of the ecosystems or climate change; raising awareness and training the employees in the relation subsisting between biodiversity and their job, and promoting eco-friendly initiatives; and publicly reporting the implementation of such commitments.

On social media, Hermès tends to create a more “elitist” bond with the followers. They do not tend to expose themselves as much as Gucci, for example, on the social issues. They tend to maintain their marketing strategy purely in terms on clothing. However, followers do not seem to be bothered by it, and still show great appreciation for the content published. Perhaps, this choice of marketing strategy, also stems from the fact that Hermès' target is less divers, and less young, than those of the brands previously analyzed. The content they share on Instagram is for sure more creative, but less careful to what is going on outside – but also inside – of the fashion and luxury world.

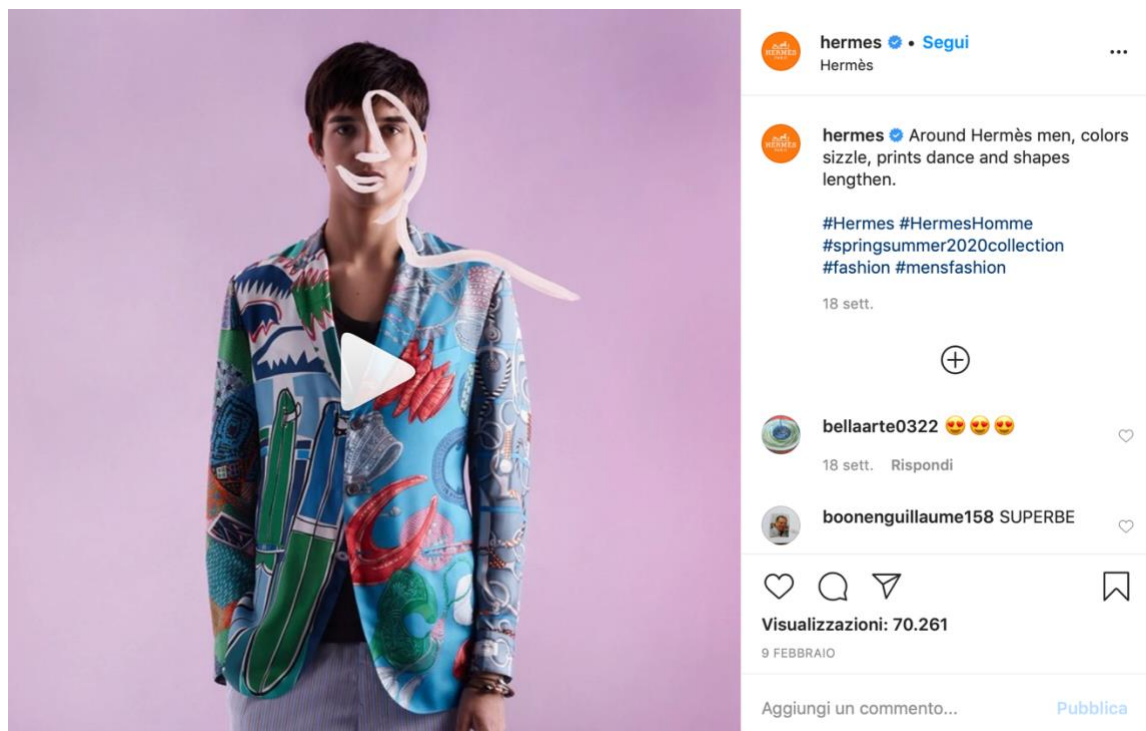


Hermès, Instagram (@hermes)

February 7th 2020, SprinSummer 2020 Collection



Hermès, Instagram (@hermes)
October 11th 2019, Herms Femme



Hermès, Instagram (@hermes)
February 9th 2020, SpringSummer 2020 Collection

3.3.4 Comparison

After analyzing the social media marketing strategies of these six brands, and the environmental challenges that they are facing, we can find many similarities and as many differences. First of all, we must say that most active brand on the environmental issue, is without doubt Stella McCartney. Stella McCartney has the strongest policies regarding both the materials and the production process. She is the pioneer in the fashion and sustainability world, and it is very clear why. Since the very beginning she has set the basis for a brand that was going to evolve around the concept of sustainability and has succeeded in doing so. Stella McCartney has proven that it is possible for luxury designers to create fabric options that are not as harmful for the environment. Her values are the core of her business, which has given her the power to advocate for sustainability.

We can also notice how the policies of Moncler, Burberry, Prada and Gucci are very similar, but with a major difference that does not have to do with the brand perception of the customer. Moncler and Burberry are listed in the DJSI, which represents a great achievement for a brand operating in this sector. Even though their attitude towards sustainability might not be immediately recognized by the average user on social media, which in this case is Instagram. From the industry perspective such recognition represents a greater value, as it directly affects the stakeholders' brand perception and value.

Prada and Gucci, on the other hand, might result more active in terms of social media integration, to sustainability, which gives them the golden opportunity of being immediately noticed by the younger generations, which have shown to be more sensitive to these issues than the older generations. It is therefore likely that by pursuing this type of marketing strategy, mixed with the environmental policies, the brands will be better evaluated in the future.

Last, we find Hermès, which has not made very clear to which extent is taking part in this modern luxury revolution. It seems almost certain that, if Hermès does not begin to become more environmentally active in the near future, it is going to face some losses. Especially if we think that the future generation, who will become the main target segment in the next years, bases its choices of purchase paying great attention to the attitude of the brand toward the environment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows how strongly the concept of sustainability is now embedded in the concept of luxury. It is particularly important to stress that almost all brands analyzed have moved in the same direction, choosing to pursue the same path, and making very similar choices. This seems to be a winning strategy for now. Consumers seem to be in complete agreement with the brands' choices, which have done nothing but strengthen the brand identity.

Some people might still insist in arguing that the fashion industry is not shifting fast enough towards sustainability, and that some even more radical changes need to be made. But the contrary emerged from this analysis. Luxury brands are willing to combine fashion and sustainability, as they have found in the second a new core characteristic that has now become an important part of their business models and policies.

Consumers have appreciated the devotion with which brands have made this change, they have even changed their purchasing patterns. Until not so long ago, the average consumer wanted to purchase a large amount of product at a low price; today, the scenario is the opposite. As a matter of fact, consumers are willing to give up quantity and promote quality, even if it means that they will have to pay a price premium.

Even though most consumers do not know the full commitment of the brands to the issues of climate change and environmental impact, it seems that from their perception through social media they are more than happy about the efforts made by the brands. Luxury brands have successfully satisfied the costumers' expectations of products having both tangible and intangible value.

They have created a valuable offer in terms of sustainability, that adds value to the already very valuable luxury product, placing once again the luxury industry above the trends of fast fashion. Those trends will not last long and will soon fail as they no longer fit into the standards of the target base, which are now even more demanding than before.

The marketing strategy through social media has proven to have given brands yet another opportunity. The chance to communicate directly with their consumers, and to do it in real time. Without changing the meaning of the message, they want to send, and without having the younger generation misunderstand it. They have full power of communication, and up to now, they have been using it in the right way. The scope of raising awareness to different social issues concerning our society, has allowed each brand to express more in depth their ideas, creating a no-filter relationship with the users they are interacting with.

This results in a gain for the industry under the economic perspective, a gain for the consumers who feel more empowered by their purchasing choices, and a gain for the planet and the ecosystems, that are finally being respected and preserved.

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