

Sustainability and luxury (ii): ecological intelligence in the aspirational dimension of luxury

Silvia Muñoz Valera

Seville University

silviamodayderecho@gmail.com

Concepción Pérez Curiel

Seville University

cperez1@us.es

Abstract

Since time immemorial, Luxury has had a deep connection with the relationship between man and Nature. One of the most interesting aspects of this relation is the use of exotic and hard to get raw materials (precious stones, fur, leather of animals from distant places...).

The main aspect of this relation was the admiration and appropriation towards the animal features, as force, fierceness... There was a magical-religious aspect of empowering, beyond the simple ornament. At the same time, these objects distinguished some persons above the rest of the community, so they were at the top of it (political, economical and religious elites, aristocracy...), following the analysis by Pierre Bordieu.

The hypothesis of our investigation is that the advancement of sustainability in fashion comes from an economical and environmental global crisis context, and it is driven by technological advances and the development of ecological intelligence, following James Coleman. The consequence of this is the incorporation of new values in the aspirational dimension of Luxury. Thus, the relation between man and environment, in general, and with other species, in particular, leads to the appearance of phenomena like the Vegan Fashion which avoids the use of animal materials (feather, wool, silk, bone), due to ethical reasons respectful with their condition of sensitive beings.

Our methodology consists in looking for and analyzing new raw materials respectful with the environmental values, like the Piñatex®, a fiber obtained from pineapples, invented by Carmen Hinojosa, with similar properties to those found in the leather; or the Ecoalf initiative, led by

Javier Goyeneche, which consists in recycling residues of the bottom of the sea to create a new type of fiber.

This phenomenon implies a change in the aspirational values found in the concept of Luxury in Fashion.

We think that this new way can be interesting for all the agents involved in the Luxury sector of Fashion, as there are already some top brands heavily committed into these values, like Stella McCartney or Vivien Westwood, and some others are producing their firsts sustainable collections as Gucci and Chanel. These examples reveal that the ecological conscience of society and consumers gives impulse to the brands to evolve towards this perspective.

Last, we wish to highlight the Green Carpet Challenge initiative by Livia Firth, because of its powerful impact on the media. This project aims at joining ethics and aesthetics in the Luxury sector, and it counts with a relevant support within the world of fashion and culture, as the actress Emma Watson.

The investigation method that arises from a study like this has got as its cornerstone the alliance between Sustainability and Technology, as a driving force to avoid the obsolescence of the Luxury brands.

Keywords

Luxury, sustainability, ecological intelligence, aspirational