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**MANAGING SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION TO BUILD BRAND
REPUTATION IN THE LUXURY FASHION INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF
LVMH GROUP**

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Transcript of interview with a fashion media and communication expert

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your general interest or background in fashion, sustainability, or consumer behavior?

Eliza: My name is Eliza Getman. I was born in Austria, and I have a background in fashion and luxury with a strong focus on sustainability and consumer behavior. I completed my master's in Paris in Fashion and Luxury Management, and I have experience working with fashion magazines, fashion and jewelry brands, and PR agencies. Currently, I work as a Fashion Stylist and Social Content Creator at Vestiaire Collective, a resale platform for pre-loved luxury fashion. This role has made me especially interested in how the industry can become more circular, how sustainability is communicated, and how consumers make more conscious shopping decisions.

Interviewer: You also wrote articles for fashion magazines like Vogue Germany and L'Officiel, as I understood, right? So you are familiar with the LVMH Group and with maisons like Celine, Louis Vuitton, and Dior?

Eliza: Not through my work as an editor, but through my studies for sure. Some of the brands were financially supporting my university, and we had many talks from people from the industry. Many friends of mine worked for the houses, and if you're in Paris, you're pretty close to the happenings and to the companies themselves, also because you're passing by every day.

Interviewer: From your personal observation, how do you think sustainability communication has changed the way luxury fashion brands are perceived by the public in recent years?

Eliza: By now it is not an option anymore, so you really have to communicate sustainability. Otherwise you'll be just banned by the public. People start judging. Especially Gen Z is very keen on sustainability and on how to make the industry better. They pay attention. Big brands have to keep in mind that those generations are their future customer base, or already their customer base, so they cannot afford to not talk about sustainability. They need to show background processes and highlight them in communication.

Interviewer: In your view, does sustainability communication from luxury fashion brands feel like a genuine commitment or more like a response to public pressure and trends?

Continuation of Interview 1

Eliza: To me personally, it feels like a response to public trends. The economy is very bad right now, and people don't have money. Do we really think they would invest in super sustainable creation or production? No, because how? They cannot even hire people, so how would they invest in better production while the piece stays the same? They try to use innovative materials and there are many aspects of sustainability, not only where it's made. What material do you use. What facilities are you using? Communication is a whole different area. I think it is for sure not 100% genuine. And from what I heard from talks from professionals, it's impossible to be a fully sustainable brand right now.

Interviewer: Which matters more for a luxury fashion brand's reputation today: its heritage and product quality, or its sustainability practices and detailed data and reports?

Eliza: Data for sure. Heritage is a story, like a fairy tale. It shows it has been there forever, but it doesn't mean they cannot switch to Chinese production today. So it doesn't really show a lot about their attachment to sustainability.

Interviewer: Do you think sustainability and luxury can genuinely coexist, or does sustainability communication risk weakening what makes a luxury brand feel exclusive and desirable?

Eliza: For some customers, yes. For some customers, no. From what I realize, French people who are loyal to their big brands care, and it is important. But I'm sure that when very rich Arab people or very rich Chinese people enter the store, the thing they care the least about is probably how the product was produced.

Interviewer: What would make you personally trust a luxury brand's sustainability communication, and what signals feel like greenwashing rather than real action?

Eliza: Not saying the truth is the biggest issue. For example, Stella McCartney just dropped the news that they are doing a collection with H&M. For someone who knows both brands, it's contradictory because Stella McCartney is super pro-sustainability, and H&M is fast fashion. They explained it by saying they only use recycled or sustainable materials for the collection. Okay, why not, but it doesn't mean H&M is a sustainable leader now. And it definitely means Stella McCartney is in desperate need of money if they collaborate with H&M. That goes in the direction of greenwashing. Also, if you say the shirt is 50% organic cotton but the other 50% is polyester, I don't care about the 50% organic cotton if the rest is trash. It depends on the person and how educated they are. For example, my parents don't care at all about whether a brand is sustainable. My mom cares more about natural materials for the body, like real wool, which is a different aspect of sustainability.

Interviewer: Going to the second part, more about LVMH cases: do you know what LVMH 360 view is?

Eliza: Is it the program that shows how sustainable it is? It's super important, but they need to do that. If one brand has to do it, it's for their own image.

Continuation of Interview 1

Interviewer: LVMH has different programs for each brand. For Louis Vuitton and Dior, we see reports and huge sustainability data. For Celine, we see basically nothing. Do you feel like it needs to be implemented in every brand, or would communication at the group level be enough?

Eliza: I'm not really into this part of the industry, but I would do it for each brand and then summarize it by LVMH. But I actually think LVMH Image is in charge. Yeah, LVMH Image is in charge.

Interviewer: Based on your observation, what should LVMH do differently to make sustainability communication more credible and genuine?

Eliza: They need to work on risk management. For example, recently, people found out that bags from a well-known luxury fashion brand are produced in Chinese production and there was a scandal. This cannot happen to a brand like LVMH. They need strong PR and strong risk management so that information doesn't drop randomly without being able to control it. From the communication side, it's important not to ignore sustainability, but also not to overdo it. People understand authenticity. If you do it just to do it, and then the quality is bad, or it's not true, or it's greenwashing, then better not do it at all. There are plenty of brands that never talk about sustainability and people still buy. Personally, I think it's better to focus on the work and behind-the-scenes videos that build credibility and transparency within the company. Often that is sustainable. For example, brands that work more with craftsmanship and not mass production. You really need to avoid public conflicts. Better to not scream about being sustainable than being caught lying. It's going to be mandatory soon to be sustainable, and you don't have to shout about it. It also shows in the "made in" sticker. If it says made in China, which is never the case, and they fake it, that's a problem. I also recently found out that usually when we read the tag with the composition, it's a lie too.

In a world where you can fake everything, go for good materials and pay accordingly. But in an economy where you cannot go for the most expensive good materials and the most expensive labor, this might be a problem. They have to go sustainable, they will try. I don't know how long this will be more expensive in the long term.

Interviewer: I think we discussed all of my questions. Thank you so much.

Eliza: Thank you.

Transcript of interview with a sustainability and corporate behavior expert

Interviewer: Before the interview, I would like to mention that the questions have been slightly adapted, as previously discussed, to better reflect your expertise in sustainability and research rather than the luxury fashion industry. And again, could you please briefly introduce yourself and describe your general background in sustainability or consumer behavior?

Antoine: My name is Antoine Cordier. I am 27 years old and currently a PhD student at the Louvain School of Management. I do not have specific experience in the fashion industry or luxury fashion. I do have experience in sustainability. In my master's, I specialized in sustainability and corporate sustainable behaviors within organizations. I worked in the private sector in an industrial engineering company, where I tried to set up and operationalize the company's sustainability efforts. That partly included sustainability communication inside the company and externally, particularly with external investors. I also did my master's thesis on corporate sustainability reporting, but it focused more on state-owned companies rather than the luxury fashion sector.

Interviewer: So the second question, it's more states about the fashion luxury, but I'm going to skip this and reformulate. From your personal observation, how do you think sustainability communication changed the perspective of the brands? Is sustainability becoming non-negotiable and part of brands' core values, or is it more complementary?

Antoine: I think these are two separate things. Even if sustainability becomes non-negotiable, it does not mean it becomes part of an organization's core values. From personal observation, I do not believe it is part of the core values of most organizations, and I have noticed this particularly in the past years. For example, in the US, around the election of Donald Trump, many companies made big promises about becoming sustainable and making sustainability part of their core values. When Trump came to power, many of those promises disappeared. Something similar happened in Europe with laws like the CSRD for sustainability disclosure and the CSDDD for due diligence on human rights. Then the omnibus regulations came through and watered down those laws, and companies did not complain. Many supported the watering down. I generally do not believe sustainability is part of companies' core values and it was never the case. However, I do see it becoming part of communication. You see things like "we are upcycling a few clothes" or "this new line is more sustainable". In the broader clothing industry, you see "bring back your clothes and recycle them" initiatives. But I do not believe it is core value-driven. I think it is either mandated by law, or there is a financial interest: companies see consumers getting more interested, so they claim to do more, but it is often marginal. It is the visible part of the iceberg rather than core efforts.

Continuation of Interview 2

Interviewer: Okay, you are right, that totally makes sense. So then the next question will be, what makes you distrust a brand when it comes to sustainability? What are greenwashing red flags?

Antoine: My initial stance would be distrust. For any traditional brand, I would not trust them. I would say the real intentions of organizations appear when it is not financially interesting for them. If a company is ready to meet commitments even when they might lose something financially, that shows values. Patagonia is the example people often give. They may do things that could be financially beneficial in the short term, but if it is not aligned with their values, they do not do it. With more traditional companies, it is often “look at everything we are doing”, but as soon as it is not financially interesting, or there is no financial incentive, the efforts disappear. For me, this is one of the biggest red flags for greenwashing. I rarely see corporations really stand up for these efforts.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how should brands communicate sustainability today, especially in sectors like luxury where heritage and storytelling are important?

Antoine: Even for luxury, I think it can go hand in hand. Luxury brands often emphasize craftsmanship and heritage. Sustainability should not be decoupled from social efforts. For example, they can emphasize local production, fair treatment across suppliers, and ensuring inputs are produced sustainably and with respect for the people in the supply chain. For luxury, it might make even more sense: with higher margins, they have more freedom of action to pay people more and produce locally, instead of relying on low labor costs in places with weak worker protections.

Interviewer: Considering large groups like LVMH, which already implement sustainability programs, what do you think companies should do differently to make their sustainability communication more credible?

Antoine: For me, actions speak louder than words. Companies invest a lot of money and effort into communication: graphs, programs, disclosure, “look at everything we are doing”. But the core issue is whether it is truly values-driven and whether they keep commitments when it is not financially attractive. Companies do not necessarily have to communicate everything they do to be sustainable.

People are tired of greenwashing increasing communication, reports, ads, programs, but with nothing behind it. If companies dedicate more resources, it should be to actual efforts rather than communication of efforts.

Interviewer: Based on your academic research, how do different types of organizations approach sustainability communication?

Continuation of Interview 2

Antoine: My master's thesis was on how state-owned companies report sustainability efforts. For stock-market companies, reporting is often mandated and investor-driven, so you see heavily data-based, quantitative reports. For state-owned companies, they are not always legally mandated and are not necessarily on the stock market. They often have a social mission, so their reporting tends to be more narrative: fewer numbers, more explanation. It can make more sense for civilians, compared to large datasets with little explanation.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you so much. It was a really insightful conversation. Thank you.

Antoine: Thank you.

Interview with a fashion and luxury consultant

Question: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your general interest or background in fashion, sustainability, or consumer behavior?

Reply: My name is Mariia Bakieva, I finished my Master's in fashion and luxury management in Paris and now work as a fashion and luxury consultant. I previously worked as a brand manager in a beauty company (L'Oreal) and did Bachelor's in Economics. I personally enjoy the field of consumer behaviour because this understanding is what drives the sales. And it's important to make consumer and its way to purchase the centre of your observations so you can build a good marketing strategy.

Question: From your personal observation, how do you think sustainability communication has changed the way luxury fashion brands are perceived by the public in recent years?

Reply: I think now communication only doesn't make the brand more respected and the customer more loyal to the brand. First, sustainability practices are no longer a novelty and a unique point. It's feels like trying to be sustainable is a normal part of any brand life. Second, many companies failed to keep their promises made to customers. Many cases of greenwashing made the consumer more sceptical and less trustworthy. So just communication is not enough and brands need to be transparent and genuinely responsible.

Question: In your view, does sustainability communication from luxury fashion brands feel like a genuine commitment or more like a response to public pressure and trends?

Reply: It depends. Most of the time I feel like brands tend to make sustainability communications a strategy to satisfy the needs of a modern consumer. The reason for that — not sustainable brands are less valuable in the eyes of the public and making sustainability statements make them competitive. But there are good examples like Stella McCartney who integrates sustainability into core identity

Question: Do you think sustainability and luxury can genuinely coexist, or does sustainability communication risk weakening what makes a luxury brand feel exclusive and desirable?

Continuation of Interview 3

Reply: I think that it is possible, but it will definitely affect the profitability of the companies. Overall, luxury seems a perfect industry to be sustainable, since hand crafted items are durable, last for decades, high quality and have a huge potential for repairs and resales. Plus, higher price of the item includes sustainable working practices, meaning that people are paid well and are working in good conditions. The only problem I see is the desire to increase profits by decreasing losses. It can be shown by many scandals that took place during the last years (Dior and Loro Piana cases).

Question: What would make you personally distrust a luxury brand's sustainability communication - what signals feel like greenwashing rather than real action?

Reply: For me it's simple. Vague communication and no tracking of the numbers. If I see that the company is reporting their specific initiatives and it has an impact measured by numbers — I can trust it more. Also I don't really trust when brands do small actions like creating a small collection made from recycled materials. It feels like they do it just to show that they are sustainable. But for me it's just trying to do less and making loud statements.

Question: Do you think younger consumers genuinely factor sustainability into how they perceive luxury brands, or is it more of a stated value that does not really affect brand reputation in practice?

Reply: I think sustainability is just an additional factor building a brand love. I'd say status signalling and design are way more important

Question: In your opinion, which matters more for a luxury fashion brand's reputation today - its heritage and product quality, or its sustainability practices and ethical communication?

Reply: I think heritage and quality build the brand and play the main role. Being successfully sustainable adds on and reinforces the brand image. At the same time, reputation can be damaged when consumers feel misled or perceive a disconnect between sustainability communication and the brand's actual practices.

Question: Looking ahead, do you think sustainability will become a non-negotiable core element of luxury brand identity, or will it remain a secondary marketing focus?

Reply: It will never replace the role of design, heritage, craftsmanship, or exclusivity, but brands won't be trusted if they fail to meet basic consumer expectations, such as fair working conditions, durable high-quality materials, and responsible production practices.

Question: When you hear that a brand like Louis Vuitton, Dior, Céline or etc., is part of a large group like LVMH with a shared sustainability program (such as LIFE 360), does that make their individual sustainability claims feel more or less credible to you?

Continuation of Interview 3

Reply: I think overall it's make it less credible since it feels like all the brands are relying on a conglomerate reputation. For me to trust the brand I need to see how general sustainability route affect the brand practices. If the strategy is tailored to each brand differently and is reflected in their own materials, sourcing and practices, then it might be credible.

Question: These LVMH brands communicate sustainability in different ways: some publish detailed data and reports, while others focus on emotional storytelling and heritage narratives. Which approach do you find more convincing as an outside observer, and why?

Reply: For me only real data can reflect the real situation happening in the company. Dior is a very good example of how emotional storytelling can hide all the controversies happening inside. The case with their scandal on bad working conditions is a good example that loud words sometimes don't prove themselves.

Question: Based on your observations of conglomerates like LVMH, what do you think they should do differently to make their sustainability communication more credible and genuinely strengthen their individual brands' reputations?

Reply: I think each brand should take care of their own sustainability practices not just hide behind the group's communications. Being more specific and measurable also helps to trust more. Not being involved in scandals also helps :) And it's better to be not perfect and be transparent with that then make consumers false general promises.

Interview with a business development assistant at Christian Dior

The interviewee preferred to remain anonymous

Question: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your general interest or background in fashion, sustainability, or consumer behavior?

Reply: I am a young professional who has some previous professional experience within the luxury industry, both in cosmetics and jewelry. My interest in fashion has been quite strong over the years and I am particularly drawn to creations that demand a high level of craftsmanship whether it be pieces of clothing that have been preserved over the years or recent haute couture. As I have been living in Paris for the past year, I have been taking advantage of the great exhibits around fashion and craftsmanship that the city has to offer. For me, the connection to sustainability is quite natural in my own personal comprehension of what luxury essentially is. I think part of buying items that have been made with a high level of craftsmanship is the fact that you get to keep and enjoy the quality for these pieces for a long time rather than buying several items in the same timespan. This is also a good link to consumer behavior because while this might be my point of view, there are of course different consumers that purchase luxury goods for different reasons and might not directly approach their purchases through this angle but might be more trend-driven for example.

Question: From your personal observation, how do you think sustainability communication has changed the way luxury fashion brands are perceived by the public in recent years?

Reply: From what I have observed, I think that it is nearly impossible for a luxury brand these days not to communicate about sustainability. You can see it on the packaging of luxury cosmetics for example that the composition of the packaging but also the composition of the product itself is always highlighted very prominently. I also have the feeling that younger generations have a certain level of expectations regarding sustainability practices towards companies and so companies had to adapt their communication to meet their expectations.

Question: In your view, does sustainability communication from luxury fashion brands feel like a genuine commitment or more like a response to public pressure and trends?

Reply: This is a difficult question because you cannot put all luxury fashion brands into the same pot and generalize here. What I do think is that there has been a certain level of public pressure that has encouraged luxury brands to reflect more on their own sustainability and what they can do to support and communicate to customers.

Continuation of Interview 4

I would also say that fashion brands have realized how damaging it can be to have unsustainable practices revealed especially if they promoted sustainability quite loudly. So while for some brands sustainability communication may stem from a shift in public expectations towards luxury brands I would not say that this is not a genuine commitment and you also see a lot of brands that have been built around exactly that, for example Stella McCartney.

Question: Do you think sustainability and luxury can genuinely coexist, or does sustainability communication risk weakening what makes a luxury brand feel exclusive and desirable?

Reply: I absolutely think that sustainability and luxury can coexist and as I mentioned before, part of my own perception of luxury is rooted in sustainability and the fact that you purchase one high quality item rather than a lot of low quality items in the same timespan. I think that a lot of customers are also aware of the fact that a lot of the materials needed to produce luxury items are coming from nature, for example leather, gem stones, cotton, wool etc. and that the quality but also the fact that these materials can be used in the long term is dependent on the state of our planet. So to me it is quite natural that luxury brands need to set real measures to be sustainable and also communicate this to the customers.

Question: What would make you personally distrust a luxury brand's sustainability communication - what signals feel like greenwashing rather than real action?

Reply: For me personally I would say if I perceive any incoherence between the communication and the real actions of the brand. I do not have a specific example in my mind right now but if a brand is for example communicating on the fact that the materials they use in their products is sustainable and then independent investigations find out that this is not the case at all, my trust in this brand as a consumer would be shattered and I would not believe in their sustainability communication anymore at all.

Question: Do you think younger consumers genuinely factor sustainability into how they perceive luxury brands, or is it more of a stated value that does not really affect brand reputation in practice?

Reply: From what I have seen and also when reflecting on my own circle of friends who are younger luxury customers, I would definitely say that sustainability plays a big impact on how they perceive luxury brands. I think that if you are not a top spender but rather make more calculated luxury purchase decisions there are more factors factoring into the purchase decision, one of them being sustainability.

Continuation of Interview 4

One thought of why this might be is social media where most people showcase their fashion and might not want to be associated with a brand that has a negative reputation when it comes to sustainability. But I would also argue that it comes from the fact that the younger generations have a strong knowledge of sustainability and what the effects of climate change have on their own future which makes them factor in sustainability a lot more when making luxury purchases.

Question: In your opinion, which matters more for a luxury fashion brand's reputation today - its heritage and product quality, or its sustainability practices and ethical communication?

Reply: Right now the biggest thing affecting a brand's reputation right now is still is heritage I would say. When you look at the last campaign of Louis Vuitton for example where they highlighted their iconic handbag models the thing that they conveyed was their heritage, how long they have been around and how iconic of a brand they are without mentioning sustainability directly. Having a strong heritage as a brand just gives you a great foundation for all your marketing communications: where are you coming from, what are your values, why are you doing what you doing and what makes you special. At the end of the day, I would argue that this is really at the core of the brand's reputation. However, it of course all depends on how you communicate that to the customer and how true you are staying to your values. If for instance a brand is confronted with accusations of a lack of quality or production issues, their story and values will be called into question. So while heritage gives a brand a solid base I think that ethical communication is necessary to uphold and convey that heritage to the customer.

Question: Looking ahead, do you think sustainability will become a non-negotiable core element of luxury brand identity, or will it remain a secondary marketing focus?

Reply: I think sustainability will absolutely become a core element of luxury brand identity. Firstly, I think when you look at new and upcoming brands in this industry they all come with a certain level of commitment towards sustainability which to me highlights that this is regarded as something that is really part of the whole strategy and not just an irrelevant factor. Secondly, I think that the younger generations who might not be the purchase drivers today but will be at one point are much more sensible towards sustainability and the impact that purchasing behavior has on the planet. So brands that are genuinely committing to sustainability and that are successful in communicating this to their customers will find a solid following in my opinion.

Question: When you hear that a brand like Louis Vuitton, Dior, Céline and etc., is part of a large group like LVMH with a shared sustainability program (such as LIFE 360), does that make their individual sustainability claims feel more or less credible to you?

Continuation of Interview 4

Reply: To me it makes it more credible because I believe that this way brands are held accountable twice – once by the groups' initiatives and then also by the demands towards the brand itself. Not every customer knows that Céline for example is part of LVMH and hence participates in shared sustainability programs. So Céline itself will need to work on their own sustainability strategy as well that they can convey to the customers. To me this can also entail that a brand can tackle different sustainability challenges because the two programs (group-level and brand-level) might have different objectives or areas that they target.

Question: These LVMH brands communicate sustainability in different ways: some publish detailed data and reports, while others focus on emotional storytelling and heritage narratives. Which approach do you find more convincing as an outside observer, and why?

Reply: I think that those two approaches serve different purposes and different target groups and I believe that brands need to combine the two. Publishing detailed data and reports is a great way of holding yourself accountable and putting numbers on the table that actually reflect what you are doing as a brand. This level of transparency is great in my opinion and can help other organizations in their own sustainable development. At the same time, it is also clear that majority of customers will not read those detailed reports to inform themselves before making a purchase decision. In my opinion, the purchase of luxury products is highly emotional and not driven by data reports so if a brand wants a customer to be aware of their sustainability practices and drive purchases through this, they need to deliver a message that reaches the customer on an emotional level. This is the reason why brands need to highlight what actions they are taking through storytelling that is engaging the customer on an emotional level. Therefore I cannot choose one approach over the other, but I would argue that both are needed.

Question: Based on your observations of conglomerates like LVMH, what do you think they should do differently to make their sustainability communication more credible and genuinely strengthen their individual brands' reputations?

Reply: I have not directly worked in communications in the luxury industry before so my answer is based on being an observer/customer. For me, I would like to see more of the approach that I discussed before so combining reports and data collection with storytelling narratives. To be more precise, I would be interested to see for example in a video format what brands are doing and having that be narrated by concrete numbers. What could also be interesting as it would feel very genuine is having brands communicate about what they have achieved but also about the goals they still want to achieve, that might be more difficult to achieve and what they are planning to do about it (concrete action plan for example).

Interview with an E-commerce specialist at LVMH

Question: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your general interest or background in fashion, sustainability, or consumer behavior?

Reply: My name is Eva Dojáčková, and I recently completed a Master's degree in Strategic Fashion Marketing at the University of the Arts London, London College of Fashion, following my studies at Istituto Marangoni. I've been interested in fashion from an early age, but through my academic work I became particularly focused on sustainability and how it shapes consumer perception within the luxury sector. During my Master's, I focused on the relationship between sustainability and luxury, with a specific interest in Gen Z consumer behaviour and how digital platforms, especially social media, influence how sustainability is communicated and perceived.

Question: From your personal observation, how do you think sustainability communication has changed the way luxury fashion brands are perceived by the public in recent years?

Reply: I think sustainability communication has contributed to quite a noticeable shift in how luxury brands are perceived. In the past, it was often associated with something 'used' or lower value, but now it's been reframed - you hear terms like 'trophy vintage' or 'vintage treasures,' which position it as something desirable. This shift in language reflects a broader change in how consumers perceive older or pre-owned pieces, often associating them with uniqueness, craftsmanship, and long-term value. At the same time, it has increased expectations around transparency. Consumers are much more attentive to materials, sourcing, and production, which has led to greater scrutiny of quality and brand claims. Overall, I think the perception of luxury has shifted more towards longevity and investment - not just buying something new, but choosing pieces that hold value, can be resold, or even passed down.

Question: In your view, does sustainability communication from luxury fashion brands feel like a genuine commitment or more like a response to public pressure and trends?

Reply: I think there's definitely a tension between sustainability being a genuine commitment and a response to pressure. Luxury brands are operating in a context where sustainability has become an expectation, especially among younger consumers, so a lot of the communication feels quite strategic - it's there to maintain relevance and brand image. There's also an attitude-behaviour gap, where consumers say they value sustainability, but it doesn't always translate into actual purchasing decisions, which further encourages brands to focus on communication.

Continuation of Interview 5

Where it feels more credible is when sustainability is actually built into the business model - for example, brands focused on resale, archival pieces, or circular fashion. In those cases, it doesn't feel like an added message, but something the brand is genuinely built around.

Question: Do you think sustainability and luxury can genuinely coexist, or does sustainability communication risk weakening what makes a luxury brand feel exclusive and desirable?

Reply: I do believe that sustainability and luxury can genuinely coexist. In my view, the two can actually very well support each other, particularly through shared values like quality, longevity, and exclusivity. For example, when looking at archival or vintage luxury, sustainability is naturally linked to scarcity. These pieces are often rare and not easily replaceable, which creates a sense of urgency for the consumer without the brand having to artificially construct it. From my observation, this kind of scarcity often leads to a stronger emotional connection to the product. The customer is now not just buying something new, but something that feels unique and valuable over time. So in that sense, I don't think sustainability weakens luxury at all - I believe it can actually reinforce what makes luxury desirable.

Question: What would make you personally distrust a luxury brand's sustainability communication - what signals feel like greenwashing rather than real action?

Reply: I would distrust sustainability communication when it is vague or lacks transparency - for example, using terms like 'eco-friendly' without clear explanation or data. Another signal is when brands promote small initiatives but do not address their overall impact or business model. A key red flag is also misalignment between what a brand communicates and how it actually operates - for example, promoting sustainability while relying on high-volume production or frequent product drops. A lack of measurable targets or third-party verification also makes sustainability communication feel more like marketing than real action.

Question: Do you think younger consumers genuinely factor sustainability into how they perceive luxury brands, or is it more of a stated value that does not really affect brand reputation in practice?

Reply: I think sustainability does play a big role in how younger consumers perceive luxury brands and can positively influence brand reputation, especially at the level of image and values. However, in practice, it doesn't always directly translate into purchasing decisions. There's often an attitude-behaviour gap, where sustainability is something consumers say they value, but factors like aesthetics, brand image, exclusivity, and overall desirability tend to be more decisive.

Continuation of Interview 5

So I would say sustainability shapes perception and can enhance credibility, but it usually works more as a supporting factor rather than the main driver of consumer behaviour.

Question: In your opinion, which matters more for a luxury fashion brand's reputation today - its heritage and product quality, or its sustainability practices and ethical communication?

Reply: I'd say heritage and product quality still matter more, because that's what luxury is built on. Sustainability is surely becoming more important and can significantly improve brand perception, but it's more of a supporting factor rather than the main reason people are drawn to a luxury brand.

Question: Looking ahead, do you think sustainability will become a non-negotiable core element of luxury brand identity, or will it remain a secondary marketing focus?

Reply: I think sustainability will become a baseline - something luxury brands are expected to address in order to remain credible and relevant. As consumer awareness increases, especially among younger audiences, sustainability will likely become a non-negotiable standard rather than a differentiating factor. In that sense, brands that fail to engage with it risk damaging their reputation. However, I don't think it will replace what luxury is fundamentally built on - things like craftsmanship, heritage, creativity, and exclusivity. So overall, I see sustainability becoming a necessary foundation, but not the core driver of luxury brand identity.

Question: When you hear that a brand like Louis Vuitton, Dior, Céline, etc., is part of a large group like LVMH with a shared sustainability program (such as LIFE 360), does that make their individual sustainability claims feel more or less credible to you?

Reply: I think it generally makes the claims more credible, because being part of a group like LVMH suggests there's a structured, long-term approach to sustainability, as well as significant resources and investment behind it. Programs like LIFE 360 indicate that sustainability is being addressed at a strategic level, rather than in isolated initiatives. At the same time, the idea can also feel quite centralised, which creates a certain distance. As an observer, it's not always clear how deeply those commitments are embedded within each individual brand. So I would say it increases credibility at a group level, but it also raises expectations - particularly around transparency and consistency - for how each brand translates those commitments into its own identity and operations.

Question: These LVMH brands communicate sustainability in different ways: some publish detailed data and reports, while others focus on emotional storytelling and heritage narratives. Which approach do you find more convincing as an outside observer, and why?

Reply: I personally find data-driven communication more convincing, because it provides transparency and allows you to actually evaluate what the brand is doing, rather than just relying on messaging.

Continuation of Interview 5

For example, I think brands like Louis Vuitton that publish more detailed reports feel more credible from an outside perspective, because there is something concrete to refer to. That being said, storytelling is still very important in luxury. It aligns with the emotional and aspirational nature of these brands, and it helps make sustainability feel relevant to their identity rather than purely technical. However, on its own, storytelling can sometimes feel quite vague or difficult to verify. So ideally, the most convincing approach is a combination of both - clear, measurable data to build credibility, supported by storytelling that communicates it in a way that resonates with the audience.

Question: Based on your observations of conglomerates like LVMH, what do you think they should do differently to make their sustainability communication more credible and genuinely strengthen their individual brands' reputations?

Reply: I think one key area would be greater transparency and consistency across all brands. While group-level initiatives are very strong, it would be beneficial to see clearer, brand-specific actions and measurable outcomes, so it's easier to understand what each brand is actually contributing. For example, instead of mainly communicating at a group level, brands could more clearly show how sustainability is integrated into their own product development, sourcing decisions, or even design processes. That would make the communication feel more tangible and relevant to the brand itself. It could also strengthen credibility if communication focused more on long-term progress rather than individual initiatives - for instance, showing year-on-year improvements or clear targets, rather than isolated campaigns. Overall, I think the more closely sustainability communication is aligned with visible, consistent actions at the brand level, the more authentic and credible it becomes, and the more it can genuinely strengthen each brand's identity.