



Luxury leathersgoods brands can fit well into the sustainable lifestyle consumers wish to have, but they have to be able to show that they are genuinely sustainable businesses: just going through the motions is not an option.

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Leather as part of a sustainable lifestyle

Many companies in the luxury sector are committed to advancing good social, environmental, and animal welfare practices, including sustainable sourcing practices. And because many of these companies offer footwear, clothing and accessories made from leather, there are important implications for tanners in these strategies of these companies'. They are already looking quite far ahead.

Luxury brands, including the biggest in the industry, are already thinking about how consumers will perceive their products five years from now, according to Guy Morgan, a director of BSR, the not-for-profit organisation that runs the Sustainable Luxury Working Group. This group, whose list of members includes Cartier, Chloé, Kering, LVMH, Mulberry and Ralph Lauren, is committed to advancing good social, environmental, and animal welfare practices in their business operations, including sustainable sourcing practices. Its members discuss common environmental, social, and “governance challenges” facing the luxury sector, and aim to promote transparency, knowledge sharing and collaboration across common areas of their supply chains.

Based in Paris, Mr Morgan addressed the 2014 CICB Sustainability Forum in Brazil in August. He said: “Brands think that in five years’ time they will gain market share if their products are placed in a sustainable lifestyle context. Sales will go through the roof, or at least they hope they will.”

His view is that brands and their suppliers, including tanners, need to start working together now to “co-create” what will constitute a sustainable lifestyle in the first place and then “create products that fit into that paradigm, rather than just create in a vacuum.”

However, for a brand just to say its products fit into that paradigm will not be enough, and nor will it be enough for tanners just to claim that the leather they supply supports the



Guy Morgan, director of BSR, believes that any company that refuses to reveal the entire truth about its products and about its supply chain will attract suspicion.

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strategy: actions, in these cases, will speak much more loudly than words. "We really do live in a new era," Mr Morgan says, "and transparency and transformation are everywhere. You can say that it's an era in which everyone is naked; and if everyone is naked, you have to be buff."

This is his way of saying that any company that refuses to

reveal the entire truth about its products and about its supply chain will attract suspicion, and will face competition from rivals who are happy to have everything on show because not only are they proud of the way they look themselves, they believe their appearance will win them new admirers. "I would go as far as to call this hyper-transparency," Mr Morgan continues. "Stakeholders and customers have access to all the information and interpret it for themselves."

He says the supply chain used to be "the great unknown" for many luxury companies, but insists they have built up a strong understanding, at least of their first-tier suppliers, even if they still need to work at increasing the insight they have into suppliers further upstream, including, in the case of leather, livestock farms. He explains that early discussions among the members of the Sustainable Luxury Working Group have focused on leather from python and other lizards, on ostrich and other exotics; they have reasoned that if consumers are going to pay \$20,000 for a handbag, they might ask for quite detailed information about how the bag was made and, if they do, the brands had better have their answers ready. At the same time, it means that if one of the brand's designers decides she or he wants to use lizard in a new jacket, for example, the company's sustainability team will probably already have a risk-mapping report prepared.

Questions are coming up now on bovine leather, he affirms, for the same reason: consumers want to know. Gauging the attitude of consumers is the hardest mystery of all to solve, he says, calling this "the great unknown squared".



MINGXIN

Senior roles at Mingxin

Automotive leather producer Mingxin is seeking to recruit leather professionals for a range of key roles within the company.

Mingxin already employs more than 400 people at its facility in Jiaxing, Tannery of the Year for China in 2014. We are now searching for people who can help us support our fast growing business in China and internationally.

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QUALITY DIRECTOR - CHINA

Candidates should have a good understanding of automotive requirements and strong leadership qualities.

Good knowledge of Mandarin & English is a must.

SALES DIRECTOR - GERMANY

Candidates should have a good understanding of automotive requirements, good relationships with automotive OEMs and strong leadership qualities.

Good knowledge of English & German is a must.

SALES DIRECTOR - DETROIT, USA

Candidates should have a good understanding of automotive requirements, good relationships with automotive OEMs and strong leadership qualities.

Good knowledge of English is a must.

LEATHER TECHNICIANS - CHINA

Candidates should be graduates of the German or UK tannery schools and experienced in the production of automotive leather.

Good knowledge of Mandarin & English is required. Applicants should be strong in finishing or in wet-end operations.