Luxury and Sustainable Development
Opposites or two sides of the same coin?

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Abstract

This piece discusses the issues that luxury is facing regarding sustainable development perspective. If luxury and sustainable development seem to be opposites, common values gather them. By thinking beyond preconceptions, the goal of this work is to show the complementarity of two main notions in our society today. I have been helped by many reviews for this work that contribute to enrich the analysis and broaden my horizon concerning luxury and sustainable development knowledge. It is possible for luxury industry to follow a sustainable development strategy.

**Keywords:** Luxury; sustainable development; sustainability; brand;
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Last but not least, I will be forever grateful to my parents who gave me the chance to pursue my dreams and travel all around the world. They are the reason of who I became and I will never let them down. I dedicate this paper to them.
Introduction

Sustainable development is the most important challenge for our present and future generations. We all agree on the fact that the Planet has met some serious disasters the past century because of human's activities. Since the Industrial Revolution back in the 19th century, scientific progress has not stopped improving and the advance in technology has increased the economic growth of the world. However, the downside of this evolution is that now we are facing the impacts and consequences of centuries of environmental disrespect and polluting production means. Since the 1980's, when the notion of sustainable development appears, people and companies' behavior and habits started to change toward more environmental friendly choices regarding the growing global issues in the world such as environmental pollution (air, water, food...), overpopulation leading to poverty, scarcity of natural resources, global warming...

Every industry seems to have understood the importance of sustainable development in the recent decades. Indeed, consumers in all social classes are increasingly concerned about social and environmental issues and prefer ethical and green products that reflect their own values and beliefs. Therefore, business models are evolving toward a more sustainable development perspective. Somehow, there is still one industry that is lagging behind the other regarding sustainable commitment: the luxury industry. Luxury has been present since the dawn of times and is very anchored in some cultures and countries but, nevertheless, the industry has received much attention from sustainable development activists and watchgroups. Indeed, the criticisms did not take long to come since luxury is seen as being wasteful, eccentric and irresponsible for the happiness of few elite people. Many people have trouble to see how luxury can be sustainable because of concepts possessing fundamentally different basis.

This thesis helps us to show how much sustainable development and luxury industry have in common by accentuating our analysis on the true sense of luxury concept. This subject is crucial since luxury has the power and the influence to be the new patriarch of sustainable development democratization in our society. We
are going to see how luxury is not what common beliefs are saying it is by developing its origins and its true meaning.

In a first phase, we will introduce luxury world as a first chapter and get a global view on its origins and its market. Fundamentals of luxury brands will be approached in order to understand what is the real essence of luxury. Secondly, we will see to what extent sustainable development is a challenge for luxury and also what solutions luxury can bring to environmental issues. We will describe the two notions and their shared values in order to determine that luxury and sustainable development are complementary despite all the negatives opinions on the subject. To finish, a case study on the brand Stella McCartney has seen useful to understand how difficult it is to proclaim oneself to be sustainable.
Literature review

- **Luxe Oblige, V. Bastien & J.N. Kapferer, 2014, Eyrolles.**

  I have to say that the main source of information and knowledge during my researches was the book *Luxe Oblige* written by Vincent Bastien and Jean-Noël Kapferer, 2014, Eyrolles. This book is not a simple publication on which I can find many materials on my subject; it is a true bible regarding luxury strategy. *Luxe Oblige* gets its content from the experience of its author, truly reputed in the fields of marketing, management and luxury.

  To have an overview of the book, I will list the main subjects approached and why this publication is a real reference on luxury:

  - It completes and goes deeply into "the forbidden law" of luxury marketing
  - Why it is not enough to do premium or expensive fashion in order to do luxury
  - It compares the luxury issues in developing countries from developed countries.
  - It asks the question of the reasonable use of Internet and social medias for luxury if it does no want to loose its specificity
  - It covers the challenge of sustainable development
  - And finally it asks the question of luxury brand outside of Occidental countries.

  I have found this book more than useful for my work. It has brought me the essentials in luxury. The main chapter that I have referred to are the chapter one on Luxury history; the chapter 4 on the different sides of luxury today; the chapter 8 mainly on the product; the chapter 9 on the price strategies; the chapter 15 on the part of sustainability as well as the conclusion that gives a last definition of what could be luxury with sustainable development.

  To bring a certain criticism to the publication even though I find the work remarkable and I admire such big names; I would say that when it comes to talk
about luxury issues in any domain, the text is rather vague and I felt that it was missing some negatives parts.


Anew, I have used a work from the famous author J.N. Kapferer. I will firstly give a quick resume about him since his name appeared quite often in my work.

J.N. Kapferer, French professor at HEC Paris, is reputed as world academic expert on luxury. He holds executive seminars on the luxury strategy in the USA, China, Japan and Korea. He wrote many books and review such as *Strategic Brand Management,* his best seller.

All That Glitters is not Green: The challenge of sustainable luxury is questioning the correlation between two concepts and their similitudes and differences: luxury and sustainable development. By reading the article, the reader understands that the two concepts join in many ways, even more than expected.

It explained how the industry of luxury has recently been a target for sustainable development and for public criticism. Considering that this business area is regarded as the most resources wasteful as well as the most unequal socially. However, luxury is more than that and I think that J.N. Kapferer explained it with sense.

Indeed, luxury industry as mentioned before has been criticized for lagging behind in terms of moderation and conservation of natural resources. This pressure has finally made luxury industry move toward a more responsible path.

J.N. Kapferer insists clearly on the fact that Luxury industry is not the most harmful and is the enemy of mass consumption and throwaway society.

Besides the difference between premium and luxury strategy is very well highlighted in this article.

Brands tend to adopt more and more a sustainable development perspective and business model. The author talks also about another side of his opinion. Sustainable development can bring some difficulties for luxury brands
due to their premium quality and excellence is not the first value of sustainable development. The reputation of luxury group or brand may be degraded.

J.N. Kapferer is a real master concerning luxury. Its analyses are really helpful in a way that they are realistic, meaning that they explained both sides of a subject. Besides, there are always many examples that confirm his statement in this article.
Luxury is not an industry like the others. Before being a product or a market, luxury is a culture that needs to be understood in order not to mix its fundamentals concepts. If tools from the marketing society nowadays are being useless on luxury sector, it is because basis from the latter are deeply different from the mass consumption market or any fashion or premium market. Luxury industry is way more complicated than any other industry and this chapter will help us to know better about it.

In this part, we are revealing what luxury truly is, by beginning to define where luxury comes from and what weight it has in the world in the late decades. This analyze will guide us to an understanding on how to approach the concept of luxury and how people have often a false image of it.

In this chapter, the book named “Luxe Oblige” by Jean-Noël Kapferer and Vincent Bastien written 2014 was very useful. A literature review of their publication is written at the end of the chapter.
A) An overview about the industry

1 - Luxury in Time and Space

Far from being a recent phenomenon, typical of our occidental societies, luxury goes back to the origins of humanity. This part gives us the understanding of luxury as part of social processes.

A Brief History...

Let's go back to the very first origins of luxury. Since the dawn of time objects with great values were found in tombs. Dead people were buried with their most beautiful sepulcher, reflection of their existence, their power and their importance in the society at a given time of their life: jewels, divines objects, food and animals. Those objects were supposed to accompany the deceased person after death.

Therefore, from the first light of humanity, it appears clearly that some groups of people, societies, leaders were present and objects, signs, and life styles were reserved to socially dominant persons. Consequently, socialization and luxury have been pairs since the beginning and it clearly refers to humanity and life in society. It is thanks to the apparition of such groups and practices that we can understand the origins of luxury in the birth of civilization.

The Ancient Egypt has widely practiced luxury codes and invented many techniques in order to make a reality the idea of luxury. The hierarchized and stable society with codes and rules of life very precise have been found in this area of the world and very well preserved thanks to the arid climate. One of the most famous and ancient discoveries was the very first use of glass to protect perfumes.

Two aspects of luxury are clearly seen in Ancient times: during life and the afterlife. During the life of the person, luxury was shown with any ways and remarkable inventions possible such as perfumes reserved to pharaohs, gods, and priest... After death, it was even more spectacular: pyramids, tombstones of the
Valley of Kings and the Valley of Queens. Most sophisticated and yet technical inventions were made in order to ensure the pursuit of splendor after death.

Beyond the mystical aspect of luxury in ancient times, it was a powerful motor of artistic and technical discoveries that bloom in the society. For example, pyramids were not made by the result of slavery but by creative engineers and competent workers. Pharaohs’ luxury were not made by slaves but by skilled men

(Found objects in Egypt beside the grave of Queen Khant Kaous III)

If we step forward in time, the period that is relevant for luxury is the 19th century. During 18th century, many disruptions occurred in the domain of philosophy and sociology, and those changes have had effects on luxury in the next century.

Adam Smith with his liberalism theory was very favorable for trade and luxury as motor of the economy. He brought the first legitimization of luxury as improvement means for all.

The general democratization at the end of the 18th century will open doors to everyone. Thereafter, the Industrial Revolution brought a considerable increase of living standard and will give financial means to more and more people. Those individuals will have better possibilities to reach luxury goods. Finally, the women emancipation all along the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries will also help the economy of luxury to expend itself. The acceptance of luxury was from “female” and peaceful societies. As centuries are progressing, the situation will go
in favor of luxury's legitimization and be on the rise. The latter is not even complete in our societies but the change is irreversible.

**Luxury’s democratization...**

From the beginning of humanity to the early 18th century, luxury world was isolated from the rest of the economy and its pleasures reserved to a small group of elite people. Starting from the 20th century, this world stopped being isolated and began progressively to gain territory. Driving forces from the socio-economic evolution from the latter century have worked in the benefit of luxury: (Bastien and Kapferer: 2014: 25): Democratization, increase of buying power, globalization and communication.

First of all, the most important forces and which explains its current success is the democratization of luxury industry. This notion means that more people can get luxury items and that the “historical” social stratification is shading off. If more people can have access to luxury, it is a great opportunity for the industry (while paying attention to popularization of luxury). Then, the historical stratification of society is fading but not disappearing. It is apparent in architecture, art, linked to the status of powerful people and to luxury.

Secondly, the increase of buying power is the most evident way of growth of luxury industry. Since the 1950’s (after war period) this buying power exploded because of two factors: on one hand technologic progress and societies development causing enrichment, and on another hand the globalization involving the decrease of manufactured products’ prices.

Globalization is a double factor of development for luxury. Indeed, it has gave access to totally new products that can be source of luxury such as silk, spices, sugar for Occidental society in 16th century or French wines in the 19th century. New markets are opening: Japan was a considerable development for French leather goods market in the 1970’s. Besides globalization gives the destruction of social stratifications. It brings new cultures, new roots and ways of life. And a luxury product is all of that. By buying luxury goods from China, we acquire a plot of China imaginary. A luxury product is loyal to its roots.
Communication is the last of the big changes that has made evolved luxury industry. World medias development has shown the wealth of other culture on the world and the possibility of other ways of life. With communication, we share more than before through television, radio, travels... Doors are opening for people and the possibility to get a new life, free of choosing which one.

To conclude, we have seen the four most important factors of luxury industry's development: democratization, increase of buying power, globalization and communication. When they all work together, luxury economy is developing very well and fast. Luxury’s market is one of the most thriving.

2 - The market

First, let’s give a definition about luxury goods (from the Business Dictionary): “Products which are not necessary but which tend to make life more pleasant for the consumer. In contrast with necessity goods, luxury goods are typically more costly and are often bought by individuals that have a higher disposable income or greater accumulated wealth than the average.”

Luxury is a sector including various activities. We shall present these activities:
- Cultural market (Art market)
- Modes of transportations (cars, yachts, private jets)
- Goods (haute-couture, perfumery, leather goods, shoes, cosmetics, clock making, jewelry)
- Hobbies (cruises, luxury hospitality)
- Housing (luxury residences, luxury decoration)
- Food (spirits and wines, groceries and luxury restaurants)

We often state, “Luxury does not know the crisis” which is true in a sens: luxury industry is one of the few that has not known recession since a long time.
The economy in this industry is flourishing every year: it represents 191 billion of euros in 2011, in growth since 2010 (173 billion of euros)

Europe represents 36% of sales, America 30%, Pacific Asia (except Japan) 19.1% and Japan itself 10%. (Bain & Company)

The United States represent the biggest market with, in 2010, a total of 48 billion of euros (including 15 billion only for the city of New York). After comes Japan with 18 billion, then Italy with 17.5 billion, France with 13.3 billion, China with 9.6 billion and finally Russia with 4.7 billion. However, China should be from 2020 the first luxury consumer. Chinese tourists spend three times more in foreign countries than in their home country. The 15 million of the richest buyers (included one third of Chinese) generate 100 billion euros of purchases of luxury items, or on average 100.000 euros per person.

The world luxury goods market – which includes drinks, fashion, cosmetics, fragrances, watches, jewelry, luggage, handbags – welcomes each year 10 millions of consumers approximately. In total there are 330 millions of consumers in the market.

LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy), founded in 1987, is the largest luxury good producer in the world with over fifty brands, including Louis Vuitton, the brand with the world’s first designer label. The LVMH group made a revenue of 30.6 billion in 2014.
B) Understanding the fundamentals

This part teaches about luxury products and what are the main characteristics of it. We will see that the answers are totally different from any product of other industries. A luxury good is related to dream, which makes it very subjective to analyze. We will see how much importance a brand is in the luxury sector.

1- What makes a product a luxury goods?

A luxury goods is not a simple product but is made of complex characteristics that we are going to define.

Firstly, we need to understand what the qualifications of a product are without being a luxury one. There are three aspects of a product: the use value, the trade value and the labor value. In the luxury case, the most relevant is the third one. Besides, it is not by adding more money to a product that it will become a luxury one. There are many items with very high value, which are not excessively expensive. Luxury is rather a “know how to spend”, than a “capacity to spend”.

The use value is obviously related to the functionality of the products. From this point of view, a luxury bag is not more worthy than a standard one from a fashion brand such as Zara or H&M. Historically, luxury is not generally functional but rather aesthetically, sensual, and is related to hedonism, culture and sacred. We reduce an object to its functional aspects and to a performance. Luxury is apart from this category.

Secondly, the trade value concerns the price and as said before, it is not the price that makes luxury and it will never be. That aspect is what differentiates high-end fashion from luxury.

What is really interesting in this part is the labor value that characterizes luxury world. The conception of a luxury goods is generally unique and there is a
A mix of elements required such as a lineage, an inheritance, a unique conception that has to be respected carefully from a founder. Added to that, a luxury good need to have some ingredients being rarity, a protected know-how, craftsperson with exclusive skills that need many years to be acquire and a procedure unique to a brand. We demonstrate the luxury of the product by the guarantee of the implemented ways upstream. For example, luxury watches are characterized by an incessant search of complexity without being complex to use it self. That is why luxury sector needs to have experts and passionate sale force. It needs time to explain in order to appreciate the unrivalled value behind a product. (Bastien and Kapferer : 2014 : 133)

Beyond all of that, a luxury goods has a notion of dream. Before explaining this aspect, it is crucial to refer to Maslow Pyramid.
(The Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a theory proposed by Abraham Harold Maslow in his 1943 paper A Theory of Human Motivation. Maslow, a famous psychologist tried to understand human motivation) - Communicationtheory.org

From this model, we can determine three level of the relation to the object: the need, the desire and the dream. The domains of prestigious brand are the desire and the dream.

From this perspective, the product is equivalent to a need that needs to be satisfied the quickest (ex: hunger or illness). The role of the basic product is to answer at this need at lowest cost. Need is objective (Bastien and Kapferer: 2014 : 249). Then, the brand product answer to the notion of desire, wish. Desire is subjective. For example, one is thirsty but he does not want water to satisfied his need, but desire a beer from the brand Leffe. The desire needs to be well maintained. It is the role of advertisement and brand to do that.

Finally, luxury product is related to the dream. This one is consubstantial to human. It does not need to be satisfied and it is sometimes its only existence that makes the person happy. The dream is out of time and last sometimes forever (for example, the dream of travelling). The dream is beyond the need or the desire. The role of a luxury good is to answer to the dreams of one individual and not to his needs or desires.
2 - No luxury without a brand

A brand is the soul of a luxury firm and is an integral part of a luxury product. It cannot be dissociated.

Indeed, luxury goods are luxury brands’ products. Only a diamond is an object appreciated without a brand. What will matter is its size and its purity. For everything else, a luxury brand goes above a product. It build itself by its reputation and its service: it is actually a signature. Moreover, the brand of a luxury firm has a very particular role: it refers to a social and cultural stratification and then makes the buyer a special person, apart from others. The brand’s function is also to recreate the difference. Therefore, it is a social “visa”. It is not enough to be expensive to be luxury; it needs to be equipped of a cultural “seal” which is the brand.

Before being a luxury brand, it is before a brand then we can add the luxury adjective. It is what differentiates from artisans. For example, India owns a very qualitative crafts but by lack of infrastructures (no roads, unsteady electric network...), the luxury industry does not develop itself and the country does not have luxury brand.

The luxury brand is founded by a person whose name is often part of the brand (ex: Coco Chanel, Guerlain, Hilton Hotels...). Its world is as complex and rich as a human’s personality. As a personality, we cannot “launch” a brand; it shapes little by little, builds a reputation and a network with time.

Finally, a brand has ancestors, a history and cultural and geographic roots. That’s why it is important to know where it comes from, what country is it from because we can understand the cultural context in which it is anchored. A country is a culture and an art of living.

In traditional marketing, a brand is define by its positioning. Nevertheless, luxury does not fit into that. The luxury brand creates its own world as we said before and this world will make the customer dreams and be immersed. The brand seeks to be faithful toward an identity rather than be preoccupied with superiority of a competitor. What luxury is afraid of is imitation because it would lose its
unique character. Even if the customer compares the brands, the brand does not seek to compare to each other.

Building a brand is building a perception. Luxury is social symbolic and a support to a cultural universe. It offers a self-elevation, on one hand, in the innermost of a person and on another hand, in the image that the buyer provides for others. Therefore the identity of the brand contributes to the construction of the customers’ identities.
II) Sustainable Excellence: A Real Challenge

The title of this chapter matches perfectly the reality. Sustainable development is the first priority for our planet since we know our vital resources are getting scarcer. It is asked for all economic sectors to change their production patterns and to change it fast. Many companies in the world are changing their business model in order to be more complementary with an ethical business view. However, there is one industry that has received a lot of criticism, more than other sectors in the recent years: the luxury sector. Indeed, luxury has recently been a target for public criticism, NGO and activists from sustainable development party. Even though luxury sector has been the most exemplary towards environmental resources, it is a misunderstood world that many people mix with fashion and haut-de-gamme market.

GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK

In this second chapter, we will see to what extent luxury has been an easy target for sustainable development activists and how the world are confusing on the real purpose and ideology of the industry. We will also give some real sustainable solutions to the social and environmental issues that luxury has met. Secondly, we will therefore explain to what extent sustainable development and
luxury have more in common than expected and share four important value of sustainable excellence.

**A quick reminder**

Before continuing on the theme of sustainable excellence, it is clearly necessary to set up the context and remind the different facts about environment and sustainable development in the world today. I will start with a brief introduction on the subject.

Sustainable development is not a new concept and was defined in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development as: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

This area encompasses many fields such as economy, environment and social equity within the limits of the world's natural resources. It exists since many decades but unfortunately, humans are acting in its favor since a few years and now it has become an urgent situation to deal with since the natural resources of the world are scarcer than it used to be.

Given the growing concern for sustainability during the 1980s, consumption habits started turning towards more environmental friendly choices, so to reduce the impact of everyday life on the earth. In the 1980s, people started considering the growing global problems that were investing the world, such as the uncontrolled environmental pollution, overpopulation, the scarcity of natural resources, drought and famine.

For instance, the statistics are quite outrageous:

- 1.3 billion people do not have access to clean water in the world
- 80% of humanity lives with less than 10$ a day
• There is more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere today than at any point in the last 800,000 years and global warming is one consequence to that fact.
• Pollution kills more than 1 million seabirds and 100 million mammals every year.
• United States produces 30% of the world's waste and uses 25 % of the worlds natural resources
• Near 80% of old primitive forest on Earth are already gone due to some practices such as illegal exploitation for example.
• More than 1 million species have become extinct
• 80% of all tourism takes place in coastal areas, with beaches and coral reefs amongst the most popular destinations, which represents a huge threat for marine ecosystems and species. (Mass tourism)

A) A Global Change/ New State of Mind?

The challenge of sustainable development for luxury company is one of the most difficult but not impossible: luxury brands need to rely on artisanship, authenticity and environmental/social respect. Several brands are now making their first steps towards sustainable luxury clothing and accessories, as Stella McCartney, Salvatore Ferragamo and Vivienne Westwood even though luxury industry has been the target of many criticisms lately.

1 – Luxury industry under great pressure

Sustainable development is a major challenge nowadays for our planet. In the Article “All That Glitters is not Green: The Challenge of sustainable luxury” by Jean-Noël Kapferer, another definition is given, it says: “Sustainable development is a global concept promoting a society that can persist over generations [...]

Metropolia University of Applied Science  Lara Elfadel
Beyond ecology, sustainable development promotes the conservation of biodiversity, of natural resources, and is also concerned with social equity.”

The luxury sector has always been a target for criticism from sustainable activists. Indeed, the terms that come to mind when we evoke luxury are those of excess, pleasure, insouciance and waste which are quite contradictory with the notions of conservation, consciousness and ethic that sustainable development advocates. When all the economic sectors have made many steps towards sustainability in the past decades, luxury industry was lagging behind.

However, since 2000, luxury groups have become more engaged into sustainable development and reported their actions in responsibility reports. An increase of conferences on luxury and sustainable development has been seen and it becomes evident even an obligation to take this direction for all sectors and luxury sector don’t have to feel different about it.

Luxury business has often been poorly regarded because of this lack of concern. The critics have as well been directed towards consumer behaviors. Luxury industry consumers are rich and their energy consumption per capita is considered as disproportionate (Kapferer 2010). Besides, luxury purchases are by definition irrational. Sometimes customers are buying objects that they don’t necessarily need. As said before, luxury means literally excess in Latin (luxus: excess). We can understand therefore why some people are saying that luxury and sustainability are two opposite concepts from this proof. Excess is massively blamed by sustainable development perspective when self-restraint is one of their mottos. Besides, luxury is viewed as the most unequal sector in the world and since sustainable development advocates social equity, it creates a tension between the two protagonists. Luxury sector owns the highest growth margin of all industries. What is evident is that luxury companies are not interested in cost reduction but rather in creation of value. Indeed, from a sustainable development opinion, luxury is a way to destroy collective capital (Kapferer 2010), meaning
“natural resources which cannot be replaced” for customer’s own personal pleasure.

Nevertheless, the luxury world has always been concerned about sustainability issues and it is even now a priority for big groups. The problem is that the latter do not talk much about their actions. Indeed, luxury brands and companies are slow “to engage on communication” (Kapferer 2013). Their discretion is seen as if they were uninvolved in the case. In general, luxury brands do not communicate much and it is a part of their character to be restrained. It builds and maintains this image of independence and admiration that luxury owns compared to other sectors. By avoiding diffusing too much information about themselves, they seek to create the dream life they are selling. Besides, sustainable development activists criticize them but the real reason is that their visibility is very high and therefore it is easier to blame. Their symbolic power is much more important than their economic weight compared to other industries in the world. We have to remind that the public attraction from this sector is linked to its high profile consumers such as VIPs and celebrities whose influence are very strong in the society. Therefore, it is possible that luxury brands encourage middle class people to buy items they can barely allow.

Luxury industry is made of exceptional purchases. Those purchase are often made to escape reality and identify to the brand ideology. Those customers do not question about manufacturing and supply chains where as for repetitive day-to-day purchases, people tend to have more sustainable consciousness.

Activists have lacked of emphasis. There is a presence of bigger issues and source of concern in other industries such as the fashion industry.
2 – Difference between two worlds

Luxury is sometimes wrongly blamed. Indeed, to many times fashion or premium sector is mistaken with luxury sector. It is necessary to differentiate them.

“The word luxury has become so fashionable, many companies use it to justify their own existence” (Kapferer 2010)

Some activists have lacked of judgment face to luxury world. There is a presence of bigger issues in other industries and one of them is the fashion one. Some people often confused premium brands with luxury one but it is important to say that luxury companies are following a certain business model created by pioneers like Rolex, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Hermes, etc. Fashion or premium brands are following another one. Real luxury means the creation of high value through rarity and uniqueness where the customer is someone out of the extraordinary, a person of taste and elegance. Luxury standard business model don’t use de-localization as a way to minimize costs as a fashion or premium brands would do. Likewise, luxury sector need to keep its experienced and skilled craftspeople and even sometimes they need to teach again the way to product with a specific know-how, which differs totally from the fashion industry where unskilled labor forces are manufacturing in mass. It is incidentally this mass-production that is harming the environment and which activist groups are mainly blaming. The luxury industry is not a mass market one. It is a business of lasting worth and of value, which by the way reflects the idea of durability that sustainable development claims.

Besides, the word luxury is also used by brands which do not represent this label (for example, the cosmetic brand L’Oréal only sold in supermarkets). It is a fact that all luxury brands have adopted the goal of being a model in sustainable development and they produce environmentally friendly products and services, which we are going to see later in this report. People often confuse fashion industry and luxury industry where as they are not similar at all. Fashion industry is an ephemeral industry, of superficiality, illusion and looks. This industry plays a key role in the economy nowadays but its ethic code is not the best. Moreover,
there is generally a hasty thought concerning the need to be noticed and social differentiation. These two elements are often the basis of fashion and luxury strategy where as they have different fundamental aspects: time relation (durability opposite to perishable) and self-relation.

To understand the difference between fashion, premium and luxury, I have found a diagram that explains very well how a product is positioned in each category. (Bastien and Kapferer: 2014, Distinguer luxe, mode et premium: triangle des positionnements)
3 – Sustainability issues and solutions

“Some luxury brands are accused of compounding this unnecessary and unsustainable waste of natural resources by fuelling unfulfilled desire.” – Deeper Luxury Report

Luxury is neither all white nor black; it has some improvements axes on sustainable development that need to be clarified. The major criticisms that meet luxury refers to hidden parts of supply chain (Kapferer 2013):

- Raw material sourcing (ex: 95% of used gold don’t have any traceability guarantee; skins from rare animal species from Bangladesh, India or China do not have any sort of traceability) (Bastien and Kapferer : 2014)
- Animal treatments
- Human work conditions
- Manufacturing methods polluting the local environment (ex: mercury’s sediment discharged in rivers by gold’s smugglers or chromium by illegal tanneries.)
- Destruction of the environment

Numbers and facts are real when it comes to highlight how much luxury world industry arouses reprehensible behaviors from fastidious providers. A lot of illegal practices are present in luxury industry and made by smugglers in order to finance wars’ effects such as weapons, for example in Africa. Those facts are giving a wrong reputation to large luxury companies.

Additionally, as said before, activists from sustainable development such as NGO are blaming the industry for its impudence. But many people don’t understand why luxury industry is doing so well and is always avoiding the worst in economic crisis. This mystery is carrying therefore some attractiveness. The
economic growth of luxury sector is never down and the margins are always up. It piques curiosity not to know how this industry works. That’s why those sustainable development defenders are attacking the industry on their ethics and moral code.

Three aspects of luxury seem to be in contradiction with sustainable development perspective and ethics, which are: waste, overexploitation of scarce resources and slavery. (Bastien and Kapferer: 2014: 448)

Some aspects of luxury are quite shocking such as waste in the industry. Some rich personalities own helicopters, private jets or big sedan cars whose CO2 productions are quite enormous and the amount of pollution in the air is excessive. This being said, luxury has great advance regarding sustainable development. For example, in cars production, luxury industry can offer electric or hydrogen motor and democratize it. The car Tesla is an example. Comfortably off customers are powering this movement of democratization when they buy items like this. The fact that they are insensitive to very high costs can bring a production more and more important in terms of volume and then, the drop of price would allow a bigger range of customer to acquire it. This phenomenon, when rich people want to show their advance, is called “conspicuous altruism” (Bastien and Kapferer: 2014). In anyways, luxury can permit sustainable development to be democratized and generalized because, overtime, mass production of sustainable development items would be more and more reachable. It is true that ecologic products for example are more expensive than standard ones. To come back to waste in the industry, where resources (such as out of season product) are misused and pollution is blameworthy, it would rather be related to “bling-bling” luxury which is not considered as “real” luxury. Luxury is permanently seeking for quality and those non-ethic behaviors are condemned by luxury industry.

The electric car Tesla
Then, for the second point of criticism, it is important to remind that some people misunderstand luxury notion. Indeed, one common thought is to believe that “everything that is rare is therefore expensive”. This statement is not a “slogan” for luxury industry and has never been. The people who combine luxury and this motto are people who buy products from endangered species such as Tiger skin from Siberia, wild caviar, ivory from elephant tusk... Sometime their only value is their rarity, the raw material being useless itself (for example, rhinoceros horn). This phenomenon is clearly a total misunderstanding of what luxury is. In order to alter this situation, luxury has international and national solutions such as sturgeon farming for eggs, ostrich farming, and crocodile farming for skins instead of illegal practices. Besides, luxury can also be a source of rescue for some population and culture. For instance, goats farmers from North India have a work due to the success of cashmere or the fish skins that tribes are usually throwing away is now sold to big luxury companies at high price and maintain the level of life of those tribes. This is a value creation from luxury industry. The cow leather used by Louis Vuitton and other big luxury houses is picked up from slaughterhouses where as in the beginning it is just a residue.

Additionally, a luxury strategy imposes a non-outsourc production and then products are manufactured in a legitimate place, in good labor conditions with respected and skilled craftsperson.

Thirdly, the criticism on working conditions and exploitation of workers is a big issue in luxury world. Some products from the industry are symbolic, such as precious stones and own their rarity from the difficulty of extraction, which is a source of “modern slavery” for miners. It can create strong conflicts and wars between diggers. However, there is a growing awareness in order to reduce those
issues. Luxury is a way to engage since the industry has a real weight on the society.

To conclude, a real luxury strategy brings real answers and solutions to criticisms. The industry is therefore compatible with sustainable development: it respects and protects Nature. We are going to extend this part further in part B)

In all times, luxury industry has always been seen with a bad look. Some are convinced of its sins but they often mistake different industries, which are fashion, premium and luxury industry. We have seen that those sectors owns totally different characteristics and the luxury world seek for quality and this goes through a very detailed strategy where ethic code is not forget and is a real concern. A true luxury brand seeks to maximize brand uniqueness and control the entire value chain. It is logical that sustainable development pays more attention to it since some “fake” luxury brand are acting like mass producers by outsourcing in China for example. In another hand, luxury world owns disequilibrium such as hotel located in poor countries where water and food are very rare.
B) Durable Luxury

This part shows on what extent luxury and sustainability are not two opposing concepts but have a lot to share. We will also help us from the work of the professor Wiedmann which study is based on the consumers perceptions of the performance of luxury brands based on four dimensions: the financial, functional, individual and social dimensions of luxury value.

1- Two concepts that shares more than expected

The meaning of luxury is manifold and its definition is nuanced. It can be define as “an idealized life beyond necessity, needlessly expensive or intimate exceptions of self-indulgence” (Kapferer: 2013: 2). A vast number of studies have tried to analyze this definition but the subjective character makes it difficult to explain correctly.

However, we can retain the definition given by Jean-Noel Kapferer: “ Well crafted, hedonistic and aesthetic objects [or services], priced excessively above their functional utility, sold in exclusive stores delivering personal service and unique consumer experience, most often from a brand with history, heritage, the whole delivering a rare feeling of exclusivity [...] and a social function. Luxury is tied to the social hierarchy.”

Luxury is often associated to negatives notions (or as a negative manner) such as excess, lack of concern, overconsumption, irrational purchases, inequality, waste and frivolity (Francois-Henri Pinault, Conference on Sustainable Luxury, 2009) and consequently, luxury attracts special attention as we have seen previously. People tend to strongly believe that luxury is the most unethical industry of all and is completely opposite to the concept of sustainable development. However, a deeper analysis reveals how much luxury and sustainable development have in common. Before explaining this aspect of the analysis, let’s take a look to sustainable development values.

Sustainable development advocates notions such as ethic, collectivity, conservation of natural resources, durability, respect, etc. The definition from the
World Commission on Environment and Development ("meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs") emphasizes on the consumption of resources while preserving them.

This is a representation of the foundation of sustainable development:

All industries, including luxury, need to preserve rare materials, guarantee safe manufacturing of their products, avoid pollution and respect workers. It challenges companies from the supply chain to the retail.

In the article "Is Luxury Compatible with Sustainability? Luxury consumers’ viewpoint" by Jean-Noel Kapferer, sustainability is resumed as a "triple bottom line" including: economic profitability, respect for the environment and social responsibility.

We can now assume that luxury and sustainable development share values such as rarity and beauty. In the article All That Glitters is not Green: The challenge of sustainable luxury, the author states that the real essence of luxury is a high quality product, creativity and rare objects with good taste and elegance. Even though historically, luxury meant money and power, this aspect of luxury has
decreased a lot. Now the luxury value is based on rarity (but not only): rare skins, rare leathers, rare pearls, rare materials and rare craftsmanship. That’s why the luxury industry is resources dependent and “obsessed by the sustainability of its resources”. What should sustainable development activists really blame instead of luxury is the mass production society that threatens the resources of the planet. For instance, the over consumption of plastic packaging exceeds the recycling capacities of the world. Luxury’s packaging “is a tiny drop compared to this ocean of neglected ecological damages”. (Kapferer 2010: 41). Therefore, luxury industry is a true enemy of the throwaway society as said in the article.

Luxury is basing on a long-term perspective and is the business of durability. Its products are built to last and forgo obsolescence. For instance 90% of Porsches produced are still being driven (Kapferer: 2014: 41). Often the luxury houses are a century old and are related to a heritage that is a key characteristic of their value. Therefore, luxury is the business of lasting worth and has everything in common with sustainable development since it is at the heart of the latter to maintain a durable way of life. Consumers, who buy luxury object like bags for example, may tend to keep it longer than another one due to its high level of quality made by very skilled people. The value of one item is often inestimable in luxury industry but it can last forever.

More innovative luxury companies have made sustainable choices in parts of their businesses, for example:

- Hermès creation of Shang Xia, a Chinese luxury brand of elegant handcrafted decorative objects. By supporting local artisans in China, Hermès offers a modern and localized adaptation of authentic savoir-faire.
- BMW’s Efficient Dynamics technology was created to deliver reduced emissions and fuel consumption without compromising driving pleasure.
- The new concept of "glamping" (glamourous camping) proposed by brands like Luxethika or Edenismes
The Dior bag is made in Italy (excellent leather suppliers and know-how) from Italians bio-farms. Once sold the bag is put inside a recyclable package.

Tyffany is another example of taking sustainable development seriously because the source of their gems and the mining practices are carefully chosen. (no Burmese rubies). They support local communities and have great collaborative efforts.

Thierry Mugler's fragrance Womanity is taking care of its carbon print. Indeed, the brand now sells refillable products.

Dior cosmetic are forbidding the use of silicones in their products.

"Luxury is at its essence very close to sustainable preoccupations because it is nourished by rarity and beauty and thus has an interest in preserving them." - Jean Noel Kapferer.

Finally, we know that luxury consumers are often celebrities, VIPs or elite people that have influence over other people in the world: they are therefore opinion leaders. They can be a way to democratize sustainable development inside our societies since people are often following their acts. Those elite persons are now demonstrating ethical concerns and “substitute an ethical stratification to power stratification” (Kapferer: 2010: 44). They care about their own reputation by being careful not endorsing brands that are not eco-friendly. Therefore they can stimulate fast change through the consumption of sustainable luxury.
2- Sustainable excellence: Four important values

If luxury companies have not yet realized the spread of sustainable development into business, then it is crucial that they changed their business model in order to adapt it to a more ethic and conscious one and therefore to respond to increasingly conscientious consumers. (Wiedmann & al: 2013)

“In times of economic recession and widely available counterfeit goods, with a sustainable strategy, luxury brands have to prove that their essence is rooted in more than having a nice (and easy to copy) logo.”

As we have seen previously, luxury is compatible with a sustainable strategy and is even complementary with the notion of durability that sustainable development is advocating. Therefore, as proposed by Wiedmann ( *Sustainability as Part of the Luxury Essence* - Delivering Value through Social and Environmental Excellence - 2013, Nadine Hennings, Klaus-Peter Wiedmann & al - Leibniz University of Hannover, Germany, ), this study is based on the consumers perceptions of the performance of luxury brands based on four dimensions: the financial, functional, individual and social dimensions of luxury value.
Financial value:

As everyone knows, luxury items are quite expensive. The financial dimension of luxury refers to the value of a product expressed in dollars, euros, yen, etc. Consumer in the luxury industry do not mind paying a tremendous amount of money for brands; brands that are expected to have a high quality of product and service, of taste and elegance that the brand image is supposed to provide.

Everything is more desirable in luxury industry since it is related at some point at the idea of dream. That is why the price strategy leads to high margins. In the article it is said that those high margins can “be used to finance more environmentally and socially responsible manufacturing.”

We know that luxury depends on limited resources and the scarcity of these resources is in a sense a good thing. Indeed, scarcity often leads to moderate consumption due to a limited supply of products. Therefore, “the scarcity of luxury products may convey the idea that luxury brands encourage more reasonable, responsible consumption and help protect natural resources” (Janssen & al: 2013: 3)

Functional value:

The functional dimension of luxury value is related to dimensions such as quality, uniqueness, usability, reliability and durability (Wiedmann & al 2007, 2009). This reveals again the affiliation between luxury and sustainability.

In many cases, luxury brands are inherited through generations (ex: jewelry and pieces of art) and for some products, an after-market exists (ex: the market of vintage Chanel clothes). Durability is not only the main characteristics of sustainable development; it is also the core of a luxury company. (Kapferer 2010)

In the article, four important areas are named in order to have a sustainable luxury brand management operational: the packaging, products, business operations and socially responsible activities. According to the packaging, Jean-Noel Kapferer argues that “the nice and sophisticated wrappings around luxury
products, as a symbol of a gift to oneself or another person, are a tiny drop compared to this ocean of neglected ecological damages, more so if the paper today is recyclable” (2010) (‘ecological damages’ refers to plastic packaging of mass consumer goods)

Besides, the notion of uniqueness is often related to inheritance. It means that the product last a long time due to the high quality standard of luxury. The basis of this high quality of material is excellent skills from craftsmanship and an authentic design. Creativity is also one of the core characteristics of luxury brands. More and more luxury design houses are becoming eco-friendly for their raw material. For example the leather contained in bags from Dior are from Italian bio farms, or the fashion stylist Stella McCartney uses only eco-friendly and recyclable materials for its collection.

The importance for the functional sustainability value is that the raw material but also the production process itself is following a sustainable strategy.

**Individual value:**

What we mean about individual value is the customer’s personal orientation. As we have seen before, a luxury brands can be a reflection of a consumer's personality and is therefore more than a product: it is a symbolic.

Sustainable consumption has gained important weight in the world in recent decades and consumers from luxury industry are people quite affluent and elitist that know about social, cultural and environmental issues around them. Therefore, those people expect that the luxury brand's environmental and social responsible is as concerned as they are since the brand is somehow a mirror to themselves. They want to feel good when they buy from a luxury brand a product rather than guilty.

Besides, the role of managers is really important because they need to ensure that the communication about the brand’s responsibility is well
maintained. Luxury brands or standard ones in the future need to focus on environment because if they don't they could lose a huge part of segmentation.

In summary, an excellent and well-communicated social and environmental performance is required to ensure individual sustainability value.

**Social value:**

According to the text, social dimensions of luxury value refers to the perceived utility individuals acquire with products or services recognized within their own social group(s) (Wiedmann 2007, 2009).

Luxury essential aspects such as prestige are affecting the evaluation of luxury brands because they improve a customer’s “status and generate benefits in social interactions”.

Consumers more turned towards sustainable and environmental concerns will think about the world around them when they buy a product from a certain luxury brand, and not only think about their social group. “Luxury helps people to express their deepest values as they gain experience and prestige”.

According to that, increasingly, leading luxury brands are taking steps in the direction of sustainable development and are introducing the idea of 'sustainable luxury' as an integral part of their own brand image. They have started to improve their social and environmental standards: for example by ensuring the well-being of their employees. The real issue and challenge for luxury industry is the conditions under which a luxury product’s raw material are extracted since its consumers are concerned way more than before about the product sources.
III) Case study: Stella McCartney, a challenging commitment


Stella McCartney is an English stylish originally London. She signed a contract with the brand Chloe in Paris in 1997 and became Creative Director for the fashion company. “A signature style of sharp tailoring, natural confidence and sexy femininity was immediately apparent in her first collection”. Since then, many prizes and recognition has been addressed to her and her brand. (for example: in 2012 she was elected British Designer of the Year by Harper’s Bazaar - Woman of the Year Awards or in 2009 she was honored by the Natural Resources and Defense Council in New York, etc)

In October 2001, Stella McCartney launched her own fashion house under her name in partnership with Kering (as a 50/50 joint venture).

The particularity of Stella McCartney is that she does not use any leather or fur in her collections. Her collections include women’s ready-to-wear, accessories, lingerie, eyewear, fragrance and kids.

“Stella McCartney’s commitment to sustainability is evident through-out all her collections and is part of the brand’s ethos to being a responsible, honest, and modern company”

A) A Strong Commitment

In their company statement, three main notions are represented as the values of the brand Stella McCartney: Responsible, Honesty and Modern.

We can understand easily the concept of responsibility for a brand that sustains material respectful of the environment and of animals. Impacts are very important for the brand and they always seek to become more innovative in order to reach
sustainability the best way possible. In this statement, they mention honesty in order to show that as a fashion brand, they are not perfect but they are always trying to be. “In many ways we are just beginning our journey towards becoming more sustainable, but we are dedicated to continuing our work towards being able to replace what we have taken from the environment”. This sentence is a perfectly good explanation. Thirdly, the term of modernity, Stella McCartney seeks to change people’s perceptions on eco-friendly fashion: “We think that sustainability can take the form of beautiful and modern clothing and accessories.”

“Our range of beautiful Noemi totes made in Nairobi, Kenya are produced with the International Trade Centre’s Ethical Fashion Initiative. The Initiative connects some of the world’s most marginalised people with the top of fashion’s value chain, for mutual benefit. It enables communities of artisans and small manufacturers [...]” Stella McCartney, 16th January 2013 on the Noemi Tote Bag (http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/printed-totes-made-in-kenya/)
B) **Actions towards sustainable development**

In order to show Stella McCartney’s implication in its beliefs, the brand has made some major actions:

- All Stella McCartney stores, offices and studios in the UK are powered by wind energy
- To power the Dallas store Stella McCartney uses TXU, who supplies 100% renewable energy, in combination with their rooftop solar panels
- The NYC Green Street store is powered by ConEdison Solutions who also supplies them with 100% renewable energy (coming from wind and hydro).
- The brand uses as much organic cotton as possible in its collections and they are always exploring new eco materials and processes. In 2012, 34% of their denim and 36% of their jersey for ready-to-wear was made from organic cotton and 50% of all knitwear for Stella McCartney Kids was organic.
- They created a carrier bag that is 100% biodegradable and made from corn
- In Miami, they are working on a tree planting initiative with Million Trees Miami and Bio Planet US. In 2012 they planted their first 20 full-grown trees in our Stella McCartney sponsored public park in Florida.
- Within the UK, all business taxi journeys are booked through Climate Cars – a service that uses only hybrid cars.
- Their signature wood flooring is made from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood, which means that it came from sustainably managed forests.
- They created a Green Guidebook in 2012 to help their stores run more sustainably.
- Etc.

(Source: [http://www.stellamccartney.com/](http://www.stellamccartney.com/))
She has also participated in many charities such as PETA, Meat Free Monday, Naked Heart Company, NSPCC, Comic Relief...

C) The reasons why

“As a designer I like to work with fabric that don’t bleed; that’s why I avoid all animal skins” – Stella McCartney

“Because skin is the most economically important co-product of the meat industry, buying leather directly contributes to factory farms and slaughterhouses—and all the cruelty involved.” – PETA

There are many reasons why Stella McCartney has chosen this kind of direction for her business. As a long lifetime vegetarian and animal rights activists, this is the logic behind the concepts and values of the brand.

Our reliance on meat and its by-products is not a sustainable life choice. This is what the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and NGOs such as PETA have discovered concerning our environmental impact. Beside it, this is also obvious that ethical issues are present concerning animal slaughterhouses.

According to Stella McCartney, producing a cloth containing animal skins, leather need 20 times the amount of energy to produce a coat with natural fiber or synthetic material. Moreover, the animal skins present in accessories and clothes are hiding some dangerous product such as caustic and toxic chemicals that prevent them from decomposing but which are very harmful.

The process of tanning that some leather-makers claim to be “biodegradable” or “eco-friendly”, is a false proclamation since the manufacturing methods “stabilizes the collagen or protein fibers so they actually stop biodegrading.” Besides, tanning requires massive amounts of energy and dangerous chemicals, including formaldehyde and coal tar derivatives, which can end up in nearby soil and water supplies. Groundwater near tanneries in
developing countries has been found to contain formaldehyde and cyanide causing cancer or some serious illness in the population and animals nearby. These toxic chemicals pose a deadly threat to those who work at the tanneries as well.

“Leather sourced from developing countries such as India and China may have come from animals who experienced untold suffering—such as being dismembered while they’re still conscious—since animal welfare laws there are either non-existent or not enforced. Stella avoids financing any of this barbarity by refusing to wear the skins of tortured animals.” - PETA

(Source: Stella McCartney’s Instagram)
D) Analysis

Stella McCartney is a real pioneer regarding sustainable development and protection of the environment and animal care. Indeed she is the first that has leaded the way to sustainable luxury at a period when luxury was lagging behind other industries. However, some criticism toward her work and practices.

The first thing that we can notice is that on her website, she states that producing non-leather products is more expensive than leather one. “About 70% of the work is done by hand, and depending on the style, it can cost us up to 70% more to make a pair of shoes than any other brand”. She explains that the work of skilled crafts persons is requiring more energy because of the technics used. This is then conforming to the value of equity that sustainable development claims since it is not more expensive to buy non-leather shoes for example. However, an issue is occurring regarding consumers: will they be ready to buy non-leather clothes at the same price of leather ones since we know fake leather has the reputation to be cheap. Without doubts, a part of customers adopt for the brand for ethical reasons but Stella McCartney is a niche market and it is probably very expensive for non-convinced people to buy her products.

Moreover, comes up the question about her positioning. We can ask ourselves why Stella McCartney is reproducing leather effect and propose same prices for her products. Those practices are the source of complicated researches: “Because of the scientific research that goes into creating these blended fibres and subsequently, their scarcity, innovative materials could be considered a true luxury, rather than leather, which has become a commodity.”

Stella McCartney is a luxury brand but does not follow a luxury strategy. Her main goal is not to use leather and animal skins. Then her customers should be appealed to the design more than materials and prices.

Consumers will not see the difference of design between a bag in PVC of a bottom-end company and a non-leather bag Stella McCartney like there is no difference between the two materials. Instead she should proposed completely different material other than imitation of leather. By imitating leather, it does not
place the brand in force position. It is obvious that it is only a matter of design (natural look). By melting away into the masses by producing non-leather product (imitation), Stella McCartney does not contribute to the elevation of other materials.

Finally, on her website, there is a real education regarding animal protection and environmental issues. She explains a lot about how animal are brutalized in the leather industry and social issues are numerous such as the toxicity of the industry for population and animals. (see part C) The Reasons Why)

Nevertheless, there is a risks in that educative communication: the public then expects that the creative designer Stella McCartney must be irreproachable concerning her way of life. Indeed, the founder of a luxury brand reflects the values of the brand (ex: she was very criticized when she was seen driving a 4x4 Range Rover). This is why some people are stating that Stella McCartney is not a sustainable development brand but a vegetarian brand. However, it is surely the only fashion house carbon neutral.

Besides we can reproach her lack of rigor concerning her materials: the requirement of not using leather or skins is more important than having eco-friendly materials. This shows that Stella McCartney is firstly a designer with strong ethics positions (even though lately she has had some trouble on the social media Instagram for having posting a photography of a anorexic woman wearing her collection.)

(Some of her campaign pictures on Instagram)
Despite her strong beliefs and actions toward a more sustainable luxury and fashion industry, Stella McCartney does not positioned as a luxury brand strategy. The brand, that is quite recent compared to pioneer luxury brands, is claiming being a sustainable brand where as she only communicates on her non-leather production. Her actions in charity, her communication about environmental and cruelty issues do not hide the fact that before everything, she is a designer and some of her products are not entirely sustainable.
Conclusion

All along this piece, we have seen that luxury poorly understood and that true luxury is not related to “bling-bling”. Far from being useless, luxury has a deep function in today societies: what can be seen as superficial at first glance is actually necessary so that humanity live in peace inside big communities (Bastien and Kapferer: 2014: 443).

Moreover, we have answered to the question of sustainability in luxury industry and have seen that the notion of durability present in the core of luxury products is the same value that sustainable development is advocating. A true luxury brand is the one that maximizes its brand uniqueness and controls the entire value chain in an ethical manner. Additionally, luxury is not the industry to blame but rather the one to give a chance because it offers an alternative to our societies since the products manufactured are made to last. This is a come back to true values that are uniqueness and timelessness. “Luxury brands have the margin and mandate to create the most environmentally responsible product” (Tungate 2009)

Luxury brands have shown more and more interest in eco-friendly practices. Consumer attitudes and corporate ones have changed during the past decades. It was important to accentuate the differentiation between fashion – premium and luxury industry, three world often mixed up. Luxury is a world where beauty meets rarity. It is not excess that advocate the industry but more accurately quality and lasting product. Sustainable development and luxury take rarity as their central concern and real luxury is by definition durable as we have seen in this work.

The case study on Stella McCartney showed that it is complicated to stand as a luxury brand and to have a sustainable development strategy. Nevertheless, the brand uses respectful material without harming animals, which goes in favor for sustainability. Luxury is in the good direction and by continuing toward this sustainable development path, the latter will finally be democratized in our society since luxury has a real weight in the economy.
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