

## *Journal of Business Ethics*

Call for papers for the Thematic Symposium on:  
**Perspectives on ethical and sustainable luxury: Opportunities and inherent tensions**

*Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019*

### **Guest Editors**

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### **Introduction to the Thematic Symposium**

Despite growing interest in ethical/sustainable consumption, the vast majority of studies focus on commodity purchases. For such products, drivers and barriers of consumer acceptance have widely been examined. However, to further increase ethical/sustainable consumption, it needs to be more widely adopted, including in the field of luxury consumption. Kollwe (2015) estimates the luxury product industry (including cars, fine art, leather goods, high fashion and jewellery) to be worth €1tn globally, and has a significant trickle-down effect onto organizational practice at a high-street level (Amatulli et al., 2017). However, it is under-represented in ethical/sustainability research despite attempts in the luxury sector to make it more responsible (Winston, 2016).

Seminal articles suggest that consumers value ethical features of luxury products less compared with commodity purchases, and that a different theoretical understanding needs to be established for the context of ethical luxury (e.g., Davies et al., 2012; Moraes et al., 2017). Indeed, sustainability criteria may even negatively impact on consumers' intention to buy sustainable luxury products (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013). In line with this, a lower willingness to pay a surcharge has been reported for sustainable goods, which are infrequently purchased, as opposed to frequently bought products (Cai and Aguilar, 2013). However, many luxury goods companies such as Gucci, Telsa, Armani, DeBeers amongst others are creating ethical product lines, or addressing systemic unsustainability in supply chains regardless of the research on limits of sustainable consumption in luxury markets. There is also the emergence of ethical marks such as the "Butterfly Mark" to identify ethical luxury products for the discerning luxury consumer.

Several reasons may underlie this contradiction between consumer research and corporate practice, which need to be empirically explored. For example, consumers may generally perceive sustainability (as a function of a product) and luxury (as an emotional response to aesthetic) as incompatible concepts (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau, 2014; Striet and Davies, 2013). Alternatively, the lack of supply-chain transparency and a history of human, animal and environmental abuse by luxury market segments makes consumers highly sceptical of ethical luxury claims (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau, 2014; Dekhili and Achabou, 2016). Nevertheless, many consider luxury markets to have negligible negative impact from an ethical perspective (Davies et al., 2012; Kapferer, 2010). Additionally, research suggests that

consumers of ethical products might be characterised by different value orientations than consumers of luxury products (e.g., Ajitha and Sivakumar, 2017; Andorfer and Liebe, 2012). Despite these first insights, it is time to systematically examine these and other factors underlying the acceptance of ethical/sustainable luxury.

Therefore, this Thematic Symposium pursues the compatibility of ethical/sustainable and luxury consumption from a consumer's point of view. Furthermore, it aims to provide researchers with a theoretical understanding of ethical/sustainable luxury production and consumption, and practitioners with guidance on how to promote ethical/sustainable luxury in order to achieve a more responsible future.

### **Prospective Themes**

Research questions and themes related to this Thematic Symposium include, but are not limited to:

- Do consumers value ethical/sustainable features of luxury products and services?
- To what extent can ethical/sustainable and luxury consumption be authentically combined, without inducing objections?
- How can the consumer of ethical/sustainable luxury products best be characterized?
- Do cultural differences exist regarding the preference for ethical/sustainable luxury?
- What drives and what hinders consumer acceptance of ethical/sustainable luxury?
- How do stakeholders react towards CSR initiatives of luxury brands?
- Does ethical/sustainable luxury consumption affect ethical/sustainable commodity purchases of both, the same individual and others?
- How can ethical/sustainable luxury consumption be theoretically explained, particularly when contrasting it to ethical/sustainable commodity purchases?
- Does the emergence of ethical/sustainable luxury labelling help or hinder the development of ethical/sustainable luxury markets?
- How are organizations, industry bodies and supply chain partners addressing ethical/sustainability concerns in the luxury sector?
- Are increased reporting requirements into modern slavery reshaping luxury supply chains?
- What role does the growth of online marketing and retailing have on ethical/sustainable luxury consumption?
- How can ethical/sustainable luxury be promoted in a digital environment?

### **Submission Instructions**

Submissions are welcomed from a variety of theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary perspectives, as long as they are closely in line with the topic of the Thematic Symposium. Author guidelines are provided on the website of the *Journal of Business Ethics*. Please note that all manuscripts need to be submitted through the Editorial Manager (<http://www.editorialmanager.com/busi/default.aspx>) by **31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**, whilst indicating that it is a submission to this Thematic Symposium.

If you have any questions about the Thematic Symposium, please contact the guest editors through the contact details provided above.

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