

le kimono



SUSTAINABLE ADVERTISING IN A POST PANDEMIC
FUTURE FOR THE LUXURY INDUSTRY

Much has been said about the detrimental effects the pandemic of 2019/2020 has had on our industry. Many high-end brands fear that it could permanently damage the marketplace they have come to inhabit and maybe even force them out of existence. However, we believe that this crisis has simply magnified underlying issues that many brands were already suffering from.

In this whitepaper we will explore what luxury, premium and fashion brands can learn from the Covid 19 crisis and how they can shift their advertising and creative strategy accordingly to help them survive.

Rather than dwelling on the negatives, we see this situation as the wakeup call that sleepwalking brands needed in order to make changes that give them a higher sense of purpose.

**“I look at every
crisis as an
opportunity”**

Jochen Zeitz

**CEO Harley Davidson, former
CEO Puma, Creator of the**

**“Environmental profit
and loss account”**



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But before brands can rise again and shine more brightly, it is important to look at why their light was at risk of going out.

Over the past years several trends had been driving changes in the market that had a creeping effect on luxury and premium brands.



Chinese Consumers

- who are increasingly young, knowledgeable about brands and looking for personalised experiences - became the fastest growth market for luxury.

Boundaries were being blurred

- as Millennial consumers - who interact with brands across a diverse range of touchpoints - changed the power balance between online and offline shopping.

Individualization

- became increasingly important as brands tried to address the unique needs of individual consumers by becoming a part of their personal lifestyles.

Category newcomers drove diversification

- as luxury consumers got younger, the market was evolving and innovating to meet their needs with novel product offerings.

Luxury brands were consolidating

- which results in diversified product offerings. This allows for increased competitiveness and the ability to enter new territories.

Cultural localization and personalization

- became increasingly important. Brands began acknowledging more diverse groups and investing in cultural localisation.



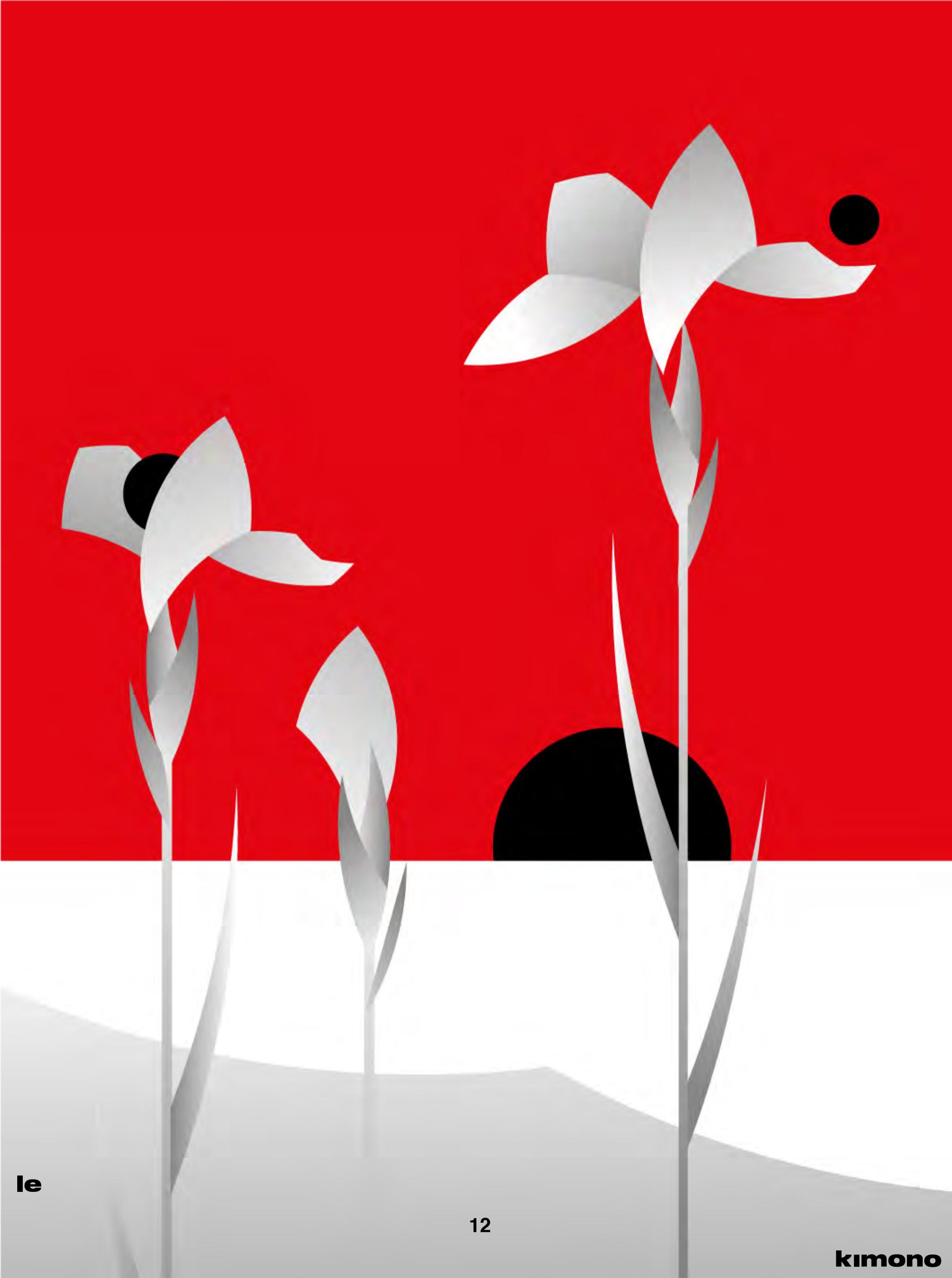
Rather than addressing these changes and looking for ways to embrace them, many luxury and premium brands were simply relying on heritage to drive themselves forward. This is not a long term strategy to be relied on, particularly after a global event like a pandemic rapidly shapes cultural changes in the minds of consumers.

“Heritage and legacy are important, but without understanding how culture works and how its context affects brands in real time, the legacy value of brands will soon become obsolete.”

**Dr. Martina Olbertova
consumer psychology expert**

The concept of 'meaning' in a cultural sense is particularly important to luxury and premium brands because of the huge gap between symbolism and function in their products.

Traditionally, high-end brands represented a heightened social status. Their products increased our perception of self-worth and by giving them as gifts they could be used to express the value of relationships we had with other people.



The sense of ‘meaning’ that brands can have is rooted in the idea of what they can represent and signify about us. It is about how they can strengthen our identities by connecting to our cultural values, mindsets and behaviours.

**In essence,
brands can be
used to show
what people
value.**

So what happens when a global crisis comes along that makes people fundamentally question what is valuable to them?

A crisis in health that doesn't care about an individual's income or wealth?

A crisis that makes people question what is good for themselves, good for wider society, good for the environment?

The fact is, luxury and premium brands should already have been fundamentally rethinking the values they promote across their services and experiences. The Covid-19 crisis has really put the writing on the wall.

There can be no doubt anymore that brands need to think about serving people's essential needs. They need to start providing true value.

**Brands
need to start
seeing their
universe
from a
holistic point
of view.**

Analysts have identified four consumer sentiments that will become prominent as a result of the pandemic: Fear, Desynchronised Society, Equitable Resilience and Radical Optimism.

These might sound rather gloomy, but for brands they present a roadmap for positive change.

Understanding these sentiments will be key to helping brands uncover the values they possess which should already have been a prominent part of their brand proposition. Covid-19 has simply shown there is no time to waste in enacting this change.

Let's look at them one by one.



Fear

Fear is an emotion that can affect all of us. Yet by looking at the different subcategories that cause anxiety in the population we can also see places where brands can show new meaning and value.

Eco-anxiety - 90% of global respondents said the thought of a climate crisis made them feel uneasy about their future.

So what could brands be doing to contribute to a more sustainable world?

Financial Uncertainty - It's been over a decade since the 2008 global financial crisis and it is arguable whether we actually really recovered.

Could brands be doing more

- such as working with local suppliers and protecting vulnerable communities

- in the markets they operate in?

Emotional Contagion (The Fear Flood) -

'Emotional contagion' is a behavioural trait in which people mimic the feelings of those around them. In the digital age these fears can now spread instantly on a global scale.

How can brands use their media

presence to not just promote their

products but also reduce anxieties too?

Desynchronised Society

A desynchronised society means people are less likely to carry out the same activities at the same time. The time-space paths of individuals are more variable and spread. Flexible hours, working from home and the emergence of streaming platforms that render media scheduling obsolete all play a role in the breakdown of traditional communities. This can lead to the lack of consistent human interaction and personal isolation.

Brands interact with communities through various media channels, meaning they have the power to bring people together in a human sense. If Nike Run Club, for example, can unite people via a shared passion that is core to the brand's purpose, then

what can other brands do to achieve a similar sense of synchronisation between people in a desynchronised society?



Radical Optimism

In a world with such global fears, optimism is becoming the new rebellion. And it is not without reason.

We are of course facing huge social, political and economic challenges but people have never been more ready to actively try to change things. Progress is being made fighting against poverty and inequality, and for our environment.

The problem is that the media has grown much more negative, which can cause people to lose hope.

By focusing on the positive values they represent and promoting an optimistic outlook via communications, could brands provide the kind of rebellion that supports a more positive world?

Equitable Resilience

People are increasingly looking towards emotional acceptance and allowing themselves genuine downtime. They are starting to question unhealthy obsession with productivity and are focusing more on emotional health.

Luxury and premium brands have long been accused of presenting an unattainable level of perfection in their communications, but post-pandemic this means much more than just 'real' models in advertising and 'body positivity'.

The challenge for brands is how they can promote wellness, make people feel good as their authentic selves and create meaningful experiences and rich life.

As we have seen, the changing consumer landscape has been put into overdrive by the global pandemic. People are searching for value in a way that has never been seen before.

This means that the premium and luxury segments need to reconsider what their true values actually are. From there, they should diversify and elevate their brands in terms of the products and services offered to relate more directly to people and what matters to them today.

This health crisis and the way we are reacting to it has shined a light on underlying weaknesses. It is a wake-up call to brands who were sleepwalking themselves into irrelevance. Reacting to this great levelling experience is the key to their survival.

How can brands enact this change?

See brands as a dynamic ecosystem of cultural meaning

This is a novel concept that was outlined by Dr. Martina Olbertova in her Luxury Report 2019. She points out that when brands are out of sync with society and what people value, their meaning becomes deflated. This is particularly dangerous for luxury and premium brands who rely much more on symbolic value than functional value. However, by seeing brands as dynamic entities in an ecosystem of cultural meaning, we can better represent what is valuable to people in this new world.

Rethink the values of your niche from the perspective of a holistic, post-Covid world

This is not about ripping up the rule book and starting from scratch. Many brands already have a solid platform of values that are rooted in positivity. Luxury, beauty and premium brands are derived from a sense of aspiration and optimism that are possibly even more essential now than they were in the past.

The task is to see how brands can rethink their values to ensure they always create meaningful experiences and rich life. How can 'premium' become more about lasting value than elevated status? How does a beauty product become an essential item? How can we promote authenticity and individualism, and see everyday life as a luxury we are all proud to participate in?



Use these redefined values to create an editorial POV

One way to ensure that a brand's values are always at the heart of their communications is to use them to create an editorial point of view. This POV is a brand's platform to communicate with the world.

Imagine brands not as commercial entities that use media to sell products, but as media in themselves that interact with the world in a meaningful way via the stories they tell and the way they interact with culture.

This shift from 'campaign content creation' to 'brand publishing' ensures a culture-first approach that puts a brand's values at the forefront of everything they do.



Build an editorial calendar

Unlike a series of campaigns from Q1 to Q4, an ‘editorial calendar’ of work better communicates a brand’s world POV and is a direct interaction with culture. It allows brands to speak to specific moments in consumers’ lives and deliver more focused messaging that has enhanced value.

Large, old school campaigns struggle to deliver on a holistic level because they are trying to do too many things at once. By changing this to an editorial calendar approach, brands can deliver on individual needs, market-specific contexts, deliver higher levels of authenticity and bring more meaningful value every time they communicate.



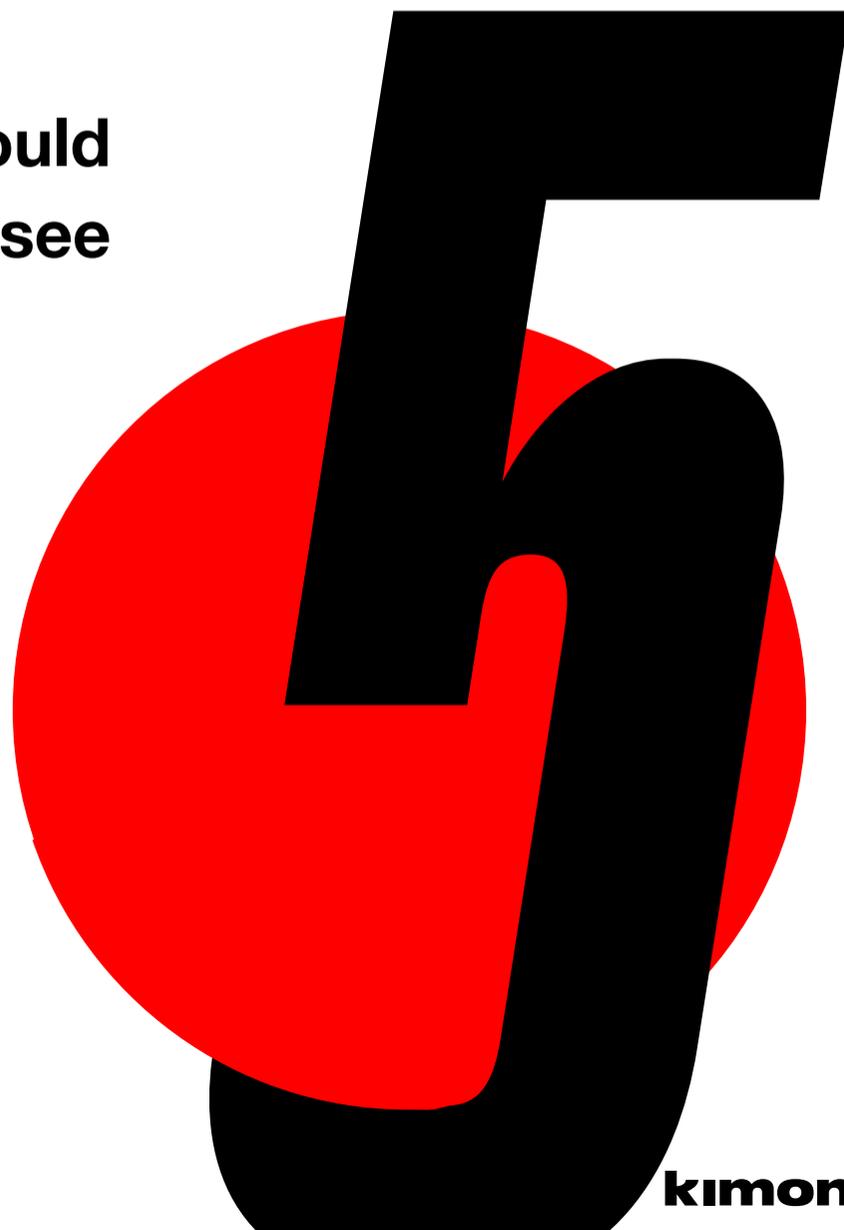
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See sustainability as a measure of quality

Many people in the industry have expressed worries that a shift towards personal protection and safety would undo many of the recent efforts to establish a more sustainable way of working and living. Yet brands should look at sustainability as part of the bigger shift to a holistic system.

In the purest sense this is not just about carbon footprint or plastic waste. It is about whether the choices we make and the values we hold contribute towards a purposeful future we can all profit from.

Luxury and premium brands should look beyond greenwashing and see sustainability as a true measure of quality.





Who are we?

Le Kimono was founded by international senior creative people who have worked at some of the biggest agencies in the world and realised it was time to start their own.

Like so many things in life, working with big machines is great for medium quality mass production, but if you want something really unique you need to see a specialist who knows their craft and how to use it wisely.

With the experience gained from making globally recognized work at companies including Ogilvy, Publicis, Zalando, Marie Claire, McCann Erickson and Glamour, our creative people use big thinking but execute with the agility that only a tight knit group can deliver.

We have a sustainable mindset

We believe in creativity as a part of a sustainable circular economy. That's why our goal is to strive to create work that is economically viable, environmentally restorative and socially constructive. We know this is the start of a long journey, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution, but by exploring new ways to make our projects as ethical and sustainable as they are creative we can offer clients novel methods of working that hopefully will one day become the norm.

We are constantly pushing ourselves to find new executional means to make our creative projects more sustainable. The following examples are far from exhaustive and we are welcome to new ideas and information that can help us keep pushing further.

Sustainability Consulting

We provide consultation on each project to offer a range of solutions that can reduce environmental impact from conception through production to final delivery. The goal is for the brands we work with to help improve upon the sustainability of their business enough to achieve certification such as ISO 9001 Quality Management Standard (QMS) and ISO 14001 Environmental Management Standard (EMS).

Digital

Digital provides us with a huge tool to help prevent waste but with it comes the problem of digital pollution. Hosting servers have their own carbon footprint and digital OOH platforms require electricity.

We work with service providers looking for new ways to make their business more efficient. Digital servers can be optimised and provided with electricity from only sustainable sources like wind and solar power. Some digital OOH companies are also investing in LED systems that use less electricity for advertising greener campaigns.

Video&Photo Production

From materials and equipment to energy use and travel, video and photo production provide us with many opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of a project without reducing the quality of the creative output. We follow the guidelines supplied by the Environmental Media Association (EMA) to ensure our productions are as sustainable as possible. Our goal is to have all our projects awarded the The EMA Green Seal, which is a recognition program honoring progress in sustainable production.

Print

Despite the rise of digital, print still has a huge role to play in promoting fashion, beauty and premium brands. While the immediate concern is paper, the ink used in outdoor print advertising also has an environmental impact. To combat this, we are working with suppliers who use 100% recycled paper, source materials from sustainable forests and are exploring the use of water-based ink, UV ink, soy-based ink and eco-solvent ink in our campaigns.

We started our agency to produce high-quality creative work for special clients who want to think and act more sustainably and with more meaning.

The pandemic of 2019/2020 has only encouraged us that now is the time for positive change in our industry.

If you would like to know more about us

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for change
is now**



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