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Tech-infused textiles offer opportunity for wellness-focused luxury

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As the luxury fashion industry continues to experience **turbulence** due to diminished profits and changing consumer habits, many companies are searching for new ways to distinguish themselves as premier brands.

For some, wellness and wearable technology has lately been a key differentiator to stand out amongst competitors.

For example, last year, Gucci began selling a **smart ring** that tracks sleep, heart rate and other body metrics; Calvin Klein has incorporated a series of minerals that trap and convert body heat to infrared energy into its **sleepwear**, improving recovery, increasing blood-flow and reducing the amount of time its customers spend awake after initially falling asleep; Tecnica, a premium ski apparel company, uses thermoregulating textiles in their ski boots to **increase users' endurance and comfort**, among other benefits.

The proliferation of bio-responsive textiles in luxury brands is no accident. The definition of luxury is changing, and companies offering health and wellness benefits embedded in their products are poised to not only maintain their premier status amid industry disruption, but come out ahead of their competitors.

Why bio-responsive textiles?

Though we may not think of them as a tool for achieving positive health outcomes, bio-responsive textiles have been **clinically proven to help us get better sleep** and better regulate body temperatures - critical components of a healthy lifestyle.

When paired with wearable technology, these textiles have the ability to give consumers unique, real-time insights into their health and help them achieve personal lifestyle goals.

However, like any other luxury material, it is not enough to provide physical comfort. The textiles must look good. Sometimes, innovation is incompatible with luxury designs because new technology is initially clunky or synthetic, giving the impression of a lower-quality material.

This certainly should not be the case with bio-responsive textiles. Several luxury brands have had success integrating tech in a quiet, uncompromising way, allowing them to maintain the silhouettes and styles that drove their success in the first place. In fact, embedding bio-responsive textiles into high-quality blends alongside fibers like cashmere can help a brand cultivate a "quiet luxury" reputation, which is increasingly in favor as consumers ditch overt branding.

And, bio-responsive materials may soon be a staple of luxury branding.

As consumers place a premium on clothing featuring environmentally friendly materials, the very definition of luxury may soon shift from synthetic to sustainable. Global politics have already begun to shape consumers' attitude towards contemporary, popular synthetics like polyester, which is made from oil, a nonrenewable resource that **generates pollution across its entire lifecycle**.

If consumers are focused on prioritizing what's good for the health of the planet with their luxury purchases, it's only natural that they would also seek to support their own health and well-being, making the combination of eco-friendly, smart and luxury materials the perfect fit.

Once major brands adopt environmentally sustainable clothing, textiles that offer health and wellness benefits, like thermoregulation, will increasingly be part of a smart textile luxury options.

Benefits for luxury brands

According to the Global Wellness Institute, the global wellness economy was valued **at \$5.6 trillion** in 2022.

Moreover, the luxury health sector's expansion, according to the Luxury Institute, outpaced other, more traditional, luxury offshoots like jewelry, watches and high fashion. This growth can be found in unexpected places; for example, airlines are exploring the use of thermoregulating textiles as part of their first-class sleep kits, a creative way to make bio-responsive textiles part of their premium offerings.

Consumers are not the only ones who stand to benefit from the rising tides of the luxury wellness industry; brands that can successfully integrate health and wellness technology into their materials stand to gain, too.

With only a few brands meeting customer demand for luxury wellness apparel, those that pivot into the fast-growing market stand to benefit as early adopters. Oftentimes, companies using bio-responsive textiles in their clothing see increased brand awareness and are viewed as industry leaders.

Bio-responsive textiles can also help a brand garner earned media, giving them the opportunity to craft their own story.

By definition, the luxury market necessitates an elevated price point, and consumers are willing to spend on products with demonstrated benefits. In many cases, products featuring bio-responsive textiles have become best-sellers not just within a company's stable of products, but within the larger market.

For all the uncertainty luxury apparel companies are facing, consumers will continue strong demand for premium products, particularly if they can deliver health and wellness benefits. Companies are already demonstrating an appetite for creating products at the crossroads between luxury and better health and are well-positioned to grow along with the booming luxury wellness industry.