



Lab grown diamonds on the luxury market – How can they gain a com- petitive advantage?

Lisa Welp

Dissertation written under the supervision of professor Laure Leglise

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the MSc in Strategic Marketing, at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 04.01.2022.

Table of Content

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....3

LIST OF TABLES.....4

LIST OF FIGURES.....5

ABSTRACT6

1 INTRODUCTION.....7

2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....9

 2.1 DEFINING LUXURY AND THE LUXURY BUSINESS MODEL..... 9

 2.1.1 *The different definitions and notions of luxury* 9

 2.1.2 *Luxury business model and the anti-laws of marketing*..... 11

 2.2 COMPARISON OF LAB GROWN DIAMOND AND MINED DIAMONDS 13

 2.2.1 *Overview over the natural mined diamond industry* 13

 2.2.2 *Lab grown diamonds*..... 15

3 METHODOLOGY..... 18

 3.1 JUSTIFICATION OF THE METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES 18

 3.2 THE DATA COLLECTION 20

 3.3 THE DATA ANALYSIS 21

4 EMPIRICAL SETTING CHAPTER..... 23

 4.1 PRESENTATION OF THE CASES 23

 4.1.1 *Matilde Jewellery*..... 23

 4.1.2 *Courbet*..... 24

5 FINDINGS 26

 5.1 ENSURING LUXURY QUALITY BY CONTROLLING THE WHOLE VALUE CHAIN 26

 5.2 BUILDING A HIGH BRAND AWARENESS..... 27

 5.3 UNCOMMON POINTS OF SALES AND HIGH FOCUS ON BEING DIGITAL 29

 5.4 CREATING DISTINCT BRAND IDENTITIES..... 30

6 DISCUSSION..... 32

7 CONCLUSION 34

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 35

APPENDICES..... 38

 APPENDIX 1: CODING TABLES 38

 APPENDIX 2: SECONDARY DATA COURBET 42

 APPENDIX 3: SECONDARY DATA MATILDE JEWELLERY 55

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Laure Leglise for guiding me through the process of writing the master thesis. For giving me an understanding for how to conduct the research. Furthermore, I would like to thank her for taking the time for giving individual advice and providing help.

I am thanking my parents for giving me the opportunity to do my Master studies in Lisbon at Católica. For supporting me and encouraging me through my whole life and my academic journey.

Lastly, I would like to thank Matilde from Matilde Jewellery, Antoine, Charlotte and Marie-Ann from Courbet for answering my questions and for taking the time to give me insights in their operations.

List of tables

Table 1: The anti-laws of marketing.....p. 10

Table 2: Overview of the contacted lab grown diamond jewellery brands.....p. 19

List of figures

Figure 1: Diamond mine production of the leading companies worldwide from 2015 to 2020
(in million carats)p. 14

Abstract

Title: Lab grown diamond brands on the luxury market – how can they gain a competitive advantage?

Author: Lisa Welp

The purpose of this work is to investigate how luxury brands that are using lab grown diamonds for their jewellery pieces can gain a competitive advantage. No previous research exists on this topic as the usage of lab grown diamonds for jewellery is a relatively new topic due to technological advancements in the production. I conducted a multiple case study on two brands, Courbet and Matilde Jewellery. The findings show that brands using lab grown diamonds need to hold the full control over their value chain, especially when choosing the supplier for the lab grown diamonds. Secondly, the brands need to build a high brand awareness and focus on educating about lab grown diamonds. Furthermore, the brands chose a mainly digital approach for their point of sales and no wholesalers. Lastly, both brands are building their brand identities on being sustainable and ethical as their main values.

Key Words: Luxury brands, Jewellery, Lab grown diamonds

Título: Marcas de diamantes cultivadas em laboratório no mercado de luxo - como podem elas ganhar uma vantagem competitiva?

Autor: Lisa Welp

O objectivo deste trabalho é investigar como as marcas de luxo que estão a utilizar diamantes de laboratório para as suas peças de joalharia podem ganhar uma vantagem competitiva. Não existe investigação prévia sobre este tópico, uma vez que a utilização de diamantes cultivados em laboratório para joalharia é um tópico relativamente novo devido aos avanços tecnológicos na produção. Realizei um estudo de caso múltiplo sobre duas marcas, Courbet e Matilde Jewellery. Os resultados mostram que as marcas que utilizam diamantes cultivados em laboratório precisam de ter o controlo total sobre a sua cadeia de valor, especialmente quando escolhem o fornecedor para os diamantes cultivados em laboratório. Em segundo lugar, as marcas precisam de construir um elevado conhecimento da marca e concentrar-se em revestimentos de laboratório sobre diamantes cultivados em laboratório. Além disso, as marcas escolheram uma abordagem principalmente digital para os seus pontos de venda e nenhum grossista. Por último, ambas as marcas estão a construir as suas identidades de marca sobre serem sustentáveis e éticas como os seus principais valores.

Palavras-chaves: Marcas de luxo, Jóia, Diamantes de laboratório

1 Introduction

"Millennials and now Generation Z – who together are the main purchasers of diamonds for engagement rings – are moving away from conventional diamonds, with nearly 70% of millennials buying a lab grown alternative."¹

Different opinions about lab grown diamonds in the luxury diamond jewellery industry exist. Many people see lab grown diamonds as the future of the diamond industry such as Jeremy Scholz. Nevertheless, critics aroused from companies such as DeBeer as well as Alisa Mousaieff, claiming that only mined diamonds are the real thing.² But the awareness is rising and the main target group consisting of millennials and generation Z are now considering buying a lab grown diamond over a mined one.³

The usage of lab grown diamonds in jewellery is a relatively new phenomena and is just starting to be researched. An increasing number of brands are choosing lab grown diamonds over mined ones for several reasons. One of the most appealing reasons to choose lab grown diamonds is the possibility of tracing the production of the diamond from the beginning. For that reason, conflict diamonds are avoided. Another important reason for using lab grown diamonds is that it is more sustainable and ethical produced.⁴

Some other research has been conducted in the field of how companies can gain competitive advantages on the luxury market. Hepner et al. (2020) for example studied if luxury brands can gain a competitive advantage by marketing the sustainable development goals. In the field of jewellery and especially the field luxury jewellery no research exists. As already mentioned above, the newness of the usage of lab grown diamonds automatically leads to the fact that no research has been conducted about this topic. Therefore, this work will help researchers and managers in the field of strategy and in the field of luxury management to understand how lab grown diamond brands should be managed for gaining a competitive advantage.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200207-the-sparkling-rise-of-the-lab-grown-diamond>

² https://www.economist.com/1843/2019/03/18/can-lab-grown-diamonds-replace-the-real-thing?utm_source=LinkedIn&utm_medium=Economist_Films&utm_campaign=Link_Description&utm_term=Science_and_Technology&utm_content=Social_native_videos&linkId=100000092360426

³ <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200207-the-sparkling-rise-of-the-lab-grown-diamond>

⁴ <https://www.newdawndiamonds.com/learn/benefits-of-lab-grown-diamonds.php>

This work is answering the following research question:

**How can lab grown diamond brands gain a competitive advantage
on the luxury market?**

In order to answer the research question, I adopted a qualitative research approach. I conducted a multiple case study with semi-structured in-depth interviews. I chose the companies Matilde Jewellery and Courbet as the two cases. Both of the companies are using only lab grown diamonds as well as recycled gold for their jewellery pieces. I find the choice of these two cases appropriate since it allows me to analyze their processes and strategies. Nevertheless, the companies are quite distinct as Courbet is already longer on the luxury jewellery market and is therefore a larger company than Matilde Jewellery. This gives me the opportunity to analyse their different approaches and the similarities that they are sharing in their strategies.

This study shows that companies need to focus on a few aspects in their strategy and leverage these in order to achieve a competitive advantage on the luxury market. Firstly, the brands need to build a high brand awareness and educate non-customers and customers about lab grown diamonds to build an understanding of the advantages of lab grown diamonds. Furthermore, they need to advertise the fact, that they are more sustainable and ethical than the mined diamond brand counterparts. Secondly, a strong focus on being digital helps to reach new customer groups and will give them the advantages of being more modern and innovative. Furthermore, working with local craftsmen that have a high focus on the highest quality and embracing this in the present and in the future will build heritage. Moreover, choosing supplier that fit to the values of the brand need to be selected.

The structure of this thesis is the following one. In a first chapter, I provide a general overview of the literature concerning the topic of lab grown diamonds on the jewellery market. Following the literature review, the methodology chapter gives an overview of my methodologic choices and justify the choice of a qualitative research approach. Furthermore, the data collection and the data analysis will be described. The empirical setting chapter describes the companies in order to understand the choice and to put the findings in context. The findings chapter will present the result of the study. The discussion chapter will discuss the findings and give recommendations. Lastly the conclusion will conclude the results and describe the limitations.

2 Literature review

This section will define what is meant by the term luxury and will define the luxury business model. Aside that, in this section the difference between lab grown and mined diamonds will be described. A market overview will give an understanding of how the market evolved and will most likely develop. Furthermore, the concept of competitive advantage will be described and the gap in the existing literature mapped.

2.1 Defining luxury and the luxury business model

In this section luxury will be defined and subsequently the rules that are part of the luxury business model. Lastly, the importance of scarcity in luxury will be described.

2.1.1 The different definitions and notions of luxury

Luxury cannot be easily defined with one single, universally applicable definition. Kapferer and Bastien (2009) discuss the problematic of different existing definitions and define a set of criteria that luxury products need to entail and agree with De Barnier et al. (2012) that luxury encompasses the following:

1. *Elitism (very few people can buy it; it is very expensive);*
 2. *Creativity (is it magical, very creative; high craftsmanship);*
 3. *Uniqueness (rare; unique);*
 4. *Distinction (for refined people; it shows who one is);*
 5. *Refinement (attractive, dazzling);*
 6. *Quality (superior; top quality);*
 7. *Power (known, leading brand)*
- (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 479)*

What can be concluded from the list of attributes above is that luxury brands or products need to distinguish themselves in terms of superior quality and uniqueness in the sense of being rare as well as distinct. Furthermore, the luxury brand needs to be known and recognizable by many

people but accessible for only a few people as it is characterized by being mostly more expensive.

Besides the attributes, Kapferer says that luxury is hedonic, entails rare products and is not a necessity (2015). Kapferer (2015) furthermore states that luxury and art are similar in the sense of wanting to be received as timeless and exclusive as well as being associated with rare materials and sophisticated craftsmanship.

Heine (2012) tried to develop an intentional definition of luxury brands and therefore reviewed a set of existing definitions. He identified a set of characteristics that are common in many existing definitions. Luxury therefore is “something that is more than necessary” (Heine, 2009, p. 41). Nevertheless, this term has the problematic of being too broad, as not everything that is not necessary is luxurious. Therefore, Heine (2009) defines the most basic definition of luxury as followed: “Luxury is anything that is desirable and more than necessary and ordinary” (p. 42). He also defines luxury brands and defines them like this: “Luxury brands regarded as images in the minds of consumers that comprise associations about a high level of price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness and a high degree of non-functional associations.”

Another definition is provided by Okonkwo (2007), who defines luxury as something that is differentiated, innovative, exclusive, extraordinary, rare and is not functional.

From the different definitions of luxury, it can be concluded that luxury encompasses the following: Luxury is built on extraordinary quality and craftsmanship, it is something that is rare and inaccessible for most of the people. Furthermore, it is something that is not functional and hedonic.

Another important part of the definition of luxury is the notion of scarcity. Kapferer (2012) states the basic equation of luxury is: “luxury = rarity”. This means that luxury needs to preserve some sort of scarcity, so that not too many people are able to buy and own the product in order to make it last luxury. Nevertheless, it is important that many people are able to recognize the brand in order to convey a feeling of status. This concept is called “objective rarity” or simply scarcity and is mainly based on the objective rarity of resources for example (Kapferer, 2012). However, we can observe an evolution from scarcity to qualitative rarity. Qualitative rarity can be created through handwork or keeping the production in the country of origin of the brand. This creates scarcity in the sense that the product has some sort of culture, history and heritage that it would not have, if it would have been produced in any other way (Kapferer, 2012).

2.1.2 Luxury business model and the anti-laws of marketing

The luxury business model is distinct to other existing business models. It is defined by six principles.

Firstly, the production of luxury goods should not be delocalized as luxury is representing the local culture and the “refined art de vivre” (Kapferer, 2012). Furthermore, luxury goods should not be advertised with the purpose of selling but for building the dream. As it is important that a luxury good or brand is recognized by a big a mass, luxury brands need to communicate to non-targets for increasing the awareness of the luxury brand. The highest quality needs to be delivered by luxury brands and therefore they need to have full control over the whole value chain and should never issue licenses. Besides the full control of the value chain, they need to maintain full control of the distribution as this is the point of direct contact of the brand with the customer. Excellence needs to be delivered and one-on-one relationships need to be nurtured (Kapferer, 2012). Furthermore, brands should “think brand identity only” (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 489) and not focus on positioning. Lastly, the average price should be increased constantly to grow demand as the middle class is continuously growing (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

Besides the six principles of the luxury business model, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) defined a set of rules called the anti-laws of marketing. These rules should be followed by companies as general guidelines in order to become luxury brands and for maintaining the luxury status.

The table below gives an overview of all the anti-laws that they defined.

1) Forget about ‘positioning’; luxury is not comparative.	12) Luxury sets the price; price does not set luxury.
2) Does your product have enough flaws?	13) Raise your prices as time goes on in order to increase demand.
3) Do not pander to your customers’ wishes.	14) Keep raising the average price of the product range.
4) Keep non-enthusiasts out.	15) Do not sell.
5) Do not respond to rising demand.	16) Keep stars out of your advertising.
6) Dominate the client.	17) Cultivate closeness to the arts for initiates.
7) Make it difficult for clients to buy.	18) Do not relocate your factories.
8) Protect clients from non-clients, the big from the small.	19) Do not hire consultants.
9) The role of advertising is not to sell.	20) Do not test.
	21) Do not look for consensus.

10) Communicate to those you are not targeting.	22) Do not look after group synergies.
11) The presumed price should always seem higher than the actual price.	23) Do not look for cost reduction.
	24) Do not sell openly on the internet.

Table 1: The anti-laws of marketing (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009, p. 65-83)

2.2 Comparison of lab grown diamond and mined diamonds

The following section will give an overview of the mined and lab grown diamond industry. Furthermore, it will show why lab grown diamonds are a viable alternative to mined diamonds and will explain how lab grown diamonds are produced.

2.2.1 Overview over the natural mined diamond industry

This section will give an overview of the natural mined diamond industry, about the main players, the evolution of the market and the problems that are associated with the mining of diamonds.

In 2020 in total 76,2 million carats of diamonds were produced. Most of the diamonds were produced by the Alrosa Group with 29,98 million in carats. Nevertheless, the production has decreased as it can be seen in the figure below.⁵

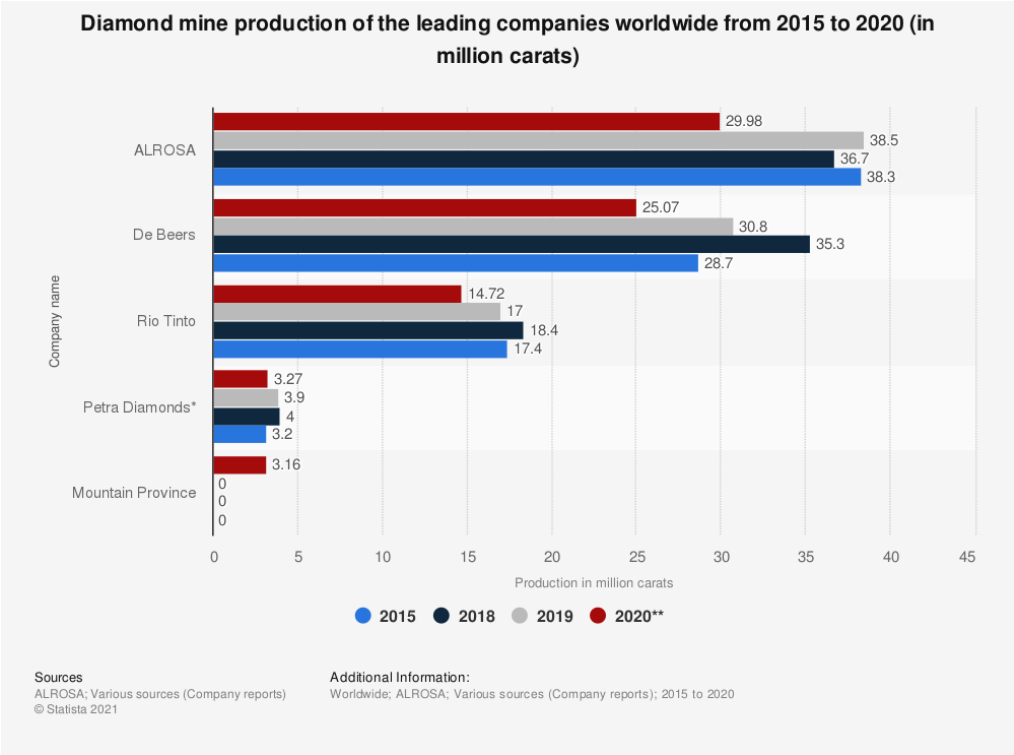


Figure 1: Diamond mine production of the leading companies worldwide from 2015 to 2020 (in million carats)⁶

⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/585369/diamond-production-of-top-diamond-companies/>

⁶ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/585369/diamond-production-of-top-diamond-companies/>

Australia, Canada, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana, South Africa and Russia are the countries producing most of the output and have the largest reserves of diamonds. The diamond industry is dominated by a few companies which are namely Alrosa from Russia, De-Beers from Luxembourg, and Rio Tinto which is British-Australian. These four players account for 60% of the whole global production.⁷

The demand for rough diamonds is expected and estimated to grow to up to 292 million carats from currently around 178 million carats in 2022.⁸ The highest demand in 2019 was in the United States with a value of 12.800 million US dollars, followed by China with 3.370 million Us dollars.⁹

The pricing of mined diamonds is influenced by several factors. The quality of the diamond plays a role which is based on the so called 4C's: clarity, cut, colour and carat.¹⁰ Furthermore, rough diamond prices are set by the suppliers, diamond cutters and supply and demand. Martin Rapaport created the institution 'Rapaport' in 1976. This institution is determining and recommending prices together with rough suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers. The so called 'Rapaport Price List' is updated weekly and suggests and moderates the prices for several different types of diamonds.¹¹

However, mined diamond brands have been criticised for several problems that the mining of rough diamonds is causing. The negative impacts of the diamonds industry are multidimensional. First, the water usage is extremely high compared to lab grown diamonds and wastewater is released in the environment. Furthermore, for mining diamonds much more energy is necessary. The energy sources that are used are emitting greenhouse gases and no renewable energy can be used. While mining diamonds big areas of land are disrupted and mineral waste occurs. The land is often not recoverable and big holes are left and are not filled up (Coste-Manière & Gardetti, 2021).

Besides the huge impact on the environment while mining diamonds, the human impact is just as high. Human rights abuses and forced labour are not a rarity in the industry. Furthermore, many incidents are occurring as the mines collapse or explode. Other health risks are an

⁷ <https://www.statista.com/topics/1704/diamond-industry/#dossierKeyfigures>

⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/584801/forecast-rough-diamond-demand-worldwide/>

⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/894919/global-polished-diamond-demand-value-by-country/>

¹⁰ <https://www.withclarity.com/education/diamond-education/diamond-pricing/lab-diamond-pricing>

¹¹ <https://www.withclarity.com/education/diamond-education/diamond-pricing>

‘increased risk of cancer, hearing loss, respiratory problems and other health problems.’ (Coste-Manière & Gardetti, 2021, p. 246)

Another problem is that the source and the way how the diamonds were mined are not traceable. Even if solutions such as the Blockchain are existing, a full control is not possible even if data is collected (Coste-Manière & Gardetti, 2021). To reduce these negative impacts, some brands started to develop a solution: only using lab grown diamonds in their jewellery line.

2.2.2 Lab grown diamonds

Lab grown diamonds are an increasingly used alternative to natural or mined diamonds as they have several advantages. As technology is advancing it is possible to imitate the conditions in which natural diamonds are growing in the earth over the course of millions of years (Coste-Manière & Gardetti, 2021).

General Electric was the first company that announced the successful creation of a diamond in a lab in 1954, after General Electric already set up a team of experts to research and develop lab-grown diamonds in 1941. The first lab grown diamonds that had gem quality were available from the 1970s on. But it was not until the 1980s that high quality diamonds were created and used commercially.¹² More specifically Tracy M. Hall, a chemist that was working for General Electric, was the man who created the first replicable process for creating diamonds in the lab. This process was called HPHT (high temperature – high pressure). Another method that was introduced later on is the Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD) method. The methods are heavily researched and developed which gives the opportunities of creating bigger and stones of higher quality.¹³

Since the increasing usage of lab grown diamonds in jewellery, the definition has changed several times. The Federal Trade Center, that is ensuring that consumers as well as the competition is protected “by preventing anticompetitive, deceptive, and unfair business practices through law enforcement, advocacy, and education without unduly burdening legitimate business activity”¹⁴, provides an official definition which is the following: ‘a mineral consisting essentially of pure carbon crystallized in the isometric system’. But lab grown diamonds must be disclosed

¹² <https://www.withclarity.com/education/diamond-education/lab-diamonds/history-of-lab-grown-diamonds>

¹³ <https://www.withclarity.com/education/diamond-education/lab-diamonds/history-of-lab-grown-diamonds>

¹⁴ <https://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc>

in order to make it possible for consumers to differentiate between the two options (Coste-Manière & Gardetti, 2021).

In general, there are two techniques that can be used for creating diamonds in the laboratory: Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD) and High-pressure High-temperature (HPHT). The HPHT method is mimicking the natural process of the earth. This work will not go into detail on how exactly the processes are working, but it can be said that the HPHT method is the most commonly used. It is able to produce large and lab grown diamonds with high clarity. The CVD method is able to create diamonds of very rare quality but is not used as often as it is very sophisticated and costlier. Nevertheless, the choice of the technique is depending on the goals. In general, it is important to note that lab grown, and mined diamonds are physically, chemically and optically exactly the same and not distinguishable (Coste-Manière & Gardetti, 2021). As technology advanced the production of lab-grown diamonds got more feasible and cheaper to produce which led diamond industry giants such as De Beer to even launch an own brand, called 'Lighthouse', only selling lab grown diamonds for a price of 800 dollars per carat (Coste-Manière & Gardetti, 2021).

The popularity of lab grown diamonds as an alternative to mined diamonds is growing which is represented by the market volume and size. The lab grown diamond market volume evolved rapidly from having a market volume in million carats of only 0.95 in 2009 to having one of currently 7.45 and being forecasted to grow up to 19.15 million carats in 2030.¹⁵ Looking at the share that lab grown diamonds have on the global total diamond market it can be seen that it increased from 1,7% in 2016 to 3,8% in 2021 and is expected to increase to 10% in 2030.¹⁶

In terms management research, little has been done to understand how to manage lab-grown diamonds from a strategic management point of view. There is only one paper discussing the effects of materialism on the evaluation of sustainable synthetic (lab grown) products (Keech et al., 2020). Besides this paper only many more newspaper articles are existing showcasing the increasing importance and the adoption of lab-grown diamonds of the jewellery industry. Besides that, no articles published in top journals about the management of companies that are selling natural, mined diamonds exist. I propose to fill this gap by answering the following

¹⁵ <https://www.statista.com/study/68955/global-lab-grown-diamond-industry/>

¹⁶ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1076048/global-market-share-of-lab-grown-diamonds/>

research question: How can lab grown diamond brands gain a competitive advantage on the luxury market?

Coyne defines competitive strategy as “an integrated set of actions that produce a sustainable advantage over competitors” (Coyne, 1986, p.54).

It is important to note that competitive advantage is a relational term. In order to determine if a firm has a competitive advantage it needs to be set into relation to other firms on different dimensions. Saying this it depends on the reference point. Ma (2000, p.18) proposes the following definition of competitive advantage: “the differential between two competitors on any conceivable dimension that allows one to better create customer value than the other.” Moreover, competitive advantage is context-specific (Ma, 2000).

3 Methodology

The methodology chapter will describe the chosen research method and will justify the usage of the qualitative research approach for answering the research question. Furthermore, it will describe the data collection followed by the data analysis.

3.1 Justification of the methodological choices

In order to answer the research question, I chose a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research can be defined as: “‘an umbrella term’ to cover an ‘array of interpretive techniques that can describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world’.” (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 520) Furthermore, it can be used for several reasons, in this case it is suitable as this work aims at understanding a complex process and the richness of data is helping to understand the phenomena under study and gain an in-depth understanding (Graebner et al., 2012).

Specifically, I chose to conduct a multiple case study. A case study can be defined as an “empirical research method used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon, focusing on the dynamics of the case, within its real life context” (Teegavarapu et al., 2008, p. 4). Case studies can be used for answering ‘why’ and ‘how’ types of questions, which is the case for this work (Teegavarapu et al., 2008). A multiple case study enables to compare the strategies and operations of the two chosen companies, Courbet and Matilde Jewellery for gaining a competitive advantage.

As this work aims at answering the question how brands that are using lab-grown diamonds are able to gain a competitive advantage, I looked for companies that are offering only lab-grown diamonds in their jewellery lines or are partly using lab-grown diamonds in specific lines. I contacted all the potential cases over email or the contact form on their websites, as well as over LinkedIn and Instagram. The table below gives an overview of the companies that I identified and contacted. I contacted eighteen companies in total. Unfortunately, most of the companies did not have the resources or the willingness to participate in my interviews.

Company	Contact Type	Response
Matilde Jewellery	Email	Positive Response; Willingness to give interviews and participate in the work
Pukka Berlin	Email	Positive Response at first, Appointment
Courbet	Email and Phone	Positive Response; Willingness to give interviews and participate in the work
Lightbox Jewellery	Email	Negative Response
Queensmith	Email	Negative Response
Lark & Berry	Email	Negative Response
Taylor & Hart	Email	Negative Response
VRAI	Email	Negative Response
Pandora	Email	Negative Response
Kimai	Email	Negative Response
LM Studio	Email and Instagram	No Response
Clean Origin	Email	Negative Response
77 Diamonds	Email	Negative Response
Brilliant Earth	Email	Negative Response
Steven Stone	Email	Negative Response
Swarovski	Email	Negative Response
Gem Paris	Email	Negative Response
Ouverture	Email	Negative Response

Table 2: Overview of the contacted lab grown diamond jewellery brands

The selected companies are MATILDE Jewellery and Courbet. MATILDE Jewellery is a suitable case as the company is only using lab grown diamonds for their jewellery pieces. Matilde herself would describe her company as luxury and not luxury at the same time, which gives the opportunity to investigate what strategies she is following for gaining a competitive advantage and if these strategies are similar to the other case.

Just like Matilde Jewellery, Courbet is only using lab grown diamonds and recycled gold. Courbet is a luxury company and is following the codes of luxury. Investigating their strategies and

operations allows me to understand what the companies that want to achieve competitive advantages need to do in order to gain a competitive advantage and to sustain this competitive advantage.

3.2 The data collection

I collected both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through the conduction of semi-structured in-depth interviews. In total four interviews were conducted. Two interviews with employees of Courbet and one with the co-founder of Courbet and one with the founder of MATILDE Jewellery. The interviews were conducted over a zoom video call face-to-face. As the companies are both not based in Portugal or more specifically in Lisbon it was not possible to meet in-person for the interviews. The choice of conducting the interviews over a video call is based on the opportunity to gain trust from the interview partner by still being able to see each other and to build a connection. This leads to deeper insights and more provided information from the interviewee.

After contacting MATILDE Jewellery, I interviewed the founder Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix. The reason for only interviewing her is that the company was just founded around one year ago in December 2020 and therefore she is the only full-time employee. As it is a relatively small company and as she is the one in charge of mostly all processes, she knows all the strategies of the company and could give me in-depth insights. In total I conducted one interview with her. The main themes that were covered in the interview were the following: motivation for using lab-grown diamonds, challenges, supply chain/production/creation, positioning/brand identity, pricing, distribution and marketing strategies. I tried to contact her lab grown diamond supplier Madestones but did not receive an answer for my request.

At Courbet I interviewed Antoine Vuillat, who is the director of development. The other employee I interviewed was Charlotte Daehn who is the head of communications at Courbet. Slightly different questions were asked during these two interviews. The topics that were covered in the interview with Antoine Vuillat were the motivation for using lab-grown diamonds, the challenges that Courbet is facing with lab grown diamonds, the expansion to China with lab grown diamonds as well as where they produce their jewellery and about their suppliers. With Charlotte Daehn I also talked about why she thinks that using lab-grown diamonds is the right choice. Furthermore, we talked about the challenges from a marketing perspective, the

positioning, brand identity and marketing activities. Besides the two employees of Courbet, I interviewed Ann-Marie Wachtmeister. She is together with Manuel Mallen one of the two co-founders of Courbet. With her I talked about the competitors of Courbet and what differentiates Courbet from other lab grown diamond jewellery brands. Furthermore, I asked her about the laboratory of Alix Giquel, in which they invested and when they will be able to source all their diamonds from this French lab grown diamond laboratory. Moreover, we covered the topic of sustainability and being the first mover on the French luxury jewellery market and if this leads to a competitive advantage.

Besides the primary data that was collected during the interviews, I collected secondary data. The secondary data was found by searching for newspaper articles about the companies. Part of the secondary data are interviews that were given by the employees or the founders of both of the companies. A table with the most relevant secondary data can be found in the appendix of this work.

One principle that guided the collection of data was data triangulation whenever it was possible. This is strengthening the quality of the research.

3.3 The data analysis

I recorded the interviews with the permission of the participants. Afterwards I transcribed the interviews in order to be able to code them. Besides the primary data that was generated through the interviews, I collected secondary data in the form of articles and interviews that had already been written and conducted for other purposes.

After the data was in a written form, was summarized and organized, I started with the coding process. In general, first codes were defined. These codes were afterwards organized into themes and finally organized into categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The codes have different origins such as the literature from the literature review, the research question as well as the primary and the secondary data. The coding process started after the transcription of the interviews. After already defining some codes that were based on the literature review, the research question as well as the interview guide, I went over the first interview and defined codes. Then after I went over all of the interviews I organized the codes into themes and finally, put the themes into categories. For example, I had predefined the code 'In-person contact' and assigned the code to the following quote of Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix, 'which

will be the first time we will be able to showcase our pieces in person to your customers'. An example for a code that was defined based on the collected primary data is the code 'Offering resources to educate' which was derived from the following quote by Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix: 'Like I previously said it is really important for us to offer all the information and resources about lab-grown diamonds and recycled gold, as well as about all of our practices. So, if customers learn even a small thing from us then we have done our job.' The whole list of the codes, themes and categories can be found in the appendix.

4 Empirical setting chapter

In order to answer the research question, I selected two cases: Matilde Jewellery and Courbet. In the following chapter, I will present the companies and some key facts about them.

4.1 Presentation of the cases

The following section consists of the presentation of the two cases Matilde Jewellery and Courbet. It will give an overview of who founded the companies and the year of foundation, as well about how they expanded. I will provide numbers as far as the information could be obtained.

4.1.1 Matilde Jewellery

Matilde Jewellery was founded by Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix as the sole founder in 2020. In May 2020 the company was registered in Companies House and was launched officially on the 3rd December 2020 in the UK. She is holding all shares herself and is the director of the company. The company is specialized in using only lab grown diamonds as well as only recycled gold. Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix is the director and the only full-time employee of the company. Besides her she is employing a website designer and developer as well as a PR on a freelance basis. Aside from that she is outsourcing photographers, models and any additional work that occurs.

Matilde Jewellery has launched four collections. The collections consist of rings, earrings, bracelets and necklaces and are called Essentials, Heritage, Sustainable First and the men's line Men's. The jewellery is produced only using lab-grown diamonds and recycled gold. The lab-grown diamonds are sourced from the supplier Madestones. The diamonds are cut and polished by the supplier and are then sent to Matilde Jewellery for the production of the jewellery pieces. The brand has a strong focus on sustainability and is therefore really strict in choosing their suppliers. Their diamond supplier Madestones got carbon neutral in August 2021.

The company is currently only selling online through their own online shop. Nevertheless, it is shipping worldwide. They are not selling through wholesalers. In total they released four collections and recently launched their first men's line, which was the first expansion into the men's jewellery sector. The first physical store will be a pop-up store starting on the 17th of November until the 24th of December in London.

The biggest markets are currently in order the UK, being the biggest market, followed by Portugal and then Italy.¹⁷

4.1.2 Courbet

Courbet was founded in 2018 by the two co-founders Marie-Ann Wachtmeister and Manuel Mallen. It is a French company and is based in Paris on Place Vendôme.¹⁸

Courbet is designing, creating and selling luxurious fine jewellery. Only lab-grown diamonds and recycled and traceable gold are used for the jewellery pieces.¹⁹ Most of the diamonds are currently sourced from diamond laboratories in the United States as well as Russia. Furthermore, a few lab-grown diamonds are already produced in France in a laboratory which is part of the CNRS and is led by Alix Gicquel. In order to celebrate the beginning of the usage of lab-grown diamonds that are produced in France for the first time, the collection Pont des Arts was created as a homage to Paris and France. The pieces are designed in Paris by Marie-Ann Wachtmeister, the co-founder and chief designer of Courbet and are then produced in Europe in Paris, Lyon and Milan.

Currently they launched four collections named Céleste, Co, Let's commit and Eclipse. The collections consist of bracelets, rings, earrings and necklaces. Besides the four collections they are offering engagement rings and wedding bands in the two collections. The engagement ring selection consists of two collections named The Signatures and The Classics.²⁰ Furthermore, they are offering the possibility of customizing an engagement ring or wedding band. Lastly, Courbet is offering a high jewellery line consisting of high jewellery and haute couture pieces. The pieces are currently sold in their own showroom on 7 place de Vendôme. Besides that, customers can order their pieces directly over their website.²¹ Furthermore, Courbet is

¹⁷ All information directly provided by Matilde Jewellery

¹⁸ <https://www.positiveluxury.com/brand/courbet/>

¹⁹ <https://www.positiveluxury.com/brand/courbet/>

²⁰ <https://www.en.courbet.com/>

²¹ <https://www.en.courbet.com/>

collaborating with the e-commerce platform farfetch. Moreover, the jewellery pieces of Courbet are available in the department store Printemps in Paris.²²

From the 8th of December Courbet is expanding to and launching in China. For the expansion an office in Shanghai was build and a general manager was hired. Furthermore, they hired a brand ambassador for the launch of the brand in China.²³

In terms of figures, Courbet is currently employing 20 employees. Courbet went through three investment rounds raising 3.6 million euros in the initial round in 2017. This initial investment was followed by another investment of 8.5 million euros in 2020. In total with the debt they are having an amount of 12 million euros at their disposal. The turnover at the moment is a little over 2 million euro. The customer base of Courbet at the moment is about 65% French and the rest is based in Europe and the US.²⁴

²² Information provided by employees of Courbet

²³ Information provided by employees of Courbet.

²⁴ <https://www.luxepackaginginsight.com/article/behind-courbet-s-strategy-to-pioneer-sustainable-jewelry.57974>

5 Findings

As described in the chapter of the literature review there is no research on the management of diamond jewellery brands. The findings aim at answering the research question: “How can lab grown diamond brands gain a competitive advantage on the luxury market?” For answering the research question, I chose two cases, Courbet and Matilde Jewellery.

5.1 Ensuring luxury quality by controlling the whole value chain

The first principle of the luxury business model presented by Kapferer (2012) implies that the production of luxury goods should not be delocalized. Which means that luxury brands should produce in the country of origin. Besides that, luxury companies need to have the full control over the value chain.

In the case of Courbet, their jewellery is designed in Paris and produced by craftsmen in Paris, Lyon and Milan. In the future they are aiming at sourcing the lab grown diamonds fully from a lab called Diam Concept that is based in the outskirts of Paris and is led by Alix Giquel. An investment in the development of the laboratory in order to create high quality lab grown diamonds, gives them the opportunity to be the first company to receive the diamonds as soon as the lab is able to produce the right quality and quantity. Furthermore, Antoine Vualliat states that:

“We invested in a new manufacturer that is going to open in two or three years. And we hope to source the diamonds from France, which will make us able to say that we are a hundred percent French company. This builds trust in Courbet.” (Antoine Vualliat, Courbet)

This implies that being able to fully produce in France, which is the country of origin of Courbet builds trust and heritage. Nevertheless, Courbet is not able to fully source their lab grown diamonds from Diam Concept yet as the process is still under elaboration and the quality of most of the diamonds is not high enough yet. But in the long run, being able to source the diamonds from a French supplier will enhance being sustainable as the circuits will be shorter.

Just as Courbet Matilde Jewellery chose their lab-grown diamond supplier carefully. Her supplier is the lab grown diamond distributor Madestones, that is based in the UK and Europe. She states:

“We source our lab grown diamonds from a supplier called Madestones – and we are so happy to say that they just became completely carbon neutral in August 2021. We really put a lot of effort in working with brands and companies who share our values.” (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix, founder of Matilde Jewellery)

The statements show that it is important to both brands that the suppliers share the same values with the brand.

In general, it is important that luxury brands deliver the highest quality that is made by craftsmen and has a high human input. Keeping the production and the supplier close to the country of origin and sharing the same values builds competitive advantages.

5.2 Building a high brand awareness

Luxury brands need to create high brand awareness in the target but especially outside of their desired target. Moreover, the communication aims at selling a dream and is not meant for the sole purpose of selling.

In order to build brand awareness, they can apply a set of different marketing and communication strategies. Both brands chose similar as well as different approaches.

Both of the companies are using social media channels such as Instagram and their own website. Matilde Jewellery strongly believes and trusts in the power of word of mouth:

“We also believe that word of mouth is the most powerful form of marketing, as it is genuine opinions and thoughts on the brand that people pass on to their friends, family, etc.” (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix, founder of Matilde Jewellery)

Of course, the main purpose of all marketing activities is to create brand awareness. Courbet has set up a so called “360-degree communication”. This includes social media marketing on Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook. The hiring of influencers especially on Instagram is

something Courbet believes in as it can help to achieve brand awareness as well as selling the dream to a big audience. The head of communication Charlotte Daehn states:

“When we choose influencer on Instagram, we may have different objectives. It can be to get more followers on our website, on our social media. [...] Sometimes we disagree with the people in the team because we don’t see the construction of the brand with the same eyes and sometimes I am completely destroyed by the choice of this person because I think it’s really not the image that I want to share.” (Charlotte Daehn, Courbet)

This quote implies that social media influencers can help to increase brand awareness for the brand, but that the influencers and the content need to fit the brand image and architecture to be effective. For the recent launch of the brand in China, Courbet also relies on the hiring of a local brand ambassador which is the in China famous actress Jing Tian. This helps the brand to reach the targeted audience which is the youth and the young, conscious generations of the Chinese population. Besides the social media marketing and the hiring of influencers and the brand ambassador Courbet is using their showroom as a form of communication. Besides that, they are doing SEO and SEA campaigns as well as paid and unpaid media with press kits.

An especially important issue for lab grown diamond brands is not only to achieve brand awareness but to educate people about what a lab grown diamond is and what it means to buy one instead of a natural mined diamond. The level of knowledge is quite low, and many people have misconceptions and do not see lab grown diamonds as real diamonds.

“It is really important for us to offer all the information and resources about lab grown diamonds and recycled gold, as well as our practices. So, if customers learn even a small thing from us then we have done our job.” (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix, founder of Matilde Jewellery)

“But of course, the main challenge for me is to educate, because to be honest, the smallest part of people knows the process, the lab grown diamond and don’t know that it exists.” (Antoine Vuillat, Courbet)

Following the statements above, education plays an important role in the communication of lab grown diamond brands. Nevertheless, Marie-Ann Wachtmeister, the co-founder of Courbet, also states that being the first mover on the French luxury jewellery market with lab grown diamonds gave them a lot of media attention, which she sees as a first mover advantage.

Summing up, the modern lab grown diamond brands are using the common marketing strategies for building brand awareness. Moreover, they are having a high focus on educating people about lab grown diamond as it is essential to understand the concept of lab grown diamonds in order to make an informed decision, leading potential customers to choose lab grown diamonds over mined ones.

5.3 Uncommon points of sales and high focus on being digital

Luxury brands need to maintain full control over the distribution as it is the point of direct contact to the customers.

Unlike many other luxury jewellery brands both Matilde Jewellery and Courbet are selling online over their own websites and are favouring e-commerce. The usage of new technologies can deliver value in this case as especially Courbet is focusing on being a highly technological advanced, digital company. Manuel Mallen, the other co-founder of Courbet said in an interview for the magazine *luxe packaging insight*:

“[...] our site features a 3D configurator to create jewelry with an exceptional rendering. We tempted by the potential of blockchain and with GoodsID’s technology we were able to add an insurance service.” (Manuel Mallen, Interview *luxe packaging insight*, 2021)

Following this statement, Courbet is making it possible for customers to configure their engagement rings online with the high-end 3D configurator. The 3D configurator was built with the company Hylink with which Courbet is having a close connection also through an investment of Hylink in Courbet. Additionally, buyers are assured that if the jewellery piece gets stolen or lost, Courbet is replacing the jewellery. Furthermore, for the launch of the brand in China they chose a digital only approach.

Besides selling online they decided to sell their jewellery in a showroom which gives them the opportunity to get in direct contact with the customers and to offer a personalized brand experience. Besides the showroom a corner in the department store Printemps in Paris was chosen with the own employees of Courbet that can convey the brand experience.

Matilde Jewellery chose a rather untypical approach for selling fine jewellery in a physical location and opened a pop-up store for a month in London right before Christmas in 2021.

“At the moment we only sell our jewellery on our website to ensure we are selling direct to consumer. We are actually going to have a Pop-Up Store in London in November 2021 until Christmas, which will be the first time we will be able to showcase our pieces in person to our customers.” (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix, founder of Matilde Jewellery)

As described, both brands are focusing highly on e-commerce and chose rather untypical point of sales for their diamond jewellery. For selling effectively online, the usage of several digital tools is essential. This clearly differentiates them from other diamond jewellery brands but gives them the opportunity to sell to their chosen target group in a more individualised way. In order to get into direct contact with their customers they chose as well rather untypical forms of physical retail which is the showroom of Courbet and the Pop-Up store of Matilde Jewellery.

5.4 Creating distinct brand identities

Kapferer calls for forgetting about positioning and only to think brand identity as a luxury brand. Both brands are having similar identities in terms of sustainability and ethics. These values especially differentiate them from other luxury diamond jewellery brands.

Courbet's motto is: “Sans le bien, le beau n'est rien – Without the goodness beauty means nothing”. They are focusing on being sustainable and ecological and see themselves as ecological jewellers.

“A few years ago, there was no true alternative to the mined diamond. Today, on the other hand, we have the choice and have no longer any reason to rummage through Earth for diamonds when science and technology make it possible to produce the exact same diamond. As for gold, there is more gold above the surface of Earth than below it.” (Manuel Mallen and Marie-Ann Wachtmeister, Founders, positive luxury)

Besides being sustainable and ethical as they are not sourcing diamonds from mines and using only recycled precious metals like gold and silver, they are focusing highly on being innovative and focus on the technological side of the brand.

“Courbet is what is known as a DNVB, a Digitally Native Vertical Brand, at the intersection of innovation, technology and commerce.” (Manuel Mallen, Interview, the french jewelry post, 2020)

Matilde Jewellery on the other hand is really focusing on being transparent, sustainable and ethical. These are the main values the brand is built on.

“During my Masters degree I really focused my research on the jewellery industry, and as I delved deeper into it the more I found out about the detrimental environmental and societal impacts that the diamond mining industry causes. For this reason, I started looking into the sustainable jewellery industry and as I learned about the different alternatives that existed, it just made sense to me to go for lab grown diamonds and try to minimize my impact as much as possible.” (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix, founder of Matilde Jewellery)

As demonstrated above, both brands are having the identity of being sustainable and ethical and therefore choosing lab grown diamond and recycled precious metals as an alternative to the traditional mined diamonds and naturally sourced gold. As the consciousness of especially younger generations such as Millennials is increasing, the choice of being an ethical and sustainable brand leads to a competitive advantage and being one of the first movers allows them to stay ahead of the competition.

6 Discussion

The findings are showing that different factors and strategies are leading companies to succeed on the lab grown diamond market and to create and sustain competitive advantages.

It can be concluded that lab grown diamond brands should focus on the fact that they are sustainable, transparent and ethical. Nevertheless, they need to put a lot of effort in educating their potential customer as many people still do not know what it means to buy a lab grown diamond instead of a mined diamond. The process of creating awareness is essential as this will grow their potential customer base and will create loyalty. Besides that, in order to be able to reach especially the ecological aware target group they need to communicate that luxury can be something that is sustainable again and that especially jewellery is something that is timeless and can be passed on to next generations.

Furthermore, building strategic partnerships and relationships with the suppliers of the lab grown diamonds is vital as it allows them to secure the supply of the diamonds. Both of the companies chose suppliers that represent their values and that fit to the brand. As already described Courbet is investing in a lab that is located in Paris and that will allow them in the future to source their lab grown diamonds only from a France brand which will strengthen the notion of heritage. In the case of Matilde Jewellery, the supplier Madestones is strategic as well as they were certified as carbon-neutral. This step towards being more sustainable fits to the brand architecture of Matilde Jewellery. In general, lab-grown diamond brands should put a high focus on choosing suppliers and partners that are sharing their values and will help them to achieve their goals in the future and achieve a strategic advantage. Choosing local craftsmen that are located in the country of origin will ensure highest quality and heritage as well.

Both companies are having a rather untypical approach to selling their jewellery in the luxury jewellery industry with favouring e-commerce and choosing a Pop-Up store as well as a showroom as their physical point of sales.

Even if both brands are only using lab grown diamonds they are different in many aspects. Courbet is a French brand that was founded earlier than Matilde Jewellery and has therefore already grown bigger which can be seen in the number of employees and other financial figures. Another difference is the product range of the two brands. While Matilde Jewellery is focusing on being more accessible for the sake of allowing many people to purchase sustainable and ethical produced jewellery, Courbet is positioning itself as a luxury brand that is competing with many other prestigious luxury jewellery brands at Place Vendome. The approach of

Matilde Jewellery is having a wide range of different jewellery pieces and a wide price range of prices. Courbet on the other hand is also focusing on wedding bands and engagement rings besides their other collections. Another difference lays in the distribution channels. Even if both brands are having a digital approach, Courbet is more sophisticated in the way they are selling online by having a stronger digital visualization of the pieces.

The described differences between these two brands leads me to the limitations of this work. As I was not able to get interviews with two brands with a similar size and the exact same positioning, it was harder to find similarities between the two cases and generalize the findings. Nevertheless, as described in the findings chapter they are both having a similar approach to their strategies. In general, the data could have been richer if more companies would have been willing to participate in the interviews. Additionally, as I was the only researcher the work can be biased in the form of the questions asked during the interviews as well as the data analysis.

7 Conclusion

This work tried to answer the research question ‘How can lab-grown diamond brands gain a competitive advantage on the luxury market?’. For answering this question, a qualitative research approach with semi-structured in-depth interviews was chosen.

With answering the research question, I tried to close the gap in the literature as there is no previous research on how lab grown jewellery diamond brands are able to gain a competitive advantage besides the challenges they are facing. Different other studies already showed how companies are able to gain a competitive advantage in other luxury market segments.

The answer to the research question is that the lab grown diamond brands need to be able to control the whole value chain in terms of choosing the right lab grown diamond supplier and choosing craftsmen that are located in the country of origin. Furthermore, they need to build a high brand awareness in- and outside of the target group and should not communicate to sell but instead create a dream about the lab grown diamonds jewellery in the mind of people. Educating about lab grown diamonds plays an especially important role as well as the level of knowledge about lab grown diamonds is quite low still even though it is increasing. Moreover, choosing an unconventional approach to selling and favouring e-commerce distinguishes the two brands from traditional luxury jewellery brands. Lastly, having a strong brand identity which is being sustainable and ethical and in the case of Courbet, being a digital first brand gives the advantage of being different and opens new opportunities for reaching a more conscious target group.

As the topic around lab grown diamonds is still very immature further research needs to be conducted in this field of luxury strategy. The research can be extended to different brands to analyse their strategies that lead to a competitive advantage. In general, as this is an evolving field it is difficult to forecast how the whole diamond and lab grown diamond market is going to develop. In general, it can be stated that there is a need for more extensive research.

Bibliography

- Coste-Manière, I., & Gardetti, M. Á. (2021). *Sustainable luxury and jewelry*.
- Coyne, K. P. (1986). Sustainable competitive advantage—What it is, what it isn't. *Business Horizons*, 29(1), 54–61.
- De Barnier, V., Falcy, S., & Valette-Florence, P. (2012). Do consumers perceive three levels of luxury? A comparison of accessible, intermediate and inaccessible luxury brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 19(7), 623–636.
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62 1, 107–115.
- Graebner, M. E., Martin, J. A., & Roundy, P. T. (2012). Qualitative data: Cooking without a recipe. *Strategic Organization*, 10(3), 276–284.
- Heine, K. (2009). Using personal and online repertory grid methods for the development of a luxury brand personality. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 7(1), pp25-38.
- Heine, K. (2012). The concept of luxury brands. *Luxury brand management*, 1(2), 193–208.
- Hepner, J., Chandon, J.-L., & Bakardzhieva, D. (2020). Competitive advantage from marketing the SDGs: A luxury perspective. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*.
- Kapferer, J.-N. (2012). Abundant rarity: The key to luxury growth. *Business Horizons*, 55(5), 453–462.
- Kapferer, J.-N. (2015). Selecting the brand architecture to match your strategy. *The future of branding*, 1.
- Kapferer, J.-N., & Bastien, V. (2009). *The Luxury Strategy: Break the Rules of Marketing to Build Luxury Brands*.
- Keech, J., Morrin, M., & Podoshen, J. S. (2020). The effects of materialism on consumer evaluation of sustainable synthetic (lab-grown) products. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 37(5), 579–590. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-09-2018-2876>
- Ma, H. (2000). COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND FIRM PERFORMANCE. *Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal*, 10(2), 15–32.
- Okonkwo, U. (2007). *Luxury fashion branding: Trends, tactics, techniques*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Teegavarapu, S., Summers, J. D., & Mocko, G. M. (2008). *Case study method for design research: A justification*. 43284, 495–503.
- Van Maanen, J. (1979). Reclaiming Qualitative Methods for Organizational Research: A Preface. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 520–526. JSTOR.

BBC (2020). The sparkling rise of the lab grown diamond
<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200207-the-sparkling-rise-of-the-lab-grown-diamond>

Courbet.
<https://www.en.courbet.com/>

FTC. About the FTC.
<https://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc>

Luxe Packaging Insight (2021). Behind Courbet's strategy to pioneer sustainable jewelry.
<https://www.luxepackaginginsight.com/article/behind-courbet-s-strategy-to-pioneer-sustainable-jewelry.57974>

New Dawn Diamonds. What are the benefits of lab grown diamonds?
<https://www.newdawndiamonds.com/learn/benefits-of-lab-grown-diamonds.php>

Positive Luxury. Courbet.
<https://www.positiveluxury.com/brand/courbet/>

Statista (2020). Demand value of polished diamonds worldwide 2019, by country.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/894919/global-polished-diamond-demand-value-by-country/>

Statista (2021). Diamond industry – statistics & facts.
<https://www.statista.com/topics/1704/diamond-industry/#dossierKeyfigures>

Statista (2019). Diamond market share of lab-grown diamonds worldwide from 2016 to 2030.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1076048/global-market-share-of-lab-grown-diamonds/>

Statista (2021). Diamond mine production of the leading companies worldwide from 2015 to 2020.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/585369/diamond-production-of-top-diamond-companies/>

Statista (2015). Forecast rough diamond demand worldwide from 2014 to 2050.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/584801/forecast-rough-diamond-demand-worldwide/>

Statista (2020). Lab-grown diamond industry.
<https://www.statista.com/study/68955/global-lab-grown-diamond-industry/>

The Economist (2019). Can lab-grown diamonds replace the real thing?

https://www.economist.com/1843/2019/03/18/can-lab-grown-diamonds-replace-the-real-thing?utm_source=LinkedIn&utm_medium=Economist_Films&utm_campaign=Link_Description&utm_term=Science_and_Technology&utm_content=Social_native_videos&linkId=100000092360426

with clarity. Diamond Prices.

<https://www.withclarity.com/education/diamond-education/diamond-pricing>

with clarity. How are Lab Grown Diamonds Priced?

<https://www.withclarity.com/education/diamond-education/diamond-pricing/lab-diamond-pricing>

with clarity. The History of Lab Grown Diamonds.

<https://www.withclarity.com/education/diamond-education/lab-diamonds/history-of-lab-grown-diamonds>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Coding Tables

Quote	Code	Category	Theme
We differentiate ourselves also because we do all the jewelry in France and Italy. We don't work with craftsmen that are working abroad. (Charlotte Daehn)	Local production	Production location	Production
We will be able to tell we are a hundred percent French company because the gold is recycled in France. (Antoine Vuailat)	Full French company		
We source our lab-grown diamonds from a supplier called Madestones – and we are so happy to say that they just became completely Carbon Neutral in August 2021. We really put a lot of effort into working with brands and companies who share our values so it's something we are so happy about. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Supplier that aligns with brands values	Supplier of the lab grown diamonds	
We invested in a new manufacturer that is going to open I guess, in two or three years. And we hope to source all of the diamonds from France, but we have to wait for the beginning of this manufacture. (Antoine Vuailat)	Investment in French laboratory and sourcing of French lab grown diamonds		

Quote	Code	Category	Theme
We also believe that word of mouth is the most powerful form of marketing, as it is genuine opinions and thoughts on the brand that people pass on to their friends, family, etc. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Word of mouth	Marketing strategies	Brand awareness
We hired an ambassador, who is really famous in China. (Antoine Vuailat)	Brand ambassador		
We use we have a 360-degree communication. (Charlotte Daehn)	360-degree communication		
It's social media, of course. And there we will choose profiles of women that and men that will represent the brand on the social media. (Charlotte Daehn)	Social media presence		
The main purpose is to get new customers to learn about the brand and what we do. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Creating brand awareness		

Instagram, email, or the website. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Communication channels Matilde	Communication channels	
So, the website is in itself a kind of media now because people will visit it. We do a lot of brand content on the website, so that the SEO and Google would notice the appearance of words and take us up on the list. (Charlotte Daehn)	Website and content for SEO		
But we also have our showroom. (Charlotte Daehn)	Showroom		
We have, of course, our social media like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. (Charlotte Daehn)	Social media channels		
And then we have the events we are doing, we're organizing, we do a lot of events like fairs and this kind of stuff. (Charlotte Daehn)	Events		
When we choose the influencers on Instagram, we may have different objectives. It can be to get more followers on our website, on our social media. So, for example, we have a target of 100000 at the end of March, and we are at 65000, I think, now. (Charlotte Daehn)	Influencer marketing		
So, it's the SEO and SEA itself. (Charlotte Daehn)	SEO and SEA		
We send very frequently press kits and press releases to different journalists and media to get what we called a publisher. We might get an article and that will be free. And this we can get it on the radio, television, newspaper, podcasts, blogs, website. (Charlotte Daehn)	Unpaid media		
We can buy advertising space. And we are doing right now a campaign in the very famous weekly journal called Paris Much. We have an advertisement in every week over the Christmas season. And so, this is paid. (Charlotte Daehn)	Paid media	Education	
Like I previously said it is really important for us to offer all the information and resources about lab-grown diamonds and recycled gold, as well as about all of our practices. So, if customers learn even a small thing from us then we have done our job. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Offering resources to educate		
But of course, the main challenge for me is to educate the individuals,	Educating people about lab		

because to be honest, the low part of people know the process. The lab grown diamond and they don't know that it exists. So it is the main challenge. First and the second, it is always the same to convince people that it is the same. It's true, but we do lots of and lots of cocktails and lots of cocktails went well and we talk about the process and everything. And some people don't understand or don't want to understand the process. And one is they want to remain on their position to tell. No, no, no. It's not a real diamond. The diamond comes from the Earth. (Antoine Vuillat)	grown diamonds / Build knowledge and an understanding		
---	---	--	--

Quote	Code	Category	Theme
At the moment we only sell our jewellery on our website. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Selling from own e shop	Distribution Channels	Distribution
We are actually going to have a Pop-Up Store in London in November 2021 until Christmas. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Pop-Up store		
And then we have the local Printemps department store in Paris, which is quite famous. (Charlotte Daehn)	Department store		
But we also have our showroom. (Charlotte Daehn)	Showroom		
to ensure we are selling direct to consumer (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Direct selling	Point of contact with costumers	
which will be the first time we will be able to showcase our pieces in person to your customers. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	In-person contact		
personal experience is so important with jewellery. (Matilde Faria Mourinho Felix)	Personal experience		
But we also have our showroom. Which is giving to the people that are coming to visit an insight of how who is the brand and this is a way to communicate as well as we have, of course, our website. (Charlotte Daehn)	Showroom for communicating the brands		
But we also have our showroom. Which is giving to the people that are coming to visit an insight of how who is the brand and this is a way to communicate as well as we have, of course, our website. And then we have the local Printemps department store in Paris, which is quite famous.	Selling online as well as in-person		

<p>Now, if you compare us to other luxury brands, the differentiation will be on the digital relation that we can have with our clients because we do and we've done since the beginning. Video Conference VIDEO Rendezvous with the clients we do. We sell online and very few luxury brands sell online diamonds. And we do. And people buy online wedding rings and receive it by the mail. And they're very happy with that. So it's with the technology and the quality. Luxury quality are the main differences. (Charlotte Daehn)</p>			
<p>But we also have our showroom. Which is giving to the people that are coming to visit an insight of how who is the brand and this is a way to communicate. (Charlotte Daehn)</p>	<p>Showroom</p>		
<p>We have the printemps department, a big department store, but its only our people. (Antoine Vuailat)</p>	<p>Departement store Printemps</p>		

Appendix 2: Secondary Data Courbet

Title Author, Year, Place of Publication	Reference	Data
Jewellery & Watches – Courbet	https://www.positive-luxury.com/brand/courbet/	<p>Courbet is a jewellery brand whose mission is to offer the next generation of modern and ethical, sustainable and creative jewellery. A jewellery brand that respects the long-held Place Vendôme traditions, combined with the use of audacious ecological materials made possible because of new technologies.</p> <p><i>Sustainability and Ethos</i> Founded in 2018, Courbet was born with the view to embrace the use of laboratory-created diamonds and recycled gold. Fluid lines, strong statements of modern luxury, elongated and sparkling, the collections revolve around themes of the universe and the planets that are dear to the brand. They are all created by its chief designer Marie-Ann Wachtmeister. Courbet is very selective in its process of choosing who to work with. Currently, their jewellery is made in Paris, Lyon and Milan working with skilled partners to craft their pieces, Courbet is committed to producing in Europe. Courbet is disruptive in its approach to luxury jewellery; its team has shaken up the strong codes of the jewellery industry to the core by the sourcing of its sacred raw materials. The diamonds are created in a laboratory in conditions that recreate the same forces as those from the depths of the Earth. The brand is committed to their community and making the right decisions, whether it's about being transparent on their recycled and traceable gold or the many philanthropic actions they are undertaking, Courbet uses its savoir-faire to create meaningful luxury jewellery.</p> <p><i>A word from the founders</i> “A few years ago, there was no true alternative to the mined diamond. Today, on the other hand, we have the choice and have no longer any reason to rummage through Earth for diamonds when science and technology make it possible to produce the exact same diamond. As for gold, there is more gold above the surface of Earth than below it.” – Manuel Mallen and Marie-Ann Wachtmeister, Founders</p> <p><i>Case Studies:</i> <i>Responsible Sourcing & Conscious Design</i> Courbet has had conscious design embedded from the beginning. Courbet's diamonds are inherently conflict free. They use laboratory created diamonds that hold the same optical, physical and chemical properties to traditional mined diamonds. Courbet uses only recycled gold, mostly coming from industrial waste and electronic devices. Courbet is committed to Sustainable Development Goal: Responsible Consumption & Production. Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns through its manufacturing methods which also help to protect the natural environment and prevent harmful deforestation. Courbet trace more than 60% of raw materials and have in place sourcing policies, which incorporate traceability of raw materials down to the product level.</p>

		<p><i>Community Investment</i> Courbet has created a collection of bracelets called “Let’s Commit”. In this collection the clients can choose to support a cause through one of the 12 bracelets. Courbet will donate 15% of the price of the sale of this bracelet to a the association chosen by the client. Over the past two years, “Let’s Commit” has raised €15,000 across different causes. Courbet also encourages its staff to get involved and volunteer in the local community.</p> <p><i>Packaging & Plastic</i> Courbet’s packaging is made from recycled leather. They source their packaging from France to lighten their footprint. They use recycled cardboard that is dyed with plant-based colours and water-based glue. Courbet does not use any single-use plastics.</p> <p><i>Equality & Innovation</i> To start their journey to becoming circular, Courbet offers a repair service alongside a take-back scheme and re-design programme for clients. Through corporate policies, Courbet promotes fair labour and equal pay in their business. Always endeavouring to be as responsible as possible, Courbet ensures that throughout their offices and showrooms, they source ethical and recycled materials, use glass over plastic and organize their waste for recycling.</p> <p><i>Where next?</i> The essential step for Courbet was to determine and to analyse its carbon report. ClimateSeed set up a study in that purpose, revealing that 20 kg CO2 per carat were released for diamonds produced in France, a very satisfying result encouraging Courbet to ramp up in order to reach a total neutrality. This aim could be supported by the French production branch of laboratory-grown diamonds that is still developing, and could consequently favour the shortening of Courbet’s supply chain. At the same time, the jeweller is tightening its bonds with diverse ethical brands to create a growing network of virtuous initiatives, both at the environmental and social scales.</p>
<p>Lab-Grown Diamonds? This New Paris Jeweler Says They’re the Future Nazanin Lankarani</p> <p>September 11, 2018</p> <p>New York Times</p>	<p>https://www.ny-times.com/2018/09/11/style/jewelry-courbet-synthetic-diamonds.html</p>	<p>“We are signaling the coming of a new age on the Place Vendôme,” Manuel Mallen, co-founder of Courbet, said in an interview in the showroom. “It is not by accident that we chose this name.”</p> <p>“The jewelry houses on the Place Vendôme know that their products have damaged the environment in one way or another,” Mr. Mallen said. “The time has come for change.”</p> <p>The new house has good timing. In late July, the United States Federal Trade Commission amended its jewelry guidelines to say, as the Federal Register reported the change: “Lab-created products that have essentially the same optical, physical and chemical properties as mined diamonds are also diamonds.”</p> <p>So lab-grown diamonds may now be marketed in the United States as real gemstones, as long as they “clearly and conspicuously convey that the product is not a mined stone.”</p> <p>The F.T.C.’s decision should shatter the belief that lab-grown or man-made diamonds are not real and is expected to erode the mining industry’s efforts to ostracize the gems. (This fall, De Beers, the mining company that has subtly criticized synthetic diamonds in its “A</p>

	<p>Diamond Is Forever” advertising, is planning to introduce Lightbox, a new jewelry label selling its own lab-grown diamonds. Some critics, however, say the move is actually intended to reinforce the image of lab-grown diamonds as cheap and of poor quality.)</p> <p>While the trade commission’s jurisdiction is limited to the United States, its action could have significant repercussions globally. Few other countries have legislation or regulations on the issue, so they may follow the lead of the United States; in France, however, a 2002 decree required lab-grown diamonds to be sold as de synthese, or synthetic. Mr. Mallen said he was talking with French legislators about changing that rule.</p> <p>Today, lab-grown diamonds represent 2 percent of the world’s diamond supply; Citibank analysts have said that is expected to reach 10 percent by 2030.</p> <p>But Mr. Mallen, an industry veteran who spent most of his career working at the jewelry houses of the Richemont group, was won over by lab-grown gems in 2015. A stone dealer who supplied the Place Vendôme jewelers invited him to visit a diamond laboratory in Antwerp, Belgium, and during the tour, Mr. Mallen recalled, the dealer said the process was the future of diamonds. “Coming from him, the statement stayed with me.”</p> <p>In 2017, Mr. Mallen founded Courbet with Marie-Ann Wachtmeister, a Swedish entrepreneur and jewelry designer whom he met three years earlier, while he was president of the jeweler Poiray.</p> <p>“What appealed to me about Courbet,” Ms. Wachtmeister said, “was the chance to create a high-end, ethical collection that stood for modernity.”</p> <p>Engagement rings will be the centerpieces of Courbet’s collection, although it also will include a parure, which is a matching set of necklace, bracelet, ring and earrings. The collection, however, won’t be ready until October because the diamonds are still growing, according to Courbet.</p> <p>Sales will be available online, with international shipping, and at the Place Vendôme store; a one-carat white-gold ring will be 6,200 euros, or \$7,200, which includes the 20 percent tax.</p> <p>Diamonds have not been the only focus at Courbet. Its precious metals will be harvested from electronic mining, a recycling process that recovers gold and silver from sources like discarded mobile phones, laptops, televisions, refrigerators and electronic toys.</p> <p>Courbet’s diamond supplier is Diam Concept, a Paris company that creates diamonds using the plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition method. A small, defect-free diamond seed crystal — which can be mined or synthetic — is introduced to a heated mixture of hydrocarbon gas and hydrogen inside a reactor at low pressure.</p> <p>The seed, affected by the interaction of gases, then grows over a period of several weeks into a diamond that can be cut and polished just like one that has been mined.</p> <p>Diamonds also can be grown using a high-temperature, high-pressure synthetic process that turns carbon into a diamond seed, mimicking the heat and pressure deep within the earth.</p> <p>“To grow ultrapure diamonds,” said Alix Gicquel, founder of Diam Concept and a physics professor at Université Paris 13, “you need sophisticated reactors and highly advanced scientific expertise. Those pose a serious barrier to entry in this industry.”</p>
--	--

		<p>Ms. Gicquel, who was introduced to the science of growing diamonds at a conference in 1987, said she knew immediately that it would be the focus of her scientific life. “The method we have developed in 30 years are the least costly and most controllable means of growing diamonds,” she added.</p> <p>Founded in 2016, Diam Concept operates its laboratory on the Paris campus of the National Center for Scientific Research, a prestigious public organization operating under the auspices of the French Ministry of Education and Research.</p> <p>Whether produced by Diam Concept or either of the world’s best-known diamond labs — the Diamond Foundry in the United States or New Diamond Technology in Russia — lab-grown diamonds, are about 30 to 40 percent less expensive than mined diamonds. (For example, Courbet said that one of its sample gems — a 1-carat emerald-cut gem of good color and clarity, which was not made in France — would be priced about €4,900 while a comparable mined diamond would be at least €7,200.)</p> <p>At the moment, size continues to be a challenge for Diam Concept. “For now, we are able to produce up to 2-carat diamonds in a period of at least six to eight weeks,” Ms. Gicquel said.</p> <p>Diamonds of 2 carats or less make up about 80 percent of all diamond sales, according to Courbet, but much larger stones are commonplace among Place Vendôme jewelers.</p> <p>Despite the F.T.C.’s decision, industry observers say, it will take time and education for consumers to accept that lab-grown diamonds are real and to shed the fear that lab-grown stones may be sold as natural. “It is impossible to tell the difference between a mined and a lab-grown diamond without sophisticated analysis,” Ms. Gicquel said.</p> <p>But rather than hoping to infiltrate the natural-diamond supply chain, many retailers, including Courbet, are laser-marking their stones to set their jewelry apart from conflict diamonds or the negative legacy of mining.</p> <p>“We are proud to be different,” Mr. Mallen said. “What we expect is that everyone else on the Place Vendôme will also turn to lab-grown.”</p>
<p>Behind Courbet’s strategy to pioneer sustainable jewelery</p> <p>Alissa Demorest</p> <p>Feburary 10, 2021</p>	<p>https://www.luxepackaginginsight.com/article/behind-courbet-s-strategy-to-pioneer-sustainable-jewelry.57974</p>	<p><i>What was the driving idea behind the creation of Courbet?</i></p> <p>It was relatively simple: to create beautiful pieces of jewelry that were also virtuous; this translated for us into pieces made exclusively with recycled gold and diamonds created in a laboratory.</p> <p><i>You say that technology has been essential in building the brand.</i></p> <p>Yes, because technology has allowed us to be environmentally friendly. A diamond created in a lab is much more sustainable than its mined counterpart and the recycling process for materials is also thanks to technology.</p> <p><i>And your diamonds?</i></p> <p>It depends on the size of the diamond, but we try to purchase them in labs where the energy is cleanest as it's a very energy-intensive process to make a diamond. Indeed, this is the only aspect where our ecological claims could be challenged. Today we work mainly with labs in Russia and the US, but we’re looking to go local. Lab diamonds are extremely rare and very few large stones are produced using this process. When a mine is opened, if you find twenty 30-carat diamonds you collect every single one. Creating a large diamond in a lab is complicated, it takes time and the result is very uncertain as you can ‘grow’ it for three months and it could be unusable in the end. The more time goes into it, the more uncertain the outcome as even the slightest malfunction will</p>

	<p>impact the stone. Courbet sold the largest diamond ever created, a 9-carat and it took an entire year to make; we went through three failures for one success!</p> <p><i>The rarity of lab diamonds impacts price, yet they retail for less than mined diamonds. Why is that?</i></p> <p>A lab diamond is three times more expensive to create than a mined diamond, but as we have greatly reduced the number of intermediaries — one or two for a lab diamond, compared to between 10 and 14 for a mined diamond — they are sold 30% cheaper.</p> <p><i>Does your ecological approach extend to the packaging?</i></p> <p>Yes of course, but finding the right packaging was incredibly complicated for us! We wanted to stay in the realm of le bon et le beau (good, in the sense of virtuous, and beautiful). We finally found the right solution thanks to a French company, Atelier Virginie Wiertz that now designs and manufactures all of our boxes. They are in recycled leather, are dyed with organic inks and folded using the origami technique in order to avoid having to use glue. We are currently working on a new generation of packaging, but always with the same ecological and aesthetic priorities. The basis of the brief is to give the boxes a second life all the while meeting the constraints of protection, as most of our sales are done online.</p> <p><i>How are you financing the company's growth?</i></p> <p>We raised an initial round of €3.6m in 2017, and in March 2020 raised another €8.5m, which, together with the debt, amounts to around €12m. Marie-Ann and I are the majority shareholders as it is essential for us to hold the reins.</p> <p>Today our turnover stands at a little over €2m. When we started out we wanted the first two years to be a "test and learn" period for the brand, the name, the communication, the collections and our approach to retail — our long-term vision being that 75% of our sales will be digital. At the end of these two years, we decided the time had come to go abroad. Our most recent round of financing should allow us to do so. Our customer base is about 65% French, with the rest in the US and Europe. We are starting to have Chinese clients.</p> <p><i>What is your target export market?</i></p> <p>Today it is China. Initially we would have liked to expand a bit more, but given the current context, we are focusing on France and China. We are fortunate to have a new investor in the form of Chinese digital communication company Hylink; this is the "smart money" we were seeking.</p> <p><i>What is your strategy for developing in the China market?</i></p> <p>We're taking a digital-only approach and since January have been in a "teasing" phase. It's a lengthy and complicated process, but we firmly believe that it's the right strategy; there are 600 million Gen Z and millennials in China for whom sustainability makes sense and who are starting to open up to new brands.</p> <p>Courbet is opening an office in Shanghai in April and hopefully a showroom (not a boutique) late 2021 or early 2022. We are very fond of the showroom and appointment model, rather than a retail store as it allows us to take time with our customers. They appreciate the 'intimacy' and they have a lot of questions; for us it's a way of cultivating loyalty, which has no price!</p> <p><i>Your latest round of financing is also going towards R&D?</i></p> <p>Yes, to create made-in-France diamonds. Today there are no diamond labs in France, so we've invested in Diam Concept, a company headed</p>
--	--

		<p>up by a researcher at the CNRS to create the first diamond lab in the country. Courbet is a small investor, but above all I want to secure sourcing. When the perfect diamond comes out of the lab, we aim to have priority!</p> <p><i>You are the first brand to have integrated GoodsID technology into your products.</i></p> <p>Yes, this solution is part of our digital strategy, as is the fact that we accept crypto-currency and that our site features a 3D configurator to create jewelry with an exceptional rendering. We were tempted by the potential of blockchain and with GoodsID's technology we were able to add an insurance service. When a customer buys from Courbet, we give them all of the physical documents of course, but also in dematerialized form via the blockchain, which includes the two-year insurance policy that stipulates that we will replace a piece of jewelry if it's stolen. This is an integrated service at no extra cost to the consumer, we didn't raise our retail prices when it launched.</p> <p>In addition to your plans for export, what else is on the cards for Courbet?</p> <p>We are working on creating the biggest jewelry parure ever set with the largest lab diamond ever created, a 15-carat.</p>
Hapticmedia Courbet	https://hapticmedia.com/3d-configurator-jewelry/	<p>Maison Courbet brings a fresh eco-conscious, and ethical perspective to jewelry making. By using synthetic diamonds and recycled and traceable gold, as well as favoring e-commerce, Courbet has positioned itself as an innovator in the field of fine jewelry.</p> <p>Maison Courbet's range of products is available online, which means that the visualization of their jewelry and user experiences lie at the heart of their brand image.</p> <p>Courbet's 3D configurator allows users to visualize their engagement rings according to their selection of materials and diamond shapes.</p> <p>1) Simulation: Our 3D engine simulates the diamond's texture as realistically as possible.</p> <p>2) Customization: Users can chose the size of the ring, the material of the band and the shape of the diamond.</p> <p>3) Online 3D configurator for e-commerce platforms: choice of metals and diamond configuration. Real time simulation of the diamonds in the browser, allowing for a realistic and physical simulation of the light playing off the diamonds' facets that adapts to the various cuts of the gems.</p>
Working from home, the sector is adapting and so are our students School News June, 05, 2020	https://www.supdeluxe.com/en/school-news/working-home-sector-adapting-and-so-are-our-students	<p>"Five years ago, there was no real alternative to the mined diamond. Today, on the other hand, we have the choice and therefore no longer any reason to excavate the ground to extract diamonds, when science and technology make it possible to produce a diamond with exactly the same physical, chemical and optical characteristics as mined diamonds. As far as gold is concerned, there is more gold above the surface of the Earth than below."</p>
A Tale Of Two	https://www.jckonline	<p>"In most cases, our customers are purchasing their very first diamond," Mallen tells <i>JCK</i>. "Some come to us after doing their own</p>

<p>Boundary – Breaking Lab-Grown Diamond Jewelers</p> <p>Victoria Gomelsky</p> <p>March 22, 2021</p>	<p>.com/editorial-article/a-tale-of-two-lab-grown-jewelers/</p>	<p>research, while others are happy to discover everything there is to know about those alternative stones from us, as we welcome all of their questions.”</p> <p>Courbet’s bridal selection starts around 1,480 euros (around \$1,766) for a simple solitaire featuring a round 0.2 ct. F VS+ lab-grown diamond set in 18k gold. In its fashion Céleste collection, Courbet offers a statement necklace of diamond-set links for 21,800 euros (about \$26,000).</p> <p>Mallen makes clear that the opportunities for the brand’s lab-grown jewels are not limited to a single category. “Even if, currently, engagement rings are the first thing our customers come to Courbet for, we strongly believe that soon lab-grown diamonds will extend to every jewel category where mined diamonds are traditionally used,” says Mallen. “We believe that there is more to man-made diamonds than just a potential for seasonal fashion or accessories. Some cultured stones are exceptional and fit for fine jewelry, and Courbet opened the doors to the Place Vendôme to these 2.0 stones, paving the way for a new, more sustainable jewelry.”</p>
<p>Courbet raises €8 million in funds</p> <p>Sandrine Merle</p> <p>June 17, 2020</p> <p>the french jewelry post</p>	<p>https://www.the-frenchjewelry-post.com/en/business/lab-grown-diamond-jewelry-courbet/</p>	<p>In the midst of the lockdown, Courbet succeeded in raising an impressive €8 million. A conversation with Manuel Mallen, founder and president of this jewelry brand using lab-grown diamond.</p> <p>Interview by Sandrine Merle.</p> <p><i>Sandrine Merle. Your new investors, the Chinese digital communication agency Hylink, were so convinced they didn’t back out in the midst of the Coronavirus crisis?</i></p> <p>Manuel Mallen. I was a bit afraid, I admit, but this crisis might even have strengthened their conviction... They believe in our DNA, the blend of luxury, ecology and digital. Luxury fascinates them and ecology – contrary to what people think – is a real issue there: the only thing that provokes demonstrations in China. The government must solve this problem to ensure its stability and also wants to position itself as the greenest nation for reasons of image. It knows that ecology is a huge source of business.</p> <p><i>S.M. Courbet and Hylink are particularly close on the digital side.</i></p> <p>Manuel Mallen. Courbet is what is known as a DNVB, a Digitally Native Vertical Brand, at the intersection of innovation, technology and commerce. Thanks to web and mobile, it addresses the customer directly without passing through traditional retailers. It will also soon be possible to make a fitting or to make your ring live. As for Chinese e-commerce, it is equivalent to the American, European, Japanese and Korean markets combined!</p> <p><i>S.M. You have no doubt: lab-grown diamonds are part of the future?</i></p> <p>Manuel Mallen. Things are clearly moving in that direction because extraction is decreasing: in 2020-2030 we will only find 10 to 15% of what we find today, whereas demand is increasing. And the increasingly well-informed clientele wants to know what’s going on. In my opinion, the phenomenon is similar to that of cultured pearls in the 1920s and 30s, with one difference: fine pearls are rare, unlike mined diamonds, of which several billion carats have been extracted. And whose prices have been manipulated to reach astronomical levels.</p> <p><i>S.M. You reject the term synthetic diamond used in France.</i></p>

		<p>Manuel Mallen. The term synthetic diamond creates the impression that these diamonds are false and are made up of several elements whereas in fact they are obtained from a single transformed atom: carbon. It's like saying that a test tube baby is a synthetic baby! The ideal would be to use the terms 'mine diamonds' and 'cultured diamonds' as they do in the United States. In France, this battle is worth fighting but it's not a level playing field, given the presence of behemoths with hyper-powerful lobbies. It's up to the government to decide, given that the United States is taking the lead.</p> <p><i>S.M. In your opinion, a lab-grown diamond is rarer than natural diamond. Why is it cheaper?</i></p> <p>Manuel Mallen. Lab-grown diamonds are more expensive to produce than mined diamonds. It took a year, and three failed attempts to create the biggest one ever sold which weighed 9.02 carats! So today we have to be very patient... If the price of lab-grown diamond was correlated to scarcity, it would be 20 times higher than that of natural diamonds. Only the absence of intermediaries makes it possible to sell them at less expensive prices.</p> <p><i>S.M. Despite your caution around Covid19, what are your objectives?</i></p> <p>Manuel Mallen. The digital development of the Chinese and French markets for which Courbet was created. And the development of a 100% French industry with the opening of a factory in Arcangues in 2021.</p> <p><i>S.M. You don't think you're seriously debasing the diamond dream?</i></p> <p>Manuel Mallen. Diamonds are fantastic stones that reflect light like no other and jewelers glorify them in wonderful ways. But I inject some reality into the dream by removing its dark side. The human genius that reproduces the magic of nature makes me dream just as much and let's not forget: the Earth will get along just fine without humankind but the opposite is not true.</p>
<p>Jewelry Brand Courbet puts on synthetic diamonds and online sales</p> <p>Alex Shishlo</p> <p>June 22, 2020</p> <p>Rough Polished</p>	<p>https://www.rough-polished.com/en/news/117689.html</p>	<p>The Courbet brand relies on the Internet sales and intends to create an exclusive production channel in France for the supply of high-quality laboratory diamonds. Today, synthetic stones are imported to France mainly from the United States and Russia. Their cost is about 40% lower than natural diamonds.</p> <p>During the isolation period, all physical sales of Courbet were frozen for two months. But, starting from May 11, customer purchasing activity began to grow rapidly. "This is not only due to the catch up effect. In recent weeks, many people have learned about our concept through our website," says Manuel Mullen, one of the co-owners of Courbet. He is convinced that online trading will eventually be the main channel for selling diamond jewelry. In three years, the owners of Courbet aim to reach a turnover of 30 million euros, 70% of which will be provided by sales on the Internet. Today, this trading channel generates 20% of revenue.</p> <p>According to Mullen, the strength of the Courbet trading concept is not just in "cheap luxury". The consumer is also attracted by the fact that the production of synthetic diamonds used by the jewelry company is environmentally safe and guaranteed not to violate human rights. "Despite the pandemic, investors had no doubts about their decision," says Mullen. Part of the raised capital will be used to upgrade the online sales platform, which will allow the client to choose a jewel in</p>

		conditions close to visiting a physical store. At the same time, the Courbet brand relies on the disposition of new generations to purchase jewelry online.
House of Courbet: France's First Sustainable and Ethical Jewelry Brand Kasia Dietz September 21, 2018	https://bonjour-paris.com/lifestyle/courbet-sustainable-jewelry-brand/	<p>.Why this pull towards sustainable jewelry? As Manuel Mallen explains, “Five years ago, there were no true alternatives to the mined diamond. Today, on the other hand, we have the choice and no longer have any reason to rummage through earth for diamonds when science and technology make it possible to produce the exact same diamond. As for gold, there is more gold above the surface of Earth than below it.”</p> <p>House of Courbet designs all of its jewelry in Paris, inspired by the universe and its planets, as evidenced when viewing each elegant otherworldly collection. Production remains exclusive to Europe, as they choose only to work with three highly regarded craftsmen in Paris, Lyon, and Milan.</p>
Marie-Ann Wachtmeister from Courbet: „Ecology must be embodied as much in the choice of materials as in the timelessness of design” Marie-Caroline Selmer September 29, 2020	https://theioffjewelry.com/uncategorized/marie-ann-wachtmeister-from-courbet-ecology-must-be-embodied-as-much-in-the-choice-of-materials-as-in-the-timelessness-of-design/	<p><i>The Eye of Jewelry: How do you go from designing jewelry collections with mine diamonds to designing laboratory diamonds?</i></p> <p>Marie-Ann Wachtmeister: More easily than if I had been in the fashion world designing clothes. In jewelry, the materials are the same: recycled gold has the same characteristics as primary gold, and the laboratory diamonds we use have the same properties as mined diamonds. On the other hand, I couldn't have made the reverse switch from laboratory diamonds to working with mined diamonds. The real constraint lies in the fact that, for the moment, we at Courbet have chosen to work only recycled gold and cultured diamonds.</p> <p><i>Theioff: In parallel to your collections, your Bridal line has developed strongly. Is this an expectation of your customers?</i></p> <p>Marie-Ann Wachtmeister: There is a growing desire among our customers to make the highlights of their lives in line with their convictions. Whether they are innovative or environmentally conscious, our customers recognise themselves in the Courbet style, in our ability to combine ecology with design desirability.</p> <p><i>Theioff: Even though they are well informed, do your customers ask you where your diamonds come from?</i></p> <p>Marie-Ann Wachtmeister: Yes, and that's quite normal. We have invested in French diamonds, particularly those from the Diam Concept company founded by Alix Gicquel, which we have used to set the pieces in the Pont des Arts collection. We also obtain our supplies from laboratories in the United States and Russia, especially for large stones. Contrary to what some may believe, just because a diamond is produced in a laboratory does not mean that it can be made in unlimited quantities. The initial investment is colossal, the machines require constant adjustment, and production starts are not always successful. It takes time to obtain a laboratory quality diamond.</p> <p>“Innovation is the keystone, it allows us to move forward in ecology without giving in to luxury.”</p> <p><i>Theioff: On this subject, what do you say to the detractors of laboratory diamonds who argue that these stones are synthetic and that they have no “soul”?</i></p> <p>Marie-Ann Wachtmeister: To say that laboratory diamonds are synthetic is not correct – even if this is their official name – because there is no fusion of new materials in the manufacturing process. On either side, there are only carbon atoms that are transformed to form a diamond. As for the history of the stone, if its creation process</p>

		<p>underground is exciting and conceals a part of magic, it must be completed by all that follows, post-extraction. It is difficult to make the magic last when we know the pollution induced by the activity of a mine and its societal impact, notably on the health of the miners or even child labour. If we want to be honest, we have to tell the whole story of the mined diamond.</p> <p><i>Theioff: Given the financial investment required for R&D in a laboratory, how do you explain the difference in cost between a mined diamond and a laboratory diamond being in your favour?</i></p> <p>Marie-Ann Wachtmeister: At Courbet, we have chosen to offer our clients only diamonds rated D, E and F, when the majority of jewellers go down to G, which is a strong commitment to quality. The production of laboratory diamonds is expensive, but unlike the market for mined diamonds, intermediaries are very limited. I take the example of our Russian supplier who produces and cuts the stones himself. In this case, the purchase is made directly from the producer. The value of the diamond is thus transferred to the customer without the need to split the margin to different intermediaries and thus increase its final cost. This is why our Bridal line allows our customers to offer themselves larger and higher quality pieces than they could find elsewhere.</p> <p><i>Theioff: When you are a brand committed to ecological issues like Courbet, what is its relationship to innovation?</i></p> <p>Marie-Ann Wachtmeister: It's the keystone. Innovation makes it possible to advance in ecology without giving in to luxury. I'm thinking in particular of the research work we're carrying out on luxury goods displays. How can Courbet take up the subject to offer a case that meets the codes of luxury without turning it into a container devoid of any functionality once the jewellery has been offered? It's a very strong commitment to be ecological because it impacts the entire value creation chain. Everything must make sense.</p>
<p>Technology at the service of eco-friendly fine jewellery</p> <p>Ludmilla Intravaia</p> <p>February 21, 2020</p>	<p>https://boudoirnumerique.com/magazine/technology-at-the-service-of-eco-friendly-fine-jewellery-59019</p>	<p>"TECHNOLOGY AT THE SERVICE OF ECO-FRIENDLY FINE JEWELLERY"</p> <p>February 21, 2020</p> <p>To grow diamonds in a laboratory and to recycle gold from electronic devices to create more ethical jewels, such is the bet of the French maison Courbet, in order to limit its environmental footprint. Explanations with Charlotte Daehn, head of public relations at Courbet, met on January 30 in Paris, in the sustainable fashion space of the Change Now summit, dedicated to innovative solutions for the ecological transition.</p> <p>Le Boudoir Numérique : You use diamonds grown in laboratory, rather than diamonds extracted from the ground, in industrial mines, to create your jewellery. How are diamonds grown ?</p> <p>Charlotte Daehn, head of public relations at Courbet : Two technologies are used to grow these diamonds which have the same physical, chemical and optical properties as mined diamonds. HPHT (High Pressure, High Temperature) technology reproduces the conditions in which diamonds formed deep within the earth, billions of years ago, while the second, CVD (Chemical Vapor Deposition) technology replicates the conditions in which they form in the universe. Scientists have found diamonds in meteorites, which shows that they do not necessarily originate in the depths of our planet but also in space. With CVD technology, the diamonds are created in a low-pressure atmosphere using hydrogen plasma, which causes the carbon atoms to crystallise into diamond. It is the technology used by one of our suppliers, the French laboratory Diam Concept, founded by CNRS researcher Alix Gicquel</p>

		<p>who has dedicated her life to diamonds. With these diamonds made in France, in the region of Paris, we have just launched a jewellery capsule collection, called Pont des arts.</p> <p>From an ecological point of view, what are the advantages of a lab-grown diamond ? The impact of a grown diamond is more limited on the environment, since the production in a laboratory of a 1 karat diamond consumes approximately 50 kilos of carbon dioxide, versus 160 kilos of CO2, for an equivalent mined diamond. To find a 1 karat diamond, you go as far as extracting 250 tonnes of ore, which generates huge dust clouds and a huge waste of energy. Industrial mines cause site pollution, deforestation and animal displacement, not to mention poor human working conditions. Grown diamonds allow traceability and transparency, shorter circuits, with fewer intermediaries, which is also a huge asset. Likewise, we use 18 karat gold recycled by the company Agosi, from obsolete computer and industrial equipment, which again avoids pollution from natural extraction, promotes traceability and the use of already existing resources.</p> <p>Can you be defined as a technological jeweller ? We see ourselves rather as a traditional jeweller who takes advantage of technological advances to reduce its ecological footprint, to offer a new way of consuming, more serene. If we have chosen to work, in a disruptive way, with diamonds produced in laboratory by high-tech processes, we keep an infinite admiration for the fine jewellery maisons, whose old skills we perpetuate in the creation of our jewellery. We embody a positive alternative, capable of responding to the environmental concerns of our customers, especially young generations, in search of transparency and ethics.</p>
<p>Diamonds are forever, but what about ones grown in a lab? – Lab-diamonds are entirely man made.</p> <p>Ines de la Cuetara</p> <p>May 29, 2021</p>	<p>https://abcnews.go.com/International/diamonds-for-ever-grown-labs/story?id=77949730</p>	<p>PARIS -- They say diamonds are forever, but it's become crystal clear the diamond industry is changing.</p> <p>Pandora, the world's largest jeweler, sent shockwaves through the diamond industry when it announced earlier this month it would no longer sell mined diamonds, opting instead for lab-grown ones. The Copenhagen-based company citing sustainability and environmental concerns, becoming the latest major industry player to make the switch.</p> <p>At Paris-based Diam Concept, a company that creates diamonds using the chemical vapor deposition method, founder Alix Gicquel explained the process begins when a thin sheet of crystal, known as a diamond seed, is inserted into a reactor, where it's exposed to heat and a gas mixture.</p> <p>As carbon atoms are deposited onto the seed, so grows the diamond. It takes about a month for the rock to fully form; it is by then quite literally a diamond in the rough, surrounded by what's known as polycrystalline. Final steps involve trimming, polishing, and evaluating the stones, which are graded according to the 4Cs-- cut, color, clarity and carat, just like mined diamonds.</p> <p>"It's exactly the same," said Gicquel, who explained one would need very sophisticated tools to be able to tell the difference between a lab diamond and a mined diamond.</p> <p>"Lab-grown diamonds are the future," she added.</p> <p>According to the Antwerp World Diamond Center, demand for man-made stones is expected to grow by up to 20% annually.</p>

	<p>Price is a big part of the appeal; according to some estimates, lab-grown diamonds with nearly identical grades to a natural one can be up to 30% cheaper.</p> <p>"With our system, the cost to produce them is actually higher, but because we don't have any intermediaries, we can sell them at a lower price," explained Gicquel.</p> <p>The sparkling stones have even made their way to Paris' iconic Place Vendome, home to some of the world's oldest and finest jewelers. Courbet is the first of its kind in Paris's center of jewelry and luxury -- a store that exclusively sells lab diamonds.</p> <p>"We wanted to show the way in ecological luxury," said Marie-Ann Wachmeister, who co-founded Courbet in 2018.</p> <p>Those in favor of lab-grown diamonds argue the stones are more environmentally friendly. According to a 2014 report from Frost & Sullivan, mined diamonds require twice as much energy per carat than those grown in a lab, and that about 125 pounds of carbon are released into the air for every mined carat.</p> <p>Gicquel estimates about 44 pounds of carbon are produced for every carat she creates.</p> <p>Wachmeister says many of her clients are environmentally conscious. "They care about the environment. They want a piece of jewelry they can look at and feel good about," she said.</p> <p>The mining industry counters that lab-diamonds still take energy to produce.</p> <p>"When a lab-created diamond is grown in the so-called CVD (chemical vapor deposition) process using 100% renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions are less than 1/10 of emissions from a low-carbon diamond mine -- this includes all upstream emissions in the lab-created diamond value chain," Pandora spokesperson Johan Melchior wrote in a statement.</p> <p>But beyond the environmental debate, consumers are also growing increasingly mindful of where their stones are coming from, hoping to steer clear of so-called "conflict diamonds."</p> <p>Progress has been made when it comes to working conditions in the mines, and thanks to initiatives like the Kimberly Process, meant to increase transparency and oversight in the diamond industry, the trade of conflict or "blood" diamonds has been reduced. But advocates say that human rights abuses are still rampant at many diamond mines.</p> <p>Those in favor of mining, such as the Natural Diamond Council, argue the industry "employs tens of millions of people around the world and their families and communities depend on the income and welfare that the natural diamond industry provides."</p> <p>"Shifting entirely to lab-grown diamonds essentially robs them of that opportunity for accessing the legal market," said Joanne Lebert, executive director of Impact, a nonprofit organization focused on trying to improve resource management in areas where human rights and security are at risk.</p> <p>"If you if we shut the door on them, you're essentially condemning them to this vulnerability, human rights violations, poverty, et cetera, rather than being a solution in the sector," she said.</p> <p>"This new emerging part of the industry is also creating a lot of new work opportunities. I'm not sure that in the long term these communities that are having work in the diamond mines are going to be sustained, because after 20 years the mine closes, and a lot of them are closing now," said Wachmeister.</p>
--	---

		<p>Just a few doors down from Courbet, jeweler Lorenz Baumer argues there's something irreplaceable about a natural diamond.</p> <p>"You just happen to work with nature, which is really wonderful because it is full of surprises," Baumer said. "We're used to dealing with all sorts of interesting, different requests and making sure we find some special unusual stones. Sometimes the stone might even have a history."</p> <p>Baumer currently only sells natural diamonds, yet he's not ruling out a future with lab-grown ones.</p> <p>"If they're in line with my values, which are about excellence, beauty and authenticity, yes, why not?"</p>
<p>Synthetic diamonds are shaking up the world of jewelry</p> <p>world to-day news</p> <p>February 14, 2021</p>	<p>https://www.world-today-news.com/synthetic-diamonds-are-shaking-up-the-world-of-jewelry/</p>	<p>Because, despite improvements in techniques and working conditions, diamond extractors are regularly singled out for their opaque trade, their working conditions and their ecological impact. "The biggest man-made holes on earth are the diamond mines. To obtain a diamond of 1 carat, of approximately 0.2 grams, it is necessary to extract up to 250 tons of ores. That's the weight of three planes. " Accused of being very energy-intensive, laboratory production is not perfect either, but it is presented as a more transparent and environmentally friendly alternative.</p>

Appendix 3: Secondary Data Matilde Jewellery

Title, Author, Year, Place of Publica- tion	Reference	Data
Matilde Jewellery debuts seasonal pop-up in London Jeremy Lim November 23, 2021	https://www.theindustry.fashion/matilde-jewellery-debuts-seasonal-pop-up-in-london/	Mourinho added: "Since the brand launched, it was vital for me to understand and know my customers. Not only does the store offer those a chance to see the collections in person, but it also offers me the chance to understand who the Matilde customer is, and what they want from an eco-friendly brand like mine. "Bringing the Matilde collections offline and enabling customers to see, touch and try on the pieces means that more people will be able to see just how beautiful and stylish that sustainable fine jewellery can be – all without breaking the bank."
This Sustainable Brand Will Have You Rethink the Way You Buy Jewellery Krista Jones April 29 th , 2021	https://www.popsugar.co.uk/fashion/stylish-sustainable-jewelry-from-matilde-jewellery-48297023	The brand thrives on making a difference and keeping transparency in mind for everything from its materials to packageing and even employees. That said, the brand's pieces don't lack in quality or designs, and it's truly making it more accessible for anyone to own ethically sourced and thoughtful jewellery. The brand's metal suppliers purchase preloved gold that is able to be refined and remade into new pieces, making it a 100 percent recyclable process. In addition to its eco-friendly approach to gold, it also uses lab-grown diamonds, which are more environmentally and socially friendly. These lab-grown pieces are visually, chemically, and physically identical to mined diamonds, so you won't even know the difference, except that you can feel good about your purchase.
Matilde Jewellery Lands Offline Michela Marrocu November 22, 2021	https://www.vopius.com/en/trend/matilde-jewellery-lands-offline	The switch from online to offline is never easy, waiting for the expectation of digital is challenging but meeting in the so-called "real life" is special. Matilde and her sustainable jewels have taken this step and have "exited" temporarily from the screen, alongside for the first time her digital platform (opened in December 2020), a physical store in the Ham Yard Village in Soho, London. Five weeks, from 17 November to 24 December 2021 included, to know and recognize the brand's eco-friendly jewelry live. «The launch in this experiential space marks a year of activity for Matilde Jewellery and I could not be more proud to see the brand come to life in a physical place, as well as have the opportunity to meet customers», explained the founder Matilde Mourinho. «The

		<p>store not only gives me the opportunity to wear my pieces, but also gives me the opportunity to understand who my customers are and what they are looking for from a sustainable brand like mine». All Matilde Jewellery jewels are made of recycled gold, embellished with lab-grown diamonds, environmentally friendly and carbon neutral, while gold suppliers are guaranteed by Scientific Certification Systems. All essential elements to ensure that Matilde’s jewels have the credentials to be defined 100% transparent and eco-friendly.</p>
<p>New Brand Matilde Jewellery Bows Line of Lab-Grown Diamond Jewels</p> <p>Brittany Schmitz</p> <p>December 18, 2020</p>	<p>https://www.jckonline.com/editorial-article/new-matilde-jewellery/</p>	<p>Tell us a little bit about your goals working with lab-grown diamonds. What makes their use important to you?</p> <p>Lab-grown diamonds are chemically and physically identical to mined diamonds, all without the negative environmental and societal impacts. I learned so much about the practices of the mining industry, and when I found an identical alternative that didn’t have to cost us the earth, I knew straight away I couldn’t go back to purchasing a mined diamond. It’s important to me and to my brand to be able to spread awareness of this alternative, and even better to offer resources to those who are unfamiliar with lab-grown diamonds.</p> <p>To launch a new brand in 2020 is a big endeavor! How has the reception among customers been so far? Are you finding it comfortable to connect with customers online?</p> <p>The reception has been overwhelming! When I started working on the beginning stages of building the brand, nobody knew what was coming in 2020, and with this I was faced with a choice of: Do I pause and resume when “this is all over,” or do I take it as a challenge and grab the opportunity to go ahead? I decided to go ahead for several reasons—I really found that this year made consumers much more aware of the origins of their products as well as the practices of the brands they choose to follow. I think connecting with customers online is a great resource, especially when social media is such a direct form of communication that allows organic and authentic communities to build and grow.</p>

<p>Matilde Mourinho wants to change the perception of lab-grown diamonds</p> <p>Amy de Klerk</p> <p>November 17, 2021</p>	<p>https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/jewellery-watches/a38276232/matilde-jewellery/</p>	<p>There is no doubt that the jewellery market is changing. Just like the broader fashion landscape, where consumers are becoming more aware than ever of the impact that their shopping habits may have on the environment, we are finally asking for transparency regarding the brands we buy into, while many of us are also becoming more open-minded when it comes to investing in less traditional methods of production. This is particularly true with diamonds. For Matilde Mourinho, a jewellery designer who recently launched her own sustainable jewellery brand, she wants to continue breaking down any misconceptions surrounding real versus lab-grown diamonds.</p> <p>“The biggest issue regarding lab-grown diamonds is that they are not considered to be ‘real’,” she tells me. “As a brand, we are trying to educate our consumers by offering tools and resources that will teach them about the reality of sustainable jewellery. Lab-grown diamonds are physically, optically and chemically identical to natural diamonds. The only difference is how they are grown.”</p> <p>The idea that lab-grown diamonds are less ‘real’ or ‘special’ than their man-made counterparts is an old-fashioned one, and an argument which brands like Matilde are working to eliminate.</p> <p>“Without a doubt, attitudes are changing. More and more people know what lab-grown diamonds are, and as consumers, they are more open to this as an alternative or even as a first choice. Just last month, research found that sustainability is now a top priority when purchasing diamonds – and this just goes to show how the perception and attitude towards lab-grown diamonds in jewellery is changing rapidly.”</p> <p>The research Mourinho is referring to comes from De Beers’ annual Diamond Insight Report, which stressed how sustainability is no longer an afterthought when it comes to purchasing a piece of jewellery. In fact, it has become one of the first questions we ask and is now considered just as important as price.</p> <p>However, the world of sustainable jewellery is still new, brands within it are still adapting and trying to do the best that they can, but there is much to be learnt. This is one of the biggest challenges for Mourinho.</p>
---	--	---

		<p>“There is always more to learn – there are so many sustainable alternatives to most things we can think of. If I were to give any advice to someone in my position, it would be to learn as much as you possibly can about what you are doing and be prepared to answer tricky questions. People will ask a lot of questions about what makes your business sustainable – be prepared to answer these and be able to back up everything you are saying.”</p> <p>For Mourinho, one of the keys to this was ensuring that her supply chains were as transparent as possible. The designer says that she was thorough in researching the suppliers and producers that aligned with her values, and which could prove that they were up to standard.</p> <p>Matilde’s lab-grown diamond suppliers are carbon neutral, while the metal suppliers are SCS (Scientific Certification Systems) certified – which means they hold the credentials for the responsible sourcing of precious metals. This certification doesn’t just cover the use of recycled metals, but it governs a range of business practices related to sustainability, ethical working conditions, and transparency, all of which was key if Mourinho was going to go into business with them.</p> <p>Once all of this was aligned, Matilde launched, right in the middle of a global pandemic. However, despite these challenges, in just a year, it has already seen plenty of success, with the understated, elegant and earth-friendly jewellery resonating with shoppers.</p> <p>“I am so excited to finally meet customers and get their feedback on the collections and the brand – I think this is something I will personally learn a lot from,” she says. “There is so much to be learnt from our community – and there are many more great things to come from Matilde jewellery I’m sure!”</p>
--	--	--