LOEWE
GROW

Concept Booklet
Introduction

Loewe Grow is a brand extension for the Spanish luxury brand Loewe and caters to its core audience, the On-the-go Sophisticates. The brand extension plays an important part in the overall strategy to establish Loewe as the most mindful leather luxury brand. This strategy aims to strengthen the emotional bond between Loewe and its core audience, and ultimately intends to secure a unique market position for Loewe in the overcrowded luxury market.
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Brand Strategy
Loewe
The Brand

Loewe is a Spanish luxury brand founded in 1846 by a German craftsman in Madrid. Today’s creative director Jonathan Anderson was appointed in 2013. Leather craftsmanship is standing at the core of the brand while quality is written in capital letters at Loewe.

The brand is constantly bridging the gap between their heritage and innovation. As they state in their mission: ‘Loewe wants to reconfigure traditional codes of craftsmanship with a timely awareness to set new creative standards for the future.’

The Spanish roots of the brand meet a modern vision on craftsmanship in their designs and communication. Loewe has got an artistic and cultured character with an intellectual, often poetic tone of voice.
Design Signature

Loewe designs high-end RTW for both men and women. Their main focus, however, lies on leather accessories, especially leather bags. But, as Jonathan Anderson once stated, the clothes still play an important role for the storytelling of the brand. “Fundamentally, the RTW is the character of the bag.”

The label is known for their experimental design approach and cultural cut and paste technique. Anderson takes traditional codes and remixes them in a new context. Beyond that, all of their designs place a high importance on tactility. As frontrunners in leather expertise, Loewe is making use of the latest techniques and material innovations for every new collection. All of the bags are handcrafted in an artisanal workshop in Madrid by a team of skilled craftsmen and -women.

Markets

For years, Loewe’s main markets have been Spain and Japan. With the appointment of Jonathan Anderson, however, the brand became more and more popular in the rest of Europe, East Asia and Northern America. Loewe is being sold in brand-owned boutiques, on the Loewe website and at a selection of luxury retailers both online and in physical stores.
Loewe’s advertising campaigns are conceptual and artistic, reminding rather of art works than commercial fashion campaigns. For every season they are collaborating with the photographers Steven Meisel and Jamie Hawkesworth. Their visuals are also featured in an inspirational booklet that is available for free in the Loewe stores.

Beyond that the brand owns an art foundation called ‘Loewe Foundation’. They organise a series of events such as collaborations with museums and artists as well as in-store art exhibitions. With the art in the stores Loewe aims to give a pause to their customers hoping that they can take a calm moment of reflection through the art. The Loewe Foundation also launched the Loewe Craft prize, which honours young as well as established craftsmen and -women for outstanding modern craftsmanship each year.

Even the womenswear fashion show of Loewe is shown at a cultural institution: the UNESCO building during Paris Fashion Week.

Physicality plays an important role in the communication of Loewe. They mainly host real life events to get in touch with their audience and all of their campaign images are not only distributed on instagram and online, but are also printed as posters.

Everything Loewe does ties in with the idea of arts and crafts.
The On-the-go Sophisticates are predominantly, but not exclusively, female and on average 20-50 years old, which makes them part of Gen Z and Gen Y. Living in big cities in Europe, Northern America and East Asia, but often traveling for work or leisure time, they are urban multilocs.

What characterizes the On-the-go Sophisticates is their career-driven attitude, spending most of their time working as high-level executives in industries like Fashion, Media, Business and Finance. They lead very busy lifestyles with lunch and dinner times often being their only moments of relaxation.

In their rare moments of free-time they like to visit museums and exhibitions. They also collect art and design pieces. They see themselves as creatives, but instead of being truly artistic, they are rather curators. This becomes evident in the way they design their homes, in the places where they choose to eat and on their social media accounts. In their opinion art should always have a deeper meaning.

Another important aspect for the On-the-go Sophisticates is self-care. In between their professional and social obligations they treat themselves once in a while with spa days, cleansing rituals and wellness treatments.
The uniqueness of a product is what triggers the On-the-go Sophisticates to make a purchase decision.

When it comes to fashion, quality and style are the most important criteria for the On-the-go Sophisticates. Functionality and price are not unimportant, but play a secondary role in their purchase decision. The majority states that they either care a lot or a bit about sustainability. However, they often end up buying products that are not sustainable as they don’t want to compromise on quality and style.

What ultimately triggers the On-the-go Sophisticates to make a purchase decision is the uniqueness of a product, which is a factor that is difficult to measure. If a product is special, it makes them feel special about themselves. They usually see products as unique if they are handmade or have a story to tell, especially in times where it is increasingly harder to identify where our products are coming from. The fact that craftsmanship puts emphasis on the making is why they like handcrafted products.

The On-the-go Sophisticates have got a high disposable income due to their careers and/or family backgrounds. They are affluent spenders who like to shop at brands like Céline, Chloé and Prada, and lately also Gucci and Balenciaga. Loewe is often seen as bridging the gap between the classic minimalism of the former brands and the modern experimentalism of the latter ones.

The reason why they buy Loewe is because it is a trusted leather expert. They associate the brand with quality, craftsmanship and leather. However, they don’t see it as especially innovative, a quality that is actually very important to the identity of Loewe. The majority of On-the-go Sophisticates are recurrent customers, owning more than just one bag or item of clothing. They prefer shopping in the physical stores of Loewe over buying online or at retailers because of the personal service they receive in the Loewe stores.
The Problem

Loewe is a brand with a long-standing history and a very clear functional selling point: leather craftsmanship. This is also reflected in the associations that the core audience of Loewe has with the brand: quality, craftsmanship and leather. All these values are functional ones.

Looking at the overcrowded luxury leather market, however, it is not just Loewe that has leather craftsmanship as a unique selling point. Almost every single competitor offers the same value proposition, which is natural as most of the luxury houses were founded as leather brands. As a result, leather expertise alone is no longer enough to make a brand stand out. Therefore, brands usually have an additional emotional selling point that helps them to position themselves on the market and to distinguish themselves from their competitors. For Loewe, however, the emotional selling point is not clear, neither internally nor to their core audience the On-the-go Sophisticates.

Loewe needs to establish an ESP (emotional selling point) in order to gain a unique market position and to stand out from its competitors in the overcrowded luxury leather market.
Today’s society is following life on the fast lane. Mass-production, mass-consumption and working hours that easily overshadow private times are the norm. No wonder that there is a large-scale counter-reaction emerging that goes against the current fast-paced rhythm of our lives: the Slow Movement. This macro-trend is often mentioned in context of the rising global interest in wellness but it is about so much more than that.

At the core of the Slow Movement is indeed the intend to take a step back and to pause for a moment, to reflect. But that does not have to happen by doing yoga, meditation or spending a day in the spa. The slow movement has many faces.

When it comes to design, the slow movement is about taking the time to make a good product, to design a product for the long-term, a product that lasts. An appreciation of craftsmanship is re-emerging and it becomes more and more important again to know where our products are coming from, and especially who made them. The Slow Movement puts the focus back on the process rather than on the result.

Showing a new interest in craft and tradition does not mean though that the Slow Movement is only looking back in time. Traditional techniques are being fused with technology and innovation. It is not about standing still, it is about going in the right direction at a decent pace. It is about the thought and it is about celebrating the beauty of slowness.
Opportunity

Loewe puts a lot of thought into the making of their products with carefully selected materials and a slow, but qualitative high production process in their artisanal workshop in Madrid.

Beyond that, the brand wants to give a moment of pause to their audience by putting art into their stores hoping that their customers can take time to reflect being at Loewe.

Both of these factors are playing into the big ideas of the Slow Movement.

As Loewe has already naturally started to tap into this macro trend, yet is not fully mastering it yet, I see an opportunity for the brand to further draw ideas from the Slow Movement and to establish Loewe as the most mindful leather luxury brand. Mindful in the sense of appreciating the process and taking the time to reflect.

Putting more emphasis on the mindful production of Loewe products will strengthen the interest of the On-the-go Sophisticates as they appreciate craftsmanship not only because of the quality of the finished products but especially as it puts emphasis on the making.

Beyond that, the On-the-go Sophisticates are in true need of a moment of slowness with their busy schedules and hectic lifestyles. If Loewe achieves to inspire their audience to take the time and the space for reflection with storytelling around their products, an emotional bond between audience and brand will be created.

The Strategy:

To establish Loewe as the most mindful leather luxury brand.

Objectives:

To gain a unique market position.
To strengthen the emotional bond between brand and core audience.
LOEWE
GROW

Concept
Loewe Grow is a brand extension for the Spanish luxury brand Loewe catering to its core audience, the On-the-go Sophisticates. As the On-the-go Sophisticates value craftsmanship, mainly because it puts emphasis on the making of the product, Loewe Grow rethinks the moment of creation. In this manner the brand extension will catch the attention of their audience and manages to communicate the newly established ESP of Loewe as the most mindful luxury leather brand.

With Loewe Grow a new product line is being introduced: bags made from mycelium leather. This innovative material is not only completely sustainable, but it also allows us to rethink the way we produce and use our products. As the mycelium leather is slowly being grown in a lab from mushrooms, the material invites us to look at the moment of creation with a different, more mindful pair of eyes.
Loewe Grow
The Philosophy

Time as a concept is usually categorised in three different eras: the past, the present, and the future. While we have no troubles indulging in lovely memories of the past or making ambitious plans for the future, we often find it difficult to cherish the present moment. This makes us rush through our lives, always focusing on the next big step instead of enjoying the journey.

At Loewe Grow, however, we don't rush. We take the time to create the best, most unique product possible. We don’t ‘just’ look at the result, we see the story, and we believe that the uniqueness of a product lies in its making.

With the rich heritage of our mother brand Loewe, our mindful approach to the present and our brave look into the future, we merge all three different eras of time into one, the only one that truly matters, the moment of creation. And we celebrate it.
Vision: The uniqueness of a product lies in its making.

Mission: We celebrate the moment of creation.

Mindful
For Loewe Grow, being mindful is not about yoga or meditation. It is about appreciating the process, taking the time to reflect and celebrating the beauty of slowness.

Innovative
Being mindful with the present moment, however, does not mean that we are standing still. We are always improving and innovating while using cutting-edge techniques and materials.

Poetic
We are more than just makers, we are thinkers. There is a meaningful thought behind everything we do and everything we make. We like to create stories and we love to share them.
**Visual Style**

The merging of different time eras is also recognisable in the visual style of Loewe Grow. It fuses a nostalgic romanticism with futuristic elements. What especially characterises the brand is the juxtaposition of natural aspects with artificial ones.

The images of Loewe Grow create a calm and soothing atmosphere, yet are strong and powerful in their essence. Just like the spirit of the brand.

Beyond that, Loewe Grow follows the example of Loewe itself with artistic and conceptual imagery that transcends an aura of sophistication and demonstrates understated luxury.

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**Tone of Voice**

We are thinkers, we are poets, we are storytellers, but we are no dreamers. We prefer to tell our stories through the power of the image, and we only use words if necessary. If we do, they are chosen wisely. We never speak without thinking, and we never share without a purpose.
Collection

In the first collection of Loewe Grow, geometric shapes meet organic elements and rounded details. This juxtaposition is a metaphor for the artificial and the natural that are united at Loewe Grow. The bags come in several muted colours such as black, brown, white and a natural orange. Smooth surfaces create the look and feel of real leather. Overall, the collection has an understated, elegant look.

Technically speaking, mushroom leather is actually not leather made from mushrooms, but made from mycelium, which are the root fibres of the mushroom.

To grow mycelium in a laboratory, there are two main ingredients needed: a base mass of agricultural waste like hay and seeds of fungus. If the fungus is added to the bio-mass under special circumstances regulated by heat, humidity and light, then the thin fibres of the mycelium start growing and bond with the bio-mass that they were added to. Eventually they form one big mass: a new material. Depending on the ingredients that are used for the foundation, different materials with different qualities can be created and so mycelium is also used in product design and architecture. The mycelium is growing all by itself, there is nothing else that needs to be done except from waiting.

For the production of the leather, however, there is one extra step needed. Once the mycelium grew around the agricultural waste and formed one material mass, it has to be taken out of its special circumstances. It will stop growing and create a skin-like surface to protect the bio-mass from outer circumstances. It is this skin that forms the actual foundation of the mycelium leather. The skin is being extracted and layered and a new leather is created, a leather that is just as durable and versatile as real leather. The rest of the bio-mass can be reused to grow more leather or it can be applied to other areas of design. It is a closed-loop process and the leather is fully bio-degradable.

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Cognitive Objective:
To introduce the brand extension Loewe Grow to the core audience of Loewe.

Affective Objective:
To inspire the audience of Loewe Grow to rethink the fast pace of life.

Communication Audience
The On-the-go Sophisticates

Main Insights
The On-the-go Sophisticates appreciate craftsmanship not only because of the high quality, but especially because it puts emphasis on the making of a product.

When it comes to fashion, but also to furniture and art, it is the uniqueness of a product that catches the interest of On-the-go Sophisticates.

As they consider being cultured as a status symbol, the On-the-go Sophisticates regularly visit art exhibitions, follow cultural institutions on social media and collect art.

Above all, they believe that art should inspire. In their opinion, art is not meant to be merely beautiful; it should have a second layer to trigger their thoughts.

The On-the-go Sophisticates consider themselves as creatives but they are not artists themselves. They are rather curators and art collectors.

As busy individuals, the On-the-go Sophisticates often only have a moment of relaxation during lunch and dinner times.

The majority of the On-the-go Sophisticates shops in Loewe’s physical stores and follows the brand on Instagram.
Strategy

To show the making of the new material through the lens of art.

Creative Concept
Nature Laboratory
Tactics & Flow Chart

1. Visual Campaign

The introduction of the brand extension Loewe Grow starts off with the release of a visual campaign that gives a sneak peak on the new product line and hints at the special making of the products. At this point, however, no further information is revealed to fuel speculations and to spark a discussion among the audience. Following Loewe’s established campaign strategy, the visual campaign is distributed both online and in print.

Aim: to create awareness for the new brand extension and to spark curiosity

2. In-House Art Installation

Once launched, the Loewe Grow products are presented in an in-house art installation at selected Loewe boutiques. In collaboration with the design duo Formafantasma, the installation visualises key steps of the making of the mushroom leather. Bridging the gap between science and art, the installation manages to bring the production process of the new material closer to the audience in an appealing way.

Aim: to inform about the making of the mushroom leather and to inspire

3. Launch Dinner

Prior to the reveal of the art exhibition to the general public, a selection of VIP customers are invited to the Loewe store for the Loewe Grow launch dinner. Here they can see the Loewe Grow products and art installation for the first time. To create a holistic experience, the guests are served a special meal made from the same mushrooms as the bags.

4. Visual Publication

With the purchase of a Loewe Grow product comes a photographic inspiration booklet that visualises the making of the mushroom bags on a conceptual level in a visual essay. This ‘Publication’ lives on beyond the campaign as a collector’s item.

Aim: to inspire and to create an emotional link between the audience and the brand
1. Visual Campaign

Prior to the release of the Loewe Grow products, a visual campaign is published to spark curiosity around the brand extension. As Loewe Grow is all about celebrating the moment of creation, the campaign puts emphasis on the making of the products.

The creative concept of the visual campaign is inspired by Paulo Coelho’s classic novel ‘The Alchemist’ (1995). But instead of portraying a male alchemist who turns lead into gold, as one of the novel’s main characters does, the Loewe Grow campaign shows a female alchemist turning mushrooms into leather bags - a modern interpretation of the classic tale. The campaign carries the title ‘La Alchemista’ to link back to Loewe’s Spanish heritage. As the On-the-go Sophisticates are cultured intellects, they certainly know Paulo Coelho’s philosophical work and the reference adds an extra layer to the campaign. However, the campaign is also understandable and attractive to those who are not familiar with Coelho’s novel.

Tapping into Loewe’s campaign philosophy of showing the creative concept and the product in two separate images, one mood image and one product image are released that interact with each other and create a storytelling through the Kuleshov effect.

The campaign images have the potential to live both in print and online. They are distributed on Loewe’s social channels such as their website and Instagram, and beyond that they are published in selected independent fashion magazines such as Another and Dansk. Finally, a series of campaign posters is being hung up in key cities all over the world.

introducing Mycelium Leather
LOEWE GROW
together with La Alchemista
2. In-House Art Installation

As the mushroom leather is a new material that the audience is not familiar with yet, they are probably critical at first. Therefore it is important that they learn to understand how the material is being made. Since the majority of the On-the-go Sophisticates shop in-store, it is an opportunity for Loewe to catch their attention here. An in-store art installation in collaboration with renowned design duo Formafantasma will bring the production of the mushroom leather closer to the audience.

This intriguing way of storytelling and special method to produce the material enhances the uniqueness factor of the bags, which ultimately catches the interest of the On-the-go Sophisticates.

Loewe is regularly exhibiting at art fairs such as Art Basel and Salone del Mobile. The installation has the potential to travel beyond the stores of Loewe.

It is here where they can learn about the making of the mushroom leather step by step - from the initial growing of the fungus to the final bag. The material is being grown on spot which has a visually intriguing effect; the slow but steady pace of the growing invites the audience to rethink the way we use and produce our products. The aim of the installation is as much to inform as to inspire with the beauty of slowness.

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Why Formafantasma?

Formafantasma is an Italian design duo that explores critical approaches to sustainability and the cultural significance of everyday objects through art and craft. With a questioning yet playful attitude, they investigate alternative material applications in their product design and art installations. During the past years the design duo has been regularly exhibiting at renowned art museums such as MoMA in New York and the V&A in London and gained international recognition in the art scene. Beyond that they have also previously collaborated with luxury houses such as Hermès and Fendi.

For the Loewe art installation, Formafantasma will be asked to create an inspiring environment that bridges the gap between visual merchandising and art to present the Loewe Grow products. As the design duo is mastering the experimentation with new materials, they will be challenged to use solid mycelium as a main material for the art installation. This mycelium is created as a byproduct in the growing of the mushroom leather. Besides that, it gained importance as a craft material in the world of product design in recent years, due to its interesting status as a living organism. The reusing of the mycelium ensures that no material goes to waste in the production of the mushroom leather which makes the installation biodegradable and sustainable.
3. Launch Dinner

To create a truly memorable experience and to give the audience a calm, relaxing evening, Loewe Grow is serving dinner alongside the product reveal. All creations on the menu are made from the same mushrooms as the ones used to make the leather bags. This means that the audience can literally eat what they buy and experience the products on a whole new sensory level.

For the launch of the Loewe Grow products and in-house art installation, a selection of VIP customers are invited to the Loewe stores. It is here where the collection is revealed for the very first time.

To create a truly memorable experience and to give the audience a calm, relaxing evening, Loewe Grow is serving dinner alongside the product reveal. All creations on the menu are made from the same mushrooms as the ones used to make the leather bags. This means that the audience can literally eat what they buy and experience the products on a whole new sensory level.

Not all the On-the-go Sophisticates will be present at the launch event, but visitors are expected to share the launch dinner experience on their social media accounts. This way the event will reach a wider audience and it will create a desire for the brand extension.
In addition to the visual campaign, Loewe Grow creates a visual ‘Publication’ that the customer receives at the purchase of a Loewe Grow product. A publication like this is being produced for every Loewe collection and usually features a mixture of lookbook and campaign images.

The Loewe Grow ‘Publication’ contains a visual essay that shows the making of the mushroom leather and bags on a conceptual level. It taps into the same creative concept as the visual campaign, ‘La Alchemista’, but features many photographs that the audience has not seen before, neither online nor in magazines or on posters.

As the On-the-go Sophisticates are collectors, the Loewe Grow ‘Publication’ hopes to become part of their collection of magazines and books that they surround themselves with in their apartments for visual inspiration.
Sustainability
Nothing goes to waste

Loewe as a brand has a sustainable mentality when it comes to product and material waste. They don’t overproduce, which according to the brand itself is not just to create exclusivity, but especially to prevent overstocking. Beyond that, Loewe has got a no-waste design approach, which manifests itself in leather accessories and furniture pieces that reuse leather that can’t be used for bags anymore and would normally go to waste. Loewe Grow is bringing this no-waste philosophy of Loewe one step further.

In the production process of the mushroom leather it is not only the leather itself that is being grown, but there are two main bi-materials being created: the mycelium biomass (2) and the mushroom fruit (3). In fact, the mushroom leather constitutes only a very small part of the growing fungus organism as it is merely the mycelium skin (1) that can be used to create the leather. In order to not waste the mycelium biomass and mushroom fruit, Loewe Grow re-uses these two ‘bi-products’ in the communication of the brand.

(1) The Mycelium Skin
is extracted from the mycelium biomass, layered, and then turned into leather. This leather is then being used for the Loewe Grow bags.

(2) The Mycelium Biomass
is needed to grow the Mycelium skin, but it is not needed for the leather bags later on. However, mycelium biomass is an established material in the world of product design, and so it will be used to create the art installation and visual merchandising that are presenting the Loewe Grow products in-store.

(3) The Mushroom Fruit
is the part that we actually often think about when we talk about mushrooms: it is the part that we can eat. However, in the production of the mushroom leather it is rather a bi-product. In order to not waste this tasteful fruit, it is being used to create delicious meals for Loewe Grow events, including the launch event.