

BUSINESS

E-P Summit 2022: Metaverse, Traceability And Cyber-security Discussed

● During e-P Summit 2022, held on May 4 in Florence, fashion brands talked metaverse, NFTs and sustainable business practices.

BY ALICE MONORCHIO

FLORENCE – During the first day of the two-day e-P Summit 2022 held on May 4 at the Stazione Leopolda in Florence (for the first time), participating brands and companies questioned how to efficiently improve the supply chain using circular and advanced technologies, and also how to create virtual spaces in the metaverse in a relevant and more engaging way.

In the last year, the metaverse has become a great addition for fashion brands to show their collections, interact with customers and propose exclusive collaborations only available in the virtual world. For example, Gucci created a Gucci Garden in the Roblox gaming platform. In January, Nike brought the digital Nikeland experience to its New York City store on Fifth Avenue. Estée Lauder designed a metaverse space on Decentraland in which users were able to receive wearable NFTs from the Advanced Night Repair's product.



The e-P summit 2022 edition held in Florence at the Stazione Leopolda.

But as many users noticed, the experiences – especially during Metaverse fashion week, which was held from March 24 to 27, on the Decentraland gaming platform – were less exciting and at times even confusing, according to Tommaso Nervegna, metaverse strategy

lead at Accenture.

Nervegna underlined during the summit that brands need to be careful on how they act in a virtual world, and that “fashion players need to act better, not in a different way,” he said. Nervegna also believes that in the next year, “brands will have to be more consistent and relevant with how they use the metaverse and digital platforms.”

Umberto Cicognini, art direction manager at Accenture, added that the basic principles of creating a virtual world are “build people-centric ideas, build for what exists today, always be consistent and embrace perpetual exploration.”

For many brands, using the metaverse as a way in which users can enjoy the virtual experience has proven an arduous task.

Stefano Righetti, chief executive officer of Hyphen-Italia, said, “If brands develop and enrich each step of the production line with 3Ds and NFTs, it will be much easier to create a project in the metaverse.”

Hyphen is a leading company in the digital transformation of the luxury and fashion world, aiming to condense each step from production of a shoot or a virtual showroom or e-tailer to post-production into one place. Hyphen launched for the

first time the Hyphen truck, which will be parked inside the exhibition area for the entire duration of the summit. “It is the first digital content factory on wheels,” as the CEO introduced it.

Thanks to a sophisticated hydraulic system, the truck extends its surface to host a mobile production studio. Garments and accessories are shot at a 360-degree level on a rotating mannequin and during the post production everyone, from the style department to the photo team, can follow it live as the computers use the Chalco BrandLife software. Thanks to AI, the computers recognize exactly the clothing item, its measurements and exact colors – this optimizes time, logistics and costs. The truck is powered by solar energy and equipped with all current market standards in terms of connectivity that make it autonomous and able to operate anywhere.

Hyphen has already collaborated with major brands like Versace, Valentino, Salvatore Ferragamo, Canali, Loro Piana, MaxMara and Diesel to create virtual showrooms, which became useful for brands during the pandemic, as buyers couldn't physically see the collections. In the future, the Italian tech company is planning to work with fast-fashion brands to make their production processes more sustainable.

The company is growing at a fast rate. During 2021, Hyphen's turnover was 12.5 million euros with a 14.6 percent growth, and in 2022, the company expects to report revenues of 15 million euros. It counts 140 employees and in 2021 alone, opened offices in Affi Bergamo, Italy; London; New York; Paris, and Lugano, Switzerland

Thanks to its adaptability, the truck is not only able to do simple clean photo shoots for virtual showrooms or e-shops, but also more creative ones, by changing the background, lights or adding props – which are often used by brands for their social channels. Hyphen is now venturing into the metaverse, trying to help brands create better virtual experiences.

“We want to provoke the fashion industry...with our small truck we can do everything,” Righetti said.

Hyphen posed a question that was widely debated during the summit: how can fashion brands become more functional and efficient without neglecting sustainability, traceability and cyber security?

Elena Verri, ICT director of Italian leather goods brand Borbonese, is starting to understand how to do this with the help of Paolo Caffagni, chief marketing officer of BrandUp Solutions.

“Our [signature] OP motif is the most copied and reproduced design, so we wanted to find a way to make our creations traceable and overcome the gray market,” Verri said. Thanks to the help of BrandUp, Borbonese was able to develop an NFC tag, which will be positioned on each bag to certify the authenticity of the item and, most importantly, to tell the story of production from beginning to end. “Sustainability is at the core of our brand and, thanks to this technology, we are able to show our production methods, which above all is Made in Italy.”

Similar to Borbonese, Pinko is also investing in blockchains and in an integrated platform called “Product Experience Management,” or PXM. Together with Lectra, which specializes in bespoke technologies that facilitate digital transformation for companies in the fashion sector, Pinko was able to manage the product life-cycle through in-cloud methods.

Marco Ruffa, digital transformation director at Pinko, said, “For us, it means putting a value of cooperation and fluidity in our supply chain.”



Inside the Hyphen truck developed by Hyphen.



The new Hyphen truck developed by Hyphen.