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Poetic Heritage and Value Innovation: A Study on the Fashion Management Strategy of Van Cleef & Arpels

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Abstract. Van Cleef & Arpels, a high-end jewelry and watchmaking house founded in 1906 on Place Vendôme in Paris, has developed a unique fashion management system over a century, with "poetic narrative" and "exquisite craftsmanship" as its core competitiveness. This article takes this brand as a research sample and, from four major dimensions including brand strategy, supply chain management, experiential marketing and sustainable development, combines typical cases such as the Alhambra Four-Leaf Clovers collection, the Perlée® series limited-time experience space, and RJC responsible sourcing to deeply analyze the core logic and practical methods of its fashion management. Research shows that Van Cleef & Arpels has achieved a dual boost in brand premium and market growth by activating poetic elements, such as "love, nature, and luck", innovating traditional techniques like the Mystery Setting, creating a nationwide artistic experience space, and establishing a responsible jewelry supply chain. In the 2024 fiscal year, the Alhambra collection contributed 60% of its revenue, driving a 14% growth in Richemont's jewelry division despite the challenging market conditions. This article aims to summarize the collaborative management model of "cultural value—craftsmanship value—user value" for luxury jewelry brands, providing a reference for the development of the high-end fashion industry.

Keywords: Fashion Management, Brand Narrative, Craftsmanship Inheritance, Experience Marketing, Sustainable Jewelry

1. Introduction

In an era of intensified global competition and rapidly evolving consumer demands, the high-end jewelry industry is undergoing fundamental changes: today's consumers not only seek exquisite craftsmanship but also expect luxury brands to offer emotional resonance, cultural narratives, and ethical responsibility.

The current academic research on luxury fashion management mainly focuses on the digital transformation of mass luxury brands and the sustainability of fast fashion. There is a significant research gap in understanding how traditional high-end jewelry brands balance their century-old heritage with contemporary innovation.

Against this backdrop, this article takes the 119-year-old Parisian brand Van Cleef & Arpels as the core case study and explores its fashion management system from four interrelated dimensions:

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how to maintain brand strategy by relying on cultural heritage, how to ensure ethical integrity through supply chain governance, how to enhance user engagement through experiential marketing, and how to strengthen long-term resilience through sustainable development practices.

This study adopts a mixed research approach, integrating in-depth case analysis, secondary data from financial reports and industry certifications, as well as qualitative assessment of brand initiatives, aiming to reveal the synergistic logic of "poetic inheritance" and "value innovation" in its operations. By addressing these questions, this study will provide actionable insights for traditional luxury brands to cope with industry changes and offer a replicable framework for the global high-end jewelry industry to balance inheritance, innovation and responsibility.

2. Brand strategy

2.1. Cultural genes and brand positioning: from Place Vendome in Paris to targeting high-net-worth clients

Van Cleef & Arpels was founded in 1906 on Place Vendome in Paris [1]. Its brand identity is deeply rooted in the elegant heritage and cultural heritage of French high jewelry. By integrating poetic themes such as "love, nature and luck" into the design narrative, the brand has established a unique emotional connection with high-net-worth clients who value craftsmanship and cultural stories. This positioning helps it stand out in the fierce market competition and attract consumers who not only pursue luxury goods but also value cultural and emotional value.

2.2. Balance between heritage revitalization and innovation: taking the Alhambra four-leaf clover series as an example

Debuting in 1968, the Alhambra four-leaf clover collection stands as a paradigmatic practice of Van Cleef & Arpels in reconciling traditional legacy with modern aesthetics. Beyond adopting the four-leaf clover—a timeless motif of fortune—as its spiritual core, the collection has evolved dynamically through material innovation: from the early use of yellow gold and onyx to the later introduction of malachite with natural veining, iridescent mother-of-pearl, and translucent agate. Each material iteration responds to shifting consumer preferences for minimalism and naturalism. This "heritage activation" logic lies in preserving the silhouette's recognizability while injecting contemporary design language—for instance, reducing the size of clover motifs to fit everyday wear scenarios. Such a strategy has solidified the collection's status as a "timeless classic with modern vitality": according to Richemont Group's 2024 fiscal report, the Alhambra series accounted for 60% of Van Cleef & Arpels' total revenue, outperforming the industry average contribution rate of 35%-40% for iconic luxury jewelry lines [2-3].

2.3. Process innovation and enhanced scarcity: the strategic value of implicit inlay method

Developed in 1933, Van Cleef & Arpels' proprietary Mystery Setting (referred to as "invisible inlay" in industry practice) serves as the foundational pillar of its brand differentiation [4]. Unlike conventional prong settings that expose metal brackets, this technique involves precise grooving on the gemstone's edge and seamless interlocking, resulting in a surface where gemstones appear to float independently—achieving a pure, unobstructed radiance. The craftsmanship's complexity is unparalleled: each gemstone requires 20+ hours of manual polishing and calibration, and only 5% of the brand's master craftsmen can proficiently master it after 3+ years of specialized training. By restricting its application to limited-edition high jewelry (fewer than 100 pieces annually) and never

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disclosing core production processes, Van Cleef & Arpels not only amplifies product scarcity but also constructs a "craftsmanship moat"—solidifying its reputation as a leader in haute joaillerie and supporting a price premium of 200%-300% compared to regular inlaid pieces.

3. Supply chain management

3.1. Responsible procurement and raw material traceability: RJC certification and rare material control

In response to the global call for ethical luxury, Van Cleef & Arpels has obtained the Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC) Chain of Custody Certification—the highest standard for supply chain ethics in the jewelry industry—covering the entire process from raw material extraction to finished product delivery [5]. For high-value rare materials, the brand has implemented a "double-traceability" mechanism: Colombian emeralds are tracked through mining area codes and export documents, while Burmese rubies are verified via in-house gemological testing to confirm their origin in non-conflict zones. Notably, the brand requires suppliers to submit annual environmental impact reports, such as water and soil restoration plans for mining areas, which go beyond RJC's basic requirements. This proactive ethical governance not only mitigates risks of boycotts or reputational damage but also resonates with the 68% of high-net-worth consumers who prioritize "supply chain transparency" when purchasing luxury jewelry [3].

3.2. Production control and process adherence: master-apprentice inheritance and full-process quality inspection in the Paris workshop

The brand's workshop in Paris is at the core of the supply chain. Master craftsmen pass on traditional skills such as hand carving and gemstone setting through 5- to 7-year apprenticeship programs. Each piece of jewelry must undergo a full-process quality inspection from raw material selection to final polishing to ensure the consistency of the craftsmanship. By adhering to independent production, Van Cleef & Arpels strictly controls quality, avoids outsourcing risks, and strengthens the authenticity of "Made in France"[6].

3.3. Inventory and category optimization: differentiation strategies balance scarcity and market accessibility

Van Cleef & Arpels has constructed a "two-tier inventory management system" to reconcile the inherent tension between luxury exclusivity and market reach. For one-of-a-kind high jewelry (e.g., custom pieces with rare gemstones), production is limited to 5-10 pieces per design, and distribution is restricted to 12 flagship stores in cultural hubs like Paris, New York, and Hong Kong—consumers must pre-register and undergo a "brand culture interview" to make a purchase, safeguarding the sense of exclusivity. For iconic commercial series such as Alhambra, the brand adopts a "flexible production + just-in-time replenishment" model: based on real-time sales data from global boutiques, production is adjusted monthly to avoid overstocking while ensuring that core styles (e.g., small-size clover pendants) are always available. This stratified approach has achieved a win-win: high jewelry maintains the brand's premium image, while commercial series drive scale revenue—contributing 40% and 60% of total sales respectively in 2024 [7].

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4. Experiential marketing

4.1. Offline space creation: Perlee ® series limited-time experience spaces

Van Cleef & Arpels enhances brand engagement through immersive offline experiences, such as the limited-time experience space of the Perlee ® series. These pop-up installations have been set up in cultural hubs such as Tokyo and New York [8], integrating art, design and interactive displays to showcase the diverse charm of the series. The brand invites customers to touch, try on and learn the story behind the jewelry, transforming shopping into a cultural experience, deepening emotional connections and promoting word-of-mouth.

4.2. Cultural IP collaboration: linkage with museums and art institutions

The brand collaborates with top cultural institutions such as the Musee d 'Orsay in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to hold exhibitions, connecting jewelry with art history. For instance, the exhibition "Time, Nature, Love" traces the evolution of Van Cleef & Arpels' design themes through the collection's works and contemporary art [9]. These collaborations have shaped the brand into a cultural patron, enhancing its reputation and attracting consumers who value intellectual and aesthetic experiences.

4.3. Online and offline integration: digital narrative and omni-channel services

Van Cleef & Arpels integrates online and offline channels to create a seamless customer journey. The official website offers 360° product displays and virtual try-on tools, while social media platforms such as Instagram share behind-the-scenes content of the workshop. Customers can also make appointments for in-store experiences through digital platforms [10], building a bridge between digital exploration and offline interaction. This omni-channel strategy not only meets the demands of tech consumers but also retains the brand's tactile texture and luxurious tone.

5. Sustainable development

5.1. Craft inheritance: apprenticeship programs and traditional skills protection

To safeguard its handcrafted heritage, Van Cleef & Arpels has launched an exclusive apprenticeship program to cultivate a new generation of jewelers to master endangered techniques such as guilloche engraving and enamel craftsmanship. The brand also collaborates with UNESCO to document and promote these crafts globally, ensuring their continuation beyond its own workshops [11]. Investing in craft protection not only safeguards technical expertise but also enables brands to become guardians of cultural heritage.

5.2. Environmental protection operations: renewable energy and full-chain green practices

Van Cleef & Arpels has committed to achieving carbon neutrality across its entire operational chain by 2030. Its Geneva watchmaking factory has already adopted renewable energy sources such as solar panels [12]. The brand also implements full-chain green practices, including the use of recycled gold and silver and the reduction of water consumption in workshops. These measures conform to the sustainable transformation trend of the luxury goods industry, attract environmentally conscious consumers, and at the same time reduce the ecological footprint of brands.

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5.3. Ethical responsibility: public welfare participation and sustainable management throughout the entire life cycle

In addition to environmental protection actions, Van Cleef & Arpels also participates in public welfare projects, including collaborating with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to protect biodiversity. The brand also attaches great importance to the sustainability of the entire life cycle, providing jewelry repair and recycling services [13] and encouraging customers to extend the lifespan of their jewelry rather than discard it. This all-round ethical responsibility strengthens the brand's image as a responsible luxury leader and cultivates long-term customer loyalty.

6. Conclusion

This study systematically analyzed Van Cleef & Arpels' fashion management strategy from four core dimensions: brand strategy, supply chain management, experiential marketing, and sustainable development. The research found that the brand's long-term success stems from its ability to balance "poetic heritage" and "value innovation": it anchors its brand identity in French high jewelry culture, connects tradition and modernity by activating iconic series, such as Alhambra, and maintains scarcity through exclusive techniques like the invisible setting method, thereby establishing a unique position in the high-net-worth market. Its supply chain governance is characterized by RJC certification, in-house production in Paris workshops, and differentiated inventory strategies, which not only ensure ethical integrity but also enhance operational resilience. Meanwhile, immersive experiential marketing and omni-channel services deepen emotional connections with consumers, and its commitment to craftsmanship protection, carbon neutrality, and collaboration with the WWF has positioned it as a responsible leader in the luxury industry.

In response to the core research question of "How can traditional high-end jewelry brands achieve development in the context of industry transformation?" this study has summarized a replicable "cultural value—craftsmanship value—user value" collaborative management model, providing practical insights for other traditional luxury brands to balance inheritance and innovation, as well as ethical responsibility and business growth. However, this study only focuses on a single case. Future research could be expanded to comparative studies of multiple high-end jewelry brands to verify the universality of this model. Additionally, exploring the impact of emerging technologies such as blockchain on supply chain transparency could further enrich the understanding of sustainable luxury management. As the global luxury landscape evolves, this study emphasizes that traditional brands must not only adhere to their artisanal roots but also proactively embrace sustainable development and digital transformation to remain competitive in the 21st century.

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