Transcript interview Bello & Eco

**Haneen:** Who are you and what do you do?

**LAV:** I am Carmen Lavrieri and I have a company (Bello & Eco), but I am also a teacher at a college here in Enschede.

**Malvika**: We have looked at the site once again and we have come up with a few more questions.

**LAV**: Go ahead.

**Malvika**: What are the future plans of the company?

**LAV**: We started 2 years ago, so we are still working on recognizing the Dutch market. In the beginning we wanted to focus on women's fashion, but we have seen that many men also like fashion. We also have a lot of male customers, so that is why we think about designing a clothing line for men in the future, durable clothing. We also want to sell more clothes in Europe. In Germany for example. We already sell in Belgium, but in Germany we also have a lot of demand for our clothes. I myself do not speak German, so I must arrange for a German partner to be able to do that. We also want to sell in England and I speak English. We also do our market in English, but now Brexit is really a challenge. So we do not know yet, but at least we sell in Belgium. Soon in Germany and perhaps Italy. There are many possibilities. It is only a matter of doing.

**Malvika**: Do you also want to expand your business outside of Europe?

**LAV**: No, not yet. Do you know why? If you go outside of Europe, the production has to really rise considerably. And I do not want mass production. This for example (takes a hat) is a very nice good winter hat. It is handmade from wool. And imagine that I also must sell this outside Europe, how much of this should I have produced? So it is impossible. And mass production brings with it pollution. That is the biggest problem of companies. And they also keep the costs down because of this mass production and I really do not want that. So, I have to provide a way to offer a collection, but I really want to prevent mass production.

**Haneen**: Do you already have partners within Europe? For example, we saw Spain on the site and you just mentioned Belgium.

**LAV**: Yes, our partners are European, for example: Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Germany. Also, with Dutch brands. And a few companies in Peru,b because I am a Peruvian, so I know the market and speak the language. I love the style of clothing, the colors and the natural materials.

**Haneen**: Who are your main target groups?

**LAV**: Girls love fashion, but young men love fashion too. But you know, maybe you have seen the website and the prices are slightly higher than in the regular markets, so an ordinary young person would not be able to pay for this. That is why we focus on people between the 25 and 55 years. People who might have a job and are able to pay a little more, but of course we also have discounts and we always try to reach younger people. That is why we also try to work a bit more with the younger generation. Take this T-shirt for example. This is not only beautiful for ladies, but boys can attract them. this is made from organic cotton without paint! No chemecalien is used for this. Do you know why? Because the cotton comes in this color. This comes from Peru. That is why I also enjoy working with these natural products from Peru. Peruvian cotton occurs in 8 different natural colors. From brown to green. So they do not have to paint it. They just make their clothes. And can you imagine how beautiful and good this is. It does not pollute the environment, it does not pollutes the groundwater, you do not use paints and chemecalien and it is very nice to wear. So this can also be very nice for you. You can also see it on the website.

**Haneen**: Yes, we've seen it. It's very nice. There are different dresses and everything, they look very beautiful.

**LAV**: Yes, you know when I started the idea of ​​working on this company, I spoke with my husband and my daughter. I had a full-time job at the college. I am a law teacher, but I also have a company, so I thought I would like to work less and set up my own company, but I can not do it alone, so I asked my husband and my daughter: "Can you help me?" and they were very enthusiastic about it. So I started working a bit less and now I also work on my company and that was the idea of ​​starting to produce sustainable clothing and when I started looking at other sustainable fashion stores, I saw very boring fashion. I did not think it was nice. I would not wear something like that. I found it very colorless and a lot of gray. I did not find that attractive, so I thought maybe there is a chance to offer sustainable fashion that is beautiful but also contains color. For example, what I have now, is my own clothing. It is made of alpaca wool and alpaca wool has to be washed by hand. So you do not have to do it in the washing machine. That is also nice, you use less energy. And another thing: this can be worn for 10 to 15 years because it is very strong.

**Malvika**: And when those colors are gone, are they simply not used, or do you not use that color? Or maybe you decide to use paint anyway? How do you do that?

**LAV**: There are also environmentally friendly dyes made from herbs and plants. If you are looking for natural dyes on google, you come up with several different factories that are also working on that, but it costs more than normal colors with chemicals.

**Haneen**: You also said that you wanted to start something with sustainable clothing that is also beautiful. How did you get the idea to make sustainably clothes and to keep it environmentally friendly?

**LAV**: first you have to find certified clothes made from biological substances such as organic cotton. There are many different biological substances. And those are the only substances that I use and sell.

**Malvika**: Where do you think your work is important?

**LAV**: My work is important for ... uhh ...

**Haneen**: For example to support the environment, to give an idea, to let people wear beautiful clothes.

**LAV**: yes, for me it was very important to offer a beautiful and sustainable fashion. Sustainable can be a lot, but it must also be beautiful, it must also be attractive. The combination of those couple things were actually my goal.

**Haneen**: So it was your goal to let people buy sustainable clothing that is really beautiful too?

**LAV**: Yes. Research shows that if you offer an item and you tell people that it is sustainable, they will not buy it because it is sustainable, but because it is beautiful and because it suits the customer. So sustainability alone is unfortunately no reason at this time to make. People are not aware that sustainable is really good for the customer, but also good for society and also for the planet and all the workers in other countries. People are not aware of this yet and that is why more sustainable stores must come.

**Malvika**: Do you also have your own shop?

**LAV**: No, and that is because ordinary sustainable fashion sometimes has 2/3/4 times the value of the clothes you can find in the regular store. Imagine I would rent another property, two employees would have. there will also be fixed costs. That should depend on the price of the clothing, so if I only sell online, the costs go down. And there is a good combination to be able to offer sustainable clothing.

**Haneen**: We have also seen on the website that you try to keep in touch with your customers as much as possible. How do you do that?

**LAV**: Sometimes we really go to ecological places. There is also a lot of contact on social media, for example Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. And in the Netherlands, there are also many organizations for sustainable web shops. So we are also affiliated with all kinds of important organizations. They already know our brand.

**Malvika**: What do you really like about your work?

**LAV**: Everything. Everything except the administrative part. But my husband does the financial business.

**Malvika**: is there a lot of profit at this company or is everything you earn back to producing clothes?

**LAV**: Yes, there is a profit, but in the first year it is more difficult. You start with a lot of costs, because you do not have customers. So in the first year there are more costs than what you sell, but in the second year there are nearly 500% more sales than in the first year, so it grows quickly. That is very important.

**Haneen**: And which tip do you want to give to people?

**LAV**: I would say everyone should try out sustainable clothing once. It feels nice. Sometimes it is even anti-bacterial, it uses less energy, because some simply must be washed by hand. It can last longer. The quality is better. The colors are natural colors and it is a good way to invest your money. I would also say let other people see the clothes. I really think this should be a mission of everyone. Normal clothing that everyone uses is not good for our planet and the environment. the message is that everyone can wear nice sustainable fashion. I think this is really the future and I would continue to work on this. I also love it and I think it's fantastic to do this. I always get good energy from it. And I also get compliments from the customers.

**Malvika**: Do you also think it is important that other companies produce sustainable fashion?

**LAV**: Yes, there is actually a community in sustainable fashion. We do not compete. We support each other. That is the best thing about sustainable companies. We all have the same mission. It's about the message.

**Haneen**: It is about spreading the goal and the idea.

**LAV**: right, it is to make people aware of sustainable fashion. It is not just for my wallet. It's about more. it is more important than that. And that's so fantastic.

**Haneen**: Do you want to produce new things in the future? So for example shoes or glasses?

**LAV**: yes, I have thought about shoes a couple times. I was in Peru last year. And I went to an ecological store. And they are now making shoes of fish. Unbelievable! And they are so beautiful. I think I would very much like to invest in this in the future.

**Haneen**: In what way do you spread the idea behind this company?

**LAV**: Yes, a lot on social media. I sometimes also wore workshops at schools and universities. I Also talk a lot about this.

**Malvika**: We have also read that India's production is being done?

**LAV**: Yes, the T-shirts are. Other products are also made in, for example, Portugal or Spain. In Peru too. Most products are made in small studios and with a social purpose. In Peru, for example, the women who work who are single mothers and have no work. for this they receive good wages. And the factory that is in India is a green factory. They use green energy, solar panels, wind energy. And I have to check everything. Everything is clean, good working conditions, no children. So I check all this, but I prefer to work with small studios

**Haneen**: How would you describe the company in five words?

**LAV**: sustainable, beautiful, affordable, innovative and creative.

**Haneen**: Yes, is there anything else you want to tell?

**LAV**: No, I think this is it.

**Haneen**: Okay, we would like to thank you very much for answering these questions and we wish you the best luck with the company.