

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in
Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

An Empirical Examination of the Relationship between Sustainable Consumption
and Luxury Purchases: A Consumer Behavior Perspective - The Impact of
Product Guarantees on Sustainable Consumption

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Defense Date: 31st of January 2025

Work project carried out under the supervision of:

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09/02/2025

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between luxury and sustainability, focusing on how sustainable luxury marketing influences consumer behavior. Using an experimental survey design, four hypotheses were tested to evaluate the impact of sustainability marketing, product guarantees, sustainable framing, and messaging strategies on consumer choices. Findings indicate that sustainability marketing in the luxury sector has the potential to promote sustainable consumption. The study examines how integrating authenticity and durability into brand strategies is essential to aligning luxury with sustainability and fostering long-term consumer trust. While sustainability is a key factor for consumers, its direct influence on willingness to pay remains limited.

Keywords: sustainability, durability, sustainable luxury, fashion, sustainable consumption, consumer behavior

This work used infrastructure and resources funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (UID/ECO/00124/2013, UID/ECO/00124/2019 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209), POR Lisboa (LISBOA-01-0145-FEDER-007722 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209) and POR Norte (Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209).

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List of Abbreviations

AUC.....	Area Under the ROC Curve
CAGR.....	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CI.....	Confidence Interval
CSR.....	Corporate Social Responsibility
EU.....	European Union
PwC.....	PricewaterhouseCoopers
ROC.....	Receiver Operating Characteristic
TPB.....	Theory of Planned Behavior
TRA.....	Theory of Reasoned Action
UK.....	United Kingdom
US.....	United States
VIF.....	Variance Inflation Factor
WTP.....	Willingness to Pay

1 Introduction

“Buy less, choose well, make it last” (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.). This statement by Vivienne Westwood, renowned British fashion designer and pioneer of the punk fashion movement, encapsulates a significant shift in the luxury industry. Traditionally characterized by indulgence and opulence, luxury is being redefined to align with broader societal demands for accountability. This transition is particularly important in the fashion industry, as the sector is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions (UNECE 2018). By encouraging consumers to prioritize durable, high-quality items over short-lived alternatives, luxury brands have the potential to significantly reduce these emissions and address a key factor driving global warming (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021).

This shift reflects not only a response to environmental challenges but also changing consumer values. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers’ (PwC; 2024) Voice of the Consumer Survey, 80% of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainably produced or sourced goods. Similarly, McKinsey & Company (2023b) highlights that 87% of fashion executives believe sustainability regulations will impact their business in the coming year. These findings underscore a new reality: sustainability is no longer optional but central to the luxury market.

As consumers increasingly prioritize products that align with their values, luxury brands operate in a dynamic environment that requires constant adaptation to changing expectations. Attributes such as ethical sourcing, eco-friendly practices, and product longevity have become critical to staying competitive. Brands like *Gucci* and *Stella McCartney*, pioneers of sustainable luxury, demonstrate their leadership through initiatives such as their commitment to carbon neutrality and the use of innovative sustainable materials such as mushroom leather (Gucci 2023; Stella McCartney 2024). However, this shift is not without tension. The traditional ethos of indulgence and exclusivity often clashes with sustainability’s emphasis on conservation and moderation, creating a paradox that the industry must navigate.

This intersection of luxury and sustainability is reshaping the entire definition of luxury. It is no longer just about exclusivity or rarity; but about creating lasting value for both consumers and the planet. As the industry evolves, it has the potential to become a powerful force for positive change, balancing timeless craftsmanship with modern responsibility.

While much of the discussion around sustainability focuses on corporate practices, this research takes a consumer-centric perspective, specifically in the context of the luxury fashion industry. The study is limited to examining how consumers perceive sustainability attributes in luxury fashion products, such as durability, ethical sourcing, and environmentally friendly practices. By narrowing the focus to consumption patterns, the study seeks to understand how consumer behavior interacts with evolving sustainability demands in this market.

This consumer focus is supported by a growing body of research that examines the relationship between luxury and sustainability. Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia (2021) emphasize that framing luxury products as durable and long-term investments encourages consumers to view them as consistent with sustainable values. Their concept of “buy less, buy luxury” suggests that quality purchases can counteract the overconsumption associated with fast fashion (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021, 28). However, prior studies also reveal contradictions in consumer attitudes. Achabou and Dekhili (2013) argue that while consumers express interest in sustainable luxury, their purchasing behavior often prioritizes exclusivity and status over environmental concerns. Similarly, Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau (2014) highlight the difficulty consumers face in reconciling sustainability with luxury’s traditional emphasis on indulgence and rarity.

Existing research highlights the potential for luxury to promote sustainable consumption, particularly through attributes like durability. However, a limited understanding remains on how consumers reconcile the tension between luxury’s exclusivity and sustainability’s focus on responsibility. Additionally, luxury has the potential to encourage

behaviors that prioritize reduced consumption in favor of fewer, higher-quality purchases. This shift, which may also increase consumers' financial commitment, is a promising area for further research. This thesis addresses these gaps by examining how consumers navigate indulgence and responsibility, exploring whether luxury can drive more mindful consumption practices. In doing so, it builds on existing literature and offers insights for aligning the luxury sector with environmental priorities.

Following this introduction, key concepts central to this study are defined to provide a contextual framework. This is preceded by a review of the existing literature on luxury and sustainability, which provides theoretical insights and identifies key research gaps in understanding consumer behavior. Building on this, the core of the study is structured around four hypotheses, each addressing a different aspect. The first explores how sustainability marketing that emphasizes durability and timelessness can shift consumer preferences toward luxury products over cheaper alternatives. The second analyzes whether life-cycle extensions, such as lifetime guarantees, encourage consumers to prioritize fewer, higher-quality purchases. The third looks at how framing luxury as an investment in quality and longevity affects willingness to pay (WTP) for sustainable features. Finally, the fourth examines how different approaches to sustainability messaging, contrasting excessive versus moderate claims, influence purchase intent and perceived authenticity. The thesis concludes by synthesizing these findings in a broader discussion and reflecting on their implications for both theory and practice. It also offers recommendations for how luxury brands can align themselves with sustainability while preserving their core values.

2 Background

2.1 Understanding Luxury

The concept of luxury is inherently multifaceted and varies across cultures, industries, and individual preferences. It combines tangible qualities, such as superior craftsmanship, with

intangible attributes, such as exclusivity, status, and symbolic value (Kapferer and Michaut 2016). This complexity makes it essential to clearly define luxury, particularly in the context of its intersection with sustainable consumption, which is the foundation of this study. Without a precise understanding of luxury, assessing how sustainability aligns with or challenges its traditional characteristics becomes difficult.

Luxury has been described as “more than necessary” (Bearden and Etzel 1982, 184) and as an “art applied to functional items” (Kapferer 1997, 253). These definitions demonstrate that luxury goes beyond mere functionality to create elevated experiences rooted in beauty, and aspiration. Historically, luxury has symbolized a dream or idealized lifestyle, being associated with indulgence, and superfluity (Barnier, Rodina, and Valette-Florence 2006; Seringhaus 2002). For consumers, luxury goods often serve as tools of conspicuous consumption, allowing individuals to signal social status and assert identity (O’Cass and McEwen 2004). Core characteristics such as rarity, cultural significance, and emotional value further distinguish luxury from other categories and reinforce its symbolic and desirable role in society (Brun et al. 2008; Vigneron and Johnson 2004).

In practice, the distinction between luxury and premium products is less clear but crucial for this study. While luxury is defined by its focus on artistry, heritage, and symbolic value, premium products emphasize superior functionality and measurable quality (Kapferer and Bastien 2009; Karpik and Scott 2010). This divergence is also manifested in pricing strategies: premium products rely on competitive justification, while luxury pricing is rooted in perceived uniqueness and cultural prestige (Kapferer and Bastien 2012).

For the purposes of this research, we focus primarily on premium products because they are more closely aligned with the attributes of interest. While these distinctions set premium products apart from true luxury, consumer perceptions often blur the boundaries between the two categories. This overlap is particularly evident in the context of sustainable consumption,

where both premium and luxury goods are increasingly evaluated not only for their symbolic value but also for their potential to align with ethical and environmental considerations. By adopting a broader definition of luxury, this study captures the nuanced ways in which consumers navigate these overlapping categories. This perspective allows for a comprehensive examination of how sustainability attributes influence purchase decisions across both segments. It reveals the evolving role of premium and luxury products as instruments for expressing not only social status, but also personal values associated with responsibility and environmental stewardship.

2.2 Assessing the Luxury Fashion Market

The luxury fashion market continues to grow steadily, solidifying its position as a key driver of the global economy. Valued at approximately \$245 billion in 2023, the market is projected to reach \$410 billion by 2032, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.8% over the forecast period (Straits Research 2023). This growth reflects the industry's ability to adapt to evolving consumer expectations while maintaining its core values.

The United States (US) will remain the largest domestic market for luxury goods, with estimated sales of \$35 billion in 2024 (Statista 2024). However, the Asia-Pacific region, particularly China, is predicted to drive future expansion. By 2025, Chinese consumers are expected to account for nearly 40% of global luxury spending, driven by a growing middle class and increasing demand for aspirational purchases (Bain & Company 2023). This shift reflects not only rising purchasing power, but also a growing appreciation for Western luxury brands, solidifying the region's influence on global sales.

Long considered the epicenter of luxury fashion, the European market continues to play a pivotal role in the industry. Famous for iconic houses such as *Louis Vuitton*, *Chanel*, and *Hermès*, Europe continues to lead the world in both production and total consumption, which includes domestic and tourist spending. According to Bain & Company (2024), overall luxury

consumption in Europe reached €102 billion in 2023, supported by a 50% year-on-year increase in tourist spending, entirely driven by higher purchase prices. Data indicates that spending by US tourists in Europe has increased by a factor of 2.5 since 2019, while spending by Middle Eastern tourists has risen by 70% over the same period. However, expenditures by Chinese tourists have yet to regain their pre-pandemic level, remaining at approximately 40% of the 2019 figure. European craftsmanship continues to underpin the market, exemplified by *LVMH*, one of the world's top-performing luxury conglomerates. In 2023, Europe (excluding France) accounted for 17% of the group's total revenue, while France contributed an additional 8% (LVMH 2023). These figures underscore the region's importance in the global luxury landscape. Despite increasing competition from other regions, Europe's dual role as a producer and consumer of luxury goods ensures its continued dominance in the global market.

2.3 Understanding Sustainable Fashion

Sustainable fashion has emerged as an essential focus at the intersection of environmental responsibility and consumer behavior, reflecting broader societal trends toward eco-conscious living. However, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of sustainable fashion and its implications, it is essential to first define sustainability itself. As a dynamic and multifaceted concept, sustainability evolves continually to address pressing global challenges across environmental, social, and economic domains (Purvis, Mao, and Robinson 2019; Vogt and Weber 2019). The Brundtland Report (1987) provides a foundational definition of sustainable development, describing it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (37). This definition highlights the intrinsic adaptability of sustainability, enabling its objectives to evolve in alignment with emerging global priorities (Purvis, Mao, and Robinson 2019). However, the lack of a universally accepted definition presents a challenge to researchers. Scholars have identified over 300 definitions of sustainability across various disciplines, underscoring the

concept's diverse interpretations and applicability (Geissdoerfer et al. 2017).

This dynamic understanding of sustainability provides a foundation for examining its specific role within the fashion industry, which represents a critical point in global sustainability discussions. Frequently identified as one of the most polluting industries globally, fashion production is associated with considerable water consumption, the use of harmful dyeing chemicals, and the disposal of large quantities of unsold goods (Legere and Kang 2020). Such practices endanger ecosystems and give rise to concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of the industry. The need to address these challenges has led to the emergence of the concept of sustainable fashion, which aims to integrate sustainability principles into every stage of the value chain, from the sourcing of materials to post-consumer recycling.

Sustainable fashion discussions began in the 1960s, driven by increased awareness of the environmental impact of traditional production practices (Purvis, Mao, and Robinson 2019). By the 1980s and 1990s, consumer advocacy prompted brands to adopt sustainable practices, including the use of organic and fair-trade materials (Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates 2016; Jung and Jin 2014). In the early 2000s, it transitioned from a niche to a mainstream movement, driven by advances in material sourcing and recycling (Beard 2008). This evolution of sustainable fashion reflects an ongoing effort to reconcile environmental and social responsibility with consumer expectations. However, its implementation remains challenging, as interchangeable terms like "green," "ecological," "organic," and "ethical" fashion often confuse consumers, researchers, and businesses (Thomas 2008, 530). This ambiguity, coupled with higher costs of sustainable materials and logistical hurdles in post-use recycling, complicates the realization of fully sustainable practices (Biswas 2017; Strübel et al. 2023).

Building on the challenges of implementing sustainable fashion, the market has

evolved significantly, driven by shifting consumer expectations. Luxury brands are uniquely positioned to lead this transformation by emphasizing values like longevity, ethical sourcing, and environmental responsibility, which align naturally with sustainability principles. Nevertheless, meaningful progress can only be achieved by addressing the systemic challenges that persist, including those related to resource scarcity. As indicated by the Boston Consulting Group (2021), while global demand for sustainable raw materials is projected to triple by 2030, supply is expected to increase by only 50%. This imbalance thus calls for the development of innovative circular business models and material sourcing strategies. Consumer trends further underscore the importance of sustainability in fashion. It is anticipated that by 2025, Millennials (individuals born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2012) will represent the majority of the luxury market (Dimock 2019). These demographics are inclined to prioritize ethical sourcing and transparency in purchasing decisions. As reported by McKinsey & Company (2023a), 60% of Generation Z consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainably produced goods. These shifts make sustainability a pivotal factor in market success, compelling brands to strike a balance between environmental objectives and consumer preferences.

2.4 Market Trends in Sustainable Luxury Fashion

Building on the preferences of Millennials and Generation Z, the luxury fashion market is experiencing transformative changes. One of the most notable trends is the rapid growth of the pre-owned luxury market, which aligns with the values of younger, sustainability-conscious consumers. Platforms such as *The RealReal* and *Vestiaire Collective* have emerged as key players in meeting the demand for pre-owned luxury goods (The RealReal 2024; Vestiaire Collective 2024). According to Business Research Insights (2024), the global second-hand luxury market was valued at \$26 billion in 2023 and is forecast to reach \$69 billion by 2032, at a CAGR of 11.5%.

At the same time, digital innovation is playing a progressively important role in driving sustainability in the luxury market. For example, virtual fashion and augmented reality initiatives reduce the need for physical production, minimizing waste and carbon footprints. *Gucci's Sneaker Garage* is an example of this, allowing users to virtually try on, customize, and explore digital products such as the *Gucci Virtual 25*, providing an eco-friendly alternative to traditional product launches (Gucci 2024). Similarly, *Balenciaga's* digital-only collections in virtual environments like *Fortnite* highlight how immersive digital spaces can redefine engagement while addressing environmental concerns (Fortnite 2024).

E-commerce is further accelerating this trend, with more than 25% of global luxury sales now occurring online; a figure that will grow as brands enhance immersive, personalized experiences (McKinsey & Company 2023b). These strategies foster deeper connections with consumers and support sustainability by reducing physical inventory and waste.

Additionally, digital technologies are driving transparency in supply chains. Platforms such as *Renoon* use blockchain to verify the origin of materials, empowering consumers to make ethical choices (Renoon 2024). Such innovations emphasize the luxury sector's evolving commitment to accountability and sustainable practices, positioning it as a leader in addressing global environmental challenges.

3 Literature Review

The evolving interplay between luxury and sustainability has received considerable attention in academic research, reflecting a broader shift in societal values and consumer expectations. At the heart of this discourse is the question of whether these two seemingly opposing domains can coexist in harmony (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014). This question gives rise to the so-called *Luxury Sustainability Paradox*, which defines the intuitive contradiction between luxury's extravagance and sustainability's principles of preservation and resource efficiency (Athwal et al. 2019; Heil and Langer 2017).

To fully understand the market implications of this paradox and the state of research, it is essential to examine consumer perceptions and the motivations that influence their purchasing decisions. Identifying common attributes between luxury and sustainability may reveal ways in which they can coexist. From a marketing perspective, integrating sustainability into the value proposition of luxury brands is crucial for shaping consumer behavior and strengthening brand loyalty (Beckham and Voyer 2014).

3.1 Theoretical Frameworks Used to Assess Sustainable Behavior

To explore consumer perceptions and motivations of sustainable behavior in depth, a breakdown of the theoretical foundation is needed. Two key frameworks that have been used extensively in this context are the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Balasubramanian and Sheykhmaleki 2024).

The TPB is used to understand how consumers make rational decisions (Qi and Ploeger 2019). It states that, before deciding how to act, individuals are thought to carefully evaluate the information they have and consider the possible outcomes, assuming that they make decisions rationally (Lira and Costa 2022). The TPB has, therefore, been used to assess sustainable consumer behavior for several decades (Yuriev et al. 2020). Created by Ajzen (1991), the TPB proposes that individual intention can be understood through (1) attitude, which represents personal evaluations of an object or issue; (2) subjective norm, which reflects the perceived social pressure from others; and (3) perceived behavioral control, which captures an individual's sense of how easy or challenging it might be to engage in a particular behavior. According to Paul et al. (2015), looking at consumer attitudes is most important for predicting consumer intentions toward sustainable behavior. Consumers who like certain aspects of an item are more willing to translate their purchase intention into an actual purchase (Cerri, Testa, and Rizzi 2018). Similarly, subjective norms often shape intentions to purchase sustainable products, as social circles help to raise awareness and concern about environmental issues

(Moser 2015). Lira and Costa (2022) found that slow fashion, which prioritizes longevity, is driven by key elements of the TPB. Ethical concerns, in particular, lead consumers to reject fast fashion – characterized by rapid turnover – in favor of sustainable options.

The TRA, developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), explains how motivation affects the likelihood of engaging in a particular behavior. Similar to the TPB, it highlights the links between personal attitudes, perceived social expectations, and resulting behaviors. People who strongly believe that a behavior will bring positive results are more likely to have positive attitudes toward it, which increases their chances of actually doing it (Liu, Segev, and Villar 2017). However, the TPB extends the TRA by recognizing that intentions alone do not always lead to action. External circumstances, such as limited resources or situational barriers, often determine whether an individual can translate his or her intentions into behavior.

3.2 Luxury Sustainability Paradox

While theoretical frameworks such as the TPB and TRA provide insights into individual sustainable behavior, the *Luxury Sustainability Paradox* shifts the focus to a broader systemic level. This paradox represents the intrinsic conflict between the defining attributes of luxury – exclusivity, indulgence, and high resource consumption – and the tenets of sustainability, which prioritize conservation, ethics, and moderation (Athwal et al. 2019; Heil and Langer 2017). Historically, luxury brands have pursued perfection and rarity, frequently utilizing resource-intensive materials such as exotic leathers and precious metals that raise concerns about biodiversity and animal welfare (Kapferer 2010; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2014). While luxury is criticized for its association with excess and social inequality, it is simultaneously praised for its exceptional craftsmanship, quality, and durability, traits that align with sustainable consumption practices (Heil and Langer 2017; Kapferer 2010; Kapferer and Bastien 2009; Vigneron and Johnson 2004). These attributes distinguish luxury from the fast fashion industry, offering the potential to contribute positively to sustainability by

emphasizing long-term value (Grazzini, Acuti, and Aiello 2021).

Luxury brands such as *Gucci* have responded to growing consumer demands for sustainability by implementing initiatives like its *Equilibrium program* to align with customer expectations and regulatory pressures (Gucci 2023). However, despite these efforts, sustainability often occupies a secondary position in consumer priorities regarding purchasing decisions (Ehrich and Irwin 2005; Gardetti and Torres 2013). Furthermore, consumer behavior frequently falls short of the expressed interest in sustainability, as WTP for sustainable luxury products does not consistently align with these values (Heil and Langer 2017). The WTP for sustainable luxury is influenced by diverse value perceptions, including conspicuousness, uniqueness, and quality (Kapferer and Bastien 2009; Vigneron and Johnson 1999; 2004). While younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, demonstrate a growing desire for sustainability, this does not always translate into a higher WTP for sustainable products (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004; Heil and Langer 2017). This divergence between attitudes and purchasing behavior underscores the complexity of aligning luxury consumption with sustainability principles.

Adding to this complexity are perceptions of quality, which remain a significant barrier to integrating sustainability into luxury. A notable concern among consumers is that environmentally friendly modifications may compromise product quality (Achabou and Dekhili 2013; Davies, Lee, and Ahonkhai 2012). This is supported by findings from Achabou and Dekhili (2013), who discovered that luxury products crafted from recycled materials were perceived as inferior in quality despite acknowledging their environmental benefits. Beyond quality concerns, other factors also shape perceptions of sustainable luxury. Social consciousness, personal style, and cultural context play essential roles in influencing how consumers balance sustainability and luxury attributes (Cervellon and Shammass 2013; Wang et al. 2021). These diverse influences reflect the multifaceted nature of consumer expectations,

which luxury brands must navigate to address the paradox effectively.

3.3 Consumer Perceptions of Luxury and Sustainability

Building on the complexity of aligning luxury and sustainability, it is essential to examine how consumer perceptions are defined and structured. Researchers consistently define consumers' perceptions of luxury items with qualities such as expensive, qualitative, rare, excessive, and aesthetic, among others (Dubois, Laurent, and Czellar 2001; Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020). Generally, the perception of a luxury brand can be vastly influenced by marketing incentives, word-of-mouth, and interaction with the brand (Hudders 2012; Romaniuk and Huang 2020). However, as discussed in the previous chapter on the *Luxury Sustainability Paradox*, the combination of luxury and sustainability remains somewhat conflicting for several consumer groups. For instance, Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau (2014) found that about one-third of their study respondents perceived luxury and sustainability as contradictory, whereas another third believed they were concordant.

Luxury consumers view a brand's commitment to the environment as a secondary factor in their decision to purchase luxury goods and perceive the use of recycled materials in luxury goods as negative (Ehrich and Irwin 2005; Achabou and Dekhili 2013). A prominent example of how an Italian leather company handles this negative perception is by emphasizing the uniqueness of the products rather than focusing on their eco-design itself (Cimatti, Campana, and Carluccio 2017; Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020). Notably, this negative perception cannot be generalized, as perceptions of luxury product quality vary by nationality. For instance, Saudi consumers tend to view the quality of items as lower than French consumers when social and sustainability information is provided (Dekhili, Achabou, and Alharbi 2019).

This tension is further complicated by the duality of how consumers consciously and unconsciously associate luxury with sustainability. Beckham and Voyer (2014) tested

conscious and unconscious methods to investigate attitudes toward sustainable luxury, and the results show that while conscious attitudes can vary based on context, consumers tend to unconsciously associate luxury with unsustainability. Participants were quicker to associate luxury with unsustainability than with sustainability, highlighting an inherent tension in the consumer mindset between these two ideas (Beckham and Voyer 2014). It was also found that consumers are more favorable toward luxury items they personally deem sustainable, as opposed to items externally labeled as such. This suggests that authenticity and personal belief are critical to consumer acceptance of sustainable luxury, indicating a need for a deeper understanding of how personal ethics influence buying behavior, especially in the context of sustainability (Beckham and Voyer 2014; Irwin and Spira 1997).

Beyond individual attitudes, specific industries provide examples of how luxury and sustainability intersect in unique ways. In the hospitality sector, luxury hotels often emphasize environmental responsibility alongside high-end offerings, creating an opportunity to align these seemingly opposing concepts (Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020). Research highlights that characteristics like scarcity and ephemerality may play a role in shaping this perception. For example, Janssen et al. (2014) suggest that when luxury experiences are exclusive but short-lived, this can influence consumers' perceptions of whether luxury hotels can genuinely incorporate sustainable practices. Similarly, companies like Tesla exemplify how luxury and sustainability can coexist in the automotive industry by integrating eco-friendly technology (Aybaly et al. 2017).

Finally, the perceptions of the individuals who purchase luxury products add another dimension to this discussion. Respondents to the aforementioned study conducted by Beckham and Voyer (2014) reacted very positively to sustainable luxury, yet argued that the typical luxury consumer would rather purchase conventional items compared to sustainable ones. In a romantic context, luxury buyers are perceived to be more physically appealing than eco-

friendly product buyers, who are perceived to be more competent, suitable for long-term relationships, and warmer than luxury purchasers (DiDonato and Jakubiak 2016). These stereotypes illustrate the complex interplay between luxury consumption, sustainability, and social perceptions.

3.4 Drivers of Sustainable Consumption

Understanding the drivers of sustainable luxury consumption is crucial for navigating the complexity of how consumers perceive the relationship between luxury and sustainability, and how these perceptions shape their behavior. Psychological and emotional factors are particularly important among the many influences on sustainable luxury consumption (Cervellon and Shammass 2013; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020; Wang et al. 2021). These drivers not only shape how consumers perceive sustainability in the context of luxury but also play a critical role in their purchasing decisions. Hedonic satisfaction, self-expression, and personal style-related motivations emerge as key elements in this dynamic (Cervellon and Shammass 2013; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020; Wang et al. 2021). The pleasure of owning luxury items, or hedonic satisfaction, is enhanced when sustainability is a factor, creating a sense of responsible indulgence (Athwal et al. 2019; Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020).

Self-expression and social identity formation are equally important factors. Consumers utilize luxury goods to convey their values and social identity, and products with sustainable attributes introduce an ethical dimension to this form of expression (Pandelaere and Shrum 2020). Such an approach resonates strongly with Millennials and younger audiences, who actively seek out brands that align with their personal and environmental beliefs (Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020). For these consumers, sustainable luxury serves as a marker of sophistication and social consciousness, blending ethical considerations with personal style (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020). Despite the growing interest in sustainability across

various groups, significant differences in market participation exist based on income levels. High-income individuals remain the primary market for luxury goods, with their purchasing power shaping much of the industry (Dubois and Duquesne 1993; Ikeda 2006; Kapferer and Bastien 2009). However, the market has also expanded to include middle- and lower-income consumers, driven by the democratization of luxury through more accessible offerings (Truong, McColl, and Kitchen 2009; Vigneron and Johnson 2004).

While self-expression and social identity highlight the psychological and emotional dimensions of sustainable luxury, economic and environmental considerations further enhance its appeal, mainly through the concept of durability. Durable luxury products align with financial rationality by minimizing replacement and reducing overall consumption (Cervellon and Shammas 2013). This perspective frames goods as responsible investments that meet both economic and environmental criteria, enhancing their appeal as sustainable choices (Athwal et al. 2019). However, consumers often disregard their long-term benefits. This phenomenon, termed by Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia (2021) as the “durability neglect” (28), presents a challenge for luxury brands to effectively communicate these advantages. The long-term use of high-quality luxury products reinforces sustainable consumption practices by emphasizing resource efficiency and waste reduction, starkly contrasting the fast fashion model characterized by planned obsolescence and rapid consumption cycles (Joy et al. 2012; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020). By offering timeless and resource-efficient products, luxury brands can position themselves as sustainability leaders and appeal to consumers who value both quality and environmental responsibility (Cervellon and Shammas 2013).

In addition to psychological and economic drivers, environmental and ethical factors, particularly corporate social responsibility (CSR), have become critical in driving consumer confidence in sustainable luxury. CSR has evolved from being perceived as a form of philanthropy to being integrated into business strategies to meet regulatory and transparency

standards (Galan 2006; Rojek-Nowosielska 2014). Contemporary CSR practices concentrate on aligning corporate operations with sustainable and ethical principles, thereby appealing to consumers who prioritize transparency and responsible business conduct (Raczkowski, Fijalkowska, and Sułkowski 2016). For luxury brands, CSR is crucial in maintaining a reputable image and meeting consumer expectations regarding ethical consumption (Athwal et al. 2019).

3.5 Brand and Marketing Implications

Building on the drivers of sustainable luxury consumption, effective brand and marketing strategies are critical for translating these values into consumer engagement. According to Mazzalovo (2008), luxury marketing relies heavily on selective advertising strategies to create an exclusive and prestigious brand image. Premium pricing reinforces this image by acting as a calculated signal of rarity and exceptional value, enhancing the consumer's perception of luxury (Dryl 2018).

With rising consumer awareness around sustainability, luxury brands increasingly integrate sustainable practices into their marketing to resonate with consumers' values in both emerging and developed markets (Osburg et al. 2024). The origin of luxury brands significantly influences consumer trust in these sustainability practices, as they often perceive brands from countries with high ethical standards as more credible in their environmental and social commitments. This country-of-origin effect can, therefore, reinforce the authenticity of sustainability claims, adding a layer of trust and perceived value to luxury products if communicated effectively (Godey et al. 2011).

To actively steer consumer choices toward sustainable luxury, marketers are leveraging insights from behavioral economics, which suggests that structured messaging and strategic product positioning can effectively influence purchasing behavior (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). By emphasizing attributes such as durability, brands help customers see the long-term

value of luxury purchases and counter the tendency to overlook the opportunity costs associated with less sustainable options (Frederick et al. 2009). In addition to focusing on functional benefits, luxury marketers are also using emotional strategies to create deeper connections with consumers, encouraging them to identify with the sustainable values embedded in luxury products personally. This dual approach fosters symbolic connections and aligns brand identity with consumer values, allowing them to identify with the sustainable qualities of the products they choose (Platania, Santisi, and Morando 2019).

The CSR component in luxury branding is increasingly recognized as a key driver of brand loyalty, as effective communication of CSR initiatives increases brand recognition and fosters stronger emotional connections with consumers (Singh et al. 2023). Effective CSR messaging that highlights positive environmental impacts not only builds brand equity but also increases acceptance (Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020). Luxury brands can further these efforts by creating products dedicated to charitable causes, raising awareness, and adding value to the brand (Dryl 2018). While some see a contradiction between luxury and CSR, key luxury attributes align well with CSR values such as environmental preservation and social responsibility. Thus, effective CSR communication can strengthen brand loyalty by reinforcing the brand's commitment to quality and social values (Schwartz 2012).

However, the relationship between CSR communication and brand perception remains complex. When consumer trust in a brand's motives is low, a strong fit between the brand and its CSR activities enhances evaluations. In contrast, when trust is already high, the importance of this alignment diminishes, as consumers are less reliant on CSR fit to evaluate the brand positively. As a result, luxury brands need to be mindful of consumers' beliefs about their intentions when promoting such initiatives (Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020).

3.6 Challenges in Promoting Sustainable Luxury

In promoting sustainable luxury, marketers face several challenges. As highlighted in

Chapter 3.2, one of the central challenges in sustainable luxury marketing is the *Luxury Sustainability Paradox*, in which individuals question whether exclusivity and environmental consciousness can coexist without compromising the unique appeal of luxury products (Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates 2016; Walker 2006). Additionally, sustainability labels themselves can detract from a product's luxury appeal. Consumers may perceive these labels as signals of lower quality or mass production, which contrasts with the high craftsmanship and rarity typically associated with luxury brands (Hong et al. 2024).

Another challenge lies in consumers' limited knowledge of sustainable practices in the luxury sector. Many are unaware of the complex environmental impacts associated with luxury goods (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). As a result, even when shoppers recognize the benefits of sustainable options, their choices are often driven by immediate factors that can overshadow the long-term value of quality and durability in luxury consumption (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). Therefore, targeted marketing strategies must be used effectively to close the knowledge gap (Sesini, Castiglioni, and Lozza 2020).

A related challenge is the *Attitude Behavior Gap*, where consumers' positive attitudes toward sustainability do not always translate into purchasing behavior. In the luxury market, status and self-expression often precede ethical considerations (Carrigan and Attalla 2001; Wiederhold and Martinez 2018). Although many European consumers say they are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products, the market share of these products remains relatively low (Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković 2022). This discrepancy highlights a conflict between consumers' values and their motivations for luxury (Wiederhold and Martinez 2018). Studies confirm that even when individuals express environmental concerns, these concerns are often secondary to other motivations in the context of luxury purchases (Ehrich and Irwin 2005; De Klerk, Kearns, and Redwood 2019; Nguyen, Nguyen, and Nguyen 2019).

Given the complexity of consumer perceptions and behaviors, effectively

communicating sustainability initiatives is a significant challenge for luxury brands. Many view sustainability claims as superficial marketing tactics designed to enhance brand image rather than genuine environmental responsibility (Bryson, Atwal, and Hultén 2013; Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates 2016). This skepticism is heightened in the luxury sector, where expectations of authenticity and exclusivity are paramount (Bryson, Atwal, and Hultén 2013). If consumers perceive a brand's sustainability efforts as insincere, it can damage its reputation and undermine trust, ultimately threatening customer loyalty (Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020; Torelli, Monga, and Kaikati 2012).

Finally, luxury brands face the challenge of promoting sustainability without diluting their prestigious image. While differentiating products based on ethical practices could help communicate sustainability, it could also lead consumers to question the luxury status of the product, as these values are often associated with more mainstream goods (Torelli, Monga, and Kaikati 2012). To maintain the exclusivity and appeal of high-end products, luxury brands must integrate sustainability into their brand identity as a core value rather than positioning it as a secondary feature (Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates 2016; Walker 2006).

3.7 Identified Research Gap

The existing research has established a robust foundation for understanding the interplay between luxury and sustainability, yet significant gaps still need to be addressed. A review of the literature revealed the potential for luxury to promote sustainable consumption through attributes such as durability. However, limited attention has been given to how consumers perceive and reconcile the inherent tension between luxury's traditional emphasis on exclusivity and sustainability's principles of responsibility and conservation.

Furthermore, the role of luxury in promoting more sustainable behaviors, such as reducing overall consumption in favor of fewer, higher-quality purchases, still needs to be explored.

While prior studies often focus on consumer attitudes in isolation, this presents an opportunity

to investigate how these attributes translate into purchasing behaviors, particularly within the luxury fashion market, where fast consumption trends frequently prevail. By addressing this gap, our study aims to examine how consumers navigate the intersection of indulgence and responsibility, uncovering whether luxury can act as a catalyst for more mindful and sustainable consumption practices.

We aim to contribute to this field by addressing the overarching question of whether luxury can be in harmony with and promote sustainable consumption. Specifically, we investigate the impacts of (1) explicit sustainability marketing on consumer choices, (2) product guarantees on encouraging sustainable consumption, (3) framing strategies on consumers' WTP, and (4) sustainability claim intensity on consumer choices. Through these four sub-studies, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between luxury purchases and sustainable consumption.

4 General Methodology

Following a comprehensive review of the existing literature, the methodology employed in this study was an experimental design. We conducted an online survey using the platform Qualtrics, and over 14 days, we recruited a total of 180 valid participants (completion rate of 100%; 47% female; median age = 27) via various channels, including personal communication, social media, and professional networks.

The survey was comprised of four individual sections, one for each sub-study presented in this paper, in addition to a set of general questions applicable to all studies. All participants were provided with an identical introduction to the survey, which outlined the purpose of the research and indicated what the subsequent sections would entail. The participants were informed that they would be presented with four distinct products and that it was imperative to read the product descriptions with great attention. Additionally, participants were advised that the research was focused on consumer behaviors in the context of premium/luxury fashion,

while the specific research questions were not disclosed to avoid any potential biases. To prevent influence from brand familiarity or loyalty, two fictitious brands were used: “Brand X” as the premium brand and “Brand Y” as the mid-range brand. Following this, the participants were automatically randomly assigned to either a control group or a test group for each of the four individual studies. Consequently, a participant may have encountered questions pertaining to the control group in one section of the survey and been presented with questions for the test group in another. Upon completion of the four sub-surveys, respondents proceeded to the general and final part of the survey, where they rated themselves on a scale from “1 – Tightwad” (difficulty spending money) to “7 – Spendthrift” (difficulty limiting their spending). Lastly, a series of demographic questions were posed, including those regarding gender, age, income, education, and country of residence (see Appendix A for complete survey questions and flow and Appendix B for respondent characteristics and demographics).

5 Study 2: The Impact of Product Guarantees on Sustainable Consumption

5.1 Introduction

In 2024, over half of consumers in the United Kingdom (UK) who claimed to actively avoid fast fashion still reported to have purchased from such retailers within the past year. At the same time, less than 20% of fashion industry executives ranked sustainability among their top three priorities, a decline from approximately 30% in 2023 (McKinsey & Company 2024). Although the luxury sector is often criticized for its perceived excess and wastefulness, it holds the potential to promote more sustainable consumption patterns among consumers. This opportunity lies in addressing consumer tendencies to prioritize quantity over durability by opting for multiple low-cost items rather than higher-quality, long-lasting goods (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021).

Although price and design often drive both luxury and non-luxury purchases, product guarantees serve as a meaningful indicator of quality and reliability for consumers (Boulding and Kirmani 1993; Godey et al. 2011; Huang, Liu, and Murthy 2007). This study explores the role of extended guarantees in signaling not only quality but also durability in premium products, examining their potential to shift consumer choices toward sustainable consumption. Understanding whether and how consumer behavior can be shaped contributes to the field of research and offers practical insights for managerial decision-making.

While product guarantees and warranties are often used interchangeably, guarantees describe a broader concept, whereas warranties refer specifically to legal obligations (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). For simplicity, both terms will be treated synonymously in this paper as a promise of quality or service. The study follows an experimental approach based on a dedicated literature review on luxury purchasing drivers, product guarantees, and sustainable consumption. The survey prompted respondents with unconditional product guarantees for a

premium item, testing for product choices and durability considerations. We follow up with a presentation of the results and a subsequent discussion of our findings and their implications for consumers and businesses before drawing an overall conclusion.

5.2 Literature Review

In the field of luxury products, the criteria for purchase can be classified into two principal categories: self-oriented and others-oriented values. Self-oriented values emphasize personal satisfaction and individual utility, whereas others-oriented values emphasize social standing and status (Jain 2019). As discussed in the general literature review, the brand of a product can be a significant factor in the decision-making process for luxury items (compare Chapter 3.5). Brands can signal status and exclusivity, but they can also influence how consumers perceive the quality of products (Godey et al. 2011; Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020). Additionally, Godey et al. (2011) examined the different purchasing criteria for luxury versus non-luxury products, finding that *Design* and *Brand* were the most important factors for luxury products, whereas for non-luxury products, *Price* and *Design* were most influential. Nevertheless, both groups identified *Guarantees* as the third most important factor influencing their purchasing decisions.

Consumers seem to justify higher expenditures through added utilitarian features of a product, a phenomenon that refers to the concept of a “functional alibi” (Keinan, Kivetz, and Netzer 2016, 479). By incorporating practical or utilitarian features, such as extended guarantees, companies allow consumers to rationalize their purchases as less indulgent and more functional. As Keinan, Kivetz, and Netzer (2016, 494) point out, these “built-in functional alibis” serve to alleviate guilt associated with high spending and purchases that seem wasteful, offering consumers a socially acceptable rationale for their decisions.

In general, consumers tend to place a high value on product durability when purchasing long-lasting goods. This preference is most evident in high-cost categories, such as cars,

kitchen appliances, and power tools, although it extends to other categories as well (Gnanapragasam et al. 2018). A study of purchasing decisions based on longevity among UK consumers identified the extension of guarantee periods as a potential strategy for enhancing consumers' perception of the durability of goods (Gnanapragasam et al. 2018). The impact of warranties on business decisions is a well-established area of research, and scholars have long acknowledged their role as a crucial determinant of consumer behavior (Blewitt 2018; Murthy and Djamaludin 2002; Wiener 1985). The prevailing view is that product warranties can be an effective tool to signal reliability and quality (Boulding and Kirmani 1993; Huang, Liu, and Murthy 2007). However, it was also demonstrated that the perception of superior quality in this context is only applicable to companies with higher credibility. Conversely, longer warranties for companies with lower credibility may potentially have adverse effects (Wiener 1985). Nevertheless, guarantees continue to serve as an effective marketing tool, as they directly measure the consumer's benefit in terms of reduced risk in a purchase (Godey et al. 2011).

While the influence of product warranties has frequently been examined from the perspective of customer segmentation, particularly in the context of risk-averse consumers (Desai and Padmanabhan 2004), the role of such warranties on product durability has been largely overlooked in academic research. This gap is significant, as durability plays a crucial role in driving sustainable consumption, as discussed in our general literature review (see Chapter 3.4). Despite its importance from both managerial and academic perspectives, it has been observed that consumers tend to disregard durability considerations when evaluating luxury items (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). In their research, Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia (2021) found that consumers presented with two options more often choose to purchase multiple ordinary goods instead of one high-end good due to a neglect of the product's durability. The researchers conclude that making product durability salient may be an effective intervention to encourage sustainable consumption.

A number of contemporary premium and high-end brands already offer extended or even unlimited guarantees to their customers, thereby signaling quality and providing justification for elevated prices. For instance, the outdoor and fashion brand *Patagonia* offers an “Ironclad Guarantee,” which includes “no set time limit” for returns, as well as “most repairs” being free of charge (Patagonia 2024a). Similarly, the high-end luxury brand *Canada Goose* utilizes its warranty policy as a means of justifying its elevated pricing strategy. It offers customers comprehensive warranty coverage “for the lifetime of the product” in addition to a complimentary repair service (Canada Goose Inc. 2024). However, this strategy is not exclusive to the clothing industry. The luxury accessories brand *RIMOWA* offers a lifetime guarantee on its products, which covers “all functional aspects of your RIMOWA suitcase for the lifespan of your suitcase” (RIMOWA 2024).

Both academia and major players in the high-end fashion market have long recognized the potential of extended guarantees as indicators of trust and product quality. However, research has shown that consumers frequently fail to recognize the durability of luxury products, thereby overlooking the potential sustainability benefits associated with such purchases. Despite these observations, the nexus of these topics remains underexplored. This paper seeks to address this gap by investigating the specific role of guarantees in extending product lifecycles and promoting durability in the luxury goods sector. To our knowledge, this area remains largely unexamined, offering valuable implications for both academic research and marketing strategies.

To address this topic, we propose the hypothesis:

H₂: Emphasizing life cycle prolongment (e.g., lifelong guarantees) in luxury or premium brands makes consumers recognize durability, thereby increasing their likelihood of purchasing fewer, more premium products.

5.3 Methodology

To study Hypothesis 2 and the effect of lifecycle prolongation measures on durability recognition and purchasing behavior, we employed the methodology of an experimental design. Within Qualtrics, this survey followed Study 1 as the second phase of the research.

A between-subjects design was used to test the manipulation in this experiment, with participants randomly assigned to either a control or test group after reading the introduction to this section of the survey. Both groups were presented with two visually identical products (black t-shirts), along with price and product descriptions: one representing a premium item and the other a mid-range item. The order in which the products were displayed was randomized by the software to prevent order biases. Participants in both groups saw a premium t-shirt from the fictitious Brand X, priced at €60, and a mid-range t-shirt from the fictitious Brand Y, priced at €20. These prices were inspired by higher-end premium brands (e.g., *Gant*, *Polo Ralph Lauren*) and mid-range fast fashion brands (e.g., *Zara*, *H&M*), ensuring that the price of the premium item was a multiple of the mid-range item. Alongside the price and the product description, participants saw an image of a neutral black t-shirt without a brand logo, print, or precise gender classification to keep the products as generic as possible and avoid associations with existing brands (for product images and descriptions see Appendix A).

The only distinction between the test and control groups was the product description of the premium item (Brand X). The control group read a generic description: “A stylish, high-end t-shirt made from cotton with a crew neck for perfect comfort.” In contrast, the test group was explicitly prompted by the independent variable of interest, the mention of lifecycle prolongation measures. The product description was modified by including the following additional information: “[...] This product comes with an unconditional guarantee for its entire lifetime (you can repair or replace the product at any time).” For the mid-range item (Brand Y), both groups read the same product description: “A stylish, mid-range t-shirt made from

cotton with a crew neck for perfect comfort.”

After being presented with both products, participants were asked two questions to examine the effect on the dependent variable and the mediator. In order to ascertain choice preferences (the dependent variable), participants were provided with the following scenario: “You have a budget of €60. Which of the following options would you choose if you had to select one?” Subsequently, participants were presented with two options: “Buy one t-shirt of Brand X for €60” or “Buy three t-shirts of Brand Y for €20.” To eliminate any potential order-related biases, the sequence in which the two options were presented was randomized once more. This question was designed to explore whether an emphasis on lifecycle prolongation, in this case through an unconditional guarantee, leads consumers to opt for fewer, higher-quality items over a larger quantity of lower-priced items.

In the final section of this sub-survey, participants were asked: “In the previous question, how important was the consideration of durability in your decision?” to assess whether they recognized the durability of premium products when life cycle prolongment measures were highlighted. Responses were recorded on a Likert scale ranging from “1 – Not at all important” to “7 – Very important.”

5.4 Results

Of the 180 valid responses collected, 48.9% ($n = 88$) were randomly assigned to the control group, which did not receive any information about lifecycle prolongment measures. The remaining 51.1% ($n = 92$) were allocated to the test group and exposed to the manipulated product description. The dependent variable, product choice (i.e., *buy one t-shirt* vs. *buy three t-shirts*), was similarly balanced, with 47.2% and 52.8% of participants choosing each option, respectively. Regarding the mediator, the mean score for durability importance was 4.61 ($SD = 1.76$), indicating that respondents, on average, moderately value durability in their decision-making. All descriptive statistics can be found in Appendix D.1.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between the experimental condition (control vs. test) and participants' choices. The results revealed a statistically significant association between the two variables ($\chi^2[1, N = 180] = 18.90, p < .001$; Appendix D.2). Specifically, 66.3% of respondents in the test group selected the premium product, compared to only 30.7% in the control group. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was performed to compare durability importance ratings between the test group ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.73$) and the control group ($M = 4.32, SD = 1.76$). The results indicate a statistically significant difference in durability importance between the two groups ($t[178] = -2.159, p = .032$; Appendix D.2).

To further examine the influence of the treatment on product choice, a logistic regression analysis was performed. The results demonstrated that incorporating lifecycle prolongment messaging in the product description significantly increased the likelihood of participants opting for the premium product. Participants exposed to the manipulated description were approximately 3.9 times more likely to choose the single premium t-shirt than those in the control group (odds ratio = 3.854, 95% CI [2.073, 7.165]; Appendix D.3).

Nagelkerke R^2 was used to assess model fit, as it is considered more suitable than Cox and Snell R^2 in this context (Mehroliya, Alagarsamy, and Solaikutty 2021). The value ($R^2 = .135$) indicates that approximately 13.5% of the variance in product choice is explained by the model (Nagelkerke 1991), suggesting that other factors may also contribute to decision-making. A Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve analysis was performed in SPSS to support this. The corresponding Area Under the ROC Curve (AUC) confirms the model's moderate predictive accuracy ($AUC = .662$; Appendix D.4).

To test the hypothesis that durability plays a significant role in the decision-making process following the manipulation, a mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes and Little 2022). The analysis included product choice as the dependent

variable, experimental condition as the independent variable, and durability importance as the mediator. Consistent with expectations, the results indicate that the relationship between lifecycle prolongment messaging and product choice is mediated by durability considerations (indirect effect = .55, 95% CI [0.049, 1.168]; Appendix D.5). Model fit indicators showed substantial improvement, with Nagelkerke R^2 and McFadden R^2 values suggesting that the final model explains between 35.2% and 51.4% of the variance in product choice. Furthermore, multicollinearity diagnostics were performed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values. Both predictors, experimental condition and durability importance, showed acceptable levels of collinearity (VIF = 1.026, Tolerance = .974), confirming that multicollinearity is not a concern (Field 2024; Appendix D.6).

Although not directly relevant to the primary hypothesis of this study, the relationship between self-reported spending tendencies (i.e., tightwad vs. spendthrift) and product choice was also explored. Using logistic regression, it was found that spending tendencies were not a significant predictor of product choice in this model ($p = .905$; Appendix D.7).

5.5 Discussion

The findings of this study align with the hypothesis that lifecycle prolongment messaging through unconditional guarantees serves as an effective marketing tool to influence consumer preferences significantly. Individuals who were exposed to the manipulation and read about the extended guarantee were nearly four times more likely to select a single premium product over multiple mid-range items. This highlights the efficacy of promoting sustainable consumption in the luxury sector. Furthermore, the data suggests that this observed effect is significantly mediated by the durability importance that respondents placed on their purchasing decision after being prompted with the manipulation. This implies that consumers can, in fact, recognize durability in luxury goods when it is emphasized through guarantees.

The results support the findings of Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia (2021), who proposed

that emphasizing product durability can be an effective strategy for promoting sustainable consumption. Respondents in the control group, which received no information about the unconditional guarantee, were more likely to purchase three mid-range t-shirts and reported lower levels of consideration for durability. This observation is consistent with prior research, which found that consumers tend to overlook the durable aspects of luxury goods when not prompted directly (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). The present study further reinforces the academic consensus that product guarantees serve as an effective marketing tool to influence consumer decisions. It can be highlighted that the use of an unconditional guarantee resulted in consumers being willing to purchase a substantially more expensive item.

By addressing the identified research gap and exploring the nexus between durability in luxury goods and the market implications of product guarantees, the experiment provides new insights into the behavior of consumers in a luxury or premium fashion context. While the research does not explicitly target high-end luxury items, it investigates consumer preferences within the more accessible segment of premium fashion. The findings, therefore, provide broader applicability across diverse consumer demographics.

Our results demonstrate how companies can leverage product guarantees beyond their conventional role of signaling quality or reliability. Specifically, product guarantees can serve as strategic tools to promote sustainable consumption practices and justify premium pricing. Emphasizing durability enables consumers to rationalize higher prices by appealing not only to perceived superior quality but also to self- and other-oriented values. These values, which are significant drivers of purchasing decisions in the luxury sector (Jain 2019), are effectively addressed through the synergy of luxury and sustainable consumption. The chosen approach allows brands to engage with these principles from distinct yet complementary perspectives.

From the consumer's standpoint, however, it remains uncertain whether products bearing unconditional guarantees are, in fact, more sustainable. The objective of this paper is

not to provide a definitive answer to this question. However, we argue that a prolonged guarantee would, in many cases, result in an extension of the product's lifetime, particularly in terms of facilitated repairs or returns. The extent to which these products will retain their timeless appeal in the face of growing consumer preference for fast fashion remains unclear and represents an avenue for further exploration. In this context, initiatives aimed at raising consumer awareness and educating them about the issues at hand may be of significant value.

The managerial implications of these findings are multifaceted and require careful consideration. On the positive side, our results underscore the significant advantages of incorporating lifecycle prolongation messaging into product marketing, highlighting its potential to enhance both consumers' purchasing preferences and perceptions of durability. This finding has the potential to provide valuable insight into the development of marketing strategies and the positioning of brands as sustainable in an increasingly conscious consumer market. Conversely, these advantages must be balanced against the financial commitments associated with such guarantees. Offering an unconditional guarantee necessitates investment in robust infrastructure to deliver such services effectively while ensuring the company meets stringent quality standards. The expected costs of implementing a guarantee are heavily influenced by the likelihood of product repairs during its typical lifespan. Furthermore, the replacement rates of goods are likely to be affected. If product lifecycles are prolonged, consumers will purchase items with a lower frequency. While this is undoubtedly beneficial from a sustainable consumption perspective, it is essential to ensure that the commercial implications for a profit-oriented organization are aligned with such a strategy. Managers will be required to assess whether any prospective price premium will offset the higher cost associated with this proposed approach.

When interpreting these findings, several limitations should be taken into account. First, the study focuses exclusively on an exemplary premium t-shirt, and consumer responses

may differ for other product categories. Beyond the omission of stylistic purchasing motivations, other factors, such as general affinity or aversion toward this product category along with real-world brand preferences, may have influenced the results. Consequently, the generalizability of these implications may be limited and warrants further investigation.

Second, the forced choice presented in the survey (*buy one t-shirt vs. buy three t-shirts*) does not account for alternative consumer behaviors, such as choosing not to purchase, choosing a different product, or allocating the budget differently.

Finally, evidence suggests that unmeasured factors may also influence the decision-making. Although the final model demonstrated a satisfactory overall fit, a notable degree of variance in product choice remained unexplained. This suggests that additional factors beyond the unconditional product guarantee merit consideration. Marketers should take these into account when developing and evaluating strategic options.

5.6 Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between lifecycle prolongment messaging (e.g., lifetime guarantees) and consumers' perceptions of product durability and subsequent product choices. Grounded in the existing literature and validated through an experimental approach, the findings support the stated hypothesis: consumers can be significantly influenced by unconditional guarantees to recognize durability in luxury goods, leading to a preference for purchasing fewer, more premium products.

These results underscore the potential for marketers to strategically employ lifecycle prolongment messaging to shape consumer behavior while simultaneously enhancing the sustainable perception of products. From a consumer perspective, unconditional guarantees align with key values associated with luxury purchases, enabling justification of higher expenditures through sustainability-oriented motives.

While previous research has already explored the role of guarantees in product marketing and the dynamics of sustainable consumption in the luxury sector, this study provides a novel contribution to the field by integrating these domains. The conducted experiment proved effective in yielding statistically significant results, addressing the identified research gap, and offering actionable insights.

Overall, extended guarantees emerge as a highly effective tool from both consumer and managerial perspectives. Their relevance to the luxury sector is substantial, with adoption by several prominent brands further underscoring their practical significance. Nonetheless, the limitations of this study suggest opportunities for further research. Future studies could extend this work to other product categories within the fashion segment or beyond. Additionally, exploring consumers' willingness to pay for such guarantees could inform strategic evaluations from a business standpoint. Further differentiation across premium, luxury, and high-end luxury segments could also offer a more granular understanding of consumer preferences across varying market tiers.

6 General Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Discussion of Findings

The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between sustainable consumption and luxury purchases. To achieve this, we conducted four independent sub-studies, each contributing unique insights and collectively providing a nuanced understanding of this research area.

Reflecting on the findings from these studies, Study 1 proved the significant relationship between explicit sustainability marketing and consumer preference. As previously hypothesized, consumers exposed to sustainability-focused framing were more likely to opt for the premium brand over the cheaper alternative. However, contrary to expectations, this relationship was not mediated by perceived durability. Building on these results, Study 2 provided further evidence that effective sustainability marketing can serve as a powerful tool to influence consumer behavior. In this specific case, prompting consumers with an unconditional guarantee enhanced their recognition of product durability, leading them to choose a single premium item over three mid-range alternatives. Study 3 further expanded on this relationship by investigating consumer decision-making under financial considerations. Explicitly, this study compared consumers' WTP for luxury items framed with sustainable messaging versus traditional framing. Although the hypothesized effect of a higher price acceptance for the former could not be confirmed, the perceived overall value was identified as a significant predictor of WTP. Recognizing the potential limits of sustainability marketing, Study 4 explored the possible adverse effect of excessive sustainability claims in luxury marketing on consumers' purchase intentions. While perceived authenticity was found to influence purchase intent, the intensity of sustainability claims did not have a significant effect.

In relation to the existing literature in this area, our findings yield several important

conclusions. A key takeaway from our research is that structured marketing can effectively encourage consumers to adopt more sustainable purchasing and consumption behaviors, as formerly suggested by Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia (2021). Within this context, we identified durability as a key factor in the decision-making of consumers. Not only does it serve as an effective instrument to position products as high-end, but it also aligns them with financial and environmental values (Cervellon and Shamma 2013; Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). Additionally, durability allows consumers to appreciate the long-term value of luxury purchases, further reinforcing its importance in purchasing decisions (Frederick et al. 2009).

Product lifespan enhancements (such as offering unconditional guarantees) can be perceived as investments that simultaneously address both economic and environmental considerations. Such features align closely with principles of sustainable consumption and motivate consumers toward such behaviors (Cervellon and Shamma 2013; Joy et al. 2012; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020). This insight provides a valuable contribution to the research field, as it helps bridge the gap between utilitarian product attributes and sustainable consumption patterns.

While the significance of durability is evident, we recognize that a number of additional factors influence product selection in the context of premium items. Beyond financial considerations, such as price or budget constraints, psychological and emotional factors are pivotal determinants of consumer behavior. These include perceived quality, self-expression, or personal style (Cervellon and Shamma 2013; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020; Wang et al. 2021).

Our research further revealed that while consumers generally recognize sustainability when prompted, more awareness is needed to translate this into more sustainable purchasing decisions. Environmental concerns often remain secondary to other motivations, with immediate and practical factors taking precedence in purchasing behavior (De Klerk, Kearns,

and Redwood 2019; Nguyen, Nguyen, and Nguyen 2019; Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). Building on this, it is notable that our study featured a considerably younger sample population compared to the EU's median age (27.0 vs. 44.5 years; Appendix B; Eurostat 2024). Therefore, our findings confirm prior observations by Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) and Heil and Langer (2017), who found that while younger generations consider sustainability in products, they are not necessarily inclined to pay a premium for such attributes. This suggests a potential avenue for future research whereby the present studies could be replicated with older cohorts to assess generational differences.

Our finding that authenticity influences consumers' purchase intentions offers further insights into the complex relationship between luxury branding and sustainability marketing. We proved the importance of this topic for future research as it touches upon crucial determinants such as trust and brand perception. In connection with consumers' personal beliefs, this finding is in line with research conducted by Irwin and Spira (1997) as well as Beckham and Voyer (2014). Consequently, luxury brands need to take these aspects into account when defining social responsibility strategies (Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020).

Overall, our findings align closely with pre-existing research. While we identified durability and sustainability as essential factors in promoting sustainable consumption within the luxury sector, evidence suggests that consumers continue to prioritize other considerations (Ehrich and Irwin 2005; Gardetti and Torres 2013). This emphasizes the need for effectively addressing consumer priorities. Enhancing consumer education about the environmental impacts of their purchasing and consumption patterns could elevate the perceived significance of these factors. Such an approach offers a compelling counterpoint to fast fashion and resonates with the growing emphasis on sustainability, heightened environmental awareness, and the broader shift toward green initiatives.

6.2 Practical Implications

In order to formulate effective marketing strategies, management should take several practical implications into consideration. A fundamental step is ensuring that a brand's marketing efforts align with the company's overarching environmental strategy and the underlying questions of how the brand intends to position itself and how it wishes to be perceived by consumers within its target market. Given the increasing significance of sustainability, recognized as one of the most influential purchasing factors in the fashion industry (McKinsey & Company 2024), it is imperative for companies to integrate sustainability throughout their entire value chain. This integration extends beyond marketing communication to include earlier stages, such as production and logistics, as exemplified by brands prominent for their sustainable commitments, such as *Fjällräven* (2024b).

Brands should ensure that their marketing explicitly communicates sustainability attributes, fostering consumer awareness of factors like durability. Marketing campaigns should employ precise wording that highlights a product's quality and sustainable characteristics. For instance, *Fjällräven* (2024a) mentions durability not only in their detailed product descriptions but already prominently on their product listing pages, immediately drawing attention to this key attribute. By directing awareness to such qualities, consumers are more likely to engage in sustainable purchase behavior.

Another effective strategy involves offering features that enhance a product's lifecycle, thereby increasing its longevity and value for consumers. Companies could provide extended or unlimited guarantees, which signals both the brands' confidence in their product's quality and durability. This approach, commonly used by established eco-conscious brands like *Patagonia*, also proves effective for high-end luxury brands such as *Canada Goose*, as discussed in Study 2. By offering such assurances, brands provide not only environmental incentives but also functional value, which can justify premium pricing.

For these strategies to be effective, consumers must perceive them as authentic. Merely including sustainability claims in product descriptions may be insufficient to influence consumer preference and does not lead to a higher WTP for luxury goods. To ensure these claims translate into consumer action, companies must integrate their environmental commitments into their core brand identity (Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates 2016; Walker 2006). Achieving this requires addressing all aspects of the value chain, from sourcing sustainable raw materials to minimizing waste through care instructions and repair services. In this context, transparency plays a pivotal role in fostering this perception of authenticity. Companies should actively communicate their tangible, sustainable practices to consumers. For example, the premium brand *Patagonia* provides detailed information for each product on “How it’s made” and “Where it’s made.” This includes comprehensive data on the materials used, the certifications obtained, the suppliers involved, and the precise locations of the factories where the products are manufactured (Patagonia 2024b).

Recognizing and evaluating authentic, sustainable practices in companies’ offerings can be challenging from a consumer perspective. This difficulty is often compounded by limited knowledge of sustainability issues and a prevalent distrust rooted in widespread greenwashing within the fashion industry (Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates 2016). Such skepticism is particularly pronounced when higher prices are involved. To address these challenges, companies can take the initiative in educating consumers about the environmental impact of their products. While transparency regarding production processes and materials is essential, companies should also prioritize efforts to inform consumers about product care, typical product lifespans, and other related aspects. In this context, previous research highlights opportunities through educational initiatives such as tutorials or targeted advertising campaigns (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021).

However, these recommendations must be carefully balanced against financial

considerations. Developing educational advertising campaigns, offering lifetime guarantees, or providing free repair services entails substantial costs. Managerial decision-makers must evaluate these expenditures in relation to the potential for increased price acceptance as a means of offsetting them. Nevertheless, the potential for such initiatives to foster brand loyalty should not be underestimated. As the importance of sustainability will presumably continue to grow, companies that adopt proactive and authentic practices in this area are likely to secure lasting competitive advantages.

6.3 Limitations

In addition to study-specific constraints, several general limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings of this thesis.

First, the experimental design relies on hypothetical scenarios and a virtual shelf setup, which may not reflect actual consumer behavior. The actual purchasing behavior of consumers may be influenced by a number of factors, including the local conditions present in a physical shopping environment as well as in-store experiences, peer influence, and the consumers' financial circumstances or constraints. The *Attitude Behavior Gap* may play a role in this instance (Wiederhold and Martinez 2018), as consumers might indicate a preference for the sustainable option in a theoretical context but behave differently in practice.

Second, the study focuses exclusively on short-term consumer reactions immediately after exposure to sustainability claims. This approach does not account for potential long-term effects, such as the evolution of trust and purchase intent with repeated exposure, or how consumers assess the consistency between a brand's claims and actual practices over time. Examining these longitudinal dynamics would yield a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of sustainability messaging in the luxury sector.

Finally, the demographic characteristics of respondents limit the broader applicability

of the findings. For instance, a disproportionately high percentage of participants (92.2%) reside in Germany, making it challenging to generalize the conclusions to other countries with differing economic contexts (Appendix B). Consumers living under different economic conditions may exhibit distinct preferences and behaviors compared to the sampled population. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the respondents represent a relatively young population, with a median age of 27 years. Compared to this, the EU median age (44.5 years) is significantly higher, limiting our studies' generalizability to older generations, whose consumption patterns may differ significantly (Eurostat 2024b). Furthermore, there were notable differences between the educational profiles of our sample and that of the EU population. In 2023, 32.6% of EU residents had attained advanced levels of education (i.e., tertiary education), whereas 69.4% of our observation group reported holding a Bachelor's degree or higher (Appendix B; Eurostat 2024). Such differences in education levels could influence preferences and decision-making processes, as more educated consumers may make more informed or sustainability-conscious choices.

Despite these limitations, this thesis provides meaningful contributions to the study of consumer behavior in a luxury context. By addressing underexplored areas, the findings offer valuable insights and practical implications, which future research can build upon to further extend these results.

6.4 Concluding Remarks and Future Research Directions

The relationship between sustainable consumption and luxury purchases is multifaceted, and understanding it is crucial for both businesses and consumers. This study, grounded in an extensive review of prior literature and an empirical investigation employing an experimental survey design, offers a nuanced comprehension of this dynamic. We conclude that sustainability marketing within the luxury sector can serve as an effective mechanism for promoting sustainable consumption practices. Although sustainability emerged as a significant

factor recognized by consumers when appropriately framed, we acknowledge that its direct influence on purchasing decisions remains limited.

Based on four focused studies examining explicit marketing, product guarantees, sustainability framing, and sustainability claims and their impact on product preferences and choices, we observed diverse outcomes. The research revealed that explicit durability marketing for premium brands significantly enhances consumer preference for such products. However, only in the context of product guarantees were we able to identify significant indirect effects, leaving the underlying mechanisms of the remaining research areas needing to be clarified and warranting further exploration

We observed that explicit marketing strategies and product guarantees act as key drivers of product preference. Nevertheless, no substantial evidence was found to support consumers' increased WTP as a result of sustainability framing. Similarly, we did not observe adverse effects from varying intensities of sustainability claims in the luxury context. We suggest that marketers consider these findings when establishing communication strategies in this sector.

Methodologically, the empirical approach proved effective in capturing consumer behavior under various marketing conditions. Segmenting respondents into distinct groups enabled clear identification and differentiation of the efficacy of hypothesized marketing tools. The present study contributes to the existing discourse on the interplay between the seemingly contrasting areas of sustainable consumption and luxury purchasing. The evidence presented indicates that consumer behavior and perceptions can be shaped by eco-conscious communication.

However, in light of the limitations of this study, including the demographic disproportionality of the sample population and the insufficient capture of long-term effects, we propose the following avenues for future research. To enhance the generalizability of the

findings, it would be beneficial to broaden the scope of respondents and to undertake longitudinal studies to gain insight into the long-term effects of sustainability framing on brand identity and consumption behavior.

Moreover, a critical question remains: Are luxury brands truly more sustainable, or is this perception driven by superficial sustainability claims? Future research should delve deeper into actual sustainable practices within companies' supply chains. By fostering a more comprehensive understanding of this, consumers will be better equipped to make more informed choices, potentially driving shifts toward more sustainable consumption patterns in the premium market and beyond.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Experimental Survey Design

Appendix A.1 Survey Structure

Introduction

PLEASE SELECT YOUR PREFERRED LANGUAGE (ENGLISH / GERMAN) Thank you for participating in our survey for our master's thesis at Nova SBE! We aim to investigate consumer preferences in luxury / premium fashion. Completing the survey should take around 5-7 minutes. You will see four different products / scenarios. They are all independent from each other. Please review each product and its description very carefully, as you will be asked questions about them. We appreciate your participation! In case of any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us via 58883@novasbe.pt. All responses are collected anonymously and will remain confidential.

Additional information

In the following you will see different products from two fictitious brands:

Brand X – This is a premium brand known for high-quality materials and timeless design.

Brand Y – This is a mid-range brand known for its trendy designs and high accessibility (i.e., affordable, widely available).

ATTENTION: You cannot go back between pages, please read the descriptions carefully!

Section 1

In the following section, you will be shown two sweaters available for sale. Please take a moment to review each one carefully, as you will be asked to answer questions about them.

Remember that you cannot go back between pages!

Participants saw product visualizations and descriptions for a premium and mid-range product

Question 1 – H1

Would you prefer to choose Brand X (€120) or Brand Y (€40)?

- 1 – Would definitely prefer Brand X (€120)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Would definitely prefer Brand Y (€40)

Question 2 – H1

How durable do you believe the products are?

Sweater Brand X – €120 (1 – Not at all durable to 7 – Very durable)

Sweater Brand X – €40 (1 – Not at all durable to 7 – Very durable)

Section 2

In the following section, you will be shown two t-shirts available for sale. Please take a moment to review each one carefully, as you will be asked to answer questions about them.

Remember that you cannot go back between pages!

Participants saw product visualizations and descriptions for a premium and mid-range product

Question 1 – H2

You have a budget of €60. Which of the following options would you choose if you had to select one?

- Buy one t-shirt of Brand X for €60
- Buy three t-shirts of Brand Y for €20 each

Question 2 – H2

In the previous question, how important was the consideration of durability in your decision?

- 1 – Not at all important
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Very important

Section 3

In the following section, you will be shown a jacket available for sale. Please take a moment to review it carefully, as you will be asked to answer questions about it. Remember that you cannot go back between pages!

Participants saw a product visualizations and description

Question 1 – H3

Based on the product description, how much are you willing to pay for this jacket? Please use the slider to indicate an amount between €100 and €1000.

Slider from €100 to €1000 with €100 interval steps

Question 2 – H3

Why did you choose the price you indicated for this jacket? Please select the most relevant reason(s) provided.

- Materials used
- Design and aesthetics
- Craftsmanship or quality of production
- Personal budget
- Prices of comparable products

- Brand reputation
- Perceived luxury or status associated with the product
- Sustainability features
- Environmental impact

Question 3 – H3

How likely are you to purchase this jacket based on the description you saw?

- 1 – Not likely at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Very likely

Question 4 – H3

How would you rate the overall value of this jacket, considering its ability to meet your needs or provide a solution (e.g., warmth, protection, style)?

- 1 – Very low value
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Very high value

Section 4

In the following section, you will be shown a pair of jeans available for sale. Please take a moment to review them carefully, as you will be asked to answer questions about them.

Remember that you cannot go back between pages!

Participants saw a product visualizations and description

Question 1 – H4

How likely are you to purchase this product?

- 1 – Not likely at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Very likely

Question 2 – H4

To what extent did the sustainability claims in the product description influence your overall impression of the jeans?

- 1 – Not at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Very much

Question 3 – H4

How authentic (i.e., credible) do you find the sustainability claims in this product description?

- 1 – Not at all authentic
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Very authentic

Final Section**Shopping Behavior**

The following question is about your usual shopping behavior. Please answer honestly. Which of the following descriptions fits you better?

- 1 – Tightwad (someone who has trouble spending money)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 – Spendthrift (someone who has trouble limiting their spending)

Demographics

What is your individual monthly disposable income? (after taxes; incl. salary, alimony, family support, capital gains, pension, etc.)

Dropdown: Below €500; €501 to €1000; €1001 to €1500; €1501 to €2000; €2001 to €2500; €2501 to €3000; €3001 to €3500; €3501 to €4000; €4001 to €4500; €4501 to €5000; €5001 to €6000; €6001 to €7000; Above €7000

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

Free text entry (only numerical values from 18 to 100)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- No formal education
- Secondary education (e.g., Highschool, GCSEs, A-Level, Hauptschule, Abitur) or equivalent
- Technical qualification (e.g., Apprenticeship) or equivalent
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent
- Master's degree or equivalent
- Doctoral degree or equivalent
- Other

Where is your primary country of residence?

Dropdown list with 197 countries

Appendix A.2 Product visualizations and descriptions

Appendix A.2.1 Study 1



 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Designed by Freepik</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Designed by Freepik</p>
<p>Brand X – Classic Sweater € 120</p> <p>A premium grey sweater with a round-neck design, offering a comfortable fit and classic style for everyday wear. Available in multiple sizes.</p>	<p>Brand Y – Classic Sweater € 40</p> <p>A mid-range grey sweater with a round-neck design, offering a comfortable fit and classic style for everyday wear. Available in multiple sizes.</p>
<p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>	<p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>

Figure 1 - Study 1: Control Group (implicit sustainability marketing)



 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Designed by Freepik</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Designed by Freepik</p>
<p>Brand X – Classic Sweater € 120</p> <p>Crafted for the long haul, this grey sweater offers a classic look that never goes out of style. Made from durable materials, it's designed to last, offering sustainability and timeless appeal. Available in multiple sizes.</p> <p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>	<p>Brand Y – Classic Sweater € 40</p> <p>A mid-range grey sweater with a round-neck design, offering a comfortable fit and classic style for everyday wear. Available in multiple sizes.</p> <p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>

Figure 2 - Study 1: Test Group (explicit sustainability marketing)

Appendix A.2.2 Study 2

 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Designed by Freepik</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Designed by Freepik</p>
<p>Brand X – Timeless T-Shirt € 60</p> <p>A stylish, high-end t-shirt made from cotton with a crew neck for perfect comfort.</p> <p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>	<p>Brand Y – Timeless T-Shirt € 20</p> <p>A stylish, mid-range t-shirt made from cotton with a crew neck for perfect comfort.</p> <p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>

Figure 3 - Study 2: Control Group (no extended guarantees)



	
<p>Brand X – Timeless T-Shirt € 60</p> <p>A stylish, high-end t-shirt made from cotton with a crew neck for perfect comfort. This product comes with an unconditional guarantee for its entire lifetime (you can repair or replace the product at any time).</p> <p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>	<p>Brand Y – Timeless T-Shirt € 20</p> <p>A stylish, mid-range t-shirt made from cotton with a crew neck for perfect comfort.</p> <p>XS S M L XL XXL</p>

Figure 4 - Study 2: Test Group (unconditional product guarantee)

Appendix A.2.3 Study 3


	<p>Brand X – Unisex Jacket</p> <p>This luxury jacket is crafted from the finest premium materials, designed for those who value timeless elegance and refined style. With a modern fit, it offers a balance of contemporary fashion and classic luxury. Every detail, from its high-end materials to its expert craftsmanship, reflects a commitment to quality and exclusivity. This jacket is perfect for individuals who prioritize sophistication and luxury, making it a distinguished addition to any wardrobe. A true reflection of high-end fashion, it offers an elegant, polished look that stands the test of time.</p>
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Figure 5 - Study 3: Control Group (traditional luxury framing)



Brand X – Unisex Jacket

This luxury jacket is crafted from the finest eco-friendly materials, designed for those who value sustainability and refined style. With a modern fit, it offers a balance of contemporary fashion and ethical luxury. Every detail, from its recycled fabrics to its eco-conscious production, reflects a commitment to both quality and the environment. This jacket is perfect for individuals who prioritize sustainability without compromising on sophistication, making it a distinguished, responsible choice for any wardrobe. A true reflection of ethical luxury, it offers an elegant, polished look with a reduced environmental impact.

Figure 6 - Study 3: Test Group (sustainable luxury framing)

Appendix A.2.4 Study 4



Brand X – Jeans

€ 130

Crafted from a durable cotton blend, these jeans are designed for **comfort and durability**. Made to retain their shape and color over time, they are a conscious choice for those who value both quality and style. With attention to sustainable practices, these jeans are **probably the best choice** for those looking for a **responsible, premium wardrobe staple**.

Main fabric: Organic cotton blend (70% organic cotton, 30% regular cotton)

Lining: Partially recycled polyester

Dyeing process: Low impact, environmentally friendly dyes

Made in: EU (Produced under fair working conditions)

Delivery: Free standard shipping

Figure 7 - Study 4: Control Group (moderate sustainability claims)



Brand X – Jeans

€ 130

Made entirely from recyclable materials, these jeans are **100% environmentally friendly** and **carbon neutral**. Designed to retain their perfect fit and rich color through countless wears and washes, they resist fading and stretching, ensuring they look as good as new after each wear. Produced in line with the highest sustainability standards, these are the **best sustainable jeans** on the market, designed for those who value both **sustainability and quality**.

Main fabric: 100% recyclable materials

Lining: 100% recycled polyester

Dyeing process: Non-toxic, eco-friendly dyes

Made in: EU (Produced under ethical labor practices and strict environmental standards)

Delivery: Free standard shipping

Figure 8 - Study 4: Test Group (excessive sustainability claims)

Appendix A.3 Survey Flow

Qualtrics Survey Flow
Introduction
Section 1
Introduction Section 1
<i>Block Randomizer 1 – Evenly Present Elements</i>
Group: Test
If: Device Type is Mobile
Test Premium Product (Mobile) – H1
Test Mid-Range Product (Mobile) – H1
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Test Premium Product – H1
Test Mid-Range Product – H1
Question 1 – H1
Group: Control
If: Device Type is Mobile
Control Premium Product (Mobile) – H1
Control Mid-Range Product (Mobile) – H1
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Control Premium Product – H1
Control Mid-Range Product – H1
Question 1 – H1
Question 2 – H1
Section Break 1>2
Introduction Section 2
<i>Block Randomizer 1 – Evenly Present Elements</i>
Group: Control
<i>Block Randomizer 2 – Evenly Present Elements</i>
Group: Control / Premium
If: Device Type is Mobile
Control Premium Product (Mobile) – H2
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Control Premium Product – H2
Group: Control / Mid-Range
If: Device Type is Mobile
Control Mid-Range Product (Mobile) – H2
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Control Mid-Range Product – H2
Question 1 – H2
Group: Test
<i>Block Randomizer 2 – Evenly Present Elements</i>
Group: Test / Premium
If: Device Type is Mobile
Test Premium Product (Mobile) – H2
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Test Premium Product – H2

Qualtrics Survey Flow
Group: Test / Mid-Range
If: Device Type is Mobile
Test Mid-Range Product (Mobile) – H2
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Test Mid-Range Product – H2
Question 1 – H2
Question 2 – H2
Section Break 2>3
Introduction Section 3
<i>Block Randomizer 1 – Evenly Present Elements</i>
Group: Control
If: Device Type is Mobile
Control Product (Mobile) – H3
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Control Product – H3
Question 1 – H3
Group: Test
If: Device Type is Mobile
Test Product (Mobile) – H3
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Test Product – H3
Question 1 – H3
Question 2 – H3
Question 3 – H3
Question 4 – H3
Section Break 3>4
Introduction Section 4
<i>Block Randomizer 1 – Evenly Present Elements</i>
Group: Control
If: Device Type is Mobile
Control Product (Mobile) – H4
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Control Product – H4
Question 1 – H4
Question 2 – H4
Group: Test
If: Device Type is Mobile
Test Product (Mobile) – H4
If: Device Type is Not Mobile
Test Product – H4
Question 1 – H4
Question 2 – H4
Question 3 – H4
Section Break 4>End
General Questions

Table 1 - Survey Flow in Qualtrics Platform (H1 = Study 1; H2 = Study 2; H3 = Study 3; H4 = Study 4)

Appendix B – Respondent Characteristics and Demographics

Appendix B.1: Frequency Statistics for Income

Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	€1001 to €1500	33	18.3	18.3	18.3
	€1501 to €2000	16	8.9	8.9	27.2
	€2001 to €2500	18	10.0	10.0	37.2
	€2501 to €3000	18	10.0	10.0	47.2
	€3001 to €3500	19	10.6	10.6	57.8
	€3501 to €4000	14	7.8	7.8	65.6
	€4001 to €4500	8	4.4	4.4	70.0
	€4501 to €5000	8	4.4	4.4	74.4
	€5001 to €6000	3	1.7	1.7	76.1
	€501 to €1000	26	14.4	14.4	90.6
	€6001 to €7000	2	1.1	1.1	91.7
	Above €7000	9	5.0	5.0	96.7
	Below €500	6	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 - Frequency Statistics for Income Distribution of Sample Population

Appendix B.2 Frequency Statistics for Gender

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	85	47.2	47.2	47.2
	Male	92	51.1	51.1	98.3
	Non-binary	1	.6	.6	98.9
	Prefer not to say	2	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 - Frequency Statistics for Gender Distribution of Sample Population

Appendix B.3 Frequency Statistics for Age

Statistics

<u>Age</u>		
N	Valid	180
	Missing	0
Mean		33.91
Median		27.00
Std. Deviation		12.825
Minimum		19
Maximum		82

Table 4 - Frequency Statistics for Age Distribution of Sample Population

Appendix B.4 Frequency Statistics for Education

Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	60	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Doctoral degree or equivalent	7	3.9	3.9	37.2
	Master's degree or equivalent	58	32.2	32.2	69.4
	No formal education	1	.6	.6	70.0
	Secondary education (e.g., Highschool, GCSEs, A-Level, Hauptschule, Abitur) or equivalent	23	12.8	12.8	82.8
	Technical qualification (e.g., Apprenticeship) or equivalent	31	17.2	17.2	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 - Frequency Statistics for Education Distribution of Sample Population

Appendix B.5 Frequency Statistics for Country

<i>Country</i>				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	Austria	1	.6	.6	.6
	Belgium	1	.6	.6	1.1
	Germany	166	92.2	92.2	93.3
	Italy	3	1.7	1.7	95.0
	Netherlands	3	1.7	1.7	96.7
	Portugal	1	.6	.6	97.2
	Switzerland	5	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 - Frequency Statistics for Country of Residence Distribution of Sample Population

Appendix D – Results Study 2

Appendix D.1 Study 2: Descriptive Statistics

Appendix D.1.1 Frequency Statistics for Experimental Condition

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Control	88	48.9	48.9
Test	92	51.1	51.1
Total	180	100.0	100.0

Table 7 - Study 2: Frequency statistics for experimental condition (Control vs. Test Group)

Appendix D.1.2 Frequency Statistics for Product Choice

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Buy three t-shirts of Brand Y for €20 each	95	52.8	52.8	52.8
Buy one t-shirt of Brand X for €60	85	47.2	47.2	100.0
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 – Study 2: Frequency statistics for product choice (Buy one t-shirt vs. Buy three t-shirts)

Appendix D.1.3 Descriptive Statistics for Durability Importance Rating

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Durability Importance	180	1	7	4.61	1.764
Valid N (listwise)	180				

Table 9 – Study 2: Descriptive Statistics for durability importance rating (1 = lowest importance; 7 = highest importance)

Appendix D.2 Study 2: Group Differences

Appendix D.2.1 Crosstabulation Condition*Product Choice

		Q1 Buy 1 T-Shirt		Total	
		Buy three t-shirts of Brand Y for €20 each	Buy one t-shirt of Brand X for €60		
Condition	Control	Count	61	27	88
		Expected Count	46.4	41.6	88.0
	Test	Count	34	58	92
		Expected Count	48.6	43.4	92.0
Total		Count	95	85	180
		Expected Count	95.0	85.0	180.0

Table 10 – Study 2: Crosstabulation for experimental condition and product choice

Appendix D.2.1 Chi-Square Test of Independence (Condition*Product Choice)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.900 ^a	1	<.001		
Continuity Correction ^b	17.624	1	<.001		
Likelihood Ratio	19.262	1	<.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<.001	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	18.795	1	<.001		
	180				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 41.56.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 11 – Study 2: Chi-square test of independence for experimental condition and product choice

Appendix D.2.2 Independent Samples t-Test (Condition*Durability Importance)

	Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Durability	Control	88	4.32	1.759	.187
Importance Rating	Test	92	4.88	1.734	.181

Table 12 – Study 2: Group statistics for independent samples t-test for experimental condition and durability importance

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
					One-Sided p	Two-Sided p				
Equal variances assumed	.500	.480	-2.159	178	.016	.032	-.562	.260	-1.076	-.048
Equal variances not assumed			-2.159	177.389	.016	.032	-.562	.260	-1.076	-.048

Table 13 – Study 2: Independent samples t-test for experimental condition and durability importance rating in purchasing decisions of respondents

Appendix D.3 Study 2: Logistic Regression (Condition*Product Choice)

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	19.262	1	<.001
	Block	19.262	1	<.001
	Model	19.262	1	<.001

Table 14 – Study 2: Logistic regression for experimental condition and product choice – Omnibus tests of model coefficients

Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	229.715 ^a	.101	.135

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 3 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Table 15 – Study 2: Logistic regression for experimental condition and product choice – Model summary

Classification Table

Observed		Predicted		Percentage Correct
		Q1 Buy 1 T-Shirt		
		Buy three t-shirts of Brand Y for €20 each	Buy one t-shirt of Brand X for €60	
Product Choice	Buy three t-shirts of Brand Y for €20 each	61	34	64.2
	Buy one t-shirt of Brand X for €60	27	58	68.2
Overall Percentage				66.1

a. The cut value is .500

Table 16 – Study 2: Logistic regression for experimental condition and product choice – Classification table

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Condition	1.349	.316	18.186	1	<.001	3.854	2.073	7.165
Constant	-.815	.231	12.433	1	<.001	.443		

Table 17 – Study 2: Logistic regression for experimental condition and product choice – Variables in the equation

Appendix D.4 Study 2: Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) Curve

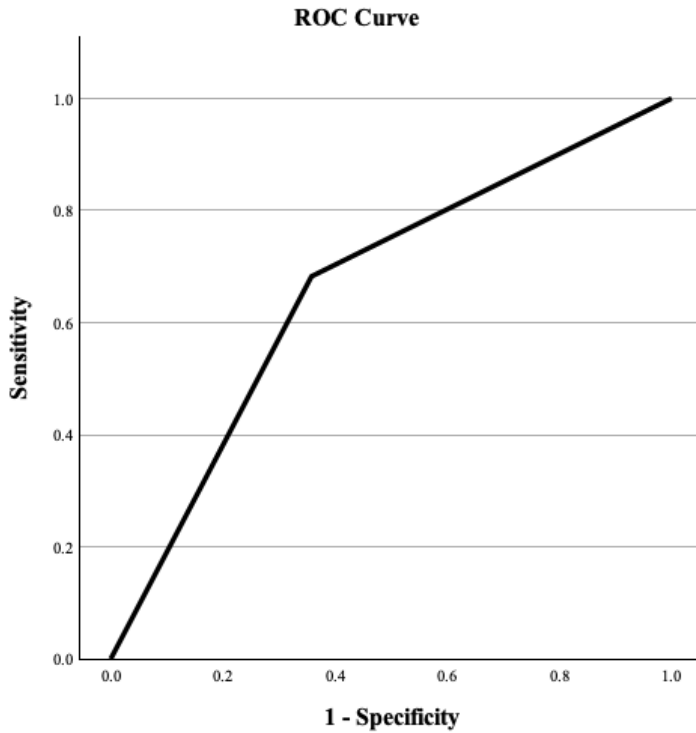


Figure 9 – Study 2: Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) Curve

Area Under the ROC Curve

Test Result Variable(s): Predicted probability
Area
.662

The test result variable(s): Predicted probability has at least one tie between the positive actual state group and the negative actual state group. Statistics may be biased.

Table 18 – Study 2: ROC curve analysis – Area under the ROC Curve

Appendix D.5 Study 2: PROCESS Model 4 – Mediator Analysis

Model Summary

-2LL	ModelLL	df	p	McFadden	CoxSnell	Nagelkrk
161.3963	87.5808	2.0000	.0000	.3518	.3853	.5142

Table 19 – Study 2: PROCESS Model 4 Mediation Analysis – Model summary

Direct Effect of Condition on Product Choice

Effect	SE	Z	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.4690	.3999	3.6736	.0002	.6853	2.2528

Table 20 – Study 2: PROCESS Model 4 Mediation Analysis – Direct effects of experimental condition on product choice

Indirect Effect(s) of Condition on Product Choice

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Durability Importance	.5500	.2838	.0490	1.1676

Table 21 – Study 2: PROCESS Model 4 Mediation Analysis – Indirect effect(s) of experimental condition on product choice

Appendix D.6 Study 2: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.630 ^a	.397	.390	.391

a. Predictors: (Constant), Durability Importance, Condition

Table 22 – Study 2: Regression analysis for VIF and Tolerance – Model summary

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.817	2	8.908	58.304	<.001 ^b
	Residual	27.044	177	.153		
	Total	44.861	179			

a. Dependent Variable: Product Choice

b. Predictors: (Constant), Durability Importance, Condition

Table 23 – Study 2: Regression analysis for VIF and Tolerance – ANOVA output

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.364	.084		-4.358	<.001		
	Condition	.236	.059	.237	4.001	<.001	.974	1.026
	Durability Imp.	.155	.017	.548	9.262	<.001	.974	1.026

a. Dependent Variable: Product Choice

Table 24 – Study 2: Regression analysis for VIF and Tolerance – Coefficients and VIF and Tolerance values

Appendix D.7 Study 2: Logistic Regression (Condition*Shopping Behavior*Product Choice)

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Condition	1.348	.316	18.163	1	<.001	3.851	2.072	7.161
Shopping Behav.	-.015	.122	.014	1	.905	.986	.775	1.253
Constant	-.757	.538	1.982	1	.159	.469		

Table 25 – Study 2: Logistic regression for experimental condition, shopping behavior, and product choice – Variables in the equation