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An Empirical Examination of the Relationship between Sustainable Consumption
and Luxury Purchases: A Consumer Behavior Perspective - The Impact of the
Sustainability Claim Intensity on Consumer Choices

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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

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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” (2021, 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 4: The Impact of the Sustainability Claim Intensity on Consumer Choices

5.1 Introduction

Sustainability communication has become a significant concern for luxury fashion brands, but the line between credible messaging and greenwashing remains blurred. According to McKinsey & Company (2023a), only 40% of Generation Z consumers trust companies' sustainability claims, highlighting a significant trust gap in the industry. To bridge this gap, luxury brands need to carefully craft sustainability messages that not only resonate with discerning consumers but also maintain their premium image.

Previous research indicates that the intensity of sustainability claims can significantly shape consumer perceptions. Moderate and transparent claims can foster trust by signaling credibility (Janssen, Vanhamme, and Leblanc 2017), while excessive claims risk provoking skepticism and damaging brand credibility (Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković 2022). Despite these findings, there is limited understanding of how varying levels of claim intensity influence consumer perceptions and decision-making in the luxury fashion sector. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how claim intensity affects key consumer outcomes, particularly their sense of authenticity and purchase intent.

Using an experimental approach, this research compares the effects of moderate versus excessive sustainability claims and examines the mediating role of perceived authenticity. The findings contribute to the academic discourse and provide practical strategies for effective sustainability communication in the luxury market.

Following this introduction, the literature review explores the theoretical background, identifies critical gaps in understanding, and lays the foundation for this study. The methodology section then describes the experimental approach designed to uncover how variations in claim intensity influence consumer perceptions and behavior. Building on this,

the results section presents the outcomes of the analysis, which are further contextualized in the discussion through their implications for effective sustainability communication and consideration of the study's limitations. The conclusion ties these elements together, highlighting the study's contributions and setting the direction for future research.

5.2 Literature Review

As discussed in the general literature review (see Chapter 3.5), limited consumer awareness of the environmental impacts of luxury goods remains a significant challenge (Kapferer 2010; Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković 2022; Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia 2021). To address this, luxury brands increasingly rely on sustainability claims to align their products with consumer values, influencing perceptions of product value and purchase intent across markets (Kunz, May, and Schmidt 2020).

Janssen, Vanhamme, and Leblanc (2017) highlight that moderate and realistic sustainability claims, such as those emphasizing durability, responsible sourcing, or reduced environmental impact, effectively build consumer trust when communicated transparently and without overstatement. These claims signal authenticity and a genuine commitment to sustainability, resonating with luxury consumers who value quality, longevity, and sustainability messages that emphasize long-term goals such as resource conservation (Janssen, Vanhamme, and Leblanc 2017; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020). Perrini and Tencati (2006) emphasize that transparency and clear reporting of sustainability initiatives further increase consumer trust. Meanwhile Kang and Sung (2022) highlight that balanced and factual language is crucial in reducing consumer skepticism and increasing credibility.

In contrast, excessive claims, often referred to as greenwashing, involve overstating or misrepresenting a brand's environmental benefits through certifications, eco-labels, or vague terminology (Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković 2022; Steenis et al. 2023). Such practices can create misleading perceptions by emphasizing small sustainable efforts while neglecting

broader environmental impacts (e.g., focusing on packaging sustainability rather than product content; Steenis et al. 2023). A prominent example is *H&M's Conscious Collection*, which has been criticized for emphasizing specific green aspects while overlooking the wider environmental impacts of its fast fashion model. Such cases weaken consumer trust, foster skepticism toward sustainability claims, and reduce confidence in individual brands and the broader sustainability movement. This growing distrust presents a significant challenge for brands to communicate genuine efforts and rebuild trust effectively (Chan 2024). Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković (2022) confirm that such misleading claims contribute to green fatigue, a phenomenon in which consumers become desensitized or skeptical due to repeated exposure to exaggerated or false claims. This, in turn, reduces consumer responsiveness to genuine sustainability efforts (Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković 2022).

Authenticity in luxury branding is a cornerstone of sustainability communication. Authentic messaging that aligns sustainability claims with demonstrable practices significantly impacts consumer perception and loyalty (Cheah, Shimul, and Teah 2022; Kaur et al. 2024). Kaur et al. (2024) emphasize that authentic communication increases perceived brand integrity and reduces the risk of perceived hypocrisy when brands fail to meet the high standards they claim. Cheah, Shimul, and Teah (2022) further note that authenticity fosters a sense of exclusivity and quality that strongly appeals to luxury consumers.

The way sustainability information is framed, whether it emphasizes environmental benefits, long-term resource conservation, or ethical practices, affects how consumers respond and perceive the brand (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau 2020). Positive framing highlights genuine achievements, aligns well with luxury brand values, and increases consumer loyalty (Kaur et al. 2024). Kang and Sung (2022) underscore the importance of consistency in framing to mitigate skepticism and prevent perceptions of greenwashing.

Sustainability marketing in the luxury sector has been widely discussed, with a

particular focus on the importance of transparency, authenticity, and aligning sustainability claims with brand values. However, a critical yet underexplored dimension of this topic is the intensity of sustainability claims, ranging from moderate, factual messages to more ambitious, sweeping statements. While luxury consumers are known to value authenticity and a seamless alignment between brand values and sustainability messaging, there is limited research examining how the tone and intensity of these claims influence consumer trust and purchase intent.

This paper seeks to address this gap by examining the effects of different intensities of sustainability claims, moderate, well-reasoned messages versus exaggerated or overly ambitious claims, on consumer perceptions and behavior in the luxury fashion sector. By exploring these dynamics, this study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of effective sustainability communication strategies and provide actionable insights for both academics and practitioners. Such insights are critical in helping luxury brands strike the right balance between bold sustainability messaging and maintaining credibility and trust in an increasingly skeptical marketplace.

To address this gap, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₄: Consumers perceive excessive sustainability claims in luxury marketing as negative, while moderate sustainability messaging fosters a more positive perception and increases purchase intent.

5.3 Methodology

In the fourth section of the study, Hypothesis 4 was tested using a framing experiment with a between-subjects design to evaluate how sustainability claim intensity influences perceived authenticity and purchase intention. This study aimed to test whether moderate or excessive sustainability claims affect consumer attitudes differently, with perceived

authenticity as a mediator to explore how trust in the claims might shape responses.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups by Qualtrics to ensure unbiased distribution, with each group receiving a product description that varied in the intensity of sustainability claims. The price was set identically at €130 for both descriptions, in line with the premium pricing typical of brands such as *Levi's* and controlled to avoid influencing participants' responses based on cost.

In the control group, participants viewed a product description for a pair of jeans with moderate sustainability claims. The description stated: "Crafted from a durable cotton blend, these jeans are designed for comfort and longevity, making them a conscious choice for those who value quality and style. With attention to sustainable practices, these jeans are an ideal choice for those looking for a responsible, premium wardrobe staple." This wording, particularly the use of "probably," was included to create a more restrained and cautious endorsement of sustainability, aiming to reflect authenticity without overstating the environmental benefits. Specific details about the material composition and manufacturing process reinforced this moderate sustainability message without overwhelming the consumer. The main fabric was described as an organic cotton blend (70% organic cotton, 30% regular cotton), with partially recycled polyester in the lining and low-impact, environmentally friendly dyes. The jeans were labelled as made in the European Union (EU) under fair labor conditions, with free standard shipping included. By presenting sustainability as a secondary message, this description aimed to test whether subtle environmental claims could drive positive perceptions and purchase intent through authenticity.

Participants in the test group were shown a product description that emphasized sustainability claims to a greater extent. This description stated: "Made entirely from recyclable materials, these jeans are 100% eco-friendly and carbon-neutral, crafted to retain their perfect fit and rich color through countless wears and washes. Produced according to the highest sustainability

standards, these jeans are designed for eco-conscious consumers who prioritize sustainability and quality.” Here, the phrase “the best sustainable choice” was used to convey a stronger, more assertive claim. Additional details reinforced this strong environmental positioning, specifying that the main fabric is made from 100% recyclable materials, with a lining made from fully recycled polyester and colored with non-toxic, environmentally friendly dyes. The jeans were described as made in the EU under strict environmental and ethical labor standards, with free standard shipping included. The purpose of this description is to assess whether an overtly sustainable framework might, as hypothesized, reduce perceived authenticity, and thereby negatively impact consumer perceptions.

Following the presentation of the product descriptions, participants in both groups completed an identical set of survey questions to measure the dependent variables. A 7-point Likert scale was used to capture subtle differences in attitudes with high sensitivity. Purchase intention was assessed with the question “How likely are you to purchase this product?” (1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely), targeting behavioral response to sustainability claims. To assess the impact of sustainability claims on product perception, participants responded, “To what extent did the sustainability claims in the product description influence your overall impression of the jeans?” (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Finally, perceived authenticity was measured by asking, “How authentic do you find the sustainability claims in this product description?” (1 = not at all authentic, 7 = very authentic) to capture trust in the claims, a key factor in luxury contexts. The entire survey flow and questionnaire are provided in Appendix A.

5.4 Results

The data set contained 180 valid responses, divided randomly into a control group (n = 91, 50.6%) and a test group (n = 89, 49.4%). Participants in the control group reported a slightly higher purchase intention (M = 5.08, SD = 1.50) compared to the test group (M = 4.87,

SD = 1.83). Similarly, perceived authenticity was rated slightly higher in the control group (M = 4.07, SD = 1.38) than in the test group (M = 3.83, SD = 1.55; Appendix F.1). While these differences are minor (mean differences of 0.21 and 0.24), they suggest that excessive sustainability claims may slightly reduce both purchase intent and perceived authenticity.

Independent samples t-tests were performed to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant or simply due to random variation (Appendix F.2). Starting with purchase intention, the t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the groups ($t[178] = 0.850$, $p = .396$), despite slightly higher scores in the control group. Similarly, there was no significant difference between groups for the influence of sustainability claims ($t[178] = -0.656$, $p = .513$). Finally, perceived authenticity showed slightly higher scores in the control group, but this difference was also not statistically significant ($t[178] = 1.074$, $p = .284$). Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of equality of variances was met for sustainability claims ($p = .656$) and perceived authenticity ($p = .179$). However, the assumption was slightly violated for purchase intention ($p = .049$). As a result, this t-test was adjusted to account for unequal variances (Field 2024). Overall, these results indicate no significant differences between the control and test group on all three variables examined.

Given the lack of significant differences observed in the independent samples t-tests, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to further explore potential group differences across the three dependent variables. There are two primary approaches to analyzing group differences in this context: categorizing responses into discrete groups or examining them across the entire Likert scale range. For this study, the one-way ANOVA was chosen to capture subtle effects that binary or aggregated categories might overlook, providing a more nuanced understanding. ANOVA results revealed no significant differences between the control and test groups on purchase intention ($F[1,178] = 0.72$, $p = .396$), the influence of sustainability claims ($F[1,178]$

= 0.43, $p = .513$), or perceived authenticity ($F[1,178] = 1.15$, $p = .284$). Effect sizes (η^2) were minimal, indicating that group membership explained only a small portion of the variance in purchase intention ($\eta^2 = .004$), the influence of sustainability claims ($\eta^2 = .002$), and perceived authenticity ($\eta^2 = .006$, [Cohen 2013; Appendix F.3](#)). These results are consistent with those of the independent samples t-tests, confirming the absence of significant group effects.

To further explore potential relationships within the data, a mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes and Little 2022). This analysis assessed whether perceived authenticity mediated the relationship between sustainability message type (control vs. test) and purchase intention.

The mediation analysis revealed that perceived authenticity was positively associated with purchase intention ($b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of perceived authenticity led to a greater likelihood of purchase. However, the type of sustainability message (control vs. test) did not have a significant direct effect on purchase intention ($b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .644$). Similarly, the indirect effect of sustainability message type on purchase intention through perceived authenticity was not significant (indirect effect = -0.11 , 95% CI $[-0.327, 0.086]$; [Appendix F.4](#)). These results suggest that perceived authenticity is an important predictor of purchase intention. However, the type of sustainability message does not have a significant impact, either directly or indirectly.

5.5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze how the intensity of sustainability claims in the luxury fashion sector, ranging from moderate to excessive, affects consumer perceptions, specifically perceived authenticity, and purchase intention. The results showed no significant differences between moderate and excessive claims in their influence on purchase intention or perceived authenticity. However, perceived authenticity emerged as a key predictor of purchase intention, underscoring its central role in shaping consumer behavior in this context.

Contrary to initial expectations, the results suggest that the tone or intensity of sustainability claims alone is not necessarily important to luxury consumers. This may be because these consumers tend to prioritize attributes such as quality, exclusivity, and craftsmanship over the specific wording or ambition of sustainability claims. As long as the claims are consistent with broader expectations of luxury values, their intensity may have a limited impact. Another explanation lies in the controlled nature of the experiment, where sustainability claims were presented in isolation from other brand elements such as reputation, advertising, or past sustainability initiatives. In real-world scenarios, however, consumers are likely to evaluate such claims in the broader context of a brand's identity and reputation. For example, sustainability claims made by a brand with a strong history of transparency may be perceived as more credible, regardless of their intensity. In contrast, a less established brand may face greater skepticism even with moderate messaging. Despite this, the findings highlight the critical role of authenticity in driving purchase intent. Consumers appear to focus less on whether claims are moderate or excessive and more on the perceived sincerity and credibility of the message. This suggests that luxury consumers integrate sustainability claims into a holistic product assessment, judging how well these claims align with core values such as craftsmanship and exclusivity. To resonate with this audience, brands need to ensure that their sustainability messaging aligns with the broader luxury narrative and reinforces its perceived authenticity and credibility.

The results of this study contribute to the ongoing debate about the effectiveness of sustainability claims in luxury markets and challenge the broad assumption that excessive claims inherently undermine consumer trust. Previous studies, such as Mandarić et al. (2022) and Steenis et al. (2023), indicate that overstatement often leads to skepticism. However, in line with Janssen, Vanhamme, and Leblanc (2017), the results highlight that authenticity, rather than claim intensity, is a stronger determinant of trust and purchase intention. This

reinforces the notion that luxury consumers prioritize the credibility and alignment of sustainability messages with brand values rather than the tone or ambition of such claims. In addition, the findings extend Cheah, Shimul, and Teah's (2022) insights into the importance of integrating sustainability messages into a holistic narrative in which traditional core attributes play a central role. By showing that authenticity mediates the relationship between sustainability claims and purchase intention, this study adds further depth to the theoretical discourse, suggesting that luxury consumers evaluate sustainability as part of a broader brand identity rather than an isolated feature. This is consistent with Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau's (2020) assertion that consumer perceptions of luxury and sustainability are not inherently contradictory but require strategic framing to emphasize compatibility. This study provides a clear contribution to the debate on greenwashing, where exaggerated claims are often considered harmful (Steenis et al. 2023). However, the findings suggest that such claims may be interpreted differently in luxury markets, especially when supported by a strong brand narrative that builds trust and credibility. This perspective highlights that consumer responses to greenwashing can vary significantly across market segments, opening avenues for further research on how luxury brands can effectively address this challenge.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results of this study. First, the absence of a specific brand context, coupled with the focus on short-term consumer responses, limits the scope of the findings. In practice, consumers evaluate sustainability claims within a broader narrative influenced by brand reputation and long-term consistency. Trust and authenticity often develop over time, and this study does not capture how repeated interactions with sustainability messages might shape lasting trust or purchase behavior. Second, the study's focus on a single product category limits the generalizability of its findings. Responses to sustainability claims may differ across luxury segments, such as fashion accessories or automobiles, where consumers' associations with authenticity and sustainability

vary significantly. Finally, a methodological limitation lies in the study's ability to explain only a limited portion of the variance in consumer behavior. This suggests that additional decision influences such as personal values or prior sustainability attitudes, were not captured, potentially limiting the explanatory power of results.

While these limitations highlight the controlled nature of this study, they also underscore its strengths in isolating key variables and avoiding bias. By excluding a specific brand context, the study eliminated the confounding influence of brand reputation and provided a neutral perspective on consumer responses to sustainability claims.

5.6 Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the impact of sustainability claim intensity, moderate versus excessive, on perceived authenticity and purchase intention in the luxury fashion sector. Contrary to our hypothesis that excessive claims would negatively affect consumer perceptions compared to moderate claims, the results showed no significant differences. Instead, they showed that the intensity of sustainability claims alone did not significantly influence perceived authenticity or purchase intention. However, perceived authenticity emerged as the most critical factor influencing purchase decisions, underscoring its central role in consumer trust and behavior.

These findings refine the understanding of sustainability communication in the luxury sector by challenging the assumption that exaggerated claims inherently undermine consumer trust. Instead, they emphasize that consumers evaluate sustainability messages as part of a broader narrative, considering their alignment with overall brand credibility and values. This suggests that authenticity, rather than the tone or ambition of claims, is what luxury consumers prioritize. For brands, this finding underscores the need to embed authenticity into their sustainability strategies to resonate effectively with their audiences.

Future research could build on these findings by incorporating specific brand contexts into experimental designs. While this study intentionally excluded brand-specific elements to maintain neutrality, examining how established and emerging luxury brands influence consumer perceptions could provide deeper insights. In addition, exploring these dynamics at different levels of the luxury market could reveal how brand reputation and positioning interact with sustainability messaging to shape consumer trust and decision-making.

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 2024).

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 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 1 - 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 2 - 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

Qualtrics Survey Flow
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
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

Qualtrics Survey Flow	
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
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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>		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative 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 C – Results Study 4

Appendix C.1 Study 4: Descriptive Statistics

Appendix C.1.1 – Frequency Statistics for Experimental Condition

Groups

	Valid		Total
	0	1	
Frequency	91	89	180
Percent	50.6	49.4	100.0
Valid Percent	50.6	49.4	100.0
Cumulative Percent	50.6	100.0	

Table 77 – Study 4: Frequency Statistics for Experimental Condition (Control vs. Test Group)

Appendix C.1.2 – Descriptive Statistics for Purchase Intent

Descriptive Statistics^a

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	91	1	7	5.08	1.500
Valid N (listwise)	91				

a. Groups = 0

Table 78 – Study 4: Descriptive Statistics for Purchase Intent (Control Group)

Descriptive Statistics^a

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	89	1	7	4.87	1.829
Valid N (listwise)	89				

a. Groups = 1

Table 79 – Study 4: Descriptive Statistics for Purchase Intent (Test Group)

Appendix C.1.3 – Descriptive Statistics for Influence of Sustainability Claims

Descriptive Statistics^a

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q2	91	1	7	4.35	1.760
Valid N (listwise)	91				

a. Groups = 0

Table 80 – Study 4: Descriptive Statistics for Influence of Sustainability Claims (Control Group)

Descriptive Statistics^a

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q2	89	1	7	4.53	1.847
Valid N (listwise)	89				

a. Groups = 1

Table 81 – Study 4: Descriptive Statistics for Influence of Sustainability Claims (Test Group)

Appendix C.1.4 – Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Authenticity*Descriptive Statistics^a*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q3	91	1	7	4.07	1.381
	91				

a. Groups = 0

Table 82 – Study 4: Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Authenticity (Control Group)

Descriptive Statistics^a

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q3	89	1	7	3.83	1.547
	89				

a. Groups = 1

Table 83 – Study 4: Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Authenticity (Test Group)

Appendix C.2 Study 4: Independent Samples t-Test and Variance Assumptions*Group Statistics*

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q1	0	91	5.08	1.500	.157
	1	89	4.87	1.829	.194
Q2	0	91	4.35	1.760	.184
	1	89	4.53	1.847	.196
Q3	0	91	4.07	1.381	.145
	1	89	3.83	1.547	.164

Table 84 – Study 4: Group statistics for independent samples t-test for Purchase Intent, Influence of Sustainability Claims and Perceived Authenticity

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One- Sided p	Two- Sided p			Lower	Upper
Q1	Equal variances assumed	3.920	.049	.850	178	.198	.396	.212	.249	-.280	.703
	Equal variances not assumed			.848	169.942	.199	.397	.212	.250	-.281	.704
Q2	Equal variances assumed	.199	.656	-.656	178	.256	.513	-.176	.269	-.707	.354
	Equal variances not assumed			-.656	177.118	.256	.513	-.176	.269	-.707	.354
Q3	Equal variances assumed	1.820	.179	1.074	178	.142	.284	.234	.218	-.197	.665
	Equal variances not assumed			1.072	174.812	.143	.285	.234	.219	-.197	.666

Table 85 – Study 4: Group Differences with independent samples t-test for Purchase Intent, Influence of Sustainability Claims and Perceived Authenticity

Appendix C.3 Study 4: One-Way ANOVA

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q1	Between Groups	2.018	1	2.018	.723	.396
	Within Groups	496.844	178	2.791		
	Total	498.861	179			
Q2	Between Groups	1.401	1	1.401	.431	.513
	Within Groups	578.927	178	3.252		
	Total	580.328	179			
Q3	Between Groups	2.474	1	2.474	1.152	.284
	Within Groups	382.076	178	2.146		
	Total	384.550	179			

Table 86 – Study 4: Group Differences with one-way ANOVA (Purchase Intent, Influence of Sustainability Claims, Perceived Authenticity) – ANOVA

ANOVA Effect Sizes^{a,b}

		Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Q1	Eta-squared	.004	.000	.042
	Epsilon-squared	-.002	-.006	.037
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	-.002	-.006	.036
	Omega-squared Random-effect	-.002	-.006	.036
Q2	Eta-squared	.002	.000	.036
	Epsilon-squared	-.003	-.006	.031
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	-.003	-.006	.031
	Omega-squared Random-effect	-.003	-.006	.031
Q3	Eta-squared	.006	.000	.049
	Epsilon-squared	.001	-.006	.043
	Omega-squared Fixed-effect	.001	-.006	.043
	Omega-squared Random-effect	.001	-.006	.043

a. Eta-squared and Epsilon-squared are estimated based on the fixed-effect model.

b. Negative but less biased estimates are retained, not rounded to zero.

Table 87 – Study 4: Group Differences with one-way ANOVA (Purchase Intent, Influence of Sustainability Claims, Perceived Authenticity) - ANOVA Effect Sizes

Appendix C.4 Study 4: PROCESS Model 4 – Mediator Analysis (Purchase Intent*Authenticity)

Model Summary: Authenticity

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.0802	.0064	2.1465	1.1524	1.000	178.000	.2845

Table 88 – Study 4: Mediator Analysis with PROCESS Model 4 (Sustainability Claim Intensity*Authenticity) - Model Summary

Model Summary: Purchase Intent

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.3980	.1584	2.3720	16.6549	2.000	177.000	.0000

Table 89 – Study 4: Mediator Analysis with PROCESS Model 4 (Sustainability Claim Intensity*Purchase Intent) - Model Summary

Direct Effect of Sustainability Claim Intensity on Purchase Intention

Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-.1065	.2303	-.4623	.6444	-.5611	.3481

Table 90 – Study 4: Mediator Analysis with PROCESS Model 4 (Sustainability Claim Intensity*Purchase Intent) – Direct Effect

Indirect Effect(s) of Sustainability Claim Intensity on Purchase Intention

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Q3	-.1053	.1028	-.3271	.0857

Table 91 – Study 4: Mediator Analysis with PROCESS Model 4 (Sustainability Claim Intensity*Purchase Intent) – Indirect Effect