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# MDDDM

Master's Degree Program in  
**Data-Driven Marketing**

**Sustainable Luxury Marketing: The mediating roles of Pride and  
Consumer Brand Engagement in Green Luxury Branding**

*A study case on Gucci.*

Maria Khalil

Master Thesis

presented as partial requirement for obtaining a master's degree in data-driven Marketing

**NOVA Information Management School**  
**Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação**

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Master Thesis presented as partial requirement for obtaining the master's degree in data-driven Marketing, with a specialization in Marketing Intelligence.

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July, 2024

## **STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY**

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism, any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

*Lisbon, 15/6/2024*

## DEDICATION

This is for everyone who values life.

This one is for those who believe that there is some good in this world, and it is worth fighting for.

This one is for myself.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Nova IMS and its esteemed professors and teachers; I have learned a great deal. Special thanks to Prof. Teodora for her encouragement regarding the thesis subject, and to Mariana Carrilho for her time and unwavering support throughout the process. I am particularly grateful to Portugal for providing a safe and welcoming environment.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my mother for always believing in me, for Angy my backbone, for my uncles, for all my friends especially Sarah, and for Damien, my love.

And to you, Papa. I wish you were here.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates consumer behavior towards sustainable and traditional luxury products employing Gucci as a case study among American women. It examines the impact of exposure, choice, age, consumer brand engagement, and pride-related emotions on consumer efficacy towards environmentalism and willingness to pay premium for sustainable products. Findings reveal that individuals opting for sustainable Gucci bag exhibit higher levels of sustainable consumerism. When presented with two choices, traditional and sustainable, participants showed a higher preference for the sustainable option and exhibited greater consumer efficacy in environmentalism, unlike when exposed to only one choice. This underscores the importance of choice architecture in implementation. Age negatively impacts sustainable consumption for people who adopt traditional consumption, with more robust effects observed in older adults. However, income did not moderate the relationship between the preference for traditional and sustainable products, and participants' willingness to pay premium. Pride-related emotions (such as authentic and hubristic pride) as well as Consumer Brand Engagement were found not to mediate the relationship between exposure and sustainable consumerism, prompting further exploration into emotions like guilt or shame in future research. Lastly, practical implications were suggested for Gucci to emphasize their green efforts in their communication and marketing strategies.

## KEYWORDS

Sustainability; Luxury; Pride; Consumer Brand Engagement.

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>RM</b>	Relationship Marketing
<b>CE</b>	Consumer Engagement
<b>CBE</b>	Consumer Brand Engagement
<b>EWOM</b>	Electronic Word of Mouth
<b>SUSCONS</b>	Sustainable Consumerism
<b>AUTH</b>	Authentic Pride
<b>HUB</b>	Hubristic Pride
<b>PREF</b>	Preference

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Global warming is occurring at an unprecedented rate not seen in the last 10,000 years (NASA, 2022). This increase is largely attributed to the rising concentration of greenhouse gases, including CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from diverse sources, such as individual activities and industrial processes. In 2015 alone, the wealthiest 10% of the global population emitted as much carbon dioxide as the poorest 50% (Karthi, 2020). Despite institutional efforts to mitigate these impacts, current trajectories suggest that global temperatures may surpass the goals set by the Paris Agreement (UN Environment Programme, 2023). In the past, several tools were used to implement sustainable consumption. The Theory of Planned Behavior has been instrumental in guiding efforts to encourage behaviors like recycling and reducing energy consumption (Ajzen, 2011). Nevertheless, in the luxury sector that already possess a unique potential for sustainability due to their longer lifespan compared to lower-end products (Sun et al., 2021), relying solely on its extrinsic factor may not be enough to address the complex challenges of environmental impact and consumer behavior. Greenwashing and part of eco-labeling have been primarily abused by fast fashion brands and some high end luxury brands. For instance, in 2021, Louis Vuitton faced criticism for promoting sustainability without substantial evidence to support many of its claims. Even though Braga (2019) concluded that consumers are willing to take the risk of greenwashing when they believe in the product (Braga Junior et al., 2019), more than a quarter of millennials and Gen Zs reported that certain businesses' impact on the environment has influenced their buying decisions (Deloitte, 2020). Knowing that millennials and Gen Z combined are forecasted to represent almost 50% of the global luxury market by 2025 (Forbes, 2015), a phenomenon known as the democratization of luxury, navigating through their preferences and behaviors is vital for brand survival. As social media has established itself as a low-barrier platform for message sharing, prevailing the strong effect of electronic word of mouth (Jansen et al., 2009) alongside with the support of boycott movements (Makarem & Jae, 2016) underlying, more than ever, the concept that value is co-created (Brodie et al., 2011). Amidst these challenges, understanding and promoting environmentally friendly behaviors remain crucial especially among those who have the greatest impact.

Accentuated by the pandemic and the desire to be heard, most people, especially millennials and Gen Z have increased their social media consumption over the years. Today,

social media emerged itself as the new hybrid element of the promotion mix (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) not only enabling companies to engage with their audience in non-traditional way but also facilitating direct consumer-to-consumer communication, thus, transforming how information and opinions about brands are shared and consumed. According to research by Marwick & Boyd (2011), 20% of tweets express sentiments while 80% mention brands without specific sentiments (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), underscoring social media's pivotal role as a platform for both emotional expression and information-seeking function. This dual role of social media as a promotional tool and a platform for peer-to-peer interaction underscores its significant impact on contemporary marketing strategies.

“The Silk Road is the world's first information superhighway”. This once-lengthy East-West trading journey is now condensed to a simple click. In 1920, the volume of global trade was approximately 30 billion dollars. By 2021, this volume skyrocketed significantly to 27.5 trillion dollars (UNCTAD, 2022). This increase is approximately at 91,566% with a population increase of only 324%. With this rapid development and globalization, access to resources and information is seamless, in real-time, and without any disruptions (Mosley & Friedman, 2006). This alters the landscape of luxury consumption as we witness the birth of democratization of luxury. This exponential growth comes at the cost of nature. The Fashion industry alone accounts for around 10% of global carbon emissions (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2018), the same amount of the entire economies of France, Germany and the UK combined (McKinsey & Company & Global Fashion Agenda, 2020). While Fashion has perennially functioned as a marker of belonging, identity, and culture, evolving alongside societal shifts (Briggs, 2001), luxury that once perceived as static, is now understood as a relative and progressive concept, with items reflecting this evolution over time (M. Y. Kang & Bae, 2016).

This evolution is palpable in brands like Gucci, which have adapted and transformed their strategies over the years while facing numerous challenges and changes. Founded by Guccio Gucci in Florence circa 1921, the brand quickly established a reputation for high-quality craftsmanship and sophisticated design. Following its acquisition by Kering in 2004, the brand experienced significant growth and innovation under the leadership of two distinctive creative directors. Tom Ford (1994-2004) revitalized Gucci with his bold, glamorous vision. Gucci's sales

soared from 230 million euros in 1994 to almost 3 billion euros in 2003 (Suzy Menkes, 2004). At a later stage and with Gucci's expansion to Chinese markets, Alessandro Michele creative director (2002-2022) emphasized inclusivity and diversity, reflecting the progressive and dynamic nature of modern luxury. Gucci's revenues doubled from 3.9 billion euros in 2015 to 9.63 billion euros in 2019 (Armitage & Roberts, 2019). Today, Kering the company is announcing a decline of 40% sales in Gucci for the next Q4 2024 (Kering, 2024). With the newly appointed Sabato de Sarno as Creative Director, the new 'Ancora' campaign nevertheless encountered a slump in China. The house of Kering that groups Gucci and many high-end brands such as Saint Laurent, McQueen, Bottega Veneta etc. relies heavily on Gucci (50%). The prediction of decline not only reflects bad on the image of the house, but also drives Kering stock price to decline by 10%. While Gucci is one of the luxury leaders in the ESG framework, it has significantly reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 71% in 2022. On another note, the House of Kering has increased its use of certified, recycled, organic, and new-generation fabrics to reduce environmental impacts and lessen reliance on new resources (Kering, 2023). Gucci specifically emphasizes monofibres in their production, using significantly fewer synthetic fibres compared to Louis Vuitton—and a stark contrast to fast-fashion retailers like Boohoo, where 97% of male jackets contain synthetics, in contrast to just 3% at Gucci (Changing Markets Foundation, 2021) whereas synthetic fibres are criticized for their environmental impacts obtained from non-renewable resources and the depletion of fossil fuels. On Instagram, Gucci's content consistently aligns with a brand identity that is eclectic, modern, romantic, exclusive, and influential (Carcavilla Puey & Aguirre Jiménez, 2022). Improving communication of its sustainability efforts could not only bolster Gucci's brand image but also position it as a leader in sustainable growth, thereby potentially averting any downturn. This proactive approach aligns with consumer expectations for transparency and environmental responsibility in luxury brands, fostering trust and loyalty among sustainability-minded customers.

Prestige plays a crucial role in cultural transmission, closely tied to the authentic facet of pride (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). Therefore, effectively communicating our efforts to future generations—to embrace sustainability and care for our planet—is essential. As Jane Goodall (2022) reminds us, “our responsibility as a species is not only to evolve, but we are also responsible for the other forms of life that we don't pay attention to, whose continued

existence is threatened by the thoughtless behavior of our own human species". "While time is always happening, learning never stops, and beliefs only be changed through repeated actions in time" (Douglass C. North, 2003), thus "behavior is learned" (Margaret Mead, 1980), and human values are transmitted through generations. Our actions today shape the values we pass down tomorrow.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT**

The historical evolution of marketing paradigms, from the 4Ps model to Marketing 4.0, underscores a shift towards relationship-oriented approaches. This transition is marked by a recognition of the significance of services, relationships, and customer engagement in marketing strategies. Time, relationships, and learning shape marketing dynamics. Furthermore, the advent of Marketing 4.0 reflects a response to the digital age, emphasizing brand interaction and customer co-creation of value in product development. As consumer brand engagement is multi-dimensional, affection, which is associated with emotions, plays a dominant factor in purchase decision-making. Knowing that, it is associated with the irrational fast, and intuitive system 1 as of Kahneman (2012). Thus, luxury products conclude high involvement from consumers.

#### **2.1.1. THE SHIFT FROM 4Ps TO SERVICE MARKETING**

Three decades ago, the first-ever explored consumer brand theory is built on the existing perspective of relationships between services and consumers called: "Relationship Marketing"; RM (Gummesson, 1994). Gummesson analogized marketing to a living organism, emphasizing its intrinsic relationships, networks, and interactions. This stands in large contrast to conventional marketing frameworks like the 4Ps model. While the 4P model focuses on Product, Price, Promotion, and Place; RM focuses on the vital need to acknowledge the significant role of relationships within networks and how interactions proliferate with the emergence of the latest trends, thus amplifying the dynamic effect of time in the marketing model. After World War 2, Western countries continued the economic recovery while numerous nations gained independence from colonial rule between 1940-1960, a surge in consumerism characterized by a higher quality of life and higher spending power, especially in the United States where advertising emerged with the prevalence of TV in households. In fact, the 4Ps marketing model played a huge part in consumerism like Coca-Cola (Foster, 2008).

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producers to consumers” highlighting the broader scope of marketing activities beyond just the exchange of goods but including also services characterized by the “intangibles” (Keller, 2003; Kotler, 2012; Smith & Aaker, 1992). In 1990, two-thirds of industrialized economies were dominated by services. According to Gummesson, for services to proliferate the need for relationships to be established and to mature is essential. And for that to happen is the emergence of loyalty as a cornerstone in nurturing. The construction of it necessitates the inclusion of time as an essential factor in the equation. In fact, statistics show that acquiring a new customer can cost five to ten times more than retaining an existing one. Given an environment with rife competition, globalization, deregulation, innovation, and technology, a myopic focus on short-term gains will eventually lead to disaster as Gummesson cites, underscoring the imperative for collaborative strategies (Gummesson, 1994). As the existence of competition breeds insecurity, the focus on creating relationships to breed security meanwhile the need for institutions to implement new regulations and laws to facilitate better cooperation among businesses. As this cycle perpetuates, it characterizes the market as an ever-evolving dynamic force, as illustrated in Figure 1.

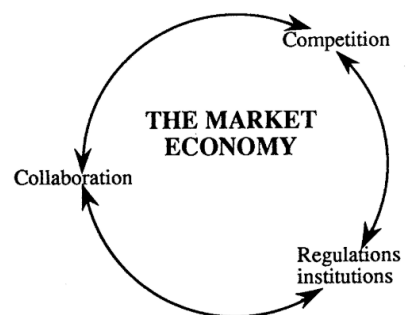


Figure 1- “The three forces of the market economy”, Source: Gummesson 1994 - “Broadening and Specifying Relationship Marketing”.

Douglass C. North (1993) emphasized the crucial role of time in shaping the evolution of institutions while relating decision-making to the learning process. “The beliefs held by individuals, groups, and societies, which influence decision-making, result from a continuous learning process over time. This learning is not confined to an individual's lifespan or a single

generation but encompasses the cumulative knowledge acquired by individuals, groups, and societies across generations, perpetuated through cultural transmission” (North, 2005).

### **2.1.2. CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT**

At the beginning of the 21st century, the New Dominant Logic for Marketing is further explored; “a more comprehensive and inclusive dominant logic is needed, one that integrates both goods and services” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Here, Marketing has shifted its focus from primarily selling physical products through individual transactions to prioritizing the intangible aspects of services, emphasizing the exchange process, and building relationships with customers. Nine foundational premises depict the marketing relationship by the customer's interactivity and co-creativity of value (Lusch et al., 2007). Revisited by Vargo and Lusch in 2009, the “New Service dominant logic service” (Vargo & Akaka, 2009) updates the original premises while three theories out of ten will be the founding pillars of the ‘Consumer Engagement’ concept (Brodie et al., 2011).

The concept of consumer engagement is deeply rooted in the idea of value co-creation, noting that the evolving understanding of “engagement” as a topic of research has drastically increased at the beginning of the 21st-century research in various fields of studies not only related to marketing. Even though researchers limited the scope of engagement under one level either emotional, cognitive, or behavioral; it concluded that this term is rich enough to possess a scope of multi-dimensionality rather than one-dimensionality and is defined by five key propositions (Brodie et al., 2011). In a nutshell, CE is a psychological state resulting from interactive experiences between customers and focal agents or objects within service relationships. It underscores the importance of co-created experiences. CE prioritizes dynamic interactions that facilitate value co-creation between customers and firms. It exists within a network of relational exchange, interconnected with concepts like involvement and participation, influenced by CE dynamics over time. CE is multidimensional, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. It varies under different situational conditions, leading to diverse levels and complexities of engagement over time. Ultimately, CE is individual and context-dependent, shaped by specific interactive experiences.

In the later 3 years, a Consumer Brand Engagement model is further developed (Figure 2) (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Key findings from research suggest that consumer brand 'involvement' plays a role as a precursor or antecedent to CBE. Additionally, outcomes or consequences of CBE include increased consumer 'self-brand connection' and greater 'brand usage intent'. CBE encompasses both utilitarian (functional) and hedonic (emotional) aspects of the brand, reflecting consumers' holistic perceptions and experiences with the brand. In summary, the model illustrates how consumers engage with brands across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, influenced by their involvement and resulting in stronger connections and intentions to use the brand.

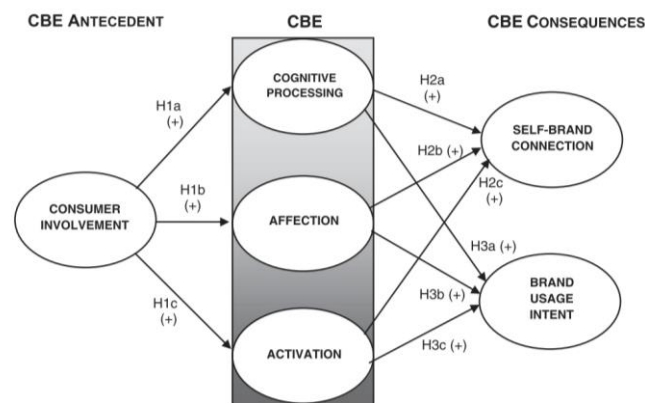


Figure 2- “The Consumer Brand Engagement Model”, Source Hollebeek 2014 from “Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation”

The statement also suggests that among affection, brand usage intent, and self-brand connection, it is the affection that significantly impacts brand usage intent and the establishment of a self-brand connection (Hollebeek et al., 2014), Park describes affection as “the evoking of positive feelings that consumers have towards a brand to the extent of forming a personal connection with that brand” (Park et al., 2006).

In contrast, through groundbreaking work in the field of behavioral economics and decision-making, Kahneman (2012) explored the two systems of thinking that drive human judgment and decision-making (Kahneman, 2012). Kahneman's work suggests that emotions play a significant role in human decision-making, affecting both automatic, intuitive responses (System 1) and deliberate, analytical reasoning (System 2). “Emotions such as fear, affection,

and hatred explain most of the occasions on which people depart from rationality.” Similarly, anchoring bias exemplifies how initial information (the anchor) can disproportionately influence decisions, often through the intuitive, automatic processes of System 1. This bias, alongside emotional influences, highlights the complex interplay between emotion and cognitive biases in human decision-making (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

The distinction between "engaging" and "non-engaging" brands highlights emotional engagement, particularly through affection. It is distinguished that heuristic brands such as luxurious brands, evoke stronger usage intent and self-brand connections compared to those perceived as utilitarian or price-driven. Indeed, luxurious brands have successfully established a strong emotional connection and loyalty with their customers (Wiedmann et al., 2009). This attachment can vary in terms of strength with stronger positive feelings toward brands generating greater consumer loyalty (Fournier, 1998) regardless of the rationale behind it. This recognition of varying levels of attachment aligns well with the widespread human inclination to anthropomorphize objects. As consumers universally engage in anthropomorphizing inanimate objects, including brands, they consistently attribute personality traits to them (Aaker, 1997). Brands are often perceived as human-like characters, a concept discussed by Levy (1985) in his exploration of brands as symbolic entities in consumer psychology (“Brands, Consumers, Symbols, & Research: Sidney J. Levy on Marketing,” 2000).

### **2.1.3. MARKETING 4.0 AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Marketing 4.0 was first introduced by Philip Kotler (2016). This concept highlights the imperative dynamic change of the marketing scene. Here, social media, with its low-barrier messaging, has positioned itself as a real-time source of up-to-date information. Twitter, for instance, serves as a platform where 19% of tweets mention brands, highlighting its potential for viral marketing and customer relations. Moreover, while 20% of tweets express sentiments, 80% mention brands without specific sentiments (Jansen et al., 2009). Thus, brands benefit from the presence of social media not only to enhance their sales funnel but also to be present, to give information of their brand or in other terms, to give a morphology to their brand. Using this enhances the intangible side of “services” that we have explained earlier. The explosion of information is driving exponential growth in digital data. From 3.6 zettabytes (ZB) in 2012, internet size soared to 60 ZB in 2021 and is projected to reach 175 ZB

by 2025 (Yin & Kaynak, 2015), propelled by advancements in Artificial Intelligence, Big Data Analytics, Recommendation systems, Machine Learning, and the Internet of Things. Drawing on Joshua Meyrowitz's concept of "Situationism" from 1986, influenced by the prevalence of TVs, Meyrowitz highlights how electronic media blur traditional boundaries between public and private spaces, influencing behavior and societal roles (Asheim, 1986). In today's context, recommender systems (collaborative filtering, content-based filtering, and hybrid approaches) significantly shape individual interactions with their environment, aligning with the user-centric approach of Web 4.0, where users actively shape digital experiences. Marketing 4.0 builds upon Marketing 3.0 by introducing Brand Interaction as a core pillar (Kotler et al., 2019), reflecting the evolving digital and social media landscape and emphasizing adaptation to evolving consumer behaviors and preferences. This shift signifies a move towards a more inclusive, socially driven approach to marketing, distinguishing between a brand's projected identity by the seller and its perceived image by consumers.

## **2.2. LUXURY**

Throughout recorded history, the existence of social classes was ever-present. Dating back to the earliest forms of writing starting with cuneiform (3100-3400 B.C.) and the code of Hammurabi, different laws and punishments were applied differently based on social standing (Johns, 1903). Exclusivity has been a consistent feature across social classes. Particularly, the way people dressed served as a primary indicator, distinguishing nobility from laborers. For example, during the Middle Ages, sumptuary laws meticulously regulated the attire of each social class, dictating not only the garments but also the materials used, which were often exclusive to certain echelons of society (Hunt, 1996). Luxurious materials like silk from the Far East (Tishkin & Orfinskaya, 2023) and the prestigious Tyrian purple derived from the mucus of Murex Sea snails in Tyre, Phoenicia (now Lebanon)(Reinhold, 1970), were only reserved for the elite.

### **2.2.1. LUXURY BRANDING**

Branding enhances desirability by shaping consumer perceptions and emotional connections with products or services (Smith & Aaker, 1992). Through strategic branding, companies create a distinct identity that communicates value, quality, and uniqueness. This identity cultivates aspirational appeal, positioning the brand as desirable among its target

audience. By effectively conveying a compelling story, aesthetic appeal, and consistent messaging, branding fosters consumer trust and loyalty. This messaging varies across cultures. For example, in China, influencers' "humblebragging" about luxury brands tend to evoke more negative attitudes compared to straightforward boasting (Feng et al., 2023). The evolving marketing language or the narrative brand theory through storytelling (Green et al., 2004) can be seen in the case of Champagne in the nineteenth century. Promoted as the 'new' wine not only by the pop of the cork and the effervescence of the bubbles but also by surrounding it and its symbolic connection with Victorian social life, Champagne was not only a 'seal of position' but a prompt to sociability and linguistic virtuosity (Harding, 2023). The ads in newspapers not only promoted the intrinsic factors of Champagne but also its extrinsic aspects such as value, social life, occasion, and product endorsements. Indeed, researchers suggest that emphasizing hedonic appeals over utilitarian ones enhances perceptions of luxury, positively impacting product attitude and purchase intent (Amatulli et al., 2020).

#### **2.2.1.1. RESPONSIBLE BRANDS**

In 2009, Geuens et al. proposed expanding Aaker's model of brand personality with five new dimensions: responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality. Molinillo's 2017 research explored consumer perceptions of "responsible" and "active" brand personalities, revealing that brands perceived as responsible are preferred for building brand trust and loyalty (Molinillo et al., 2017). Based on a survey of Spanish respondents, the study revealed that both responsible and active brand personalities have a positive influence on consumer-brand relationship constructs. While, active brands are linked to increased brand awareness, responsible brands cultivate higher levels of brand trust and loyalty. Interestingly, active brands showed a lower levels of trust and loyalty, attributed partly to cultural factors such as high uncertainty avoidance among Spanish consumers (Hofstede, 2001). This cultural trait enhances the perceived reliability of brand personality dimensions, particularly sincerity and excitement (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013) suggesting that in uncertainty-averse cultures like Spain, sincerity and excitement are critical aspects of brand personality perceived consistently and reliably by consumers.

### **2.2.2. DEMOCRATIZATION OF LUXURY**

Recent shifts in consumer behavior, technology, and cultural attitudes have led to what many scholars describe as the "democratization of luxury" (Truong et al., 2009). This phenomenon involves the broadening accessibility and redefinition of luxury goods and experiences, making them available to a wider audience. The process describes its accessibility to younger consumers and all social classes. In fact, it is forecasted that millennials and Gen Z combined will represent almost 50% of the global luxury market by 2025 (Pamela N. Danziger, 2021) while 35% accounts for luxury consumption are led by Chinese consumers (Company, 2019). Research showed that while Gen Z tourists are more likely to belong to "Environmental" or "Mixed-Bag Environmental" segments (Prayag et al., 2022), "Cancel culture" is prevalent in Gen Z and it is not a fad, that brands feel compelled to make reactive changes to avoid losing customers (Cheselle Jan L. Roldan, 2024) underlying the imperative importance of information sharing on social media. While Gen Y (millennials included) and Gen Z exhibit similar slow-paced communication style, their engaging in information processing is different. Gen Y engage in analyzing information obtained from the Internet more than their peers while Gen Z expect more instantaneous feedback (RASLIE & TING, 2021), underscoring not only the criticality for brands to manage the propagation of misinformation and gossip but also to align their values with those of their consumers.

### **2.3. SUSTAINABILITY**

The adoption of sustainability principles, driven by global agreements like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015), has compelled companies to reassess their practices and integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into their strategies. As part of this shift, companies in sectors such as fashion have increasingly utilized image-based social media platforms like Instagram to communicate their sustainability efforts fashion brands such as Stella McCartney and Patagonia that utilized visual mediums like fashion-centric and photo-centric photos, respectively, to depict sustainability (Milanesi et al., 2022). As the world is going faster, info propagation on social media could reach thousands for outreach in some milliseconds thanks to the recommendation systems. Thus, the pro-creation of value is happening online as well, comments are now called Electronic Words of Mouth e-WOM (Jansen et al., 2009), Hard news is now mostly likely to engage in comments

reading (Krebs & Lischka, 2019), which means more engagement and affection and more of System 1, Kahneman (2012). The shift between acting for the sake of good purpose without sugarcoating means a comprehensive ethical approach to co-production. For example, in 2013, Gucci withdrew a woolen jumper from sale after the angry black lash and the shoppers' threat to boycott the brand for "resembling a blackface" (BBC, The Independent). Talking about how this situation precisely, put in another time frame 400 years ago reflected how society functioned consolidates the dynamic nature of society. The development of stigmas and fads is directly linked to how society evolves as a dynamic entity (Goffman, 1974). Stigmatized-identity threat cues also might prompt anti-consumption including boycotts (Chaney et al., 2019). The world is evolving into a path of liberation, a sexual liberation too. Throughout history, LGBTQ+ individuals have faced discrimination, violence, and marginalization due to their sexual orientation and gender identity until recently in the past century that we started applying legal reforms against the decriminalization of homosexuality. Alessandro Michele's tenure at Gucci marked a significant shift towards greater inclusivity and diversity, promoting gender fluidity, employing more patterns and colors in a romantic way. The focus was on a younger target. Gucci's revenue more than doubled during Michele's tenure. In 2015, the brand's revenue was around €3.9 billion, and by 2019, it had surpassed €9.6 billion (Figure 3).

Global revenue of the Kering Group from 2012 to 2023, b  
(in million euros)

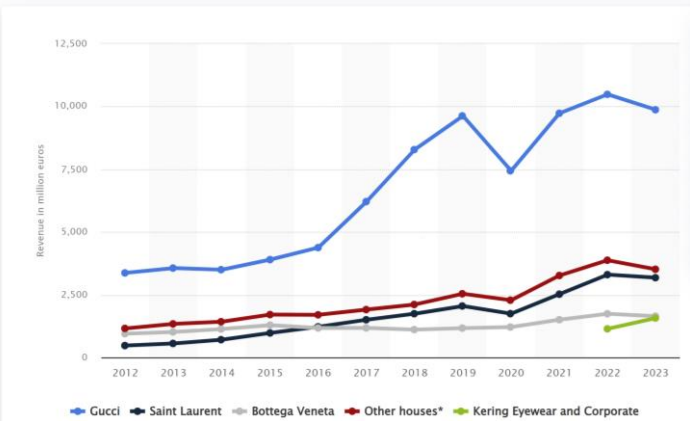


Figure 3– Global Revenue of the Kering Group 2012 to 2023 in million euros, Source: Statista 2024.

Nowadays, Millennials and Gen Z exhibit a higher tendency toward environmentally friendly behaviors than previous generations, driven by the influence of social groups and the bandwagon effect, as noted by LaRoche (2014) and (Wei & Jung, 2017). Some consumers prioritize purchasing products and supporting brands that embody specific ideologies, such as biodegradability, organic sourcing, sustainability, non-genetically modified ingredients, veganism, and cruelty-free practices. These preferences reflect a strong commitment to environmental responsibility and ethical standards. Additionally, consumers actively scrutinize companies' diversity and inclusion policies, social initiatives, political stances, and sustainability efforts. This trend highlights a shift towards conscientious consumerism, where buying decisions are influenced by ethical considerations and alignment with personal values. As a result, businesses are increasingly expected to integrate these factors into their brand strategies to resonate with socially and environmentally aware consumers and maintain competitive relevance (Schmitt et al., 2022).

### **2.3.1. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMERISM**

Sustainable consumerism refers to the practice of making purchasing decisions that minimize environmental impact and promote social responsibility. It involves choosing products and services that are produced and consumed in ways that are mindful of their environmental and social consequences. This concept encourages consumers to prioritize sustainability criteria such as environmental friendliness, ethical sourcing, and fair labor practices when making choices in the marketplace.

Sustainable consumerism hinges on customer efficacy towards environmentalism, which reflects individuals' beliefs in their capacity to influence environmental outcomes through their purchasing decisions. Customer efficacy towards environmentalism, rooted in beliefs about one's ability to impact environmental outcomes through consumption choices, significantly influences willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2011) and Value-Belief-Norm Theory (Stern et al., 1999) provide frameworks suggesting that attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and social norms shape consumer intentions and behaviors related to environmentalism. Empirical studies underscore the positive correlation between environmental efficacy and willingness to pay more: for instance, D'Souza (2006) found that consumers with stronger environmental efficacy were more inclined to pay premiums for organic foods, driven by their sense of

personal responsibility (D'Souza et al., 2006). Similarly, meta-analytical insights highlight the interconnectedness of environmental concern, efficacy beliefs, and willingness to pay, suggesting that bolstering efficacy perceptions can heighten consumers' readiness to invest in sustainable products (Carrington et al., 2014). Trust in institutions and the perceived effectiveness of environmentally friendly products also play pivotal roles in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors.

### **2.3.2. GREENWASHING**

Nevertheless, from a sustainability and CSR point of view, messages highlighting environmental benefits lead consumers to believe the company's green efforts are genuinely for social good, positively influencing their evaluation (E. Y. Kang & Sung, 2022) but also being mindful enough by not overstating sustainability efforts prevent being perceived as greenwashing (Knight et al., 2022) while necessarily highlighting the importance of information criteria are met: 'relevance and accuracy' for sharing behavior on social media. The narrative brand theory, emphasizing storytelling in brand communication, offers insights into how luxury brands engage consumers. Recent research underscores the significance of fluency in luxury brand advertising and the contextual factors affecting emotional connections (Huang et al., 2018). This highlights the intricate interplay between storytelling, branding, and consumer psychology in luxury brand marketing. The link between status motivation and consumers' perceptions of retailer sustainability (both environmental and social) is stronger for those who are more collectivist (Tascioglu et al., 2017).

### **2.4. PRIDE**

Pride is a self-referential emotion. It is an emotion directed at the person experiencing it. Self-referential emotions refer to emotions that are often individual on one hand; whereas associated with personal values, events, memories, and cognitions, but also overly complex on the other hand; in a way, they do require preconditions such as language-based self-representations, and theory of mind (Zinck, 2008). Pride, classified as a positive emotion, unlike guilt and shame, is remembered more vividly by humans. According to Roth et al. (2014), stronger brain activity occurs in the left amygdala—responsible for processing emotional memories—when recalling prideful events rather than shameful memories (Roth et al., 2014). This finding validates the self-positivity bias, which correlates the positive

emotions and pleasure linked to recalling prideful events. The three emotions (pride, guilt, shame) develop rather later in childhood than basic emotions (joy, fear, sadness, disgust, and anger), whereas shame and guilt emerge at the age of 2-3 years old, pride tends to be displayed around that age; the capacity to understand it emerges before experiencing it at 5, until the age of 9-10 where attributing pride as a measurement of child's success fully mature (Kornilaki & Chlouverakis, 2004). This comes in large contrast in what we find in literary work. If we dive into the Oxford English Dictionary, pride is as "a high or overweening opinion of one's qualities, attainments, or estate, which gives rise to a feeling and attitude of superiority over and contempt for others." It is also: (a) Unreasonable self-esteem, pride; the desire to exceed one's proper station; also, the sin of pride, (b) love of praise, vanity; (c) prideful bearing or behavior, arrogance, haughtiness; -- whereas referring to the third definition: 'the first deadly sin'. The definitions presented here emerge as contradictory to what we, as children, have learned. What about pride of achievement and pride of success? Dr. Jessica Tracy, who is spending her lifetime researching Pride and its implications, comes to unveil and further classify two facets of Pride: Authentic Pride and Hubristic Pride.

Psychologists have long debated the multifaceted construct of Pride. Aristotle differentiated between "greatness of soul" (megalopsychia) and "hubris" (excessive pride); Nietzsche called ambition-less people "little souls" contrasted with the "Übermenschen"- the overman. To start, Pride is a universal feeling, its expression is universally recognizable, in cross-cultural studies (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Pride is also a universal sign of high status. Empirical evidence depicted two facets of pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007). The first face is mostly associated with a cluster of words related to "accomplishment, confidence which is also associated with the 5 traits of extraversion; this facet called "authentic pride" is mostly related to earned status, pro-socialism, and achievement-oriented (McFerran et al., 2014). On the other hand, another cluster of words describes another facet of pride. This cluster is mostly linked with words such as "arrogance", and "conceited"; "hubristic pride" seems to emerge as an undeserved social status and a form of anti-social behavior (McFerran et al., 2014). On a side note, Prestige, which is responsible for transmitting culture is associated with Authentic Pride, while Dominance is mostly associated with Hubristic Pride. If we look back at our existence from a Darwinian point of view, displays of dominance or superiority may be linked

to pride-like behaviors and are very essential to future mating as to the continuation of our selection (Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 1871).

Narrowing it down to luxury consumption, McFerran and Tracy (2014) showed that consumers are motivated by a different kind of pride than what they experience after consuming luxury brands; authentic pride is the main motivator for buying luxury, and hubristic pride is the experience following the luxury consumption. The imperative tactic is to induce authentic pride in promoting the purchase of high-margin brands. Thus, Pride is a consequence of luxury consumption (McFerran et al., 2014). In collectivist countries, especially Confucian countries, culture plays a vital role in the self-defining process (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). The high collectivism in China and most Confucian countries, mostly with the term saving face is pervasive, and following social rules is one of the important motivations guiding their purchase behavior (Wei & Jung, 2017). The tendency to be environmentally friendly is higher than their individualistic peers (LaRoche, 2014); consumer decisions are heavily influenced by the relative to others, thereby causing a bandwagon effect and the necessity to hold a certain status within the group, contributes to the degree of implication in eco-friendly decisions as Wei & Jung precise. In collectivist countries, a strong weight of self is related on society/public perception (Mao, 1994).

## **2.5. CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

Based on the comprehensive review of existing literature, the conceptual model for this study (see Figure 4) integrates key constructs from consumer behavior and environmental psychology to examine the impact of product material and consumer attitudes on brand engagement and purchase intention.

The model focuses on two primary independent variables: exposure to the Gucci Diana tote bag made from sustainable materials and exposure to the same bag made from real leather. These exposures will be hypothesized to influence levels of pride, specifically divided into Authentic Pride and Hubristic Pride as previously demonstrated, as well as Customer Efficacy (CE) towards environmentalism (DV1) and Willingness to Pay Premium (WTP)(DV2). The model also suggests that emotional (A\_CBE), behavioral (B\_CBE), and cognitive (C\_CBE) responses will, in turn, affect Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE), which acts as a mediating variable linking pride and CE to the dependent variables of sustainable consumerism.

Additionally, a second measurement method is introduced, where participants, after evaluating their CE, WTP, pride and CBE, are asked to choose between the sustainable and the real leather tote. This choice scenario called (PREF) is examined as a potential moderating variable, with the hypothesis that the expressed preference post-exposure might influence the relationships among pride and CE.

The conceptual model aims to elucidate the complex interactions between product attributes (material: Real Leather, Sustainable Leather), emotional responses (pride), cognitive attitudes (CE)(WTP) and behavioral intentions (CBE and PREF). This framework provides a comprehensive basis for the empirical investigation, highlighting the nuanced dynamics of consumer behavior in the context of sustainable and luxury fashion.

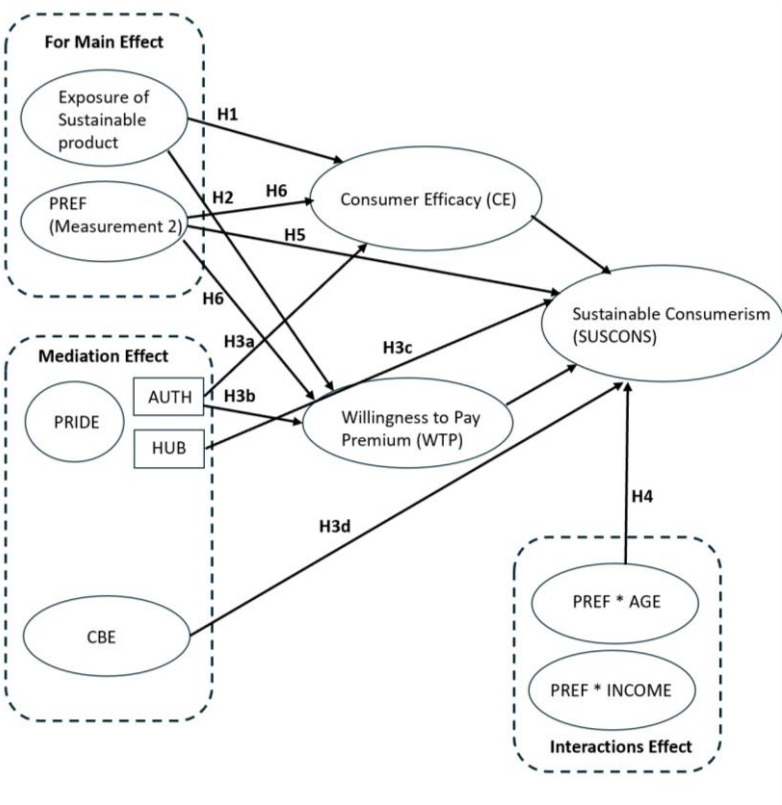


Figure 4- Conceptual Model

**2.6. HYPOTHESES**

**For main effect:**

H1: Sustainable (vs. traditional) luxury products lead to higher (vs. lower) Consumer Efficacy (CE).

H2: Sustainable (vs. traditional) luxury products lead to higher (vs. lower) Willingness to Pay Premium (WTP).

**For Mediation:**

H3a: Authentic Pride mediates the relationship between type of sustainable products and Consumer Efficacy.

H3b: Authentic Pride mediates the relationship between types of sustainable products and Willingness to Pay Premium.

H3c: Hubristic Pride does not mediate the relationship between types of sustainable products and Consumer Efficacy and Willingness to Pay Premium.

H3d: CBE mediates the relationship between types of sustainable products and Consumer Efficacy and Willingness to Pay Premium.

**For Moderation:**

H4: Age acts as moderator whereas Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than older generations to adopt sustainable leather.

**Measurement 2:**

H5: The availability of a choice (Measurement 2) leads to the selection of sustainable products, independent of individuals' overall pride scores.

H6: Individuals who select sustainable products demonstrate higher levels of sustainable consumerism, as measured by Consumer Efficacy (CE) and Willingness to Pay (WTP).

### **3. EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW**

Regression T-test, and PROCESS were used to analyze the data on SPSS examining the relationships and potential moderating and mediating effects among the variables.

#### **3.1. PARTICIPANTS AND DESIGN**

To test the suggested hypothesis, an online experiment was designed to investigate the relationship between customer efficacy towards environmentalism and willingness to pay a premium for environmentally friendly luxurious products, with a focus on the mediating roles of Authentic Pride and Hubristic Pride, Pride overall, as well as the mediating effect of Consumer Brand Engagement. The study included one independent variable: exposure to the Diana tote bag 90's made from sustainable material and another version made from real leather (traditional leather). Another measurement that we took is the preference in choosing sustainable vs. non-sustainable bag will be further explored.

The study utilized a sample of 157 respondents, 129 as a final count. They were recruited through Prolific, a crowdsourcing platform where participants were compensated for their participation. The respondents were selected randomly from a pool of individuals who identified as female Americans and part of Europe. The selection criteria focused on individuals exhibiting consumption behaviors related to luxury goods. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all participants before their involvement in the study. After filtering out the disinterest in owning luxury products, the final count of participants is 129. Respondents were mostly American women (87%) residing in the United States with a mean age of 38 years old where the majority fall within the income ranges of \$40,000 to \$79,999. 76% of them have obtained academic degrees. 69% of participants pre-owned sustainable products, and 81% pre-owned a luxury product. 82% were interested in owning more luxury products.

#### **3.2. PROCEDURE AND STIMULI**

The participants recruited through Prolific randomly were assigned to view either sustainable or non-sustainable versions of Gucci bag (see Appendix A). They then completed surveys assessing their perceptions of sustainability, and feelings of pride and consumer brand

engagement (Appendix E). The stimuli used was the tote bag Gucci Diana. Reflective of its era, the bamboo handle tote was first presented by the House in the early 1990s.

### **Data Processing:**

The 'Scenario' variable was created to distinguish between different experimental conditions, coded 1 for Sustainable exposure and 2 for Real Leather exposure. The mean values were computed for PRIDE, including also the means for Authentic Pride and Hubristic Pride, AUTH and HUB respectively, CBE whereas A\_CBE corresponded to the affective dimension of CBE, B\_CBE for the behavioral dimension, C\_CBE for the cognitive dimension. Dependent variables Customer Efficacy as in CE, and Willingness to Pay Premium as in WTP. Additionally, a composite variable, SUSCONS, was calculated by the means of WTP and CE to represent sustainable consumerism calculated by the means of both variables. PREF stands to the second measurement whereas participants were asked to choose between sustainable leather and real leather, coded 1 and 2 respectively.

### **3.3. MEASURES**

A structured questionnaire consisting of 17 questions (Appendix E) was used, employing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) to assess participants' attitudes and behaviors towards luxury consumption.

The questionnaire begins with three questions aimed at gathering background information about the participants. Question 2 is pivotal; if a participant indicates that they are not interested in owning a luxury product, the survey will end for the participant. Following the initial questions, two scenarios are introduced and randomized equally, each using the Diana 90's Gucci bamboo tote from the '90s archives as a stimulus. In Scenario 1, the tote is described as made from sustainable materials, while in Scenario 2, it is made from real leather.

Following, questions related to Pride and CBE are asked to be rated on a scale from 1 to 7. The mediating effects tested are Pride and CBE. Pride was constructed with two items, Authentic Pride and Hubristic Pride as already discussed. The measures were 6 points, 3 by 3 for each (McFerran et al., 2014) and CBE was of 6 as well (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Authentic pride statements were associated with achievement, reward and enjoyment. Hubristic pride statements were associated with a cluster of words related to superiority, show off and something for others to notice. CBE grouped the affectionate such as the evoke of feelings of

happiness, of positiveness while wearing the brand, while cognitive and behavioral constructs were related of the thinking and loyalty towards the brand.

Dependent Variable studied was Sustainable consumerism. It is measured by two key variables: customer efficacy towards environmentalism and willingness to pay a premium. Customer Efficacy was measured by four points questions and willingness to pay premium by two (K. H. Kang et al., 2012).

The question for preference "PREF" in this study refers to participants' preferences between two distinct options: a sustainable product made from eco-friendly materials and a conventional product made from non-sustainable materials (real leather). Here, participants were asked to indicate their preference based on these options, with responses coded numerically (1 for sustainable, 2 for non-sustainable). This variable serves as a key factor in understanding consumer choices and behavior towards environmentally conscious products, which is central to investigating sustainable consumerism in contemporary markets. This variable will be taken as Measurement 2.

Scenario realism and an attention check question were added to the survey to ensure data quality and reliability. Three items adapted from Bagozzi et al. (1999) were used to measure the realism of the scenario (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Responses to all items were recorded on 7-point Likert scales. Appendix E details all survey items in this study. The mean score for the scenario realism described was  $M=5.41$  ( $SD = 1.529$ ). A one-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether this mean was significantly different from 0. The results indicated a significant difference,  $t(129)=40.195t$ ,  $p<.001$ . This suggests that participants rated the scenario significantly higher than the neutral midpoint.

Finally, demographic questions about age, country of residence, country of origin, income, employment level and educational background are asked.

### **3.4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **For Main Effect (Figure 5):**

A T-test was conducted to examine the impact of the independent variable (Figure 5). Grouping Variable by Scenario, while testing all dependent variables, including Pride (PRIDE), Authentic Pride (AUTH), Hubristic Pride (HUB), Consumer Brand Engagement (CBE), Consumer Efficacy (CE), and Willingness to Pay (WTP).

The results from the independent samples t-tests and Levene's tests (Figure 5) provide insights into the comparisons between groups across different scenarios: exposure to sustainable Gucci Diana tote bags and exposure to non-sustainable Gucci Diana tote bags. Levene's tests generally indicated non-significant differences in variances between these exposure groups for AUTH (Authentic Pride), PRIDE (Hubristic Pride), CBE (Consumer Efficacy towards Environmentalism), CE (Customer Efficacy towards Environmentalism), WTP (Willingness to Pay), and SUSCONS (Sustainable Consumerism), except for WTP and SUSCONS showing significant differences in variances 0.0002 and 0.015 respectively. However, when examining the t-tests for equality of means, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups in terms of these variables. Specifically, AUTH ( $t = 0.370$ ,  $p = 0.712$ ), PRIDE ( $t = 0.989$ ,  $p = 0.325$ ), CBE ( $t = -1.340$ ,  $p = 0.183$ ), CE ( $t = -1.167$ ,  $p = 0.245$ ), WTP ( $t = -1.523$ ,  $p = 0.130$  when equal variances not assumed), and SUSCONS ( $t = -1.516$ ,  $p = 0.132$  when equal variances not assumed) did not show significant differences. These findings suggest that exposure to sustainable versus non-sustainable Gucci Diana tote bags does not lead to significant differences in consumer efficacy towards environmentalism or sustainable consumerism variables, indicating that these variables are independent of the exposure scenario. Therefore, H1 and H2 are rejected.

### **Measurement 2 (Figure 6):**

The Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to compare the means of various psychological constructs (PRIDE, CBE, CE, WTP, HUB, AUTH, and SUSCONS) between two groups defined by the Preference (PREF) variable (Figure 6).

The t-tests for PRIDE do not show significant differences between groups in terms of mean scores. This suggests that regardless of individual pride scores, there is no significant preference for sustainable products and no dependence of pride overall score. Nevertheless, a marginal significance (0.063) for the two-sided p-value for the AUTH variable (authentic pride) when equal variances are assumed. Therefore, Hypothesis H3 is partially supported by the marginal significance observed for AUTH (Authentic Pride). This suggests that authentic pride might play a role in the choice of sustainable products, even though the effect is not statistically robust. Significant differences are observed in CE, WTP, and SUSCONS between groups, indicating that those who choose sustainable products show higher sustainable

consumerism compared to those who do not. The mean differences are statistically significant, with  $p$ -values  $< 0.001$ , suggesting strong evidence to support this hypothesis validating H5 and H6.

### **3.5. MEDIATION ANALYSIS**

In this study, we used the PROCESS macro, model 4, to explore the mediating effects of psychological constructs on the relationship between Scenario (independent variable) and Sustainable Consumerism (SUSCONS) (dependent variable). The mediators included PRIDE, which measures the extent of pride individuals feel wearing Gucci and CBE which measures Gucci's consumer brand engagement (Table 1) and AUTH and HUB (Table 2).

#### **3.5.1. DISCUSSION**

##### **PRIDE, CBE (Table 1):**

The analysis reveals that the direct effect of X on Y is not statistically significant ( $t = 1.0368$ ,  $p = 0.3018$ ), indicating no strong relationship between X and Y. The 95% confidence interval for the direct effect spans from  $-0.3681$  to  $1.1782$ , further supporting this finding. The indirect effect of PRIDE and CBE on Sustainable Consumerism (SUSCONS) is not statistically significant. The confidence interval for the indirect effect through CBE is  $(-0.0723$  to  $0.4991)$ , and PRIDE  $(-0.1088$  to  $0.1878)$  which spans zero. This indicates that there is no sufficient evidence to conclude a significant indirect effect of Scenario on SUSCONS through CBE and PRIDE in the analyzed data. Therefore H3 is rejected.

##### **AUTH, HUB (Table 2):**

The analysis indicates the exposure to different conditions (Scenario) does not have a statistically significant direct effect on Sustainable Consumerism (SUSCONS)(see Table 2). Additionally, the indirect effects through Authentic Pride (AUTH) and Hubristic Pride (HUB) are also not statistically significant with scores of  $-0.0263$  and  $0.0249$ , respectively. These findings suggest that Scenario does not significantly influence Sustainable Consumerism directly or indirectly through pride-related variables. Therefore, H3a, H3b are rejected and H3c is validated.

### 3.6. MODERATION ANALYSIS

The table summarizing the regression coefficients and conditional effects from the PROCESS procedure for Model 1, investigating the relationships of the variables PREF and Age with the outcome variable CE (Table 3) and the moderating effect of Income on WTP (Table 4).

#### 3.6.1. DISCUSSION

##### **Age (Table 3):**

Does age act as a moderator for sustainable consumerism? In Table 3, the hypothesis (H4) suggests that age acts as moderator whereas Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than older generations to adopt sustainable leather is not strongly supported by this analysis. The regression analysis results indicate that the baseline customer efficacy towards environmentalism (CE) is 4.2837, which is statistically significant. Preferring traditional choices (coded as 2) is associated with a decrease in CE by 0.2833 compared to preferring sustainable choices (coded as 1), although this effect is not statistically significant. Each additional year of age increases CE by 0.0498, a marginally non-significant effect. The interaction term between PREF and Age shows that the negative effect of preferring traditional choices on CE increases slightly (by 0.0146) with each additional year of age. Age-specific analysis reveals that at age 26.8651, preferring traditional choices decreases CE by 0.6745 (significant) p-value (0.0314), at age 37.6172, it decreases CE by 0.8310 p-value (0.0002)(both highly significant), and at age 48.3693, it decreases CE by 0.9876 p-value(0.0002)(both highly significant). These results suggest that the negative impact of preferring traditional choices on customer efficacy towards environmentalism becomes more pronounced with age. Therefore H4 is partially validated accentuating the negative impact of age increase on customer efficacy towards environmentalism.

##### **Income (Table 4):**

The interaction term PREF\*Income is not significant with a coefficient of -0.1522, SE = 0.1776, t-value = -0.8572, p-value = 0.3930, and CI = [-0.5037, 0.1993]. This indicates that the effect of preference for sustainable products on sustainable consumerism does not significantly differ by income level and people are willing to pay premium regardless of income levels. These results suggest that the relationship between preference for sustainable

products and willingness to pay premium for that does not significantly differ across income levels.

## 4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Firstly, hypotheses related to the influence of exposure to sustainable and non-sustainable products on consumer efficacy towards environmentalism (H1 and H2) were rejected. The findings indicate that exposure to different product scenarios, such as sustainable versus non-sustainable Gucci Diana tote bags, did not lead to significant differences in consumer efficacy or sustainable consumerism variable in general. This suggests that consumer attitudes towards environmentalism and sustainability may not be significantly swayed by the type of product alone, challenging assumptions about direct consumer response to sustainable product offerings.

In contrast, hypotheses related to the effects of consumer choice PEF on sustainable product selection (H5 and H6) were supported with a marginal significance for the role of Authentic Pride. The results show that regardless of individual overall pride scores and their exposure scenarios, individuals tend to choose sustainable products when given a choice, reflecting a positive consumer trend towards sustainable consumerism. This aligns with the hypothesis that choice and exposure to both options could consolidate sustainable consumer behavior positively. Furthermore, anchoring bias identified in the study as a potential factor influencing decision-making processes, underscoring the need for further research on how initial presentation of sustainable choices can influence subsequent consumer decisions. This suggests that from a marketing perspective, positioning both sustainable and non-sustainable products together can influence consumer decisions favorably towards sustainable choices

Additionally, the analysis of mediating effects through pride-related variables (H3a and H3b, H3c and H3d) revealed that neither authentic pride nor hubristic pride significantly mediated the relationship between exposure scenarios and sustainable consumerism. This suggests that pride-related emotions may not play a substantial role in influencing sustainable consumer behaviors in the context of the studied scenarios.

Moreover, the study partially validated hypotheses concerning the moderating effects of age on consumer efficacy (H4). While it was found that age negatively influences consumer efficacy, this negative impact grows stronger with age. While those aged around 37 and 48 experience a more substantial negative effect than those who are aged less (26), an even stronger impact is recorded for those aged more than 49 years and so on.

Laslty, the findings suggest that income does not significantly moderate the willingness of individuals to pay a premium for sustainable products or environmental initiatives. This implies that variations in income levels among the sample population do not lead to statistically significant changes in how much individuals are willing to invest financially in supporting environmental causes or sustainable practices. Such results could indicate that, within the studied population, income may not be a decisive factor in influencing the perceived value or importance of sustainability issues when it comes to financial decisions. Other factors, such as personal values, environmental awareness, or specific contextual factors, might play more influential roles in shaping individuals' willingness to allocate financial resources towards sustainability efforts.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The rejection of H1 and H2, which hypothesized that exposure to sustainable or non-sustainable products would impact consumer efficacy towards environmentalism, indicates that mere exposure to product types (sustainable vs. non-sustainable) is insufficient to influence consumers' environmental attitudes. This suggests that other factors, such as deeper engagement or more extensive education, may be necessary to shift consumer perceptions and behaviors regarding sustainability.

The partial support for H5, where authentic pride (AUTH) showed marginal significance in influencing sustainable product choices, suggests that authentic pride might play a nuanced role in sustainable consumer behavior. This indicates a need for more detailed exploration of emotional and psychological factors that contribute to sustainable consumption.

The validation of H6 confirms that individuals who choose sustainable products demonstrate higher sustainable consumerism (measured by CE, WTP, and SUSCONS). This finding supports theories that link product choice directly to broader sustainable behaviors, reinforcing the idea that product selection can be a reliable indicator of consumer values and behaviors. This indicates that exposure to choices significantly influences sustainable consumption. This finding aligns with decision-making theories suggesting that providing options can encourage more sustainable behaviors, emphasizing the importance of choice architecture in promoting sustainability.

The rejection of H3a, H3b, H3d hypotheses, which explored the mediating effects of pride (both authentic and hubristic) and consumer brand engagement on sustainable consumerism, underscores the complexity of the pathways through which exposure to product scenarios influences consumer behavior. The results suggest that these specific mediators (pride and consumer brand engagement) do not play significant roles, prompting further investigation into other potential mediators or moderators that might impact sustainable consumerism.

The study's findings regarding the moderating effects of age on consumer efficacy towards environmentalism provide valuable insights into how age influences attitudes and

behaviors related to sustainability. Specifically, the research reveals that older age groups tend to exhibit a more pronounced negative impact on consumer efficacy compared to younger individuals. This suggests that as people age, their existing habits and attitudes towards environmental issues may become more entrenched, making it potentially more challenging to change these behaviors.

Also income did not play as a moderator for the willingness to pay premium for sustainable product, this means that the relationship between these two is consistent across different income levels. Thus, people's willingness to pay a premium for these products does not significantly vary with how much they make.

## **5.2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Communication Strategies:**

Since exposure to sustainable products alone does not significantly alter consumer attitudes or behaviors, marketers and policymakers should focus on more comprehensive strategies that engage consumers more deeply. This could include educational campaigns, interactive experiences, and narratives that connect sustainability to personal values and identities: Rebranding. Rebranding Gucci as both sustainable and boldly eclectic would require a strategic approach that integrates sustainability into every aspect of the brand's communication platform while maintaining its distinctive and innovative style. Gucci should emphasize authenticity in its claims for fear of backlash and greenwashing. Above findings may suggest that marketing strategies should focus on fostering feelings of authentic pride when presented by two options, as this emotion may play a nuanced role in influencing sustainable product choices. This can be enhanced by utilizing language and storytelling, as exemplified by Gucci's exceptional approach. In contrast, given that pride (both authentic and hubristic) did not significantly mediate the relationship between exposure scenarios and sustainable consumerism, trying to involve on social influence like celebrity endorsement to push sustainable consumerism might be a groundbreaker.

### **Marketing:**

The strong support for H6 indicates that individuals who opt for sustainable products are likely to exhibit higher consumer efficacy. This suggests that Gucci should prioritize the

promotion of sustainable products, as their adoption can lead to broader sustainable behaviors among consumers. Representing both sustainable and traditional products on the shelf could be vital. Being a pioneer in offering both sustainable and traditional luxury products can differentiate Gucci from its competitors, potentially setting a trend in the luxury market and establishing Gucci as an innovator in sustainability.

While income did not act as a moderator for willingness to pay a premium, positioning the sustainable product at a higher scale for Gucci could also be a way to showcase its intrinsic factor of “exclusivity” . By placing these products at a premium price point, Gucci not only appeals to affluent consumers who value luxury and exclusivity but also enhances the perceived value of sustainability within its brand identity. This allows Gucci to differentiate itself in the competitive luxury market by showcasing sustainability as a premium and as the ultimate choice. This could strengthen its brand image and attract a discerning customer base that values both luxury and ethical consumption, thus expanding its customer base for the millennials and Gen Z.

## **6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

### **6.1. LIMITATIONS**

The study's limitations to the American market may explain the absence of mediation effects between pride and sustainable consumption. Expanding the survey to a larger and more diverse sample could provide more comprehensive insights. Additionally, considering the potential influence of brand favoritism, particularly towards brands like Gucci, might yield different results if respondents have a strong preference for such brands. Other potential limitations include the limited sample size which may affect the generalizability of the results. Reliance on self-reported data can introduce biases such as social desirability bias, where respondents may overstate their environmentally friendly behaviors. The timing of the survey might influence results, as consumer attitudes towards sustainability can change over time or be influenced by current events. Moreover, focusing solely on the American market may not capture cultural differences in attitudes towards sustainability and luxury brands. These limitations suggest that future research should consider a broader and more diverse sample, qualitative data, and cross-cultural comparisons to enhance the understanding of the relationship between pride and sustainable consumption.

### **6.2. FUTURE RESEARCH**

For future research, exploring the mediating effect of shame and guilt, rather than pride, on the adoption of sustainable consumerism could provide valuable insights into alternative motivational factors as we can see that pride did not mediate the relationship in this study. Understanding how shame and guilt influence consumer behavior towards sustainability could complement existing research. Additionally, incorporating other measures such as perceptions of greenwashing could enhance the robustness of the study.

Additionally, investigating anchoring bias, where people tend to choose the decision favoring sustainable options when presented with choices, offers another avenue for exploration. To add, examining how visual mediums like logos can effectively communicate sustainability messages to consumers could further enhance understanding of communication narratives in promoting sustainable consumer behavior rather than written texts. This could be also an interesting area to explore in sustainable implementation strategies.

Finally, exploring the European market rather than the American market could provide fertile ground for investigation. Europe shows a stronger inclination towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals compared to America -after their rejoin to Paris agreement 2021, highlighting the pivotal role of environmental considerations in fostering sustainable consumerism. Thus, exploring how questions related to a nation's overall green initiatives, coupled with pride in contributing to these initiatives, could serve as additional mediators in promoting pro-environmental consumer behavior. This approach could involve measuring individuals' national pride in their countries green initiatives influence their sustainable consumer efficacy. Integrating these factors into existing models of sustainable consumerism could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers behind environmentally friendly purchasing decisions.

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## 8. APPENDIX

### 8.1. APPENDIX A : EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS

- Condition 1, Sustainable Leather bag (Treatment Group).

Description : You ended up buying a sustainable leather bag: the Gucci Diana. This bamboo tote from the '90s archives and is made from sustainable leather!



- Condition 2, Real Leather (Control Group).

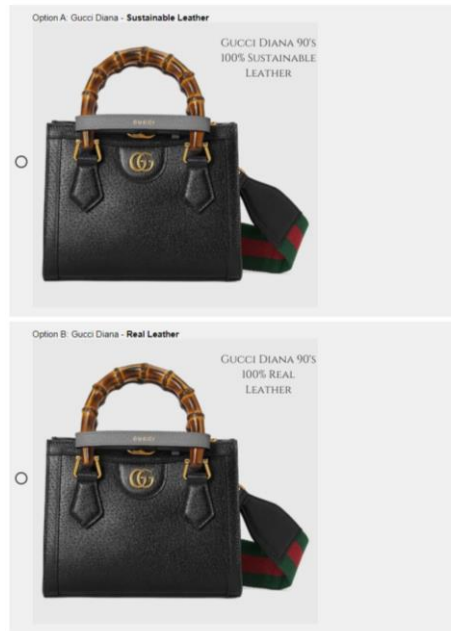
Description: You ended up buying a real leather bag: the Gucci Diana. This bamboo tote from the '90s archives and is made from real leather!



- Measurement 2:

10. If you had to choose between these two options, which one would you choose?

Option A Gucci Diana from the 90s made from **sustainable leather**, or Option B Gucci Diana from the 90s made from **real leather**.



## 8.2. APPENDIX B : TABLES AND FIGURES

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
PRIDE	Equal variances assumed	.382	.538	.989	127	.162	.325	.17011	.17202	-1.7028	.51050
	Equal variances not assumed			.988	124.457	.163	.325	.17011	.17219	-1.7068	.51091
CBE	Equal variances assumed	.019	.891	-1.340	127	.091	.183	-.28401	.21198	-1.70349	.13546
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.340	126.990	.091	.183	-.28401	.21194	-1.70341	.13538
CE	Equal variances assumed	2.238	.137	-1.167	127	.123	.245	-.48365	.41434	-1.30356	.33625
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.168	125.475	.122	.245	-.48365	.41393	-1.30285	.33554
WTP	Equal variances assumed	9.582	.002	-1.520	127	.066	.131	-.70325	.46279	-1.61902	.21253
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.523	119.632	.065	.130	-.70325	.46184	-1.61768	.21119
HUB	Equal variances assumed	.565	.454	1.222	127	.112	.224	.27364	.22384	-1.6931	.71658
	Equal variances not assumed			1.221	123.706	.112	.224	.27364	.22410	-1.6993	.71721
AUTH	Equal variances assumed	.149	.700	.370	127	.356	.712	.06659	.17998	-.28956	.42273
	Equal variances not assumed			.369	122.090	.356	.712	.06659	.18024	-.29021	.42339
SUSCONS	Equal variances assumed	6.105	.015	-1.514	127	.066	.133	-.59345	.39205	-1.36925	.18235
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.516	121.885	.066	.132	-.59345	.39138	-1.36823	.18133
PREF	Equal variances assumed	.205	.652	.227	126	.411	.821	.020	.086	-.151	.190
	Equal variances not assumed			.227	125.943	.411	.821	.020	.086	-.151	.190

Figure 5- Independent T-Test, Grouping Variables by Scenario.

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p				
PRIDE	Equal variances assumed	2.500	.116	1.335	126	.092	.184	.23819	.17847	-.11499	.59138
	Equal variances not assumed			1.234	76.874	.110	.221	.23819	.19298	-.14608	.62247
CBE	Equal variances assumed	.644	.424	1.180	126	.120	.240	.25694	.21767	-.17382	.68770
	Equal variances not assumed			1.142	89.039	.128	.257	.25694	.22500	-.19012	.70400
CE	Equal variances assumed	6.550	.012	3.832	126	<.001	<.001	1.56771	.40911	.75809	2.37733
	Equal variances not assumed			3.653	84.829	<.001	<.001	1.56771	.42917	.71437	2.42104
WTP	Equal variances assumed	22.552	<.001	6.439	126	<.001	<.001	2.70417	.41996	1.87307	3.53526
	Equal variances not assumed			5.800	70.748	<.001	<.001	2.70417	.46622	1.77450	3.63383
HUB	Equal variances assumed	.008	.928	.552	126	.291	.582	.12917	.23408	-.33408	.59241
	Equal variances not assumed			.550	97.842	.292	.584	.12917	.23503	-.33724	.59558
AUTH	Equal variances assumed	6.621	.011	1.879	126	.031	.063	.34722	.18481	-.01851	.71295
	Equal variances not assumed			1.687	70.104	.048	.096	.34722	.20577	-.06316	.75760
SUSCONS	Equal variances assumed	9.252	.003	5.882	126	<.001	<.001	2.13594	.36312	1.41733	2.85455
	Equal variances not assumed			5.442	76.965	<.001	<.001	2.13594	.39250	1.35436	2.91751

Figure 6- Independent T-Test, Grouping Variables by PREF.

### Direct Effects of X on Y

Effect	SE	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
.4051	0.3907	1.0368	0.3018	-0.3681	1.1782

### Indirect Effect of X on Y

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
<b>Total</b>	0.1884	0.1570	-0.0931	0.5310
<b>PRIDE</b>	0.293	0.0691	-0.1088	0.1878
<b>CBE</b>	0.159	.01440	-0.634	0.4938

Table 1- The Mediating Effects of Pride and CBE on SUSCONS (Y) with Scenario(X).

**Direct effect of X on Y**

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.5948	.3921	1.5169	.1318	-.1812	1.3709

**Indirect effect(s) of X on Y**

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
<b>TOTAL</b>	-.0014	.0960	-.2011 .2070
<b>AUTH</b>	-.0263	.0794	-.1948 .1413
<b>HUB</b>	.0249	.0620	-.0854 .1789

Table 2- The Mediating Effects of AUTH and HUB on SUSCONS(Y) with Scenario(X)

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	95% Lower	CI	95% Upper	CI
<b>Constant</b>	4.2837	1.1528	3.7160	0.0003	2.0021		6.5653	
<b>PREF (X)</b>	-0.2833	0.8044	-0.3522	0.7253	-1.8755		1.3088	
<b>Age (W)</b>	0.0498	0.0295	1.6912	0.0933	-0.0085		0.1081	
<b>PREF*Age</b>	-0.0146	0.0206	-0.7067	0.4811	-0.0553		0.0262	

Age	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	95% Lower	CI	95% Upper	CI
<b>26.8651</b>	-0.6745	0.3099	-2.1768	0.0314	-1.2878		-0.0612	

37.6172    -0.8310    0.2172    -3.8270    0.0002    -1.2609    -0.4012

48.3693    -0.9876    0.3106    -3.1800    0.0019    -1.6023    -0.3729

Table 3- Conditional Effects of PREF on CE at Different Age Levels.

	Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
<b>constant</b>	9.6801	1.5969	6.0617	.0000	6.5194	12.8409
<b>PREF</b>	-1.8370	1.1082	-1.6577	.0999	-4.0304	.3563
<b>Income</b>	.2434	.2604	.9346	.3518	-.2720	.7587
<b>Int_1</b>	-.1522	.1776	-.8572	.3930	-.5037	.1993

**Int\_1 :    PREF    x    Income**

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
<b>X*W</b>	.0044	.7348	1.0000	124.0000	.3930

Table 4- Conditional Effects of PREF on WTP at Different Income Levels.

### 8.3. APPENDIX C: THE ETHICS COMMITTEE



This is to certify that

Project No.: **DDMKT2024-6-59341**

Project Title: **Sustainable Luxury Marketing: The Mediating Roles of Pride and Consumer Brand Engagement in Green Luxury Branding – A study case on Gucci.**

Principal Researcher: **Maria Khalil**

according to the regulations of the Ethics Committee of NOVA IMS and MagIC Research Center this project was considered to meet the requirements of the NOVA IMS Internal Review Board, being considered **APPROVED** on 6/5/2024.

It is the Principal Researcher's responsibility to ensure that all researchers and stakeholders associated with this project are aware of the conditions of approval and which documents have been approved.

The Principal Researcher is required to notify the Ethics Committee, via amendment or progress report, of

- Any significant change to the project and the reason for that change;
- Any unforeseen events or unexpected developments that merit notification;
- The inability of the Principal Researcher to continue in that role or any other change in research personnel involved in the project.

Lisbon, 6/5/2024

NOVA IMS Ethics Committee  
ethicscommittee@novaims.unl.pt

### 8.4. APPENDIX D: ASPREDICTED.ORG

Delete	File ID	Type	Section	Description	Filename	<a href="#">Rename Files</a>	Size	ext	Uploaded
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Pre-Registration	pending	AsPredicted #178425	aspredicted_178425.pdf <a href="#">make public: #178425</a>	Anonymous	179 Kb	pdf	2024-06-07 (14:48)
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Data	pending	sav	Final Data.sav		499 Kb	sav	2024-07-11 (18:06)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Select all</a>								

## 8.5. APPENDIX E: SURVEY QUESTIONS

**Luxury products** are high-quality items made from superior materials, produced by prestigious brands, and often recognized as status symbols, such as designer clothing, high-end automobiles, and luxury watches.

Some examples of luxury brands on the fashion sector are **Hermes, Prada, Chanel**, etc.

1. Do you own any fashion luxury products?  
(eg. handbags, belts, clothes, etc.)

Yes

No

2. Are you **interested** in **owning** any luxury fashion product?

Yes

I am not sure

No



**Sustainable products** are produced with minimal environmental impact, using eco-friendly materials, supporting fair labor practices, and promoting resource conservation.

Some examples of sustainable products: **Vegan leather, Sustainable leather, Recycled cotton, Upcycled clothes** etc.

3. Do you own any sustainable products?

Yes

I am not sure

No



4. Using the scale below (7-point scale), indicate how much you agree with the following statement about this product.

	1. Extremely Disagree	2	3	4. Neither Disagree nor Agree	5	6	7. Extremely Agree
I think of this bag as a <b>signal of superiority</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think of this bag as a <b>reward for myself</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think of this bag as a <b>way to show off to others</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think of this bag as a <b>signal of achievement</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think of this bag as <b>something for others to notice</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think of this bag as <b>something for myself to enjoy</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



5. Using the scale below, indicate how much you agree with the following statement about Gucci.

	1. Extremely Disagree	2	3	4. Neither Disagree nor Agree	5	6	7. Extremely Agree
<b>I will think</b> about Gucci when I am wearing it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using Gucci stimulates <b>my interest to learn</b> more about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wearing this brand would make me <b>happy</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I will feel good</b> when I wear Gucci.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I wear Gucci a lot of times</b> , compared with other luxury brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whenever I am wearing luxury, I <b>usually wear</b> Gucci.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



6. Using the scale below, indicate how much you agree with the following statement about the environment in general.

	1. Extremely Disagree	2	3	4. Neither Disagree nor Agree	5	6	7. Extremely Agree
I <b>feel capable</b> of helping solve the environmental problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I <b>can protect the environment</b> by buying products that are friendly to the environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each consumer's behavior can have a <b>positive effect on society</b> by buying products that are <b>friendly to the environment</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Any individual can <b>make a difference</b> in the quality of the environment by choosing products carefully.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Lastly, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

	1. Extremely Disagree	2	3	4. Neither Disagree nor Agree	5	6	7. Extremely Agree
I would pay more for a green product that is <b>making efforts to be environmentally sustainable</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe it is <b>acceptable to spend extra money</b> for products that are made using <b>environmentally friendly materials</b> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. The situation described in the scenario previously is...

1. Unrealistic	2	3	4. Neither unrealistic nor realistic	5	6	7. Realistic
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Taking into account the scenario you had, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	1. Extremely disagree	2	3	4. Neither Disagree nor Agree	5	6	7. Extremely Agree
I ended up buying a sustainable leather bag.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ended up buying a real leather bag.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To confirm your attention, please select option 3 for this question.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## 8.6. APPENDIX F: FINAL DATA

Final Data of Survey Question after Data Cleaning for SPSS are available on Google Drive:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/12m\\_G4vBIMKOUWvfLeZHJBX34xf8fhVzP/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/12m_G4vBIMKOUWvfLeZHJBX34xf8fhVzP/view?usp=sharing)



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