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Article

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Redefining luxury: exploring the natural connection with sustainability beyond labels

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Once considered improbable, the fusion of sustainability and luxury has emerged as a captivating concept in contemporary consumer culture. The growing emphasis on integrating sustainability into luxury products has raised concerns about potential consumer backlash. The current research proposes that consumers' traditional luxury personal and social purchase motives (i.e. luxury values) can be shaped by their opinions on luxury sustainability (i.e. perceived luxury sustainability).

Design/methodology/approach: The analysis was conducted in two stages using the PROCESS macro. We utilized a sample of 600 participants, equally distributed across two distinct cultures: individualistic with a high sustainable orientation and collectivistic with a developing sustainable orientation. In the first stage, we employed Model 4 to examine the anticipated influence of perceived luxury service (PLS) on perceived luxury values that underpin consumers' purchase intentions (PI). In the second stage, we investigated the country's moderating role in shaping the relationships explored in the first stage. A moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Model 7 of the PROCESS macro.

Findings: This research has uncovered a profound connection between luxury and sustainability that challenges conventional knowledge. The results confirm that perceiving luxury as sustainable enhances consumers' perceptions of its quality and material aspects, increasing their intent to purchase luxury items. However, this perception also seems to diminish other traditional luxury values. This trend holds across diverse cultural contexts. Nevertheless, insights from this study highlight the importance of considering cultural differences, particularly in social motives, in the context of luxury and sustainability.

Originality: The current research adds to the understanding of the self-congruity concept, which influences consumers' evaluation of products based on how they relate product or brand values to their self-identity. This study employs a novel approach to investigate how comprehensive variables—including personal and social values, cultural orientation, and sustainable perception—might influence consumers' purchase intentions (PI) toward luxury products, regardless of sustainable labeling. For the first time, it reveals how consumers innately link sustainability to luxury values across different cultures. Previous studies have focused explicitly on sustainably labeled luxury products, considering limited luxury values and never conducting cross-cultural tests. Given these findings, the current article proposes managerial recommendations to navigate this complex consumer landscape.

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Marketing

Introduction

As the world increasingly prioritizes sustainability, luxury brands are pressured to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable production methods (Jain, 2019; Mohr et al., 2022). However, it is important to note that consumer expectations vary. Some consumers assume luxury brands are inherently sustainable due to their reputation for crafting high-quality, durable products (Mohr et al., 2022), while others may view sustainable luxury products negatively (Acuti et al., 2022; Kumagai, 2020). The global nature of this issue, coupled with the practice of luxury brands pricing their sustainable products at a premium,

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underscores the need to understand how consumers perceive luxury sustainability (Kapferer & Michaut, 2014) and how this perception influences their brand/product evaluation and purchasing behavior (Athwal et al., 2019). Perceived luxury sustainability reflects consumers' perceptions of the sustainability of luxury products, questioning whether luxury aligns with sustainability concerns (Kapferer & Michaut, 2014)

Within the luxury consumption literature, it is firmly established that consumers are primarily motivated to purchase luxury products through their perceptions of personal and social values associated with luxury (Al-Issa et al., 2024a; Al-Issa & Dens, 2023). Personal values emphasize the importance of luxury in achieving personal satisfaction and encompass perfectionism (highlighting the quest for superior product or service quality, performance, and design), materialism (revolving around the use of possessions to create impressions, showcase achievements, and establish social status), self-expression/identification (reflecting the use of luxury purchases as a means to express one's identity and personality), and hedonism (tied to the emotional value of luxury consumption, where it provides self-reward and gratification). In contrast, social values are influenced by external factors and encompass conspicuousness (where individuals opt for high-value items to enhance their social image and status within social groups) uniqueness (reflecting the pursuit of exclusive and rare products to distinguish oneself), and social conformity (involving the purchase of luxury products already owned by reference group members, aiming to gain acceptance, approval, and conformity with others' expectations) (Al-Issa et al., 2024b; Al-Issa & Dens, 2023)

Previous research has highlighted a positive indirect impact of luxury sustainability and a brand's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on consumer behavior (Kong et al., 2021). This effect is attributed to functional, symbolic values (Diallo et al., 2021), conspicuous ethical self-identity (Essiz & Senyuz, 2024), and subjective happiness and novelty seeking (Lee & Furukawa, 2023) associated with luxury brand consumption. However, these findings conflict with indicated direct negative influences on consumers' purchase intentions (Kumagai, 2020) and their willingness to pay premium prices (Diallo et al., 2021).

As detailed in the literature review section, previous studies have predicted limited luxury values through sustainability, primarily concentrating on how these values influence consumer behavior toward luxury products explicitly labeled as sustainable (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). However, Sustainability extends beyond environmental practices; it encompasses the entire supply chain, even if products are not explicitly labeled as sustainable (Al-Issa et al., 2022). Furthermore, previous research has been limited by its focus on specific demographics (e.g., Eastman et al., 2021; Kapferer & Michaut, 2020; Pencarelli et al., 2019) or by exclusively involving actual consumers (e.g. Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Essiz & Senyuz, 2024). The perception of a conflict between luxury values and sustainability has led some consumers to abstain from purchasing luxury items (Kapferer & Michaut, 2014; Kumagai, 2020). These constraints in prior research underscore the need for a more comprehensive examination of the relationship between luxury and sustainability, inclusive of diverse consumer perspectives.

Besides, cultural diversity among nations plays a pivotal role in consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward luxury and its sustainability (Al-Issa et al., 2024b; Kong et al., 2021; Lee & Furukawa, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). Eastman et al. (2021) suggest that collectivism moderates the relationship between uniqueness and ecologically conscious consumer behavior within the context of luxury. Wang et al. (2021) emphasize that in collectivist cultures, the need for conformity (uniqueness) positively (negatively) influences sustainable luxury PI, whereas this effect is reversed in individualist cultures. On the other hand, Diallo et al. (2021) found that differences in the impact of CSR actions on willingness to pay premium prices for luxury items between distinct cultural contexts are not statistically significant. Previous research has yielded mixed cross-cultural findings regarding consumers' perceptions of the relationship between luxury and sustainability. Furthermore, a notable gap exists in understanding how consumers' perceptions of luxury sustainability influence their evaluation of and intentions to purchase luxury brands.

In addressing the noteworthy gaps within the current body of literature, the present research aims to answer two central questions: (1) What personal and social luxury values do consumers anticipate when perceiving luxury as sustainable? (2) How does this connection impact their PI across distinct countries? Inspired by findings in former studies, the current research proposes that consumers' traditional luxury purchase motives (i.e. personal and social values) can be shaped by their opinions on luxury

sustainability (i.e. perceived luxury sustainability). While sustainability research has traditionally concentrated on developed countries characterized by a strong emphasis on sustainability, there is growing recognition of sustainability's importance in developing nations (Wang & Huang, 2021). Therefore, this study's comparative analysis between the Kuwaiti and UK markets is expected to provide insights elucidating differences between the countries. Distinct from former studies, this research is not limited to explicit sustainability labels on luxury products and incorporates a diverse range of respondents. The subsequent sections of this paper will delve into the literature, theory, hypotheses development, research methodology, results, discussion, implications, limitations, and avenues for future research.

Literature review

In recent years, ethical and sustainable consumption has emerged as a significant aspect of consumers' desired identity, leading them to prefer luxury products that align with sustainability objectives (Jain, 2019). However, some consumers may intentionally avoid sustainable products to distance themselves from associated negative stereotypes, such as being labeled as feminine, hippie, or part of marginalized groups (Acuti et al., 2022). When evaluating a product or brand, consumers often compare their perception of the brand-user image with the identities they wish to project (Al-Issa et al., 2024a; Al-Issa & Dens, 2023; Eastman et al., 2021). This evaluation process is influenced by self-congruity, a multidimensional concept encompassing various aspects of the self: the actual self, driven by the need for self-consistency; the ideal self, characterized by high self-monitoring and motivated by the need for self-esteem; the social self, influenced by the need for social consistency and perceived social image; and the ideal social self, prompting actions for social approval (Al-Issa et al., 2024a; Eastman et al., 2021; Jain, 2019). Therefore, consumers are expected to value luxury sustainability in alignment with their personal values (actual and ideal self), social values (social and ideal social self), and local identities (actual self) (Figure 1). These complexities underline luxury brands' challenges in managing consumer perceptions of sustainable luxury, emphasizing that brands must integrate these considerations into their marketing strategies (Amatulli et al., 2021a).

PLS and luxury purchase motives (perceived values)

While Hennigs et al. (2013), sustainable luxury value encompasses various dimensions traditionally associated with luxury, like functional, financial, individual, and social value, Ozdamar-Ertekin (2019) stresses the importance of assessing how luxury values align with or contradict sustainability principles. While luxury sustainability is a relatively recent concept deserving further investigation, prior research has delved into the connections between specific luxury values and sustainable luxury. While a notable debate regarding consumer perceptions of sustainable luxury exists, a subset of studies suggests that associating luxury with sustainability may lead consumers to perceive products as lower in quality (Dekhili et al., 2019) and emotionally aversive states (Acuti et al., 2022). However, it is essential to acknowledge a significant body of research that counters this perspective and collectively demonstrates

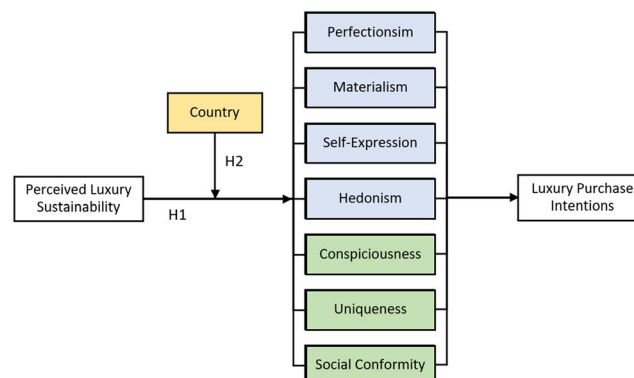


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

that the driving force behind purchases of sustainable luxury goods lies in the pursuit of perfection and superior product standards (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Essiz & Senyuz, 2024; Hennigs et al., 2013; Ing et al., 2021; Kapferer & Michaut, 2020, 2014). This aligns with the belief that luxury items should endure, reinforcing luxury goods' timeless allure while promoting waste reduction and responsible resource management (Kelleci, 2022; Osburg et al., 2021). Thus, many luxury brands maintain sizable aftermarkets for their products, facilitating extended use over generations and emphasizing responsible resource utilization (Kelleci, 2022).

In addition, luxury sustainability serves as a means for consumers to convey their commitment to environmental and social causes, which play a crucial role in shaping consumers' self-image (Cervellon & Shammas, 2013; Jain, 2019). For instance, vintage luxury consumption, recognized as a sustainable approach, notably enhances consumers' perceptions of their desired and ideal self-image (Amatulli et al., 2018a). This alignment also gives consumers a sense of guilt-free indulgence (Cervellon & Shammas, 2013). Consumers derive distinct pleasure from the awareness that their luxury purchases not only fulfill personal desires but also contribute positively to society and the environment (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Essiz & Senyuz, 2024; Kelleci, 2022). The discrepancies observed in the results of prior studies can be traced back to variations in the methodologies utilized. For instance, Acuti et al. (2022) study adopts a conceptual approach, offering theoretical insights without empirical validation. Conversely, Dekhili et al. (2019) research uses qualitative methods, incorporating interviews with luxury consumers and industry professionals. While qualitative methods like interviews can provide in-depth insights, they may lack the broad generalizability of quantitative survey-based studies. The positive correlation between luxury sustainability and specific luxury personal values is corroborated by existing literature reviews on the subject (Athwal et al., 2019; Jain, 2019).

With regards to social values, luxury sustainability goes beyond mere ownership; it embodies a distinctive form of conspicuousness, where possessing and displaying sustainable luxury items becomes a statement of commitment to responsible living and ethical values (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Cervellon & Shammas, 2013; Osburg et al., 2021). In a parallel vein, responsible luxury underscores scarcity and exclusivity, factors that have been shown to heighten (willingness for) consumption (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Amatulli et al., 2021a; De Angelis et al., 2017). The desire for unique products has also been identified as a mediating factor in the relationship between socially related consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Eastman et al., 2021). This interconnectedness highlights how responsible luxury leverages scarcity and exclusivity and reinforces consumers' pursuit of uniqueness, influencing their consumption behaviors.

At the same time, sustainable luxury fosters a collective sense of social conformity towards shared environmental responsibility (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022). Consumers embrace sustainability as a collective value within this framework and conform to it within their social networks (Essiz & Senyuz, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). Thus, subjective norms (i.e. the influence of social groups) exert social pressure on individuals, compelling them to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors (Jain, 2019). Additionally, purchasing sustainable luxury products can be seen as a means for individuals to align themselves with a particular social class that can afford these environmentally responsible products (Cervellon & Shammas, 2013). Founded by discussions in the literature, we predict that:

H1: PLS positively shapes consumers' perception of luxury personal (i.e. self-expression, perfectionism, hedonism, and materialism) and social values (i.e. conspicuousness, uniqueness, and social conformity), influencing luxury products PI.

Cross-cultural differences

Cultural diversity among nations plays a pivotal role in consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward luxury and its sustainability and consumers' perceptions of sustainable luxury might be distinct across diverse cultures (Lee & Furukawa, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). For instance, Eastman et al. (2021) suggest that the relationship between the desire for unique products and ecologically conscious consumer behavior is moderated by cultural values, such as collectivism. While Athwal et al. (2019) highlight the role of collective social drivers in motivating consumers to support products that positively impact society, fostering more favorable attitudes toward sustainable businesses, Cervellon and Shammas (2013)

emphasize that individual and collective social drivers for purchasing sustainable luxury differ among countries. According to Wang et al. (2021), the desire for exclusivity in sustainable luxury items negatively influences purchase intentions, while the need for conformity has a positive effect in a collectivist country like China. Conversely, these effects are reversed in the UK, characterized by its individualistic nature.

Kong et al. (2021) provide further insights by demonstrating that collectivist consumers in South Korea are less influenced by sustainability when evaluating luxury brands and forming purchase intentions than individualists in Germany. They suggest that sustainability communications may be perceived as threats to quality and scarcity, particularly among collectivist cultures. In a similar line, Diallo et al. (2021) show that luxury brands' corporate social responsibility (CSR) actions negatively affect customers' willingness to pay premium prices, with cultural differences influencing the mediating effects of luxury values. While the effects of CSR actions and brand symbolic value on willingness to pay do not differ between countries, the influence of functional value is stronger in high long-term orientation (LTO) cultures. In contrast, the effect of social value is stronger in low LTO cultures. From another perspective, Lee and Furukawa (2023) find that subjective happiness significantly influences luxury consumption in China compared to Japan. These differences are attributed to variations (high vs low, respectively) in feelings of guilt about environmental impacts across cultures.

However, there is a notable trend towards increased acceptance of sustainable luxury as an essential component of modern luxury consumption, suggesting the possibility of a gradual convergence in the appreciation of sustainable luxury products across different countries and cultures (Kumar, 2023; Pelikánová et al., 2021). Despite this trend, it is essential to highlight the limited number of cross-cultural empirical studies on this topic, indicating the need for further research to understand better the nuances of luxury sustainability and its influence on consumers' evaluation and consumption across diverse cultural contexts. Considering former findings, we expect that:

H2: while PLS consistently influences luxury consumers' PI, the mediating role of luxury personal and social values varies across countries with distinct cultural and sustainable development contexts.

Methodology

To gather our data, we developed a questionnaire based on prior research (Al-Issa & Dens, 2023) and tailored it to the specific context of our study. This research complied with all ethical standards and guidelines for involving human participants. We obtained all necessary ethical approvals, consents, and permissions following the regulations of Antwerp University and the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants provided informed written consent.

After providing information about their demographics, participants were given some questions to gauge their perception of luxury values involving perfectionism, materialism, self-expression, hedonism, conspicuousness, social conformity, uniqueness, and social conformity. Then, they indicated their PLS and their PI toward luxury. All items were measured using a multi-item 7-point Likert scale for all questions. The country is used as a proxy for cultural and sustainable orientation (Al-Issa et al., 2024b; Eastman et al., 2021; Kong et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021) and is coded as 0 for Kuwait and 1 for the UK. for the UK. Kuwait is an under-researched market characterized by its collectivist nature, and high-income levels underscore its potential significance as a luxury market (Al-Issa & Dens, 2023). Kuwait has recently embarked on a sustainable transformation, demonstrating a solid commitment to a sustainable future.¹ In contrast, the UK represents the Western individualist society, where sustainability is a well-established and ingrained concept.² Such distinctive cultural orientations and varying levels of sustainable development make the selected countries captivating candidates for a comparative approach in our study. The questionnaire was developed in English and Arabic to cater to Kuwait's national language preferences. To ensure accuracy, an independent researcher back-translated the Arabic version into English. Respondents were allowed to choose their preferred language when completing the questionnaire. Online administration was facilitated via reputable platforms: YouGov in Kuwait and Prolific in the UK. 600 completed questionnaires were collected and evenly distributed, with 300 responses from each country. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the sample characteristics.

A multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) encompassing both countries is conducted to comprehensively assess reliability, validity, and measurement invariance across the two nations. The factor loadings (Table 2) were robust and reflective of good measurement quality, except for one item of uniqueness that displayed a loading value that bordered on acceptability ($\lambda = 0.490$). Item is retained as it has undergone rigorous testing and validation in prior studies (Farah & Fawaz, 2016; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012). Cronbach's alpha for each construct is acceptable (>0.7), except in the case of uniqueness, where it is marginal (0.582). AVE presents satisfying values above the 0.50 threshold, and the composite reliability of the constructs is above 0.75 (Table 3), thus deemed acceptable and confirming the scales' reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Discriminant validity is solidified with HTMT values spanning from 0.093 to 0.758, affirming the robustness of the measurements. Moreover, the negligible impact of common method variance (CMV) further bolsters the credibility of the findings (Al-Issa et al., 2024b).

Results

This section analyses collected data using the PROCESS macro version 3.5 (Hayes, 2018). Our analysis is conducted in two stages (Amatulli et al., 2021a). While continuously including consumers' income as a control variable, the first stage examines the anticipated influence of PLS on the perceived luxury values that underpin consumers' PI. To test H1, we employed Model 4 of the PROCESS macro. The results in Table 4 reveal that PLS significantly positively impacted perceived perfectionism ($b = 0.121$, $p = 0.01$). However, the effect on perceived materialism, while positive, was found to be statistically insignificant ($b = 0.041$, $p = 0.453$). Moreover, PLS exerted a significant negative influence on the following luxury values: perceived self-expression ($b = -0.116$, $p < 0.001$), hedonism ($b = -0.234$, $p < 0.001$), conspicuousness ($b = -0.200$, $p < 0.001$), uniqueness ($b = -0.163$, $p < 0.001$), and social conformity ($b = -0.324$, $p < 0.001$).

In the regression model with PI as the dependent variable (Table 5), we observed a significant direct positive effect of PLS on PI ($b = 0.113$, $p < 0.005$). Additionally, there was a positive indirect effect through perceived luxury perfectionism ($b = 0.036$, 95% CI: 0.008, 0.067) and a significant adverse effect through hedonism ($b = -0.029$, 95% CI: -0.054 , -0.010). However, the mediating effects of perceived materialism ($b = 0.008$, 95% CI: -0.015 , 0.033), self-expression ($b = -0.006$, 95% CI: -0.020 , 0.006), conspicuousness ($b = -0.022$, 95% CI: -0.047 , 0.001), uniqueness ($b = -0.013$, 95% CI: -0.004 , 0.033), and social conformity ($b = -0.006$, 95% CI: -0.032 , 0.023) were found to be insignificant. Therefore, H1 is partially supported.

The second stage investigates the moderating role of the country in shaping the relationships explored in the first stage. Thus, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Model 7 of PROCESS macro. This analysis considered perceived luxury values as mediators, PLS as the independent variable, country as the moderator, and PI as the dependent variable. Income is included as a control variable. Results demonstrated in Table 6 indicate that the country's moderating influence on PLS's impact on luxury values was insignificant except for conspicuousness ($b = -0.163$, $p < 0.05$). In the UK, PLS more negatively influences the conspicuous value usually attached to luxury ($b = -0.287$, $p < 0.05$) than it does in Kuwait ($b = -0.124$, $p < 0.05$).

However, examining conditional indirect effects unveiled a remarkable finding—an index of country-moderated mediation that did not reach statistical significance (Table 7). No differences were observed across countries in the impact of PLS on PI through perceived luxury values, rejecting H2.

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

		KW	UK
		%	%
Gender	Male	75.7	46.3
	Female	24.3	53.7
Education	High school graduate or less	9.3	27
	2-year degree	10.3	7.0
	Bachelor's degree and above	80.4	66
	M	M	
Age		29.8	27.3
Income (USD)		4900–6500	2660–3990

Table 2. Composite reliability and construct loadings.

Constructs	Items	Factor loading	T statistics
Perfectionism	Luxury goods are bought for their excellent quality	0.877	62.379
	Luxury goods are bought for their excellent design	0.877	64.197
	Luxury goods are bought for their excellent customer service	0.793	36.543
Materialism	I admire people who own luxurious homes, cars, and clothes	0.783	34.475
	I like much luxury in my life	0.822	51.508
	My life would be better if I owned certain luxury products; I do not have	0.847	54.805
	It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I cannot afford to buy all the luxury products I would like	0.779	33.874
Self-expression	Luxury products help people achieve the identity they would like to have	0.803	46.361
	People buy luxury goods to reveal a little of who they are	0.652	18.076
	People buying luxury goods belong to an elite class	0.664	18.658
	Buying luxury goods is synonymous with success	0.793	40.193
Hedonism	Buyers of luxury goods are sophisticated people	0.803	28.011
	Luxury goods are bought for a feeling of fulfilment	0.730	17.072
	Luxury goods are bought for self-indulgence	0.692	13.609
	Luxury goods bring pleasure to the owner	0.833	32.728
Conspicuousness	Luxury goods bring excitement	0.887	46.680
	Luxury goods are bought for their distinctive brand design	0.751	24.667
	Luxury goods should be easily recognized by others	0.765	27.355
	Luxury goods are a symbol of high social status	0.670	16.510
Uniqueness	Luxury goods impress people	0.682	16.030
	People buy luxury goods to make themselves stand out	0.752	9.121
	Once a product becomes mass-produced, it is not luxurious anymore	0.490*	3.734
	Luxury goods are bought because they are exclusive	0.867	15.434
Social conformity	People buy luxury products to meet social expectations, norms, and practices	0.729	6.326
	People buy luxury products to do the same as what others do	0.581*	3.159
	People buy the same luxury products their friends buy to feel closer to them	0.779	7.398
	People prefer to buy luxury products that are already used by people they appreciate and admire	0.864	11.465
PLS	Luxury is a symbol of human inequalities and richness (R)	0.511*	3.897
	Luxury makes people buy products far too expensive for their means (R)	0.778	10.707
	Liking luxury is liking a superficial way of life (R)	0.817	13.330
	Luxury and sustainability are contradictory (R)	0.823	14.603
PI	My willingness to buy luxury products would be high while I am shopping	0.678	23.216
	The probability I would consider buying luxury products is high	0.703	27.108

Note: PLS: perceived luxury sustainability; PI: purchase intentions, (*) Item with a factor loading < 0.6.

Discussion

This study is primarily centred on elucidating the complex dynamics of consumer behavior towards luxury products, particularly in a new world emphasizing luxury brands' sustainable practices. The current study focuses on identifying the relationship between PLS and the values consumers attach to luxury, as these values subsequently motivate their purchasing intentions. This approach encompasses a cross-cultural dimension, comparing countries with distinct cultural orientations and levels of sustainable development, expected to lead consumers to pursue luxury items for varying motives.

The current research findings reveal that PLS enhances consumers' perceptions of luxury attributes such as superior quality and durability and increases consumers' PI towards luxury products. These findings are consistent with the established association between luxury sustainability and these luxury values in previous research (e.g. Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Essiz & Senyuz, 2024; Kelleci, 2022; Osburg et al., 2021). Simultaneously, PLS reduces consumers' perception of pleasure, self-expression/identification, and various social values, including status signaling, self-distinction, and conformity to social groups, diminishing

Table 3. Descriptive statistics, properties, and correlations of constructs.

Variables	M	SD	a	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PI	4.680	1.230	0.862	0.892	0.519	0.720	0.441	0.273	0.490	0.511	0.418	0.197	0.150	−0.152	0.024
Self-Expression	3.988	1.316	0.789	0.852	0.537		0.733	0.428	0.540	0.460	0.55	0.434	0.313	0.029	−0.047
Hedonism	5.270	1.248	0.811	0.868	0.623			0.789	0.308	0.166	0.472	0.458	0.347	0.072	0.055
Materialism	3.947	1.519	0.824	0.883	0.653				0.808	0.446	0.454	0.316	0.200	−0.051	−0.051
Perfectionism	5.175	1.311	0.808	0.886	0.723					0.850	0.435	0.222	0.143	−0.108	−0.063
Conspicuousness	5.237	1.020	0.862	0.810	0.516						0.718	0.495	0.426	0.082	−0.037
Uniqueness	5.153	1.104	0.582	0.755	0.519							0.720	0.405	0.157	0.008
Social conformity	5.132	1.106	0.765	0.831	0.556								0.746	0.240	0.019
PLS	4.599	1.235	0.724	0.755	0.552									0.743	−0.022
Income ^c	3.833	1.104	–	–	–										–

Note: SD: standard deviation; a: Cronbach's alpha; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted; ^c = control variable. Numbers in the matrix represent construct correlations. Values on the diagonal (bolded) represent the square root of AVE.

Table 4. Impact of PLS on luxury purchase motives (perceived values).

Effect	Index	SE	P	LLCI	ULCI
PLS -> Perfectionism	0.121	0.047	0.010	0.029	0.213
PLS -> Materialism	0.041	0.055	0.453	(0.066)	0.149
PLS -> Self-expression	(0.116)	0.045	0.010	(0.203)	(0.028)
PLS -> Hedonism	(0.234)	0.043	0.000	(0.318)	(0.149)
PLS -> Conspicuousness	(0.200)	0.039	0.000	(0.277)	(0.123)
PLS -> Uniqueness	(0.163)	0.037	0.000	(0.236)	(0.091)
pls -> Social conformity	(0.324)	0.037	0.000	(0.396)	(0.252)

Table 5. Mediated effect of PLS on Luxury PI.

Mediated Effect	Index	SE	LLCI	ULCI
PLS -> Perfectionism -> PI	0.036	0.015	0.008	0.067
PLS -> Materialism -> PI	0.008	0.012	(0.015)	0.033
PLS -> Self-expression -> PI	(0.006)	0.007	(0.020)	0.006
PLS -> Hedonism -> PI	(0.029)	0.011	(0.054)	(0.010)
PLS -> Conspicuousness -> PI	(0.022)	0.012	(0.047)	0.001
PLS -> Uniqueness -> PI	(0.013)	0.009	(0.004)	0.033
PLS -> Social conformity -> PI	(0.006)	0.014	(0.032)	0.023

Table 6. Country moderated the impact of PLS on luxury purchase motives (perceived values).

Country moderated effect	Index	SE	P	LLCI	ULCI
PLS -> Perfectionism	0.150	0.094	0.110	(0.034)	0.334
PLS -> Materialism	0.014	0.110	0.897	(0.202)	0.231
PLS -> Self-Expression	0.038	0.091	0.672	(0.139)	0.216
PLS -> Hedonism	0.030	0.081	0.713	(0.130)	0.190
PLS -> Conspicuousness	(0.163)	0.080	0.042	(0.319)	(0.006)
PLS -> Uniqueness	0.026	0.076	0.733	(0.123)	0.174
PLS -> Social Conformity	0.068	0.074	0.361	(0.078)	0.214

Table 7. Country moderated mediated impact of PLS on Luxury PI.

Country moderated mediation	Index	SE	LLCI	ULCI
PLS -> Perfectionism -> PI	0.044	0.029	(0.012)	0.106
PLS -> Materialism -> PI	0.003	0.023	(0.041)	0.049
PLS -> Self-expression -> PI	0.002	0.008	(0.013)	0.021
PLS -> Hedonism -> PI	0.004	0.012	(0.018)	0.029
PLS -> Conspicuousness -> PI	(0.018)	0.014	(0.050)	0.004
PLS -> Uniqueness -> PI	(0.002)	0.009	(0.022)	0.014
PLS -> Social conformity -> PI	0.001	0.006	(0.007)	0.016

consumers' PI toward luxury. These results intriguingly contradict findings from previous studies and underscore the inherent contrasts between sustainability and traditional values closely associated with luxury (Amatulli et al., 2021a; Hennigs et al., 2013), influencing intentions to purchase luxury products.

For instance, sustainability, often associated with long-term satisfaction, may not seamlessly align with the hedonistic aspect of luxury, which primarily centres on immediate pleasure and indulgence. Luxury products have historically incorporated elements of conspicuousness and social conformity, where consumers often make purchases to signal their status or to conform to a particular social group. In contrast,

sustainable practices often involve standardization and mass production to reduce waste and environmental impact, leading to fewer unique products. Notably, the positive indirect impact of luxury sustainability on consumers' PI is particularly significant when viewed through the lens of perfectionism. In contrast, the negative indirect effect is primarily significant through hedonism.

It is important to note that the current research involves a broad sample of respondents, exploring their perceptions of luxury sustainability in a general context. This differs from previous studies, which have yielded conflicting findings and focused on various sustainable practices such as ethical sourcing, certifications, donations, eco-friendly initiatives, vintage consumption, or renting (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Amatulli et al., 2018a; De Angelis et al., 2017). Previous research has also targeted specific demographic groups (Eastman et al., 2021; Kapferer & Michaut, 2020; Pencarelli et al., 2019) or luxury consumers explicitly (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Amatulli et al., 2018a; Cervellon & Shammas, 2013; Essiz & Senyuz, 2024; Wang et al., 2021), as well as distinct luxury product categories (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Kong et al., 2021). By contrast, the present study aims for a more comprehensive approach, encompassing a wider range of perspectives on luxury sustainability.

An interesting cross-cultural dimension emerges when comparing Kuwait to the UK. The study reveals variations in the connection between conspicuousness and luxury sustainability between the two countries. Despite being distinct cultures, it is observed that consumers in the UK tend to associate conspicuousness with luxury sustainability more negatively than consumers in Kuwait. Cultural values and orientations towards sustainable consumption and environmental consciousness in the UK could be found in this. The emphasis on sustainable living is often ingrained in educational curricula and government policies. As a result, consumers in the UK are more likely to be self-motivated to prioritize environmentally friendly practices, including their purchasing decisions. However, findings shed light on the lack of differences in the indirect influence of PLS on PI across these different cultural contexts.

Implications

The current study endeavours to refine traditional luxury frameworks within existing literature to offer improved predictions of luxury PI in a global landscape increasingly shifting towards sustainability. This research aims to enhance our understanding of how consumers perceive and engage with luxury products in light of evolving sustainable luxury trends.³ It pioneers a comprehensive exploration of a diverse array of traditional luxury values and their interconnectedness with PLS on one hand, and their impact on PI on the other, irrespective of whether luxury products are explicitly labeled as sustainable. This departure from previous research, which often focused on singular values, and exclusively examined sustainability-labeled luxury products, or specific consumer segments (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022; Wang et al., 2021), allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics influencing consumer behavior in the luxury market. Additionally, the current study offers a cross-country comparison, addressing a notable gap in the literature, lacking sufficient cross-cultural investigations on this dynamic subject.

Recognizing the connections consumers develop between luxury sustainability and purchase motives (values), luxury brands should be cautious when promoting sustainable practices and communicating their contribution to a more sustainable future to avoid consumer skepticism or backlash. While pleasure, enjoyment, and social dimensions are traditional elements of luxury offerings, it is crucial to recognize that consumers often perceive them as disconnected from the luxury sustainable image, which can potentially reduce PI. By transparently communicating their commitment to sustainability and integrating sustainable practices into their products and processes, brands can bridge the perceived gap between luxury and sustainability. Emphasizing exceptional quality and longevity reinforces the value proposition of sustainable luxury products, enhancing PI.

For instance, implementing blockchain technology and Automated Traceability Systems throughout the supply chain can track every step of the production process, from sourcing raw materials to the final product, ensures transparency and traceability (Al-Issa et al., 2022; Fortuna & Gaspar, 2022; Shih et al., 2021). The use of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), which verify the uniqueness of each item and provide a digital record of its sustainable attributes, can also add a layer of authenticity and exclusivity to sustainable luxury products, enhancing consumer trust and confidence (Sisodia, 2023). Additionally, brands can leverage Craftsmanship Index and Smart Quality Control mechanisms can also be implemented to ensure

that products meet rigorous quality standards (Pazzaglia et al., 2021). Incorporating these technologies and systems into their operations allows luxury brands to align with consumer expectations for sustainability while maintaining the allure and prestige of luxury goods (Al-Issa & Thanasi, 2024).

Besides, this study highlights the similarity in consumer perceptions across countries regarding the association between luxury values and sustainability. However, it underscores the importance of considering cultural factors. While the impact of PLS on PI through social values is insignificant in both countries, the negative association between conspicuousness and luxury sustainability is more pronounced in the UK compared to Kuwait. According to Al-Issa and Dens (2023), consumers in Kuwait are often interested in signaling their status through luxury consumption. Thus, luxury brands can effectively engage with their target audience by adapting marketing strategies to resonate with specific cultural values and consumer expectations. This involves tailoring messages and brand imagery to align with the values and preferences of consumers in each market.

Limitations and future research

The current research explores consumers' perceptions of and behavior toward luxury sustainability in different countries and cultures. It is crucial to acknowledge that cultural influences are complex and diverse. Therefore, capturing diverse cultures' nuances within a single study presents a significant challenge. Hence, we advise testing our proposed model across a broader range of nations as consumer attitudes and actions vary significantly worldwide. Future research can also consider incorporating individual-level cultural orientations, such as horizontal IND-COL, as consumers within the same country may exhibit variations in their cultural orientations. Additionally, exploring the moderating role of self-congruity on the relationship between PLS and luxury values can offer a deeper understanding of how consumers' alignment with their self-concept influences their perceptions and value assignments related to sustainability in the luxury context. Adding more control variables like luxury purchase frequency, purchase time, and luxury product category (e.g. cars, fashion items, jewelry, and services) to future studies can also provide valuable insights. Future studies might also consider comparing the proposed framework across distinct types of luxury (premium luxury vs. mass luxury), various sustainable practices, and brands (high vs low transparency and reporting). This could yield additional insights into the nuanced relationship between consumer perceptions and luxury sustainability.

Notes

1. Sustainability in the UK: Trends and Insights. 2022. Available from: <https://Snowdropsolutions.Co.Uk/Sustainability-In-The-Uk-Trends-2022/#:~:Text=Sustainability%20is%20a%20national%20concern,Had%20a%20positive%20environmental%20impact>
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Data availability statement

Data is available on reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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