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Generation Z: sustainability in the luxury fashion consumption

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Master in Marketing

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Business School

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BUSINESS
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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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*“Any luxury too easily obtained is probably
not a luxury at all. ”– Saskia Havekas*

Acknowledgements

As a little child, I loved to be creative and made-up little versions of how my life could look like as an adult. Even though I made up these different versions of possible Me's, I could not decide what I wanted to be. I did not want to get up my hopes and get disappointed later. As a result, I developed a willing power to always do my best for achieving anything I want and have options to choose from. Without this willing power that I carry with me since my childhood, I would not have had come this far. Nonetheless, this dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of several people.

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Resumo

Este trabalho centra-se na percepção do luxo e da sustentabilidade pela Geração Z e no seu comportamento ético de consumo em relação à moda de luxo. Os principais objetivos deste trabalho são compreender como a Geração Z percebe a moda de luxo, a função da sustentabilidade na moda de luxo, o comportamento de consumo da Geração Z quando compra marcas de Moda de Luxo Sustentável e, finalmente, se a percepção da marca da Geração Z muda depois de saberem que uma marca de moda de luxo é sustentável.

Foi utilizada uma metodologia qualitativa através de entrevistas aprofundadas a 20 consumidores de moda de luxo, da Geração Z, no Luxemburgo. Foi utilizado o programa NVivo para analisar os dados.

Os resultados das entrevistas revelam uma visão específica do luxo no que respeita à sua percepção e às suas motivações para comprar. Verificou-se que a sustentabilidade desempenha um papel importante na moda de luxo, associada à qualidade dos produtos. Relativamente ao consumo ético em relação à moda de luxo, foi demonstrada uma diferença de atitude e um comportamento associado a uma percepção de indiferença.

São reveladas novas perspetivas no contexto da percepção da Geração Z sobre o luxo e a sustentabilidade, incluindo a preservação como dimensão e o carácter prático como motivação para comprar luxo, uma associação da qualidade à sustentabilidade e o raciocínio subjacente à percepção de indiferença relativamente ao consumo ético da moda de luxo. São também apresentadas implicações teóricas e de gestão.

Palavras-chave: Luxo, Moda de luxo sustentável, Geração Z

JEL: M31 e O44

Abstract

This study focuses on the perception of luxury and sustainability by Generation Z and their ethical consumer behavior towards luxury fashion. The main goals of this study are to understand how Generation Z perceives luxury fashion, the role of sustainability in luxury fashion, the consumption behavior of Generation Z when they buy Sustainable Luxury Fashion brands and, finally, if Generation Z's brand perception changes after they know that a luxury fashion brand is sustainable.

A qualitative methodology was used through in-depth interviewees to 20 Generation Z luxury fashion consumers in Luxembourg. NVivo was used to analyze the data.

Findings reveal that interviewees have a specific view on luxury concerning their perception and motivations to buy. Sustainability was found to have an important role in luxury fashion linked to the products quality. Concerning ethical consumption towards luxury fashion, an attitude behavior gap and a consumer behavior linked to indifference was shown.

New insights are revealed in the context of Generation Z's perception of luxury and sustainability including preservation as a dimension and practicality as a motivation of luxury, a quality association with sustainability and the reasoning behind indifference towards ethical consumption of luxury fashion. Theoretical and Managerial implications are also presented.

Keywords: Luxury, Sustainable Luxury Fashion, Generation Z

JEL: M31 and O44

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Glossary of acronyms

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

SLF – Sustainable Luxury Fashion

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This study aims to assess the role of sustainability in the luxury industry for young people, especially in terms of their luxury fashion consumption motives and behaviors. The luxury fashion industry has been on a consistent growth from 2016 to 2023, with a temporary fall in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic that slowed down the whole world (Statista, 2022). With a regrowth to nearly US\$108.4 billion market value in 2021, the luxury fashion segment is expected to grow up to US\$132.8 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2022). Numerous scientific articles, books, and annual reports state that Generation Y and Z are the Generation cohorts that have been buying increasingly luxury goods and care the most about Sustainable Luxury Fashion (SLF) (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Deloitte, 2021; McKinsey & Company, 2019; Mohr et al., 2021; Pencarelli et al., 2020; Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022; Shin et al., 2022; Vanhamme et al., 2021). Some studies assert that luxury consumers insist on transparency and supply chain information (Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012; Karatzas et al., 2019; McKinsey & Company, 2019), while others indicate that sustainability is considered as a secondary concern in terms of luxury consumption (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013). We would like to better understand if sustainability is a primary consumption criteria and how the full spectrum of the concepts is perceived by young fashion luxury consumers. The goal of this work is to shed light on this topic by examining the perception of Generation Z on sustainable luxury and their consumer behavior towards luxury fashion. This incorporates asking about their usual ways of buying luxury fashion, the role of sustainability on luxury brands, the willingness to buy SLF and / or second-hand. This research will focus on luxury consumers from Generation Z in Luxembourg which grew up in an environment of daily luxury use.

1.1. Research relevance

Luxury is a complex concept (Osburg et al., 2022). Therefore, it is difficult to define the term (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). Generation Z perceives luxury differently than other generation cohorts (Bakir et al., 2020) and, together with Generation Y, becoming increasingly sustainable and ethically minded (Mohr et al., 2021). There is a need to understand the definition of luxury by Generation Z (Bakir et al., 2020) and identify their consumer behavior around luxury consumption (Shin et al., 2022). Recent literature about luxury concentrates, besides other topics, on sustainable consumption and “new luxury”, which underlines the relevance of the topics (Aleem et al., 2022; Atkinson & Kang, 2022). Aleem et al. (2022) propose to “analyze the new lifestyles of the luxury consumers, involving new concepts and interaction

with new constructs” (p.12). Some of the new constructs mentioned in the paper are ethical consumption, collaborative consumption, and circular economy (Mohr et al., 2021). There is a need to do more research on SLF consumption to identify the ways to prolong the life of a product and the perception of these concepts by young consumers.

The main topics in literature concerning Generation Z and luxury are sustainability and digitalization. Generation Z has a strong responsibility for the environment (Shin et al., 2022), as a response luxury fashion brands were pushed to produce sustainable products (Mohr et al., 2021). The second-hand market is growing in popularity to buy or rent preloved items and consumers try in general to prolong the lifespan of a product (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). However, not everyone is convinced by the idea of sustainable luxury, which is why literature has been studying their (in)compatibility (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013; Kapferer & Michaut, 2015; Karatzas et al., 2019; Mohr et al., 2021; Osburg et al., 2022; Pencarelli et al., 2020; Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). Generation Y and Z seem to have a different perception of luxury, which result in the emergence of a new luxury that demands analyzing their motivations to buy luxury brands (Atkinson & Kang, 2022). Luxury brands should not neglect digital channels, because these are specifically appealing to Generation Y and Z (Pencarelli et al., 2020). Therefore, the impact of social media and mobile marketing is being examined to come up with the best strategies on how to use them. Luxury brands should invest in technology to engage with customers and offer memorable shopping experiences (Deloitte, 2021). New technology like gamification, Metaverse and digital fashion are being explored by luxury brands to catch the attention of young consumers. Technology is being used to come up with new environment-friendly biomaterials (Deloitte, 2021), like for example sustainable polyester (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022).

Luxury and sustainability can be seen as incompatible (Osburg et al., 2022). Luxury is associated with show casing and overconsumption; while in contrast sustainability requires a moderated consumption because of ethics (Vanhamme et al., 2021). Still there is a demand for ethical luxury consumption, which means that sustainability and luxury cannot be such opposites (Vanhamme et al., 2021). More and more luxury companies have been adapting a sustainable approach in their business model to gain a competitive advantage (Balconi et al., 2019; Karatzas et al., 2019; Vanhamme et al., 2021). There is evidence suggesting that 30–40% of luxury consumers seek sustainable luxury and perceive sustainability as an important purchase determinant (Vanhamme et al., 2021). Despite of their interest, some gaps remain concerning the specific motivations to buy sustainable luxury and actual actions and initiatives taken by the luxury consumers.

The meaning of luxury is being redefined by young consumers, especially Generation Y who are born between 1981 and 1996 and Generation Z who are born after 1997 (Buckle, 2019). The definitions

of the different Generations are not clearly established, which explains why there are mixed explanations for Generation Z. According to the US Census Bureau and Pew Research Center, the men and women who are born between 1997–2012 are categorized as Generation Z (Mohr et al., 2021). In the year 2023 the age cohort would be 12 to 26. “These consumers, who grew up in the shadow of 9/11 and the Great Recession, are considered to be a conscientious, hard-working, but anxious generational cohort growing up in the age of smartphones, social media and increased multicultural diversity” (Shin et al., 2022 p.395). While the literature has addressed in depth Generation Y and Baby Boomers’ relationship to luxury, Generation Z’s approach to luxury brands has not been studied so deeply (Jain, 2019; Shin et al., 2022; Williams, 2015). Generation Z is growing into a promising consumption generation to luxury marketers (Shin et al., 2022) and represents the main growth of the luxury market (Bakir et al., 2020), which makes it crucial to better understand their relationship to luxury. As Bain & Company (2021) predict, younger cohorts, including Generation Y and Z, would become more demographically dominant in the luxury market, representing 70% of global purchases in 2021. They should not be overlooked and underestimated because they have a strong influence on the luxury market (Bain & Company, 2021) due to their growing access to disposable income (Shin et al., 2022). Furthermore, Generation Y and Z are sharing their opinions on social media like TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, and many are influencers who connect with other influencers and followers as well as brands on a regular basis, due to their heavy use of mobile devices (Mohr et al., 2021). Their rising power in marketing implies that they have a strong influence on other generations, even though their perception of luxury is different from earlier generations (Shin et al., 2022). Their different approach to consume luxury brands calls for more research into Generation Z’s relationship with luxury brands.

Taking into account the geographic context of this study, this research focus on Generation Z luxury consumers from Luxembourg. Luxembourg is one of the smallest states in Europe with an area of 2,586 square kilometers (University of Luxembourg, 2022) and it has a total population of 650,262 inhabitants in 2022 (Worldometer, 2022). Even though Luxembourg is a small country, it is not only one of the main international economic and financial hubs, but also one of the three European Union capitals that houses numerous international institutions (Dautel & Walther, 2013). The small metropolitan area is located at the heart of Europe, between France, Germany and Belgium which makes it easily accessible (University of Luxembourg, 2022). Luxembourg ranks second place right behind Denmark with 5.143 € per month as European country with the highest average wage in 2022 (Fischer, 2022). Eurostat (2022) states that Luxembourg has the highest minimum wage in Europe with 2257 € per month which is almost 7 times higher than the lowest. By eliminating price differences, Luxembourg shows a purchasing power standard (PPS) of 3 times higher than the lowest in Europe.

Furthermore, Luxembourg shows 1.5 times more jobs than residents due to an incredible development of employment and knowledge-intensive activities (Eurostat, 2022). This attracts employees that work in Luxembourg but live at the frontier of France, Germany, and Belgium (Dautel & Walther, 2013). Taking this information into consideration, Luxembourgish customers purchase regularly at their neighbor countries and vice versa. French luxury companies represent 28.1% of global luxury goods sales and form, therefore, the country that has the most luxury goods sales with US\$8.866 billion in 2020 (Deloitte, 2021). Due to its small size, Luxembourg is often over seen and not taking into consideration in statistics, research and studies which explains the lack of articles about Luxembourg. To the best of our knowledge, luxury consumption in Luxembourg has not been deeply studied. Therefore, there is a need to research the luxury consumption from this powerful economic hub where luxury is highly present in people's life's and, specifically, in the lives of Generation Z.

1.2. Research questions and objectives

This research addresses several questions concerning sustainable luxury. Firstly, there is a need to understand how Generation Z perceives luxury fashion. Therefore, the first research question of this study is:

RQ1. What is the perception of Generation Z concerning luxury fashion brands?

Furthermore, literature mentions that Generation Z gives importance to sustainability and social responsibility. So, there is a need to go deeper and understand their perception on sustainability and the importance of sustainability in luxury fashion. Thus, the second research question is:

RQ2. What is the role of sustainability in luxury fashion from the point of view of Generation Z?

With the rise of second-hand and circular consumption (Mohr et al., 2021), it is important to do research on the consumption behavior of Generation Z concerning SLF. In other words, to clarify if they prioritize sustainable products or a sustainable consumption over the traditional luxury fashion. The third research question is:

RQ3. What is the consumption behavior of Generation Z when they buy SLF brands?

Several papers indicate a competitive advantage using sustainability in their strategies (Balconi et al., 2019; Karatzas et al., 2019; Vanhamme et al., 2021) , however skepticism has been identified on the second-hand market (Lee & DeLong, 2022) and the compatibility of sustainability and luxury (Osburg et al., 2022). We want to find out if a luxury fashion brands' perception changes positively or

negatively in function of an adoption of a sustainable strategy. So, the last research question of this study is:

RQ4. How does the brand perception change after Generation Z consumers know a luxury fashion brand is sustainable?

1.3. Structure of the dissertation

This study is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 is the Introduction, in which this structure is inserted. Chapter 2 consists of the literature review, providing definitions and contextualization of several concepts around the research problem. In the chapter 3 we dive into the methodology to elaborate every step of the project by addressing the research design that structures the project and collect the data according to plan. In chapter 4 the findings are presented. In chapter 5 the findings are discussed in depth. In the last chapter, the conclusions are presented with the most relevant outcomes concerning the role of sustainability on luxury fashion and the related consumer behavior of Generation Z. Moreover, implications for theory and for practice, as well as paths for future research are also presented (Figure 1.1).

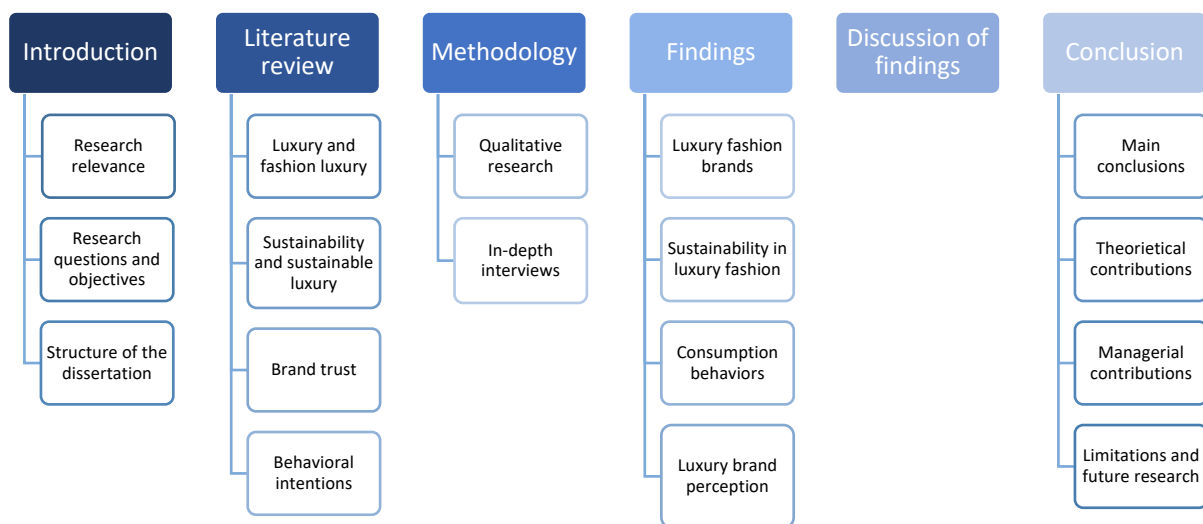


Figure 1.1: Thesis structure

Source: author's elaboration

Literature review

2.1. Luxury and fashion luxury

According to Ranfagni and Ozuem (2022), “The nomadic and multipurpose nature of luxury makes it particularly difficult to define” (p.2). Luxury is a relative concept, it changes intertemporally or culturally which is why a widely accepted definition does not exist (Osburg et al., 2022). The multitude of definitions is also due to the different perspectives of luxury. It is possible to look at it for example from a consumer’s perspective but also from a Brand’s perspective. Luxury can be conceptualized by objective (material), collective (social), and subjective (individual) dimensions; and luxury products provide symbolic, experiential, and functional value (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). Due to its subjectivity, it is often morally criticized, “what is luxury for some is just ordinary for others” (Kapferer, 1997, p.252). Just like art, luxury can be perceived with different approaches that result in subjective outcomes (Kapferer, 2016). As Kapferer (1997) said, “Luxury defines beauty; it is art applied to functional items” (p.253). The terms “luxury” and “prestige” are synonyms (Juggessur & Cohen, 2009). Luxury comes from the Latin word “luxus”, which represents an excessive lifestyle by adopting non-necessities to belong to the elite (Dubois et al., 2005). This explanation goes hand in hand with the traditional conceptualization of luxury in relation to the wealthy classes. Nevertheless, the definition of luxury has evolved over time because it is not static. The rise of democratization and accessibility of luxury brings affordable and large-scale products and services with a prestige image that targets consumer mass. This concept is known by *masstige* (mass + prestige) (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). Furthermore, the increase of counterfeits or knock-off products and the short-term rental market of luxury goods offers more affordable and accessible options that decreases the exclusivity of luxury (Atkinson & Kang, 2022).

Luxury goods are associated with rarity, high quality, and timeless products, which can be perceived as an investment and should be used for a longer period of time. Luxury comes along with high levels of service, and extraordinary shopping experiences (Noh & Johnson, 2019). Kapferer (1998) identified nine main attributes of a luxury brand including 1. Beauty; 2. Excellence/quality; 3. Magic; 4. Uniqueness; 5. Tradition and *savoir-faire*; 6. Creativity; 7. Sensuality; 8. Exceptional; 9. Never out of fashion. Furthermore, De Barnier et al. (2012) came up with seven luxury dimensions: 1. Elitism (not a lot of people can buy it because it is very expensive); 2. Creativity (very Creative, made with a high craftsmanship and gives a sense of magic); 3. Uniqueness (rare and unique); 4. Distinction (for a certain

league of people and represents who one is); 5. Refinement (attractive and shining); 6. Quality (top quality with a superiority); 7. Power (well-known and leading brand in their sector). Pencarelli et al. (2020) generalized the different notions associated with luxury from the literature suggesting nine dimensions to define luxury : 1. supreme quality linked to a sophisticated look; 2. high price; 3. scarcity and uniqueness; 4. a strong aesthetic appeal; 5. hedonism associated with an experience that provides pleasure; 6. ancestral heritage and long history; 7. superfluity or uselessness to survival; 8. exclusivity, in terms of difficulty to acquire a rare luxury product; and 9. a unique and strongly positioned brand image (Dubois et al., 2001; Chevalier & Gutsatz, 2012).

Engagement in luxury consumption is mostly triggered by various socio-psychological motivations. An owner of luxury products obtains prestige, beyond the functionality of the goods, which makes status the primary motivation of luxury consumption. "Luxury consumption also might be driven by motivations to please or express oneself, enhance self-concepts, and signal uniqueness" (Vanhamme et al., 2021, p.8). Five potential motivational factors that drive luxury consumption have been identified by the current literature: hedonic, ego-defensive, uniqueness, social and economic factors (Ruan et al., 2022). The hedonism refers to self-directed pleasure; the ego-defense means emotional self-defense; the uniqueness is related to express a personal style and the need to stand out; the social factors reveal the importance of social approval including social value, consciousness, recognition, and influence; economic factors incorporate monetary motivations, financial success, and price value. These motivations of buying luxury vary depending on the characteristics of the consumer, the type of luxury product and purchase situation (Ruan et al., 2022). Atkinson and Kang (2022) identified five consumption values to define new luxury because the ones for traditional luxury are no longer accurate. The five consumption values are personal fulfilment, inconspicuous consumption, intrinsic experiential value, self-directed pleasure, and sustainability. Personal fulfilment can be seen as the combination of attention capital and life enrichment. Attention capital through the use of social media to get attention which emerged in a new status symbol (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). Life enrichment allows self-actualization, cultural consumption and a deep meaning in the consumers life which enhances their life quality (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Experiences like travel and multiculturalism that provide intrinsic value like freedom, relaxation and well-being represent status (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). Inconspicuous consumption is the use of subtle luxury products where the brand itself is not immediately visible, only people with the cultural understanding will recognize it (Eckhardt et al., 2014). Intrinsic experiential value is the consumers' emotional and intrinsic experiences linked to luxury. Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. (2019) revealed freedom (freedom to do what they want), relaxation, meaning, meaningfulness and well-being as emotions provided from luxury. Because luxury has become more accessible, consumers tend to want experiences that provide them with a distinctive

or unique identity (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). Experiences like travelling are being associated with luxury because they provide consumers with flexibility and cultural capital which allows them to transmit a certain status to others (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). Self-directed pleasure consists of using luxury for one self's pleasure without caring what other people think about it (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Sustainability has increasingly become important for luxury consumers, especially concerning the environment, animal welfare and responsible manufacturing like the use of unsustainable materials and raw animal skins (Lo & Ha-Brookshire, 2018).

Clothing brands range from different attributes like price, quality, and fashionability, and are classifiable from fast fashion, moderate to luxury. Luxury fashion brands offer high quality, rarity, and timeless products. In terms of service, they provide a high level of customer service and an extraordinary customer experience. Luxury apparel can be seen as an investment in a product intended to use over a long period of time (Noh & Johnson, 2019).

According to Heine (2012), Luxury brands can be classified into four levels:

- **Entry-level luxury brands:** Brands who are luxury but are not as expensive and rank just above premium brands. Examples include Hugo Boss and Mercedes.
- **Medium-level luxury brands:** Brands that are recognized as members of the luxury segment but are a step behind the forefront of luxury. Examples include Dolce & Gabbana, Escada and Moschino.
- **Top-level luxury brands:** Brands that are without a doubt known as leading luxury brands. These brands are worldwide known and recognized as luxury brands. Examples include Gucci, Chanel, and Louis Vuitton.
- **Elite-level luxury brands:** As niche brands in the highest segment, these brands determine the benchmark of the best quality and highest exclusivity within their category, and most people do not know them. Elite-level consumers do not only have the financial resources but also the necessary culture knowledge. Examples include Puiforcat.

According to the relativity of luxury, the ranking of a brand is done in comparison to the other luxury brands. For this reason, the categorization of a luxury brand changes with time. There are brands moving up the luxury ladder like Burberry (Klaus, 2012) and others who damaged their luxury image such as Calvin Klein and Jaguar (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

The luxury industry aims to attract Generation Z because they have been identified as the fastest growing segment worldwide (Langer, 2019) with a growing access to disposable funds (Shin et al., 2022). Generation Z represents around US\$143 billion in purchasing power of the US which will continue

to increase with them entering the workforce (McKinsey & Company, 2019). 85% of global luxury sales growth is accounted by Generation Y and Z consumers (Vanhamme et al., 2021). Social media impacts the interaction of consumers with the fashion industry and establishes new trends. Teenagers and young adults are mainly in search of self-worth and self-identity. Luxury consumption and relationships with luxury brands can allow them to feel more empowered and express themselves through their style (Shin et al., 2022). Moreover, young consumers that are status-conscious are easily influenced by the symbolic of a luxury brand, due to the feelings it conveys and the degree of matching their self-image and the brand's image (Vanhamme et al., 2021). Nonetheless, according to Shin et al. (2022) Generation Z "like" rather than "love" luxury brands. They may feel a high level of loyalty toward luxury brands in terms of attitudes and behaviors, but they do not necessarily have strong, passionate feelings for them.

2.2. Sustainability and sustainable luxury

2.2.1. Sustainability

Ethical and sustainable consumerism are often used interchangeably to talk about buying products with minimal impact in terms of social, animal, ecological and environmental (Mohr et al., 2021). Additionally, sustainability concerns are primarily about the environment, animal welfare and responsible manufacturing (Atkinson & Kang, 2022). Terms like eco-friendly, environmentally friendly, green, socially responsible, and organic are also used interchangeably, despite their conceptual distinctions (Vanhamme et al., 2021). The ability of businesses to integrate and implement sustainable initiatives to protect the environment demonstrates if a brand / company is sustainable or not. Sustainability was intended as a permanent sustainable development of economic, social, and ecologic aspects of human existence (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). To explain furthermore the idea of sustainability, the 3 Ps were identified: "the processes involved in production and distribution, the products' use, lifespan and disposability and the impact on place of where the product is made or sold" (Karatzas et al., 2019, p.225). Ethicality is defined as trading under fairer terms, reducing the environmental impact by using renewable, recyclable and/or reused resources in the production of products and supporting materials, but also working in a responsible way within the societies for which the firm either produces or operates its retail in (Guedes, 2011).

Despite that, sustainability actions can be objective in function of the consumer's perceptions (Osburg et al., 2022). There is no general conceptualization of sustainability due to the complexity of the concept. It may vary depending on the context as well as upcoming changes over time (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). For example, Brundtland (1987) report suggests that sustainability can be defined by

three pillars which are economic, environmental, and social (Osburg et al., 2022). Nonetheless, a concept of sustainability divided into four dimensions was proposed to obtain a wider and generalized definition of sustainability (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022) :

- **Environmental:** Sustainability to respect the environment and its resources (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022) like fair energy use, water use and avoid gas emission, toxicity (Balconi et al., 2019).
- **Social:** Sustainability as CSR and corporate sustainability to meet the needs of long-term stakeholders (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022) like for example assuring working conditions, workers' rights, animal welfare, and avoiding child labor, sweatshops (Balconi et al., 2019).
- **Organizational:** Sustainability as a firm's core ideology, by taking on corporate behaviors among stakeholders and all the supply chain's actors.
- **Economic:** Sustainability as a positive performance through a sustainability-oriented culture in the firm and in all its interacting economic subjects.

2.2.2. Sustainable luxury

The concept of sustainable luxury appears for the first time in Bendell and Kleanthous (2007) World Wildlife Fund report in which sustainability is put at the core to achieve authentic luxury. A change in the attitude of luxury consumers towards sustainability in business has been noticed since global developments that took place in 2015, like the Paris Accord 2015 (COP21) focused on Sustainable Development Goals and the Modern Anti-Slavery Act 2015 (Olatubosun et al., 2021). The creation of the 'Fashion Pact' on the 26 August in 2019 with 63 companies of the most influential fashion companies in the world as signatories, brought to light the relevance of sustainability in the fashion industry by committing to mitigate fashion's impact on the environment, including luxury brands like Hermes, Burberry, Chanel, Ralph Lauren, Moncler etc. (Olatubosun et al., 2021). In 2020 the pandemic underlined again the importance of sustainable business models to achieve long-term survival, ethical responsibility, and a sustainable consumption. Ethical luxury has been referred to as sustainable luxury (Severo et al., 2021). It combines ethical criteria such as manufacturing that causes minimal harm to humans, animals, or the natural environment; with luxury criteria like for example prestige, price, rarity, quality (Vanhamme et al., 2021). The aim of eco-friendly products is to achieve a cultural, ecological, and social balance by minimizing negative consequences and maximizing positive impacts (Balconi et al., 2019).

Concerning sustainable fashion, the academic literature offers numerous explanations about the meaning of sustainable fashion (Mohr et al., 2021). "Sustainability in a fashion context is often used

interchangeably with eco-, green-and ethical-fashion” (Mohr et al., 2021, p.5). More and more luxury companies have been adapting a sustainable approach in their business model to gain a competitive advantage (Vanhamme et al., 2021), due to the pressure of continuously growing the brand’s value according to client’s expectations changes in terms of technology and customer tastes (Olatubosun et al., 2021). The luxury industry is floated by high competition, rapid growth of brand selections and counterfeiting, which endangers the uniqueness of luxury. The use of sustainability into luxury brands could offer a solution to counteract this new craved uniqueness to create competitive advantage of higher prestige, by combining exclusivity and consciousness (Karatzas et al., 2019). An increase in the emotional connection between luxury brands and consumer tends to be created with eco-products by establishing a meaningful motivation of purchase, differentiating them from their competitors (Balconi et al., 2019).

There is a debate if luxury and sustainability are compatible or incompatible (Osburg et al., 2022). Some see luxury and sustainability as oxymoronic due to their opposite natures, whereas others consider sustainability as imbedded in the DNA of luxury (Osburg et al., 2021). According to Ranfagni and Ozuem (2022), “luxury is related to an excessive, exclusive, and prestigious lifestyle, whereas sustainability is connected to a frugal lifestyle aimed at reducing, protecting, and respecting the limited resources on the planet” (p.6). Especially luxury has been perceived as incompatible with sustainability due to the fashion industry’s history of a disastrous impact on the environment by being one of the major polluting industries in the world (Mohr et al., 2021). As the third most polluting industry, the fashion industry is placed right after the oil and agriculture business (Balconi et al., 2019). The luxury fashion industry has been criticized to use unsustainable materials and raw animal skins (Atkinson & Kang, 2022) - “the production and distribution of the crops, fibers and garments used in fashion all contribute to different forms of pollution, chemical wastes, ecological hazards and environmental catastrophes” (Mohr et al., 2021, p.1). If the two terms are perceived as compatible also depends on how the consumers viewed luxury in the first place (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015).

It has been argued by some luxury experts that luxury fashion is already aligned with ethicality, such as luxury’s personification of purity with sustainability’s demand for further reduction of impacts on the planet (Karatzas et al., 2019). Luxury is not perceived as sustainable as such; however, sustainability is embedded in the nature of luxury. Due to durability and rarity, luxury uses rare constitutive resources (skins, leathers, pearls, etc.) that depend on the preservation of natural resources and luxury products are intended to last which allows a reduction of waste (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). Furthermore, the two characteristics durability and quality seem to link sustainability and luxury (Balconi et al., 2019). Luxury is expected to implement ethical sourcing to produce its goods. Therefore, sustainability presents a potential ally for luxury to answer to the demand and use as

competitive advantage (Guercini & Ranfagni, 2013). Furthermore, if sustainability and luxury truly were incompatible, there would be no demand for ethical luxury consumption (Vanhamme et al., 2021).

Sustainable fashion represents an alternative trend against fast fashion, which spins around the design, manufacturing and consumption trend, and philosophy to reduce human impact on the environment and social responsibility (Woodside & Fine, 2019). This trend has been around for a while and it is transforming from a “trend” to a “permanent style” (Mohr et al., 2021, p.4). The sustainable fashion trend concentrates on supporting the reduction of pollution caused by fashion through buying products that have a minimal social, ecological, environmental, and animal impact (Mohr et al., 2021). Social is referring to assuring fair working conditions (Gladwell, 2006) like safe and comfortable facilities with a livable wage and reasonable work hours (Tumba, 2022) and assertion of territorial identity of the natural resources (Guercini & Ranfagni, 2013). From an economic point of view, “sustainable luxury fashion should focus on making a profit in the long run with respect for the community and stakeholders of the business” (Mok et al., 2022, p.4). To create a sustainable culture within the supply chain, behavioral rules and a formal organization is needed (Guercini & Ranfagni, 2013). As for the preservation of the environment, sustainable fashion brands are using natural resources in their products favoring the conservation of their sources like silk, alpaca, vicuña, cashmere, camel, yak, (EcoCult, 2023), native wools (Guercini & Ranfagni, 2013) and organic cotton (Mohr et al., 2021). Another approach is to use environmentally friendly materials like sustainable denim (Mohr et al., 2021), sustainable polyester (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022) and recycled content (Pencarelli et al., 2020). Luxury fashion brands that want to be perceived as sustainable should also put thoughts into their packaging and consider using recycled and recyclable materials (EcoCult, 2023) like recycled plastic, biodegradable materials, paper packaging, reusable packaging (EcoCult, 2022). It is all about choosing fabrics that need a low amount of supplies like water, land, and energy; and avoid any textiles made out of fossil fuels (Tumba, 2022). Beside other luxury brands, Stella McCartney stopped the usage of real leather, turning sustainable fashion more fashionable and producing in an animal friendly way (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015). Other brands including the previously mentioned chose to go anti-fur meaning stop using fur in their products like Gucci, Alexander McQueen, Versace, Valentino, and Saint Laurent (The Fashion Starter, 2021). Furthermore, the production of quality and long-lasting products should not be neglected (Tumba, 2022), therefore a craftsmanship that consists of a handmade manufacturing process is necessary (Pai et al., 2022). Luxury fashion rental and the second-hand market is rising, where luxury fashion products are given a second life (Ruan et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2022; Vincent & Gaur, 2021, Deloitte, 2021). These new ways of consumption allow to minimize waste and put quality over quantity (Cappellieri et al., 2020). Big luxury companies have been

entering the gaming world to become more sustainable and attractive to younger generations with a program that allows to try on clothes virtually (Deloitte, 2021). The luxury industry is investing in fashion-tech to focus on sustainability in the design and production of luxury goods, and simultaneously engaging with consumers by using technology to deliver luxury shopping experiences (Deloitte, 2021) - transparency and taking part in the CSR of fashion businesses.

Generation Z, matching their time and era are digitally savvy, value saving and feel a strong responsibility for the environment (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022; Shin et al., 2022). The Generation Y and Z represent the most sustainability-conscious segment (Pencarelli et al., 2020). A study by CGS (2019) suggested that especially among Generation Z, sustainability rises demand and customer loyalty. As a result of the technological, societal, and global changes, young consumers listen to their own beliefs in what is really important to them (personal values), which has an influence on their decision-making regarding products and services (Atkinson & Kang, 2022). The new generations no longer value traditional luxury, instead they value quality, resale value, and want to buy luxury brands that stand out (Vincent & Gaur, 2021). Young consumers (adults born after 1997) are redefining the meaning of luxury (Atkinson & Kang, 2022).

2.2.3. Consumption behaviors

a. Ethical consumption

Purchasing products and services produced / used ethically, without exploiting or harming humans, animals, or the environment is considered as ethical consumption (Lee & DeLong, 2022). It refers to making purchase and usage decisions carefully found on ethical values to make the right decision (Lee & DeLong, 2022). The annual Global Powers of Luxury Goods report of Deloitte (2021) mentions ethical fashion as a concept that is conscious around production methods, working conditions, and fair trade, as for conscious fashion they refer to eco-friendly and green fashion.

Twelve specific reasons for ethical consumption have been identified including fit with peers, making a difference, easy to find, leadership (can make me an opinion leader), savings, higher quality, healthier option, positive identity, relevance (caring about the issues they deal with), higher status, innovative technology, and information (able to distinguish between ethical and non-ethical); and thirteen specific reasons against ethical consumption incorporating monetary risk in trialing, unattractive packaging, non-beneficial (no other benefits other than being ethical), skepticism (skeptical towards the degree of their ethicality), carefree (not caring about the consequences), indifference (giving not much thought), availability in other stores (harder to find), confusion (not knowing what makes a product really ethical), lower quality, too expensive, negative stigma, and

ethical overload (sick of hearing about the topic) (Burke et al., 2014). Clarification is needed like clear labelling which can make a real difference even though some consumers show mixed reaction towards organic and fair-trade labels. A solution could be a formal regulation of labels. The number one reason of consumers to not buy ethical products is indifference, they do not give a lot of thought to them or think that their consumer behavior will not make a big difference (Burke et al., 2014). However, consumers tend to reach for ethical options if they think they can save money or obtain health benefits in the long-term (Burke et al., 2014).

b. Collaborative consumptions

The luxury market is transforming from “owning to sharing and experiencing and even to anti-consumerism and the desire of a simple life” (Gutsatz & Heine, 2018, p.409). There are alternative ways to perceive sustainable fashion, from clothing production in an eco-friendly manner, the purchase of second-hand/vintage, the act of swapping clothes, to the rental of clothes (Mohr et al., 2021). Ranfagni and Ozuem (2022) talk about “new ways of liquid consumption and collaborative fashion consumption that include gifting, sharing, lending, second-hand purchasing, renting, and leasing” (p.8). The act of sharing and renting fashion can also be addressed as slow fashion (Deloitte, 2021). Words like “charity”, “thrift” and “used” transformed into “pre-owned”, “pre-loved”, “retro” to describe the marketplace of second-hand (Fox, 2018, p. 48). According to the annual Global Powers of Luxury Goods report (Deloitte, 2021), vintage and second-hand markets which provide an environmentally friendly and more accessible way of buying luxury products, have turned into a trend. Nonetheless, the perception of second-hand depends on the type of clothes: luxury or vintage second-hand is linked with authenticity and uniqueness whereas fast fashion second-hand is associated with the economic and environmental benefits of prolonging the life of a product (Ramkumar et al., 2021).

The collaborative consumption business model integrates three systems which include (1) Product Service Systems (PSS) where companies provide access to products and services via renting or borrowing, (2) Redistribution Markets where used or pre-owned goods are exchanged, and (3) Collaborative Lifestyles which consist of peer-to-peer sharing or lending (Vincent & Gaur, 2021).

c. Circular economy

The fashion market has been dominated by fast fashion that offers haute couture look alike styles for a low price, which encourages a short product life cycle also known by “linear fashion” that results in enormous waste each season (Ramkumar et al., 2021). To solve the environmental issues caused by the fashion industry, luxury fashion brands are responding with sustainable strategies to achieve

circular fashion (Lee & DeLong, 2022). This consists of abandoning the old-fashioned “take, make, dispose” approach and replace it with a closed-looped system to keep products as long as possible in the supply chain (Lee & DeLong, 2022). Lee and DeLong (2022) state, “sustainable circular system” consists of producers taking actions to increasing the durability and recyclability of products, consumers purchasing environmentally friendly goods with the intention to use for longer durations, and the government fixing infrastructure and rules. The annual Global Powers of Luxury Goods report of Deloitte (2021) defined the circular economy as recycling, upcycling, and thrifting.

Brismar (2019) suggests a Green Strategy diagram with seven main forms of sustainable fashion production and consumption : (1) each product should be produced on demand or custom-made, (2) in an environment-friendly manner, (3) in a high-quality manner and timeless design, (4) with consideration of fair and ethical standards for the workers, (5) with time the need for repair and redesign becomes important, (6) renting, borrowing, giving away or swapping clothes instead of purchasing new clothes or throw them away when you have no use for them; and (7) considering selling or buying second-hand or vintage products. The second-hand trend: “Represents 7 percent of personal luxury market value and grows by 12 percent annually. Thirty-four percent of the true-luxury consumers sell second-hand products and 26 percent buy.” (Olatubosun et al., 2021, p.58). When a fashion product cannot be used anymore because of wear or damage or simply “unwanted”, it should be recycled. In this way, the textile material can be reused to produce new clothes or other textile products (Mohr et al., 2021). The objective is to look at the whole lifespan of the product from production to consumption and after to create a continuous circle of sustainable fashion (Mohr et al., 2021). Both of the above-mentioned consumption behaviors are derived from the umbrella construct of circular economy (Mohr et al., 2021).

2.3. Brand trust

Customers trust a brand when they expect a desirable outcome from a brand according to their hopes and wishes (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022). The literature indicates that expected sustainability from a brand results in an increase of customer trust, especially if the customer cares deeply about the wellbeing of the environment (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022). An apparel brand that launches a clothing line using sustainable materials is perceived as socially desirable due to its brand message of caring about the environment (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022). However, due to trust issues related to the fashion industry history, brands are expected to make communication efforts (Olatubosun et al., 2021). Obviously, it is of great importance that communication efforts avoid luxury “greenwashing”, disperse misleading sustainable claims without actual actions behind, to prevent reputational risks as

a result of consumer cynicism and mistrust (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015). For example, H&M has engaged in sustainability practices that have been criticized because of their fast fashion image associated with the brand that wants to be perceived as sustainable (Noh & Johnson, 2019). In contrast, the brand Lewi's which is considered as a moderate brand has been recognized as a Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) brand that contributes to the industry-wide standards for sustainable products and processes. Consumers view it as attractive and trustful (Noh & Johnson, 2019). Based on these examples, it can be stated that sustainability efforts have different effects on brand trust depending on the type of apparel brand (Noh & Johnson, 2019). This phenomenon becomes especially clear concerning luxury and its different levels of luxury brands (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022). An apparel brand with a high level of luxury is considered as authentic, timeless, and long-lasting which results in high expectations from consuming luxury products. When a consumer purchases a high-level luxury brand the expected desirable outcomes are higher than for a low-luxury brand (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022).

Kumagai and Nagasawa (2022) state that the perceived quality risk is the expected negative outcome from consuming a brand which comes from limited information. Customers have anxiety towards product quality from an unfamiliar product especially if it is innovative. Luxury relates to high quality which explains why an increase in luxury value translates into a decrease of perceived quality risk. Brand attitude is the customers' evaluation of a brand. If the customer expects a desirable outcome of a brand, he has a positive attitude towards the brand. When a customer believes in a desirable outcome towards a brand, his purchase intention is considered as high. As a result, a direct effect was identified of brand trust on purchase intention, as well as the direct effect of brand attitude on purchase intention. Furthermore, brand trust depends on the perceived brand quality. According to Kumagai and Nagasawa (2022) "when consumers perceive a quality risk associated with a branded product, they are anxious about the negative outcomes of the purchase of such a product." (p.7). Risk perception has a negative impact on brand attitude and purchase intention. Depending on the level of brand trust and perceived quality risk, the customer develops a positive brand attitude that leads to purchase intention. The information asymmetry about sustainable products rises quality concerns in comparison with conventional options which can lead to a mistrust noticeable on a negative brand attitude and an absence of purchase intention. For example, recycled material in luxury products can be perceived as negative due to an association with a lack of rarity that turns the product less prestige (Balconi et al., 2019). Recycled packaging seems to be more easily accepted by consumers than recycled materials (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015).

2.4. Behavioral intentions

Behavioral intentions are the intentions to revisit and repurchase a product or service. It can be seen as a representation of loyalty, which can be translated into positive word of mouth, saying positive things about the brand and recommend the brand to family and friends (Oliver, 2010). Brand loyalty can be defined as “A deeply held psychological commitment to repurchase a product or repatronize a service in the future” (Oliver, 2010, p.23). For example, concerning tourism, the most used measure for tourism consumer-behavior studies around loyalty to destination is repeat visitation (Loureiro, 2014). Loureiro (2014) measured behavioral intentions by analyzing the likelihood of speaking about the place, recommend the place, encourage friends and family to visit the place, and the intention to return to the place.

Environmental knowledge has a positive relationship with environmental behavioral intentions; therefore knowledge is needed to build attitudes and behaviors (Kong et al., 2016). Previous research indicates three sustainability information sources for consumers, which includes public education, peer influence and corporate marketing information. Furthermore, four different types of Sustainable knowledge have been identified - declarative knowledge (theory knowledge), procedural knowledge (“how to” knowledge), effectiveness knowledge (knowledge about cost benefits from energy efficiency) and social knowledge (understand others’ motives and intentions), which have an impact on sustainable behavioral intentions (Kong et al., 2016). Studies have discovered that sustainable conscious people and people without sustainability awareness perceive negative emotions towards non-sustainable consequences (Balconi et al., 2019). According to Mohr et al. (2021), information and communication technology have been identified as a critical driver for responsible fashion consumption and an eye-opener towards environmental consequences of fashion production and consumption. Even though fashion brands are becoming increasingly sustainable, they do not inform and encourage enough their customers concerning environmental interests and concerns (Kong et al., 2016). The “4/40 Gap” addresses that around 40% of consumers are open to the idea of consuming sustainable, but only 4% actually buy sustainable products (Makower, 2017). According to Ehrich and Irwin (2005) consumers claim to care about sustainability issues, yet while doing their purchase choices they ignore them to avoid negative emotions. An attitude-behavior gap has been identified concerning the sustainable criteria in the decision-making (Reimers et al., 2017), where people support CSR but are not willing to pay more for it (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). They expect fashion companies to commit in sustainability, especially luxury fashion brands. Nevertheless, people are only willing to transform their attitudes into behaviors when they expect their actions to make a difference (Leary et al., 2014). Therefore, there seems to be a lack of information provided to the people around the topic sustainability and sustainable fashion, which leads to a non-engagement tendency.

Methodology

3.1. Qualitative research

Malhotra et al. (2017) define qualitative research as “An unstructured, primarily exploratory design based on small samples, intended to provide depth, insight and understanding” (p.150). According to Bryman and Bell (2011), in a qualitative interview the researcher pursues interviews in an unstructured or semi-structured manner directly with one or more participants to obtain contextual understanding with a focus on meaning and obtain deep data in a natural environment. Qualitative interviews are to interpret the answers and derive meaning from them and not expect facts from the participants (Malhotra et al., 2017). The obtained results are theory emergent and want to analyze the process of society in a micro approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative research incorporates four traditions : Naturalism to understand social reality through in depth descriptions of people and interaction in a natural environment; Ethnomethodology to understand how social order is created through talk and interaction; Emotionalism to gain access to ‘inside’ experience and the inner reality of humans; Postmodernism to understand the different ways social reality can be constructed with a focus on ‘method talk’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

In the case of the current research, qualitative research has been employed mainly to understand the behavior, feelings, and experiences of participants and to analyze a complex phenomenon (Malhotra et al., 2017). This research wants to analyze and explore the perceptions and motivations all around the topic of sustainable luxury consumption of Generation Z, which demands a contextual understanding through semi-structured interviews to obtain rich and deep data.

Following the approach of Shin et al. (2022), we will apply a qualitative methodology as it is most suited approach to understand the complex phenomenon of consumer-luxury brand relationships. Luxury is subjective and of a complex nature depending on personalized meanings (Shin et al., 2022), which makes it complicated to define the term. It is about quality, intangible value, superior design, and status (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). Moreover, sustainability can be a complex and overwhelming notion due to changes of the concept depending on the context, which is not easy to understand and identify (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). According to Shin et al. (2022), Generation Z has a unique yet expansive view of luxury that encompasses not only traditional luxury but also masstige and non-traditional luxury brands. To get a more in-depth view of Generation Z’s perception of luxury,

sustainability, and sustainable luxury, we chose to do a qualitative research based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

3.2. In depth interviews

According to Malhotra et al. (2017), “An in-depth interview is an unstructured, direct, personal interview in which a single participant is probed by an experienced interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a topic” (p.209). The word “deep” drives to four different meanings in the context of in-depth interviews: 1. “everyday events” because participants gather deep information about a place, activity or event which the interviewer wants to learn about; 2. “context” as deep understanding beyond common-sense explanations of an activity, event or place, but rather explore contextual boundaries and uncover the nature of that experience; 3. “multi-faceted” due to a deeper understanding of multiple views and perspectives of an activity, event or place; 4. “interviewer reflection” because deep understanding reveals the interviewers ways of thinking and talking, practices and assumptions, common-sense and self-interests (p.210).

Bryman and Bell (2011) mentions two types of interviews in qualitative research “the two main types are the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview” (p.465). In qualitative research, the interviewer is flexible to respond to the participants direction, new questions can be asked, and the order of questions can be varied to obtain detailed answers. In unstructured interviews a range of topics are prepared like a “aide-mémoire” before the interview without defined questions, the interviewer lets the respondent answer freely and he responds to points that seem interesting to follow up without interrupting but focus on listening. As for the semi-structured interviews a list of questions on specific topics is prepared like a “interview guide” and even though the order of the questions can vary, they are all asked and with a similar wording. An introduction of the topic in the beginning is not unusual (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.2.1. Research setting and sampling

To collect data, we did individual semi-structured interviews because the research questions have a clear focus instead of a general notion on a topic. It allowed us to address more specific issues without losing side of the important topics to be addressed. To do so we prepared an interview guide (see Annex A) with the main topics that had to be brought up in every interview with predefined questions. The interviews were conducted in French, because nevertheless Luxembourg is a multilingual country where people speak Luxembourgish, German, French and English, the country’s linguistic system is based on the first 3 previously mentioned languages with French as their official administrative

language (University of Luxembourg, 2022). Therefore, to make the participants more comfortable and gather enough people for the research, French was chosen for the interview language. Furthermore, the interviews were held online through Teams meetings during the month of March 2023. The length of the interviews was on average around 35 minutes long varying from 18 minutes to 53 minutes depending on the participant's flow. In total twenty interviews were done, to be agreeable with the five to twenty-five participants suggested by Saunders (2012). We achieved a theoretical saturation which means that sampling was carried on until no new or relevant data seemed to be emerging (Bryman & Bell, 2011), the same topics and patterns of answers started reoccurring. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), once theoretical saturation is achieved there is no need to continue data collection.

To assemble participants for the interviews, we contacted people through direct messaging on Instagram and Facebook by explaining the progress and the purpose of the interview and asking them if they were interested to participate in this voluntary research. The target audience was luxury fashion consumers that live in Luxembourg since limited luxury research has been done in this financial metropole and due to the normalization of luxury consumption by an early age. A snowball effect was also employed as some interviewees also suggest other potential interviewees. As for the participants selection, we only chose people that are above 18 because of legal reasons and that are not older than 26 to respect the age cohort of Generation Z. Table 3.1 shows the sample characteristics. Once all of these criteria were confirmed and people agreed to participate in the interviews, we fixed a date and time that was convenient for them and for the interviewer. All of the participants got a Teams invitation with the link for them to access the meeting.

Participant	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education level
P1	M	25	employed	Undergraduate
P2	F	24	employed	Master
P3	M	18	student	Undergraduate
P4	F	18	student	Undergraduate
P5	F	25	student	Bachelor
P6	F	24	employed	Bachelor
P7	F	24	student	Bachelor
P8	F	25	student	Bachelor
P9	F	23	student	Post-graduate

P10	M	25	student	Post-graduate
P11	F	24	employed	Bachelor
P12	F	24	student	Bachelor
P13	F	22	student	Post-graduate
P14	M	23	student	Post-graduate
P15	M	26	Employed and student	Post-graduate
P16	M	24	student	Bachelor
P17	F	26	employed	Bachelor
P18	F	21	student	Undergraduate
P19	F	23	student	Post-graduate
P20	M	18	student	Undergraduate

Table 3.1 : Sample characteristics

Source: author's elaboration

3.2.2. Interview procedures and guidelines

Once the participants entered the meeting through the Teams link, the purpose of the interview was explained again- it was conducted in the framework of a Master thesis to find out what the perception of Generation Z is on luxury and sustainability. The procedure of the interview was explained once again and permission to audio-record with a digital device was requested. Then, the text was transcribed for analysis. It was reinforced that participants had right to ask questions at any time and to refuse to answer certain questions. Moreover, participants' anonymity was ensured making sure that they would not be identified in the dissertation. Lastly, it was also importance to tell interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers- it is all about their point of view to create a safe place and make interviewees comfortable for the interview.

The rest of the interviews were held according to the interview guide (see Annex A) as a guideline of important topics and questions to be asked, allowing nevertheless an adaption to the participants as the interviews went on. The interview guide was divided into four main topics: the perception of Generation Z on luxury fashion brands; the role of sustainability in luxury fashion from the point of view of Generation Z; Generation Z's consumption of SLF brands and their motivations behind it; and how the brand perception changes after Generation Z consumers know a luxury fashion brand is

sustainable. To get a sense of their perception on luxury fashion brands, participants were asked to give a definition of luxury, cite some of their top-of-mind luxury fashion brands, explain to how they feel using luxury fashion products and tell what they value the most in luxury fashion products. To assess the importance of sustainability in luxury fashion for Generation Z interviewees were asked to describe the concept of sustainability, explain if for them sustainability and luxury are compatible, explain if they buy SLF products, if they trust the claims of luxury brands about their sustainability and explain if sustainable luxury brands are easy to identify. Generation Z's consumption of SLF brands and their motivations behind it were looked into by asking participants how they consume luxury fashion, if they try to prolong the lifespan of their luxury fashion and if they prioritize buying SLF or traditional luxury fashion. Finally, to understand the impact of sustainability on luxury fashion brands perception, we wanted to know if their consumption behavior towards their favorite brands changed after brands announce that they commit to produce from now on only sustainable.

Although there was a predefined flow, it was adapted for every single interview depending on the answers of the participants which allowed flexibility and more in-depth answers. In a lot of the interviews, additional questions had to be asked to get a more in-depth answer from the participants, especially concerning their definition of luxury and sustainability. For example, in the interview with P8, the participant gave us a really broad definition without mentioning what luxury means to her in the context of luxury fashion. Therefore, the additional question was asked "And if you're thinking more about the aspect of luxury products, what are the characteristics that come to mind?". Furthermore, in the interview with P18 the participant was relating sustainability only with good quality products that last long without talking about the environmental purpose. To get a more in-depth answer, the following question was added "And when you think about the planet, what are the goals of sustainability?", which allowed the participant to show that she actually knows a little bit about this concept.

3.2.3. Data analysis

The content analyze is done with NVivo, a premier software for qualitative data analysis used to analyze data from different types of data collection like interviews, journal articles, surveys, field notes and web pages (NVivo, 2023). In this study, NVivo was used to analyze the interviews conducted for this research. According to NVivo (2023), "NVivo allows them to organize, analyze and visualize their data, finding the patterns it contains." In other words, this software is used to code the collected content into different sections and create a visual overview.

Coding is a key step in qualitative research, which consists of grouping data into component parts and name them (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The identified codes emerge both from the answers given in the interviews and from the literature review performed- *theory-generated codes*. Coding in qualitative data analysis requires constant comparison of the data that reveals potential indicators of concepts to determine in which concepts the indicators fit in the best (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The data is coded into three different levels also known as three types of codes: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Open coding is the first level of codes, which consists of breaking up the data and creating concepts and categories. Axial coding demands connecting the different categories by context, consequences, patterns of interaction and causes. The third level of codes is the selective coding, the procedure of determining a core category that integrates the other categories. This consists of rereading the interview transcripts and taking notes of similarities between all of the interviews and important remarks (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It is all about comparing and maintaining a close connection between data and conceptualization (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, there is a need to go over the codes once again and verify if two or more words are used to describe the same category and chose one. Furthermore, the existing literature should be consulted to verify if some of our concepts have been used previously, if so, they should be considered. At this point, connections should be identifiable between the different categories followed by determining general ideas for the different sets of categories.

3.2.4. Ethical consideration

Before starting with the interviews, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent (see Annex B) that was sent to them by e-mail to guarantee data protection and a voluntary participation declaration. By signing the informed consent participants agreed to participate in the study, to be audio-recorded and to the processing of their personal data. The informed consent mentions their right to contact the interviewer to require some modifications concerning their answers during the interview, as well as their right to withdrawal at any time their participation without any justification needed. In addition, the informed consent contains information about the data storage and protection including important contacts participants can reach in case of questions.

After the interviews were performed, and once they were transcribed, the transcriptions were sent to every single participant to be as transparent as possible. This allowed them to read over their interviews and make modifications if needed. It also allowed us to verify the information written down and get their approval towards the collected data.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The 3rd and 2nd order codes were aligned with the interview guide representing the four main topics of our research and their underlying categories. The 1st order codes were identified through a thorough analyze and comparison of the 20 interview transcripts with the current literature. The findings represent a mix of already identified structures in the literature and new aspects resulting from the interviews (see table 4.1). To explain more in depth the composition of the codes and the different point of views of the participants, we will go question by question from the interview guide.

3 rd order codes	2 nd order codes	1 st order codes
Luxury fashion	Dimensions of luxury	Elitism
		Quality
		Strong aesthetic
		Unique brand image
		Hedonism
		Exclusivity
		Preservation
	Levels of luxury fashion brands	Cheaper luxury fashion brands
		Expensive luxury fashion brands
	Motivations to buy luxury fashion	Self-expression
		Price value
		Self-directed pleasure
		Attention capital
		Sustainability
		Practicality
Sustainability in luxury fashion	Dimensions of sustainability	Environmental
		Social
		Animal
		Quality association
		Compatibility

	Compatibility between sustainability and luxury	Incompatibility
	Behavioral intentions towards SLF	Boycott and Boycott
		Attitude-behavior gap
	Brand trust on SLF	Trust
		Mistrust
		Necessity to do research
	Identifiability of SLF	Easy to identify
		Difficult to identify
		Ignorance
Different consumption behaviors concerning sustainability and luxury fashion	Consumption ways of luxury fashion	Buy new
		Buy second-hand
		Buy SLF
		Get as gift
	Lifespan of luxury fashion	Repair
		Sell
		Gift and donate
		Share and borrow
		Throw away
	Motivations for ethical consumption of luxury fashion	Savings
		Relevance
		Transparency
		High quality
	Motivations against ethical consumption of luxury fashion	Monetary risk
		Skepticism
		Too expensive
		Indifference
		Ownership
Role of sustainability on the brand perception of a luxury brand	Emotions	Delight
		Suspicious
	Consumption behavior	Buy more
		Buy the same

		Buy less
		Give the brand a chance

Table 4.1: Codes

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

If we have a closer look at the 3rd degree codes with its corresponding references and sources, which consists of the number of times the topic is brought up (number of references) and how many people talked about it (number of sources), we can clearly see that all the participants had something to say to every main topic in the interview and that no one refused to answer certain topics (see table 4.2). As for the four main topics, the most talked about construct with 897 references is *Luxury fashion* because all the other topics are based on the first one. We also notice that the code *Role of sustainability on the brand perception of a luxury brand* has by far the least references with 81, that's due to its composition of only one main question.

3 rd order codes	References	Sources
Luxury fashion	897	20
Sustainability in luxury fashion	583	20
Different consumption behaviors concerning sustainability and luxury fashion	660	20
Role of sustainability on the brand perception of a luxury brand	81	20

Table 4.2: References and sources of the 3rd order codes

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

4.1. Luxury fashion

The first part of the interview was centered around “RQ1: *What is the perception of Generation Z concerning luxury fashion brands?*”. To get an overview, four main questions were chosen to get a sense of their perceived dimensions of luxury, levels of luxury fashion, and their motivations to buy luxury fashion.

How would you define luxury?

All participants were asked to give a definition of luxury and more specifically luxury fashion. Luxury fashion was often compared to the opposite of fast fashion, “Brands that do not produce fast fashion” (P5). 7 luxury dimensions were identified including 1. *Elitism*, 2. *Quality*, 3. *Strong aesthetic*, 4. *Unique brand image*, 5. *Hedonism*, 6. *Exclusivity*, and 7. *Preservation* (see figure 4.1). The following dimensions were mentioned by all the participants: *elitism*, *quality*, *hedonism*, and *strong aesthetics*, giving an insight of their luxury perception. *Elitism* was by far considered as the most important dimension with 156 references. The interviewees associate luxury products especially with a high price which does not allow everyone to be able to purchase this type of products. For example, P11 said “Luxury is hard to define, but I'd say it's expensive things. Things that maybe not everyone can buy, things that are rather rare.” and P14 added “Luxury products are not accessible to everyone, to begin with, because they are very, very expensive. So, it's people with more advanced financial means who can afford them ...”. *Quality* was mentioned 72 times referring to a higher and better quality expected from luxury products, “Luxury is above all good quality.” (P5). Even though quality is expected, it is not always a given, “Because even if not all of them, the majority are still of better quality than basic products.” (P13). The dimension *hedonism* was addressed 80 times, where buying luxury fashion is considered as making a pleasure to oneself without caring what other people think. For example, P10 “What's also important to me is that it suits my style and that I like it. I'm not someone who necessarily goes with fashion.” *Strong aesthetic* was identified as a luxury dimension with 69 references, describing it as “beautiful” (P16) and “extraordinary, bizarre or fashionable” (P17). Therefore, our participants perceive luxury products as unique and outstanding, however it is not necessarily considered as beautiful for everyone. Moreover, *unique brand image* talked about by 7 participants with 48 references is linked to a specific look which allows to identify the brand. Like for example, the “snake” from Zadig Voltaire (P11) and the logo from Gucci (P10). As for *exclusivity*, it was the least talked about dimension, only brought up by half of the participants with 34 references. Our participants perceive certain luxury products as rare and difficult to have access on due to a limited number of productions. The last dimension *preservation* was talked about by 14 participants with 38 references mentioning a sense of protection and vigilance towards their luxury products to keep them as long as possible. For example, P7 said “In fact, when I use luxury products, I'm very careful with them because they're normally very expensive and I don't want to damage them at all. So, it's a bit of vigilance that you feel.”

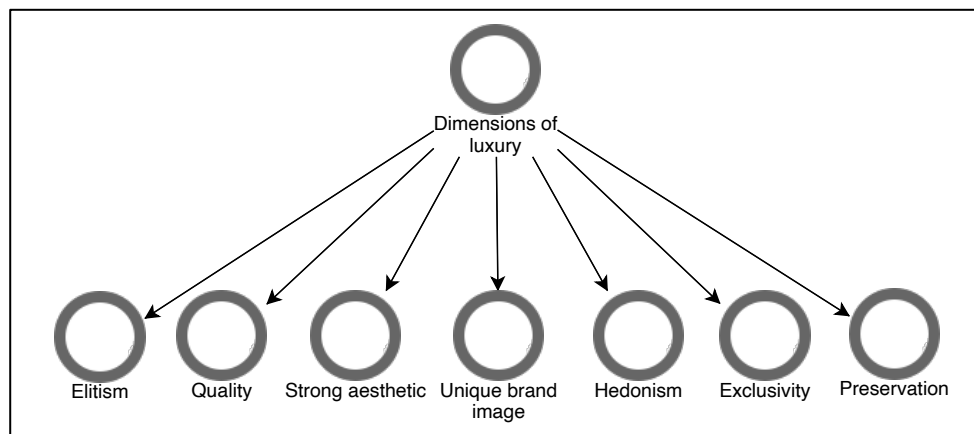


Figure 4.1: Dimensions of luxury

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

What luxury fashion brands pop immediately into your mind?

Every participant was asked to cite some luxury fashion brands to understand how many levels of luxury fashion brands they perceive and identify their top-of-mind luxury fashion brands. It was concluded that most people perceive only two levels of luxury fashion brands: 1. *Expensive luxury fashion brands*, and 2. *Cheaper luxury fashion brands* (see figure 4.2). These findings are based on the principal that people referred to the price differences between certain luxury brands to explain the different levels. For example, P11 mentioned "I think there's a level 1: these are luxury brands, but they're still affordable." and P18 said "Yes, for example, I know that Guess is more of an accessible brand, so it's rather reasonably priced compared to Louis Vuitton, which is rather more expensive." Only P14 thinks there is only one level of luxury because on itself it is already a higher level. All the participants brought up expensive luxury fashion brands (92 references) and 15 talked also about cheaper luxury fashion brands (34 references). *Expensive luxury fashion brands* mentioned include Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Gucci, Christian Dior, Chanel, Prada, Christian Louboutin ... and cheaper luxury fashion brands talked about are Michael Kors, Guess, Hugo boss, Armani, Sandro, Longchamp, Furla ... The three top-of-mind luxury brands are by far Louis Vuitton, Hermès, and Gucci. Nonetheless, a minority of the participants cited fast fashion brands as luxury fashion brands explaining that these brands have some exclusive products with a high price tag. For example, P11: "Yes, because with Nike, for example shoes, on the one hand you have shoes that everyone can buy at Footlocker or somewhere else, and then you also have shoes that are rare and expensive, for example Travis Scott's Nike Dunk, which costs 2,000 euros, or another Travis Scott shoe. Some of the more limited ones."

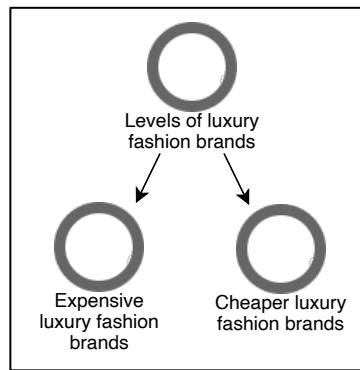


Figure 4.2: Levels of luxury fashion brands

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

How do you feel when you use a luxury fashion product? What do you value in a luxury fashion product?

The following two questions aimed to identify the motivations of our participants to buy luxury fashion brands. We found 6 different motivations for a luxury fashion consumption: 1. *Self-directed pleasure*, 2. *Price value*, 3. *Attention capital*, 4. *Practicality*, 5. *Self-expression*, and 6. *Sustainability* (see figure 4.3). The main motivations to buy luxury fashion are *self-directed pleasure*, *price value* and *attention capital*. *Self-directed pleasure* was expressed through the personal pleasure of buying luxury products without caring about other people opinions, which was brought up by 19 participants with 93 references. For example, P14 said “I don't do it for other people to look at me. So, obviously, if you're better dressed, people will see you differently, but it's not in my interest. My interest is to feel good in my skin and with myself, and if I do it, it's simply for pleasure.” *Self-directed pleasure* was also addressed as a proudness to being able to make oneself a pleasure by buying a luxury product with his/her own money, “It's also how we feel, because sometimes we've paid for it with our own money.” (P13). *Price value* was identified through people's concerns about the price and quality balance such as finding good products for a fair price. 17 participants talked about the *price value* aspect mentioning it 48 times. For example, P2 told “I'd say the quality has to match the price, so it should have a good quality.” and P7 said “Generally speaking, since I'm a student and I don't have much money, when I buy a luxury product, I usually make sure it's good quality too.” However, P7, P8, P11, P12, P13 and P14 also mentioned that quality is not always to be expected in luxury but that for them it is a major criterion to buy luxury, so the *price value* must be correct to be worth it to invest in. *Attention capital* is related to the satisfaction of getting attention from others due to a luxury product resulting in a feeling of “superiority to others” (P1), mentioned by 17 participants 45 times. *Practicality* was identified through 13 participants mentioning that they pay attention to buy a luxury product that is comfortable, compatible with their garderobe and versatile (37 references). For example, P7 said “If

it's not comfortable, I'm not going to wear it, so it's not going to be worth it.”, P17 mentioned “I value that it's something I can easily incorporate into my wardrobe and wear a lot.” and P8 explained her thoughts before buying a luxury product “Then I start looking at how much it costs. Is it practical? Is it impractical? Why should I use it? Where can I use it? Where do I buy it? Or is it just going to sit in my wardrobe and I'm not going to do anything with it?”. *Self-expression* refers to how people choose to present themselves based on their preferences in a product. It consists of wanting to express themselves through their own style without following the crowd and choosing visible logos, mentioned by half of the participants 23 times. For example, P10 told “But then, I'm not someone who has a t-shirt with "Hermès" printed on it. I like sober things.” Finally, 11 of our participants mentioned that *sustainability* is one of their motivations to buy luxury fashion with 21 references. *Sustainability* concerning the search for luxury fashion brands that care about the environment, animal welfare and social responsibility.

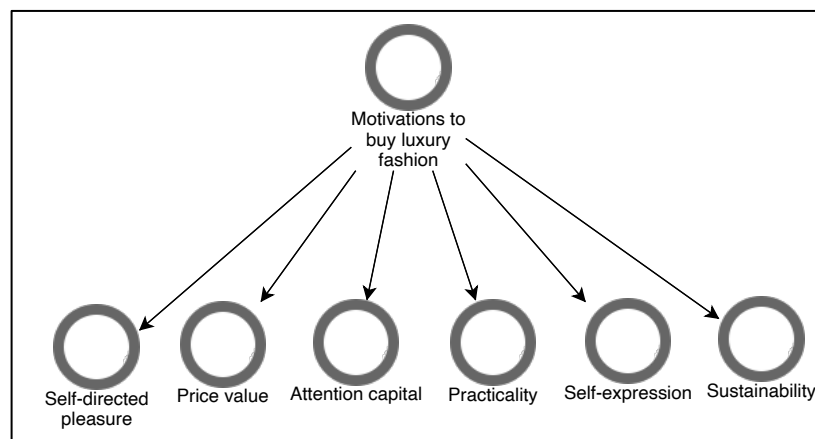


Figure 4.3: Motivations to buy luxury fashion brands

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

4.2. Sustainability in luxury fashion

The second part of the interview was centered around “*RQ2: What is the role of sustainability in luxury fashion from the point of view of Generation Z?*”. Five main questions were asked to understand their perceived dimensions of sustainability, compatibility between luxury and sustainability, behavioral intentions towards SLF, brand trust on SLF, and identifiability of SLF.

How would you describe the concept of sustainability?

Due to the complex meaning of sustainability, a definition of the term was asked from every participant to find out what they know about sustainability and what they associate with it. We

identified four dimensions of sustainability perceived by our interviewees: 1. *Environmental*, 2. *Animal*, 3. *Social* and 4. *Quality association* (see figure 4.4). Sustainability is mostly associated with the *environmental* dimension, talked about by all the participants with 142 references. It was addressed as respecting the environment by using natural and resistant ingredients, considering recycled materials, and avoiding pollution. For example, P13: “Sustainability means using resources to meet the needs of this generation, without impacting future generations.” and P9: “Use materials that are not difficult to recycle and use paper or cardboard packaging instead of plastic... And then try to use materials that don't come from too far away, that are for example a European brand, that use materials that are produced in Europe and not in Asia to reduce transport journeys.” *Social* consists of “protecting human rights” (P12), respecting the “working conditions” of the workers (P6), and having a “fair salary” (P11), talked about by 18 participants 43 times. Especially one aspect of the social dimension lies in their heart which is child labor, “And also, for some brands, I won't buy things because of their image. Like Balenciaga, there was the scandal with the children.” (P2). The aspect *animal* was identified as a dimension due to ¼ of the participants mentioning it 35 times. It is linked to avoiding products for which animals had to suffer like for example fur and leather. Using crocodile is considered as a tabu by our participants, as for the use of fur and leather there are mixed opinions. Especially, for leather “it's very traditional to associate leather, for example, with luxury and good quality” (P9), which makes it difficult for the participants to change habits. Lastly, *quality association* was expressed by 17 participants that talked about quality in relation to sustainability in a sense that they expect a sustainable product to last long which requires a high quality (68 references). Like for example P1: “Sustainability is something that lasts, that tries to last long enough, that can be passed on from generation to generation.” and P15: “I think it's really about keeping this product as long as possible. And that's where the quality of the product comes in.”

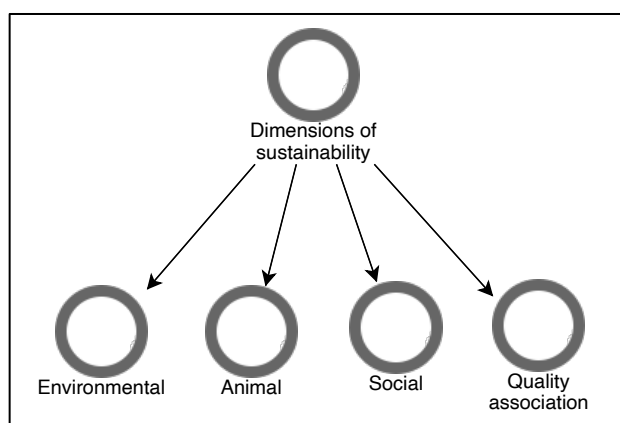


Figure 4.4: Dimensions of sustainability

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

Do you think sustainability and luxury are compatible? How? Why?

There is an ongoing debate if luxury and sustainability are compatible or incompatible. Therefore, we included a question about compatibility in our interviews to find out what our participants thoughts are. The findings revealed: 1. *Compatibility* and 2. *Incompatibility* (see figure 4.5). 15 participants see luxury and sustainability as compatible due to its high-quality nature which is characterized by durability and rarity that allows a reduction of waste (31 references). The high price of luxury is also considered as an ally for sustainability as the result is buying less. P9 talked about it “I don't think it's as easy to buy ten Louis Vuitton bags for a small price. So maybe we don't consume them as much.” The other 5 participants think that they are incompatible due to the bad reputation of the luxury fashion industry polluting the environment (8 references), “They would rather throw things away and burn them than put them on sale.” (P10). All in all, most of the participants think they are compatible. Nonetheless, their compatibility is debated because there is a perception that some luxury brands do not care about sustainability but only concentrate on their profits without caring about their impact on the rest. P14 brought it to the point “I think they could be, they could have a relationship together, but unfortunately brands always chose their profits, their authority. And that's a little bit what distances luxury from sustainability.”

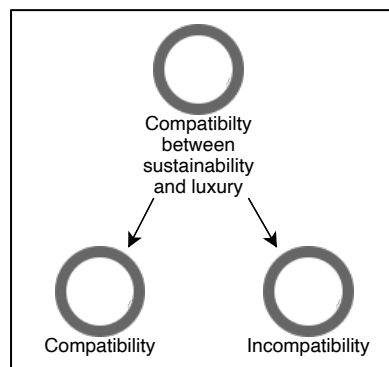


Figure 4.5: Compatibility between luxury and sustainability

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

Do you usually buy SLF products? Why? / Why not?

To find out how our participants feel about SLF and what their behavioral intentions are, a question about their buying habits was asked. We identified two behavioral intention patterns being: 1. *Boycott and Boycott* and 2. *Attitude-behavior gap* (see figure 4.6). *Boycott* consists of not buying from a brand that makes no sustainability efforts. *Boycott* on the contrary, is when a consumer buys a brand based on their contribution to sustainability to make a difference. Only 12 participants mentioned 22 times that they have already knowingly bought sustainable luxury or not bought non-SLF. There is a need to point out that people that talk about *boycott* referred mostly to fast fashion

brands, which shows that they apply their attitudes when they are confronted with extremes. However, 18 participants showed an *attitude-behavior gap*, where they claim to care about sustainability but ignore the issues while shopping and do not want to pay more for it (69 references). For example, P8: “When I buy, as I said, I don't pay attention to that. I don't even think about it.” and P14: “It's important for the selection process, but you can't change purchasing power for the sake of durability.”

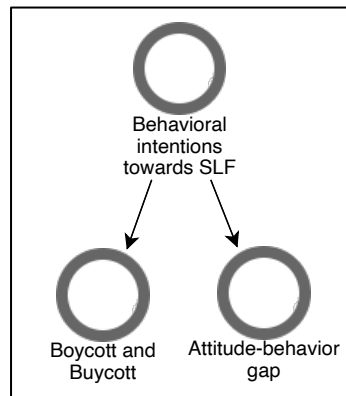


Figure 4.6: Behavioral intentions towards SLF

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

Do you rely on the claims of luxury brands concerning their sustainability? Why? / Why not?

Participants were asked about their brand trust to understand how they feel about sustainability claims from luxury fashion brands and three reactions were identified: 1. *Trust*, 2. *Mistrust*, and 3. *Necessity to do research* (see figure 4.7). *Trust* was addressed as having faith in the claims of SLF brands and *mistrust* was expressed as suspiciousness in the sustainable claims of luxury fashion brands. 19 participants mentioned a certain degree of mistrust with 56 references and only ¼ of the participants expressed trust towards SLF brands with 6 references, due to a lack of proves and regulations of the claims. For example, P9: “Because I know that a brand can very easily have a label that it's sustainable without actually being sustainable. I think there are a lot of factors that haven't been considered.” against P13: “I can still have a certain amount of confidence in national products, because there are Luxembourg regulations.” Lack of information can create doubts towards sustainable claims of luxury fashion brands, which is why 11 participants mentioned the *necessity to do research* (24 references). The risk of greenwashing leads once again to doubts and mistrust, which underlines the *necessity to do research*.

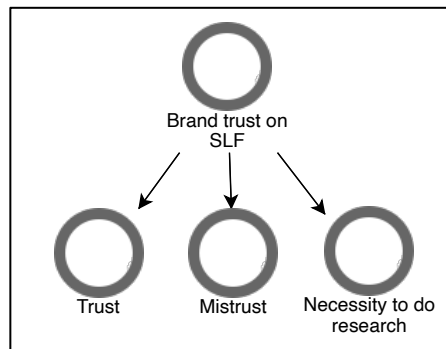


Figure 4.7: Brand trust on SLF

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

Do you think it is easy to identify a sustainable luxury brand?

Based on the brand trust issues identified from the literature review there was a need to analyze the identifiability of a SLF brand. We found three different reactions towards this question: 1. *Easy to identify*, 2. *Difficult to identify*, and 3. *Ignorance* (see figure 4.8). *Easy to identify* based on visible indicators and trust, *difficult to identify* based on mistrust towards the labels and claims of the brands. The findings were similar compared to the previous question, 15 participants with 33 references perceive SLF brands *difficult to identify* and only a minority being 4 participants with 6 references think they are *easy to identify*. Therefore, most of the participant do not trust SLF brands, P17 "the problem with sustainable terms is that there are lots of different definitions of the term and everyone can just put the little sustainable tag on it... But since there are no specific guidelines, it's very easy to claim this without really having any proof." $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants mentioned that they do not know how to answer the question because they do not pay attention, which we categorized as *ignorance* (38 references). Like for example P1 "I don't pay attention. Whether it's traditional or sustainable, I couldn't give you a 100% answer to the question."

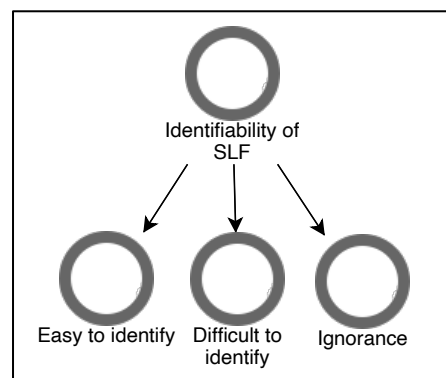


Figure 4.8: Identifiability of SLF

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

4.3. Consumption behaviors

The third part of the interview was centered around “RQ3: What is the consumption behavior of Generation Z when they buy SLF brands?”. To answer this question, three main questions were asked in relation to their consumption ways of luxury fashion, the lifespan of their luxury fashion and their motivations for and against ethical consumption of luxury fashion.

How do you consume luxury fashion? Why? / Why not?

To get a sense of our interviewee’s consumption behavior towards luxury fashion, they were asked about their ways of buying luxury fashion. The results showed four different consumption ways of luxury fashion: 1. *Buy new*, 2. *Buy SLF*, 3. *Buy second-hand*, and 4. *Get as gift* (see figure 4.9). All the participants expressed a satisfaction in buying new, linked to the purchase experience, and certainty of certification (42 references). P16 brought it to the point, “... maybe it's also the feeling of the new, of being in the store, of being in the association with all the people around you, with the employees who help you choose, and of being at the checkout. They do the wrapping, and you are waiting, maybe you are offered something to drink, it's also what you're paying for, the service, the surroundings.” Only 7 participants have at least once bought a SLF product (17 references), which aligns with the attitude-behavior gap previously mentioned. ¾ of the participants mentioned 28 times having bought second-hand in the past, however not all of them had a pleasant experience because of a risk towards received authenticity and quality. For example, P10: “It wasn't like in the pictures. It was a little more worn than it looked.” and P11: “Second-hand, if you buy online, can be a scam.” Nearly, every participant has received luxury fashion as a gift, which incorporates also getting luxury fashion from their parents. Except for P2, P8 and P11 that clearly stated they do not get such kind of gift, they buy it with their own money.

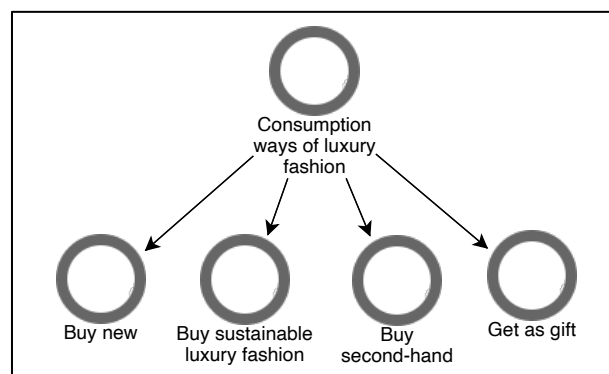


Figure 4.9: Consumption ways of luxury fashion

Source: author’s elaboration based on NVivo output

Do you try to prolong the lifespan of your luxury fashion? Why? How?

To find out if our interviewees make efforts towards a “sustainable circular system” by prolonging the lifespan of their luxury fashion, participants were asked about their habits concerning their luxury fashion products. The findings presented five habits including: 1. *Repair*, 2. *Share and borrow*, 3. *Sell*, 4. *Gift and donate* and 5. *Throw away* (see figure 4.10). 18 participants *repair* when a product starts degrading (26 references), 12 participants *share and borrow* to increase usage (18 references) and $\frac{3}{4}$ *sell* to get some of their money back instead of throwing away (30 references). *Gift and donate* were identified as a single dimension because donating is some kind of gifting. All the participants donate or give when they do not want a product anymore to friends, family or people in need (42 references), “Sometimes I donate my clothes to children in need.” (P2). Lastly, a minority mentioned that they *throw away* their luxury fashion without recycling when they have become unusable which does not respect the “sustainable circular system” (4 sources and 11 references), for example P13: “If it's still in reasonably good condition, I put it in the garbage cans for the poor. So that's that. But now, if it's in very poor condition, there's no point in giving them the trash. ... But if now it's really broken, then no, I'll have to throw it away.”

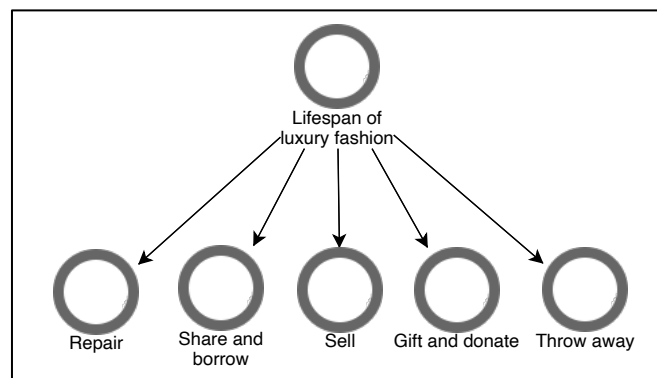


Figure 4.10: Lifespan of luxury fashion

Source: author’s elaboration based on NVivo output

Do you prioritize buying SLF or traditional luxury fashion? Why?

By asking the participants their priority in terms of their choice between sustainable or traditional luxury fashion and assembling insights given throughout the interviews, we were able to identify their motivations for and against ethical consumption of luxury fashion.

Four motivations have been found for ethical consumption including: 1. *Relevance*, 2. *Savings*, 3. *High quality*, and 4. *Transparency* (see figure 4.11). *Relevance* consists in caring about sustainability and the actions that the brand does, which was mentioned by 17 participants with 76 references. For

example, P6 said “That would be the right direction. I also think it encourages people because the new trend is to be green. It gives competition to other brands who may have to do it too. And I think it's going in a direction that's good for sustainability.” 12 participants talked about *savings* 24 times, which is about choosing a cheaper alternative like second-hand and getting some money back through selling their luxury fashion. For example, P18 mentioned “I'm someone who tends to buy second-hand clothes because, as I said, it's more... how shall I put it... affordable.” *High quality* in terms of an expected good quality from SLF, but not better quality compared to traditional luxury fashion. Nonetheless $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants mentioned *high quality* as a motivation for ethical consumption (24 references), like for example P19 said “There's also leather, I can't say vegetarian now, but fake leather. But good quality, that exists too.” Moreover, half of the participants expressed a need for *transparency* (19 references), consisting of the desire to get proof of sustainable claims like for example P9: “I'd like to know the details of production, what materials were used and by whom, so that it's not produced by children. Also, I think it would be nice if they had this list with transparency, so the products listed with percentages that were spent on certain steps.”

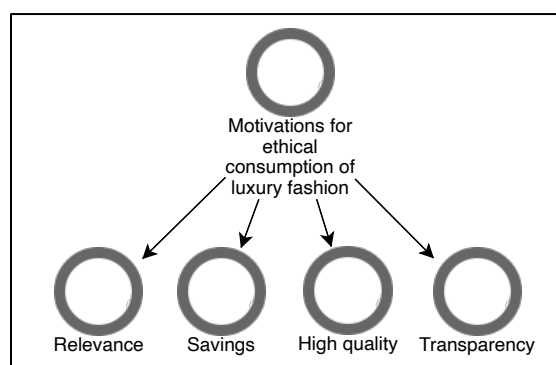


Figure 4.11: Motivations for ethical consumption of luxury fashion

Source: author's elaboration based on NVivo output

Five motivations against ethical consumption were identified including: 1. *Skepticism*, 2. *Monetary risk*, 3. *Ownership*, 4. *Indifference*, and 5. *Too expensive* (see figure 4.12). *Skepticism* related to mistrust in the ethicality of the brands was expressed by 17 participants 63 times. *Monetary risk* while buying second-hand and trying out ethical products, was mentioned by half of the participants 22 times. Our findings showed various monetary risks linked to a quality risk of possible counterfeit, higher than expected degradation or lack of hygiene. As for P1, P10 and P12 see using second-hand products as unhygienic related to a quality risk, “with shoes, you run the risk of the person before suffering from ringworm, a contagious microbe.” (P1). The findings revealed *ownership* as a motivation against ethical consumption, where 13 participants explained the desire to have a luxury fashion product to themselves without having to share it or knowing that it belonged to someone else before (26

references). All the participants showed some level of *indifference* by not giving a lot of thought and not paying attention to sustainability (100 references), “I’ve only got 3-4 products and I wasn’t paying attention when I bought them.” (P11). This indifference was explained by a lot of the participants as not giving much thought to sustainability due to the occasional purchase of luxury fashion. For example, P6 said: “when it comes to fashion, as I don’t buy a luxury product every month, I don’t think about it anymore than I do about other aspects of sustainability.” Lastly, SLF is perceived as *too expensive* compared to traditional luxury by more than half of the participants with 31 references. However, they also insisted that if a SLF brand is not more expensive than a traditional one that something would have to be off.

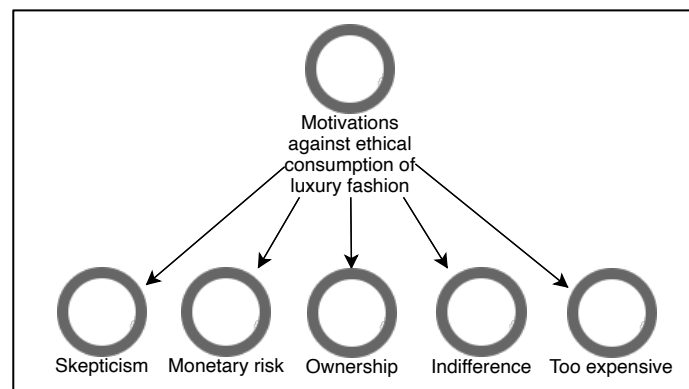


Figure 4.12: Motivations against ethical consumption of luxury fashion

Source: author’s elaboration based on NVivo output

4.4. Luxury brand perception

As for the fourth part of the interviews the aim was to find out if our participants perception of a luxury fashion brand changes after turning sustainable responding to the question “RQ4: *How does the brand perception change after Generation Z consumers know a luxury fashion brand is sustainable?*”. One main question was chosen to identify the result on their emotions and consumption behavior.

How would you feel if one of your favorite brands announces that they commit to produce from now on only sustainable products? Would you still buy from the brand? Would you buy more? Would your consumption behavior change? Why?

We wanted to explore the role of sustainability on a luxury fashion brand perceived by our interviewees, therefore a scenario was created where their favorite brand turns sustainable. The findings showed two different emotions: 1. *Delight* and 2. *Suspicious* (see figure 4.13). *Delight* in a sense of happiness and positive brand perception, “That would be the right direction. I also think it

encourages people because the new trend is to be green.” (P6). *Suspicious* linked to mistrust and skepticism towards their actions after the commitment to sustainability. The main emotion perceived by 18 participants with 31 references was *delight*, even if 5 felt nonetheless a little bit *suspicious* with 8 references.

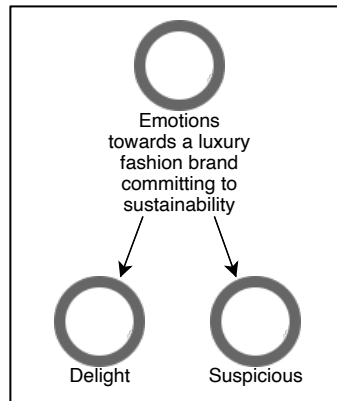


Figure 4.13: Emotions towards a luxury fashion brand committing to sustainability

Source: author’s elaboration based on NVivo output

To get a sense of sustainability’s power on the brand, their new consumption behavior was analyzed. Four different reactions were found: 1. *Buy the same*, 2. *Buy more*, 3. *Buy less* and 4. *Give the brand a chance* (see figure 4.14). *Buy the same* related to just buy when the need is there and not having the means to buy more, *buy more* because their tendency to buy from that brand increased, *buy less* due to mistrust of their real actions and *give the brand a chance* linked to a certain skepticism of their authenticity but being open to let them try. 11 participants said they would buy the same (22 references), 6 mentioned they would buy more (10 references) and only two participants said they would buy less from the brand (4 references). 4 participants added they would like to give the brand a chance before making a final decision (6 references).

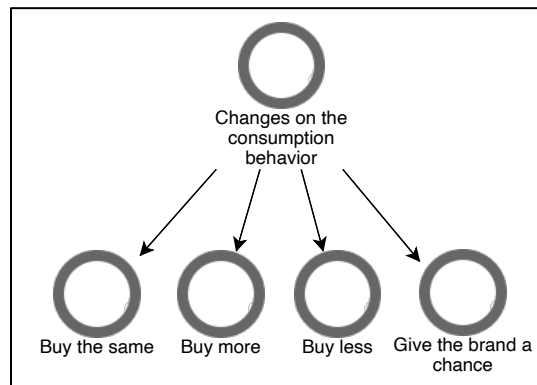


Figure 4.14: Changes on the consumption behavior

Source: author’s elaboration based on NVivo output

Discussion of the findings

Firstly, by asking our respondents to describe luxury we noticed that they understand what luxury means and what it represents, bringing up the main dimensions of luxury. *Elitism*, *quality*, *hedonism*, and *strong aesthetics* were the most talked about topics in relation to luxury fashion. *Elitism* was chosen instead of *high price* (Kapferer, 1998) because it does not only refer to expensive products but also to a limitation of people that can afford luxury products (De Barnier et al., 2012). *Quality* refers to a superior quality (De Barnier et al., 2012; Kapferer, 1998), which is considered as a dimension of luxury even though it is not given. We took into consideration the code *supreme quality* (Pencarelli et al., 2020), however it also refers to a sophisticated look which would overlap with our next code *strong aesthetic*. Pencarelli et al. (2020) suggested *a strong aesthetic appeal*. However, we decided to go with *strong aesthetic*- that way there is no assumption that it is considered as beautiful for everyone. Moreover, the dimension *hedonism associated with an experience that provides pleasure* (Pencarelli et al., 2020), was shortened to *hedonism* for facilitating representation purposes. Buying luxury fashion is considered as making a pleasure to oneself without caring what other people think. Moreover, our participants talked about *unique brand image*, which aligns with the suggested dimension *a unique and strongly positioned brand image* (Pencarelli et al., 2020), which was shortened for the same reasons as previously mentioned. This study revealed *preservation* as a new luxury dimension, which means that our participants are careful with their luxury fashion and want to be able to use them for a long period of time. However, we do not know if this dimension is only perceived by our participants or also by other generations because according to Atkinson and Kang, (2022) younger customers perceive luxury differently. *Exclusivity* linked to a limited access to rare luxury products (Pencarelli et al., 2020) was only mentioned by half of the participants. This could be linked to the rise of democratization and accessibility of luxury which is known as *masstige* (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022).

Furthermore, our interviewees seem to have a simplified view on the luxury levels, which “depends on the price” (P12) differing between cheap and expensive luxury brands. This does not align with Heine (2012) that suggests 4 levels of luxury brands: *entry-level brands*, *middle-level brands*, *top-level brands*, and *elite-level brands*. Nonetheless, the drop of some fast fashion brands, leave some questions open about their understanding of luxury. Aligning with the research of Shin et al. (2022), our results reveal that there is an association between traditional luxury brands, *masstige* and non-traditional luxury brands with the category of luxury. Some participants talked about non-traditional luxury brands where two of the mentioned brands are the exact same ones as in Shin et al. (2022) article: Nike and Apple. In our research the participants justified the brands with their high price tag

linked to exclusive limited-edition products and collaborations. Therefore, they associate luxury especially with a high price which was reflected by our results of elitism being the 1st order code with the most references. Nonetheless, most of the luxury fashion brands mentioned were expensive luxury fashion brands.

According to Atkinson and Kang (2022), luxury has been through changes in the last years which is why they talk about new luxury. They identified new luxury motivations to buy of which *attention capital*, *inconspicuous consumption*, *self-directed pleasure*, and *sustainability* reoccur in our research. The main motivation to buy luxury fashion for our participants seems to be *self-directed pleasure*, consuming luxury products for personal pleasure without caring about other people opinions (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Ruan et al., 2022; Wiedmann et al., 2009). *Attention capital* is related to the attention received from other people resulting in a status symbol (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). Atkinson and Kang (2022) suggested the motivation *personal fulfillment* which combines *attention capital* and *life enrichment*, however in our research *attention capital* was chosen due to the fact that we are analyzing the motivation to buy luxury fashion and not the motivation to consume luxury in general. Vanhamme et al. (2021) said that luxury consumption can be motivated by a need and will to express oneself through their one style, therefore *self-expression* was inspired by his suggestion. Participants also talked about *inconspicuous consumption*, which aligns with Atkinson and Kang (2022) that Generation Z prefers luxury products with a discreet logo. Therefore, we decided to combine both aspects in the code *self-expression* due to their link of preferences in a product which comes down to how they choose to present themselves. As for the motivation *sustainability*, customers seek sustainable luxury and consider sustainability as an important purchase determinant (Vanhamme et al., 2021). However, it does not seem to be the main motivation to buy luxury fashion, it is perceived more of a plus but not a must (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013). Furthermore, *Price value* was inspired by the *economic factors* that include monetary motivations, financial success and price value (Ruan et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the findings of the interviews did not incorporate financial success neither monetary motivation, our participants are more concerned about the price and quality balance because a lot are still students and do not have a consistent income yet. Moreover, quality is not always to be expected in luxury, but it is for them a major criterion to buy luxury. This aligns with Noh and Johnson (2019) findings that luxury goods are associated with high quality products, which can be perceived as an investment and should be used for a longer period of time. Lastly, to our knowledge *practicality* has not been yet talked about in the literature review. It consists of searching for products, they can get the most use out of by incorporating it easily in their garderober, having a versatile product which can be used for different occasions, and which is easy-to-use. Our participants also look for products that are not too complicated or extravagant, that way it does not go out of style which allows to use it for many years

and if not wanted anymore to sell without losing value. This aligns with the findings of Vincent and Gaur (2021), younger consumers value quality, resale value and luxury brands that stand out.

Aligning with Atkinson and Kang (2022), sustainability concerns are primarily about the environment, animal welfare and responsible manufacturing. These three concerns were identified in our research as *environmental*, *animal*, and *social*. *Environmental* consists of respecting the environment like using natural ingredients and recycled materials, economize energy and avoid pollution (Balconi et al., 2019). *Social* in terms of CSR like respecting the work conditions and human rights (Balconi et al., 2019). Moreover, Brundtland (1987) also suggested the dimension *economic* which was not perceived by our participants. As for Ranfagni and Ozuem (2022), besides that they have one more dimension of sustainability being *organizational* which could not be identified in our sample size, they included animal welfare in the social dimension. In this research the dimensions *social* and *animal* were separated due to the great importance put into them by our participants. The luxury fashion industry gets criticized to use unsustainable materials and raw animal skins (Atkinson & Kang, 2022). P3, P13 and P18 needed a little bit help to define the different dimensions of sustainability. This can be explained through its complexity, there is no clearly defined conceptualization of sustainability (Ranfagni & Ozuem, 2022). It is up to the consumer's perception (Osburg et al., 2022). Besides, we identified a new dimension not previously mentioned in the literature review performed which is *quality association*. In the context of sustainability, a majority thinks about quality in a sense that the products are made from resistant materials and have a long duration. Which means they do not think necessarily about a sustainable production but a product that lasts without breaking easily. The dimension *quality association* can be brought in relation to the 3 Ps, they consist of the processes of production; the products' use, lifespan, and disposability; and the impact on place (Karatzas et al., 2019). The *quality association* is linked to the products' use, lifespan, and disposability because it needs to have a good quality to have durability.

According to Osburg et al. (2022) there is an ongoing debate if luxury and sustainability are compatible or incompatible. The findings include compatibility and incompatibility just as the literature review suggested. Nonetheless, most of our interviewees think they are compatible. According to Ranfagni and Ozuem (2022), luxury products are intended to last for a long period of time which allows a reduction of waste. Furthermore, durability and quality are the characteristics that link sustainability and luxury together (Balconi et al., 2019). However, sustainability efforts have a different impact on customers depending on the type of fashion brands (Noh & Johnson, 2019), even between different levels of luxury brands (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022). The more expensive the brand the higher the positive expectation, which is why customers brand trust is higher towards a luxury brand than a fast fashion brand. Sustainable fashion is an alternative trend against fast fashion, to reduce environment

waste and support CSR (Woodside & Fine, 2019). Therefore, some people boycott certain brands especially fast fashion brands and *buycott* ethical options. *Boycott* consists of reacting negatively against brands that do not support sustainable development and choose not to buy from them (Kapferer & Michaut-Denizeau, 2014). *Buycott* however is the opposite, where the consumer buys a brand to support their sustainable efforts and actions (Friedman, 1996). Aligning with Reimers et al. (2017), we identified an *attitude-behavior gap* where they claim to care about sustainability but do not act on their attitude. Luxury fashion brands are expected to do sustainability efforts (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005), but the customer is unwilling to pay more for sustainability (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Our results show that participants do not seem to make the extra steps to verify if a brand is sustainable or not and if they are telling the truth or engaging in greenwashing. People are only willing to change their behaviors according to their attitudes when they expect their actions to have an impact (Leary et al., 2014). Furthermore, information asymmetry about sustainability can create a risk perception (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022), the risk of greenwashing leads to mistrust (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015). Only a minority of our sample size trusts SLF and even them mentioned that you can never know and that not all the brands are completely transparent with their customers. *Trust* is based on a positive outcome expectation and *mistrust* is based on a negative outcome expectation (Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2022). A small percentage of luxury brands trying to be sustainable paired with a lot of greenwashing, underlines the *necessity to do research*. The need to do research on the claims of the brands show how little our participants trust them, which is creating a big obstacle for the brands that are putting real effort into sustainability. This *mistrust* makes people question the claims of SLF and affects the identifiability of SLF. Most of our participants think that SLF is *difficult to identify* and only a minority thinks it is *easy to identify*. Customers ignore sustainability issues while buying to avoid negative emotions (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005), which we encountered in our research as *ignorance*.

According to Noh and Johnson (2019), luxury includes a high level of service, and extraordinary shopping experiences. Which is why our interviewees like to *buy new*, to experience the special treatment and feeling of the product. The main reason to *buy second-hand* seems to be the price because all the participants expressed a preference for buying new. Consumers have the tendency to go for ethical options if they see an opportunity to save money (Burke et al., 2014). However, some of the participants had an unpleasant experience while buying second-hand due to unwanted surprises and a risk of counterfeit. They want to get as much as possible out of their money and keeping their luxury fashion as long as possible, which is why they take every opportunity to *repair* their products. *Sell* when they do not have any use anymore for the product to get some of their invested money back. They also are not against *sharing or borrowing* their products unless there is no trust in the given person. According to Brismar (2019), these 3 last mentioned habits are ways to prolong the life span

of luxury fashion. When their product is not worth selling, they are open to give it to someone they know or donate it to the poor which is a form of recycling. The same author talked about *gift*, however we decided to combine it with *donate* because donating is some kind of gifting. Only a minority thinks that once a product is too damaged your only option is to throw it away, which does not align with the “sustainable circular system” (Brismar, 2019). Environmental knowledge is needed to build attitudes and behaviors (Kong et al., 2016). Luxury fashion rental and the second-hand market is rising, (Ruan et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2022; Vincent & Gaur, 2021, Deloitte, 2021), however our findings show that none of our participants have rented luxury fashion before and they show a low interest in renting luxury fashion. P3 and P7 even pointed out that their disinterest in renting is linked to a fear to lose status and being judged. They perceive renting as presenting themselves in a certain way that they are not and cannot afford. Only one participant (P9) saw the opportunity in it to try out a product before buying it or to get an outfit for a special occasion without having to buy it.

Burke et al. (2014) suggested twelve reasons for ethical consumption from which we encountered three also in our research including *relevance*, *savings* and *high quality*. The main motivations for our participants for ethical consumption are *relevance* followed by an expected *high quality*. Generation Z is one of the most sustainability-conscious segment (Pencarelli et al., 2020), which we found in our study as the motivation *relevance*. In their eyes a product to be called sustainable has also to have great quality due to their *quality association* to the concept. As already mentioned, customers are not willing to pay more for sustainability (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), they look out for monetary *savings* (Burke et al., 2014). Besides, our findings revealed a longing for *transparency*, they want to know where and how the products are produced. This aligns perfectly with some studies asserting that luxury consumers insist on transparency and supply chain information (Cervellon & Wernerfelt, 2012; Karatzas et al., 2019; McKinsey & Company, 2019). As for their main motivations against an ethical consumption of luxury fashion, *skepticism* and *indifference* represent the main obstacles keeping them from buying sustainable luxury brands aligning perfectly with the findings of Burke et al. (2014). *Skepticism* related to mistrust in the ethicality of the brands and *indifference* by not giving a lot of thought and not paying attention to sustainability (Burke et al., 2014). We must keep in mind that the results obtained come from a context of buying SLF and not from buying in general sustainable products. When customers think they can obtain health benefits in the long-term, they chose ethical products (Burke et al., 2014). Like for example P8 “Make-up, it goes on the skin. ... My body absorbs it, so I'm careful and I prefer to use make-up that's vegan, for example, so that I don't damage my body even more. And I also think it's important for me because I want to see that it's not something used on animals, tested on animals... On the other hand, a bag, I don't put it on my skin, it's not absorbed. If it's made of leather, yes, the animal has suffered. But I don't think about that as much, because as I

said, if I buy a bag, it's not on a daily- basis it's not for daily-use.” This shows that sustainability seems to have a bigger importance and role in product categories like make-up and food than on fashion, where the difference lays in the health benefits and the frequency of the purchase. According to Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau (2014), luxury purchases are occasional and therefore while purchasing they want to splurge. In our research this way of thinking was identified as *indifference*, hence because they do not buy with frequency, the purchase is surrounded by less thoughts. Maybe this explains why a lot of participants see sustainability in fashion luxury more as a plus and not a criterion, P7 said “I know it's important, but I confess I don't always pay attention to it. I know it's a plus. If, for example, there's something I find very beautiful and I can also see that it's sustainable, that's fine, but that's not the criterion, I'd say.” This comes close to the research of Achabou and Dekhili (2013), indicating that sustainability is viewed as a secondary concern in terms of luxury consumption. Even though, because one of the most important criteria for our interviewees in luxury fashion is quality and they make a quality association with sustainability, sustainability represents a strong ally for luxury brands to achieve competitive advantage. Furthermore, the main reasons against second-hand are *monetary risk* and *ownership*. *Monetary risk* can be perceived while buying second-hand and trying out ethical products (Burke et al., 2014). Our interviewees long for security in their investments, they are afraid that the quality of second-hand products is inferior to what they expect due to degradation, counterfeit, or lack of hygiene. They also put great importance in *ownership*, which was not yet identified by the literature. It means having a product that belongs only to them and knowing no one else has it previously used, therefore they are ready to spend a little more to buy new instead of buying second-hand or renting luxury fashion. A lot of the participants only accept pre-used clothes coming from people they know like family or friends. Lastly, SLF can be perceived as *too expensive* (Burke et al., 2014), a higher price is expected to cover the materials and work conditions of the employees. Nonetheless, people are not willing to pay more for it (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), especially our participants where a lot do not have a monthly income yet.

Lastly, sustainability is without a doubt perceived as something positive, but unfortunately there is a need to get rid of the suspiciousness around the topic by clarifying things. The key is to provide as much information to the customer as possible (Burke et al., 2014). Even though, our participants show a higher tendency to not change their consumption behavior after a brand committing to sustainability there is still a percentage that would buy more and on the long run this commitment will pay off once they win over the trust of their customers. Moreover, participants foresee that once brands manage to be more transparent and get the trust of their customers that sustainability will gain even more importance and become a primary criterion. Some participants stated they are after the interview more interested in the topic and will pay more attention to it in the future.

Conclusion and implications

6.1. Main conclusions

To conclude, this study findings suggest that elitism, quality, self-directed pleasure, and strong aesthetics are core in luxury, taking into account the perspective of Generation Z consumers. Moreover, they have a newer view on luxury, incorporating luxury fashion, masstige and fast fashion. They differentiate the levels of luxury through their price. Such as also their motivations to buy luxury fashion have a fresher take by including self-directed pleasure, self-expression, sustainability and practicality.

They care a lot about sustainability and especially important for them is the respect towards animals, society, and the environment. Nonetheless, when it comes to luxury fashion's sustainability it is not a major criterion due the occasional purchase to make themselves a pleasure and the absence of expected health benefits. Buying luxury fashion is at some degree already considered as buying a sustainable product due to their quality association towards the concept of sustainability. Something that is sustainable must be resistant and made from great materials to prevent breakage or degradation of a product. Therefore, our participants see sustainability and luxury as compatible and as strong allies. Nonetheless, luxury brands have to make more efforts in this direction to fight against the mistrust and skepticism that is around the topic.

Moreover, it is all about having the most out of their investment for our interviewees. They look for quality so that they have it for a long time without breaking; practicality which consists of an uncomplicated product that is comfortable and easy-to use; and price value so a good quality for a fair price, instead of a hyped product with low quality that is overpriced and will lose its value after the trend goes by. Moreover, they try to preserve their products in taking good care of them which allows to use them for a long time. All these points together allow them to resell a luxury fashion product once they do not want it anymore or do not have any use anymore for it. It allows then to get some of their invested money back and give the product a second life. More importantly, all these aspects of their consumption behavior are compatible with an ethical consumption which underlines the opportunities for luxury brands.

Our interviewees show low interest in the renting market. They want to only present themselves in something they can afford and not use products out of their price range. Renting a product is perceived as pretending to be something that you are not because if you could afford a certain product,

you would just buy it instead of rent it. The renting market does not seem to them attractive because they spent their money for a product that they cannot keep. As for the main reason to buy second-hand it is the lower price, however quality risks are a possible threat which represent monetary risks. The main motivations for an ethical consumption are relevance and high quality, the main motivations against an ethical consumption are skepticism and indifference.

6.2. Theoretical contributions

Preservation was identified as a new dimension of luxury, which shows the care and love our interviewees have towards their luxury products. The current literature does not seem to refer preservation in the context of luxury, the fact that customers sense protection and vigilance towards their luxury products was not yet addressed. This aspect gives the definition of luxury a more complete overview addressing the characteristics of luxury and the feelings that come with it.

Furthermore, we identified practicality as a new motivation to buy luxury which consists of wanting products that are unique but not difficult to use, comfortable and versatile. Once again to our knowledge the current literature does not consider this motivation in buying luxury fashion. This new motivation allows to understand better what Generation Z looks for in luxury fashion and where their priorities lie.

The quality association towards sustainability provides the current literature with a new take on the definition of sustainability. To our knowledge there has been identified a relationship between quality and sustainability, however quality has not yet been categorized as a dimension as itself for sustainability. This finding brings changes into the interpretation of the perception of sustainability from Generation Z. The literature has identified that Generation Z has a different perception on luxury, however it has not yet analyzed their perception on sustainability.

Additionally, indifference which consists of not paying attention to sustainability while buying luxury has already been identified as the main reason to not engage in ethical consumption. However, the reason behind it has not yet been looked at. Our findings suggest that the indifference towards SLF might be linked to the consumers desire to splurge on themselves due to occasional purchases. The role of occasional purchases in the context of their own pleasure has not been taken into consideration in the buying process of SLF. This provides literature with a deeper understanding of non-engagement in sustainability.

Lastly, our participants low interest in renting luxury fashion contradicts several findings of certain articles and research. Therefore, additional research is required on this topic. Our interviewees seem to not show a real interest in renting luxury fashion.

6.3. Managerial contributions

First of all, managers should take into consideration that our study reveals a different view on luxury. The dimension preservation can be addressed by luxury brands in their communication strategies and be focused on in their commercial ads to connect with them. As it seems that Generation Z might associate traditional luxury, masstige and non-traditional luxury with luxury brands, managers can reexplain the meaning and essence of luxury. They can take this opportunity to teach Generation Z about luxury and how to identify them.

Moreover, the main motivation to buy luxury fashion seems to be self-directed pleasure, brands should take this into consideration and use it to their advantage. This aspect could be emphasized in commercial ads and campaigns. As for the new motivation practicality, it provides managers with features to include in their products. They should create products that are unique, easy-to-use, comfortable, and versatile. Something that catches the eye and can be used every day or for a night out.

Managers should consider committing to sustainability especially if they target Generation Z because it is important to them. However, if a brand decided to go green, they should do it right or just not do it at all. To overcome the mistrust and skepticism around sustainability it is of great importance to explain what sustainability is, explain what exactly they do with examples and provide real proof. Our study reveals a need for transparency; therefore, a good idea would be to introduce a transparency list with the percentages of money that went into the different stages of production and distribution in their business strategy. Furthermore, our participants relate SLF more with the aspect of respecting society and animals and using environment friendly materials. Therefore, managers should make sure that their employees have fair wages, good working conditions and legal working hours. They should also consider stopping harming animals to produce their products which is possible through switching to vegan leather and refuse the usage of materials like fur and crocodile. Moreover, one of the main criterions they look for in their luxury fashion is high quality. Brands should prioritize the quality of their luxury products because quality is what links luxury and sustainability together. It is what allows their compatibility paired with a high price. Nonetheless, managers should not go overboard on the price because our study reveals the criterium of price value. Even if brands decide against the commitment to sustainability, they can be perceived as sustainable through quality

association. Managers should pair sustainability, high quality, and practicality together to win the customer over. Since, Generation Z does not want complicated products but easy to use products that do not lose their resale value easily.

6.4. Limitations and future research

This research has some limitations to take into consideration linked to the methodology chosen. A qualitative method was chosen to collect data which gets criticized by some based on the relying of the researchers view, which has an impact on the focus of the study and interpretation of the results (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Potential personal relationships with the participants can also influence the process of data collecting and interpretation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In our case a snowball effect was employed for the choice of participants, which includes friends and acquaintances. As for the interviews themselves, they were held through online meetings to overcome distance obstacles which makes it harder to see emotions and expressions. The number of the interviews was based on a sense of saturation, which was achieved at 20 interviews even though you never can have too many interviews. Another limitation is the language in which the interviews were held, all the interviews were done in French because not all the participants would feel comfortable doing it in English. Therefore, all of the quotes were translated into English which requires some wording changes.

It would be interesting for future research to analyze more in detail the dimension preservation to find out if only our interviewees relate luxury with some vigilance or if others feel the same way. Moreover, the motivation of practicality towards luxury fashion leaves some questions open. There is a need to look in deeper to find out if our participants look for practicality because they are referring to their first pieces of luxury fashion and therefore their motivations towards luxury fashion might change with time and age. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare the role of sustainability on luxury fashion between different generations, like for example compare Generation Y and Generation Z due to their higher interest in sustainability, by analyzing their consumer behaviors. Another point could be to analyze more in detail the quality association to sustainability to find out if other generations also make this association and the reasons behind it. For example, a quantitative methodology could be applied to understand, in a more conclusive way, how these constructs interplay with each other. Finally, the low interest of renting luxury fashion could be explored more in-depth in other countries that have maybe a lower average wage like for example Spain and Portugal.

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Annexes

Annex A: Interview guide

Explain the interview:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This interview is conducted in the framework of my Master thesis to find out what is the perception of Generation Z is on luxury and sustainability. During the interview, you have the right to ask questions at any time and to refuse to answer certain questions. Your anonymity will be assured, and you will not be identified in the dissertation. As you have already read on the informed consent, I will audio-record the interview which will be transcribed to text for analysis. There are no right or wrong answers, it is all about your point of view. Before we begin, do you have already a question?

First topic: What is the perception of Generation Z concerning luxury fashion brands?

1. How would you define luxury?
2. What luxury fashion brands pop immediately into your mind?
3. How do you feel when you use a luxury fashion product?
4. What do you value in a luxury fashion product?

Second topic: What is the role of sustainability in luxury fashion from the point of view of Generation Z?

1. How would you describe the concept of sustainability?
2. Do you think sustainability and luxury are compatible? How? Why?
3. Do you usually buy SLF products? Why? / Why not?
4. Do you rely on the claims of luxury brands concerning their sustainability? Why? / Why not?
5. Do you think it is easy to identify a sustainable luxury brand?

Third topic: What is the consumption behavior of Generation Z when they buy SLF brands?

1. How do you consume luxury fashion? Why? / Why not? (Buy new, second hand, rent, share, borrow, get gifted)
2. Do you try to prolong the lifespan of your luxury fashion? Why? How? (Buying sustainable products with high quality, repair when needed, gift, share, rent or sell when not used anymore and recycle when comes the time)
3. Do you prioritize buying SLF or traditional luxury fashion? Why?

Fourth topic: How does the brand perception change after Generation Z consumers know a luxury fashion brand is sustainable?

4. How would you feel if one of your favorite brands announces that they commit to produce from now on only sustainable products? Would you still buy from the brand? Would you buy more? Would your consumption behavior change? Why?

Annex B: Informed consent



INFORMED CONSENT

This study is part of a Master thesis at ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. The objective of this research is to elaborate the perception of Generation Z on sustainable luxury. The participants were chosen according to specific characteristics: being of age and belonging to generation Z (age 18 to 26), residing in Luxembourg and being luxury consumers. Your participation in the study will be highly appreciated and will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field.

Iscte is responsible for the processing of your personal data, collected and processed exclusively for the purposes of the study, with your consent as the legal basis [art. 6º, nº1, point a) and/or art. 9º, nº2, point a) of the Regulamento Geral de Proteção de Dados].

The study is carried out by Carla Sofia Santos Jordão (santos_jordao_sofia@iscte-iul.pt), a student in Master of Marketing, whom you can contact if you wish to clarify a doubt, make a comment or exercise your rights regarding the processing of your personal data. You can use the contact indicated to request access, rectification, erasure, or limitation of the processing of your personal data.

Participation in this study is confidential. Your personal data will always be processed by authorized personnel bound by the duty of secrecy and confidentiality. Iscte ensures that appropriate technical, organizational and security measures are used to protect personal information. All researchers are required to respect the confidentiality of personal data.

In addition to being confidential, participation in the study is strictly voluntary: you can freely choose whether or not to participate. If you have chosen to participate, you may terminate your participation and withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data at any time, without having to provide any justification. Withdrawal of consent does not affect the lawfulness of processing previously carried out on the basis of the consent given.

The interview will be recorded to ensure a better understanding of the information shared.

Your personal data will be kept for six months, after which it will be destroyed, thus guaranteeing your anonymity in the results of the survey. The information collected and the results of this work may be disclosed for statistical, educational, communication purposes at meetings or scientific publications.

There are no significant risks expected from participation in the study.

Iscte does not disclose or share information about your personal data with third parties.

Iscte has a Data Protection Officer, who can be contacted by e-mail at dpo@iscte-iul.pt. If you consider it necessary, you also have the right to file a complaint with the competent supervisory authority - Comissão Nacional de Proteção de Dados.

I declare that I have understood the objectives of what has been proposed and explained to me by the researcher, that I have had the opportunity to ask all the questions related to this study and that I have received a clear answer to each of them. I agree to participate in the study and consent to the use of my personal data in accordance with the information provided to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____ (City), ____/____/____ (Date)

Name: _____

Signature: _____