

Does Brand Personality Beat Sustainability Claims?

An investigation into brand personalities' effect on consumers' product evaluations

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Abstract

Sustainability has been an inevitable topic globally and its importance is not expected to decline in the near future. Lately, sustainable options have taken a bigger proportion of the market share within the fashion industry. However, consumers still have strong (often falsely) preconceptions of what the word sustainability means in a product context. Since brand image is known to have a strong impact on product evaluations, this paper focuses on one of the dimensions of brand image. The chosen dimension is brand personality and its moderating role on consumers' sustainability preconceptions within the fashion industry will be investigated. An experiment was conducted where two variables were being manipulated, the sustainability claim (eco-labeling/statement vs no eco-labeling/statement) and the brand personality (luxury vs non-luxury). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four different scenarios and were asked to rate the product attributes (quality, price and visual appeal) based on their scenario of exposure in order to explore the preconceptions. This report contributes to the existing literature by investigating the combination of sustainability preconceptions and brand personality. There were no significant findings that brand personality had a moderating effect on consumers' sustainability preconceptions. However, the study found that there was a main effect of the brand personality regardless of whether the product was perceived as sustainable or not. Exactly what this means and whether the luxury and non-luxury branding induces positive or negative product evaluations are not revealed in this report and suggested for future research. This could be an interesting topic to further investigate in order for companies to get an understanding of how they can use their brand personality in marketing communication.

Keywords: Consumers preconceptions, sustainability preconceptions, brand image, brand personality, luxury, non-luxury, product attributes, communication

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Sustainability has been an inevitable topic globally and its importance is not expected to decline in the near future. The dilemmas of both climate change and increased global temperature are still prominent, and therefore the United Nations (UN) has in 2015 created 17 climate goals directed to the world's economy including; companies, governments and consumers, with the hope to combat climate change together (United Nations, 2022). The manufacturing industry stands for the majority of emissions and one industry that has been accused as the villain is the fashion industry with its “fast-fashion”. Since the 2000s the fashion industry has produced fashion with the aim to follow the fast changing trends and social media has been part of accelerating this even more (Melanie Alphonse, 2021). Therefore, the UN goal number 12 “responsible consumption and production” is more relevant now than ever within the industry.

Sustainability is not only a spoken topic within the manufacturing industries but also within consumers' everyday life. It has been shown that consumers are demanding more sustainable options (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019) and that consumers try to spend less money by adopting a sustainable lifestyle (Deloitte, 2022). The change in consumer behavior, towards being more sustainable has also led to consumers being more likely to choose a product from a brand with a sustainable reputation (Carter, Jayachandran, & Murdock, 2021) and companies who manage to have a strong link between their strategy and sustainability actions seem to be more profitable (Acuti, Pizzetti, & Dolnicar, 2022; Farah Mammadli, 2022), 2022).

The changing demand has put a pressure on fashion companies to act sustainable. Some examples of this are H&M's Loop initiative, where they recollect and recycle garments from all different types of brands (H&M, 2020). Nike advertises its use of recycled plastic and other materials for their shoes, to minimize waste (Nike, 2022). Gucci's Gucci-up is an upcycling initiative to recover and reuse leftover materials (Gucci Equilibrium, 2021).

In order to reach the UN goals, companies need to engage all actors in their supply chain, both upstream and downstream (Vadakkepatt et al., 2021). Engaging the consumers (downstream) is crucial, however, this could sometimes be difficult since consumers tend to be skeptical towards sustainability claims (Chen, Huang, Wang, & Chen, 2020). The company's sustainability claims could then backfire (RepRisk, 2022) and undermine consumers' intention to purchase these products. The two main reasons for this are 1) contradictory and ambiguous sustainability claims creating an information overload (Acuti et al., 2022) and 2) consumers associate sustainability with compromises in product attributes (Gruber, Schlegelmilch, & Houston, 2014). Providing sustainable products does not have to lead to information overload or compromises in product attributes, if the right communication is used.

As sustainability is a broad topic including social, economic and environmental responsibility (Fischer, Brettel, & Mauer, 2020) we have chosen to focus on the environmental part of sustainability. Even though respondents in this study are exposed to a survey with environmental sustainability in focus, we can not avoid evoking other sustainability dimensions such as social responsibility as it is closely linked to the topic of fashion (Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

1.2 Problematicization

Previous research shows evidence of an existing trade-off in consumers' minds between sustainability and other product attributes when making a purchase. Consumers may assume that producing sustainable products leads to a compromise in product attributes such as quality and design (Acuti et al., 2022). Recognizing attributes that affect sustainable perceptions is important since the attributes act as qualifiers during the decision-making process and purchase stage (Marcon, Ribeiro, Dangelico, de Medeiros, & Marcon, 2022). Previous research has found that **quality**, **price** and **visual appeal** are the product attributes that have a significant relation to consumers' perceived sustainability (Gruber et al., 2014; Marcon et al., 2022; Rausch et al., 2021; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). While the current stream of research has examined the relationship between consumers' sustainability preconceptions and product attributes, the literature is yet to examine if brand personality

(luxury and non-luxury) could have an impact on consumers preconceptions of product attributes.

Brand personality has five dimensions; sincerity, excitement, sophistication, competence and ruggedness (Aaker, 1997). The last three dimensions of brand personality together with professionalism, attractiveness and materialism are the characteristics of luxury branding (Sung et al., 2015). As common dimensions are found across luxury branding and brand personality one could state that luxury branding therefore originates from brand personality, which in turn originates from brand image. Brand image has a powerful role in adding value to a product by changing the experience and perceptions towards it (Wijaya, 2013). This is strengthened by the fact that consumers react to what they perceive as reality rather than the actual reality (Ibid). Further, understanding the perspective of luxury vs non-luxury branding is interesting, since it is found that people shopping for luxury products are more attentive to attributes such as quality and price than sustainability (Parguel et al., 2020). Additionally, there exist strong associations connected to luxury vs non-luxury branding, where luxury is connected to exclusivity, pride, accomplishment, trustworthiness and status (Sung et al., 2015; Wijaya, 2013). On the other hand, non-luxury is more commonly associated with lower trustworthiness and fast-fashion (Caldecott, 2022). Based on this, luxury and non-luxury (brand personality) will be used to examine the effect on sustainability preconceptions.

Combining the research of product attributes, sustainability preconceptions and the findings on brand image, there is a gap in the literature investigating the role of brand personality (luxury and non-luxury branding). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the association between sustainability preconceptions and product attributes (quality, price and visual appeal) and how this association may change depending on luxury vs non-luxury branding (Gruber et al., 2014; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Marcon et al., 2022; Rausch, Baier, & Wening, 2021). Product quality is found to be an attribute that consumers use to differentiate between luxury and non-luxury branding (Zhang & Cude, 2018). In a luxury context, it can be assumed that there is no trade-off between sustainability and quality, instead the luxury context could make consumers' interpretations of sustainability synonymous with physical durability (quality) (Garry & Hardwood, 2017). Further, sustainable apparel is often perceived as more pricey (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Gruber et al., 2014), however, paying a higher price can be justified for luxury products (Sung et al., 2015). Luxury products can be found as visually

appealing through its traits of being beautiful, attractive and gorgeous (Ibid). This might attenuate the preconception that sustainable products are less visually appealing than conventional apparel (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Gruber et al., 2014). Since there are separate preconceptions connected to both brand personality and sustainability associated with the three product attributes (quality, price and visual appeal), this study will investigate what the interaction effect is when being combined.

There is currently a lack of knowledge, both within research and the fashion industry, about consumer preconceptions that has led to information overload (Acuti et al., 2022) where companies communicate sustainability in all channels at all times. This knowledge is important since the negative perceptions of sustainability could be avoided by companies through rightfully adjusted marketing communication efforts (Meng & Leary, 2021).

1.3 Research Contribution

This study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. Firstly, in contrast to previous research, this study investigates the effect that brand personality (luxury and non-luxury) has on consumers' sustainability preconceptions of product attributes. Our findings contribute to the existing literature examining product attributes; quality, price and visual appeal, associated with sustainability (Gruber et al., 2014; Marcon et al., 2022; Rausch, Baier, & Wening, 2021; Lundblad & Davies, 2016) and the importance of brand personality (Wijaya, 2013).

Secondly, researchers suggest that consumers are becoming more skeptical towards sustainability communication due to greenwashing which undermines the development of green marketing (Chen et al., 2020). Additionally, it is found that it is important to understand what values are compromised versus reinforced by sustainability (Acuti et al., 2022). However, not much literature has discussed in what way companies can take advantage of sustainability preconceptions in communication. It could be reasonable to believe that sustainability communication should use the consumers preferred product attributes to avoid the backfire of the sustainability claims.

Thirdly, this study explores the fashion industry since only a few studies have been found on this topic. The fashion industry is especially interesting due to its size, fragmented and changing environment within sustainability, greenwash controversies (Chen et al., 2020) and high consumer involvement (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). It could also be argued that fashion and clothing evoke more emotional rather than functional values which will be of importance for consumer evaluations (Luchs & Kumar, 2017).

1.4 Purpose

Sustainable options have taken a bigger proportion of the market share lately. However, consumers still have strong (often falsely) preconceptions of what the word sustainability means in a product context. This has led to companies experiencing difficulties when communicating their sustainability efforts, due to consumers often associating it with negative emotions and trade-offs. On the other hand, brand image has shown positive implications on product evaluations. Remaining to investigate is whether brand personality has the same implication as brand image in a sustainability context.

Therefore, this paper aims to answer the following research question:

Does the brand personality (luxury and non-luxury) moderate consumers' preconceptions of sustainability within the fashion industry?

2. Theory

In the following section the three most prominent topics for this report will be discussed. We will begin by explaining consumers' preconceptions and why these can have a crucial role in the context of product evaluation. Later on, we will go into the topic of luxury branding, brand personality and brand image and their powerful effect in changing consumers perceptions. Lastly, the most prominent product attributes found in previous research in the context of sustainability and brand personality will be discussed. Followed by our conceptual model and summary of hypotheses. To conclude, a summarizing table of findings from previous research will be provided.

2.1 Consumers Sustainability Preconceptions

When humans are lacking information about a specific situation, product or person, we infer the missing information by using preconceptions, defined as “*an idea or opinion formed before enough information is available to form it correctly*” (Cambridge University Press). These preconceptions are then stored in the mind as a memory (Tsouna, 2016). When consumers are confronted with missing information regarding sustainability they may use cognitive schemata (Gruber et al., 2014), defined as a categorization of objects and events that is based on shared elements and characteristics. This new information is then processed based on how well it fits the mental structure or rules of the category (Anne S. Beauchamp, 2022). Depending on how the new information is processed and categorized the outcome will be different, leading to differences in consumers perceptions.

The demand for sustainable options is growing, still consumers often view sustainable decisions as involving trade-offs of other product attributes (Herédia-Colaço & do Vale, 2018; Luchs & Kumar, 2017; White et al., 2019). The preconceptions that consumers hold on sustainable products are often associated with higher price (Lundblad & Davies, 2016), inferior quality, inferior aesthetics (Acuti et al., 2022; White et al., 2019) and negative emotions & beliefs (Acuti et al., 2022). This leads to consumers compromising a product's sustainable attributes rather than functional performance. The product's function is often higher prioritized since this is more closely related to the consumer's primary-goal than the greater good of society (Luchs & Kumar, 2017). Additionally, the trade-off between sustainability and product attributes is more evident in the context of utilitarian (quality) product attributes than with hedonic (visual appeal) product attributes (Ibid).

With regards to the fashion industry, consumers view sustainable fashion as unattractive and not suiting their wardrobe needs. It shows that product attributes such as quality, price, appearance and trendiness are higher valued than ethics when making a purchase decision (Acuti et al., 2022; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). In addition, brand personality is found to have an impact on product evaluations (Wijaya, 2013). However, no research is found whether the brand personality potentially could have an important impact in avoiding negative perceptions regarding sustainable fashion.

2.2 Brand Personality: The Role of Luxury Branding

This report will investigate the role of brand personality being luxury and non-luxury (Sung et al., 2015), and whether it has the same impact as brand image has on consumers' product perceptions within fashion. Luxury branding originates from brand personality which in turn originates from brand image. Therefore, in order to understand luxury branding we will begin by explaining the primary origin; brand image.

2.2.1 Brand Image

Brand image is an association made by humans that is based on all the available information of products, services and brands of a company (Wijaya, 2013). Namely, it can be defined as: *“Cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to the brand name”, “The set of beliefs held about a particular brand”, and “Perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer’s memory”* (Kato, 2021). Brand image creates a relationship between seller and buyer that involves trust and acts as a promise of bringing performance, benefits and service (Wijaya, 2013). While brand image does not only encapsulate the consumer experience about a product, it can also change the experience. This can be linked to the fact that the psychological factors (emotions, beliefs, values and personality) have a bigger impact than the physical factors (packaging, logo, brand name and functionality) that the consumers associate the product with (Ibid). This means that the brand image has a powerful role in adding value to the product by changing the experience and perceptions towards it (Ibid). Since the brand image becomes a guideline for consumers, building on reputation and credibility (Wijaya, 2013) a consistent brand image is key for a company's success or failure (Kato, 2021).

2.2.2 Brand Personality

Brand image has five dimensions; brand identity, brand association, *brand personality*, brand attitude & behavior, brand benefit & competence (Wijaya, 2013). The dimension of brand personality is a construct that makes it easy for consumers to distinguish one brand from another, due to the distinctive character that makes up the personalities of the brands as human beings (Ibid). The use of brand personality is the most appropriate one for this study since it explains why consumers choose one brand over another when there are no differences

in the functional attributes of the products (Ibid). With this in mind, the effect of brand personality will be investigated while holding the product attributes constant.

2.2.3 Luxury Branding

When describing brand personality five dimensions have been found; sincerity, excitement, sophistication, competence and ruggedness (Aaker, 1997). The last three dimensions of brand personality together with professionalism, attractiveness and materialism are the characteristics of luxury branding (Sung et al., 2015). As common dimensions are found across luxury branding and brand personality one could state that luxury branding therefore originates from brand personality, which in turn originates from brand image.

Luxury branding is associated with traits like exclusivity and consumers owning products with luxury brand labels makes them feel a sense of pride, accomplishment and fulfillment (Sung et al, 2015). It is found that consumers were more willing to buy luxury products if the brand image was consistent with their own intrinsic beliefs, self-image (Zhang & Cude, 2018) and enhancing their social status (Sung et al., 2015). On the other hand, the consumers shopping for luxury brands are not particularly attentive to sustainability, rather focusing on brand, quality, prestige, product attributes, self-image and price (Parguel et al., 2020). Product attributes and their connection to both luxury and sustainability will be discussed in the following sections.

2.3 Product Attributes

Research has found that some product attributes have a direct linkage to inferences about sustainability. In the case of missing information about sustainability, consumers tend to form an opinion and make a guess based on preconceptions concerning the products sustainability based on available product attributes (Gruber et al., 2014). This also means that being exposed to a sustainable product can change the perceptions of the product attributes. Meaning that choosing the product attributes that consumers associate with sustainability is crucial during product design for companies to promote green consumption (Marcon et al., 2022). Examples of these attributes are quality, price and visual appeal, where the first two are so-called “leading” attributes whereas the last is a “lagging” attribute. The leading attributes have a stronger relationship with sustainability than the lagging attributes, which

needs to be assessed in combination with other attributes (Gruber et al., 2014). In the following sections the report will discuss the three most prominent product attributes related to sustainability that have been found in previous research; quality, price and visual appeal (Gruber et al., 2014; Marcon et al., 2022; Rausch et al., 2021; Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

2.3.1 Quality

Quality has an important role during the purchase stage (Gruber et al., 2014) since consumers prefer products with superior functional performance over products with superior sustainability characteristics (Luchs & Kumar, 2017). However, we assume that this trade-off between the functional performance (quality) and sustainability only exists in a non-luxury brand context. This since Sun et al. (2021) found that consumers' interpretations of sustainability were synonymous with physical durability (quality) of the product when it comes from a luxury brand. The reason why consumers see sustainability synonymous with physical durability could be because sustainability is an ambiguous attribute and an elusive concept that they then strongly connect to quality perceptions (Gruber et al., 2014).

Quality could be linked to professionalism, one of three dimensions of luxury branding (section 2.2.3) (Sung et al., 2015), where consumers expect superior utilitarian characteristics and functional performance of luxury branding as compared with non-luxury branding. Additionally, Zhang & Cude (2018) found that consumers differentiate luxury brands from other brands (non-luxury) with help of the superior quality of the products. The reason for this is that luxury clothing is associated with handmade design and the use of comfortable fabrics, quality being one of the most salient attributes of luxury products (Zhang & Cude, 2018). The consumers' perception of the luxury product quality further led to a positive effect on purchase intention (Zhang & Cude, 2018). This suggests that sustainable products that are luxury branded will be more favorable due to the positive association between sustainability and durability of luxury products (Sun, Bellezza, & Paharia, 2021). In contrast to luxury brands, non-luxury brands are more often associated with fast-fashion and by that also lower quality (Caldecott, 2022). The lower quality of non-luxury products is assumed to be more salient when combined with a sustainability claim, since it is associated with fast-fashion that is characterized with short product lifetime (Keinan, Goor, & Crenel, 2020) and therefore not being sustainable or durable (Caldecott, 2022). This leads to the following hypotheses:

***H1a:** A **luxury** branded product together **with** a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived quality than a **luxury** branded product **without** a sustainability claim.*

***H1b:** A **non-luxury** branded product together **with** a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived quality than a **non-luxury** branded product **without** a sustainability claim.*

2.3.2 Price

Price has been found to be a highly salient cue for consumers to assess the products sustainability (Gruber et al., 2014). Price showed a higher relevance for consumers than sustainable attributes such as fair wages and working conditions. Even though attributes like friendly material may influence purchase decisions, conventional product attributes like price showed higher importance (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Sustainable apparel is often perceived as more expensive than conventional apparel (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Rausch et al., 2021) and with the high price, consumers assume that the production is environmentally and socially responsible (Gruber et al., 2014). Additionally, Lundblad & Davies (2016) suggest that sustainable products are perceived to be of a sufficiently higher quality which compensates for higher price.

Further, paying a high price for acquiring and consuming luxury products can be justified by inner-personal motivation. Status-conscious consumers may use luxury brands as an important part of its self-concept which is linked to the materialism dimension of luxury branding (section 2.2.3). This is closely related to personality traits of being pretentious, materialistic and showy (Sung et al., 2015). Based on this we assume that the price for the sustainable product with a luxury branding will be perceived as more favorable for the consumer than the non-luxury branding. One reason for this is due to the effect of branding, which can change the consumer experience and perceptions, in this case, a luxury brand will justify a higher price of the product (Wijaya, 2013). Non-luxury branding together with a sustainability claim may on the other hand be perceived as less credible (greenwashing) (Wijaya, 2013) and consumers then perceive the price as more expensive. This leads to the following hypotheses:

***H2a:** A **luxury** branded product together **with** a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived price than a **luxury** branded product **without** a sustainability claim.*

***H2b:** A **non-luxury** branded product together **with** a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived price than a **non-luxury** branded product **without** a sustainability claim.*

2.3.3 Visual Appeal

Visual appeal, relating to the hedonic value of esthetics and design, is another attribute that has shown a strong connection to sustainability perceptions (Gruber et al., 2014). Visual appeal is a complex construct, some associate sustainability with good design while others associate sustainable products with unappealing esthetics, this is due to it being a lagging attribute, as mentioned before (Gruber et al., 2014). Besides, in a sustainability context, consumers are more likely to trade-off aesthetics (hedonic values) than functionality (utilitarian value) (Luchs & Kumar, 2017). This is often the case with sustainable clothing that is made of natural material and without pesticides. In terms of design, the clothes often do not follow the trends and are instead made from a long-lasting perspective with a timeless cut. Even though more consumers start to shop sustainably, many still view sustainable fashion as unattractive and not suiting their wardrobe needs (Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

Attractiveness is one of the three main dimensions of luxury branding which is defined by traits like exclusive, beautiful, attractive and gorgeous (section 2.2.3) (Sung et al., 2015). One of the core values of luxury brands is aesthetics and customers that are being associated with such brands may experience sensual pleasure (Sung et al., 2015). Based on the importance of visual appeal within luxury and sustainability, we assume that the positive associations to luxury will have a stronger impact of the visual appeal and thereby attenuate any negative associations linked to sustainability. However, in the case of non-luxury branding the association between sustainable apparel and visual appeal, as discussed by Lundblad & Davies (2016), will be more salient and thereby lead to unfavorable perceptions of the visual appeal. Leading to the following hypotheses:

H3a: A **luxury** branded product together **with** a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a **luxury** branded product **without** a sustainability claim.

H3b: A **non-luxury** branded product together **with** a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a **non-luxury** branded product **without** a sustainability claim.

2.4 The Conceptual Model

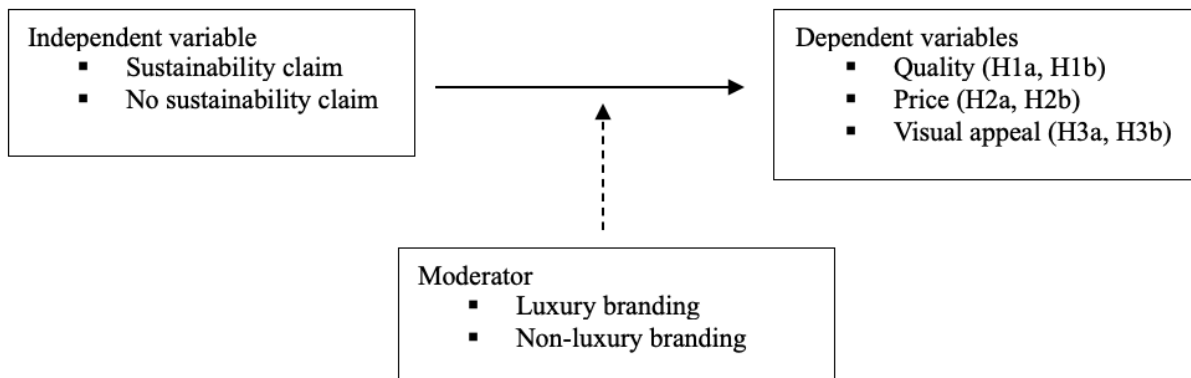


Table 1. Summary of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	
H1a	A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived quality than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.
H1b	A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived quality than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.
H2a	A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived price than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.
H2b	A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived price than a non-luxury branded product without sustainability claim.
H3a	A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.
H3b	A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.

2.5 Literature Summary

Table 2. Summary of Relevant Literature Reviewed

Author and year	Journal	Findings
<i>Brand personality</i>		
Kato, 2021	The Journal of Brand Management	Having a consistent brand image has a positive effect on the establishment of a strong brand.
Wijaya, 2013	European Journal of Business and Management	The components of brand image (e.g., brand personality) and its importance for consumer associations and behaviors.
Aaker, 1997	Journal of Marketing Research	Develops five dimensions of brand personality; sincerity, excitement, sophistication, competence and ruggedness.
Sung et al., 2015	Psychology and Marketing	Develops the six dimensions of luxury branding; sincerity, excitement, sophistication, professionalism, attractiveness and materialism.
Zhang & Cude, 2018	Journal of International Consumer Marketing	There are significant differences between luxury and non-luxury consumers relating to attitude towards; brand image, product quality, materialism and uniqueness.
Parguel et al., 2020	Sustainability	Consumers shopping for luxury brands are not particularly attentive to sustainability, rather focusing on; brand, quality, prestige, product attributes, self-image and price.
<i>Product attributes</i>		
Gruber et al., 2014	Psychology & Marketing	Quality, price, visual appeal and country of origin has significant influence on consumers' sustainability perceptions.
Marcon et al., 2022	Sustainable Production and Consumption	Some of the important attributes for consumers purchasing intention to green products are, availability, product quality, packaging, country of origin, design and aesthetics.
Rausch et al., 2021	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	The most important attributes when purchasing garments were found to be fit and comfort, price-performance ratio, quality and design.
Lundblad & Davies, 2016	Journal of Consumer Behavior	Consumers purchase sustainable fashion due to attributes such as higher quality and longer-lasting.
Diego-Masa et al., 2016	Journal of Cleaner Production	Product attributes (aesthetics) have an important role for consumers to perceive the product as sustainable.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study uses an experimental and quantitative research approach, testing the hypotheses that have been developed based on existing literature. An experimental approach is suitable since it enables testing of a hypothesized relationship between independent and dependent variables by manipulating the independent variable (Kirk, 2013). Additionally, experiments allow tests of causal claims in a rigorous manner to confirm or disconfirm the causal relationship (Söderlund, 2018). A quantitative approach, using a survey, will help to establish relationships among the variables since it enables the study to collect a large amount of information (Kirk, 2013) and make generalization of the study sample (Swanson & Hilton III, 2005).

3.2 Research Design

The experiment used a 2×2 between-subjects factorial design, where two variables were manipulated. Being the sustainability claim (eco-labeling/statement vs no eco-labeling/statement) and the brand personality (luxury vs non-luxury). These variables are combined into four different scenarios:

Scenario 1: Sustainability claim together with a luxury branding (SL).

Scenario 2: Sustainability claim together with a non-luxury (regular) branding (SR)

Scenario 3: Non-sustainability claim together with a luxury branding (NL)

Scenario 4: Non-sustainability claim together with a non-luxury (regular) branding (NR)

The sustainability claim was stimulated by using an eco-friendly statement together with a green eco-label. Using eco-friendly statements have shown to work as a stimuli for sustainability perceptions (Garvey & Bolton, 2017). Eco-labels have also been proven to act as a stimulation of consumers' sustainability perception which is in line with previous research by (Ischen, Meijers, Vandeberg, & Smit, 2022). In terms of brand personality, the study does not use any real brand names or logos. This is to avoid other non-controllable

perceptions connected to the brand image (Fazeli, Shukla, & Perks, 2020). Instead, a statement was used stating if the product was from a luxury or non-luxury brand (Ibid). The approach was used to achieve responsiveness and minimize the risk that the treatments caused differences in responses among the participants (Oehlert W, 2010). Therefore, the scenarios excluded all the information except the absolutely necessary for the investigation of sustainability claim and brand personality. This is to minimize the risk of affecting other aspects of consumer perceptions that lead to unwanted results.

Four different scenarios were created where participants were randomized and exposed to one of them. The chosen dependent variables; quality, price and visual appeal, originate from Gruber et al. (2014) who have examined which product attributes that are connected to sustainability perceptions. Basing the dependent variables on existing literature ensures that there is a sustainability perception that will be further investigated in connection to the brand personality.

3.3 Questionnaire Construction

Participant responses were collected through a survey made in Qualtrics which then were analyzed with quantitative methods. Respondents were randomly assigned one of the four scenarios that the experiment entails (Appendix A). The scenarios all had the same picture of a white T-shirt (originally taken from COS). The T-shirt was unisex, included a broad range of sizes and as minimalistic as possible making it a suitable product for all the respondents. A price was included in the picture that was considered to be a medium price after screening the Swedish market, the similar price point was used by Gruber et al (2014). The four different scenarios were differentiated through brand personality (luxury vs non-luxury) and sustainability claims (eco-labeling and eco-friendly statement).

Scenario 1: Sustainability claim together with a luxury branding (SL).

Here the respondent was exposed to the white T-shirt where the picture also included a green eco-label together with the scenario of shopping for an eco-friendly T-shirt for a luxury brand.

Scenario 2: Sustainability claim together with a non-luxury (regular) branding (SR)

Here the respondent was exposed to the white T-shirt where the picture also included a green eco-label together with the scenario of shopping for an eco-friendly T-shirt for a non-luxury brand.

Scenario 3: Non-sustainability claim together with a luxury branding (NL)

Here the respondent was exposed to the white T-shirt where the picture did not include any green eco-label. The scenario was to go shopping for a T-shirt for a luxury brand.

Scenario 4: Non-sustainability claim together with a non-luxury (regular) branding (NR)

Here the respondent was exposed to the white T-shirt where the picture did not include any green eco-label. The scenario was to go shopping for a T-shirt for a non-luxury brand.

After being exposed to the scenario, respondents were asked to score the product based on the product attributes, on a scale of 5, on the questions that are used by Gruber et al. (2014). Consistent throughout the whole survey 1 is negatively associated while the highest number is positively associated (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). In order to ensure that the stimuli were successful, two control questions were asked immediately after the scenario exposure. First, the respondents were asked how they perceived the brand that they were exposed to. This manipulation check was performed by using the same questions as Jung & Dubois (2022). Next, they were asked how environmentally-friendly they perceived the product of exposure to be (Kim & Oh, 2020).

After the scenario exposure, the participants were asked personality and demographic questions. This included one question regarding sustainability attitude and behavior where the participants were asked different statements that were based on the GREEN items measured on a 7 point scale (Haws, Winterich, & Naylor, 2014). This question will be used to control for any differences in the participants interests that may affect the result. The reminding questions concerned demographics, such as age, gender, country and income, and behavioral questions regarding shopping frequency per month of clothing and luxury clothing (using a 7-point scale). Additionally, one open question was added at the end of the survey where the respondents could add any questions or comments that they had. The majority of the question

required an answer, however, gender and income was excepted from this rule since it can be sensitive information for the participants.

3.4 Questionnaire Measurements

Table 3. Questionnaire Measurements

What we measure	Questions	Scale	Source
Quality	How would you perceive the quality? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must be good - Seems reliable - Will not last long 	5-point	Gruber et al. (2014)
Price	How would you perceive the price? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive - Pricing is favorable - The pricing is negative 	5-point	Gruber et al. (2014)
Visual appeal	How would you perceive the visual appeal (design)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is aesthetically appealing - I like the look 	5-point	Gruber et al. (2014)
Manipulation check brand personality (control questions)	Based on the picture you saw, please rate the T-shirt brand along the following dimension? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prestigious - Luxurious - High status 	7-point	Jung & Dubois (2022)
Manipulation check sustainability (control questions)	Based on the picture you saw, to what extent do you think this T-shirt is environmentally friendly? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not at all - very much 	7-point	Kim & Oh (2020)
Consumers sustainability attitude and behavior (GREEN-items)	How engaged are you in sustainability? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment - I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions - My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment - I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet - I would describe myself as environmentally responsible - I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly 	7-point	Haws et al. (2014)

3.5 Data Collection and Participants

The primary data was collected through social media such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, E-mails and SurveyCircle.com, a website for collecting answers to surveys. Before the respondents started the survey they were enlightened that the data collection follows GDPR regulations. Accordingly, the data will be deleted once the report is finalized. They could themselves end the survey whenever they wanted and email us if any questions arose, no questions were received. In total 283 responses were collected, 144 were excluded due to unfinished robot answers ($n = 82$), or failing the control questions ($n = 62$). As a result, the number of respondents that were analyzed are 139, resulting in normal distribution among the four scenarios. This will be discussed more in detail in section Manipulation Check 3.6.2.

The age span of the respondents were between 19-80 with a gender distribution of 56% Female and 44% Male. There was no significant difference in gender between the groups ($p = 0.862$), age ($p = 0.455$) or their sustainability interest ($M_{\text{sustainable}} = 14.42$, $SD = 1.075$ vs. $M_{\text{non-sustainable}} = 14.43$, $SD = 1.260$; $F = 0.002$, $p = .963$) which is of importance in order to ensure that the personal characteristics do not affect the reactions (Söderlund, 2018). The participants' sustainability interest (rated the GREEN-items above 4) was further investigated in order to see if it affected the results, the findings showed that there was no difference from the whole sample (Appendix C). In total 11 countries were recorded. The majority of the respondents were residents of Sweden 82.7%, next being the Netherlands (6.5%) followed by Switzerland (3.6%), Germany (1.4%), Denmark and the United States. The survey has been held open for 3 weeks from March 13th to April 4th 2023.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Grouping of Scenarios

Since the survey randomly assigned respondents to different scenarios (Appendix A) and answered separate questions for the product attributes there were no variables that contained information from all the participants that could distinguish the scenarios. In order to make 2×2 between-subjects factorial design it was necessary to create two variables containing all the respondents, distinguished by the brand personality condition and sustainability claim condition.

3.6.2 Manipulation Check

The data from the 283 respondents were imported to SPSS were unfinished answers and answers by robots were discarded, leaving 201 responses remaining. Next, the first control question, testing the manipulation check for brand personality “*Based on the picture you saw, please rate the T-shirt brand along the following dimension? Prestigious, Luxurious and High status*” (Jung & Dubois, 2022), was made into an index after scoring a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.878 in the reliability analysis. This index was used in an analysis of variance ANOVA in order to see if there is any difference between the two different brand personality exposures. The result showed no significant difference between how the participants perceived the brand personalities. Based on this we decided to only include participants that answered the questions in accordance to the scenario they were assigned to. Based on the 7-point scale, people who had been exposed to the non-luxury branding and answered higher than 4 were excluded from the dataset. Additionally, people who had been exposed to the luxury branding were excluded if they had answered lower than 3 on the 7-point scale. The total number of people remaining after the exclusion were 139. The results of the new sample size remained the same as the results from the whole sample size ($n = 201$), unfinished answers still being excluded ($n = 82$), see Appendix B for clarifications on the results.

The second control question “*Based on the picture you saw, to what extent do you think this T-shirt is environmentally friendly?*” was tested in an analysis of variance ANOVA. The result showed a significant difference ($p < 0.001$), where the respondents that had been exposed to a sustainability claim rated the perceived sustainability higher ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.496$). In contrast to the non-sustainability claim ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.507$). The manipulation was thereby successful and no one was excluded. This left us with 31 respondents in scenario 1, 41 respondents in scenario 2, 31 respondents in scenario 3 and 36 respondents in scenario 4, which ensures normal distribution in all the scenarios.

3.6.3 Product Attributes

The measures of product attributes, as used by Gruber et al. (2014), were tested in a reliability analysis before being computed into an index. Both *quality* and *price* used one reversed scoring variable, therefore, these two (question 1.3 and question 2.2: Appendix A)

were reversed, in all the scenarios, by re-coding the answers. Once this was done, reliability analysis was made on the questions regarding each of the product attributes.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Quality	0.672
Price	0.701
Visual appeal	0.889

After checking Cronbach's alpha, indices were made for all the product attributes for each scenario. All the variables had a Cronbach's alpha > 0.6 , which is considered acceptable (Daud, Khidzir, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2018). In order to make a 2×2 between-subjects analysis, an analysis of variance ANOVA is chosen. In order for this to be successful three dependent variables needed to be computed: one for quality, one for price and one for visual appeal. This was done by compiling the quality variables from the different scenarios into one index variable for quality. The same procedure was also done for price and visual appeal.

4. Results

This section will present the empirical results of the study. Throughout this analysis a significance level of 0.05 is used. The result section is structured based on the product attributes, where under each attribute we will start with discussing the interaction effect along with the two relevant hypotheses a and b. In total 6 hypotheses will be discussed.

4.1 Brand Personality's Moderating Role on Quality

We conducted a 2×2 analysis of variance ANOVA to assess participants' perceptions of quality. The results showed a non-significant interaction effect ($F(1,135) = 0.021, p = 0.885$). Meaning that there is no moderating effect when looking at the brand personality in combination with sustainability claims, showing an opposite result than anticipated in our research question. The main effect of the brand personality condition was significant

($F(1,135) = 9.300, p = 0.003$), this means that the brand personality does have an effect on the product evaluations. However, the main effect of the sustainability condition was not significant ($F(1,135) = 1.832, p = 0.178$), meaning that hypotheses H1a and H1b are not supported.

H1a suggested that a luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the quality than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim. The results of comparing sustainability vs no sustainability claim with luxury branding did not show any significant results in the product evaluation of the quality ($M_{\text{sustainable}} = 3.82, SD = 0.61$ vs. $M_{\text{non-sustainable}} = 3.67, SD = 0.71; F = 0.798, p = 0.375$).

H1b suggested that a non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on quality than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim. The results when comparing sustainability vs no sustainability claim with a non-luxury branding did not show any significant results in the product evaluation of the quality ($M_{\text{sustainable}} = 3.46, SD = 0.84$ vs. $M_{\text{non-sustainable}} = 3.27, SD = 0.71; F = 1.103, p = 0.297$).

Table 5. ANOVA Table for Quality: H1a & H1b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H1a)	3.82 (0.61)	3.67 (0.71)	3.74 (0.66)	0.789	0.375
Non-luxury (H1b)	3.46 (0.84)	3.27 (0.71)	3.37 (0.78)	1.103	0.297
Total	3.61 (0.77)	3.45 (0.73)			

4.2 Brand Personality's Moderating Role on Price

The 2×2 analysis of variance ANOVA showed that there was no significant interaction effect when assessing participants' perception of price ($F(1,135) = 0.142, p = 0.707$). The main effect of the brand personality condition was significant ($F(1,135) = 4.572, p = 0.034$).

The main effect of the sustainability condition was not significant ($F(1,135) = 1.146, p = 0.286$). This means that H2a and H2b are not supported.

H2a suggested that a luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on price than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim. The mean for the sustainable product was lower indicating that the price was perceived as being more favorable. However, the result of comparing sustainability vs no sustainability claim with a luxury branding did not show any significant difference in the product evaluation of the price ($M_{\text{sustainable}} = 2.97, SD = 0.68$ vs. $M_{\text{non-sustainable}} = 3.18, SD = 0.86; F = 1.186, p = 0.280$).

H2b suggested that a non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on price than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim. The results of sustainability vs no sustainability claim with a non-luxury branding did not show any significant result in the product evaluation of the price ($M_{\text{sustainable}} = 3.34, SD = 0.91$ vs. $M_{\text{non-sustainable}} = 3.44, SD = 0.97; F = 0.231, p = 0.632$).

Table 6. ANOVA Table for Price: H2a & H2b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H1a)	2.97 (0.68)	3.18 (0.86)	3.08 (0.78)	1.186	0.280
Non-luxury (H1b)	3.34 (0.91)	3.44 (0.97)	3.39 (0.93)	0.231	0.632
Total	3.18 (0.84)	3.32 (0.92)			

4.3 Brand Personality's Moderating Role on Visual Appeal

The 2×2 analysis of variance ANOVA to assess participants' perceptions of visual appeal showed a non-significant interaction effect ($F(1,135) = 0.822, p = 0.366$). The main effect of the brand personality condition was significant ($F(1,135) = 7.455, p = 0.007$), meaning that the brand personality did affect the product evaluations. However, the main effect of the

sustainability condition was not significant ($F(1,135) = 1.016, p = 0.315$), meaning that H3a and H3b were not supported.

H3a suggested that a luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the visual appeal than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim. In contrast, the results when comparing sustainability vs no sustainability claim with luxury branding did not show any significant results in the product evaluation of the visual appeal ($M_{\text{sustainable}} = 3.68, SD = 0.85$ vs. $M_{\text{non-sustainable}} = 3.69, SD = 0.88; F = 0.005, p = 0.942$).

H3b suggested that a non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on visual appeal than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim. However, the results when comparing the sustainability vs no sustainability claim with a non-luxury branding did not show any significant difference in the product evaluation of the visual appeal ($M_{\text{sustainable}} = 3.10, SD = 1.01$ vs. $M_{\text{non-sustainable}} = 3.40, SD = 0.95; F = 1.847, p = 0.178$). On the other hand, the direction of the means followed the hypothesis, where the mean for the sustainable product was lower (more unfavorable) than the non-sustainable product.

Table 7. ANOVA Table for Visual Appeal: H3a & H3b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H3a)	3.68 (0.85)	3.69 (0.88)	3.69 (0.86)	0.005	0.942
Non-luxury (H3b)	3.10 (1.01)	3.40 (0.95)	3.24 (0.99)	1.847	0.178
Total	3.35 (0.98)	3.54 (0.93)			

Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses		Results
H1a	A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the quality than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.375$)
H1b	A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on quality than a non-luxury product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.297$)
H2a	A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the price than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not Supported ($p = 0.280$)
H2b	A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on price than a non-luxury branded product without sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.632$)
H3a	A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the visual appeal than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.942$)
H3b	A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on visual appeal than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.178$)

5. Discussion

In this chapter, we summarize our main findings. We then discuss how our study contributes to already existing literature and how fashion companies can gain from our contribution through managerial implications. Lastly, we consider the limitations and further research within the topic.

5.1 Summary of Main Findings

This report investigates the role brand personality has in combination with sustainability, more precisely answering the question: *Does the brand personality (luxury and non-luxury) moderate consumers' preconceptions of sustainability within the fashion industry?* The findings show that the brand personality does not moderate consumers' sustainability preconceptions about the product attributes quality, price and visual appeal.

The reasoning as to why the hypotheses did not show any significance can have multiple explanations. One being that both the luxury and sustainability statements were vague. Additionally, the product (a white t-shirt) might not evoke the reactions that were anticipated, meaning that it can be difficult to judge the product attributes from a generic product. Besides, the respondents were only exposed to one product and did not have anything to compare it with, which might make it hard to evaluate the product. Another reason is that the product in itself did not correspond to the statement, such as misaligning with consumers' perceptions of a luxury or sustainable product. Lastly, one explanation could be the respondents, where the majority were Swedish citizens. One could argue that sustainability is a well-established concept in Sweden and that most of the “falsely” preconceptions that consumers might have about sustainability do not exist in the Swedish market.

Even though none of the six hypotheses was supported, the results of H2a and H3b showed a directional indication of supporting the hypotheses, although there were no significant results. With that said, these results should be interpreted cautiously. H2a indicated that the luxury branded product having a sustainability claim was perceived as being more favorably priced than the luxury branded product that did not have any sustainability claim. This might have to

do with consumers expecting a higher price for sustainable products compared to conventional apparel, which also was argued by Lundblad & Davies (2016). H3b had a directional indication where the non-luxury branded product that had a sustainability claim was perceived as more unfavorable in terms of visual appeal than the non-luxury product without a sustainability claim. This can be related to assumptions made that the view of sustainable fashion as being unattractive (Lundblad & Davies, 2016) becomes more salient when combined with a non-luxury brand. Additionally, sustainable clothing is usually made from a long-lasting perspective and does not follow trends (Ibid). While these associations might be offset by a luxury brand, a non-luxury brand makes the sustainability preconceptions more salient.

Out of the scope of research regarding the research question and hypotheses, we found a significant main effect on the brand personality condition with regards to both quality, price and visual appeal. Meaning that the brand personality does have an effect on the product evaluations when disregarding the sustainability condition from the analysis. This can be linked to the previous research findings on luxury products, where luxury is associated with high quality-design and fabrics (Zhang & Cude, 2018) and traits like exclusive, beautiful, attractive and gorgeous (Sung et al., 2015). Whereas non-luxury, on the other hand, is more closely related to fast-fashion and lower quality perceptions (Caldecott, 2022). Regarding the price, luxury brands, with higher quality and better design, could justify a higher price and therefore be seen as more favorably priced than a non-luxury brand (Wijaya, 2013). Additionally, a higher price for luxury products could be justified by inner-personal motivation, including traits of being pretentious, materialistic and showy (Sung et al., 2015). Still, important to mention is that only a main effect was found and what implications (positive or negative) it has on the product attributes have not been investigated.

To conclude, brand personality did not show any moderating effect on consumers' sustainability preconceptions. On the other hand, brand personality was found to have an effect on product evaluations in quality, price and visual appeal regardless of whether the product was perceived as sustainable or not (including a sustainability claim or not).

5.2 Contribution

This study contributes to the existing literature by combining the research made on product attributes associated with sustainability (Gruber et al., 2014; Marcon et al., 2022; Rausch et al., 2021; Lundblad & Davies, 2016) and the importance of brand personality (Wijaya, 2013). However, this study did not find any moderating effect of the brand personality (luxury and non-luxury) on consumers' sustainability preconceptions of product attributes when it comes to sustainable products. As stated before we did on the other hand find insight regarding the brand personality condition which was outside of our hypothesis testing.

Our findings about the brand personality condition showed an effect in combination with quality, price and visual appeal. The brand personality condition is in line with previous research by Wijaya (2013). He found that branding has a powerful role in adding value to a product by changing consumers' experience and perceptions towards it. Branding's major effect in changing consumers' attitude towards products was also evident in our findings regarding the brand personality condition. Likewise, Acuti et al (2022) mentioned that it is important to understand what values that are compromised versus reinforced. This report however, did not investigate which product attributes are compromised versus reinforced by brand personality.

Quality has in previous research been found to be one of the most salient attributes of luxury products. Luxury branding is associated with handmade design and the use of comfortable fabrics, resulting in superior product quality (Zhang & Cude, 2018). The finding made on the brand personality condition is in line with the existing literature, where quality was affected by the brand personality condition, regardless of the sustainability claim. Price also showed to be affected by the brand personality condition. This validates existing literature where luxury branded products can be perceived as more favorably priced since it is justified by inner-personal motivation and other product characteristics (Wijaya, 2013; Sung et al., 2015). Visual appeal has been found to be another core value of luxury branding, relating to aesthetics and sensual pleasure (Sung et al., 2015). This product attribute also showed to be affected by the brand personality condition. The findings can be explained by the reasoning by Wijaya (2013) where branding becomes a guideline for consumers, based on reputation and credibility. The branding itself also contains preconceptions with regards to the product

attributes and benefits.

The findings of the brand personality conditions are important since it means that it can change consumers' perceptions of product attributes, it therefore has a similar effect on consumers as brand image. Additionally, the preconceptions act as qualifiers during the decision-making process and purchase stage (Marcon et al., 2022).

5.3 Managerial Implications

In this section we will discuss how companies communicate in the best way possible from a product marketing perspective in order to avoid evoking consumers' negative emotions and preconceptions. This when taking into account sustainability and brand personality conditions.

One could say that from a communication perspective luxury and non-luxury brands do not have to consider that their sustainability communication will evoke trade-offs in consumers' minds regarding the attributes quality, price and visual appeal. However, this is based on the results made on a small sample size ($n = 139$) and should therefore be cautiously interpreted. Therefore, there still needs to be an alignment of the communication and the product's sustainability, reducing the risk of contradictory and ambiguous claims (Acuti et al., 2022). This is because the skepticism towards sustainability communication is growing, due to greenwashing (Chen et al., 2020).

On the other hand, in general marketing communications, the brand personality could lead to changed perceptions regarding the product attributes. However, exactly in what way the perceptions of the product attributes are changed by the brand personality has not been investigated in this paper. It could be assumed that luxury will be positively associated due to the word luxury in itself, which has a strong meaning for the consumers. Accordingly, it is strongly connected to status, self-image and can further enhance their social status (Sung et al., 2015; Zhang & Cude, 2018). If this was the case, that luxury has a positive implication on the product attributes, the luxury brand should be used in marketing communication. This is to evoke the potential positive emotions associated with the luxury brand.

5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has limitations such as only investigating a small sample size alongside a narrow geographical market (Sweden). Additionally, only one dimension of the brand personality was accounted for (luxury vs non-luxury). This could be extended in future research by having real brands (e.g., H&M vs Gucci), evoking deeper brand associations and perceptions.

Even though this study did not find any moderating effect of brand personality in combination with the sustainability condition. Previous research has found trade-offs regarding sustainable product choices and we therefore see an opportunity to continue to investigate this topic. We suggest a similar study could be made again, having clearer sustainability statements and pictures in order to successfully stimulate the participants. Additionally, testing several clothing items, different product categories or industries could help to get a more comprehensive understanding.

Since this study showed significant results on the brand personality condition and therefore further investigation within the topic would be interesting. This is to get a deeper understanding of how the product attributes are affected (reinforced vs not) by the brand personality. The knowledge can help companies in how to communicate, whether focusing on the product attributes or the brand personality.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, brand personality did not show to have a moderating effect on consumers' sustainability preconceptions. Therefore, the trade-offs associated with sustainability that has been discussed, are not assumed to have any effect on product evaluations. However, companies should still be careful about their sustainability communication since it easily can lead to contradictory and ambiguous claims. Additionally, brand personality (luxury and non-luxury) conditions are important since the findings suggest that it can change consumers' perceptions of product attributes.

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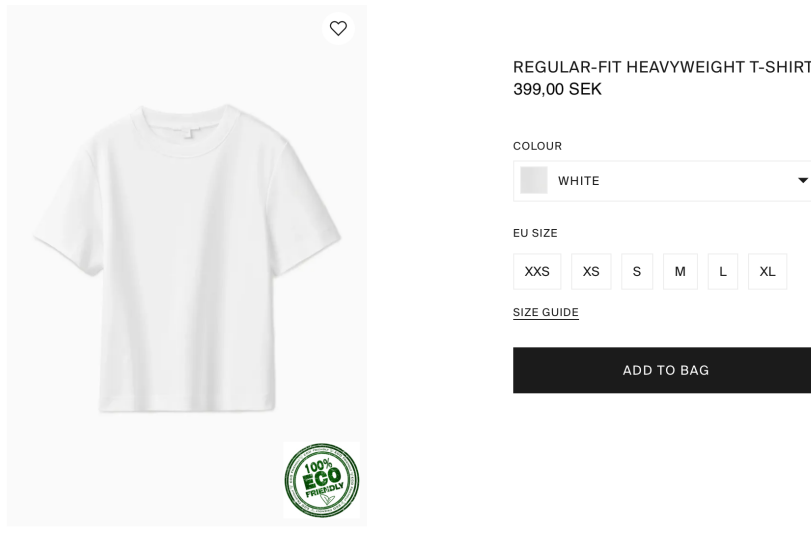
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Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Scenario 1

Imagine that you are a consumer shopping for an eco-friendly T-shirt from a luxury brand. Based on the picture below, please rate each of the following questions regarding product attributes.



Q1

How would you perceive the **quality**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Must be good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seems reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Will not last long	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2

How would you perceive the **price**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Expensive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pricing is favourable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The price is negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3

How would you perceive the **visual appeal (design)**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Is aesthetically appealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Scenario 2

Imagine that you are a consumer shopping for an eco-friendly T-shirt from a non-luxury brand. Based on the picture below, please rate each of the following questions regarding product attributes.



REGULAR-FIT HEAVYWEIGHT T-SHIRT
399,00 SEK

COLOUR

WHITE

EU SIZE

[SIZE GUIDE](#)

ADD TO BAG

Q1

How would you perceive the **quality**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Must be good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seems reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Will not last long	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2

How would you perceive the **price**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Expensive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pricing is favourable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The price is negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3

How would you perceive the **visual appeal (design)**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Is aesthetically appealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Scenario 3

Imagine that you are a consumer shopping for a T-shirt from a luxury brand. Based on the picture below, please rate each of the following questions regarding product attributes.



REGULAR-FIT HEAVYWEIGHT T-SHIRT
399,00 SEK

COLOUR

☐
WHITE

EU SIZE

XXS

XS

S

M

L

XL

[SIZE GUIDE](#)

ADD TO BAG

Q1

How would you perceive the **quality**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Must be good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seems reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Will not last long	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2

How would you perceive the **price**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Expensive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pricing is favourable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The price is negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3

How would you perceive the **visual appeal (design)**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Is aesthetically appealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Scenario 4

Imagine that you are a consumer shopping for a T-shirt from a non-luxury brand. Based on the picture below, please rate each of the following questions regarding product attributes.



REGULAR-FIT HEAVYWEIGHT T-SHIRT
399,00 SEK

COLOUR

WHITE ▼

EU SIZE

[SIZE GUIDE](#)

ADD TO BAG

Q1

How would you perceive the **quality**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Must be good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seems reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Will not last long	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2

How would you perceive the **price**?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Expensive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pricing is favourable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The price is negative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3

How would you perceive the visual appeal (design) ?					
	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly agree
Is aesthetically appealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like the look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Control questions

Q4. Control question 1

Based on the picture you saw, please rate the T-shirt **brand** along the following dimensions

	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 Very much
Prestigious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Luxurious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
High status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5. Control question 2

Based on the picture you saw, to what extent do you think this T-shirt is environmentally friendly?

1 Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 Very much
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Personality and demographic questions

Q6. Sustainability question

How engaged are you in sustainability?

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would describe myself as environmentally responsible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7.
Please specify your gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Do not want to specify

Q8.
In which country do you live in?

Q9.
Please specify your age

Q10.

How much is your income per month?
(SEK)

- ☐ 0 - 15 000
- ☐ 15 001 - 30 000
- ☐ 30 001 - 45 000
- ☐ 45 000+

Q11.

How often do you shop for **luxury** clothes per month?

	1 Very rarely	2	3	4	5	6	7 Very often
Frequency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12.

How often do you shop for clothes per month?

	1 Very rarely	2	3	4	5	6	7 Very often
Frequency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13.

This is the last question in this study. Below, please list any thoughts you have about this study that you would like to share with the researchers (this is optional).

Appendix B: Results from Total Sample Size

Table 9. ANOVA Table for Quality: H1a & H1b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H1a)	3.23 (0.26)	3.22 (0.34)	3.23 (0.30)	0.001	0.974
Non-luxury (H1b)	3.21 (0.28)	3.22 (0.33)	3.21 (0.31)	0.009	0.923
Total	3.23 (0.26)	3.22 (0.34)			

*Interaction effect ($F(1,197) = 0.008$, $p = 0.928$)

**Main effect of brand personality ($F(1,197) = 0.089$, $p = 0.766$)

***Main effect of sustainability ($F(1,197) = 0.002$, $p = 0.965$)

Table 10. ANOVA Table for Price: H2a & H2b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H2a)	2.87 (0.69)	3.04 (0.89)	2.95 (0.79)	1.014	0.316
Non-luxury (H2b)	3.33 (0.84)	3.39 (0.96)	3.36 (0.89)	0.089	0.766
Total	3.11 (0.80)	3.22 (0.94)			

*Interaction effect ($F(1,197) = 0.213$, $p = 0.645$)

**Main effect of brand personality ($F(1,197) = 11.389$, $p < 0.001$)

***Main effect of sustainability ($F(1,197) = 0.805$, $p = 0.371$)

Table 11. ANOVA Table for Visual Appeal: H3a & H3b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H3a)	3.36 (1.03)	3.29 (1.18)	3.33 (1.10)	0.087	0.768
Non-luxury (H3b)	3.23 (1.01)	3.52 (0.91)	3.37 (0.97)	2.340	0.129

Total	3.29 (1.02)	3.41 (1.05)
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*Interaction effect ($F(1,197) = 1.476, p = 0.226$)

**Main effect of brand personality ($F(1,197) = 0.112, p = 0.738$)

***Main effect of sustainability ($F(1,197) = 0.576, p = 0.449$)

Table 12. Summary of Hypothesis Testing (whole sample)

Hypotheses	Results
H1a A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived quality than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.974$)
H1b A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived quality than a non-luxury product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.923$)
H2a A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived price than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not Supported ($p = 0.316$)
H2b A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived price (being lower) than a non-luxury branded product without sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.766$)
H3a A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.768$)
H3b A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.129$)

Appendix C: Results from Environmentally Concerned Respondents

Table 13. ANOVA Table for Quality: H1a & H1b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H1a)	3.74 (0.68)	3.73 (0.86)	3.74 (0.68)	0.002	0.968
Non-luxury (H1b)	3.58 (0.90)	2.81 (0.90)	3.30 (0.96)	3.267	0.088
Total	3.63 (0.87)	3.31 (0.88)			

*Interaction effect ($F(1,280) = 1.639$, $p = 0.211$)

**Main effect of brand personality ($F(1,280) = 3.120$, $p = 0.088$)

***Main effect of sustainability ($F(1,280) = 1.504$, $p = 0.230$)

Table 14. ANOVA Table for Price: H2a & H2b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H2a)	3.07 (0.15)	3.67 (1.01)	3.44 (0.83)	1.692	0.220
Non-luxury (H2b)	3.69 (0.78)	3.43 (1.24)	3.60 (0.95)	0.331	0.572
Total	3.51 (0.72)	3.56 (1.09)			

*Interaction effect ($F(1,280) = 1.639$, $p = 0.211$)

**Main effect of brand personality ($F(1,280) = 0.332$, $p = 0.569$)

***Main effect of sustainability ($F(1,280) = 0.244$, $p = 0.625$)

Table 15. ANOVA Table for Visual Appeal: H3a & H3b

	Sustainability claim	No sustainability claim			
	M (SD)	M (SD)	Total	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Luxury (H3a)	3.80 (0.76)	3.25 (0.65)	3.46 (0.72)	1.932	0.192

Non-luxury (H3b)	2.83 (0.72)	3.07 (1.30)	2.92 (0.95)	0.268	0.611
Total	3.12 (0.84)	3.17 (0.98)			

*Interaction effect ($F(1,280) = 1.490$, $p = 0.232$)

**Main effect of brand personality ($F(1,280) = 3.146$, $p = 0.087$)

***Main effect of sustainability ($F(1,280) = 0.233$, $p = 0.633$)

Table 16. Summary of Hypothesis Testing (GREEN)

Hypotheses	Results
H1a A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived quality than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.968$)
H1b A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived quality than a non-luxury product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.088$)
H2a A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived price than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not Supported ($p = 0.220$)
H2b A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived price (being lower) than a non-luxury branded product without sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.572$)
H3a A luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more favorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.192$)
H3b A non-luxury branded product together with a sustainability claim will have a more unfavorable effect on the perceived visual appeal than a non-luxury branded product without a sustainability claim.	Not supported ($p = 0.611$)