

Generation Z Purchase Intention of Environmentally Sustainable Luxury Fashion Products

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Abstract

Background: Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of sustainability issues in the fashion industry and are demanding brands to incorporate sustainability into their business models (Youn & Cho, 2021). Regarding sustainability in luxury fashion, it can be argued that luxury brands have an advantage over high-street brands as they are believed to have smaller production batches produced at a slower pace (Henninger et al., 2016). Research suggests that many consumers class luxury fashion as slow fashion, meaning there is less/no need for sustainability (Henninger et al., 2017). However, as consumers' awareness regarding the negative environmental and social impact of the fashion industry grows, luxury brands are no longer able continue operating based on their traditional unsustainable business models (Janssen et al., 2017).

When implementing sustainability into luxury fashion, brands are faced with many challenges. First, luxury products are traditionally made from rare materials which increases the perceived value of the products (Kapferer and Michait-Denizeau, 2014; Veblen, 2016). This conflicts with sustainable fashion which seeks to incorporate recycled and less resource-intensive materials in the products (Henninger et al., 2016) which may be perceived as less valuable (Veelaert et al., 2020). Second, the concept of luxury is associated with ostentation and conspicuousness where purchases are made excessively to display wealth (Veblen, 2016) whereas sustainability is associated with ethics and altruism where purchases are made in moderation (Kong et al., 2021). Third, change is a form of luxury in fashion (Gardetti and Torres, 2015) and for most luxury consumers, it is not only important to be seen in the 'right' clothes, it is also important to follow the latest trends as "status and power are asserted through consumers' ability to discard products that are still useable" (Gardetti and Torres, 2015, p.16). This lack of compatibility between sustainability and luxury fashion has been found to have a negative impact on consumers' purchase behaviour regarding sustainable luxury

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fashion products as it highlights the conflict between the two (opposing) concepts (Kapferer and Michait-Denizeau, 2014).

Research aim: This paper aims to evaluate Generation Z consumers' purchase intention of sustainable luxury fashion products in the United Kingdom. Although there is a lot of research conducted on consumers' purchase intention of sustainable and luxury fashion products (Henninger et al., 2016; Janssen et al., 2017; Kong et al., 2021 and Youn & Cho, 2021), there is limited research on the two concepts combined, i.e. sustainable luxury fashion. Additionally, sustainability is a broad term and includes both social and environmental sustainability (Henninger et al., 2016) and in most papers the distinction has not been made. In this paper the researchers solely focus on environmental sustainability as it has been identified as one the main areas that luxury fashion brands can rely on for their recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic (Deloitte, 2020). The primary audience for this paper is Generation Z consumers as they have been identified as the "sustainability generation" (Youn & Cho, 2021, p. 516) and one of the key market definer cohorts with a significant spending power (Davis, 2020).

To achieve the research aim, the researchers will first identify the factors that affect that Generation Z consumers' attitude toward environmentally sustainable luxury fashion products using extant literature. This is key as consumers' attitude is one the key factors that impact their purchase intention (Ajzen, 2020). Next, they evaluate how their attitude affects their purchase intention by conducting a questionnaire based on extant literature.

Research questions:

- What are the main factors that affect Generation Z consumers' attitude towards environmentally sustainable luxury fashion products?
- How do the above factors affect Generation Z consumers' attitude towards environmentally sustainable luxury fashion products?
- How does Generation Z consumers' attitudes toward environmentally sustainable luxury fashion products impact their purchase intention?

Methodology: The researchers will take a quantitative approach and use questionnaires to understand the factors that affect generation Z consumers' attitude towards environmentally sustainable luxury fashion products, and their impact on their purchase intention. The questionnaire will be digitally distributed between 400 Generation Z participants across all regions in the United Kingdom who are luxury fashion consumers. The questionnaire will consist of filter questions to ensure the respondents belong to the target audience selected this research.

Findings: The expected results of this research are identification of the factors that affect Generation Z consumers attitude towards environmentally luxury fashion products, and evaluation of how these factors affect their purchase intention. Using the results, a framework will be developed which will have theoretical contributions to academia and can be used by academics and researchers who wish to understand and study this topic further. Additionally, this research will have managerial contributions as it provides valuable insights for luxury brands who wish to incorporate environmental sustainability into their business model.

Keywords: sustainability, luxury fashion, sustainable luxury fashion, purchase intention.

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