

Brand Authenticity in Sustainable Luxury: Consumer Trust and Purchase Intentions

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Abstract

Sustainable luxury brands face the challenge of aligning ethical practices with traditional notions of exclusivity. This study examines the impact of brand authenticity on purchaser trust and purchase intentions within the sustainable luxury sector. The research is grounded in signalling theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour to explain consumer responses to authenticity cues. A structured survey of 150 respondents was conducted using purposive and quota sampling to ensure demographic diversity. Structural equation modelling was utilised to evaluate the validity, reliability, and strength of the proposed connections in the data. The findings show that consumer trust and purchasing intentions are directly increased by brand authenticity.

Additionally, the association between purchase intentions and authenticity is somewhat mediated by trust, suggesting that authenticity functions across a combination of indirect and direct pathways. Model fit indices confirm the robustness of the proposed framework, with all hypothesised relationships supported. The results add to the body of literature by including trust as a mediating component and expanding the authenticity of brand investigations into the sustainable luxurious space. For practitioners, the research highlights the crucial significance of clear communication, heritage storytelling, and consistent sustainability practices to foster trust and drive long-term loyalty. These observations provide practical advice for luxury firms looking to stay relevant in a market that is socially conscious.

Keywords: Sustainable luxury, Brand authenticity, Consumer trust, Purchase intentions, Sustainability values, Luxury branding

1. Introduction

A collection of fundamental value generators that consist of heritage, exclusivity, and craftsmanship heritage, have long been the foundation of luxury branding and sets it apart with products that are mass-marketed (Morhart and Malär, 2020; Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2021). These fragments do not merely form the symbolic capital of the luxury brands but precondition the pricing premiums and the customer loyalty of the luxury brand (Husain *et al.*, 2022; Lin and Ku, 2023). Heritage passes a sense of traditions, exclusivity guarantees a lack of availability, and craftsmanship signals the quality of perfection, which are factors that promote the assumption that luxury is the sphere of the elite and something to aspire to (Lee

et al., 2023). The issue of vital environmental and social issues has pressed the luxury business to respond to certain changes in recent years, and thus, the sustainability aspects have been consolidated into the brand systems (Cattaneo, 2023; Zhao *et al.*, 2023). Sustainability Luxury involves material sustainability, fair labour practices, and the visibility of supply chains, in that it seeks to match the consumption of luxury with goals of sustainability seen in the world (Lavuri *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, this union brings a contradiction, as luxury is based on scarcity and a premium, and sustainability commonly encourages availability, lifetime, and optimised use of resources (Amatulli *et al.*, 2021). Such a clash leaves pressing questions as to whether the luxury brands can maintain their customary charm even as they continue to show sincere interest in sustainability (Kumagai and Nagasawa, 2023). One of the most important variables influencing customers' attitudes toward sustainable luxury in this changing market climate is their impression of brand authenticity, or if a brand is genuine, faithful to its beliefs, as well as consistent in its activities (Hanhimäki, 2025; Safeer *et al.*, 2023; Ligaraba *et al.*, 2024). Authenticity signals that a brand's sustainability initiatives are more than marketing rhetoric, helping to build credibility and consumer trust (Huang and Guo, 2021; Lim and Lee, 2024). His trust, in its turn, is crucial when it comes to influencing the intentions to be purchased, which happens especially in the high-involvement categories such as the luxury fashion items, accessories, and vehicles (Wang *et al.*, 2021).

Sustainability programs are increasingly becoming less believable, even though luxury brands increasingly publish them to promote a positive image. Critical issues on so-called greenwashing, with scanty supporting evidence to the claims of environmental friendliness, have supported mistrust amongst consumers (Cheah *et al.*, 2023). Such trust loss falls under the core principles of luxury branding, in which reputation and sincerity are the key elements of the relationship with consumers (Neumann *et al.*, 2021; Lavuri *et al.*, 2022). Available literature evidences show that sustainable practices have the potential to improve consumer insights of the quality brand (Lee *et al.*, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2024); however, the robustness and consistency of the contribution remain contentious in many cases (Hanhimäki, 2025; Safeer *et al.*, 2023), depending upon the concept of authenticity. The authenticity is a prism in which consumers perceive the sustainability messages, determining the credibility of such messages and whether they are defined with a brand (Lim and Lee, 2024). Nevertheless, they are still in need of consolidated empirical studies that look at how authenticity works as an intermediary between sustainability action and the desire to purchase in the luxury marketplace (Zhao *et al.*, 2023). The development of theoretical and practical understanding of sustainable luxury branding will close this gap.

The framework of the current research integrates Signalling Theory, Brand Authenticity Theory, and the TPB or called Theory of Planned Behaviour. Signalling Theory embraces that in markets with information asymmetry, brands use cues such as sustainability certifications, environmentally friendly products and open supply chains to convey trustworthiness (Huang and Guo, 2021; Lee *et al.*, 2023). Brand Authenticity Theory explains how consumers assess these cues based on heritage, quality, and value consistency (Safeer *et al.*, 2023; Hanhimäki, 2025), with authenticity turning sustainability claims into trust-building assets (Ligaraba *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, TPB notes that views and purchasing intention are shaped by authenticity-driven trust (Husain *et al.*, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2024). Collectively, these views place authenticity at the core of trust and intent to buy in sustainable luxuriousness.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To inspect how buyer trust in sustainable luxury companies is affected by brand authenticity.
2. To examine how customer trust affects purchasing intentions.
3. To evaluate how customer trust functions as a mediator between purchase intentions and authenticity.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are developed to examine the suggested connections between customer trust, purchasing intentions, and the authenticity of the brand in the context of sustainable luxury:

- H1: Customers' confidence in sustainable luxury companies is positively impacted by their perception of brand authenticity.
- H2: Customers' inclinations to purchase sustainable luxury products are favorably influenced by their perception of brand authenticity.
- H3: Purchase intentions for luxury brands that practice sustainability are positively impacted by consumer confidence.
- H4: Purchase intentions and brand authenticity are mediated by consumer trust.

These hypotheses offer a methodical foundation for evaluating the conceptual framework empirically, allowing for a methodical assessment of the connections between consumer trust, purchasing intentions, and the authenticity of the brand in the context of sustainable luxury.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The research was conducted using a quantitative and cross-sectional research design, which had the aim of determining the correlations between the concepts of customer trust, brand authenticity and purchase intention towards sustainable luxury products. The structural survey is chosen as the principal tool of data collection because it enabled the orderly gathering of data about a significant number of subjects and yielded evidence that would help conduct statistical testing of the postulated relations. The cross-sectional method enabled all the measurements of the study variables in the research with respect to the assessment of consumer perception of the study time at a given moment, offering a snapshot of the consumer perceptions and the behavioural intentions as part of the luxury market. The cause of quantitative methodology was the desire to achieve measurable and generalised results that could enlighten academia as well as the management of sustainable luxurious branding.

2.2 Population and Sampling

The study population of interest included consumers who have made at least one purchase or a clearly expressed be interest in sustainable luxury goods like high fashion clothing, accessories, jewellery, cosmetics, and luxury vehicles. In order to make sure that the participants possessed both the knowledge and experience of the topic, purposive sampling was implemented. Also, quota sampling was used to sample the variety represented by demographic factors, including gender, age, income, and educational attainment. A standard formula for determining sample size for proportions was used to calculate the size of the sample:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

where Z is the z-score consistent with a 95% confidence level (1.96), p is the projected proportion of the people owning the attribute of interest (0.5, used for maximum variability), and e is the margin of error (0.08). Substituting the values yields:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5}{(0.08)^2} \approx 150$$

Based on this calculation, a minimum of 150 valid responses was targeted to ensure adequate statistical power for hypothesis testing.

2.3 Instrumentation and Measures

The major constructs that were developed in the survey-form tool are brand authenticity, consumer confidence, and purchase intentions. The brand authenticity construct was developed as a multidimensional construct consisting of heritage, quality commitment, transparency and sincerity. The concept of consumer trust was quantified on two dimensions: cognitive trust, which is the confidence in the brand's competence and reliability and affective trust, which is the feeling of certainty of brand integrity. Wearers considered the future purchase of sustainable luxury products when establishing their deliberations about their purchasing intentions. Each topic was measured using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 was used to express strongly disagree and 7 to strongly agree. This enabled the respondents to perform a show of personal degree of agreement and disagreement with each statement. A piloting test with a sample of 20 was administered on the questionnaire to give clarity, understandability, and initial reliability of the questionnaire before a full-scale pilot test.

2.4 Data Collection Method

The data was gathered both online and offline in order to ensure the greatest reach with the broadest range of respondents. The online surveys were sent out through the email invitation and experimental marketing social media actions, whereas offline data collection occurred within a few chosen luxury retail stores and in the framework of the events organised by the company, with the agreement of the store's management. A statement outlining the study's goals, its methods, and each participant's rights as a respondent was provided to each participant. The subjects were assured of anonymity, and any information with the ability to identify individuals was not written. All the responses were stored securely and utilised only for academic purposes, the adherence to the principles of ethical research.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

After data collection, responses were screened to remove incomplete or poor-quality entries. Descriptive statistics outlined respondent demographics and engagement with sustainable luxury brands. Exploratory and confirmatory factor studies confirmed convergent and discriminant validity, and Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.70) was utilised to evaluate confidence. Direct and indirect relations were tested using path analysis, where the mediating role of consumer trust was tested through bootstrapping (5000 resamples). Model fit was assessed using the conventional indices of (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) RMSEA, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). These treatments also ensured that the proposed conceptual model of the observed data was aligned, and it produced valid results regarding the consumer behaviour in the sustainable luxury market.

3. Results

3.1 Population Characteristics

To characterise the demographic makeup of the study sample, 150 valid replies in total were examined. The distribution across age, education, gender, income, and location is detailed in Table 1, providing context for interpreting the subsequent analyses.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 150)

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	45.3

	Female	54.0
	Non-binary/Prefer not to say	0.7
Age	18–25 years	22.0
	26–35 years	38.7
	36–45 years	26.0
	Above 45 years	13.3
Education	Graduate	18.0
	Postgraduate	57.3
	Professional/Doctoral	24.7
Income (Annual, ₹)	10–15 lakh	31.3
	15–25 lakh	45.3
	Above 25 lakh	23.4
Location	Metropolitan	64.7
	Tier-2 City	27.3
	Tier-3 Town	8.0

Table 1 shows that most respondents were female (54.0%), aged 26–35 years (38.7%), and postgraduates (57.3%). The predominant income range was ₹15–25 lakh (45.3%), with 64.7% living in metropolitan areas. Luxury fashion and accessories were the most purchased sustainable luxury products (41.3%).

Figure 1 visualises gender, age, and income distribution.

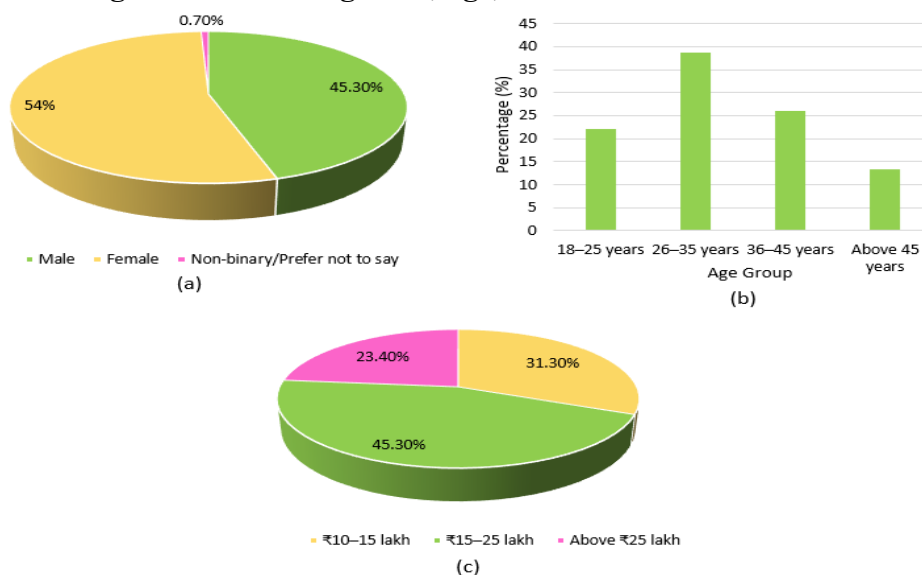


Figure 1. Demographic characteristics of participants: (a) gender distribution, (b) age group distribution, and (c) annual income distribution

Figure 1 presents participant demographics, showing a predominance of female respondents (Fig. 1a), a majority aged 26–35 years (Fig. 1b), and most with annual household incomes of ₹15–25 lakh (Fig. 1c). This distribution offers a balanced and diverse base for analysing sustainable luxury consumption behaviours.

3.2 Reliability and Validity of Scales

The validity and reliability statistics were calculated to determine the quality of the measurement model of each construct. The findings, presented in Table 2, confirm that all measurement items met or exceeded recommended thresholds for inner consistency, composite reliability, and convergent validity.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Statistics

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	CR	AVE
Brand Authenticity	12	0.91	0.93	0.67
Consumer Trust	6	0.88	0.90	0.64
Purchase Intentions	3	0.90	0.92	0.69

Cronbach's alpha values in Table 2 (0.88 to 0.91), which is higher than the benchmark of 0.70, confirming that there is a strong consistency internally. Convergent validity was supported by the fact that AVE (0.64–0.69) and composite reliability (0.90–0.93) both reached the suggested criteria of 0.50. The Fornell–Larcker criterion was used to verify the discriminant validity. Figure 2 visualises these reliability and validity metrics across constructs.

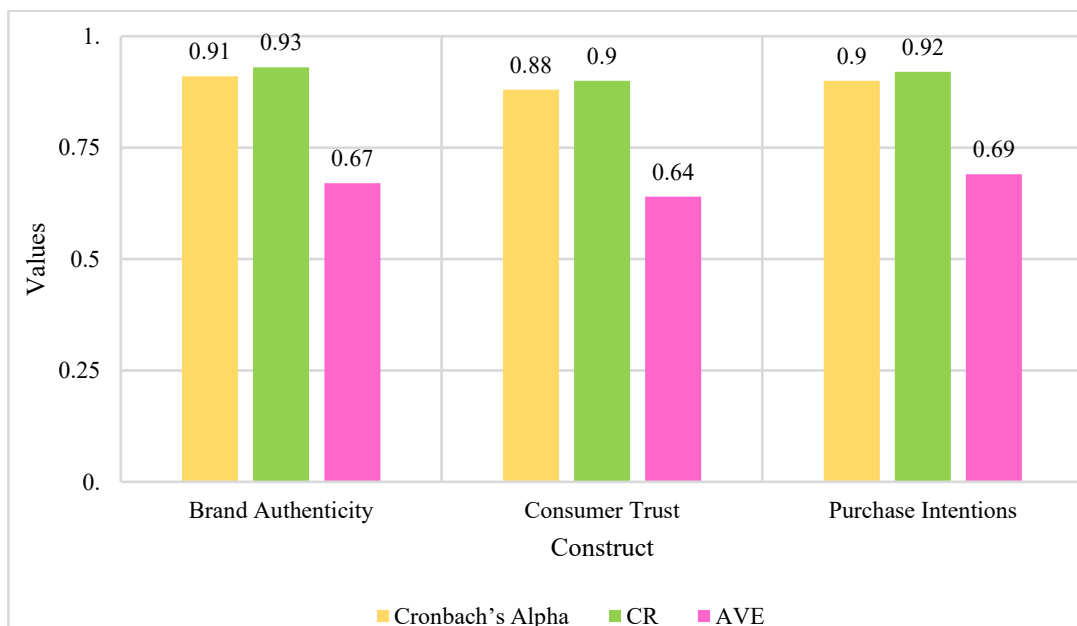


Figure 2. Reliability and Validity Statistics

Figure 2 provides a comparative visualisation of the psychometric properties for the three measurement constructs. The bars for Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha are consistently high across all constructs, surpassing their corresponding adequacy thresholds. This graphical display highlights the internal consistency of the items of each construct, the reliability of the latent variable and adequate variance coverage in comparison to measurement error. The similarity in magnitude across the three measures for each construct further reflects the balanced and well-calibrated nature of the scales used, supporting their suitability for following hypothesis testing and organisational structure modelling.

3.3 Model Fit Indices

Model fit was assessed to verify that the conceptual framework aligned with the observed data, following established thresholds in consumer behaviour research. Table 3 displays the fit indices together with the corresponding acceptable benchmarks.

Table 3. Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold
CFI	0.963	≥ 0.90
TLI	0.955	≥ 0.90
RMSEA	0.045	≤ 0.06
SRMR	0.039	≤ 0.08

Table 3 indicates that all fit indices exceeded recommended thresholds, confirming an excellent model fit. CFI (0.963) and TLI (0.955) surpassed 0.90, while RMSEA (0.045) and SRMR (0.039) were well below 0.06 and 0.08, respectively. These results validate the structural model for hypothesis testing, as also depicted in Figure 3.

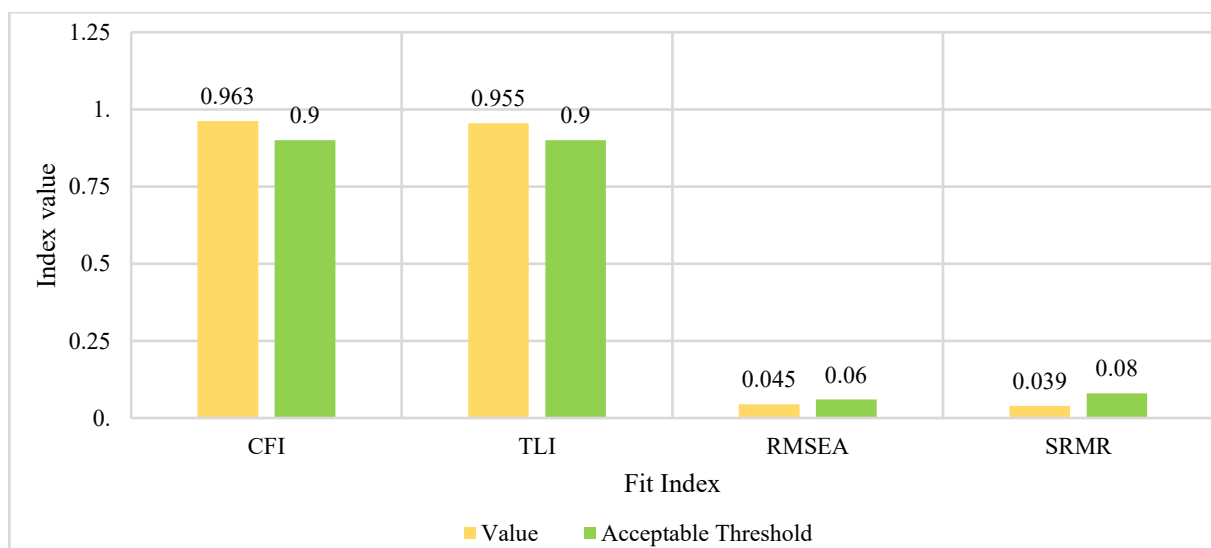


Figure 3. Model fit indices and their acceptable thresholds

Figure 3 visually compares the observed model fit indices with their acceptable thresholds, highlighting that all values comfortably satisfy established criteria for an excellent model fit.

3.4 Hypothesis Testing

To examine the hypothesised connections between customer trust, purchasing intentions, and brand authenticity, the suggested structural model was assessed. Path analysis results demonstrated that all hypothesised relationships were statistically significant and associated with the theoretical expectations of the study. Path coefficients (beta) and level of significance (p-values) were standardised and displayed in Table 4, together with the results of hypotheses.

Table 4. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	p-value	Result
H1	Brand Authenticity → Consumer Trust	0.65	<0.001	Supported
H2	Brand Authenticity → Purchase Intentions	0.28	0.002	Supported
H3	Consumer Trust → Purchase Intentions	0.54	<0.001	Supported
H4	Brand Authenticity → Purchase Intentions (via Consumer Trust)	0.35 (indirect)	<0.001	Supported

Table 4 demonstrates that H1, H2, and H3 demonstrated significant advantages, supporting the strong predictive function of customer belief on purchase intentions as well as the direct impact of brand authenticity on consumer trust and buying intentions. Additionally, statistically significant was the indirect link listed in H4, indicating the existence of a mediation effect.

3.5 Mediation Effects

To investigate the function of customer trust as a mediator in connection to a relatively greater impact of consumer trust, a bootstrapping approach was used using 5,000 resamples. The result concluded that the association between brand authenticity and consumer trust acted as a partial mediator of purchase intentions. The indirect effect was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.35$, 95% CI [0.21, 0.49], $p < 0.001$), while the direct path from brand authenticity to purchase intentions remained significant ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.002$). These findings show that, despite the direct impact of brand authenticity on purchase intention, a significant part of the effect still works through increasing consumer trust. Such parabolic mediation accentuates the concern of consumer trust as a giveaway and a major mechanism that connects perceptions of authenticity to purchase behaviour in the sustainable luxury market.

4. Discussion

The results of this study offer empirical evidence in favour of the crucial role that brand authenticity plays in influencing consumers' trust in sustainable luxury businesses. The strong and positive correlation between authenticity and trust (H1) shows that customers are more likely to believe in the veracity of luxury businesses' claims when they are consistent in their heritage values, sustainability pledges, and brand messaging. This aligns with prior findings that authenticity serves as a credibility filter, enabling

consumers to differentiate between genuine sustainability efforts and superficial “greenwashing” (Olšanová *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, it seems that the high influence of faith on buying intentions (H3) highlights the role of trust as a key psychological factor in this high-involvement luxury setting, where consumers are unable to substantiate ethical assertions in many cases, and have to resort to brand-selection cues and reputation. Additionally, the study demonstrated that purchasing intentions are directly impacted by legitimacy (H2), and the results lead to the conclusion that consumers may be encouraged to make purchases irrespective of completely developed trust with the brands that are regarded as authentic. Nevertheless, the partial mediation effect in H4 indicates that a considerable portion of such influence is indirect, which supports the fact that trust is a mechanism through which authenticity affects purchase behaviour. The interdependence between direct and mediated effects is an indication of a tiered construct in decision making, where authenticity might be an initial attentive process, but trust will establish faith in the statements made by the brands, and this sense of expected purchase can only be boosted.

The research makes many contributions to the body of work already done on brand authenticity in the realm of sustainable luxury. First, it confirms authenticity as a direct indicator and indirect driver of purchase intentions by means of consumer trust. The dual role complements earlier theoretical literature, including that by Neumann *et al.* (2021), which mentioned trust as the middle-ground in the fast fashion context by demonstrating that its mechanism is true and possibly even more essential in luxury markets where symbolic and ethical values are tightly interconnected. Second, the results reinforce the combination of the signalling theory and consumer trust constructs in sustainable luxury consumption. In signalling terms, authenticity makes the sustainability cues, e.g., eco-friendly materials or ethical-sourcing certificates, convincing and more influential (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). In a trust perspective, authenticity ties marketing to values and actions that it espouses, resulting in decreasing perceived risk and uncertainty in customer decision making. Bringing both of these perspectives together, this study gives a conceptual connection between the communication of sustainability efforts and the resulting behaviour.

The results have a strategic significance according to practitioners because of their communication of sustainability in an authentic way. Sustainability initiatives should become a part of the brand story that is not merely a side product of a marketing campaign. This will entail setting the environmental practices to align with the brand values of heritage and craftsmanship, consequently leading to strengthening the perceptions of authenticity. As illustrated, a message of real-life storytelling that links craft artisanal production with the sustainability of material resources will enhance the consumer opinion that brand commitments are sincere (Huang *et al.*, 2025). One of the strategies is applied, giving transparency. Limited transparency of supply chains, the use of third-party auditors, and reports on the hurdles they overcome in working towards sustainability can cut consumer criticism and enhance trust. Storytelling about the Heritage of the brand with its strong values and traditions in quality can be used as an additional distinguishing factor of the brand in the competitive world. Touch-points must be made the same; sustainability must be presumed in advertisement, and demonstrated in the retail experience, product design, and after-consumer contact. Brands that do not succeed in preserving this correspondence are threatened to destroy the authenticity-trust relationship and, as a result, to purchase intentions.

This research provides insightful outcomes but has various limitations that can be followed up on. Future studies employing longitudinal or experimental study methodologies to ascertain the temporal link between authenticity, trust, and purchase intentions are advised because the cross-sectional nature makes it difficult to demonstrate cause and effect. The problem can also be seen in the fact that self-reported measures are subject to bias, such as the social desirability effect, which will be particularly acute where

sustainability is a socially desirable trait. This purposive and quota sampling approach provided adequate demographic diversity, yet it can restrict the applicability of the outcomes to other luxury consumers. The further study might involve probability-based sampling and addressing various cultural contexts since cultural norms can affect the way authenticity cues are materialised (Safeer *et al.*, 2023). Further research on the significance of the link between authenticity, trust, and intention might help us better grasp its nature when mediators or moderators may be involved, such as brand attachment, perceived quality, or consumption status motives, to make the presented relationship more complex (Husain *et al.*, 2022). Lastly, the way to enhance perceptions of transparency and authenticity (Huang *et al.*, 2025) with the help of emerging technologies, such as blockchain, can be an insightful suggestion as to how luxury brands are going to be positioned in the future.

5. Conclusion

The research represented beneficial managerial and theoretical implications since the interactions between customer trust, purchasing intentions, and brand authenticity within the context of sustainable luxury were gauged. The results revealed not only the direct role of authenticity as a stimulating factor of purchase intentions but also the indirect role in the case of its great impact on consumer confidence. This dual pathway underscores authenticity's pivotal role in shaping consumer decision-making in high-involvement markets, where symbolic value, ethical practices, and quality perceptions intersect. By integrating signalling theory, brand authenticity theory, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how sustainability claims can be transformed into credible and persuasive brand narratives. The results reinforce the idea that authenticity is central to overcoming consumer scepticism and that trust serves as a vital link between consumer behaviour and brand ideals. From a strategic standpoint, the study emphasises how important it is for luxury companies to include sustainability into their primary identity, ensuring that it is consistent with their pledges to quality, craftsmanship, and legacy. Transparent communication, consistent practices across touchpoints, and meaningful storytelling can enhance authenticity perceptions, strengthen trust, and foster long-term loyalty. Ultimately, the evidence suggests that sustainable luxury branding succeeds when authenticity is not an accessory but a foundation. Trust built through authentic practices becomes a lasting asset, one that not only drives immediate purchase intentions but also supports enduring consumer relationships. As the luxury sector navigates evolving market expectations, the commitment to authenticity and trust will remain essential for achieving sustainable growth and competitive differentiation.

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