

**Positive luxury: A consumer-centric approach to bridging luxury and sustainability**

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# **Positive Luxury: A Consumer-Centric Approach to Bridging Luxury and Sustainability**

## **Abstract**

This study explores the concept of luxury through the lens of sustainability, questioning conventional interpretations and promoting a broader comprehension of luxury's compatibility with sustainability. It also explores the potential positive effects of luxury consumption and production at various scales—individual (micro), industry (meso), and environment (macro). This research, adopting a positive theory approach and aligning with the transformative luxury research (TLR) stream, proposes a novel framework termed 'positive luxury.' This framework, informed by consumer insights, introduces additional pillars of sustainable practices in the luxury sector that yield positive impacts. These pillars encompass ecological, social, and economic aspects, as well as ethical governance, supply chain integrity, philanthropy, well-being, and diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). The findings underscore the significance of a consumer-centered perspective and reveal the nuanced positive impacts that consumers perceive from each of these pillars. Furthermore, the study advances existing works by classifying sustainable pillars into either 'core' or 'incipient' qualities, while responding to the TLR stream's call for a focus on well-being outcomes. The findings have implications for policymakers and luxury businesses alike, offering potential directions for future research.

## **Keywords**

Positive luxury, consumer-centric approach, positive marketing theory, transformative luxury research (TLR), portrait method.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of luxury has been the focus of considerable academic discussion, with its definition differing across various studies. Some researchers describe luxury based on its tangible attributes such as superior quality, rare and exclusive materials, and historical craftsmanship (Athwal et al., 2019). In contrast, others take an economic standpoint, defining luxury by its high cost (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau, 2014). However, these conventional definitions often overlook the idiosyncratic, contextualized, and experiential dimensions of luxury. In recent years, the focus has shifted towards a more comprehensive understanding of luxury, considering its cultural embeddedness and subjective dimensions (Batat, 2023). This shift is crucial in the context of sustainability, a concept that refers to the avoidance of the depletion of natural resources to maintain an ecological balance. A more nuanced evaluation of sustainable luxury from an individual's subjective perspective is needed. Yet, a growing debate in literature questions the compatibility between luxury and sustainability, as well as how consumers perceive luxury brands' sustainable initiatives.

Traditional literature often associates luxury with waste and superfluity (e.g., Davies et al., 2012). However, certain studies suggest that luxury and sustainability can coexist by changing production and management approaches (e.g., Athwal et al., 2019). Nevertheless, consumers tend to overlook sustainability when shopping for luxury goods due to “product durability neglect,” preferring multiple ordinary goods over fewer luxury items, even if they believe luxury goods last longer (Sun et al., 2021). Our research adopts a positive theory approach (Krush et al., 2015), which aligns with the transformative luxury research (TLR) stream (Batat, 2022), and advocates for the positive impact of luxury consumption and production. The primary objective is to explore how sustainable practices in luxury consumption

and production can generate a positive impact at individual, social, and environmental levels. We aim to identify the key pillars of these practices from a consumer perspective and understand how they contribute to this positive impact. Our research adds to the ongoing debate about the compatibility, or lack thereof, of luxury and sustainability (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013). It establishes a robust connection between the two constructs, offering scholars and luxury businesses a new framework—‘positive luxury’—informed solely by consumer insights. We propose that this framework and its pillars encourage scholars to adopt a more comprehensive approach, thereby preventing a myopic vision of firms’ sustainable practices. This proposition aligns with the TLR paradigm, promoting a holistic and integrative examination of the positive impact of luxury consumption and production while considering various stakeholder profiles, multiple sustainability dimensions, and different perceptions and individual profiles.

Furthermore, drawing upon the TLR stream, our research uncovers the nuanced perceived positive impact of luxury. This impact varies depending on consumers’ profiles and their familiarity with and perceptions of luxury shaped by diverse sociocultural settings. This study enriches positive marketing theory (e.g., Tadjewski, 2016; Gopaldas, 2015; Krush et al., 2015) by highlighting contrasting views on the positive impact of brands’ actions and marketing strategies. It underscores the importance of the perspective taken, which in our case is the consumer’s subjective viewpoint. Our findings reveal that consumers consider a multitude of factors when assessing the positive impact of luxury consumption and production. This comprehensive evaluation has guided us in identifying supplementary pillars and gauging their significance from a consumer’s standpoint.

Specifically, this research enriches the categorization of sustainable dimensions in marketing theory by extending the three pillars (3Ps) of sustainability (people, planet, profit) that dominate

the field (Sheth et al., 2011) and advancing Lim's (2016) sustainability marketing aspects, which include the 3Ps alongside ethical and technological pillars. The ethical pillar addresses businesses' moral responsibilities, while the technological pillar focuses on innovation's role in sustainability. By adding well-being, this research highlights the importance of consumers' physical and mental health and happiness in sustainable marketing. This extension provides a more holistic view of sustainability that aligns with evolving consumer values. Furthermore, this research categorizes sustainable marketing aspects by their importance from a consumer perspective into "core" and "incipient" sustainability. This categorization offers scholars a more nuanced understanding of sustainable marketing, enabling practitioners, especially in the luxury industry, to better align their strategies with consumer expectations and drive more effective sustainability initiatives.

Additionally, we respond to the TLR stream's call for a focus on well-being outcomes, a fundamental aspect at the core of the paradigm (Batat, 2022). Findings suggest that well-being is an integral element of positive luxury that should be viewed as both a catalyst and a result to create positive impacts. Thus, this research bridges the gap between the practices of the luxury industry and the realities of luxury sustainability by considering the consumer's perspective. Unlike the luxury industry's views, which are primarily centered on the potential positive ecological impact (Osburg et al., 2021; Kunz et al., 2020), our study provides a consumer's subjective evaluation of luxury sustainability pillars and their potential positive impact. This approach ensures that luxury brands maintain their relevance by aligning with the escalating consumer ethical demands.

This article begins with a foundation for positive luxury research, followed by a qualitative study on consumers' views of sustainable luxury's benefits. We then discuss our findings, their

implications for policymakers and businesses, acknowledge the study's limits, and suggest future research directions.

## **FOUNDATIONS OF POSITIVE LUXURY RESEARCH**

### ***Unifying Luxury and Sustainability: A Positive Outlook***

The compatibility between luxury and sustainability has been a pivotal theme in marketing academia (Athwal et al., 2019; Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau, 2014). This section endeavors to intertwine these seemingly contrasting concepts through the prism of positive marketing, thereby addressing the research question: 'How can luxury brands contribute positively to sustainability?' Luxury brands, often seen as influential change-makers, are increasingly acknowledged for their potential to champion positive transformation (Batat, 2021a, b). This potential is further highlighted by the rise of ethical luxury consumption, indicating a potential symbiosis of ethics and luxury (Vanhamme et al., 2021). To comprehend this symbiosis, this research employs a positive marketing theory (Tadajewski, 2016; Gopaldas, 2015) that emphasizes the role of luxury brands in delivering high-quality goods while also contributing to societal and environmental sustainability.

Positive marketing, a growing research field, engages stakeholders and third parties in a value exchange that improves both individual and collective states compared to before the exchange (Center for Positive Marketing, 2012). It also plays a vital role in human and productivity development, enhancing market actors' actions within the marketplace and towards society and the environment. This logic echoes previous studies that underscored the sustainable facet of luxury from both a managerial and consumer perspective. For example, Michelin-starred chefs have pioneered sustainable high-end gastronomy (Batat, 2021a, b), and there is an

escalating consumer demand for environmentally friendly luxury fashion (Campos et al., 2019). These findings align with the recent TLR research stream (Batat, 2022), advocating for an in-depth exploration of the positive effects of luxury production and consumption on both individual and collective well-being. It also takes into account the beneficial contributions to society and the environment. Adopting the TLR approach to investigate the interplay between luxury and sustainability equips researchers with a more profound understanding of stakeholder perceptions, actions, and decisions that might result in positive outcomes at individual, societal, and environmental levels.

Subsequently, the philosophy of positive marketing, aligning with the TLR's advocacy for a comprehensive examination of the positive impact of luxury production and consumption at various levels, serves as a bridge between luxury and sustainability. These concepts are traditionally viewed as dichotomous. Therefore, a proposed framework of 'positive luxury' validates the robust connection between luxury and sustainability, emphasizing their compatibility. This, in turn, challenges the skeptical literature on sustainable luxury practices, such as those discussed by Achabou and Dekhili (2013).

### ***Introducing Positive Luxury as a Theoretical Framework***

A positive luxury framework presents an opportunity for scholars and businesses to integrate the dynamics, stakeholders, levels, and outcomes of sustainable initiatives, thereby improving people's lives and profits. Such a holistic view of the positive impacts of luxury constitutes a path for better alignment between luxury businesses' sustainable practices and stakeholders' perceptions. This is particularly relevant from the perspective of consumers, where prior studies suggest a perceived incompatibility between luxury and sustainability (e.g., Achabou and

Dekhili, 2013). In their quest for a positive impact, luxury brands can encounter challenges in balancing sustainability as perceived and defined from the perspective of different stakeholders (e.g., consumers, suppliers) with their core values (e.g., exclusiveness, social status, expensive prices, and rare materials), thus bridging the concepts of luxury and sustainability.

The proposed framework of positive luxury advances luxury sustainability research by unlocking access to true equity and positive change at the individual, corporate, community, and environmental levels to transform the production and consumption of luxury. This transformation takes into account various actions, levels, actors, factors, and fields. With this in mind, we define positive luxury as: *a holistic framework designed to promote positive actions that (re)focus on generating individual and collective well-being and thus should benefit all stakeholders, including luxury brands, their employees and suppliers, consumers, shareholders, society at large, the environment, and the economy, both upstream and downstream.* This definition emphasizes that positive luxury is a multidimensional and multi-level ecosystem. It incorporates stakeholders' lives and firms' profits into the design of luxury products (goods and services) that are anchored in collective and individual well-being. This approach generates a positive impact at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Thus, envisioning the multifaceted positive impacts of luxury brands on various entities and perspectives is crucial as it advances previous sustainable luxury research.

Therefore, positive luxury encompasses multiple dimensions, including economic, ecological, social, and cultural. These dimensions have been formulated based on contributions from various luxury and sustainability studies (e.g., Kunz et al., 2020; Amatulli et al., 2017; Achabou and Dekhili, 2013). Additionally, the TLR stream has contributed to this framework with works by Batat (2022), emphasizing the positive impacts of luxury consumption and



production on well-being outcomes. Positive luxury's holistic approach advocates for actions that enhance well-being outcomes, and positively influence the environment, society, and all luxury industry stakeholders. Although some studies have emphasized the compatibility between luxury and sustainability (Osburg et al., 2021; Athwal et al., 2019), much of the past research generally focuses on luxury brands' ecological, and to some extent, social sustainability, with actions examined primarily from the firm's perspective (Amatulli et al., 2017).

While luxury brands often focus on sustainable practices through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, research shows that consumers have their own subjective understanding of what sustainable luxury means to them (Batat, 2022). This difference in perspective often leads to a gap between the two, with luxury brands focusing on their actions, while consumers focus on the impact on stakeholders. Bridging this gap is essential in gaining a comprehensive understanding of whether a luxury brand's CSR initiatives are aligned with consumer expectations. Hence, it's vital for luxury brands to incorporate consumers' subjective views into their sustainability plans to ensure effective sustainable actions and CSR strategies. Transcending the environment and social dimensions of sustainable luxury, the present study attempts to empirically explore the potential positive impacts of luxury production and consumption and identify, from a consumer standpoint, the key pillars at the heart of a positive luxury framework.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

We employed an exploratory qualitative research design to capture consumers' subjective experiences and perceptions of sustainable initiatives by luxury brands. Drawing on the works of Salmons (2014) and Gruber et al. (2008), we used online interviews and semi-structured protocols to understand complex phenomena such as the perceived positive effects of luxury

consumption and production. This approach allowed us to effectively collect nuanced consumer views on positive luxury.

### ***Online Interviews***

Zoom, a video conferencing platform, was used to conduct online interviews as they are widely adopted in qualitative research for their flexibility and ability to reach diverse participants (Lobe et al., 2020; Archibald et al., 2019). Besides, during the COVID-19 pandemic, online interviews facilitated safe research setting and access to participants. Conducted between March and May 2021, participants were recruited through the authors' networks. The final sample comprised individuals fluent in English, allowing all interviews to be conducted in English. To counter potential language barriers, we ensured clear and concise interview questions. The interviewers, also the researchers and co-authors, ensured participants comprehended the topics under discussion. Hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds, the interviewers adopted a flexible and iterative approach, tailoring the interview guide to each situation. This strategy aligns with Tomaszewski et al. (2020), emphasizing adaptability in online qualitative research. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. We also secured ethical approval from an institutional review board, assuring participants' confidentiality and respect for their data privacy during the informed consent process.

### ***Sample Selection***

We conducted 37 online interviews to determine theoretical saturation (Seale et al., 2004). A rigorous sampling method was used to collect rich and nuanced data. The criteria for our sampling method, informed by prior research in the luxury field (Batat, 2023; Khochman and

Batat, 2022; Batat, 2021a, b; Srinivasan and Bhanot, 2015), included knowledge of luxury, age range, marital status, and cultural background. These criteria were selected to capture the diverse perspectives on luxury sustainability and its potential positive impact from a consumer's subjective perspective. Key steps in our sampling method involved identifying participants with substantial knowledge of luxury goods, assessing their familiarity with luxury brands, market trends, and frequency of luxury goods consumption, and ensuring diversity in age range, marital status, and cultural background. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' profiles.

“Insert table 1 about here.”

Furthermore, participants were chosen based on their self-reported familiarity and experience with luxury goods. We employed a purposive sampling strategy (Denieffe, 2020), selecting individuals with a certain degree of luxury knowledge. Assessment was guided by the researchers through their evaluation of the participants' understanding. Factors such as acquaintance with luxury (i.e., the duration of the participant's engagement with luxury goods, assessed through years or the quantity of luxury items owned), knowledge of brands (i.e., participants' familiarity with various luxury brands, evaluated through questions about specific brands, designers, or product lines), understanding of luxury market trends (i.e., participants' awareness of current trends in the luxury market, including knowledge of popular items, emerging brands, trending luxury styles), and frequency of luxury goods consumption (i.e., the regularity of the participant's luxury goods purchases or usage) were considered. The criterion of luxury knowledge ensured participants had a substantial understanding of the luxury realm, vital for the depth and validity of the data collected.

Our sample comprised individuals aged between 20 and 50 years, capturing diversity in sustainable luxury practices across different age groups. This age selection echoes recent studies

advocating that younger consumers are more likely to purchase second-hand luxury goods due to sustainability and economic considerations, while older luxury consumers may be less motivated by these factors (Khochman and Batat, 2022). This approach provides an understanding of the diverse motivations and behaviors among luxury consumers of different ages. Alongside luxury knowledge and age range, marital status was also considered, as it has shown varied luxury purchase behaviors among married and single consumers (Srinivasan and Bhanot, 2015).

To ensure a broad spectrum of profiles, participants from various regions were included. Luxury consumption is influenced by cultural norms and values (Batat, 2019). Therefore, we included participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, capturing a wide array of experiences and perceptions. This approach enriched our data and facilitated a deeper exploration of the relationship between luxury and sustainability. While incorporating cultural diversity, the aim was not to establish an intercultural comparison but to capture various ways luxury can relate to sustainable practices, positively impacting individuals, society, and the environment. Moreover, a consumer perspective was essential in this research, as consumers are increasingly conscious of the environmental and social impact of their purchase behaviors, leading them to engage in responsible practices across different consumption fields (Batat, 2020). These consumers exert pressure on luxury brands, driving them to transform their production and marketing practices to a more sustainable luxury business model.

### ***Data Collection and Interview guide Structure***

We developed our interview guide using an abductive reasoning approach (Lipscomb, 2012). It included general and specific questions, refined after a pre-interview stage and further developed by two academics. We followed a semi-structured interview procedure (Gruber et al., 2008) to

foster participant interactions and allow flexibility. The guide was based on Batat's TLR (2023) framework, covering luxury consumption, production, macro-level stakeholders, and well-being outcomes (see Table 2).

“Insert table 2 about here”

The structured guide, divided into four sections using the TLR framework, clarified the order of questions, ensuring all relevant topics were covered. This approach underscores our commitment to methodological rigor in order to capture the multifaceted nature of consumer perspectives on luxury and sustainability, highlighting its impact at individual, social, and environmental levels. In the first section, we explore luxury consumption by asking about participants' relationships with luxury brands, aligning with the TLR's focus on consumer profiles and their impact. The second section examines luxury production and participants' knowledge of sustainable practices, reflecting the TLR's emphasis on production entities' effects. The third section probes the roles of macro-level stakeholders, recognizing the influence of market actors and institutions. The final section uses projective techniques to explore how luxury brands can shift towards positive luxury, reflecting the TLR's focus on luxury's impact on well-being outcomes.

The interview process was customized to each situation, enhancing interaction and comfort. Questions explored the positive and negative impacts of luxury brands, including sustainability and ethical practices. We also sought opinions on actions luxury brands should take for a positive impact. Topics included: sustainability and ethics of luxury brands, their impact on society, the environment, and individuals, and examples of positive impact. The order of questions was adjusted based on research objectives, participants, and context. By aligning our guide with Batat's TLR framework, we ensure our research contributes to understanding luxury's

transformative impact from a consumer perspective. This approach allows direct connections between participants' responses and the framework complements.

### *Analysis and Coding*

The coding process, shown in Table 3, used intra- and inter-portrait analysis (Batat, 2014) and thematic analysis (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). The objectives were to identify the key pillars of positive luxury from a consumer perspective.

“Insert table 3 about here”

We conducted a portrait analysis method, an abductive framework preserving each participant's unique characteristics and insights. This approach is beneficial for understanding subjective experiences, particularly in studies like consumer perceptions of luxury brands' sustainability efforts. It enabled us to capture the 'fatal residue' (Batat, 2014), significant yet unclassifiable insights from personal narratives contributing to a holistic understanding of consumer perceptions. For example, a participant's ritual of buying luxury goods for self-indulgence on special or difficult days, though not fitting predefined themes, is deeply meaningful and ties luxury's positive impact to emotional well-being rather than ecological concerns. This narrative, the 'fatal residue,' is crucial for understanding participants' holistic perception of luxury brands' potential positive impact at personal, social, or environmental levels. Following the portrait approach, participants' profiles were categorized into labels derived from self-descriptions and interview responses, encapsulating key characteristics and attitudes towards luxury. Criteria for each label were based on expressed values, purchasing behaviors, and perceptions of luxury, providing a nuanced understanding of diverse consumer profiles.

Intra-portrait analysis yielded detailed profiles of participants' subjective experiences as luxury consumers, categorizing data into themes related to positive luxury's adoption by firms addressing ethical concerns. The data coding process focused on four main themes from the TLR framework: consumer acquaintance with luxury consumption (sub-themes: meaning of luxury, affinity towards luxury brands, motivations and behaviors, experiences with luxury); sustainable practices in industry consumption (sub-themes: awareness of sustainability, impact of production processes, effect on consumers, role of sustainable innovation); influence of market stakeholders (sub-themes: roles and influences of stakeholders, impact of regulations); and potential impact of brands advocating for change (sub-themes: shift in consumer perception towards positive practices, role of luxury in advocating for positive changes).

Inter-portrait analysis across 37 portraits identified recurring semantic categories using iterative interpretation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Key themes included ecological sustainability (sub-themes: carbon footprint reduction, use of renewable resources, waste management); animal cruelty-free practices (sub-themes: use of synthetic materials, ethical sourcing); community support (sub-themes: investments in local economic development, education, health initiatives); giving back (sub-themes: corporate philanthropy, disaster relief efforts); altruism (sub-themes: humanitarian aid, social impact initiatives); and emphasis on employee/consumer happiness (sub-themes: initiatives around employee wellness, customer satisfaction).

After two-step portrait coding, thematic analysis identified core positive luxury pillars based on their presence or absence in luxury brand practices and their weight and urgency in transforming practices to generate positive impacts. Themes and sub-themes were classified as important or not important, urgent or not urgent, and mandatory or non-mandatory. For instance, 'ecological sustainability' and 'animal cruelty-free' were deemed important, urgent, and

mandatory due to the immediate need for environmental preservation and ethical treatment of animals, while ‘community support’ and ‘giving back’ were considered important and mandatory, but not necessarily urgent.

The validity of themes from our dual data analysis protocol adheres to the ideography principle (Batat, 2014), offering an understanding of the phenomenon from participants’ subjective perspectives, shaped by the study’s context. Themes were validated through an iterative interpretation process to ensure reliability and validity. Key topics were established after consultations with academics and luxury experts, enhancing the reliability of the findings.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study identifies eight fundamental pillars of positive luxury from a consumer perspective. These pillars are divided into core and incipient qualities. Core qualities include ecological, social, and economic sustainability, forming the cornerstone of responsible luxury businesses. Incipient qualities encompass ethical governance, supply chain integrity, diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI), philanthropy, and well-being. These emerging values are encouraged by luxury brands. The positive luxury framework (Figure 1) illustrates the divergent perspectives of these pillars and guides luxury brands to align with consumer expectations and societal demands for sustainable practices. The following sections discuss these core and incipient qualities in detail. Participants’ names were substituted with pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

“Insert figure 1 about here”

### ***Core Qualities of Positive Luxury***

Data analysis shows participants view sustainable luxury as encompassing ecological, social, and economic dimensions. These elements are seen as essential to a positive luxury business model.



Participants expressed concerns that luxury brands ignoring these “core qualities” risk consumer boycotts or rejection (Amatulli et al., 2020). The next sections will explore consumers’ differing perspectives on ecological, social, and economic issues related to luxury brand practices.

### **Ecological Sustainability**

Our findings reveal a pressing need for luxury brands to mitigate their environmental footprint to uphold their brand reputation. Participants suggest adopting a ‘positive luxury’ strategy via various ecological actions, including improved adherence to government regulations, responsible sourcing practices, pre-ordering to reduce waste, and financing projects to restore ecosystems. However, participants’ views diverge on the overall progress made by luxury brands. Some report that certain brands are gradually becoming more environmentally conscious. For instance, *James*, a sustainable luxury advocate, appreciates Gucci’s efforts to become more sustainable by ceasing the burning of products. He believes this is a step in the right direction:

“Gucci has stopped burning products, making it more sustainable.” (James)

*James* elaborates that by ceasing the burning of unsold products, Gucci is reducing waste and lowering its carbon footprint. He views this as a significant move towards sustainability and a reflection of the brand’s commitment to more environmentally friendly practices. While *James* perceives Gucci’s action as a move towards a positive impact, research shows that sustainability requires a comprehensive and consistent approach (Batat, 2022). Our findings show that a single action, while commendable, does not define luxury brands’ overall commitment to positive impact. Another participant, *Li*, a luxury observer, suggests that certain brands, such as Cartier and Stella McCartney, epitomize industry-wide progress:

“In general, luxury brands respect the environment... Brands like Cartier and Stella McCartney are environmentally-sustainable and can represent the majority of luxury brands.” (Li)

*Li* believes Cartier and Stella McCartney demonstrate industry-wide progress through consistent sustainable practices, such as using ethically sourced materials and investing in renewable energy. He views these brands as leaders in setting a standard for environmental responsibility within the industry. On the other hand, our findings highlight skepticism about the overall commitment of luxury brands to a positive ecological impact. *Linda*, a sustainable luxury advocate, believes luxury brands generate excessive waste and are not as committed to sustainability as they should be:

“I don’t believe that luxury brands are as concerned with the planet and sustainability as they should be.” (Linda)

In the same vein, *Carlos*, a luxury sustainability skeptic, argues that the industry is more concerned with profit than with environmental responsibility:

“You know, I think in the luxury industry, they’re just more concerned about making more money... But if they really wanted to, yes, they could be more sustainable.” (Carlos)

An additional ecological aspect from our study is animal welfare as a key component of ‘positive luxury.’ Participants believe luxury brands should prioritize animal welfare and publicize their initiatives. However, there is a perceived conflict between luxury and animal welfare due to the frequent use of materials like fur and leather. *Jennifer*, a luxury enthusiast who appreciates personalized services, emphasizes the importance of animal welfare, especially in skincare brands. She appreciates that many luxury skincare brands are promoting vegan beauty products and adopting more humane testing methods:

“It is crucial in today’s world for luxury brands, especially skincare ones, to prioritize animal welfare... In fact, animals should not be subjected to product testing.” (Jennifer)

However, some participants doubt the feasibility of completely eliminating animal products. *Carlos* believes that while moving away from animal products is positive, leather is indispensable and irreplaceable in the luxury industry:

“I believe we are progressing towards a better future, but a complete ban on animal products is unlikely.” (Carlos)

Thus, our findings reveal differing views on the progress luxury brands have made towards ecological sustainability. Participants’ diverse perspectives highlight the complexity of this issue within the luxury sector (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013). Some participants acknowledge progress, while others remain skeptical, calling for increased action. This discrepancy emphasizes the need for luxury brands to enhance transparency and take proactive measures in their sustainability efforts. Focusing on animal welfare and responsible sourcing can help these brands positively impact the environment without compromising product authenticity and quality. However, the perceived importance of these practices varies among participants, indicating a need to better understand the different profiles of luxury consumers.

### **Social Sustainability**

Our results reveal the importance of social sustainability as a core pillar of positive luxury. Participants highlighted that luxury brands with a strong social impact foster deeper emotional connections with customers. They expressed a preference for luxury brands that are community-oriented or contribute to social causes (Osburg et al., 2021), aligning with their personal values and beliefs. Participants stated that social sustainability is critical for luxury brands’ positive efforts. This statement was expressed in various ways, including both optimistic and pessimistic views. Some participants mentioned the importance of community engagement and product-linked charity, noting that luxury brands engaging with communities and contributing to social

causes can create stronger emotional connections with their customers. For instance, *Gabriela*, an exclusive luxury experience seeker, elaborated on how a specific luxury brand supports indigenous communities by selling handcrafted garments made by the members, thus genuinely helping the communities involved. She explained:

“...they assist indigenous communities...there was a collection from Honduras where they adopted local ideas and helped the community. The indigenous community handcrafted the garments, which were then sold. They created these items from scratch, including crocheted pieces. After adding some embellishments, they sold it to the consumers. I know for a fact that they have indeed helped the indigenous communities.” (Gabriela)

Gabriela’s quote illustrates the tangible impact of social sustainability initiatives. By adopting local ideas and providing a platform for indigenous craftsmanship, the luxury brand supports the economic well-being of these communities and preserves their cultural heritage. This approach resonates with consumers who value authenticity and ethical practices, strengthening their emotional connection to the brand. Participants also suggested that engagement in social causes can alleviate guilt associated with luxury purchases. This contradicts previous research (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013), which suggests that consumers are uncertain about luxury brands positioning themselves as “caring” and “prosocial” through CSR practices. *Ahmad*, a regular luxury consumer who is socially conscious, sees his ownership and use of a Louis Vuitton bracelet highlighting the brand’s charitable efforts as a form of indirect advocacy. This suggests a sense of pride and fulfillment in being part of a social cause:

“I am a fan of Louis Vuitton. I own a bracelet from Louis Vuitton, the proceeds from which are used to help children. When you wear it and someone asks about it, you indirectly encourage them to buy it and join this wonderful mission. Just by wearing a luxury bracelet, you add a touch of style, help someone, and promote a social cause.” (Ahmad)

This quote illustrates how luxury consumption intertwines with personal values, social impact, and ethical considerations (Vanhamme et al., 2021). It highlights luxury brands' potential to foster emotional connections and contribute to social sustainability. However, some participants were skeptical, questioning luxury brands' 'honest' commitment to social causes. They argued that if luxury brands genuinely cared about people, they would not charge exorbitant prices, as stated by *Linda*, a sustainable luxury advocate:

“If they were genuinely concerned about people and the environment, they wouldn't charge \$20,000 for a handbag.” (Linda)

Participants also emphasized that luxury brands should benefit the countries and workers producing their goods. They expressed concerns about brands not paying fair wages or treating workers fairly. Some stated they would not support a brand that does not give back to society or pay fair wages. They believe luxury brands contribute negatively to society if they exploit workers. *Samir*, a conscious luxury consumer with a friend in the luxury industry, noted:

“I can attest that not all companies uphold high standards. For instance, a friend of mine worked at a high-end luxury brand where employees were manipulated into signing contracts before termination, effectively depriving them of their legal rights and due compensation. If a company doesn't respect its employees' rights, I see no reason to support them.” (Samir)

In summary, our research highlights the interplay between guilt, luxury, and social sustainability. It underscores the importance of community involvement and fair treatment of workers as key to positive luxury and stronger emotional bonds with customers. Adopting social sustainability will enhance luxury brands' image and yield positive societal contributions. Our findings also indicate that luxury brands should ensure transparency in their social sustainability initiatives, as industry-specific allegations can negatively affect consumers' perceptions (Rashid and Chattaraman, 2019).

## Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability is fundamental to positive luxury, as revealed by our research. However, many participants expressed skepticism about luxury brands' contributions to economic sustainability, citing concerns related to production and high growth. For example, *Samir*, a conscious luxury consumer, questioned the economic sustainability of luxury brands:

“While the economic contributions of luxury brands globally may seem beneficial to all parties involved, I can’t help but question the full extent of these contributions. If they are indeed contributing, it’s a win-win situation where society benefits, the companies are viewed positively, and their profits are utilized for noble causes. However, I wonder if there’s more to this than what is apparent.” (Samir)

This skepticism is echoed in the literature, where scholars note that luxury brands' perceived contributions often do not align with their actual impacts (Davies et al., 2012). Similarly, *Jennifer*, a luxury enthusiast who appreciates personalized services, pointed out the growth-driven nature of American luxury brands like Coach and Michael Kors, which seem to overlook economic sustainability:

“These brands maintain transactional relationships with their customers, launching new products every season and offering significant promotions to stimulate immediate consumer purchases. This approach seems to prioritize growth over sustainability.” (Jennifer)

This observation aligns with research indicating many luxury brands prioritize short-term growth over long-term sustainability (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau, 2014). Conversely, some participants held a more optimistic view, believing luxury brands could contribute economically by integrating with a community (Inieta-Bonillo et al., 2016). *Elizabeth*, a fashion-focused shopper with limited sustainability awareness, emphasized the role of luxury brands in local economies:

“Certain brands cleverly avoid reinvesting in the economies they operate in, especially through taxes.

I firmly believe that brands should contribute positively to the societies they operate in, whether through taxes, voluntary contributions, or employment opportunities.” (Elizabeth)

This perspective is supported by literature suggesting luxury brands can significantly impact local economies through various means (Joy et al., 2012). *Amanda*, a luxury brand lover, highlighted examples of luxury brands driving economic activity while respecting and aiding the environment:

“Consider Brunello Cucinelli, despite their high prices, they stimulate business within their local community in Italy, demonstrating that luxury brands can explore innovative ways to increase profits while enhancing the sustainability of their products and their company.” (Amanda)

This statement aligns with the idea that luxury brands can balance profitability and sustainability, as documented in positive marketing literature (Krush et al., 2015). Consequently, luxury brands must integrate economic sustainability as a fundamental value contributing to positive luxury. This can be achieved by ensuring their expansion does not jeopardize the environment or local communities, thereby making positive economic contributions.

### ***Incipient Qualities of Positive Luxury***

The idea of “incipient qualities” pertains to nascent responsible initiatives luxury firms are encouraged to adopt, supplementing their established “core qualities.” These firms should intensify their focus on representing diverse stakeholders, integrating them into operational practices, and advocating for social justice. Our research uncovers five incipient qualities of positive luxury: philanthropy, ethical governance, supply chain transparency, well-being outcomes, and diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Participants view these pillars as crucial, acting as a catalyst for a positive luxury business model that should steer luxury

brands' actions internally and externally. However, some participants perceive these burgeoning qualities have not yet achieved the same level of establishment as the fundamental "core qualities." The following sections discuss each pillar in greater detail.

## **Philanthropy**

Participants identify philanthropy as vital to positive luxury but argue it should extend beyond mere charitable donations, often used by luxury brands as public relations (PR) tools to enhance their image. They propose aligning philanthropic initiatives with brand ethos, prioritizing effort over ability (Zhu et al., 2017). *Fatima*, a sustainability-conscious yet brand-loyal shopper, expressed doubt about the true motives behind luxury brands' philanthropic actions:

"I'm not sure if their actions are genuinely for the people or more for the media attention..." (Fatima)

This statement aligns with Plewa et al. (2015), who found that consumers often question the authenticity of corporate philanthropy, suspecting it to be a PR strategy rather than a genuine effort to give back. *Amanda*, a luxury brand lover, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the importance of authenticity in philanthropic initiatives and suggesting consumer preference for brands that demonstrate genuine commitment to their causes (Zhu et al., 2017):

"...As long as luxury brands are genuinely contributing to the cause and their donations are reaching the intended organizations, I believe that's commendable." (Amanda)

*Sarah*, an advocate for sustainable luxury and regular buyer, emphasized the importance of executing cost-related marketing strategies effectively. Well-executed philanthropic strategies can enhance a brand's image and appeal to consumers (Plewa et al., 2015):

"Companies use cost-related marketing to support philanthropy, thereby promoting their brands to consumers. It's crucial that this strategy is well-executed..." (Sarah)



*Emma*, a regular luxury buyer, suggested that luxury brands should be proactive, not reactive, in their philanthropic efforts:

“So, they’ve taken corrective measures, such as making donations to a series of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). But how does that benefit those universities? Is it just a tax write-off, or is it genuinely compatible? For instance, I have never associated Gucci with education, so it’s unclear. It seems like they’ve just jumped on the bandwagon. Over the past few years, there’s been a heightened focus on racial justice and police brutality, and more people have been concentrating on equity in education. It appears they’re merely trying to do damage control. However, they need to be proactive rather than reactive.” (Emma)

This sentiment echoes Zhu et al. (2017) who found that consumers appreciate brands that take initiative in their philanthropic efforts, rather than simply reacting to social trends or crises. Additionally, participants suggest that philanthropy as a dimension of positive luxury should empower and financially support individuals. *Michael*, an affluent luxury shopper, suggested that luxury brands could attract customers through their philanthropic efforts. He considers that when a luxury brand donates to a children’s school, the children may grow up and become loyal shoppers of that company.

“Luxury brands exist in a realm beyond the reach of the average citizen. Most people cannot afford to shop at these places. However, I believe that luxury brands can attract customers through philanthropy. For instance, if a luxury brand donates to a children’s school, those children might grow up to become loyal customers of that brand, remembering the generosity they once benefited from.” (Michael)

Participants believe philanthropic activities benefit communities by providing essential resources, fostering social equity, and creating opportunities for underprivileged groups. This perspective suggests that consumers can develop a positive perception of brands engaging in meaningful philanthropic activities, potentially leading to increased customer loyalty (Plewa et

al., 2015). In sum, participants believe that luxury brands should align with philanthropic initiatives, arguing that, as a domain of positive luxury, philanthropy should benefit communities rather than serve merely as a PR activity or marketing strategy.

### **Ethical Governance**

Ethical governance is a crucial component of positive luxury. Participants in our study view it as relevant but underdeveloped in the luxury sector. *Harry*, a conscious consumer aspiring for luxury, metaphorically described a positive luxury company:

“A genuine positive luxury company can be likened to a tree. The ethical governance forms the trunk, providing a strong foundation, while the other pillars represent the branches. In a nascent company, these branches may be small, reflecting limited activities, but this doesn’t diminish its authenticity as a positive luxury company. As the company matures, akin to a tree growing, the branches expand, becoming more prominent and visible.” (Harry)

This metaphor aligns with the ethical foundations of justice and fairness. It suggests that as a company (tree) grows, it should distribute its benefits to all stakeholders (branches), reflecting the principles outlined by Addis et al. (2022). Participants recommended extending ethical training beyond internal HR practices to include external practices to support ethical governance. This would help luxury firms understand their impact on the broader community. *Harry* elaborated on this point:

“Typically, organizations conduct regular ethics training sessions, often facilitated by the same HR managers. However, these sessions may lack real-world interactions. There’s potential to enrich this training by incorporating diverse experiences. For instance, executives who travel extensively could leverage their journeys to engage with locals in various countries. This direct exposure could offer invaluable insights into their realities, thereby broadening the executives’ perspectives.” (Harry)

The findings suggest that luxury brands should prioritize ethical governance by respecting human rights and considering multiple stakeholders. This aligns with the ethical principles of autonomy and fairness (Addis et al., 2022), fundamental to positive luxury. Participants suggested HR managers engage directly with employees to understand their unique needs and acknowledge them as autonomous individuals. Our study found that positive luxury challenges traditional notions of standardized ethical training to increase trust among managers and strengthen a company's ethical governance efforts (Remišová et al., 2019). Moreover, participants believe ethical governance can benefit luxury companies in the long run. *Sarah*, an advocate for sustainable luxury and regular buyer, stated:

“Long-term survival in business necessitates an ethical approach. It's a crucial consideration for any enterprise seeking sustainability.” (Sarah)

Nonetheless, participants voiced skepticism about luxury brands' motivations and their ambiguous understanding of ethics. To embrace a positive luxury mindset, participants concurred that ethical governance must be explicitly defined, effectively communicated, and should encompass diverse committees and stakeholders. *Nicolas*, a quality-conscious luxury consumer focused on sustainability, expressed concerns about current ethical practices:

“Despite the importance of ethical conduct, tangible examples seem elusive. It appears that companies often resort to the bare minimum, making ethical practices difficult to discern. In my observation, companies tend to engage more in questionable activities such as cutting corners and lobbying.”  
(Nicolas)

To sum, our study underscores the significance of ethical governance in positive luxury. It proposes that luxury brands should clearly delineate their ethical guidelines, adhere to a code of conduct, ensure fair treatment for all, respect human rights, and consider multiple stakeholders. Ethical governance forms the basis for positive luxury, ensuring companies distribute benefits to

all stakeholders, build trust, and enhance positive impact while aligning with ethical principles of autonomy and fairness (Addis et al., 2022).

### **Supply Chain Integrity**

Participants argued that maintaining virtuous standards in complex supply chains is challenging. They noted that many luxury brands hide sections of their supply chain with unethical practices, shifting responsibility to vulnerable links instead of addressing the root cause. *Michael*, an affluent luxury shopper, noted:

“Luxury brands may be unaware of the practices on the vendor side due to their distant relationship. It’s imperative for these brands to hold their suppliers accountable for ethical practices by enforcing stringent reporting standards. For instance, if a luxury item manufacturer in Vietnam pays a meager daily wage of \$1, I would withdraw my support. Practices such as child labor should be strictly prohibited in vendors’ factories, and the public has a right to this information.” (Michael)

This quote highlights the need for luxury brands to maintain close supplier relationships and enforce strict ethical standards to preserve their reputation (Joy et al., 2012). *Daniel*, a sustainable luxury enthusiast, defined ‘ethical’ as a business that genuinely ‘cares.’ He emphasized the importance of transparency and fairness in the supply chain, enhancing the perceived value and authenticity of luxury brands:

“It’s committed to producing with top-tier materials, ensuring fairness throughout the supply chain, employing craftsmanship, maintaining transparency with customers, and delivering the highest achievable quality product. There’s a soul imbued in the product.” (Daniel)

Other participants stressed the need for luxury brands to ensure fair compensation throughout their supply chain, a key aspect of CSR in the luxury sector. *Elizabeth*, a fashion-focused shopper with limited sustainability awareness, added:

“Luxury brands often command a premium for their products, and it’s expected that this premium is reflected in fair compensation down the supply chain. Adequate and fair remuneration should result in superior products and materials. It’s socially responsible to invest in the areas from where these products originate, ensuring a cycle of quality and fairness.” (Elizabeth)

Our findings suggest that luxury brands should enhance supply chain transparency, enabling consumers to verify sustainability claims. One potential solution is adopting blockchain technology for accurate data reporting and increased transparency (Karaosman et al., 2020), key areas for development in the luxury fashion sector. *Amanda*, a luxury brand lover, shared:

“When a luxury brand claims that their cashmere originates from a well-nurtured goat, it’s not something I can personally verify. However, I’m aware that blockchain solutions exist in this domain to address such issues. For instance, Starbucks has implemented an impressive program - although not in the luxury segment - that allows customers to trace the origins of their coffee beans and cups using QR codes and blockchain technology.” (Amanda)

Our study also revealed that participants familiar with luxury are more conscious of supply chain traceability and the social impact of luxury brands (Batat, 2022). They are less likely to support unethical luxury brands. *Ahmad*, a socially conscientious regular luxury consumer, observed:

“In reality, only a small number of consumers have a deep understanding of a company’s supply chain. While some may peruse articles or delve into the company’s specifics, it’s unlikely that all consumers are investing time in researching the company or scrutinizing the details of its supply chain.” (Ahmad)

This quote underscores the importance of luxury brands communicating their supply chain practices to consumers, a key aspect of CSR communication in the luxury sector. Ethical supply chain practices are crucial for maintaining reputation and legitimacy. Transparency and supplier

engagement across supply chains can build consumer trust and loyalty, fostering a positive luxury mindset.

### **Well-Being Outcomes**

Our study highlights well-being as a key pillar of positive luxury. Participants advocated for shifting luxury brands' focus from profit to the well-being of all stakeholders, including employees and consumers, to cultivate an equitable luxury business model. Concerns about the treatment of workers by luxury brands were prevalent. For example, *Charlotte*, an ethical luxury consumer, voiced concerns about the lack of transparency in employee treatment:

“Certain brands have been accused of exploiting human labor, such as delaying payments to workers in developing countries. Consumers must know that their preferred brands are fair in their payment and treatment of workers. Otherwise, they may choose to avoid or even develop a dislike for the brand. This isn't just about the supply chain, but about human dignity.” (Charlotte)

This quote stresses the need for ethical labor practices and transparency in the luxury industry. It suggests that consumers are becoming more conscious of brands' ethical practices and are willing to change their preferences based on this information (White et al., 2019). This awareness can lead to more responsible consumption patterns, as consumers may support brands that prioritize ethical practices. *Amanda*, a luxury brand lover, hopes that luxury brands contribute positively to the communities where their factories are located:

“I hope that luxury brands are contributing positively to the communities where their factories are located. For instance, Gucci may be doing a lot for their local community. However, they might be undercompensating their workers in other parts of the world. There needs to be more transparency about whether luxury brands are genuinely upholding their stated values.” (Amanda)

This quote highlights the need for luxury brands to contribute to local communities and ensure fair worker treatment. It calls for more transparency in luxury brands' operations to enhance sustainability efforts. Our results indicate that luxury brands should enhance personal connections with customers, leveraging these as resources for well-being outcomes. *Samir*, a conscious luxury consumer, emphasizes the power of strong employee-customer relationships in enhancing consumer well-being and brand loyalty:

“When an employee cultivates a relationship with a consumer, the consumer naturally develops a stronger attachment to the brand, fostering brand loyalty. Personal touches, such as sending a handwritten letter, remembering their birthday, or recognizing them by name when they visit the store, play a significant role in this process. These seemingly small gestures hold great importance for the consumer, enhancing their sense of self-worth. When consumers feel valued and experience a sense of belonging, akin to being part of a family, it significantly contributes to their well-being.” (Samir)

As indicated in the quote, small gestures can enhance consumers' sense of self-worth and belonging, contributing to both consumer and employee well-being. This approach can encourage more sustainable consumption, as valued and connected consumers may support the brand long-term (Batat, 2019). However, some participants, especially those with luxury industry experience, reported that the industry often prioritizes profits over employee well-being. *Carlos*, a luxury sustainability skeptic, criticizes the industry's lack of focus on employee well-being:

“Having been in the luxury industry for a considerable time, I can assert that employee well-being is not a priority. They may claim to care, but the truth is, they don't. Their focus is on numbers. They want you there to sell, they want profits, and employee welfare is not their concern.” (Carlos)

This critique emphasizes the necessity for luxury brands to prioritize collective and individual well-being. This approach can lead to a fair-minded and transformative luxury business model that positively impacts and enhances the welfare of all stakeholders in the luxury ecosystem (Batat, 2022).

## Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion

Positive luxury should be rooted in diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI), which have become increasingly important. Participants from various backgrounds highlighted that luxury brands need to understand their consumers' identities and self-perceptions. The absence of DEI in luxury branding is a concern, particularly for those from minority backgrounds. *Karen*, a value-oriented luxury consumer, emphasized the importance of internal diversity in a luxury brand:

“Diversity is crucial because it permeates from the inside out. When a brand embraces diversity among its employees, it naturally extends to its consumers through marketing. This approach benefits everyone involved.” (Karen)

This quote suggests that when a brand values diversity within its workforce, it can authentically project this value to its customers. However, it is important to note whether this internal diversity is genuinely embraced or merely a marketing strategy (Plewa et al., 2015). Our findings indicate that luxury brands have not yet fully embraced DEI in their marketing efforts. Participants had mixed perceptions about the extent to which luxury brands value DEI. Some participants believe that luxury brands are not necessarily concerned about DEI, while others think that simply avoiding actions that go against DEI is good enough. For instance, *Fatima*, a sustainability-aware, yet brand-loyal shopper, shared her decision to boycott a brand due to allegations of harassment against its founder:

“After learning about the harassment allegations against Alexander Wang, I was deeply disturbed. The fear that silenced his male models is concerning. I’ve decided not to support this brand anymore. Why should we endorse someone who is harmful and disrespectful towards others? If we all adopt this mindset, we can truly make a difference.” (Fatima)

This quote underscores the impact of a brand's actions on its reputation. It suggests that consumers are increasingly conscious of DEI practices of brands and are willing to withdraw



their support in response to misconduct. Similarly, *Amanda* expressed concern about the discrepancy between public statements and internal practices in some luxury brands:

“Luxury brands must prioritize diversity, equality, and inclusion, especially in their advertising campaigns. This is a response to significant social movements and a dramatically changing consumer base over the past decade. Now, they cater to a more diverse population. However, my concern is whether these brands genuinely embrace diversity, both in their marketing campaigns and their corporate structure. A case in point is Nike. Despite their public support for the Black Lives Matter movement, their top management is predominantly white males. This discrepancy between their public statements and internal practices could potentially harm the company.” (Amanda)

The statement in the quote above calls for a critical examination of the alignment between a brand’s public statements and its internal practices. It points out the potential harm caused by such discrepancies, suggesting that consumers are increasingly aware and critical of performative activism (Romani et al., 2015). It is thus crucial to question whether these brands are making substantial changes in their corporate structure to reflect their public commitment to DEI. While some research shows that top management teams with greater gender, international experience, and educational background diversity are positively associated with higher firm performance (Cambrea et al., 2017), luxury brands have not yet fully embraced DEI in their marketing efforts (Leri, 2020) except some recent shifts in luxury brands like Gucci, Prada, and Tiffany towards using Asian celebrities as spokespersons for their Asian markets, as stated by *Jennifer*, a luxury enthusiast with high appreciation for personalized services:

“Recently, classical luxury brands such as Gucci, Prada, and Tiffany have begun to use Asian celebrities as spokespersons for their Asian markets. This sends a positive message to Asian consumers, particularly in China, a crucial market for these brands. By leveraging local celebrities, these luxury brands can create a personalized experience for Chinese consumers.” (Jennifer).

This strategy sends a positive message to Asian consumers, particularly in China, a crucial market for these brands. It highlights the shift in their marketing strategies to appeal to diverse consumer groups, which is a key aspect of DEI. Therefore, our study suggests that positive luxury should include DEI, which is often overlooked in marketing efforts. Participants agreed that luxury brands should incorporate DEI principles, including size, color, ethnicity, non-binary models, and disabilities as one of its pillars to promote positive luxury and respect human rights while considering multiple stakeholders.

## **RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS**

### ***Theoretical Contributions***

Our research elucidates consumers' interpretations of the positive effects of luxury consumption and production, emphasizing a holistic approach to sustainability in the luxury sector. This holistic perspective offers novel insights beyond typical unidimensional views in sustainable luxury literature (Osburg et al., 2021; Kunz et al., 2020). We introduce the 'positive luxury' framework, categorizing positive luxury into core and incipient types, each with multiple pillars and interpretations from a consumer's perspective at micro, meso, and macro levels. Table 4 summarizes our research outcomes, highlighting their significant contributions to the literature on ethics and sustainability.

“Insert table 4 about here”

Our study makes three key advancements in research. Firstly, adopting a positive theory approach (Krush et al., 2015) aligns with the TLR stream (Batat, 2022) and supports the positive impact of luxury consumption and production, contributing to the debate on luxury and sustainability (in)compatibility (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013). Our 'positive luxury' framework underscores the benefits of luxury consumption and production, supporting the compatibility

between luxury and sustainability (Davies et al., 2012). Secondly, our consumer-centric perspective reveals nuanced positive implications of luxury, influenced by diverse consumer profiles and sociocultural contexts (Batat, 2023). Our framework includes eight sustainability pillars, categorized into core and incipient types, impacting various levels. At the micro level, it includes individual and collective well-being; at the meso level, supply chain integrity, DEI, philanthropy, and ethical governance; and at the macro level, environmental, societal, and economic sustainability. Doing so, we extend the three prevalent sustainability pillars (people, planet, profit) (Sheth et al., 2011) and the sustainability marketing dimensions (Lim, 2016), emphasizing the stakeholder's perspective on sustainability. Our findings advance positive marketing theory (Tadajewski, 2016; Gopaldas, 2015) by highlighting unique perspectives on the positive impact of brands' actions and strategies and thus emphasizing the importance of the perspective adopted, which in our case, is the consumer's subjective viewpoint.

Lastly, our research addresses the TLR stream's call for focusing on collective and individual well-being outcomes, a core aspect of the TLR paradigm. Consistent with prior studies (Batat, 2020), we suggest well-being is integral to positive luxury, serving as both a catalyst and a result, enabling firms to transform practices and generate positive impacts. Well-being redefines sustainable practices in the luxury industry by integrating mental, emotional, and physical health, moving beyond material wealth and exclusivity. This approach aligns with modern consumption trends and workforce requirements that prioritize health and happiness. Consequently, future research should focus more on innovative measurement and accountability mechanisms to assess well-being outcomes among all stakeholders involved in the luxury sector or in a given industry ecosystem. This approach aligns with the TLR's emphasis on promoting well-being outcomes among market actors and stakeholders.

In summary, our research offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay between luxury and sustainability. The positive luxury framework and its sustainability pillars encourage a more inclusive and holistic approach, avoiding narrow perspectives on firms' sustainable and ethical practices, aligning with the TLR stream's multidimensional and multilevel view of sustainability.

### ***Implications and Future Research Avenues***

Our research provides practical implications for businesses and policymakers to promote a positive luxury mindset. Table 5 outlines the primary managerial and policy implications of positive luxury, as well as potential areas for future research. We offer recommendations across various domains, ranging from core qualities such as ecological and animal welfare, social and economic sustainability, to incipient qualities like ethical governance, well-being outcomes, DEI, supply chain integrity, and philanthropy.

“Insert table 5 about here”

From a managerial standpoint, luxury brands should prioritize ethical strategies across multiple domains and stages, including corporate management, manufacturing, and consumption processes. Brands should adopt more positive business models, such as secondhand, renting, and sharing of luxury items. They should also improve marketing communication strategies to be more transparent about supply chain integrity and diversify hiring processes to promote positive luxury. These efforts can help educate consumers about positive luxury and increase appreciation for luxury brands' efforts. Policymakers play a crucial role in creating an environment that fosters positive luxury brands and consumers. They should use regulatory tools to support the growth of positive luxury and ensure consumers are aware of the benefits of supporting a positive luxury ecosystem. Luxury brands, policymakers, and consumers can work together to

contribute to a more sustainable and equitable luxury industry. As Table 5 shows, forthcoming research can further investigate the evident positive luxury domains highlighted in our study by directing attention towards the entire process, particularly upstream parties, such as artisans and suppliers, and their well-being. Scholars can explore alternate luxury business models from both consumer and managerial standpoints or evaluate the domains of positive luxury in the context of emerging luxury companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and family-owned businesses, rather than focusing solely on large corporations.

While our framework of ‘positive luxury’ offers a novel consumer-centric perspective on the intersection of luxury and sustainability, future research can build on this foundation by exploring its applicability across different cultural contexts and consumer segments. Researchers could design empirical studies to test the framework’s pillars in real-world luxury markets, examining how various demographic and psychographic variables influence perceptions of the positive impact of luxury consumption and production. Additionally, longitudinal studies could investigate the long-term impact of positive luxury practices on consumer behavior, well-being, brand loyalty, and environmental outcomes. Scholars can also integrate this framework into experimental designs to assess its effectiveness in promoting a positive luxury business model among luxury brands, consumers, and other stakeholders. Moreover, interdisciplinary research could explore synergies between ‘positive luxury’ and other sustainability frameworks, thereby enriching the theoretical landscape and providing comprehensive insights for both academia and industry. Finally, this framework serves as a foundational tool, encouraging further scholarly inquiry into the complexity of the positive impact of luxury consumption and production.

Despite our study’s contribution of a novel framework, some limitations persist, primarily related to the nature of the research methodology and positioning. While our study included a

diverse sample, it is important to note that we did not focus on establishing a cross-cultural or gender analysis. Instead, our aim was to capture diverse perceptions of positive luxury. However, we acknowledge that cultural backgrounds, age, marital status, and income can influence luxury consumption and sustainable practices, as documented in prior studies. For instance, we did not consider the background and the country of origin of the participants in our analysis. Future studies would benefit from a cross-cultural analysis of the domains of positive luxury. Likewise, we did not focus on gender differences, which can be an interesting factor to understand in the context of positive luxury domains. Additionally, future research can examine the relationship between positive luxury and participants' familiarity with luxury sectors, as well as the impact of/on their ethical and sustainable behaviors in other consumption contexts.

Ultimately, luxury businesses have a significant role to play in society, extending beyond their conventional pursuits. The positive luxury framework is a comprehensive approach that aims to prevent luxury companies from engaging in fragmented or singular sustainable practices driven by personal motives, such as managing downside risks, investor reactions, and building reputation by engaging in social issues vital to their key stakeholders (Joy et al., 2012). Instead, it provides a holistic and comprehensive alternative that enables businesses to create a more significant positive impact by integrating core and incipient values and moving beyond sustainability efforts, which often focus on the 3Ps. The framework aims to generate individual and collective well-being for all stakeholders and is an all-inclusive luxury ecosystem that emphasizes responsible business practices both within and outside the organization.

Furthermore, positive luxury has a much broader perspective than sustainable luxury, as it focuses on bringing positive changes at all levels, including individual, corporate, community, and environmental. Conscious consumption is becoming increasingly prevalent in luxury,

replacing the traditional conspicuous consumption (Keinan et al., 2020). Luxury companies' failure to meet consumers' expectations compared to non-luxury brands leads to a higher sense of discomfort among consumers, with detrimental consequences for luxury brands, as demonstrated by Amatulli et al. (2020). In conclusion, the positive luxury framework is an innovative and vital approach that can help luxury businesses maintain their relevance and impact in an evolving and more conscious society.

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**Table 1. Participants' profiles**

| <b>Name</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age range</b> | <b>Country</b> | <b>Situation</b>  |
|-------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Li          | Male          | 31-35            | China          | Single            |
| Emily       | Female        | 31-35            | USA            | Married with kids |
| Sarah       | Female        | 41-45            | USA            | Married with kids |
| James       | Male          | 36-40            | Canada         | Married with kids |
| Lukas       | Male          | 36-40            | Switzerland    | Married with kids |
| Sophie      | Female        | 41-45            | Switzerland    | Married with kids |
| Max         | Male          | 21-25            | Switzerland    | Single            |
| Eva         | Female        | 36-40            | Switzerland    | Married with kids |
| Olivia      | Female        | 25-30            | USA            | Single            |
| John        | Male          | 51-55            | USA            | Married with kids |
| Jessica     | Female        | 35-40            | USA            | Married with kids |
| Linda       | Female        | 35-45            | USA            | Married with kids |
| Ana         | Female        | 35-45            | Brazil         | Married with kids |
| Laura       | Female        | 20-35            | Switzerland    | Single            |
| Maria       | Female        | 45-60            | Italy          | Married with kids |
| Daniel      | Male          | 35-45            | Switzerland    | Single            |
| Beatriz     | Female        | 40-55            | Brazil         | Married with kids |
| Robert      | Male          | 40-55            | USA            | Single, with kid  |
| Emma        | Female        | 25-35            | USA            | Single            |
| Karen       | Female        | 45-55            | USA            | Single, with kid  |
| Patricia    | Female        | 45-55            | USA            | Married with kids |
| Michael     | Male          | 40-50            | USA            | Single            |
| Jennifer    | Female        | 30-40            | USA            | Single            |
| Amanda      | Female        | 25-35            | USA            | Single            |
| Ashley      | Female        | 20-30            | USA            | Married           |
| Pierre      | Male          | 41-45            | France         | Single            |
| Nicolas     | Male          | 36-40            | France         | Single            |
| Julien      | Male          | 21-25            | France         | Couple with kids  |
| Marie       | Female        | 21-25            | France         | Single            |
| Ahmad       | Male          | 25-35            | Lebanon        | Single            |
| Fatima      | Female        | 25-35            | Dubai          | Married           |
| Charlotte   | Female        | 20-30            | UK             | Single            |
| Samir       | Male          | 25-45            | Lebanon        | Single            |
| Harry       | Male          | 25-30            | UK             | Single            |
| Elizabeth   | Female        | 30-35            | UK             | Married           |
| Carlos      | Male          | 50-55            | Brazil         | Single            |
| Gabriela    | Female        | 30-35            | Bolivia        | Married           |

**Table 2. Structured interview guide based on Batat's TLR domains**

| Section | Batat's TLR domains             | Focus   | Example questions   |
|---------|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 1       | Luxury consumption              | Participants' relationships and experiences with luxury brands and their perceived impact               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is luxury for you?</li> <li>- Do you believe luxury brands are sustainable and ethical?</li> <li>- Do luxury brands have a positive and/or negative impact on society, the environment, and individuals?</li> </ul> |
| 2       | Luxury production               | Participants' knowledge of sustainable practices within luxury brands                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you provide examples of the positive impact of luxury brands?</li> <li>- What actions should luxury brands undertake to have a positive impact on people, the environment, or society?</li> </ul>                    |
| 3       | Macro-level Luxury Stakeholders | Roles of various market actors, institutions, and non-governmental organizations on the luxury industry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who are the key players in the luxury industry, and what impact do they have on the market and society?</li> <li>- How do various luxury stakeholders influence the environment, society, and individuals?</li> </ul>    |
| 4       | Luxury well-being outcomes      | How luxury brands can shift towards positive luxury by focusing on various well-being outcomes          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the key elements that define positive luxury in the context of well-being?</li> <li>- How can luxury brands integrate sustainable practices to enhance well-being outcomes for their consumers?</li> </ul>      |

**Table 3. The Data Analysis and Coding Process**

| Two-Step Analysis   | Description  | Categories   | Codes   | Illustration   |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>STEP 1</b></p> <p>INTRA- AND INTER- PORTRAIT ANALYSIS</p> | <p><b>1. Intra-portrait analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Approach.</b> An individual-focused analysis method to preserve each participant's unique luxury consumer profile and their interpretation of the relationship between luxury and sustainability. For instance, we captured a participant's personal ritual of buying luxury goods for self-indulgence on special or difficult days, which didn't fit into the study's predefined themes but was deeply meaningful to them.</li> <li>• <b>Objective.</b> Understand subjective experiences, such as the participant's view of luxury's positive impact being more tied to emotional well-being than ecological concerns.</li> <li>• <b>Outcome.</b> Detailed profiles reflecting participants' subjective experiences as luxury consumers. These profiles categorize data, gathered from the participant's viewpoint and familiarity with luxury, into themes associated with the adoption of positive luxury by firms that are addressing ethical concerns.</li> </ul> | <p>Portraits were structured using the TLR's categories. The coding process focused on four themes that provide a comprehensive understanding of luxury consumption and production, and its potential positive impact at the micro, meso, and macro level.</p> <p><b>1) Consumer Familiarity with Luxury Consumption</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaning of luxury</li> <li>• Consumers' affinity towards luxury brands</li> <li>• Motivations and behaviors related to luxury</li> <li>• Experiences with luxury</li> </ul> <p><b>2) Sustainable Practices in the luxury Industry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of sustainability among brands</li> <li>• Impact of luxury production processes</li> <li>• Effect on consumers</li> <li>• Role of sustainable innovation in the luxury industry</li> </ul> <p><b>3) Influence of Market Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and influences of various stakeholders in the luxury market</li> <li>• Impact of regulations on these stakeholders</li> </ul> | <p>1) <u>Consumer Familiarity with Luxury Consumption</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luxury definition, perceived value, luxury associations, luxury significance</li> <li>• Brand loyalty, brand affinity, brand preference, brand connection</li> <li>• Luxury motivation, purchasing behavior, luxury drivers, consumption patterns</li> <li>• Luxury experience, customer satisfaction, luxury interactions, luxury impressions</li> </ul> <p>2) <u>Sustainable Practices in the luxury Industry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand awareness, sustainability initiatives, sustainability consciousness, green initiatives</li> <li>• Production impact, environmental footprint, production consequences, ecological impact</li> <li>• Consumer impact, consumer perception, consumer reactions, consumer attitudes</li> <li>• Innovation role, sustainable innovation, innovation impact, green technologies</li> </ul> <p>3) <u>Influence of Market Stakeholders</u></p> | <p>1) <u>Consumer Familiarity with Luxury Consumption</u></p> <p>"You know, when it comes to luxury, people fall into two camps. Some folks see it as more than just a price tag. They love that personal connection and the memories that come with their first luxury purchase. Then, there are those who view luxury as all about the brand and the price. The higher the price, the more exclusive it feels, and they enjoy owning things that symbolize wealth and prestige."</p> <p>2) <u>Sustainable Practices in the luxury Industry</u></p> <p>"It's cool to see luxury brands going green, but it's kind of a paradox, right? The environmental impact of making luxury goods is a big deal, and I want to support brands that care about sustainability. But there's this irony—luxury often clashes with the idea of minimalism and conservation. Innovation in sustainability is super important for the future, but can true sustainability ever really mesh with the lavishness of luxury?"</p> <p>3) <u>Influence of Market Stakeholders</u></p> |

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|   |  | <p><b>4) Potential Impact of Brands Advocating for Change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shift in consumer perception towards more positive practices of luxury brands</li><li>• Role of luxury in advocating for positive changes</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stakeholder influence, market dynamics, stakeholder roles, market influences</li><li>• Regulatory impact, policy effect, regulatory effects, policy consequences</li></ul> <p>4) <u>Potential Impact of Brands Advocating for Change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perception shift, brand positivity, perception changes, brand improvements</li><li>• Change advocacy, luxury impact, change role, luxury contributions</li></ul>   | <p>“The luxury market is like a big, intricate dance. You've got designers aiming for creativity and exclusivity, while consumers are leaning more towards sustainability. And then there are the regulations, which can either help or complicate things. It's a fascinating mix!”</p> <p>4) <u>Potential Impact of Brands Advocating for Change</u></p> <p>“There's this really interesting contradiction. On one hand, luxury brands are all about excess and opulence. But on the other hand, they have the power to drive real change. When a luxury brand starts pushing for sustainability, it feels like a beacon of hope. But you can't help but notice the irony of extravagance now advocating for restraint. That leaves us feeling both hopeful and skeptical.”</p> |
| <p><b>2. <u>Inter-portrait analysis</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Approach.</b> A comprehensive analysis across 37 portraits to identify recurring semantic categories, using iterative interpretation. We identified key themes like ecological sustainability, animal cruelty-free practices, well-being or community support, among others.</li><li>• <b>Objective.</b> Identify key themes related to luxury brands'</li></ul> | <p>The coding process identified several key themes and subthemes that provide a comprehensive understanding of luxury consumption and production, along with its potential positive impacts at the micro, meso, and macro levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><i>Ecological Sustainability / Environmental Responsibility</i></b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Carbon footprint reduction</li><li>○ Use of renewable resources</li><li>○ Waste management</li><li>○ Conservation efforts</li><li>○ Resource management</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Ecological Sustainability / Environmental Responsibility</u></li></ul> <p>Coding themes: “Green Initiatives”, “Resource Efficiency”, “Environmental Impact Assessments”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Animal Cruelty-Free Practices</u></li></ul> <p>Coding themes: “Ethical Material Use”, “Cruelty-Free Sourcing”, “Animal Welfare Policies”, “Alternatives to Animal Testing”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Ecological Sustainability / Environmental Responsibility</u></li></ul> <p>“Isn't it ironic? We crave luxury, yet we demand sustainability. We want the finest things in life, but we also want to protect the planet. It's a constant tug-of-war between indulgence and responsibility. I love buying from brands that champion green initiatives and resource efficiency, but sometimes I wonder if true luxury can ever be truly sustainable.”</p> |  |

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|  | <p>sustainable and ethical practices from a consumer perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome.</b> Identification of the key themes that serve as the pillars of positive luxury. These themes, which emerged in relation to consumer perspectives, shed light on what they perceive as the positive impacts of luxury brands. These impacts are observed at various levels - individual, social, and environmental.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Animal Cruelty-Free Practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use of synthetic materials</li> <li>○ Ethical sourcing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Community Support / Social Engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Luxury brands' investments in local economic development</li> <li>○ Education initiatives</li> <li>○ Health initiatives</li> <li>○ Community development</li> <li>○ Social Impact Initiatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Giving Back / Philanthropic Initiatives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Corporate philanthropy</li> <li>○ Disaster relief efforts</li> <li>○ Charitable Giving</li> <li>○ Community Support</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Altruism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Humanitarian aid</li> <li>○ Social impact initiatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Emphasis on Employee/Consumer Happiness / Well-being Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Initiatives around employee wellness</li> <li>○ Customer satisfaction</li> <li>○ Employee Wellness</li> <li>○ Consumer Health</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Economic Stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sustainable Business Models</li> <li>○ Economic Growth</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Community Support / Social Engagement</u> <p>Coding Themes: "Local Investment", "Educational Support", "Community Outreach Programs", "Social Justice Initiatives"</p> </li> <li>• <u>Giving Back / Philanthropic Initiatives</u> <p>Coding Themes: "Corporate Charity", "Disaster Response", "Community Grants", "Non-profit Partnerships"</p> </li> <li>• <u>Altruism</u> <p>Coding Themes: "Humanitarian Aid", "Social Impact", "Volunteerism"</p> </li> <li>• <u>Emphasis on Employee/Consumer Happiness / Well-being Focus</u> <p>Coding Themes: "Employee Wellness Programs", "Customer Satisfaction Measures", "Work-Life Balance Initiatives", "Customer Experience Enhancements"</p> </li> <li>• <u>Economic Stability</u> <p>Coding Themes: "Sustainable Business Models", "Economic Growth Strategies", "Investment in Green Technologies"</p> </li> <li>• <u>Ethical Leadership</u></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Animal Cruelty-Free Practices</u> <p>"It's like asking for a diamond that sparkles without ever having been mined. We say we support cruelty-free practices and ethical sourcing, but sometimes it feels like we're just scratching the surface of a much deeper issue."</p> </li> <li>• <u>Community Support / Social Engagement</u> <p>"You know, it's really heartening when some luxury brands take the time to invest in local communities. It's not just about the money they put in, but the genuine support they show for schools and social workers. It feels like they're not just here to make a profit, but to be a part of our lives, to help us grow and thrive together."</p> </li> <li>• <u>Giving Back / Philanthropic Initiatives</u> <p>"When they offer community grants and partner with non-profits, it shows they understand the importance of using their influence for good. Seeing these brands support meaningful causes reminds us that even in the world of luxury, there's room for compassion and generosity."</p> </li> <li>• <u>Altruism</u> <p>"It's really heartwarming to see a luxury brand like Gucci getting involved in humanitarian efforts. By partnering with organizations to</p> </li> </ul> |
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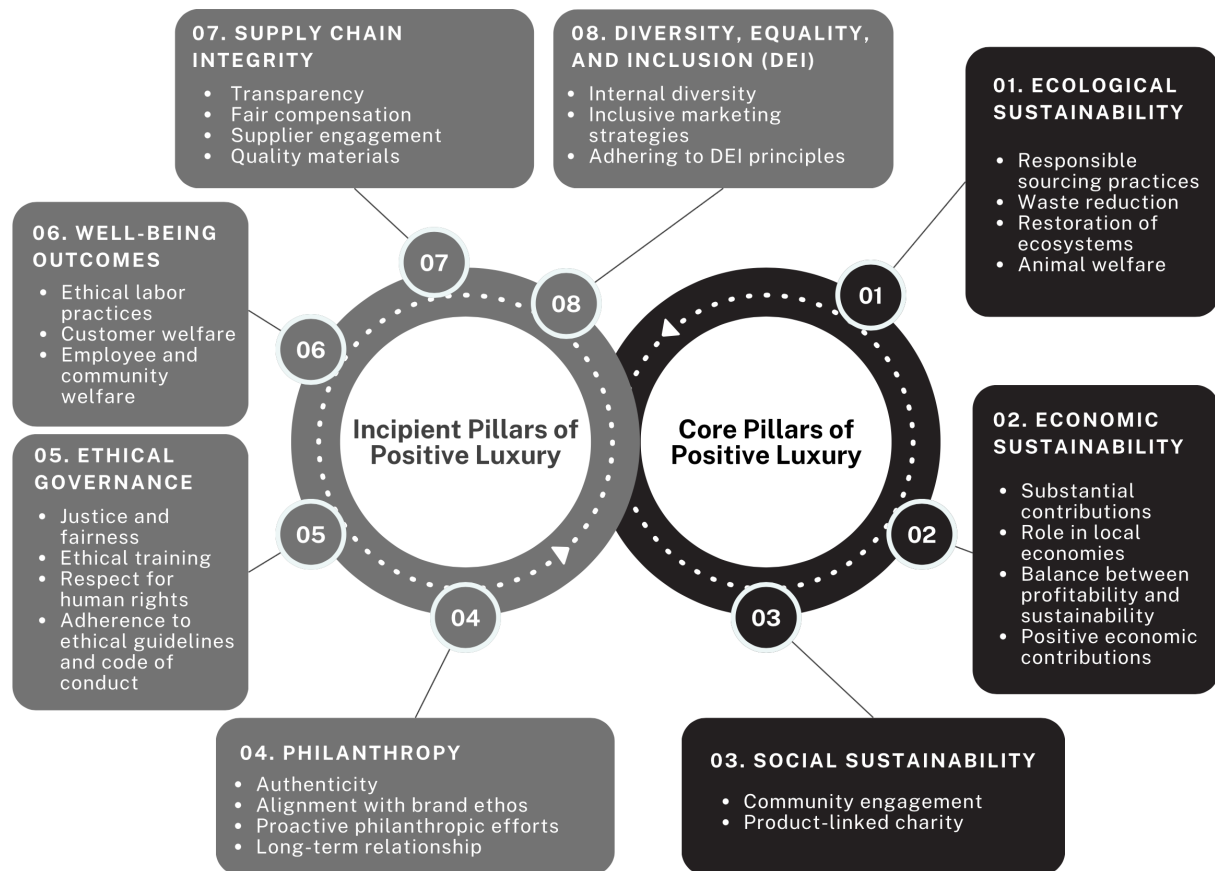


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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ethical Leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Corporate Ethics</li> <li>○ Governance Transparency</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Supply Chain Transparency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ethical Sourcing</li> <li>○ Supplier Accountability</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Inclusive Practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Diversity Promotion</li> <li>○ Equal Opportunity</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p>Coding Themes: “Ethical Decision-Making”, “Transparent Governance”, “Code of Conduct”, “Ethics Training”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Supply Chain Transparency</u></li> </ul> <p>Coding Themes: “Ethical Sourcing Practices”, “Supplier Accountability Measures”, “Fair Trade Practices”, “Supply Chain Audits”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Inclusive Practices</u></li> </ul> <p>Coding Themes: “Diversity Promotion”, “Equal Opportunity Policies”, “Cultural Sensitivity Training”, “Inclusion Initiatives”</p> | <p>support empowerment initiatives, Gucci is showing that they understand the deeper value of their success.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Emphasis on Employee/Consumer Happiness / Well-being Focus</u></li> </ul> <p>“When a company genuinely cares about its employees and always strives to make customers happy, it creates a ripple of positivity. Take LVMH, for example—they’ve rolled out initiatives to keep their employees loyal. And then there’s the Four Seasons hotel chain, which is dedicated to both employee and customer satisfaction.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Economic Stability</u></li> </ul> <p>“It’s reassuring to see that some luxury brands and other businesses are now prioritizing the future over short-term gains. It gives me hope that we can achieve a balance between economic growth and environmental responsibility”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Ethical Leadership</u></li> </ul> <p>“It’s about brands like Chanel making conscious decisions that reflect integrity and transparency. When a brand commits to fair labor, it sets a standard that resonates deeply with consumers. It’s not just about the luxury we see, but the values they uphold behind the scenes. This kind of leadership inspires trust and loyalty, showing that true luxury is as</p> |
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|   |   |   |  | <p>much about ethics as it is about elegance”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Supply Chain Transparency</u></li> </ul> <p>“I’m all for luxury brands that source ethically and hold their suppliers accountable. If they’re fair trade and audit their supply chains regularly, they’ve got my support.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Inclusive Practices</u></li> </ul> <p>“I find myself gravitating towards luxury brands that genuinely embrace inclusion. For instance, when I see some luxury brands actively promoting diversity and implementing equal opportunity policies, it resonates with me on a deeper level. This commitment to inclusivity makes me feel more connected to the brand and more inclined to support it.”</p> |
| <p><b>STEP 2</b></p> <p>THEMATIC ANALYSIS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Approach.</b> Identify the pillars of positive luxury and understand their significance from the perspective of consumers. Each theme was evaluated based on its importance, urgency, and necessity from the consumers’ point of view.</li> <li>• <b>Objective.</b> Assess the actual and emerging aspects of the dimensions of sustainable and ethical practices in luxury brands that emerged in the first step, as well as their significance and urgency from a consumer</li> </ul> | <p><b>1) Core Pillars of Positive Luxury from a Consumer Perspective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological Sustainability</li> <li>• Social Sustainability</li> <li>• Economic Sustainability</li> </ul> <p><b>2) Incipient Pillars of Positive luxury from a Consumer Perspective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical Governance</li> <li>• Supply Chain Integrity</li> <li>• Diversity, Equality, And Inclusion (DEI)</li> <li>• Philanthropy</li> <li>• Well-Being</li> </ul> | <p>1) <u>Core Pillars of Positive Luxury from a Consumer Perspective</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Importance.</b> Coding themes: ‘Consumer Demand’, ‘Brand Reputation’, ‘Market Trends’, ‘Regulatory Compliance’, ‘Competitive Advantage’</li> <li>• <b>Urgency.</b> Coding themes: ‘Immediate Action’, ‘Time-Sensitive’, ‘Crisis Response’, ‘Short-Term Impact’, ‘Long-Term Consequences’</li> </ul> | <p>1) <u>Core Pillars of Positive Luxury from a Consumer Perspective</u></p> <p>“Luxury brands are truly evolving. They’re not just becoming greener, but they’re also focusing on fair work conditions and boosting local economies. But let’s be real, they don’t really have a choice. It’s a big deal for us consumers, and it’s make or break for the brands. Their standing and future in the market hinge on their dedication to sustainability and ethics.”</p>  |

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|  | <p>perspective in terms of transforming these practices to generate positive impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome.</b> Identification of the key themes that serve as the pillars of positive luxury. These themes, which emerged in relation to consumer perspectives, shed light on what they perceive as the positive impacts of luxury brands. These impacts are observed at various levels - individual, social, and environmental.</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mandatory.</b> Coding themes: 'Non-Negotiable', 'Minimum Standards', 'Baseline Expectations', 'Regulatory Requirements', 'Consumer Expectations'</li> </ul> <p>2) <u>Incipient Pillars of Positive luxury from a Consumer Perspective</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Prioritize image over genuine commitment'</li> <li>• 'Lack comprehensive supply chain oversight'</li> <li>• 'Not fully integrate DEI into operations'</li> <li>• 'Engage in philanthropy for image enhancement'</li> <li>• 'Not prioritize well-being in their operations'</li> </ul> | <p>2) <u>Incipient Pillars of Positive luxury from a Consumer Perspective</u></p> <p>"As a regular consumer and having friends in the industry, I firmly believe that luxury brands should focus more on the well-being of their employees. They should genuinely engage in philanthropy, inclusion efforts, and support stakeholders in their supply chain. However, from my perspective, I do not see this happening to the extent it should. Even if there are charity efforts, I question their authenticity. It seems to me that these initiatives are more of a response to social media pressure rather than a genuine commitment to ethical and sustainable practices. There is still a long way to go for these brands to be authentic in their approach, especially when it comes to how they treat people - be it employees, customers, or even their contractors."</p> |
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**Figure 1. The Positive Luxury Framework**



- The **circular arrow with points** represents the continuity and complementarity between the core and incipient pillars of positive luxury.
- The **black color** symbolizes the core foundational pillars of positive luxury, from a consumer's perspective.
- The **grey color** signifies the emerging pillars of positive luxury as perceived by consumers.

**Table 4. A Consumer-Centric Interpretation of Positive Luxury: Contributions to Ethical and Sustainability Research**

| Categories                             | Consumers' perceptions of the positive impact of luxury consumption and production   | Key Contributions  |
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| Core qualities of positive luxury      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three key pillars have been delineated: ecological sustainability, social sustainability, and economic sustainability.</li> <li>These pillars exert influence at the macroscopic level.</li> <li>The pillars were deemed essential for every business operating in the sector due to factors such as consumer demand, regulatory requirements, and pressure from social media.</li> <li>The perceptions of consumers regarding these three pillars were found to be intricate and nuanced.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>1) Holistic Approach to Sustainability</b></p> <p>The research emphasizes a holistic and integrative approach towards sustainability, particularly within the luxury sector (Osburg et al., 2021). This approach provides novel insights that extend beyond the unidimensional perspectives typically found in ethical and sustainability literature.</p> <p><b>2) Positive Luxury Framework</b></p> <p>The research adopts a positive theory approach (Krush et al., 2015) and introduces the 'positive luxury' framework. This framework underscores the potential benefits of luxury consumption and production, contributing to the ongoing debate about the compatibility between luxury and sustainability (Achabou and Dekhili, 2013; Davies et al., 2012).</p> <p><b>3) Consumer-Centric Perspective and Sustainability Pillars</b></p> <p>The research adopts a consumer-centric perspective (Batat, 2023) and uncovers additional pillars of sustainability and a nuanced perception that enrich the marketing theory literature (Sheth et al., 2011, Lim, 2016)</p> <p>The proposed framework of positive luxury comprises eight sustainability pillars, derived from the consumer's subjective perception of the potential positive impact of luxury consumption and production.</p> <p>These pillars are categorized into two primary categories: core and emerging, which are perceived to generate impact at various levels: micro, meso, and macro.</p> <p><b>4) Well-being Outcomes</b></p> <p>The research responds to the TLR stream's call for incorporating a focus on both collective and individual well-being outcomes (Batat, 2022). It</p> |
| Incipient qualities of positive luxury | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five principal pillars have been identified: ethical governance, supply chain integrity, philanthropy, well-being outcomes, and diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI).</li> <li>These pillars exert influence at both the micro level (well-being) and the meso level within the industry, encompassing ethical governance, supply chain integrity, philanthropy, and DEI.</li> <li>While these emerging pillars are crucial in today's business landscape, especially in terms of well-being outcomes, consumers perceive that businesses are not adequately considering them. If they are considered, it is often perceived as being more for image enhancement and communication purposes.</li> <li>Consumers were found to be skeptical</li> </ul> |  |

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|  | about these pillars, questioning their authenticity. They emphasized the importance for businesses to start taking these aspects into consideration. | suggests that well-being is an integral component of positive luxury and should be viewed as both a catalyst and a result, facilitating brands in creating positive effects. |
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**Table 5. Implications and Future Research Directions**

| <b>Domains of Positive Luxury</b> | <b>Implications of Positive Luxury for Policy Makers and Businesses</b>   | <b>Future Research Directions</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <b><u>Core Qualities</u></b>      |   |  |
| Ecological & Animal Welfare       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rethink their strategies to protect/not to harm the environment because it affects consumers' health and well-being</li> <li>• Rethink the production and manufacturing process as well as consumption process (big packaging) to be more environmentally friendly</li> <li>• Promote alternative luxury business models (e.g., second-hand/renting/sharing luxury markets, selling upcycle goods)</li> <li>• No green-washing in market communication</li> <li>• Align the brand with what consumers increasingly care about</li> <li>• Provide more choices to consumers (e.g., personalization)</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More research on the whole process especially upstream parties (such as artisans, suppliers) along with the focus on their well-being</li> <li>• More study on alternative luxury business models from both consumer and managerial perspectives</li> <li>• Examine ecology in the case of emerging luxury companies, SMEs, and family business companies instead of just focusing on big players</li> <li>• Study how consumers perceive non-animal materials and/or animal testing for luxury products (e.g., price, quality, senses, logo, durability, functionality)</li> <li>• Explore how luxury houses produce an alternative product that is comparable to animal-based products</li> </ul> |
| Social & Economic                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not exploit the local communities by acquiring raw materials that affect the social and economic well-being of the communities</li> <li>• Shift towards a sustainable and collaborative win-win business model to work with and empower local businesses</li> <li>• Adopt different approaches to improve the living conditions of the local population. (e.g., Sana Jardin)</li> <li>• Policy implications: evolve the regulations to fit with social issues and improve working conditions (e.g., child labor, work hours, minimum wage, vacation, paternity/maternity leave, insurance for work disability, etc.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More for emerging markets as most existing research is about established markets</li> <li>• Examine consumer's perceptions of emerging luxury brands' ecological product and alternative business models vs established companies' sustainable actions</li> <li>• Shift from the competition model to a collective/ a win-win business model</li> <li>• Examine business models of masstige and high-end luxury brands driven by social and economic dimensions</li> </ul>  |

| <u>Incipient Qualities</u> |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| DEI                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and empower the excluded population in the market</li> <li>• Develop products and services for consumers who have traditionally been marginalized</li> <li>• Aligning consumers more with other stakeholders to have their identities connected</li> <li>• Create a diverse talent pipeline</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine how companies can position themselves in terms of exclusivity and inclusivity</li> <li>• Explore how diversity and inclusion are incorporated in the hiring process, and its impact on consumer perceptions</li> <li>• Study how businesses can promote a talent pipeline that is fair and inclusive</li> <li>• Understand how consumers think and feel about diversity and inclusion within the luxury industry</li> <li>• Examine how to incorporate intersectionality within luxury research</li> <li>• Explore brands' perspective of transformative luxury as well as how brands' engagement in positive luxury impacts consumer well-being [<i>relevant to all dimensions</i>]</li> </ul> |
| Philanthropy               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support consumer interest groups and charities</li> <li>• Use frequency focused approach that is perceived favorably by consumers and benefits corporations</li> <li>• Improve the exposure to different donors and greater appeal amongst consumers because of the work of the brands.</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how businesses select the philanthropy-related goal and how it influences consumer perceptions of this brand</li> <li>• Study how philanthropic decisions should be communicated to the public</li> <li>• Examine how luxury brands can overcome consumer mistrust in relation to philanthropic actions</li> <li>• Explore how businesses can benefit from increasing their customer base because of this exposure to different donors</li> </ul>  |
| Ethical Governance         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish ethical strategies and execute them</li> <li>• Offer transparency to consumers</li> <li>• Increase credibility of other sustainable actions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine how ethical governance should be communicated to consumers and how this might impact perceptions of the brand</li> <li>• Study how ethical governance helps brands gain a competitive advantage within the marketplace</li> <li>• Explore how ethical governance promotes other dimensions and then contributes to well-being</li> </ul>  |
| Supply Chain Integrity     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be transparent about where the product comes from</li> <li>• Educate consumers on every step of the supply chain</li> <li>• Protect smaller members of the supply chain</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study how brands improve their communication strategies regarding the supply chain</li> <li>• Explore the perceived benefits of communicating supply chain integrity</li> </ul>   |

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| Well-Being | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the diversity of well-beings (e.g., psychological/financial/subjective/intellectual/emotional/social/environmental) from the perspective of consumers and other individuals</li> <li>• Emphasize the collective well-being of the community (living/working conditions, health care for workers and care for kids, schooling, etc.)</li> <li>• Build collaborative relationships with local institutions</li> <li>• Enhance the autonomy, engagement, and independency of members in the community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus more on HENRY (high-earners-not-rich-yet) group of consumers</li> <li>• Examine stigma related to plus-size consumers</li> <li>• Examine the role of luxury brands (such as through communication) in creating a positive environment and promoting consumer happiness (consumer self-image), eudaimonic (meaningful, more long-lasting, more difficult to reach) vs hedonic (focus on immediate emotions)</li> <li>• Examine the role of luxury brands on improving QOL (quality of life)</li> <li>• Positive materialism and consumer well-being</li> </ul> |
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