

# 'Buy Luxury' : Adapting the SHIFT Framework to Explore the Psychological Facets Enabling Consumers for Sustainable Luxury Consumption

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## Abstract

This era of the global market is witnessing a new look for luxury products and services. There has been an accelerating shift in consumption patterns and consumer preferences for sustainable luxury products. Moreover, the COVID - 19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for changes in consumer behavior and adapting to a new way of living. Consumer trends have revealed that sustainability has become a key consideration in varied consumer segments when making their purchase decisions. Consumers' drive for environmental stability, social responsibility, and ethical practices has well been reflected in their lifestyles today. Thus, companies are re-evaluating their products' sustainability credentials and adopting a new paradigm of value creation to meet the changing psychological approach of consumers. This short communication delved into consumers' psychological aspects that drive momentum towards sustainable luxury consumption. Here, the SHIFT framework (White et al., 2019) was adopted to highlight the subtle psychological facets of consumers that trigger them to embrace sustainable luxury consumption. The perspective presented a conceptual framework that indicated various psychological facets (atypicality, social desirability, life changes, need for uniqueness, self benefits, sense of accomplishment, pro-environment nature, personal experience of others, and consideration of legacy) of a consumer, which influence sustainable luxury consumption.

**Keywords :** psychological, consumer, sustainable, luxury, consumption, SHIFT framework, short communication

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Modern lifestyle is currently based on various consumption patterns; some are environmentally unsustainable and socially inequitable (Kunz et al., 2020). Moreover, the unsustainable and socially inequitable consumption is contributing towards a sequence of pressure points that requires a rethinking on restructuring the current system of consumption and prosumption. Amidst such an issue, sustainable luxury consumption has emerged as a new paradigm in the luxury consumption patterns of consumers (Amatulli et al., 2017). As the luxury industry is eventually embracing sustainability, consumers are focusing more on self-analysis, the creative process, craftsmanship, and the perceived value of luxury products (Sun et al., 2021). The

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additional value provided by sustainability for luxury consumption has generated an innovation with every production and exchange (Kapferer, 2014). Since marketing is harnessing responsibility (Wilkie & Moore, 2012), the present consumption paradigm is witnessing the integration of ethical and environmental values in a consumer's purchase decision (Belz & Peattie, 2012). An adherence to luxury consumption patterns has thus emerged not as a trend but as a symbol of endurance through generations.

As luxury seems to be more compatible with sustainability (Kapferer & Michaut-Denizeau, 2014), it is no longer associated with ostentation and superficiality but with sobriety and moderation. Eventually, most consumers recognize, embrace, and reward the sustainable value of luxury consumption. Certain psychological facets have also given a spur towards this change in consumer behavior. As consumers focus on mindful purchasing, aesthetics, sustainable manufacturing, and the heritage value of products, the consumption of sustained luxury items is soaring high (Pencarelli et al., 2020). In general, consumers today are more concerned about the sustainable-oriented initiatives of brands (Morales et al., 2017). Luxury consumptions play a vital role in a case where luxury products are not limited to traditional innovation, but it goes beyond to embrace new values and perspectives in response to the emerging needs of the consumers and the planet (Giri et al., 2019; Yeoman, 2011). Consumers have found the true ethos of social luxury as brands or products have well-balanced transparency with exclusivity (Giri et al., 2018; Hennigs et al., 2012).

As 'luxury' is continuously redefining itself, consumers are changing their thought processes and purchasing decisions for luxury products. In this short communication, we attempt to ascertain the subtle psychological factors driving consumers to enhance their self and lifestyle and engage them in sustainable luxury consumption. Moreover, answers are also sought to the question of how the emotional and experiential values are ingrained among consumers' growing interest in sustainable luxury consumption. To contextualize the contribution of our present study, we adopted the SHIFT framework to highlight the psychological facets that enable consumers for sustainable luxury consumption. The general SHIFT framework that was proposed in the study of White et al. (2019) has helped to address the specific factors that encourage consumers to behave sustainably in the empirical context of luxury consumption. Hence, the objective of this study is to build a comprehensive framework for identifying the psychological factors that trigger consumers' purchase intention toward sustainable luxury consumption.

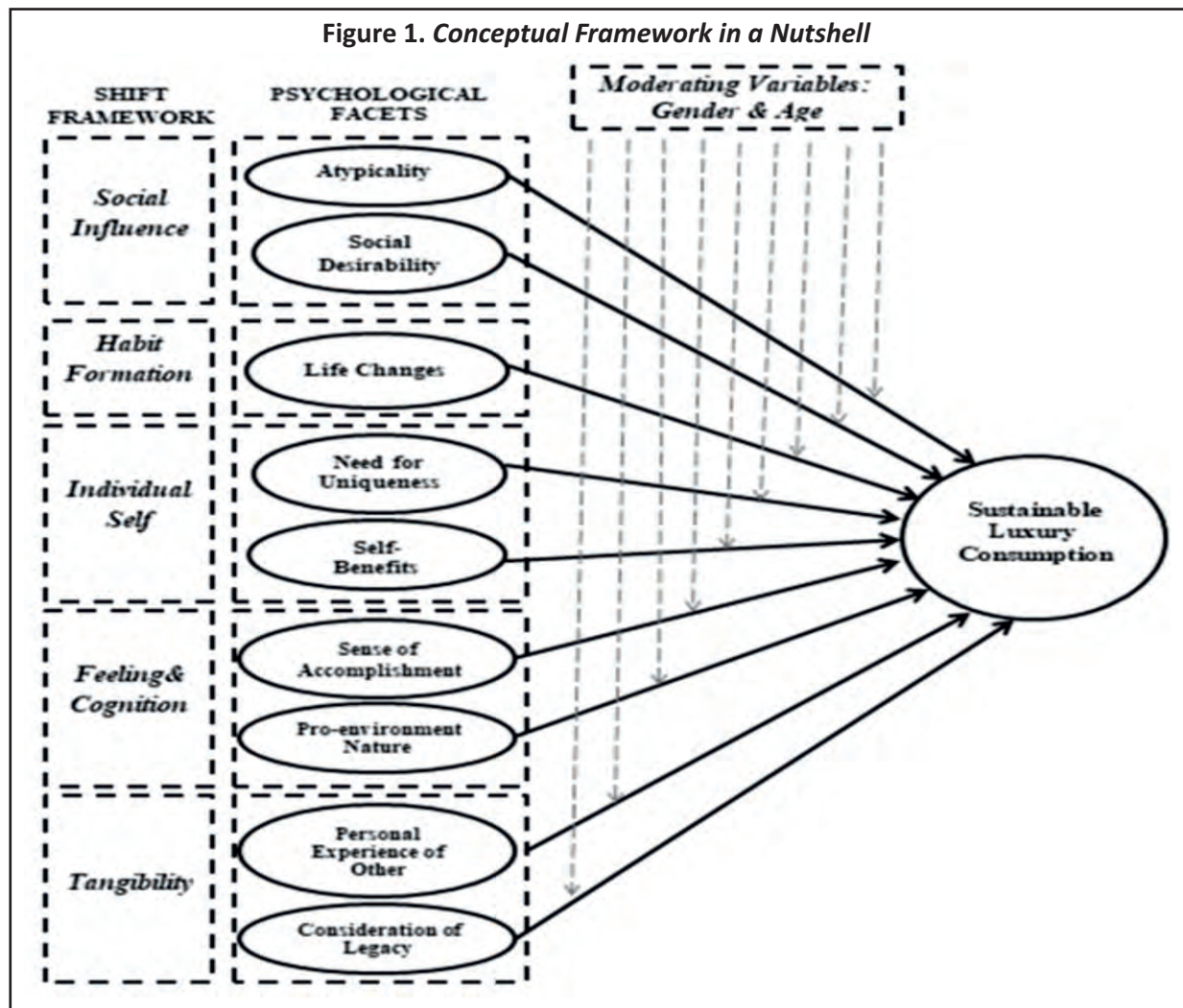
## **Review of Literature**

Consumers are willing to buy products that are unique and separable from the majority (Jebarajakirthy & Das, 2021). This 'atypicality' elicits consumers' purchasing decisions toward sustainable luxury products (Kapferer, 2010). Consumers today are more into sustainable luxury consumption as it not only symbolizes prestige, but communicates a message of authenticity, rarity, creativity, and the quality standards of craftsmanship skills (Amatulli et al., 2017). There is another means by which social influence has influenced consumers towards sustainable luxury consumption. Consumers have a tendency to behave in a socially desirable manner so that people can observe and assess their actions. This highlights their public symbol of commitment towards sustainability (Baca-Motes et al., 2012; Chakraborty et al., 2020; Giri et al., 2020). Certain sustainable behaviors and life-changing events become a critical component for habit formation. Many such behaviors are reflected in consumers' shopping for products, food consumption, and lifestyle. Thus, some positive habit formation behaviors (eco-friendly) trigger the adoption of sustainable luxury consumption. Uniqueness is another particular value that stimulates a consumer towards sustainable luxury consumption (Giri & Pandey, 2016; Ruvio, 2008).

Uniqueness seems to be one of the values that focuses on perfection and provides certain benefits in terms of self-enhancement (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Today, consumers believe that their sustainable attitudes can trigger sustainable behaviors in them, thereby strengthening their personal norms, values, and confidence

(Giri & Chatterjee, 2020 ; Morando & Platania, 2022). Consumers strongly feel that a potential positive action is taken while they go for sustainable luxury consumption. Such behavior also elevates their positive emotions. The joy and pride they derive from consumption often motivates them towards the purchase of sustainable luxury goods (Rezvani et al., 2017). A willingness to buy environment-friendly products is often perceived among consumers as they see through the intrinsic quality attributes of the products (Achabou & Dekhili, 2013). Consumers often want to express a strong ethical concern by fostering environmental sustainability that triggers them towards sustainable luxury consumption (De Klerk et al., 2019). Another unique facet that has been identified from the SHIFT framework is tangibility. Consumers now have a greater focus on future aspects while purchasing luxury items. Today, consumers increasingly feel a need to look beyond a brand and strongly consider the sustainability of its full value chain. Their present-focused biases are quite reduced as they remain concerned about their future generations, increasing their sustainable choices (Zaval et al., 2015).

People's sustainability-oriented actions and behaviors often motivate consumers towards sustainable luxury consumption. As consumers perceive the outcomes to be tangible, relevant, and concrete, they remain attached to such consumption patterns of luxury items. The moderating role of age plays a crucial role in this case. Young consumers show a proclivity toward uniqueness in their purchase patterns, and they are more focused on the



functional value of their luxury consumption (Chatterjee & Giri, 2021; Srinivasan et al., 2014). Additionally and interestingly, varied research studies have suggested that males are more concerned with the social value gained with their luxury consumption, while women are attached to the symbolic qualities of luxury items (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Pelet et al., 2017).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework and different factors have been derived with the help of the general SHIFT model (White et al., 2019) and an extensive literature review in this study (Figure 1).

### **Conclusion**

Consumers today realize that their individual actions do have an impact and collectively even more. Thus, they want to engage with purpose-driven consumption of brands when it comes to luxury consumption. The paper tries to highlight the fine-drawn psychological facets (atypicality, social desirability, life changes, need for uniqueness, self benefits, sense of accomplishment, pro-environment nature, personal experience of others, and consideration of legacy) of a consumer that stimulates them toward sustainable luxury consumption. Today, consumers' perception of purchasing a luxury product includes two aspects – the feeling and experience attached to the product, and the purchase should go beyond the necessity. No more luxury consumption is attached only with pleasure. Increasingly, luxury brands must understand that sustainability does not compromise the proclaimed impression of luxury. Rather, sustainable luxury consumption helps consumers to justify their consumption. Thus, the effect of emotions plays a significant role in their sustainable luxury consumption that permits consumers to recognize themselves in them (Morando & Platania, 2022). In the current scenario, consumers view sustainable luxury consumption as more aesthetically pleasing as they view the product's positive attributes, including their messaging around social welfare. Their step toward sustainable luxury consumption reflects self-efficacy – that their actions shall have a meaningful impact, especially on the environment and the extended self in social media. Thus, the potential sustainability benefit of luxury consumption brings with it happiness, strong connections, and fosters emotions and positive memories.

### **Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

The current study has developed a conceptual framework to measure sustainable luxury consumption patterns. This framework will help and encourage researchers to conduct more studies to get more insights into this research area.

This study has a strong significance for the managerial decision-making process and establishes a conceptual model for the luxury industry to explore psychological facets affecting sustainable luxury consumption. As millennials and Generation Z are driving a larger segment of sales growth of luxury consumption, they are concerned about the social and environmental impact of their purchase decisions. An emerging trend toward ethical and sustainable luxury is now noticed among the luxury brands (Louis Vuitton, Mandkhai, Eileen Fisher, etc.). Thus, the brands are increasingly transparent and talk about the sustainability impact of their products and supply chain processes. Luxury brands clearly are closer to understanding that a socially conscious innovation can bring positive changes among consumers. This study will facilitate luxury product manufacturers to understand the psychological facets of sustainable luxury consumption, which will help them improve customer satisfaction and survive in a competitive environment. Therefore, the luxury industry should focus on these facets to provide superior services and serve their customers in a better way.

## Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

The current study has some limitations that can facilitate further research in this particular domain. The empirical study on the proposed factors derived from extant literature review can facilitate insightful results. Researchers can expand the model by including other variables in the study, such as data privacy and information disclosure behavior.

## Authors' Contribution

Dr. Arunangshu Giri participated in the literature review, modeling, and carried out the project administration. Wendrila Biswas generated the conceptualization and carried out the reviewing and editing of the final draft. Dr. Jari Salo verified the study method and identified the implications and the future scope of this study.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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