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Consumer Perceptions of Sustainability and Their Influence on
Purchase Intention in the UK Fashion Industry: A Case Study of
Burberry

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Background to the Study.....	3
1.2 Research Problem	3
1.3 Research Aim, Objectives.....	3
1.5 Research Hypothesis.....	4
1.4 Significance and Structure	4
2. Literature Review.....	4
2.1 Sustainability in the Fashion Industry.....	4
2.2 Consumer Perceptions of Sustainability	4
2.3 Purchase Intention.....	5
2.4 Relationship Between Perceived Sustainability and Purchase Intention	5
2.5 Theoretical Foundation: Theory of Planned Behaviour.....	6
2.6 Literature Gap and Summary	6
3. Methodology	6
3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach	6
3.2 Research Design and Strategy	7
3.3 Sampling and Ethical Considerations	7
3.4 Data Analysis	7
4. Expected Findings.....	8
5. Limitations	8
6. Timeframe.....	9
7. Conclusion	9
References.....	10
AI Acknowledgement	13

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The fashion industry is widely recognised as among the most environmentally harmful sectors, contributing significantly to carbon emissions, water contamination, textile waste, and exploitative labour practises. As knowledge of such issues has increased, sustainability has become a primary concern for brands, regulators, and consumers. This trend has been especially noticeable in the UK, where consumer demands and increasing regulatory scrutiny have led to a rise in the public disclosure of environmental and ethical responsibilities and guidelines. According to Mukendi et al. (2020), sustainable fashion has ceased to be a niche issue and is becoming part of the mainstream strategic agenda, and brands are currently under pressure to demonstrate credible environmental and social responsibility.

In this respect, Burberry can be selected as a rather topical case study. As a well-established British luxury fashion house, Burberry has publicly promoted sustainability through responsible sourcing, carbon-reduction policies, and transparent reporting. Specifically, in the context of luxury brand development, Bae (2019) examines Burberry's sustainability positioning, highlighting the company's efforts to balance its heritage and luxury identity with current environmental obligations. Nevertheless, the extent to which such initiatives will affect consumers' purchase intentions remains a critical and understudied issue, particularly in the UK market.

1.2 Research Problem

The commercial influence of these actions on consumer behaviour among businesspeople remains uncertain, despite emerging trends toward increased investment in fashion brands' sustainability. The current practise of framing sustainability messages in marketing is evident among many brands. Still, studies also indicate that customers do not necessarily translate positive attitudes toward sustainability into their buying behaviour, a phenomenon known as the attitude-behaviour gap (Lundblad and Davies, 2016). In the case of a luxury brand such as Burberry, this tension is especially acute, as symbolic value, price, and brand prestige can come into conflict with ethical considerations. In case imagined sustainability plays a role in purchase intention, then it would be an effective commercial resource. Otherwise, the brands might have to rethink the articulation and positioning of sustainability.

1.3 Research Aim, Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine how consumer perceptions of sustainability influence purchase intention in the UK fashion industry, using Burberry as a case study.

The objectives are:

- To examine the concept of perceived sustainability in the fashion industry.
- To explore consumer awareness of Burberry's sustainability practices.
- To analyse the relationship between perceived sustainability and purchase intention.
- To provide recommendations for fashion brands on using sustainability to influence consumer behaviour

1.5 Research Hypothesis

H1: Perceived sustainability positively influences purchase intention.

1.4 Significance and Structure

The paper has an academic contribution to consumer behaviour, sustainability marketing, and purchase intention literature in the purchase of fashion. In practise, it can assist Burberry and similar brands in the UK to determine whether sustainability communication is producing a significant commercial effect. This proposal will be designed in the following format: literature review, methodology, anticipated results, limitations, time schedule, and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

Fashion sustainability includes environmental sustainability, financially responsible labour, responsible sourcing, circular production systems and minimum waste. The advent of fast fashion increased the alarm over overconsumption, pollution, and exploitation of the supply chain, which is being triggered by the industry and regulatory actions alike. Shen, Richards and Liu (2013) have established that consumer awareness of the importance of sustainable fashion is not uniform enough; there seems to be a lack of correspondence between brand messages and awareness among consumers. Yu, Cao and Tan (2019) reviewed businesses in the UK clothing sector and found a CSR-consumption paradox, where sustainability-focused brands were running a high-volume, high-turnover business model that casts a question on credibility. Parguel, Delecolle and Mimouni Chaabane (2020) also investigated the campaign of fashionisation as an image that can damage the image of luxury brands based on the ability of sustainability strategies to do so, arguing that sustainability message delivery is equally important to sustainability promises themselves.

2.2 Consumer Perceptions of Sustainability

How consumers perceive, assess and believe in the actions that a brand performs does not predetermine consumer perception of sustainability, which is defined by what a brand does. Mandaric, Hunjet and Vukovic (2022) have proven that consumer purchasing decisions are

largely affected by the sustainability of a fashion brand, but still, the connection is mediated by credibility and transparency. Sener, Biskin and Kilinc (2019) observed that the perceptions of value related to slow fashion are based on the individual ethical models, brand communication, and the previous brand image. Lundblad and Davies (2016) also demonstrated that sustainability consumption occurred through values and self-identity, implying that perception was very much subjective and fluctuating among consumers. Such subjectivity especially applies to the case of luxury consumers whose motivation might be based more on exclusivity and prestige rather than being ethical.

2.3 Purchase Intention

The definition of purchase intention is the propensity of a consumer to purchase a product later, which is often applied in marketing research as one of the predictors of the actual behaviour (Paul, Modi and Patel, 2016). Abrar, Sibtain and Shabbir (2021) established in the sustainability perspective that the environmental concern, perceived value of products and brand trust affect the eco-friendly purchase intention among younger cohorts of consumers in the UK and the same ones. Hasbullah et al. (2022) have validated that sustainability-related perceptions and subjective norms are important in the prediction of apparel purchase intention. Nonetheless, Chi et al. (2021) observed that functional aspects like perceived value and the quality of products could be more important to the final purchases of environmentally responsible people compared to sustainability. This position was strengthened by Su et al. (2023), whose results indicated that sustainable apparel intention is affected by several interacting factors as opposed to sustainability perception.

This literature has maintained the attitude-behaviour gap. Consumers often make positive sustainability orientations but do not translate these into purchase behaviour, and purchase intention based on surveys can exaggerate purchase behaviour (Lundblad and Davies, 2016; Sobuj et al., 2021). This has been a significant caveat to the design and analysis of this study.

2.4 Relationship Between Perceived Sustainability and Purchase Intention

The key relationship that was tested in this study has been mixedly supported. Lee and Lee (2018) discovered that the CSR activities had a positive impact on purchase intent with corporate and brand image as mediating variables, which means that the sustainability advantages should be communicated and perceived based on the brand and not as an isolated initiative. The positive sustainability attitudes were shown to be transformed into green purchase intention by Nguyen Thi Hoang Yen and Hoang (2023), provided they were backed by the internal value and external social norms. Ki and Kim (2016) used the self-determination

theory in sustainable luxury fashion purchase and discovered that sustainability appeal had the potential to predict purchase intention when it met consumer identity and autonomy needs, especially in a luxury brand such as Burberry.

Talukdar and Yu (2020) specifically analysed materialist luxury consumers and discovered that the sustainability concern can fit with the motive of luxury purchasing among certain segments but not across the board. This indicates the possibility of perceived sustainability conditioning the purchase intention of particular classes of consumers, whereas having minimal conditions for other classes. This is an ambivalent nature of the evidence, which is why it is possible to suggest the necessity of targeted empirical research of the UK luxury fashion setting.

2.5 Theoretical Foundation: Theory of Planned Behaviour

This paper builds on the Theory of Planned Behaviour that suggests that attitude, subjective norms and the perceived behavioural control predict behavioural intention (Maichum, Parichatnon and Peng, 2016). The TPB has found extensive use in the research on sustainability and green purchasing. The authors Paul, Modi and Patel (2016) utilised the TPB in predicting consumption of green products and verified the applicability of the model in explaining the influence of sustainability-related attitudes on purchase intention. Perceived sustainability in this research serves as an element that creates a positive image of the consumer of Burberry, and thus can affect purchase intention.

2.6 Literature Gap and Summary

The current body of literature generally confirms the existence of a positive relationship between sustainability-purchase intention, and mixed and context-specific findings are obtained. The majority of the research is not specifically on the UK luxury fashion consumer, nor does it test this relationship by a particular brand like Burberry. An exception is Bae (2019), although it does not involve quantitative testing of purchase intention. This paper fulfils this gap by assuming a quantitative survey-based design in the UK Burberry consumer setting that adds empirical evidence in this sector, which is now capable of testing the H1.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The research philosophy embraced in this study is that of positivism, fitting well due to the purpose to check a quantifiable correlation between two predefined variables, namely the perceived sustainability and the purchase intention, through the use of structured data and statistics. Positivism is based on objective and reproducible investigation, which correlates with the hypothesis-based research design. A deductive methodology is provided: the

hypothesis is made on the basis of the existing theory and literature and will be empirically validated based on the empirically obtained values, and not developed inductively based on the observations.

3.2 Research Design and Strategy

Quantitative research design will be employed, and a survey will be the most commonly used approach in collecting data. Evans and Mathur (2018) clarify that an online survey is a method of consumer behaviour research, which is efficient and collaborates with a wide scope and data standardisation. In the research, the structured online questionnaire will be employed and will be conducted with the help of a platform like Google Forms or Qualtrics. The questionnaire will consist of demographic questions, Likert-scale questions on perceived sustainability (e.g. 'Burberry is an environmentally responsible brand') and Likert-scale questions on purchase intention (e.g. 'The purchase intention towards Burberry is bigger when it is perceived that the brand is environmentally responsible'). To achieve construct validity by developing questionnaires, Hinkin (1998) stresses the need to have well-designed items in the survey in order to ensure construct validity.

3.3 Sampling and Ethical Considerations

The target market will be the UK customers who are conscious of Burberry and have an inclination towards buying fashion. The recruitment of the participants will be based on convenience sampling, and it will be realised via online platforms and social media. It is aimed at a sample size of around 50-60 respondents; this sample size is suitable for conducting the quantitative research at the dissertation level. The research methods rely on self-reported survey data, which is susceptible to common method bias; some corrective measures that are suggested by Podsakoff et al (2003), like procedural separation of measures and clear wording used in items, will be implemented. This will be done on a voluntary basis, the consent will be well-informed, responses will be anonymous, and the data will be utilised for scholarly purposes.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis will be based on descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and simple regression analysis. The regression analysis will be used to directly test H1 by testing the hypothesis of whether the perceived scores on sustainability predict the purchase intention scores to give statistical proof of acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis. This strategy goes with the positivist, deductive, quantitative design and is befitting the research objectives of the study.

4. Expected Findings

According to the literature that has been reviewed, the research should determine that the perceived sustainability relates positively to the purchase intention among the UK consumers of Burberry. The consumers who feel Burberry is more environmentally friendly and ethically good are also likely to exhibit a greater purchase intention, which is a broad support of H1. It correlates with the results introduced by Mandaric, Hunjet and Vukovic (2022), Nguyen Thi Hoang Yen and Hoang (2023), and Lee and Lee (2018). It is, however, expected that sustainability perception will not be the sole determinant of purchase intention. Price sensitivity, brand prestige, and product quality are just some examples of elements that probably will not give up their powers, and this is to say that sustainability can also serve as an apuricative positive driver when compared to the leading decision variable.

In case H1 is confirmed, the results can indicate that brands such as Burberry should proceed to invest in visible, credible, and transparent sustainability, and that the communication plans should focus on authenticity and measureability. The results can be put into practical use in brand strategy and sustainability marketing practise in the UK luxury fashion industry.

5. Limitations

There are a number of limitations associated with this study. To begin with, convenience sampling might compromise representativeness since those who are attracted to online platforms might not be representative of all consumers of Burberry. Second, the sample used in 150-200 respondents is suitable for a dissertation, wherein such a sample size limits the extrapolative applicability of the results. Third, the market research is narrowed down to UK customers only; hence, findings might not be relevant to the global markets where Burberry operates, where cultural values of sustainability and luxury are far apart. Fourth, the singleness of Burberry as a brand restricts the comparative knowledge on the wider luxury fashion industry. Fifth, purchase intention is a self-reported variable that is not a determinant of the decision to buy the product, and the consideration of attitudes and buying behaviour indicates that the difference between intentions and behaviours needs to be cautious (Lundblad and Davies, 2016). Lastly, self-reported questionnaire responses are susceptible to social desirability bias according to Podsakoff et al. (2003), that is, the respondents who do the questionnaire may give answers which they think are acceptable in society, instead of what they actually think. These shortcomings will be curbed by designing the questionnaires well, open reporting, and wise interpretation of findings.

6. Timeframe

The project will be completed across ten weeks. The Gantt chart below outlines the main stages of the research.

Week	Stage	Activity
Week 1	Topic Finalisation	Confirm research topic, aim, objectives, and hypothesis
Week 2	Preliminary Reading	Start reading key articles on sustainability and purchase intention
Week 3	Literature Review (Part 1)	Write initial literature review sections
Week 4	Literature Review (Part 2)	Complete literature review and identify research gap
Week 5	Methodology Design	Develop research design, questionnaire, and ethics considerations
Week 6	Pilot + Final Survey	Test questionnaire and finalise survey
Week 7	Data Collection	Distribute the survey and collect responses
Week 8	Data Analysis	Perform descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis
Week 9	Findings & Discussion	Write findings and discussion chapters
Week 10	Final Editing & Submission	Proofread, format, reference, and submit (by 8 June)

7. Conclusion

This paper has presented a narrowed-down quantitative research project that will investigate how consumer sustainability positively affects consumer purchase intention within the UK fashion sector, based on the Burberry organisation as the case study. This subject is timely in the sense that sustainability has emerged as a strategic issue of concern for fashion brands and an increasingly popular field of inquiry on consumer behaviour. The ambiguous nature of the available literature, along with the scarcity of UK-specific luxury brand research, makes it perfect to conduct this research. As an adequate means of testing H1 in a systematic and replicable, academically rigorous manner, a positivist, deductive, and quantitative survey design has been suggested. The research has both explicit practical importance for the management of fashion brands and academic significance on the development of knowledge on the sustainability-purchase intention association in a luxury setting.

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AI Acknowledgement

Category	Description	Yes	No
RESEARCH	Use of AI for searching sources, summarising, and comparing materials	☒	☐
STRUCTURE	Use of AI for organising content, headings, and overall structure	☒	☐
PROOFREADING	Use of AI for grammar, clarity, and rephrasing own work	☒	☐
WRITING	Use of AI to generate text for submission	☐	☒
CREATIVE	Use of AI for images or creative materials	☐	☒
PROGRAMMING	Use of AI for coding or technical programming	☐	☒
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I recognise the use of ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com/>) to facilitate the execution of this research proposal in March 2026. The tool helped with the organisation of the research proposal, fine-tuning of academic language, and clarity and fluent written content, depending on my initial concepts and rough draft. This application complies with allowable assistive support to research, organisation, and proofreading as per the institutional AI guidance.

The prompt(s) used include:

- “Assist me with outlining a research proposal on sustainability and purchase intention in the UK fashion industry.
- “Turn this paragraph into a formal academic paragraph with clear writing.”

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