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TITLE:

THE SUSTAINABLE LUXURY PARADOX: GENERATION Z CONSUMERS' RESPONSES TO TOURISM MARKETING CONTENT

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Abstract

This study explores Generation Z consumers' responses to luxury tourism brands marketing, specifically examining their reactions to sustainability messaging. It provides insights on the relationship between luxury and sustainability, considering the challenges and opportunities for luxury tourism companies. Furthermore, the study provides insight into how Gen Z consumers engage with these messages. First, the purpose of this study is to look at the content and style of marketing messages from luxury tourism brands, focusing on the sustainable aspects. The research also explains how luxury brands influence sustainability trends in tourism. Second, this study attempts to understand how consumers, particularly Gen Z, feel about these messages and how they react to them. Physiological methods like eye-tracking and facial expression recognition were used, as well as semi-structured interviews. The triangulation approach allowed for complex understanding of participants' reactions to marketing content and obtaining of both physical and self-reported responses. Findings suggest that luxury tourism brands appeal to emotions and authenticity, but consumers often struggle to associate luxury with sustainability. Excessive sustainability cues can reduce engagement, indicating a need for more balanced approach in luxury brands' marketing efforts.

Keywords

Sustainability, luxury tourism, marketing, Gen Z, semi-structured interview, eye-tracking, facial expression analysis

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Preface

In this thesis, I discuss the phenomenon of sustainability within the luxury industry, the challenges, and tactics of implementing sustainable solutions, especially in the tourism sector. I also focus on potential travellers' responses to sustainable cues in luxury marketing. The participants of this study were all Generation Z, which is the same generation as me. This let me understand them better and ask relevant follow-up questions. This phenomenon was chosen by me because usually it does not receive a lot of attention, which is confirmed by the empirical gap on this topic. The sustainable aspect of many industries often gets overlooked, and I wanted to investigate the underlying reasons.

With help of my supervisor, I selected a triangular method, combining eye-tracking, facial expression recognition, and a semi-structured interview. I would not choose such method without her encouragement and advice, and I am grateful for that. With this said, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Marie Christine Lundberg, for all the feedback, advice, and time she spent providing guidance and support. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support and motivation while writing this thesis. I am also very grateful to every person who took time to participate in my experiment and answered my questions. Finally, I would like to thank the university's Cognitive Lab Team, for letting me use their equipment and providing assistance. I hope this thesis provides you, the reader, with interesting insights and findings and motivates other researchers for future studies in this direction. I think it is important to write about topics that interest us, and hope that while reading my thesis you will also be intrigued by this paradox.

Stavanger, May 2024

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1. Introduction

"The wealthiest 10% of people are responsible for nearly half the world's CO₂ emissions" as Horton (2022) states in her article for The Guardian. This implicates that what is broadly considered luxurious is not sustainable and has a materialistic and hedonistic focus. In the recent years the world experiences growing awareness and need for sustainable products and services on the market (Hall, 2019). The concept of sustainability is defined differently, depending on its relevance, and has no universal definition. It is associated with maintenance of environmental quality and actions not harming the future generations (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019). The most common definition of sustainability in terms of tourism is the one given by WTO: "development that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future" (WTO, 2004, p. 19). It can also be defined more generally as "the responsible consumption of resources without endangering the needs of future generations" (Morales et al., 2020, p. 394). Several other articles mention the "triple bottom line" that proposes a tri-dimensional understanding of sustainability – economic, environmental, and social. Those criteria help identify unsustainable practices and patterns of consumption in businesses (Morales et al. 2020).

Luxury brands that specify in tourism are usually not perceived as something sustainable due to their economic, environmental, and social impact. This paper will try to explore how consumers experience luxury and if brands' sustainable values matter in their purchase decisions. Luxury is often defined using several core attributes: aesthetics, hedonism, exclusivity, and authenticity "in addition to the product characteristics of premium quality and price" (Holmqvist, 2020, p. 504). Another definition is "goods such that the mere use or display of a particular branded product brings the owner prestige apart from any functional utility" (Han et al., 2010, p. 16). Luxury brands are perceived as expensive, reserved to a specific group of people and rare. However, in recent years luxury brands have become more available and

accessible. "Given such ease of accessibility of luxury brands, luxury companies have attempted to develop distinctive intrinsic attributes and characteristics of their offerings in order to build strong long-term brand values and identity. In particular, as one of these means, they put a greater emphasis on engaging in social responsibility or sustainability practices to differentiate themselves and highlight the consumers' ethical and experiential values" (Pavione & Pezzetti, 2015, as cited in Kang & Sung, 2022 p. 293)

Luxury tourism is rarely associated with sustainability as the economics of it often mean increase in real estate and land price, higher tourist prices affecting local markets, employment fluctuation and economic dependence on a single industry. As for the environmental impact of luxury tourism, the increased consumption of electricity and water, extra waste production, overcrowding, reduction in accessibility are all negative effects. The social side of luxury tourism is importing and exporting illegal goods, excessive commercialization and even loss of cultural identity (Starc Peceny et al., 2020, p. 40). According to Cowburn "there is a need to identify and manage environmental negative impacts of tourism on local environments, in order to protect both the habitats, and the tourism industry itself, from degradation" (Cowburn et al., 2018). Thus, it is important that luxury tourism companies implement sustainable practices in the way they manage their businesses. The future of luxury brands, especially luxury travel, is being affected by environmental movements and consumers getting more conscious about sustainability. Consumers' preferences towards more eco-friendly products have influenced several brands' actions (Rolling et al., 2020).

1.1. Study objectives

This study aims to analyse the marketing communication strategies used by luxury tourism brands to promote their products and services, focusing on the design and delivery of their messages. It investigates the content and format of these messages, examining how

consumer perceive the sustainability cues used in them. Additionally, the study examines the influence of luxury brands on broader sustainability trends within the tourism industry. The goal is to further understand how advertisements affect emotions and other physiological responses and compare this data to the self-reported data from participants during the interviews. This paper will be a response to the empirical gap on sustainability in luxury tourism and area for development in this field, as sustainability and luxury are inherently at odds. It will investigate the research question: How do Generation Z travellers respond to mentions of sustainability in luxury tourism marketing content? It will also challenge existing literature on sustainable luxury tourism, investigate which techniques luxury brands use in communicating their products to travellers, and provide conclusions based on empirical research. This topic is worth studying as modern marketing environments are complex, and as this tourism form grows it may be beneficial for marketers to follow current trends and global changes (Nordin & Ravald, 2023). It is also crucial to develop new marketing strategies to stay relevant on the market, stand out from the competitors and position your company as responsible and environmentally conscious. According to Nordin and Ravald "marketing is currently undergoing a major shift driven by environmental disruptions and advances in marketing technologies." (Nordin & Ravald, 2023). As luxury tourism is one of the fastest growing niche tourism forms, it is worth studying (Japutra et al., 2022, p. 871). This study will specifically focus on Generation Z (Gen Z), people born during the late 1990s, and the 2010s (Eldridge, 2024). Generation Z is interesting to study, as they are the ones currently influencing how the worlds future will look like. Nevertheless, they are teenagers and young adults and have to carefully choose how they spend their money. Gen Z are more inclined towards experiences over material possessions, they prioritize reliability and sustainability while making purchasing decisions. "Gen Zers are known for their social responsibility, dedication to social and political issues, and their demand for authenticity when it comes to brands and advertising." (Feger, 2024).

2. Literature overview

There are few research articles with focus on marketing sustainability in the luxury sector, especially tourism. Recent studies were conducted concerning mainly the aspect of sustainability in the hospitality sector, researching sustainability-related practices in hotel management. Those studies found that hotels engage mostly in water saving, energy efficiency and waste reduction. Other studies have shown that what travellers perceive as sustainable is staying in green hotels and paying more for eco-friendly services (Amatulli, et al., 2021). According to Kunz's article in the Business Research Journal, research to investigate possible relations between luxury and sustainability has only been started recently. She mentions that this development was overdue, as luxury product can often act as models in their industry, and speed up the shift towards sustainability, as well as pave the way for other sustainable products on a more comprehensive spectrum (Kunz et al., 2020). The luxury travel portal Virtuoso conducted a study which showed that 74% of their travellers were willing to pay more for sustainable travel, if they knew where the money was going (www.virtuoso.com, 2022).

Although many consumers care about sustainability, they often base their purchase decisions on different criteria when it comes to luxury products and services. "Increased awareness of consumers about environmental issues does not by itself turn into an automatic higher and favourable response to environmental advertising" (Chang, 2011). Another study by Buckley focuses on sustainable tourism, but not on the luxury aspect of it. The research has been conducted on social and environmental impacts of tourism in five categories: population, peace, prosperity, pollution, and protection. In his article Buckley mentions that only few of around five thousand relevant publications attempted to evaluate the entire global tourism sector in terms of sustainable development. He also claims that "tourism is not yet close to sustainability" (Buckley, 2012, p.528). An argument from an article on the luxury hospitality sector is that "sustainability represents an obstacle to luxury hospitality firms' economic

performance" (Amatulli et al., 2021 p. 2). However, findings from Amatulli's study show that luxury hotel managers may find success by focusing their marketing communications on sustainability. It is a possibility that those findings are also applicable in the luxury tourism sector.

Companies need to create value for consumers to attract them, and as consumers' values change, they must develop products with desired characteristics and market them accordingly. Consumer habits are shifting which means that luxury tourism marketing will have to adapt and face new challenges, while already being more complicated due to tourisms intangibility. According to Kang and Sung (2022) growing consumer concerns about social and environmental responsibilities are causing companies to move into an "ethics era" and actively embrace corporate social responsibility (CSR). They are focusing on pro-environmental sustainability initiatives such as reducing chemical usage, using recycled materials, and conserving natural resources. This also affects the luxury industry, pressuring it to adopt "responsible luxury" practices, such as using eco-friendly material like vegan leather, recycled synthetic fabrics, organic cotton, and faux fur (Wolfe, 2022). Luxury brands are also pressured to integrate pro-environmental CSR into their business model (Kang & Sung, 2022).

2.1. The sustainable tourism paradox

In literature, there are many mentions of sustainability paradoxes concerning tourism. In their article Power et al. (2024) describe that one of the main concerns in tourism in the question of carbon emissions. Despite companies' efforts of decarbonisation, tourism is a carbon-creating economy. The tourism industry, especially in the luxury sector, often faces criticism of "eco-hypocrisy" and greenwashing. The frequent issue is that companies claim being sustainable and lowering their carbon emissions, but rely on visitors travelling large distances, and thus emitting great amounts of greenhouse gases. This leads the researchers to rise the first

Sustainability Paradox "Can tourism ever be really sustainable if people continue to fly?" (Power et al., 2024).

In their respective works Wempe (2005) and Cadbury (2002) delve into the complexities of relationship dilemmas that come from various stakeholders' needs perspectives. It is often observed that destinations tend to prioritize the well-being of tourists over the needs of their own residents. Some companies claim to have "respect for all host communities and their socio-cultural heritage", basing their actions on "just" and "good" tourism, in order to create utilitarian dimension of sustainable tourism. Power et al. (2024) state that the dilemma arises when "just" and "good" are interpreted differently by different people, highlighting the clash of motivational, moral, emotional, and practical standards across multiple levels and among various stakeholders within the experience industry. According to them the second Sustainability Paradox is investigating the balance of needs between different stakeholders and can be phrased as "Is the pursuit of sustainability in tourism compromised by the need to provide 'good' customer experiences?" (Power et al., 2024). This paradox is especially relevant when looking into the luxury sector, as one of its main concerns is providing exquisite customer experiences and putting the consumers' needs in focus.

The last sustainability dilemma mentioned in this article is the continuing growth of the tourism sector in a world of finite resources. One of the definitions of sustainability is preserving the resources for future generations. Power et al. (2024 p. 4) mention that sustainable development is paradoxical in relation to the growth paradigm. "While economic growth forms one part of sustainable development, critics argue that this is incompatible with ecological conservation and social equity". Originating from a recent social movement, the principles of degrowth and sufficiency have emerged among scholars. Degrowth suggests reducing economic activity to promote fairness and environmental sustainability. Supporters of degrowth and sufficiency challenge the idea that economic growth always leads to prosperity and well-

being (Van den Bergh & Kallis, 2012). The luxury tourism sector is often focused on broadening its offer in more modern and exclusive products and services, sometimes expanding them at the expense of local communities. Because of that, it can be harder to incorporate fair approaches to tourism development and justice concepts within the industry. Some argue that limiting growth in tourism would lead to decrease in job opportunities and go against people's rights to travel and move freely. In summary, it can be hard to figure out which resources should be used, and how to keep the constant growth of tourism focused on benefiting everyone. Therefore, the final Sustainability Paradox is "If perpetual tourism growth is not sustainable, how can we meet everyone's right to travel?" (Power at al., 2024 p. 4). Taking those paradoxes into consideration, marketers for luxury tourism brands could alter their content accordingly. They should be aware of some contradictions and challenges in the industry and try to incorporate different strategies.

2.2. Marketing in the luxury sector

"Marketing has been defined as the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large" (American Marketing Association, 2013). According to Wang et al. (2021) creating an image that promotes sustainable consumption can be an effective way of supporting sustainability. Though sustainable tourism is getting more attention, there aren't many studies on how the marketing content should be designed to encourage travellers to consume sustainably. Most of scientific articles that mention sustainable tourism do not explore all its forms. Furthermore, only few studies have conducted research to understand sustainability within the luxury marketplace (Carrigan et al. 2017; Davies et al. 2012). However, much sustainability research focuses on low-involvement and habitual shopping, and not on luxury. There is a lack of information on the contexts of high-involvement consumption, such as luxury purchases. Luxury consumption is associated with ostentation, overconsumption,

over-production, indulgence, and personal pleasure. While sustainable consumption is linked to moderation, responsibility, and ethics (Anthwal et al., 2019 p.405-408). Luxury brands messaging tends to appeal to consumers' emotions, rather than moral aspects, which is more natural to the messaging of sustainable brands. Additionally, luxury brand's image significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions, which means that luxury brands must balance disclosing their green efforts to signal responsibility without undermining their brand value. Using recycled materials and being environmentally conscious might compromise the brand's exclusivity and uniqueness. Because of that, many luxury brands face a dilemma regarding their engagement in green CSR practices. This raises the question of which message strategies luxury brands should adopt to effectively communicate their green efforts and elicit positive consumer responses (Kang & Sung, 2022).

"Marketing in the tourism industry has distinct characteristics from other marketing plans. Because tourists are temporary, they are exposed to an area's goods and services for shorter periods" (Sofronov, 2019, p. 117). Marketers often choose to advertise on the experiences and memories tourists can get out of their service, and appeal to the potential visitors by combining advertising with other marketing activities (Sofronov, 2019). Technology is also significantly changing the marketing field and affects how companies plan and execute their marketing (Lewnes & Keller, 2019). According to Anthwal luxury brands are experiencing growing tensions driven by consumer activists who critique them for their lack of supply-chain transparency and accuse them of animal and worker exploitation. As a response to that, the luxury sector is slowly changing its strategy and recognizing their responsibilities and opportunities to encourage sustainability in different areas, such as sourcing, marketing, and manufacturing. Luxury products and services mean great quality, uniqueness, tailored services, and extravagance, which make consumers feel special and prestigious. (Anthwal et al., 2019 p.405-408). Sustainability in marketing can mean incorporating sustainable practices in all

elements of the marketing mix and exploring transformative marketing actions to stimulate institutional change (Biedenbach et al., 2023, p. 421). Marketing luxury services in a way that shows they are sustainable can be a challenge because sustainability marketing concept reflects multiple values, such as shared value and prosperity, and inclusive growth for society (Kelleci, 2022, p. 5). This requires luxury brands to change the way they operate, communicate, and incorporate more responsible practices, to be perceived as sustainable. This could entail investing in local communities, preserving natural landscapes and minimizing the environmental impact of travel, by investing innovations like carbon offsetting and eco-friendly infrastructure (Dunham, 2023). Dunham also states that "the luxury travel industry has a unique opportunity to lead the way in reshaping consumer mindsets and driving positive change. By leveraging their influence, luxury travel brands can promote education and awareness, nudging consumers towards more responsible choices without compromising on the allure of indulgence." (Dunham, 2023).

Morales et al. (2020) rises a question whether marketing and sustainability can truly get along? He states that "one of the main causes of the environmental degradation that the world is facing, specifically, unsustainable patterns of consumption, is attributed to marketing" (Morales et al., 2020, p. 395). According to Godec (2019) businesses are losing their credibility as their foul behaviour is being exposed. Marketers face many challenges while incorporating sustainability in their practices, such as criticism of their actions and distrust from consumers who are getting more environmentally conscious. Many critics state that marketing leads to overconsumption and the implementation of sustainable practices is done in a wrong way.

Morales et al. also mention the fact that some companies find themselves captivated by the promises of markets that lean towards sustainability. They may disregard the fact that, despite consumers becoming increasingly informed about sustainability, their primary focus remains on fulfilling their own needs. Many green initiatives fail due to factors such as consumer scepticism, companies sacrificing performance, quality, and convenience in pursuit of sustainability. Some companies overlook meeting customers' needs, which should be one of their main objectives (Morales et al., 2020). Although the research on the relationship between consumer confidence in the performance of green products and their adoption is insufficient, certain studies shed light on this topic. Pickett-Baker et al.'s (2008) study suggests a correlation between confidence in the performance of green products and their contribution to sustainability on general. They advise companies to promote and use both eco-friendly and functional cues to sell products.

2.3. Visual stimuli in marketing

Visual stimuli (and cues) and emotions are strongly correlated (Ghosh & Sarkar, 2016). As stated by Lee and Gretzel (2012) the majority of consumers in the tourism industry (nearly 75%) rely on visual cues to complete their decision-making process. Visual attention is a selective process that focuses on limited mental capacity on certain aspects of the visual environment while disregarding others. In business contexts, attention creates a bridge between awareness and action, influencing decision-making processes. It is crucial for travellers' processing of marketing messages to select relevant stimuli (Wang & Sparks, 2016). Visual imagery is a frequent method to stimulate emotion for a destination or experience (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003). "For businesses and advertisers, understanding the feelings of target audiences is crucial to creating effective marketing campaigns and products that resonate with their customers." (Sung & Litchfield, 2023)

There have been many studies done on visual processing in marketing, and it has been found that people tend to view content (especially website type) in an "F" pattern, meaning that the visual attention is focused on the upper and left part of the content area. This pattern has also been identified when people were asked to read webpages with different layouts, such as

single or double columns (Nielsen & Pernice, 2010). For luxury brand implementing sustainable practices, but at the same time wanting to keep their original brand identity it could mean placing mentions of sustainability in the bottom right part of advertisements. This would allow for the visual cues to still be there, but not as noticeable for potential consumers.

2.4. Sustainability awareness

"It is often argued that pro-environmental attitudes should lead to more pro-environmental and sustainable behaviours, but emerging evidence suggests that this link is not tenable" (Hall et al., 2015). The level of society's awareness and understanding of sustainability and ecopractices varies depending on socio-demographic factors as age, education level, exposure, and cultural context (Smith & Kingston, 2021). In recent years there has been an increase in public awareness and discussion surrounding sustainability issues. Such increase can be driven by factors including media coverage, educational initiatives, and growing concerns about environmental degradation and climate change. Consumers increasingly recognize the significance of sustainable practices in different sectors. Many of them are informed about environmental issues, the impact of their consumption patterns, and the role of sustainable practices in mitigating environmental damage. Studies and surveys often demonstrate growing consumer preference for products and companies showing a commitment to sustainability. The importance of sustainability can vary depending on consumers' socio-economic status, demographics, and personal values. "Age has a significant influence on environmental attitudes and behaviour but there is no consensus on the effect that generational cohort has on these attitudes and behaviour." (Prayag et al., 2022 p.1). Previous research has shown a negative correlation between age and environmental attitudes, indicating that younger people often exhibit stronger eco-centric worldviews than older individuals. However, recent studies mention that while young people show a growing concern of sustainability and environmental issues, it is older people who engage in environmentally responsible and sustainable behaviours (Prayag et al., 2022).

Gen Z tourists are more likely to be environmentally conscious and their travel behaviours and attitudes differ to the other three generations (Gen X, Y and Baby Boomers) (Prayag et al., 2022). Emerging evidence shows that Gen Z have strong environmental beliefs and attitudes but tend to limit their engagement in actual environmental practices, however those studies focus on specific tourism products or consumer choices rather than the general travel related behaviours (Prayag et al., 2022). Studies show that Gen Z wants brands to support several values, mental health being on the first place, then comes the environment, climate change and sustainability, followed by racial and gender equity (Feger, 2024). With Gen Z'ers being more engaged in social issues and politics, and more aware of concerns surrounding those topics, there is a possibility that their consumption choices lead to them experiencing guilt and uncertainty whether they can trust big companies and luxurious brands.

2.5. Guilt in luxury consumption

"The feeling of guilt is a distinct feature of luxury consumption" (Kang & Sung, 2022, p. 296). Research by Tangney et al. (1996) suggests that consumers often experience guilt when purchasing luxury items. When consumers buy expensive luxury goods, they can feel guilty as they perceive it as not only indulgence but also moral transgression. They try to find ways to justify their purchase to ease the guilt. Information about the luxury brands' involvement in prosocial or pro-environmental activities, or partnership with charities, can help alleviate these negative feelings. A study by Hagtvedt and Patrick (2016) shows that cause-related marketing communication from luxury brands reduced consumers' perceived guilt, leading to increased purchase intentions. Consumers seek guilt-free experiences, and a luxury travel brand that

constantly reminds them of their impact on local environment and the importance of sustainability could potentially lead to them experiencing shame or guilt.

3. Methods and research design

This paper takes a qualitative research approach to answer the research question. It combines systematic analysis of documents, as well as physiological research, and semistructured interviews conducted in person, with participants of different ages and professional status to study how emotional, rational, and moral content influence their decision-making processes. In their article, Dowling et al. (2016), state that qualitative interviews continue to prevail in the social and cultural geography subdisciplines. "Interviews are used in understanding interpretations, experiences and spatialities of social life" (Dowling et al., 2016, p. 679). The semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to study participants' attitudes and ask additional question if something appears unclear. The physiological research includes facial expression recognition (FER) and eye-tracking. "FER is currently an active research topic in the fields of computer vision, pattern recognition, and artificial intelligence" (Chen & Chen, 2023, p. 1718). It allows the researcher to understand how viewers perceive the marketing content and how they react to it, which is a useful tool in developing marketing strategies and investigating consumers' perspective. Eye-tracking "offers incredible insights into visual attention" (iMotions, 2017, p. 36). It allows for better understanding of visual attention and the importance of certain visual cues.

The purpose of this study is to investigate which type of content consumers respond best to when it comes to sustainability in the luxury tourism industry. The first part of this research provides an analysis of data from relevant articles found in online databases and additional academic sources. Key words used in the search of academic data were sustainability, tourism, luxury tourism, brand communication, marketing, gen-z, and sustainable development. The

focus was primarily on articles published after the year 2000 in order to stay applicable. It then compares how consumers' understanding of brands' communication has changed through the years and what has become their main concern while making a purchase decision. The message design of luxury tourism brands communication was also studied. A study of content and format differences in messages of luxury brands' products and services was conducted to understand the response of travellers and their motivations. The second part consisted of eye-tracking and facial expression recognition research, and interviews together with interpretations of collected data in an attempt to answer the previously stated research question. Using those methods combined it was possible to compare involuntary physiological reactions like gaze fixation or facial expressions, and self-reported information from the participants collected during the interview.

"While self-reports and questionnaires might be ideal tools to get insight into respondents' attitudes and awareness, they might be limited in capturing emotional responses unbiased by self-awareness and social desirability" (iMotions, 2017, p. 11)

3.1. Research design

This study includes self-report through a semi-structured interview and physiological research by collecting data from eye-tracking and facial expression analysis. This triangulated approach makes it possible to find differences between participants' self-report and physiological reactions. This study examines potential consumers' visual attention toward luxury tourism related advertisements containing both picture and text. The interview is used to acquire information about the perceived advertising effectiveness.

Firstly, participants were asked to look at three prompts – advertisements of a luxury retreat in Bali - and choose the one that they find most appealing. The first example of luxury tourism

brand advertisement showed a hedonic service appealing to consumer's emotions, focusing on the experience and exclusivity, with no implications of being sustainable. The second one showed a rational offer, a more sustainable and balanced approach prioritizing economic, social, and environmental preservation. The third advertisement targeted their moral values, offering consumers a comprehensive assessment of the offered tour, focusing mainly on sustainability and responsibility, with few mentions of luxury.

3.1.1. Eye-tracking

Many researchers use eye-tracking studies to evaluate the attractiveness of certain images and their influence on consumers' visual attention (Wang et al., 2021). Eye-tracking is a useful tool to capture objective and real-time data on which parts of a given stimulus people are focusing on. Participants fixate on specific areas within the stimulus, reflecting their points of interest. "Commonly used eye-tracking measures are fixation duration, fixation count, and patterns of saccades" (Wang & Sparks, 2016). "Fixation is a generally motionless instant in which the eye moves to another area, while a saccade is a rapid movement between fixations. Eye-tracking technology can detect fixations and saccades using data collected by an eye tracker. A gaze plot can be used to show a specific sequence of consumer fixations and saccades on a panel or website, while heat maps can indicate how long each area of the screen was viewed" (Šola et al., 2022, p. 3). These measures give insights into different aspects of visual attention, such as the number of elements attended to, the duration of attention, and amount of space covered. Eye-tracking data can be analysed to determine tourists' level of interest in specific advertisements or destination promotion materials.

3.1.2. Facial expression recognition

According to Wang and Sparks (2016) "emotional arousal is highly relevant to the consumption of tourism activities because emotional benefits motivate engagement with tourism". They also mention that tourists pursue optimal arousal in travel and pushed by their emotions. Emotion based experiments are becoming a central concept in tourism research, essential for creating memorable tourism experiences. "Evaluating consumer preferences and delivering persuasive communication are critical elements in marketing" (iMotions, Facial Expression Analysis). According to Tucker (2009) emotions are a critical factor influencing both destination selection and travel behaviour. Combining facial expression recognition (FER) software and self-report questionnaires can help researchers understand the mental processes and emotions occurring while reacting to marketing content. "With facial expression analysis you can test the impact of any content, product or service that is supposed to elicit emotional arousal and facial responses" as stated in the iMotions guide on FER. Analysing FER data lets marketers optimize their products, assess market segments, and identify target audiences. Facial expressions can be tracked using a specialized software and a webcam. The camera is placed at the respondent's eye level and tracks facial expression while the respondent is looking at screenbased stimuli (iMotions, Facial Expression Analysis).

3.2. Experimental procedure, equipment, and interviews

The study was conducted in a laboratory, to achieve the best experimental quality without any distractions. Participants were shown three images, one at a time, while wearing the Tobii 2 eye-tracking glasses (Tobii Technology, Inc., Stockholm, Sweden) and having their facial expressions registered by a Trust Trino 720p HD webcam positioned on top of a 3440 x 1440 pixel secondary screen (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Equipment used during the experiment

The prompts were obtained using the Canvas website, based on an existing template. The researcher modified the images in order for them to be relevant to this study. Before the experiment, the researcher first assisted the subject with calibrating the eye-tracking glasses. Once the calibration was complete, the researcher explained the experimental process and made sure the participant understood the experimental procedure. The participants were seated at a desk in front of a computer screen, and their seating position was adjusted to stay centred in front of the monitor at a distance of approximately 60 cm. Finally, the subject was instructed to look at three examples of advertisements for luxury travel with different content accordingly to the emotional, moral, and rational factors. They were told to take their time while looking at the prompts and inform the researcher when they were ready to see the next one. However, they could also look at the prompt for its entire duration, which was set to no longer than three minutes, in order to optimize the eye-tracking data, but none of them required that much time.

The order of the visual marketing stimuli was kept constant during the experiments. The researcher sat next to them while seeing the sensor preview in real time on the primary screen. The glasses were used to track eye movement patterns and record subject's visual focus position and fixation duration. After this part of the experiment was completed, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview asking the participant about the images and their opinion on them.

3.2.1. Prompt design



The first prompt includes no mentions of sustainable practices during the retreat. There are no visible certificates confirming its commitment to the environment, it focuses primarily on the luxurious aspect of the travel offer. This is a hedonistic approach, appealing to consumers' emotions.

- Overtitle The overtitle indicates that this offer is extraordinary, and consumers get to experience something unusual and exclusive.
- 2. Headline The headline mentions luxury,

uses words like "paradise", to enhance the feeling of exclusiveness and prestige, only available for a certain group of people.

3. Body Copy – The icons allow the consumer to get the feeling of a holistic experience, with everything included, where the traveller wouldn't need to worry about the practical side of their vacation. The description below further explains all the retreat has to offer, mentioning only the best service, luxurious experiences and focuses primarily on the customers' needs. The consumer can get a sense of exclusivity, as they read about private helicopter tours and yacht excursions.



The second prompt is a more balanced advertisement, mentioning both the luxury aspect and the sustainable aspect. It has one eco-friendly certificate logo, which indicates the retreat using organic products and caring about the environment enough to get certified. The balance between luxury and sustainability appeals to consumers' rationality.

1. Overtitle – The overtitle states that the luxury in this case is "elegant", which doesn't directly indicate that this offer is focused on being sustainable but can cause connotations

to responsible travel – being elegant, as opposed to being reckless and irresponsible.

- Headline The headline includes the statement "a heart for nature", which indicates
 that the resort and its services are using responsible practices and local products, while
 still mentioning luxury.
- 3. Body copy It says that the accommodations are "5-star" but doesn't mention luxury in this aspect. The text below describes exclusive attractions this retreat has to offer, while simultaneously mentioning being responsible and using local products.



The last prompt is focused on sustainable travel, had three certificates, showing that this retreat is concerned with being green and responsible, as they walked the extra mile and got their certifications from organizations like Green Destinations or Earth Check.

1. Overtitle – The overtitle here suggests that this offer is redefining luxury, making it ethical but still exclusive. It is meant to capture consumers' who have high moral values and appreciate sustainable travel without losing the luxurious aspect.

- 2. Headline "Leave no trace" in the headline suggest that this retreat has little or no consequences on the local environment. It further mentions the word "responsible" to show that even a luxury tour to Bali could be done in an eco-friendly manner.
- 3. Body copy Firstly, the icons and their titles indicate that the accommodations are ecofriendly, not mentioning anything about luxury, but the tour still offers a holistic experience with flight tickets, accommodation, and a tour guide. The text below includes mentions of "travelling with a conscience".

3.2.2. Interviews

After looking at the prompts, participants took part in an interview consisting of seven questions. A set of pre-planned questions was used during the interviews to make sure every person understands the questions correctly. Participants were asked to choose one advertisement they were most interested in and give a short explanation on what factors influenced their decision. If something appeared unclear, they were asked additional questions to clarify their answers. At the end of the interview participants were able to share any additional thoughts or concerns. The semi-structured interview allowed for the flexibility of the responses. The questions focused on why customers choose certain brands, how they perceive them based on their marketing strategies, do they value sustainability in luxury and whether they are willing to pay more for sustainable luxury services. The interview guide was centred around following questions, that also allowed for follow up questions:

- What is sustainability for you?
- What is luxury travel to you?
- How do you perceive the relationship between luxury and sustainable travel?
- Do you perceive sustainable luxury brands to be less luxurious and exclusive?
- Would you choose a luxury tourism destination based on its rational commitment to sustainability?
- Which travel offer would you choose and why?
- What are your priorities while choosing a luxury travel destination?

The collected data from the interviews was then analysed using qualitative methodology, first on its own, and then by incorporating biometric methods of data collecting such as eye-tracking and facial expression analysis, together with answers collected during the semi-structured interview.

3.3. Recruitment of participants

This study seeks to provide an analysis of a diverse and representative sample to obtain best results. The interviews were conducted on potential luxury travellers as well as on actual luxury travellers and people interested in travel, sustainability and/or luxury brands. Participants were recruited in the author's own network, through social media or in person. They were asked to participate and given a consent for explaining the research's structure and methods. Participants were not notified of the research's nature and topic beforehand, to avoid false data through them researching sustainability or luxury travel. They were given all information a few minutes before the experiment.

3.3.1. Sample description

Participants were all residents of Norway, aged 19-27 (Generation Z), with different professions and educational backgrounds (above high school). They were of different nationalities, however as the study is based in Norway, they were mostly Norwegian. All of the participants were students, however most of them had part-time jobs in different fields. The purpose of including only participants with education level beyond high school is to heighten the chances of their prior knowledge and familiarity with the sustainability/luxury tourism related terminology. Prior to the interview, the participants were asked if they were familiar with the concept of sustainability and luxury travel. This study was conducted with a total of 17 participants. For two participants eye-tracking data could not be acquired because of a technical error with the software, and for three participants the data was insufficient. Those five participants are only marked with "FER and interview" in the table below. This sample size can be considered sufficient for a qualitative eye-tracking study, as those studies are often conducted with relatively small sample size. Table 1 gives an overview of participants, providing relevant variables to better describe the sample and allow for more thorough analysis of collected data.

Table 1. Sample descriptives

Participant no.	Age	Gender	Nationality	Research done	Prompt chosen	Previous knowledge of sustainability/luxury tourism
1.	23	Female	Norwegian	FER, interview	1	Yes
2.	26	Female	Norwegian	FER, interview	3	Some
3.	25	Male	Norwegian	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	1	Yes
4.	23	Female	Norwegian	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	2	No
5.	27	Female	Chinese	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	3	Yes
6.	27	Female	Chinese	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	3	Yes
7.	27	Male	Nepali	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	2	No
8.	23	Female	Spanish	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	2	Yes
9.	25	Male	Bangladeshi	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	2	Yes
10.	23	Female	Norwegian	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	2	Some
11.	23	Male	Norwegian	FER, interview	2	Yes
12.	27	Female	Norwegian	FER, interview	3	Yes
13.	24	Female	Norwegian	FER, interview	1	Yes
14.	26	Male	Norwegian	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	1	Some
15.	24	Female	Iranian	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	1	Some
16.	25	Male	Norwegian	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	1	Some
17.	23	Female	Serbian	Eye-tracking, FER, interview	3	Yes

3.4. Data analysis

3.4.1. Visual attention measurement

Using the Tobii 2 eye-tracking glasses participants' visual attention was recorded while looking at the prompts. Attention was measured using gaze-related variables based on the eye-movement data of the previously defined areas of interest (AOIs). "In all research areas, AOIs are used to associate eye movement measures to parts of the stimulus presented, and they are defined separately in order to determine the most relevant parts of the stimuli" (Peker et al., 2021, p. 6). In this study the AOIs were identified at the experimental design phase, and they were: overtitle AOI, headline AOI picture AOI, icons above body text AOI and body text AOI.

The raw data was imported into the iMotions 10.0 software and analysed by looking at the fixation count and heatmaps. This process shows what participants pay attention to, what they ignore and for how long they focus their gaze on the AOIs.

3.4.2. Facial expression analysis

The iMotions' AFFDEX automatic facial expression analysis shows numeric scores for facial expressions and emotions. This software is based on frame-to-frame analysis of static images or videos. The score rises from 0 (no expression) to 100 (expression fully present). Respondents have different "neutral" expressions, which means some raw data needs to be baseline corrected. If a respondent has a rather joyful baseline, the highest recorded emotional value will be taken into consideration during viewing a prompt, rather than calculating a median. The values collected vary from 0,001 to 99,999. To view this data in a more accessible way, only numbers before the comma will be shown on the graphs, where 0 – no expression detected, 100 – expression fully present. The AFFDEX software is able to detect 12 emotions – anger, contempt, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, engagement, valence, sentimentality,

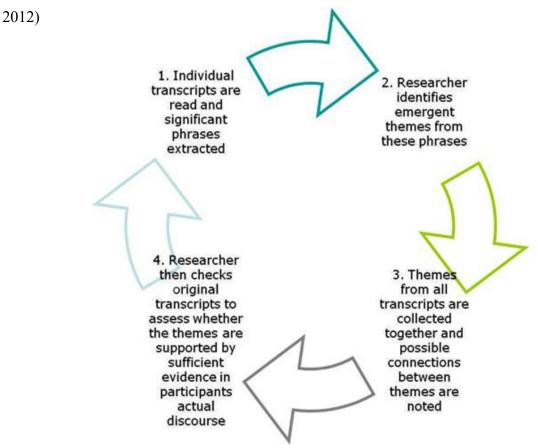
confusion, neutral. During this experiment only three, most relevant to this study, facial expressions were recorded (joy, contempt, engagement).

3.4.3. Interviews

The respondents were asked seven questions, and their answers were recorded digitally and anonymized through the Nettskjema website, which is a web-based survey tool allowing to store and manage data safely to ensure data accuracy and privacy. The interviews were then transcribed automatically through the website. As the interview was semi-structured, the researcher asked supplementary questions and asked the participants to give examples if something was unclear. The answers varied depending on participants' prior knowledge on sustainability and their priorities while choosing a luxury travel destination, as well as their education and attitude. Answers collected during the interviews were analysed separately, then an overview was given to provide a conclusion. Data saturation was observed after the fifteenth participant, when the researcher noticed the same themes coming out during interviews repeatedly and supplementary data did not lead to any new emerging themes. Two additional participants were interviewed to confirm the occurrence of saturation.

Central topics mentioned in the interviews were luxury travel and sustainability. The participant also provided information on their experiences during travelling, their insights on sustainable travel and greenwashing, and what they value in marketing content. Additional questions allowed for better understanding of participants' attitudes towards luxury, sustainability, and tourism.

Figure 2. The processes involved in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Lewis et al.,



By analysing data from the semi-structured interviews using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) the researcher can use specific examples to develop broader theories and uncover themes and meanings. "IPA is a qualitative approach which aims to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experience" (Smith & Osborn, 2007 p. 517). The analysis followed the four stage process shown on the image above. This allowed for structured analysis and identification of important themes. The initial stage of the analysis involved close reading of the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings. During this process the researcher made notes with observations and insights, allowing for further interpretation, and formulating of main themes. The last stage involved connecting the themes and finding if they are supported by sufficient evidence from the actual interviews.

3.5. Validity and reliability

In order to assess the quality of the research methodology four criteria are commonly used: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Stenfors et al., 2020). Those are necessary to assess the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. To ensure research credibility, it is crucial to explain and justify the chosen methodology. In this paper, the mixed method was used to ensure best collection of data and allow for comparison for voluntary and involuntary responses to marketing content. Based on the research question the researcher chose to implement both physiological methods and semi-structured interviews to achieve best results. This paper also provides sufficient data, allowing other researchers to replicate the study in similar conditions and using the same procedural steps, and possibly reaching different conclusions. This supports the dependability of this research. Confirmability is a criterion used to show a link between the data and the findings. This paper shows that there is relationship between the data and the findings through detailed descriptions and use of quotes. The findings are then discussed and linked to literature. At last, transferability is supported through providing context in which the research was performed and how it shaped the findings, so that they may be transferred to another setting, context, or group (Stenfors et al., 2020). The researcher explains the sample size and gives its description, to ensure that the context is understood. They also explain the circumstances and conditions in which the study was conducted.

"Reliability involves the extent to which any experiment, test, or systematic procedure yields the same results across replicated trials under identical conditions." (Compton et al., 2012 p. 348). When an experiment is reliable it means that similar results can be achieved through repeated measured. This paper provides a clear procedural description as well as extensive theoretical background explaining the reaction of Gen Z participants to certain topics and visual cues. The general focus of this study is to analyse potential consumers' reactions to marketing content including certain phrases and words.

3.6. Limitations of this study

This study has some limitations which should be discussed. First, in this study both facial expression recognition and eye-tracking methods were used to collect physiological data. The glasses had a thick frame which could obstruct the cameras view of participants' eyebrows, thus leading to insufficient or incorrect data. Some participants also talked while viewing the prompts, despite being instructed not to. This could also cause the FER data to be incorrect. The prompts were shown in a fixed order, which could also influence the participants' attention to certain AOIs. For instance, every prompt contained the same three icons, but the text below was different. However, participants could overlook the different text and assume that if the icons were the same, the text would be as well. Another limitation was the advertisements having the same design and composition, which could lead to participants showing less engagement when looking at the succeeding image. Additionally, the price on each advertisement was the same and placed in the same spot. This was done to focus on the causal mechanisms and avoid directing participants' attention away from the text and is typical in visual attention research on consumer decision-making (Zuschke, 2020). Future research could address those limitations by changing the design or showing the prompts in randomized order. Another potential limitation concerns the interviews. The questions were asked in English, to avoid any misinterpretations and participants were given the possibility to answer in either English or Norwegian. It is worth noting than none of the participants were native English speakers which could influence the quality of their answers. Additionally, the responses in Norwegian had to be manually translated by the researcher in order to cite them as the automatic transcription tool was set to English, which could result in minor translation shifts.

4. Findings and discussion of results

4.1. Visual results – heat maps

Participants' visual attention to luxury destination advertisements can be represented with heat maps. Heat maps illustrate visual attention by manifesting fixation locations and fixation durations across regions within the stimuli (Huang & Christianson, 2016). The heat maps generated by the iMotions 10.0 software allow us to clearly see where the visual attention was focused by analysing raw data collected during the experiment. The regions of fixation are coloured using a spectrum of red to green colours, where red indicates more frequent or longer fixation durations and green represents less frequent or shorter fixation durations. A close look at the heat maps suggests that viewers' visual attention was primarily focused on regions containing text, and on the certificate logos in the left top corner. This is consistent with the previously described areas of interest (AOIs). Viewers tended to spend more time looking at advertisement 1 & 3, especially at the three icons (flight tickets, accommodation, and tour guide), which were also drawing their attention. Only heatmaps containing clear markings and sufficient data were included in the analysis. Some heat maps were insufficient, due to participants moving their head, and some did not show the entire image, and were therefore not included in the study.

Participants who chose prompt 1 as the most attractive, often had very short fixation times on its elements. They often had 2 to 4 main gaze fixation points on the previously identified AOIs. It can be caused by them reading the luxury slogans and already making up their mind. Some commented that it was the most "catchy" and "interesting" one, therefore they did not feel the need to look at it for a longer period. Prompt 2 had in general the shortest fixation times and lower density of fixation points (1 to 3), most participants did not focus on a certain area, but rather looked all over the advertisement. The majority of them focused on the text, but when asked about it could not recall any particular themes. This is interesting as six people chose this

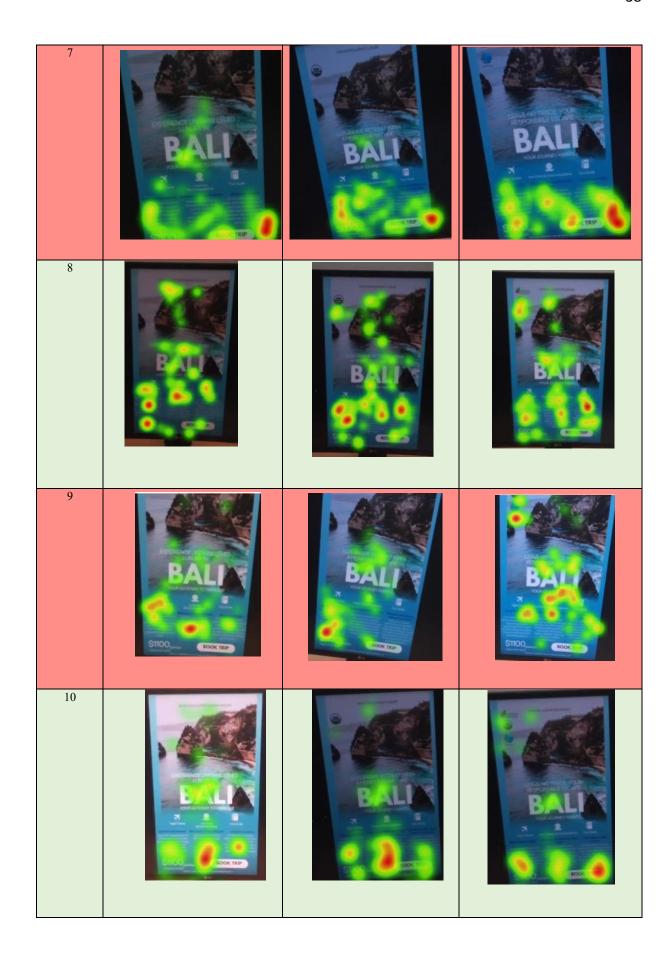
prompt as the most appealing. Other participants who did not choose the second prompt stated that they perceived it as "too much information" and "nothing concrete". They were not sure what they would get by choosing this offer as it focused on both luxury and sustainability, and almost all participants said that sustainable luxury is hard to achieve. The shorter fixation times can also be explained by viewers' attention span and their interest in the topic of sustainability. Those with less interest in this subject could be more eager to skip the prompts they were not as engaged in. The second advertisements also contained the most text, which could negatively influence the number of fixation points and their length, as consumers often associate advertisements with an overload of cues with something cheap. The third prompt resulted in similar density of gaze fixation points as the first one (2 to 4), and viewers fixation durations could also be comparable to the first advertisement. Their focus was mainly directed towards the designed AOIs such as the certificates, icons and the text below them.

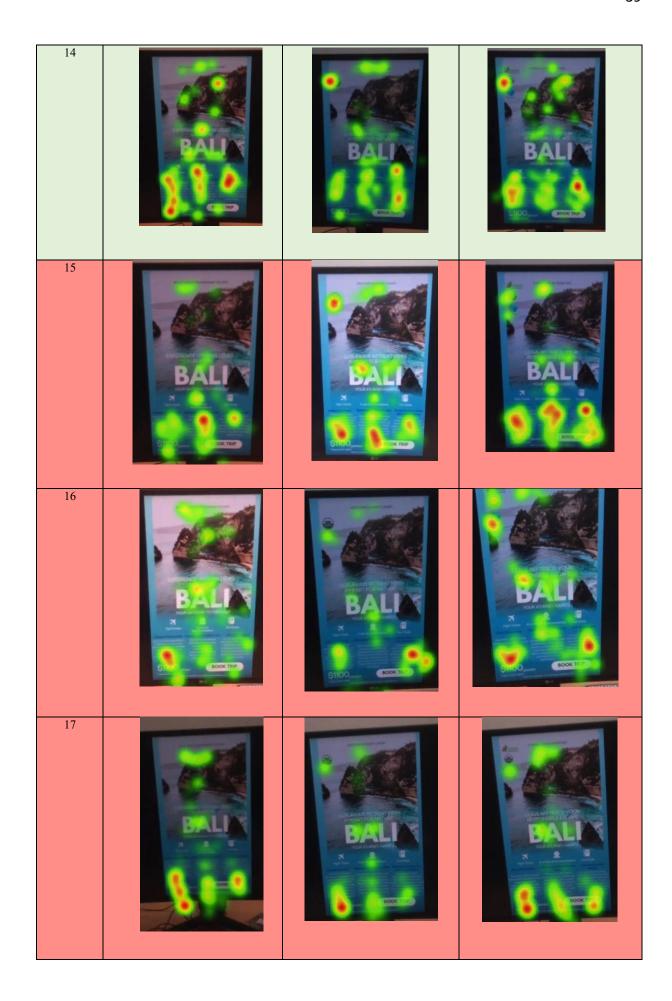
Participants whose final decision (chosen prompt) differed from their heat map results were marked in red, those who's results matched were marked in green in the table below. Only four answers matched the physiological data, those were participants 6, 8, 10 and 14. They had longest gaze fixation durations and multiple AOI's detected on prompts they chose as the most appealing in the interview. Remaining viewers chose prompts which did not match their eye-tracking data or had very similar results for all advertisements. Participant number 6, who chose the third prompt, presented the highest number of fixations on all of the text fields, the three icons and the headline. They also had interest in prompts number 1 and 2, but the fixation times were shorter. This participant had extensive previous knowledge about sustainability and luxury travel, explaining their interest for the third prompt and the data being compliant with their answer during the interview. Participant number 8, who chose the second advertisement, had the longest fixation times and the most AOIs detected while looking at that prompt. They also had vast knowledge about sustainability due to their previous studies on this topic. Interestingly,

during the interview this person answered that sustainable luxury is possible, and even more luxurious in their opinion. This corresponds to their physiological reactions and explains their interest in the second prompt. Participant 8 showed the lowest level of interest in the third prompt, which could further indicate them favouring the second advertisement. Viewer number 10 had shown the most interest in prompt number two, which is also the one they chose during the interview. They had little previous knowledge about sustainability and luxury tourism, and their main AOI was the middle icon and text. The second prompt contained the most information, which could be a possible explanation to why this participant chose it as most attractive, due to their limited previous knowledge. They could feel as if it had the most value and explained the benefits in the best way. Finally, participant number 14 who selected the first prompt as most appealing, demonstrated a corresponding high level of interest in in this particular prompt. Their choice was also confirmed by their prolonged fixation gazes and greater attention to the AOI's while viewing the prompt. They had some previous knowledge about sustainability and were familiar with luxury tourism. They valued luxury and trustworthiness and showed less interest in the second and third prompt.

Table 2. Heatmaps

Participant	Prompt 1	Prompt 2	Prompt 3
3	BALL	BALI	B LIA
4	BALL State of the	BALI SIIOO_ CESTED	BALLI
5	BALL CONTRACTOR	BALI STIOO ROCKTRIP	BALL FOR ALL AND THE CONTROL STOOL STOOL
6	BALL BALL STOOL ST	BALIA	BALL POLIFICATION STIDO BOOK TRP





4.2. Emotions

The graphs below show which of the three emotions, joy, engagement, and contempt were detected in participants while viewing the three prompts.

Figure 3. Emotional responses to prompt 1

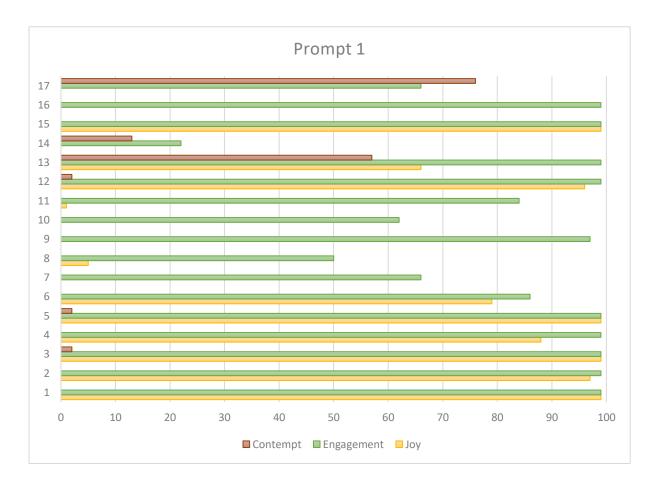


Figure 4. Emotional responses to prompt 2

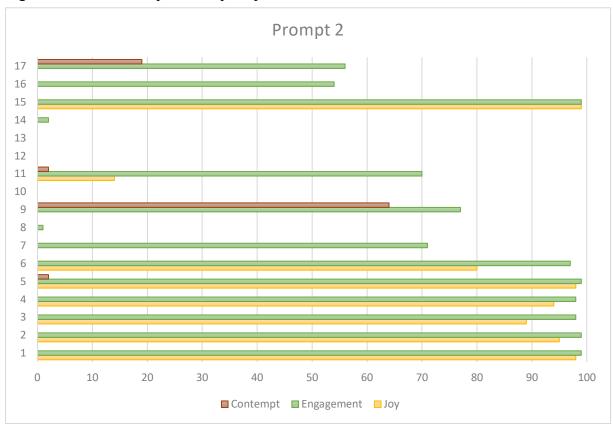
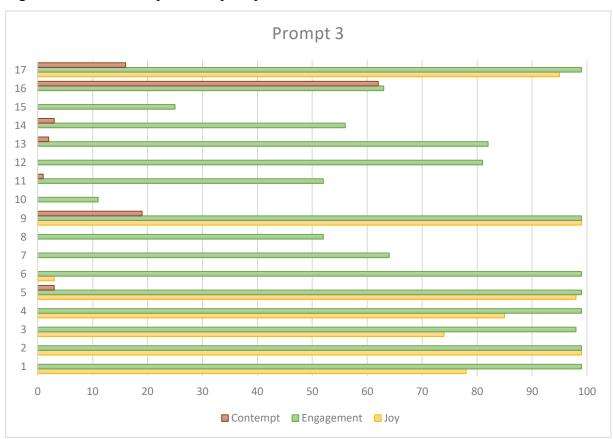


Figure 5. Emotional responses to prompt 3



The data was shown on diagrams ranging from 0 to 100 making it easier to read and interpret. These diagrams show how the seventeen participants reacted to being shown the three prompts. It is clear to see that the second prompt caused less engagement and joy than the other two. Viewers had less interest for this prompt, and often needed less time to read its contents. This is an interesting find as several participants answered that they found the second prompt the most appealing. It could indicate that they wanted to choose the "safe option", which is neither too luxurious nor too sustainable, but a reasonable offer. This is consistent with the literature explaining feeling of guilt while consuming luxury goods, as well as self-awareness and social desirability (Tangney et al., 1996, iMotions, 2017). The observed patterns in facial expression data suggest that the first and last prompt caused the most engagement. This can be caused by those two prompts containing less text and more concise information. Those prompts focused either on luxury or sustainability, while the second prompt combined these two. This shows that when presented with too much information people will be less eager to read the entirety of it and pay less attention to details. The data also reveal that the highest levels of joy were detected while viewers looked at this first prompt and the lowest while looking at the third one. There is a possible connection between reading about "responsible travel" and "not leaving any trace behind" and experiencing the feeling of guilt and contempt. This could explain the low levels of joy while looking at the third prompt with the most mentions of sustainability. Tourism advertisement appeal to consumers' emotions, preferably positive ones, causing them to feel a connection with a destination and the desire to travel there. The first prompt focused mainly on extravagance, pleasure, and meeting the consumers' needs, thus causing the most joy in viewers. The last prompt had several mentions of ethical tourism and responsibility, which could be the reason for viewers experiencing less joy, as it was not solely focused on their own needs. There are several studies mentioned before in this paper that explain which feelings and emotions advertisers should target to create effective marketing campaigns and products that

resonate with their customer (Sung & Litchfield, 2023, Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2003), and the facial expression data collected in this study confirms, that emphasizing responsible travel practices do not cause the same level of positive emotions. Advertisements showing sustainable tourism may be perceived as more educational and informational than emotionally stimulating, potentially leading to lower levels of joy and engagement among viewers.

4.3. Self-report data collected through interviews

What is sustainability to you?

Most participants could explain the principal rules of sustainability; however, they mostly mentioned the ecological factors like protecting the environment, and responsible travel to mitigate negative consequences of tourism like pollution and depletion of natural resources. Many answers included the phrases "making sure future generations are not affected" and "having a long time goal" when asked about what sustainability is to them. This shows that usually people correlate sustainability with preserving the current state of things for the future. Participant number 16 says sustainability is "about saving the planet, taking preventive measures in order to effectively minimize waste" (Participant 16). Few participants stated they had no previous knowledge of sustainability, however when asked to explain this concept they gave somewhat correct answers, mentioning ecology, preservation of resources and being green.

What is luxury travel to you?

Only few participants had no previous knowledge of luxury travel, the rest have either participated in luxury tourism or heard about it. The common answer was that luxury travel is expensive, targets wealthy people, a holistic experience where travellers don't have to worry about anything, and that it is exclusive and tailored to the customer. Almost every participant

said that when they think about luxurious destinations they usually don't think about sustainability, and that they expect all aspects like accommodation, flight tickets etc. to be taken care of, so that their experience is care-free. They mentioned private jets, cruises, helicopters, and yachts when asked for examples, as well as places like Bali or Dubai. They also answered, "perhaps something to do with food, where you have an all-inclusive, but not the charter kind, but where you eat Michelin top quality food" and "I could imagine going to the North Pole being actually luxury travel because it's something that costs a lot of money and not a lot of people would have the ability to experience." (Participant 13). Those answers show that they perceive luxury tourism as something reserved to only a certain group of people, not popular and easy to obtain.

How do you perceive the relationship between luxury and sustainable travel?

All participants stated that it is difficult to find balance between sustainability and luxury. Surprisingly, participant 13 said that they feel as those two aspects have been somewhat combined in the past years. "I feel like it has become almost like a pop culture thing to eat, so a lot of expensive food is organic or etc." (Participant 13). They mention that the wealthy people using luxury services often tend to like these things because it "makes them feel better about being rich in a way" (Participant 13). Other participants mentioned that luxury brands' focus is the customer, and you don't want to worry about the environment while already spending a lot of money on a product or a vacation. They agree that the relationship between luxury and sustainable travel is negative and requires a lot of changes to be perceived differently. Participant number two says that "the customer is the main focus, which means that you have to sacrifice certain things, like cut down a forest to make space for accommodations or something" (Participant 2). A lot of participants state that in their opinion sustainable luxury is more expensive, and if it not more expensive, the luxurious aspect is weaker. Participant number

five explained that luxury travel can be sustainable if companies improve their main area of concern which is transportation by incorporating eco-fuels or green ways of travelling. When asked for examples of sustainable luxury travel, only few participants could come up with an answer, they mentioned biofuels in cruise ships and hotels improving their waste management, majority of them could not come up with such examples and were unsure if sustainable luxury travel is possible.

Do you perceive sustainable luxury brands to be less luxurious and exclusive?

The answer to this question was mostly "no", which was surprising as most participants had a negative opinion on sustainable luxury. A participant without prior knowledge of luxury travel and sustainability answered "yes" to this question. However, the answers showed that many consider sustainable luxury brands to be more exclusive, as sustainability in this sector is hard to obtain so the companies "must be doing something right". Participant 17 says "if they are still luxurious, and they are sustainable it's just a big plus" (Participant 17). Participant number 8, with extensive prior knowledge of sustainability and luxury travel answered that they consider sustainable luxury brands to be less exclusive, and that it is not enough for a luxury brand to mention they are sustainable, but they need to provide documentation on what they are doing exactly. This participant also mentioned greenwashing, and that they are sceptical of companies who base their marketing communication on "being green". Participant number 10, with some prior knowledge, said that for them sustainable luxury brands are less exclusive, as luxury means making sure the customer is satisfied and doesn't have to worry about anything, including sustainable travel. In their opinion it would be difficult to connect those two concepts. Some participants also mention that luxury brands have the means to be more sustainable but choose not to do that. Another observation was that people connected sustainable luxury with being even more expensive because consumers need to pay extra for such services to be ecofriendly and not harmful to the environment, as it is not the most profitable approach on the luxury brands' side. When asked if they would consider paying additional costs themselves, most participants answered "no" initially, but when asked the same question, considering they would know exactly what sustainable practices they were paying for, most of them changed their answers to "yes". Several participants answered "maybe" to this question but were not able to recall any sustainable luxury brands or give any examples of such. They stated it can be difficult to compare such sustainable brands to what is usually perceived as luxurious. A couple of participants said that they would not pay more for a sustainable luxury travel because they would be looking for getting the most benefits with relatively least amount of money, and extra costs for sustainable options would mean something opposite. Participant 13 answered that it depends, as a lot of the materials used to produce luxury items cannot be sustainable. "As I prefer leather instead of vegan leather, like cactus leather or other faux leathers. But that's because I believe that leather is supposed to be renewed, you can use it again." (Participant 13). They then proceeded to give several examples of how real leather can be reused and explained that fabrics like cactus leather are not viable after a couple of years, concluding that real leather lasts longer. They finished by saying that sustainable luxury items are, in a way, less luxurious and exclusive.

Would you choose a luxury tourism destination based on its rational commitment to sustainability?

Here, majority of the answers were "no", some participants were unsure, and some answered that it would depend on the destination and price. As mentioned before, if they knew exactly what sustainable practices they were paying for, they would be more likely to do it. Also, if the price remained unchanged, they would choose the more sustainable option. Participants whose answer was "no" stated that while choosing a luxury destination they wouldn't base their

decision entirely on sustainability, however, it would be fine if the luxury travel company had some interest in responsible travel, but not a necessity. Many answered that the exclusiveness and uniqueness would be the factors influencing their decision the most. What was interesting, is that some participants with extensive knowledge about sustainability and those interested in green practices answered "yes" to this question, but when asked a following question "would you be willing to pay more for sustainable luxury travel?" they were unsure and changed their mind. However, some participants were sceptical and answered that they wouldn't base their decision on the brands commitment to sustainability, as they wouldn't want to worry about it during their luxurious travel. Participant 13 said "No, it would not be the main thing that I would look for, of course I would not look for something that is very much on the other end (non-sustainable) either" (Participant 13). The answers collected during this question show that ideally, many of the participants would want their luxury tourism experience to be responsible and not harm the local environment, but since they already perceive luxury tourism to not be sustainable, it would not be a priority to them.

Which travel offer would you choose and why?

Some participants picked prompt number one or three as their first choice, but when asked to explain their decisions they changed their mind to prompt two. This prompt contained both mentions of luxury and sustainability, was balanced, and appealed to their rationality. However, participants with extensive knowledge of sustainability were sceptical to the third prompt, and mostly chose prompt one. Participant who initially chose prompt one often changed their mind when asked to explain why and stated that they would "feel guilty" for choosing it, then changed their mind to either prompt two or three. The three certificates on prompt three were significant and memorable for most participants. Those who could not recall the text, chose prompt number three based on the certificates, they stated that it made the advertisement more believable.

Participant number 4 with no prior knowledge of sustainability and luxury travel chose the second prompt because "they do not need a travel offer to be too many different things, like have too many certificates and so on" (Participant 4). Participant number 3 chose the first prompt as the most appealing and explained that "the other two would appeal to other people, the branding would be wrong for potential luxury consumers" (Participant 3).

What are your priorities while choosing a luxury travel destination?

Most participants said that they look at the price and destination first. It mattered if the destination itself was considered luxurious and high-end. They would want to feel as if they were getting what they paid for, and more. Participant 13 answered they look for "something different, exotic, where I can experience something that is out of the ordinary to me" (Participant 13). Many participants highlighted the importance of all aspects of their travel being taken care of, from flight tickets and accommodation to local transportation and a tour guide. Also, the nature of the travel was important, travelling in first class or having a private driver. Participants' priorities were safety, comfort, and a holistic experience without worrying and responsibilities. They also considered the destinations reviews to be important.

Additional follow up questions allowed for better understanding of participants' point of view. Participant number 2 shared that they went on a luxury cruise as a child with their parents, however now, as an adult, they would not choose that tourism form due to the carbon emissions and contamination of water. Participant number 13 with extensive knowledge of sustainability explained how the topics of global warming and other ecological concerns are perceived in their family, which allowed for better analysis of their answers. One person stated that the third advertisement almost felt like a spam e-mail, because of the number of sustainability mentions. Most participants could not provide examples on sustainable luxury, however, when presented with examples they were mostly familiar with them. This shows that

even if sustainability is not the first connotation when thinking about luxury, most of the interviewed people have heard about green alternatives, eco-friendly practices, and other responsible solutions in the luxury industry.

Main themes that were identified during the semi-structured interviews are:

- 1. Understanding of sustainability mainly on the ecological level.
- 2. Referring to luxury tourism as non-sustainable.
- 3. Attributing sustainability to more responsibilities and higher price.
- 4. Too many mentions of sustainability felt fake and insincere (greenwashing).
- 5. Wanting to fit societal norms.
- 6. Not prioritizing sustainability when choosing a luxury service.
- 7. Willingness to pay more for luxurious goods if they are sustainable and trustworthy

The next stage involved looking for connections between these main themes. Themes 2 and 4 can be connected by the general understanding of luxury as non-sustainable. If a luxury brand mentions sustainability, even if those mentions are genuine and not a greenwashing technique, they are perceived as fake and suspicious (Theme 4). This can be caused by the initial associations with luxury goods and services, and many may find it hard to believe. The lack of trust is often caused by a history of luxury brands not caring about sustainability and their most important goal being maximizing profit, among other things (Theme 2). Themes 3 and 7 connect by associating sustainable luxury with additional costs and/or responsibilities. If sustainable practices were inexpensive and easy to implement, possibly more companies would put them into practice. It also shows that people feel good when paying more for something they perceive as favourable to their society and the environment (Theme 7). However, that requires the brands being transparent and honest with their consumers. People are generally

sceptical to bigger brands and luxury companies. This further connects to Theme 2 and 4, showing that consumers are not eager to trust large companies without getting proof of their actions towards a good cause. Themes 1 and 6 suggest that consumers' understanding of sustainability influences their priorities when selecting luxury services. As they mostly associate sustainability with protecting the environment, they can easily overlook its economic and social aspect. As a result, if a luxury brand tries to implement more sustainable practices without emphasizing their efforts, consumers may remain unaware, and the sustainable aspect may unconsciously influence their choices. Finally, Theme 5 may be connected with several other themes, as following societal norms and society's understanding of luxury and sustainability may influence consumers' attitudes and buying decisions. For example, societal norms might contribute to consumers' scepticism towards the luxury tourism industry's sustainable efforts (Theme 4) or impact consumers' willingness to prioritize sustainability in luxury consumption (Theme 6).

4.4. Main conclusions and future research

By looking at the results and data collected from both physiological and non-physiological tests, it is possible to reach some final conclusions. In general, participants with prior knowledge of sustainability exhibited two main attitudes towards the third prompt. Some stated that they liked the third prompt the most, as it brought attention to responsible travel, but often remained sceptical and felt the company was "greenwashing", suggesting that less sustainability cues would be more believable, even if the brands efforts were authentic. Some were responding negatively to the eco certificates as they meant it made the advertisement feel "fake". Others, equally interested in sustainability, also favoured the third prompt but were less focused on its luxurious aspect, as it was not a priority for them. What they liked about it was its high focus on responsible travel and local societies. Participants who favoured the second

prompt often went for the "safe option" and justified their answers by explaining how they valued balance and measured actions. However, none of them mentioned sustainability when asked about their priorities while choosing a luxury destination. Participants who found the first prompt most appealing often answered that it was the only one fully focusing on consumers' needs, they believed the other offers to not be as exclusive and "care-free". Surprisingly, the first advertisement was often favoured by people with vast knowledge of sustainability, who were able to give examples of responsible tourism. This finding is consistent with Chang's (2011) study on ambivalence towards sustainability. Additionally, viewers who expressed their appreciation for trustworthiness and luxury and who were familiar with greenwashing practices often chose prompt number one, rarely number two and none of them chose prompt three as the most appealing.

When it comes to facial expression recognition, the three diagrams revealed distinctive patterns. The second prompt caused the less engagement and joy compared to the other two prompts, despite some participants initially choosing it as the most appealing. This further suggests that some viewers prefer a "safe option" that balances luxury and sustainability and feel the need to fit society's norms. The first and last prompts resulted in the highest level of engagement, possibly due to more focused content and more concise information. It is also worth noting that the third prompt, which emphasized responsible travel and organic resources, caused the least level of joy. This is possibly caused by the subconscious feeling of guilt associated with sustainability messaging (Tangney et al., 1996). However, the self-reported emotions evoked by the images showed significantly larger differences between the three prompts. Most described they felt joy while viewing the first image and having least emotions for second prompt. Third prompt had more emotional reaction than the second one, but less engagement than the first one, some participants were instantly discouraged by the number of sustainability cues. Overall, advertisements containing many mentions of sustainability can be

viewed as educational rather than emotionally stimulating, which then can potentially lead to reduced levels of joy and engagement among viewers. Those findings can be useful to luxury brands' marketers as they highlight the importance of targeting positive emotions while creating tourism marketing content and give insights as to how it should be structured and presented. This confirms the previous studies, which suggest that visual stimuli and emotions are strongly correlated, and it is critical for marketers to select relevant stimuli (Ghosh & Sarkar, 2016, Wang & Sparks, 2016).

The heat maps generated from participants' visual attention to luxury destination advertisements revealed a predominant focus on the text, icons, and certificate logos, which was consistent with the previously identified AOIs. Viewers perceived the first prompt as catchy and interesting, which resulted in fewer fixation gaze fixation points due to participants quickly reading through it and being satisfied with limited information. The second prompt, despite being chosen as the most appealing by some participants, resulted in the shortest gaze fixation durations and viewers' attention was scattered across the image. Many perceived it as overwhelming and lacking in concrete information. This finding suggests that combining luxury and sustainability in advertisements has to be done carefully and in an informed way, as it can decrease the advertisement's effectiveness. Interestingly, only a few participants' final choices matched their heat map results, suggesting a disproportion between their conscious preferences and subconscious visual attention. Those with extensive knowledge on sustainability favoured advertisements aligned with their experience and values. Familiarity often influenced their decisions, as they chose the prompt that resonated most with what they were comfortable with. In summary, the results once again highligt the importance of clear and concise messaging in luxury tourism marketing, to effectively capture viewers' attention and align with their preferences.

The overall objective of the study was How do Generation Z travellers respond to mentions of sustainability in luxury tourism marketing content? The research shows that luxury tourism brands appeal to consumers' emotions by keeping a strong brand identity and giving consumers the feeling of authenticity and exclusivity. Luxury companies appeal to consumers' emotions and value traditions, unwillingly altering their character. Few people associate luxury with sustainability; therefore, it can be difficult for luxury tourism brands to implement sustainable practices. Researching human emotions and facial expressions helps determine which parts of advertisements are most emotionally engaging and lets companies adjust their future campaigns accordingly. Applying facial expression analysis can be beneficial in marketing and help marketers to better understand consumers' needs. Findings suggest, that in luxury tourism potential Gen Z travellers are not interested in a lot of sustainability mentions. For many of them adding certificates to the advertisement would be enough, as it would implicate that the brand is aware of their impact on the environment and is acting towards a greener future. The findings also suggest that having too many different cues is not beneficial, and marketers should whether focus on the luxurious or the sustainable aspect. This is confirmed by viewers emotional reactions to prompt number two, which caused the least amount of engagement and had shortest fixation times. The findings from this study contribute to the current literature investigating the mentions of sustainability in luxury brands' communication. They confirm the theory by Hall et al., (2015) that the rise in pro-environmental attitudes does not necessarily lead to change in behaviour and cause more sustainable behavioural patterns. This raises the question whether the shift to sustainable luxury is necessary, and whether implementing sustainable practices by luxury brands needs to be declared in detail.

Even genuine efforts of luxury brands are met with suspicion due to historical associations of luxury with profit maximization rather than environmental concern. However, transparency

from brands is essential to overcome scepticism, especially given the general distrust towards larger companies. This suggests a need for genuine actions and open communication to build consumer trust in sustainable luxury. Luxury appeals to individuals' desires for pampering, status, and escapism from everyday life, causing positive emotions and making them feel taken care of. The themes identified during semi-structured interviews shed light on the complexity of the relationship between luxury and sustainability and how those two are perceived by consumers, particularly Generation Z. Despite being sceptical towards luxury brands' sustainability efforts, consumers express a willingness to pay more for products perceived as beneficial to society and the environment. Furthermore, the impact of societal norms on consumers' attitudes and buying behaviour highlights the importance of luxury brands adjusting their marketing to match evolving ideas about luxury and sustainability. This paper agrees with Sung and Litchfield's (2023) study and further confirms that luxury brands need to adapt their marketing content and carefully balance luxury and sustainability, focusing on being honest, trustworthy, and reflect the values of their consumers.

In conclusion, the Sustainable Luxury Paradox is quite relevant to modern society and is often noticeable in media. Although Gen Z's engagement with social and political issues is increasing, it is apparent that their consumption decisions could induce feelings of guilt and uncertainty and weaken their trust in large corporations and luxury brands. The importance of luxury brands' influence on certain trends and buying behaviour of young people is worth mentioning. Those brands have the power to make a change but often prioritize maximizing profit and keeping their brand identity over sustainability. They are often the ones conditioning consumers to believe luxury cannot be sustainable and causing suspicion and accusations of greenwashing. This leads consumers to believe that luxury and sustainability cannot coexist and forces them to associate sustainable brands with higher costs or less comfort and elegance. However, studies show that luxury brands are pressured into implementing new sustainable

practices (Kang & Sung, 2022), and combining luxury and sustainability may one day become mission (im)possible. The luxury sector is undergoing a gradual shift towards more green solutions and sustainable strategies. While luxury goods are associated with exceptional quality, exclusivity and indulgence, the brands are starting to recognize and incorporate the need for addressing environmental and social concerns to meet consumer expectations.

Future research can further fill the literature gap on sustainable luxury tourism and provide insights on certain marketing strategies targeting other generations. It can investigate bigger sample sizes in different environments, to minimize the constraints in data collection. Based on the findings this paper proposes potential areas for future research, which are not included in this study such as exploring the galvanic skin responses or pupil dilation using the eye-tracking glasses. This experiment can be replicated using different methodologies to address previously mentioned limitations. There is also possibility for follow-up studies and investigating how participants' responses change over time. Understanding the role of emerging technologies in marketing is crucial to marketers, and learning how to convey sustainable messages effectively represents a promising area for research.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide:

A semi-structured interview, containing questions like:

- 1. What is sustainability for you? What is luxury travel to you?
- 2. Do you perceive sustainable luxury brands to be less luxurious and exclusive?
- 3. How likely are you to choose a luxury tourism destination based on its rational commitment to sustainability?
- 4. How important is sustainability to you when considering travel options?
- 5. What are your priorities while choosing a luxury travel destination?

Appendix 2

Are you interested in taking part in the research project "Luxury tourism and sustainability: travelers' responses to marketing content design"?

Purpose of the project

You are invited to participate in a research project where the main purpose is to investigate which type of content consumers respond best to when it comes to sustainability in the luxury tourism industry.

Master's thesis: Project objectives

- Collect data from participants to understand their demographic profiles and preferences related to sustainability in luxury tourism.
- Utilize appropriate research methodologies to analyze the collected data and draw conclusions about consumer responses to sustainability in the luxury tourism industry's marketing content.
- Assess the factors influencing consumer preferences and attitudes towards sustainability in the luxury tourism field.
- Explore the relationship between consumer demographics and their responsiveness to sustainability messaging in the luxury tourism context.

Which institution is responsible for the research project?

University of Stavanger, The Faculty of Social Sciences, The Norwegian School of Hotel Management is responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

The target for this study comprises individuals between the ages of 19 and 27 years old. To ensure relevance to the research topic, participants are required to have some knowledge about tourism and/or express an interest in travel. This age range has been chosen to capture the perspectives of a demographic that is likely to engage in travel activities and has some level of familiarity with the concepts and experiences associated with tourism and sustainability. The research aims to include a diverse yet manageable sample size to ensure in-depth analysis. A targeted number of up to 30 participants will be invited to participate in the study.

What does participation involve for you?

1. Biometric methods test (Eye Tracking, Facial Expression Recognition)

- Participants will undergo a physiological test involving eye tracking and facial expression recognition. Those tests aim to capture subconscious responses and emotional reactions during the exposure to travel-related content. This test will take approximately 20 minutes.
- This data will be recorded electronically using specialized equipment. The recorded data will be anonymized and used for further analysis.

2. Semi-structured interview

- Participants will engage in a semi-structured interview format, lasting approximately 25 minutes. An audio recording of the interview will be taken.
- The interview will explore participants' experiences with luxury tourism, their understanding of sustainability in this context, and their preferences for different types of content related to sustainability.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified here and we will process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation (the GDPR).

- Researchers of the project will have access to personal data.
- Data will be saved on researcher's password protected memory card, and only accessed by researchers of the project.

Participants will not be recognizable and will be anonymized in any related publications.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The planned end date of the project is September 2024. The personal data will be safely stored until all planned project publications have been completed, but no longer than 7 years.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the *University of Stavanger*, The Data Protection Services of Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project meets requirements in data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

(Signed by participant, date)

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Student Kornelia Kamieniak: <u>k.kamieniak20@gmail.com</u>
- Project Supervisor Christine Lundberg: Christine.lundberg@uis.no

If you have questions about how data protection has been assessed in this project by Sikt, contact:

• email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 73 98 40 40.

Yours sincerely,				
Student Kornelia Kamieniak	Project Supervisor Christine Lundberg			
Consent form				
I have received and understood information about the project "Luxury tourism and sustainability: travelers' responses to marketing content design" and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:				
\square to participate in the interview	ogical test (Eye Tracking, Facial Expression Recognition) w tored after the end of the project			
I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end of the project.				