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Common and Contradictory Motivations in Buying Intentions for Green and Luxury Automobiles

Farhad Aliyev ^{1,*}, Ralf Wagner ^{1,*}  and Stefan Seuring ² 

¹ International Direct Marketing, DMCC-Dialog Marketing Competence Center, University of Kassel, Mönchebergstraße 1, 34125 Kassel, Germany

² Supply Chain Management Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Kassel, Mönchebergstraße 1, 34125 Kassel, Germany; seuring@uni-kassel.de

* Correspondence: aliyev@wirtschaft.uni-kassel.de or a.farhad787@gmail.com (F.A.); rwagner@wirtschaft.uni-kassel.de (R.W.); Tel.: +49-0561-804-2133 (R.W.)

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Abstract: Luxury is often blamed for creating social inequality and hampering sustainability, especially in the social and environmental realms. For instance, luxury goods entice people to conspicuous consumption that may result in showing off. However, study results show that luxury and environmental sustainability have common features. Notably, previous research mainly examined motivations for green purchases in general without relating to the specific product categories such as durables. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between these two—green and luxury automobile buying intentions—by analyzing the survey results of 1601 respondents relating to more than 60 nationalities. In contrast to a substantial effect on luxury buying intentions, perceived conspicuousness has no significant positive effect on green auto purchase intentions, and that price value has a limited influence compared with the effect on luxury automobile purchase intentions. Furthermore, hedonism has a less positive impact on green auto purchase intentions compared to its impact on luxury automobile buying intentions. The ‘extended self’ and the perception of high quality have been found to be drivers of luxury and green automobile purchase intentions, while unique value appears to have no impact on purchase intentions for green and conventional luxury automobiles. The present study contributes to the extant research by investigating common and contradictory motivations for luxury and green buying intentions of automobiles. Furthermore, it suggests a reconsideration of the traditional view that luxury and environmental consumption are inconsistent and contradictory concepts. The complementary managerial implications of this study guide practitioners in positioning the situatable variants of their automobiles as ethical luxury.

Keywords: luxury automobiles; green automobile buying intention; extended self; conspicuousness; uniqueness

1. Introduction

An apparent increasing interest in luxury-marketing research has been observed among scholars; however, green luxury has emerged to become a substantial research stream. Three recent literature reviews on luxury research [1–3] reveal that a limited number of scientific works have contributed to investigating the relationships between green and luxury consumption. Recently, the importance of green products and services has been emphasized, as increasing consumption levels endanger the environment [4,5]. Through innovation and responsible design, green product variants cause fewer harmful effects on the environment [6]. The objective of environmental sustainability is not to decrease consumption but to reduce its negative effects [7]. To achieve the goal of an increase in the proportion

of green product choices, this study examines the motivations underlying the buying intentions for both alternatives in the domain of automobiles.

The green luxury concept has recently become an area of burgeoning research interest [8]. Besides being attractive to academics, the purchase of green luxury items due to social and political pressure, as well as the fast-growing luxury market, has caught the attention of practitioners [9,10]. In 2018, market sales of luxury goods and services increased by 5% worldwide compared to 2017 and accounted for 1.2 trillion euros [11]. Luxury brands are prone to being involved in pro-social activities, which may be perceived by customers as inappropriate [12]. Davies et al., claim that consumers tend to consider ethics less when purchasing luxury goods as compared to non-luxury goods [13]. Beckham and Voyer obtained similar results, confirming this finding [14]. Altruism, uniqueness, and modesty are green values [15], whereas hedonism, aestheticism, rarity, affluence, and surplus are components of luxury [16]. Cristini et al. conclude that “a concern is that luxury may—despite the seemingly sustainable steps changing the mental models—not be sustainable economically or environmentally after all” (p. 5) [3]. Recently, the conflict between luxury and environmental sustainability has been decreasing as luxury companies have begun to offer green luxury products [9]. This tendency may result from luxury’s being aligned with green product characteristics, such as the production of low quantities of unique goods (i.e., uniqueness) and the production of high-quality handmade items in line with traditions [17]. According to Janssen et al., if luxury products exhibit rarity along with durability, then, based on consumer perceptions, the compatibility of luxury and green consumption increases [8].

Noticeably, examining the common and contradictory motivations of luxury and green purchase intentions has been the focus of previous research. Uncovering these motivations will support luxury companies’ efforts to fit sustainability into their marketing-communication strategies [18]. Several authors [1–19] state that interpersonal dimensions or price-related values, such as conspicuousness, need of uniqueness, and high quality, as well as perception-related values (the extended self and hedonic values) are fundamental in luxury marketing. Furthermore, these values have significant influence on green product purchasing [7–20]. In scholarly research, to our best knowledge, the differences in the influence of personal and interpersonal values in regard to purchase intentions of luxury and green products have not been examined. Based on related research, we assume that conspicuousness and hedonism set luxury apart from environmental sustainability, whereas high quality, uniqueness, and the extended self are common components of both. Based on these assumptions, this study tackles three research questions.

First, the paper aims to identify the common (i.e., uniqueness, quality, and the extended self) and contradictory motivations (i.e., conspicuousness and hedonism) for luxury and green product purchase intentions. The novelty of this study arises from the research design, which evaluates the relevance of the same set of determinants for both green and luxury products. To examine these motivations, we chose luxury automobiles and their green alternatives as the application domain. This choice was motivated by the high-involvement decisions of the consumers, the social relevance of the choice, and the fast-paced market growth of luxury vehicles. This category exhibited the highest sales (€495 billion, or 42.3% of total sales in 2018) among other luxury-product categories and services [11]. Furthermore, in 2030, the share of green automobiles will be 48% of the total vehicle market, compared with 4% in 2017 [21].

Second, strong policies, environmental issues, and the falling cost of batteries as well as a preference for green consumption have made luxury automobile brands more focused on the production of hybrid and electric automobiles [22]. Up to now, however, consumers have tried to avoid green auto purchases because of diverse factors [23], particularly their limited range and high prices [24]. Therefore, governments and automobile brands try to motivate consumers to purchase through marketing activities such as communication. The literature review on green purchase intentions [7], as well as the analysis in our literature section, found that less attention from academic research was devoted to examining the motivations for purchase intentions for green vehicles. Notably, most of the literature on green behavior has investigated the motivations for green purchases in general. This approach could mislead

academics as well as practitioners because, depending on the product category, distinct values and motives result in buying behavior [7]. The factors influencing the purchase of durable goods such as autos are different from those related to goods that are consumed frequently, such as food items [25], which has been closely examined [7].

Third, previous research mainly examined the effects of functional attributes on purchase intentions for green automobiles. With green automobiles (or green luxury) we address vehicles such as hybrid electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, full electric vehicles. Based on our literature review, only the study by McLeay et al. (2018), within the framework of the product-attractiveness construct, examined the effect of social and hedonic items on purchase intentions of hybrid automobiles [26]. The positive evaluation of green vehicles depends on a combination of the social, functional, and hedonic dimensions [27]. Therefore, motives such as emotional consumer-driven values (e.g., hedonism) or price-related perceptions (e.g., conspicuousness) were neglected, so another aim of the present study is to test these motivations for buying green automobiles.

A large-scale survey through interviewing more than 1600 respondents from more than 60 nationalities in different countries (primarily in Germany and in Azerbaijan) was used to examine the effects of motivation values on purchase intentions for green automobiles and to compare those with their impacts on luxury automobile purchase intentions. The second section outlines the related research that provides the basis for formulating our hypotheses. The third section details the methodology used. In Section 4, we outline the results. In the final section, the authors conclude with a discussion, academic and managerial implications, and promising directions for future research.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Possible Common Values Affecting Luxury and Green Purchase Behaviors

Overpricing, aesthetics, uniqueness, and symbolism are the key features of luxury [28]. Many prominent luxury marketing researchers [19] agree that the main attributes of luxury are conspicuousness, high quality, uniqueness, the extended self, and hedonism. Several literature reviews on luxury using bibliometric and qualitative analysis [1,2] show that these dimensions are significant values affecting luxury product purchase intentions, especially the buying intentions for luxury automobiles (see Table 1). Using these values, Vigneron and Johnson constructed the first scale, the Brand Luxury Index (BLI), that aims to evaluate certain luxury brands based on consumers' perceptions [19]. These general attributes can be classified as the price-associated attributes—conspicuousness, uniqueness, and high quality—and the consumer-related attributes of luxury: The extended self and hedonic value [29].

Table 1. Fundamental luxury values.

Values	Characteristics according to Vigneron and Johnson (2004) [19]	Characteristics according to Dubois et al. (2001) [28]
Conspicuousness—determines the “perceptions of price and social status associated with the brand” [19]	Conspicuous Elitist Extremely expensive For the wealthy	Conspicuous Elitist Very high price Differentiated from others
Uniqueness—“Is in evidence when status-sensitive consumers come to reject a particular product when it is seen to be consumed by the general mass of people” [30,31]	Very exclusive Precious Rare Unique	Scarcity Uniqueness
Quality—“Excellent quality is a sine qua non, and it is important that the premium marketer maintains and develops leadership in quality” [32]	Crafted Luxurious Best quality Sophisticated Superior	Not mass-produced Rather like luxury Excellent quality Good taste
Hedonism—shows how well premium products provide pleasure [33]	Exquisite Glamorous Stunning	Pleasure Aesthetics Beautiful
Extended Self—social referencing and the construction of an individual's self could lead to consumption [30]	Leading Powerful Rewarding Successful	Refined people

According to the literature reviews on green purchase behavior [7,20] the price-controlled values that are conspicuousness (i.e., high pricing), quality, and accessibility or uniqueness were most often used to examine green product purchase behavior. The authors of recent literature reviews [7,34] agree that the aforementioned value perceptions have a significant impact (negative and positive) on green product purchase intentions. Moreover, consumer-driven values, such as hedonism, were found to have both positive [35] and negative [36] effects on green buying, which is a finding that requires further investigation. Complementing this finding, according to Hur et al., the abovementioned values can have a positive influence on the overall assessment of green automobiles [27].

Table 2 presents the independent variables (conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, hedonism, and extended self) that make up the BLI considered in our research design as well as their influences on luxury and green purchase intentions. According to Kapferer and Michaut–Denizeau, superficial values, such as conspicuousness, increase the contradictions between luxury and green consumption [18]. “Luxury is thus a key element in the drive to consume, and the effect of this is to generate profits, and thereby, maintain capitalism, whilst simultaneously, from the Green Perspective, depleting the stock of sustainable resources” [37]. Moreover, in line with the value of conspicuousness, it is claimed that hedonism hampers green consumption, whereas this attribute influences luxury purchase intentions positively [7,17]. In contrast, the values of high quality and uniqueness are used to promote both luxury and green products (8,17). Complementing these findings, several researchers [13,38] argue that, in addition to being close to affluent groups, people tend to extend their selves to responsible societies.

Table 2. The effects of value perceptions on green and luxury product purchasing.

Value Perception	Relationship with Luxury Purchase Intentions	Relationship with Green Purchase Intentions
Conspicuousness	Conspicuousness positively influences luxury purchasing [19]	High pricing negatively influences green purchasing [36,39]
		Premium pricing has no positive effect on green purchasing [34,40]
		Low pricing positively influences green purchasing [41,42]
Hedonism	Hedonism positively influences luxury purchasing [19,30]	Hedonism positively influences green purchasing [26,35,43,44].
		Self-enhancement values (e.g., hedonism) are negatively related to green purchasing [36,45]
Uniqueness	Uniqueness positively influences luxury purchasing [19]	Uniqueness positively influences green purchasing [17,46]
		Limited availability has a negative effect on green purchasing [44,46,47]
Quality	High quality positively influences luxury purchasing [19,30]	Quality positively influences green purchasing [26,48,49]
Extended self	The extended self positively influences luxury purchasing [19]	The extended self positively influences green purchasing [50,51]

Most of the previous studies examined motivations of green consumption without referring to the context of a specific product category. We have checked the product categories that were examined in the studies mentioned in Table 2. In comparing them with the literature review [7], some similarities can be found. For instance, most of the studies (38 articles out of 80) in their corpus as well as in our study (10 articles out of 20) were devoted to motivations for green purchases in general, while few studies investigated concrete product categories, such as vehicles. Moreover, research on product categories, such as green clothing or automobiles (three articles out of 80) is neglected, although auto makers generate a higher share of global durable-goods sales. This tendency shows that most of the studies limit their contributions by failing to distinguish the relevance of determinants with respect to the product categories under consideration.

We have reviewed the studies (from Table 2) that examined green automobiles, and in all cases the papers examined primarily the influence of functional attributes, such as economy or load capacity [26,40], thus neglecting to investigate the effects of emotional motives, such as hedonism, or status-seeking motives, such as conspicuousness (the Veblen effect) or unique values (the snob effect). Finally, few studies [26] have examined the cause-and-effect relationships between various attributes and green automobile purchase decision-making.

2.2. The Effect of Conspicuous Value on Luxury and Green Automobile Buying Intentions

Higher prices increase the desirability and conspicuousness of brands [19]. Notably, no other consumer-goods sector encourages global social inequality to the extent that luxury does [17]. Because of its conspicuousness, luxury fosters purchases that defy functionality and the related rationality. The luxury sector targets consumers to lure them into investing significant amounts of their income in products or services that they do not need. Therefore, conspicuousness contradicts sustainable consumption because of its symbolic power as a creator of inequality [3,18]. People buy luxury items to increase their status in their communities, thereby violating social norms [14].

According to the results of several studies [39,44], high prices (a conspicuousness feature) negatively influence green product purchasing. By contrast, low prices positively influence environmentally friendly product choices [41,42,52]. Moreover, Chekima et al., report a low moderating effect of premium pricing on green purchase behavior (see Table 2) [34]. Knez et al., reveal low prices to be the most important factor in green auto purchase intentions, which contradicts the conspicuousness value [40]. However, Griskevicius et al. have found that status motives (including high price) may lead to purchasing green automobiles. This effect is considered in our first research hypotheses [53].

H1L (Luxury). *Conspicuousness has a positive effect on the intention to buy a luxury automobile.*

H1G (Green). *Conspicuousness has a negative effect on the intention to buy a green automobile.*

2.3. The Effect of Hedonism on Luxury and Green Automobile Buying Intentions

Sustainability stresses the wellbeing of people and care for the environment; it is, therefore, associated with self-transcendent values [15]. Conversely, hedonism, aestheticism, affluence, ostentation, and surplus relate more to luxury [16]. According to several studies [26,35,43,44], individualistic values, such as hedonism or pleasure, positively affect green buying behavior, particularly in regard to green or organic food. Therefore, hedonism might positively influence buying intentions for green durable products. However, hedonism as a self-enhancement value is mainly associated with luxury [52], emphasizing an individual's personal interests and wellbeing [8]. Several studies [36] show that hedonism as a self-enhancement value negatively affects intentions of green buying. Overall, self-enhancement values, such as conspicuousness and hedonism, conflict with self-transcending values, which are pro-socially oriented [12]. As there is no a comment agreement on the direction or amplitude of the impact of hedonic motives on green automobile buying behavior, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H2L. *Hedonic attributes have a positive effect on the intention to buy a luxury automobile.*

H2G. *Hedonic attributes have a positive effect on the intention to buy a green automobile.*

H3. *Hedonic attributes have a lower effect on the intention to buy a green automobile than on the intention to buy a luxury alternative.*

2.4. The Effect of Uniqueness on Luxury and Green Automobile Buying Intentions

Due to inconvenience, high prices, habit, and lack of availability, people buy fewer green items. Limited availability also negatively influences green purchase intentions [44,46]. Several researchers [46,54] agree that the availability and knowledge of a green product foster green purchase

behaviors. However, Kapferer states that uniqueness lessens the contradiction between luxury and green consumption [17]. Vigneron and Johnson point out that uniqueness or rarity is one of the important values that have a positive impact on buying intentions of luxury items [19]. In cases in which the luxury product reflects rarity and durability, it becomes compatible with green consumption [8]. Thus, in the following hypotheses, it is supposed that green automobiles are perceived to be at least as unique as luxury ones. This perception positively influences the purchase intention of both alternatives.

H4L. *Uniqueness has a positive effect on the intention to buy a luxury automobile.*

H4G. *Uniqueness has a positive effect on the intention to buy a green automobile.*

2.5. The Effect of High Quality on Luxury and Green Automobile Buying Intentions

It is common for luxury automobiles to pass through several owners; for example, most of the Rolls Royce vehicles that have been produced are still being driven today. High quality is an inherent component of luxury [17]; thus, consumers expect luxury products to last. High quality is significant in sustainable development; therefore, it may establish a strong link between green and luxury consumption [38]. According to Steinhart et al., environmental claims lead to positive consumer evaluations of both functional and luxury products [55]. Some studies [26,48,49] have shown that high quality has a significant impact on green buying behavior. Therefore, the quality of green automobile is perceived to be at least as high as that of their luxury counterparts, and this attribute influences purchases positively.

H5L. *High quality has a positive effect on the intention to buy a luxury automobile.*

H5G. *High quality has a positive effect on the intention to buy a green automobile.*

2.6. The Effect of the Extended Self on Luxury and Green Automobile Buying Intentions

Consumers also buy luxury items due to the symbolic indication of membership in a certain group, pointing to a bandwagon effect [29]. According to Belk's concept of the extended self, people tend to match their behaviors to those of affluent groups, thereby extending their selves [56]. The extended self embraces that reference group, and the construction of an individual's self can lead to luxury purchases. Luxury consumers who are prone to ethical criteria are now concerned not only about the effects of luxury purchases on their own lives with regard to their peers but also on the world in which they live [13]. As a result of the increasing awareness of green-related concerns in both developed and emerging countries, a consumer might purchase green luxury goods to extend his or her self as part of a responsible society [38]. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs are significant in the consumer's attitude toward luxury, willingness to pay extra, and buying intentions. Additionally, reference groups are found to positively influence buying intentions for environmentally friendly product [50]. Therefore, the extended self may have a positive impact on green automobile buying intentions. Based on the above-mentioned literature, it is possible to pose the following hypotheses (Figure 1).

H6L. *The extended self has a positive effect on the intention to buy a luxury automobile.*

H6G. *The extended self has a positive effect on the intention to buy a green automobile.*

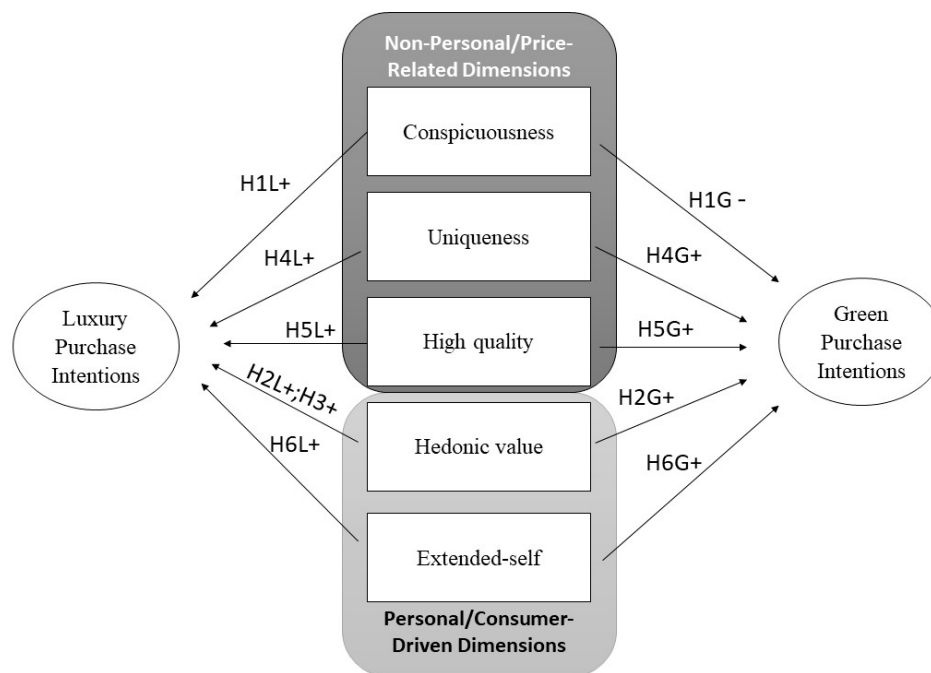


Figure 1. Consolidates the above research hypotheses in a conceptual model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Procedures

The BLI was used for assessing the luxuriousness of individual luxury brands [57]. The definition of luxury is subjective and is based on consumer perceptions of interpersonal (conspicuousness, uniqueness, and high quality) and personal (the extended self and hedonic value) dimensions [19]. Thus, the BLI has five general luxury dimensions, and each construct consists of three to five items, adding up to 20 items.

Additionally, buying intentions measurement scale was used [58]. A five-point Likert rating scale was applied. Because the BLI constructs were initially designed in English, the translation and back-translation to and from Azerbaijani and Russian were done by native editors independently of each other. The respondents were instructed to think about the brands in the luxury-automobile category (e.g., Porsche) or green luxury category (e.g., Porsche hybrid) while they measured perceptions. The respondents' assessment of the luxury automotive perceptions was captured in one section of the questionnaire and the assessment of the green automotive in the subsequent section. The sample was selected through purposive sampling which is appropriate if the objective is to research psychological processes rather than generalizations. Thus, in theoretical and comparative international research, non-probability sampling is suitable. The respondents were contacted through social media as well as via email and in person.

3.2. Sample

The surveys were carried out primarily in Germany and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan, as a part of the Eastern culture, is an emerging country among the former Soviet republics in which a significant part of the population tends to conspicuous consumption. Germany is taken as an example of a developed, Western country. However, because citizens of various countries—such as the United States (83 respondents), Russia (45 respondents), Turkey (23 respondents), Italy (21 respondents), China (20 respondents) and India (15 respondents)—study and work in Germany, the sample is heterogeneous, but 28.5% of those who indicated their nationality (484 respondents) were Germans. Almost 1800 respondents took part in the study, and 1,698 questionnaires from persons of 64 nationalities were

used. As the final step, 1601 respondents evaluated their perceptions and purchase intentions in regard to the green automobiles, and 1608 respondents evaluated their perceptions and purchase intentions regarding the luxury automobiles. The sample sizes differ because some respondents (in this case, seven) did not complete the survey to the end, and the luxury-product-related questions were in the first part of the questionnaire, while the second part consisted of green-related questions.

Our respondents comprised young adults with a mean age of 29 years, and, of our sample, 63% had at least a bachelor's degree. Education is a positive antecedent of pro-social purchasing [59]. Of the respondents, 60% earned equal to or above the average income. The gender of the respondents was equally distributed (50.2% men and 49.8% women).

3.3. Data Analyses

Descriptive and frequency analyses of the data were conducted. Moreover, we used partial least squares to fit a structural equation model in order to examine the effect of perceptions on the intention to purchase a green auto as well as its luxury alternative.

4. Results

4.1. Assessment of the Measurement Specification

First, we conducted a convergent validity analysis of the BLI scale. Generally, the average variances extracted (AVE) of all dimensions used to evaluate the green and luxury automobiles and their purchase intentions were mainly above 0.5 (see Table 3). Fornell and Larcker state that the scale can be accepted based on composite reliability, as AVE is a conservative assessment [60].

Table 3. AVE (average variances extracted), composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha.

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Luxury automobile			
Conspicuousness	0.751	0.653	0.374
Uniqueness	0.782	0.848	0.583
Quality	0.785	0.852	0.540
Hedonism	0.814	0.888	0.725
Extended self	0.850	0.898	0.687
Purchase intentions	0.859	0.904	0.703
Green automobile			
Conspicuousness	0.838	0.852	0.599
Uniqueness	0.828	0.884	0.657
Quality	0.840	0.887	0.612
Hedonism	0.871	0.920	0.794
Extended self	0.877	0.915	0.730
Purchase intentions	0.893	0.887	0.756

Additionally, the indicators for the composite reliability of all constructs were above the accepted level of 0.7. The composite reliability of conspicuousness was lower (0.653). Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha for the measurement model of all constructs exceeded the minimum level of 0.7. The heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of each measurement model specification was below the 0.85 level (see Table 4), indicating discriminant validity [61].

Table 4. HTMT (heterotrait-monotrait ratio) in the case of green automobile purchase intentions.

	Conspicuousness	Uniqueness	Quality	Hedonism	Extended Self	Purchase Intentions
Conspicuousness						
Uniqueness	0.683					
Quality	0.656	0.78				
Hedonism	0.615	0.56	0.818			
Extended self	0.591	0.637	0.825	0.817		
Purchase intentions	0.124	0.237	0.324	0.303	0.356	

4.2. Common and Contradictory Motivations for Luxury and Green Automobile Purchase Intentions

To examine the relationship between the BLI dimensions and green automobile purchase intentions, the following analyses were conducted. The R2 was 19% for luxury automobile purchase intentions and 14.5% for green automobile purchase intentions. When considering the social-norms construct as the explanatory variable, the R2 increased substantially (i.e., by 35%).

According to the results in Figure 2, the conspicuousness value had an insignificant negative effect ($t = 1.207, p = 0.227$). However, H1G received partial support, as the hypothesis stated that conspicuousness negatively affects green automobile purchasing. Surprisingly, conspicuousness also had no significant impact on luxury buying intentions ($t = 1.595, p = 0.111$), contradicting H1L (see Figure 2). Because the effects in both cases are not significant, we cannot compare them. The hedonic-value dimension was associated positively with the green automobile buying intention. Notably, this dimension had a positive influence on green automobile buying intentions ($t = 2.027, p = 0.04$), thereby supporting H2G. Moreover, H2L was supported, as the value indicated a positive impact on luxury automobile purchasing ($t = 5.146, p < 0.001$). However, the impact on green automobile purchase intentions was apparently weaker than the effect on pure luxury. Using Cochran’s Q testing, we revealed significant differences ($Q = 7.942, p = 0.005$), thereby supporting H3.

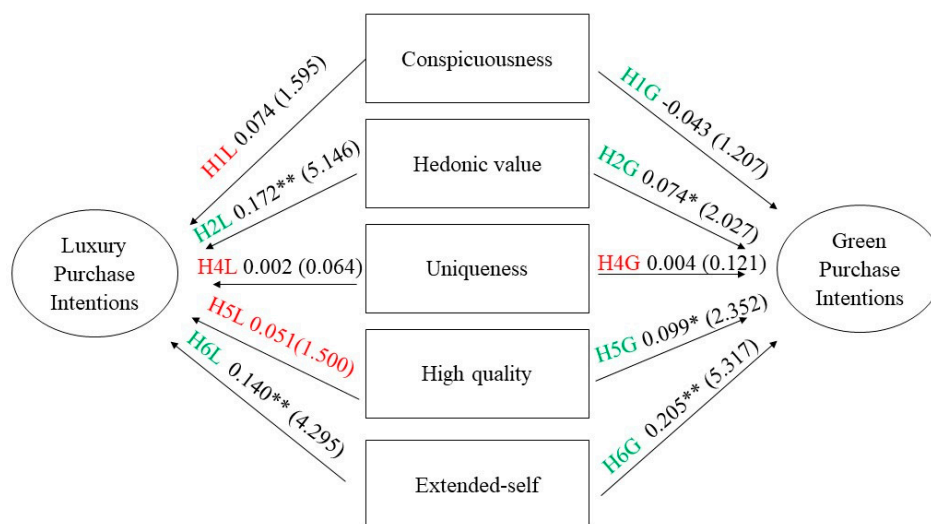


Figure 2. The impact of perceptions on green and luxury automobile purchase intentions (n = 1601 for green automobiles and n = 1608 for luxury automobiles). Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$.

Furthermore, contrary to the predictions, uniqueness had no significant positive effect on green automobile buying intentions ($t = 0.121, p = 0.904$). Additionally, there was no impact on luxury automobile buying intentions ($t = 0.064, p = 0.951$), and the difference between the effects was insignificant. Therefore, H4G and H4L were not supported. Perceived quality positively influenced green automobile buying intentions ($t = 2.352, p = 0.019$). Furthermore, quality did not have a significant positive impact on luxury purchasing ($t = 1.500, p = 0.134$). Thus, H5G was supported, but H5L was not. Moreover, a significant and positive effect was observed of the perceived extended-self construct

on green automobile buying intentions ($t = 5.317, p < 0.001$). Thus, H6G was supported. The extended self positively influences luxury automobile buying, thereby supporting H6L. Moreover, age had a negative effect on both ($t = 5.675, p < 0.001$ for the green automobile and $t = 6.199, p < 0.001$ for the luxury ones), thus supporting the use of a sample of younger adults.

5. Discussion

5.1. Academic Contribution

In a few studies examining luxury and environmental sustainability, it has been argued that environmental sustainability and luxury contradict each other [13,25]. Luxury is more related to conspicuousness and surplus, while sustainability is more closely aligned with modesty and equality [3]. Using a large-scale, cross-cultural survey with respondents from 64 nationalities, this study attempted to identify both common and contradictory motivations for luxury and green automobile purchase intentions, and the findings suggest significant contributions to the extant research.

5.1.1. Common Motivations

First, based on a literature review and analysis, the study shows that fundamental luxury values, such as quality, hedonism, and the extended self, are also important values of environmental sustainability. Despite past findings that documented incompatibility between luxury and environmental sustainability [13], the results of the present study suggest the reconsideration of the view that the two domains contradict each other. The study explores the conditions under which environmental sustainability and luxury can be successfully intertwined, as argued by Kapferer or Yang et al. [5,17]. In line with Janssen et al., the present research reveals that perceived high quality positively influences green automobile buying intentions and that this value is a joint motivation for green and luxury buying intentions [8]. Although there is no difference in the effect of the high-quality dimension between luxury and green automobile buying intentions, high quality was found to have a weak impact on luxury buying. Consumers may perceive luxury brands as obligatorily having high quality, which may be a reason for this tendency [30]. A complementary contribution of the present study involves the testing of personal dimensions, such as hedonism and the perceived extended self, in regard to luxury and green products, as this has not been examined in previous research. Our study revealed that, in regard to extension of the self, green products are valued at least as highly as non-green products. The perceived extended self has a positive impact on green automobile buying intentions. This supports previous arguments [38] that ethically oriented consumers tend to purchase products as an extension of their selves, not only with regard to their reference groups but also regarding the world in which they live. Noticeably, hedonism is more associated with luxury than with green automobile [16,52]. However, in line with Cerjak et al., our study found that perceived hedonism positively influenced environmentally friendly buying intentions, although this effect was substantially weaker in comparison to its impact on luxury automobile buying intentions, and there existed a significant difference between them [35].

Second, the current results contradict those of previous research [13] that reports that luxury cannot be green as well as those of studies [1,14] that state that sustainability and luxury are incompatible domains. Consequently, we propose that the high-quality, extended self, and hedonic constructs will allow the buying of luxury and environmentally friendly products and services to go hand in hand. However, up to now most green automobiles are small, less powerful or restricted by their maximum distance without a longer lasting recharge.

5.1.2. Contradictory Motivations

The present research found values that did not have a positive effect on green buying or that sharpened the contradiction between luxury and environmental sustainability. Perceived conspicuousness had no significant impact on green buying intentions of automobiles. We contribute

to the discussion of whether a negative relationship exists between perceptions of luxury products and green properties [25] and of whether perceptions of luxury conflict with sustainability because luxury consumption is a communicative act that signals status [19]. Therefore, the perceived conspicuousness value hampers the merging of luxury and sustainability perceptions. Kapferer and Michaut–Denizeau’s study did not reveal that uniqueness decreased the contradiction between luxury and green buying intentions [18]. Complementarily, the present research found that the perceived uniqueness value had no impact on green automobile buying intentions. As argued above, the reasons for not buying environmentally friendly product alternatives include scarcity and poor information about them. Although uniqueness has been considered one of the most important motivations for luxury purchases, the current research results contradict this stereotype.

5.1.3. Motivations for Purchase Intentions of Green Automobiles

According to recent literature reviews on green consumption [7,20], most studies contribute to the research on motivations for green products in general. Most of them neglected to investigate diverse product categories. Moreover, the decision-making process varies depending on product types. Apparently, the purchase of luxury or durable products, such as automobiles, is more complex and not so frequent as in the case of food items [25]. Our study complements the findings of previous research [40] which shows that a high price demotivates buyers from buying green, even in a context in which the high price expresses high status and conspicuousness. Thus, the paper contradicts the study by Griskevicius et al., that claims that status motives could lead to green consumption [53]. Furthermore, according to several research studies [62], green cosmetics buyers are also highly price sensitive. However, green cosmetics as well as food products are considered to be low-involvement purchases that require less effort and consideration before purchase [63]. According to Lee and Yun, price had a less positive effect on green food purchase intentions than quality, safety, and eco-friendliness [64]. This means that price may have a greater influence on buying intentions for green automobiles than the quality items. On the other hand, convenience (opposite to uniqueness) and quality are universal values for diverse green-product categories. Another innovation of this study was finding the positive effect of a hedonic motive on green vehicle buying intentions. Therefore, our results support the notion that, along with functional attributes, emotional values play an important role in the decision-making process [27].

5.2. Managerial Contributions

The findings have important implications for luxury-industry practitioners, especially for luxury automobile manufacturers. Today, it is expected that many consumers will adopt green automotive variants [65]. According to International Energy Agency forecasts (2018), the number of green automobiles will grow from 3 million to 125 million by 2030. In 2017 alone, global sales increased by 54%. Luxury firms have recently begun to suffer due to being viewed as less ethical than green firms. Moreover, luxury brands have recently started to spend more on environmental issues than they did in the past. However, they continue to struggle with the selection of proper marketing-communication and product strategies. Our results suggest that luxury companies can successfully embrace environmental sustainability. Therefore, by orienting common motivations for purchasing luxury automobiles with green consumption, these companies can improve their positioning and communications regarding their products and services. According to Davies et al., ethical issues are not considered in luxury purchase decisions, even though many luxury companies have developed CSR programs and offer green products [13]. This is most likely because the positioning of conspicuousness negatively influences the intention to purchase green products. Accordingly, brand managers, especially in the luxury automotive industry, may fail to promote green automobiles by applying conspicuousness branding strategies to these products. Therefore, luxury companies should not apply conspicuousness branding strategies when promoting green durables, such as automobiles. Perceived uniqueness has no impact on the intention to buy green automobiles. Instead, luxury automobile brand managers may

use more hedonic appeals in their communication. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for practitioners to position their brands to offer self-extension attributes that attract people to purchase green luxury items that conform to the green global community. Complementarily, enlightenment regarding green product variants might cause people to perceive them as unique rather than merely rare.

6. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

As is the case for all studies, the current paper has some limitations. Although the sample size was large and heterogeneous, attracting more participants from different geographical areas would be advantageous. Few respondents from South American or African countries participated in the current survey. Furthermore, only one product category—that is, luxury automobiles and their green variants—was tested. Additionally, examining actual purchase behaviors rather than buying intentions might result in a more fruitful contribution.

Future researchers could conduct related research using various product categories [5] and luxury brands, as well as luxury and green services. Additionally, we recommend designing a sustainability index for luxury products and services that allows for simple but targeted communication on green features for competitive differentiation. The digitalization of luxury is an area that is badly neglected [1,2,66], although, in the previous year, e-commerce for luxury products increased by 24% [11]. It is likely because of this disregard that we have not noticed that the significance of the uniqueness value in promoting luxury desire has suddenly vanished. Therefore, we strongly encourage the development of a new luxury-research stream focused on digitalization. Moreover, future research might focus on crafting a suitable roadmap from a supply-chain management perspective to coincide with sustainability practices.

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