

**AN EMPIRICAL STUDY EXPLORING THE  
IMPACT OF GREENWASHING ON FASHION  
BRAND REPUTATION AND BRAND LOYALTY  
AMONG GEN Z CHINESE CONSUMERS:  
EXPLORING GREEN PERCEIVED RISK AND  
STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE SCANDAL  
EFFECTS ON BRAND LOYALTY**

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## **Declaration Page**

*No portion of the work referred to in this project has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this institution or any other university or other institution of learning. In the writing of this project I have received assistance from Lan Wang in a supervisory capacity.*

*I, Haijin Zhu, certify that this is an original piece of work. I have acknowledged all sources and citations. No section of this MA project has been plagiarised.*

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## **Abstract**

With the growing environmental awareness among consumers, green marketing has become a key tool for fashion brands to gain competitive advantage. However, this trend has also led to the widespread phenomenon of greenwashing. This deceptive practices are particularly prevalent in the fashion industry due to its complex and opaque supply chains. A 2020 investigation by the European Commission revealed that 53% of environmental claims within the EU were misleading. In recent years, brands such as H&M, Lululemon, and Shein have been frequently involved in global greenwashing scandals, highlighting the global challenges greenwashing poses to brand credibility and market integrity.

This study aims to explore the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and brand loyalty of Gen Z Chinese consumers, to analyse effective communication strategies to mitigate green perceived risk and maintain brand loyalty.

Adopting an interpretivist philosophical perception, this research employed a sequential exploratory mixed-method design, with a qualitative emphasis. In the first stage, semi-structured interviews with six Chinese Gen Z consumers were conducted to explore their perceptions and emotional responses to greenwashing. In the second stage, a structured survey with 103 Chinese Gen Z participants was conducted to validate the qualitative findings. This multi-method triangulation enhanced the credibility and robustness of the conclusions.

The findings reveal that Chinese Gen Z consumers generally view environmental claims with skepticism, often perceiving them as profit-driven marketing tactics. Greenwashing significantly violates consumer expectations, evoking strong negative emotions, particularly feelings of betrayal which lead to a decline in brand reputation and overall credibility, and thereby influence brand loyalty. Consumer behavioral changes are mediated by perceived risks, including concerns about product value, quality, and, in some cases, social image. Negative emotions are also influenced by the perceived severity of the greenwashing and the brand's tier, while product uniqueness can mitigate the negative impact on brand loyalty. The study further demonstrates that trust rebuilding is a long and arduous process, requiring brands to demonstrate authentic commitment through high

transparency, third-party verification, and visible sacrifices (e.g., reduced profit margins) to regain consumer trust.

This research makes both theoretical and managerial contributions. It integrates Expectancy Violation Theory and Commitment-Trust Theory to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding brand crises triggered by greenwashing and the subsequent trust repair process. Moreover, it addresses an important gap in the literature by offering context-specific empirical evidence from China, the world's largest fashion market. The practical value of this study lies in its multi-stage, evidence-based recommendations that can help brands establish long-term relationships with environmentally conscious Gen Z consumers.

Keywords: greenwashing, green marketing, brand reputation, brand loyalty, perceived green risk, Generation Z, Chinese fashion market, trust repair strategies.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Context

As consumers' awareness of sustainability increases and the green economy rises, green marketing has become an essential tool for enterprises to gain a competitive advantage in the market (Lu et al., 2022; Moravcikova et al., 2017). However, the effective implementation of green marketing strategies faces numerous challenges, the most prominent of which is the phenomenon of greenwashing (Tu, et al., 2024). Greenwashing refers to enterprises exaggerating or misleadingly promoting their environmental actions in order to attract consumers, while failing to implement sufficient environmental measures (Nemes, 2022). The competitive landscape, combined with the inherent complexity of achieving genuine sustainability, drives some enterprises to exaggerate or mislead consumers rather than invest in substantive environmental improvements (Michelon, Pilonato & Ricceri, 2015; Parguel, Moreau and Larceneux, 2011). In a 2020 review of EU environmental claims, 53% were found to contain greenwashing (European Commission, 2021). This widespread deceptive behavior not only undermines consumer trust in individual brands, but also has a systemic negative impact on the entire green market (Wu, Liao and Liu, 2025).

The fashion industry, characterized by its notoriously fragmented and complex supply chains, is widely considered one of the largest sources of industrial pollution (Li, Cavender, and Lee, 2025). To address growing environmental pressure and meet consumer demands, fashion brands have widely adopted green marketing strategies, which has also made them a high-risk sector for greenwashing scandals (McKinsey and Company, 2023; Badhwar et al., 2024; Heidenstrøm, 2025). As of 2024, the issue of greenwashing in the fashion industry has intensified, with several international brands facing scrutiny for the gap between their green promises and actual practices (Statista, 2025). For example, H&M's "Conscious" collection and Zara's "Join Life" line have been criticised for potentially misleading consumers (Savić and Frfulanović, 2024). A recent case in which fast fashion brand Shein was fined for greenwashing in Italy has attracted global attention (The Guardian, 2025). Therefore, the impact of scandals involving international brands is not limited to specific regions, and it also highlights that greenwashing by international fashion brands is a global problem (Jochecová, 2025).

Brand reputation is one of the most valuable assets of an enterprise (Influency, 2024). As a business strategy, reputation building influences long-term shareholder value, opportunities for entering new markets, profitability, and more (McKinsey, 2011; Chen, 2009; Homburg, Stierl and Bornermann, 2013). It is also a key intangible asset that affects consumer trust and loyalty (Açikgöz et al, 2024). Brand loyalty is likewise one of the most important components of brand equity (Aaker, 1992). It refers to consumers' psychological preference for a brand, reflecting the degree of trust

and reliance they place on it (Atulkar, 2020; Lau and Lee, 1999). Strong brand loyalty can transform buyers into brand advocates (Influencity, 2024). However, reputation damaged by unethical behavior is extremely difficult to repair and can further undermine brand loyalty (Siano et al., 2017; Ewing, Caruana and Loy, 1999).

China is currently one of the largest and most important fashion markets in the world, accounting for 18.4% of the global apparel market value of USD 1.773 trillion (MarkNtel Advisors, 2025). International brands have achieved significant expansion in the Chinese market by attracting consumers through localisation strategies, brand awareness, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Consumers' awareness of sustainability is continuously increasing. According to a survey conducted by PwC (2024), 50% of Chinese consumers are purchasing more sustainable products or products that reduce climate impact. At the policy level, the General Office of the State Council of China issued the Guiding Opinions, which explicitly called for the prevention of "greenwashing" risks (Securities Times, 2024). This marks the first appearance of the term in an official government document (Securities Times, 2024), indicating that China is increasingly aware of the negative impacts of greenwashing.

As the primary consumer group in the Chinese market, Generation Z is generally more environmentally conscious and increasingly places importance on sustainability in their purchasing decisions, expecting retailers and brands to take a leading role in addressing environmental issues (First Insight, 2020; Vogue Business, 2022). At the same time, they demonstrate higher levels of social media engagement, meaning that greenwashing scandals spread rapidly, shaping their negative perceptions and eroding green trust, which in turn further affects brand reputation and loyalty (Lu et al., 2022; Chen and Chang, 2012). Therefore, the introduction of the concept of Green Perceived Risk (GPR) is highly significant. Green perceived risk refers to consumers' perception of the potential negative environmental or personal consequences of being misled by green claims (Chen and Chang, 2013). This not only damages the reputation and loyalty of the brands affected by the scandal but also undermines broader efforts by companies to promote sustainable products, as consumers begin to doubt the authenticity of all green claims.

## **1.2 Rationale**

Although the body of literature on greenwashing is expanding, several research gaps remain. Previous studies have extensively explored the impact of greenwashing on brand equity or consumer purchase intention (Chen & Chang, 2013; Akturan, 2018; Lu et al., 2022), but fewer have focused on brand reputation and brand loyalty within the context of the fashion industry. The fashion industry is characterized by differentiation, trend-driven practices, a globalized supply chain, and high social media visibility (Joy et al., 2012), making brand reputation crucial to business survival

and competitiveness. At the same time, studies have shown that Generation Z consumers display overall lower and more volatile brand loyalty, with this instability influenced by emotional factors and economic factors, thereby increasing the expectations they place on brands to maintain their loyalty (UTA, 2025). Therefore, it is necessary to gain a more nuanced understanding of the specific interactions between greenwashing, brand reputation, brand loyalty, and green perceived risk (GPR), in order to provide a deeper insight into the long-term implications of greenwashing for the relationship between brands and consumers.

Secondly, differences in cultural background and market environment mean that what constitutes an expectation violation and how consumers react to it may differ between the East and the West (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). China's cultural context and social norms shape perceptions of corporate misconduct in distinctive ways, meaning that responses to greenwashing may differ from those in other countries. A Deloitte (2024) study indicates that Chinese consumers' understanding of sustainable development focuses more on the environmental dimension, while Western consumers also consider broader sustainability issues such as social and equity. Extensive research in the West has examined the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and loyalty, with widespread consensus that it undermines consumer trust, damages brand reputation, and reduces long-term loyalty (Walker and Wan, 2012; Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla, and Paladino, 2013; Grimmer and Woolley, 2012). However, research in the Chinese context remains relatively scarce, particularly focusing on Generation Z consumers. Considering that China is one of the largest fashion markets in the world (MarkNtel Advisors, 2025) and, studying greenwashing in the context of China's Generation Z is both unique and necessary (Shi and Omar, 2024).

Existing research indicates that greenwashing in China does indeed undermine consumer trust and purchasing intention. A survey of Chinese residents revealed that approximately 46% openly distrusted manufacturers' claims about green products. This widespread distrust stems primarily from excessive packaging and even false advertising by some companies regarding environmentally friendly products (National Information Center, 2023). Academic research further confirms that in China's fast fashion industry, consumers' perceptions of greenwashing directly reduce their willingness to purchase green products (Lu et al., 2022; Shi & Omar, 2024). At the same time, Recent social incidents have more clearly reflected the heightened sensitivity of Chinese consumers towards brands' sustainability practices. For instance, the 2025 collaboration between Arc'teryx and artist Cai Guoqiang on the "Rising Dragon" art project triggered widespread controversy on Chinese social media over alleged "ecological damage," eventually resulting in large-scale boycotts and public criticism (China Newsweek, 2025). This suggests that Chinese consumers already possess a certain degree of green skepticism, and once they identify greenwashing behaviour by a brand, they may rapidly amplify negative emotions and translate them into concrete actions, thereby weakening brand loyalty and even leading to collective boycotts.

Considering Chinese fashion market increasingly intense competition, and the high speed at which consumers switch between brands, an in-depth investigation into how greenwashing affects brand reputation and loyalty would not only contribute to enriching academic understanding of brand consumer relationships but also provide valuable insights for brands to develop more effective sustainable marketing and crisis management strategies.

Finally, current research on greenwashing mostly uses quantitative methods, measuring pre-defined variables through questionnaires and experiments. While this allows for statistical analysis of the impact of greenwashing on purchase intention, it can overlook consumers' deeper psychological and emotional reactions, such as betrayal, disgust, and disappointment, which are often crucial for rebuilding brand relationships. In the context of the fashion industry, in particular, there is a lack of systematic research and strategic guidance on how to mitigate green perception risks and rebuild consumer trust and loyalty through communication and action. Therefore, this study employs a mixed-methods approach with a focus on qualitative research, capturing richer narratives and explanations directly from consumers in order to reveal emotions and perceptions that are difficult to quantify, thereby providing more comprehensive insights. Through this approach, the study not only complements the limitations of existing quantitative research but also offers a new theoretical perspective for academia to gain a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of greenwashing on brand reputation and loyalty.

### **1.3 Research Question**

To what extent does greenwashing affect brand reputation and consequently brand loyalty of Chinese gen z consumers and what are the communication strategies brands can employ to mitigate green perceived risk and maintain brand loyalty?

### **1.4 Aim and Objectives**

Based on the above background and research rationale, the aim of this study is: To explore the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and brand loyalty of Gen Z Chinese consumers, to analyse effective communication strategies to mitigate green perceived risk and maintain brand loyalty.

Objectives 1: To critically review the literature on greenwashing, its effect on brand reputation, green perceived risk and its impact on brand loyalty.

Objectives 2: The critically review the literature on available crisis communication strategies available and employed in a greenwashing context.

Objectives 3: To empirically explore consumer perceptions of greenwashing, perceived green risk and impact on brand loyalty.

Objectives 4: To provide recommendations for effective communication strategies to mitigate negative impact on brand reputation, reduce perceived green risk and maintain consumer brand loyalty.

### **1.5 Theoretical and Managerial Contributions**

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study expands the theoretical depth of greenwashing research, providing a novel theoretical framework for understanding the damage greenwashing can cause to brand equity. Existing research fewer studies offering a theoretical framework explaining how greenwashing systematically affects brand reputation and loyalty. Drawing on Expectancy Violation Theory, this study reveals the process by which consumers' psychological imbalance occurs and further examines the mediating role of perceived green risk. This theoretical integration not only enriches the causal chain of greenwashing research but also addresses the core questions of "why" and "how" greenwashing undermines brand equity, providing testable path hypotheses for future research. Secondly, this study expands the application of trust-commitment theory to crisis situations. This theory, traditionally used to explain stable customer relationships, is applied to the context of greenwashing crisis communication, examining the role of different communication strategies (such as information transparency, apology, commitment, and third-party certification) in trust repair and brand loyalty recovery. Through triangulating qualitative and quantitative findings, the study proposes scalable trust-rebuilding strategies, addressing a research gap in the Chinese market.

By exploring consumers' subjective perceptions of different communication methods through qualitative research, this study will propose and validate effective communication strategies for responding to greenwashing scandals, to rebuild consumer trust, and ultimately maintain brand loyalty, thereby bridging the gap between academic research and management practice.

### **1.6 Overview of Research Design**

This study will adopt a mixed-methods approach with a primary focus on qualitative analysis to comprehensively investigate the research questions. The research will be conducted in two stages. The first stage will be a qualitative exploratory study, employing semi-structured interviews to collect rich primary data. This stage will explore in depth Generation Z Chinese consumers' perceptions of greenwashing, the dimensions of their perceived risk, and their initial responses to different crisis communication strategies. The second stage will be a confirmatory quantitative study, in which a structured questionnaire will be developed based on the findings from the qualitative phase. Using a

Likert-scale survey, this stage will conduct large-scale validation to examine the relationships between greenwashing behaviour, green perceived risk, brand reputation, and brand loyalty, as well as to assess the effectiveness of different communication strategies.

## **1.7 Overview of the Structure**

This dissertation is structured into five main chapters. Chapter One introduces the research background, defines the core concepts, outlines the research motivation and significance, presents the research questions, aims and objectives, and provides an overview of the research design. Chapter Two offers a detailed review of the relevant literature, theories, and current research findings, covering topics such as the definition and manifestations of greenwashing, the mechanisms through which greenwashing influences consumer perceptions, brand reputation and loyalty, the perspective of Expectancy Violation Theory, consumers' green perceived risk, as well as crisis communication strategies and the application of Commitment-Trust Theory in greenwashing contexts. Chapter Three elaborates on the research methodology, explaining the philosophical stance, research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques adopted to address the research questions. Chapter Four presents the findings and analysis, integrating qualitative and quantitative results to examine the effectiveness of different crisis communication strategies. Chapter Five discusses the theoretical and managerial implications, identifies the study's limitations, and offers suggestions for future research. Through this structure, the dissertation systematically and coherently addresses the proposed research questions, with each chapter closely interconnected and collectively focused on the core theme.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

Reviewing the contemporary literature in related fields provides a foundation for subsequent research and serves as an exploration of current perspectives. This critical review explores four core research areas: the definition of greenwashing and its manifestations within the fashion industry; the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and brand loyalty, interpreted through the lens of Expectancy Violation Theory; the mechanisms of green perceived risk; and crisis communication strategies for mitigating the effects of greenwashing scandals, along with the application of Trust-Commitment Theory. By systematically reviewing the scholarship in these areas, this review aims to reveal how greenwashing influences consumer psychology and behavior, thereby undermining brand reputation and loyalty, and to explore effective pathways for restoring trust. By exploring the existing knowledge surrounding these topics, it is possible to identify areas where further research is needed, thereby providing theoretical support for subsequent research and identifying areas where further contributions are needed.

## 2.2 Greenwashing in the Fashion Industry

### 2.2.1 Definition of Greenwashing

The term greenwashing was first used by American environmentalist Jay Westerveld in 1986. Westerveld argued that hotels encouraged consumers to reuse towels in order to protect the environment, while in reality, they were primarily motivated by profit rather than genuine concern for environmental protection, thus engaging in greenwashing (Watson, 2017). In recent years, the number of companies across various industries adopting net-zero targets has continued to increase, and the phenomenon of greenwashing has likewise become increasingly prevalent (Montgomery, Lyon and Barg, 2023).

Netto et al. (2020) acknowledge that, due to the multifaceted nature of greenwashing, there is no strict definition of the term. Some scholars argue that greenwashing is essentially a deceptive marketing practice designed to mislead consumers about a company's ecological actions or the environmental attributes of its products or services (Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla and Paladino, 2013; Parguel, Moreau and Russell, 2015). Lyon and Maxwell (2011) emphasize information disclosure based on deception in their definition of greenwashing, which is "selective disclosure of positive information about a environmental or social performance without fully disclosing negative information on these dimensions, in order to create an overly positive corporate image." Meanwhile, Arouri, Ghoul and Gomes (2021) contend that greenwashing represents a potential discrepancy

between a company's environmental disclosures and its actual environmental performance.

### *2.2.2 Forms of Greenwashing*

To identify the mechanisms of greenwashing, it is necessary to distinguish its specific forms. Greenwashing is primarily conveyed through communication media, particularly advertising (Netto et al., 2020). The green marketing literature defines two types of greenwashing advertisements: claim greenwashing and executional greenwashing (Netto et al., 2020).

Claim greenwashing refers to the use of vague or controversial terminology, the creation of false claims, and the manipulation of claims to exclude necessary information (Kangun, Carlson and Grove, 1991; Netto et al., 2020). Kangun, Carlson and Grove (1991) categorise claims based on type (product-oriented, process-oriented, image-oriented, environmental fact, or combination) and based on deceptiveness (vague or ambiguous, omission, false or outright lies, combination, or acceptable) (Parguel, Moreau and Russell, 2015). Subsequently, the environmental marketing company TerraChoice (2010) developed a more accurate and detailed classification of the Seven Sins of Greenwashing. This framework includes: (1) the sin of the hidden trade-off; (2) the sin of no proof; (3) the sin of vagueness; (4) the sin of worshipping false labels; (5) the sin of irrelevance; (6) the sin of the lesser of two evils; and (7) the sin of fibbing (Netto et al., 2020). Delmas and Burbano (2011) believe that TerraChoice's seven sins represent product-level greenwashing, while Markham, Khare and Beckman (2014) argue that this also helps to accurately detect company-level greenwashing. Baum (2012) similarly considers the seven sins of greenwashing to be a primary means of exposing how firms use environmental claims to mislead consumers and adopts the framework for his analysis of advertising. Based on TerraChoice's classification, Scanlan (2017) added to accusations "false hope," "intimidation," "broken promises," "injustice," "harmful consequences," and "profit over people and the environment," often associated with covering up harms and risks.

By contrast, executional greenwashing refers to the use of visual or auditory cues evoking natural elements in advertising, such as colors (e.g., blue, green), sounds (e.g., birdsong, the ocean), and natural landscapes (e.g., mountains, forests), which induce a false perception of a brand's green image in the absence of explicit claims (Parguel, Moreau and Russell, 2015, p. 108; Netto et al., 2020).

In more recent research, Planet Tracker's (2023) report categorises greenwashing behaviour into six distinct types, collectively referred to as the Greenwashing Hydra, including greencrowding, greenlighting, greenshifting, greenlabelling, greenrinsing, and greenhushing (Huang et al., 2025). Figure 1 summarises the types of greenwashing proposed by scholars in the literature.

Source	Categories / Types	Key Features
Kangun, Carlson and Grove, 1991	Five claim types (Product-oriented, Process-oriented, Image-oriented, Environmental fact, Combination) + Five types of deception (Vague, Omission, False, Combination, Acceptable)	Distinguishes the object of claims and the degree of deception, forming the foundation of later greenwashing research
TerraChoice, 2010	Seven Sins of Greenwashing: 1. The Sin of the Hidden Trade-off 2. The Sin of No Proof 3. The Sin of Vagueness 4. The Sin of Worshipping False Labels 5. The Sin of Irrelevance 6. The Sin of Lesser of Two Evils 7. The Sin of Fibbing	Focuses on misleading advertising/product-level practices, widely cited in advertising analysis and regulation
Scanlan, 2017	Adds on top of the Seven Sins: False Hope, Fearmongering, Broken Promises, Injustice, Harmful Consequences, Profits over People & Planet	Extends to corporate-level behaviors and ethical critique, emphasizing social consequences and value conflicts
Netto et al., 2020	Two main categories: 1. Claim Greenwashing: false claims, vague terms, information manipulation 2. Executional Greenwashing: use of colors, sounds, and natural imagery to induce green perception	Introduces the distinction between claim-based and execution-based greenwashing, covering both language and visual cues
Planet Tracker, 2023	Six strategic types(Greenwashing Hydra): 1. Greencrowding 2. Greenlighting 3. Greenshifting 4. Greenlabelling 5. Greenrinsing 6. Greenhushing	Classifies greenwashing at the corporate strategy level, including concealment, distraction, and blame-shifting tactics

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 1: The types of greenwashing proposed by scholars in the literature

### *2.2.3 Greenwashing in the Fashion Industry*

Greenwashing is widespread within the fashion industry (Li, Cavender and Lee, 2025). Companies frequently omit critical information that would allow consumers to evaluate the accuracy of sustainability claims, use vague or ambiguous language to confuse consumers, and may even employ false marketing messages (Li, Cavender and Lee, 2025). Specifically, the fashion industry often uses terms such as “eco-friendly,” “sustainable,” “circular,” “vegan,” or “carbon-neutral” to describe sustainable practices (Li, Cavender and Lee, 2025). However, these terms often lack clear definitions or third-party verification, and sometimes highlight minor positive attributes while ignoring significant negative environmental impacts (United Nations, no date; Savić and Frfulanović, 2024; Li, Cavender and Lee, 2025). This discursive strategy is particularly pronounced in the absence of industry-wide standards for measuring sustainable outcomes, making the fashion industry especially susceptible to greenwashing (West, 2023; Li, Cavender and Lee, 2025). Furthermore, the fashion industry often relies on a variety of certifications, classifications, and voluntary initiatives to demonstrate its sustainability practices (Badhwar et al., 2024). However, the lack of standards and insufficient regulation means these tools are often used as marketing tools (Badhwar et al., 2024). For example, many fashion brands create a sustainable image by designing their own eco-labels or using “sustainable” certifications that are not third-party verified, thereby misleading consumers (Li, Cavender, and Lee, 2025).

A report entitled *Synthetics Anonymous: Fashion Brands’ Dependence on Fossil Fuels* investigated nearly 50 brands and revealed the fashion industry’s widespread reliance on synthetic fibres (Badhwar et al., 2024). It further found that 59% of products carrying sustainability claims were violated of the UK Green Claims Code, with H&M, ASOS and M&S exhibiting the highest rates of non-compliance, at 96%, 89% and 88% respectively (Badhwar et al., 2024).

At the same time, numerous industry scandals have further confirmed the prevalence of greenwashing. For example, H&M has been accused of exaggerating the environmental attributes of its products through the “Let’s Close the Loop” recycling programme, falsely claiming that its garment collection initiative achieves closed-loop recycling and prevents clothing from ending up in landfill (Changing Markets Foundation, 2023). Similarly, Lululemon’s “Be Planet” commitment focused on reducing carbon emissions and using sustainable materials, but reports indicate that its supply chain’s carbon emissions have increased rather than decreased, and that it remains highly dependent on fossil fuels. Consequently, it has been criticized for overstating its climate action efforts (Vogue Business, 2024; Wu, 2025). Figure 2 lists cases of greenwashing scandals involving fashion brands.

Brand	Year	Greenwashing Classification	Brief Case Description
H&M	2023	<i>Fibbing + Hidden trade-off</i>	Accused of exaggerating the effectiveness of its “Let’s Close the Loop” recycling program, misleading consumers into believing garments would not end up in landfills(Changing Markets Foundation, 2023).
Lululemon	2023	<i>Greenrinsing</i>	Criticized for its “Be Planet” pledge as supply chain emissions continued to rise, contradicting its climate action claims(Vogue Business, 2023;Wu, 2025).
Loro Piana	2025	<i>Hidden trade-off</i>	Promoted the use of rare animal fibers and emphasized ecological and animal welfare values, but investigations revealed inadequate oversight of outsourced suppliers, contradicting its sustainability narrative(The Business of Fashion, 2024).
Shein	2025	<i>Vagueness + No proof</i>	Fined by the Italian Competition Authority for vague and unsubstantiated claims related to its “evoluSHEIN by Design” sustainability initiative and related communications(The Guardian, 2025).
Zara	2021	<i>Hidden trade-off</i>	The “Join Life” collection used limited recycled material content and lacked sufficient transparency, offering minimal real sustainability improvements(Savić and Frfulanović, 2024).
Nike	2023	<i>No proof + Fibbing</i>	Faced a lawsuit alleging that only about 10% of products in its “Move to Zero” collection actually used recycled materials, contrary to marketing claims(Forrester Research, 2023).
Adidas	2025	<i>Vagueness + Greenlighting</i>	A German court prohibited Adidas from advertising “climate neutrality” goals due to the absence of specific reduction plans(Wenzel, 2025).

\*Author’s Own Figure

Figure 2: Cases of Greenwashing Scandals in Fashion Brands

#### *2.2.4 Greenwashing in the Fashion Industry and Generation Z Consumers*

Generation Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, is a significant and influential consumer group (The Business of Fashion, 2020). Their is reflected not only in their leadership of fashion trends but also in their active advocacy for sustainable practices within the global and domestic fashion industries (Wang, 2021; Liang, Li, and Lei, 2022; Zhang, Liu, and Lyu, 2023). Generation Z consumers demonstrate greater autonomy in their purchasing decisions and expect fashion brands to prioritise sustainable practices and accountability (Zhang, Liu and Lyu, 2023).

However, according to research by Li, Cavender and Lee (2025), the growing awareness of sustainability among consumers, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, has been accompanied by an increasing recognition of greenwashing and growing scepticism towards brands' sustainability claims on social media. Such frequent instances of deception heighten consumer suspicion, confusion, and distrust of brands' environmental claims, thereby negatively affecting brand reputation and brand loyalty (Siano, Kitchen and Confetto, 2017; Ewing, Caruana and Loy, 1999).

Although studies have revealed that Generation Z has attitude behaviour gap in sustainable fashion, where their recognition of the importance of sustainable fashion does not always translate into actual purchasing behaviour (Zhang, Liu and Lyu, 2023), but the phenomenon of greenwashing may also further exacerbate this gap in their green consumption. The high environmental awareness, digital literacy, and reliance on social media information among Chinese Generation Z consumers make them particularly susceptible to the influence of greenwashing, while simultaneously positioning them as a powerful force driving brand accountability (Zhang, Liu and Lyu, 2023).

### **2.3 The Impact of Greenwashing on Brand Reputation and Brand Loyalty**

#### *2.3.1 What is Brand Reputation?*

Brand reputation is an important intangible asset and a key concept for measuring perceived brand value (Bianchi, Bruno and Sanchez, 2019; Stravinskiene, Matuleviciene and Hopeniene, 2021; Açikgöz et al., 2024; Johnson, 2024). Aaker and Keller (1990) describe brand reputation as the perceived quality associated with a brand name, while Lau and Lee (1999) further emphasise that brand reputation is also related to people's perceptions of brand quality and credibility. Chaudhuri (2002) defines brand reputation as the overall value, respect, and characteristics of a brand as perceived or evaluated by the public, while Ren, Choe and Song(2023) highlight that brand reputation reflects public perceptions of a brand's business practices, ethics, and standards.

A systematic review of multiple studies on brand reputation reveals that brand reputation reflects

stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation, their emotional responses to the organisation, the information they acquire through direct or indirect experiences with it, and the organisation's past behaviour (Stravinskiene, Matuleviciene and Hopeniene, 2021). This indicates that brand reputation is a continuous process of building prestige, gradually established through consistent actions and communication (Bianchi, Bruno and Sanchez, 2019; Martín-de Castro, 2021; Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023; Amer and Ezz, 2023; Açikgöz et al., 2024).

Previous research indicates that brand reputation has a positive impact on both customers and businesses (Lau and Lee, 1999; Chaudhuri, 2002; Erisher, Obert and Frank, 2014; Cheng et al., 2023; Amer and Ezz, 2023; Seberini, Izáková and Tokovska, 2024). It represents the overall image of the brand within society and the level of public trust (Herbig and Milewicz, 1993). Brand reputation helps customers make purchasing decisions, strengthens their trust, and creates feelings of pleasure and pride when making purchases (Lau and Lee, 1999; Ahmadi and Ataei, 2022). For businesses, a favourable brand reputation can positively enhance financial performance, equity, and profitability (Herbig and Milewicz, 1993; Chaudhuri, 2002; Erisher et al., 2014; Amer and Ezz, 2023).

### *2.3.2 What is Brand Loyalty?*

Brand loyalty represents consumers' psychological tendency towards a brand, indicating their trust in and reliance on the brand (Aaker, 1992; Atulkar, 2020). Copeland (1923) was one of the first to propose a concept related to brand loyalty, referring to it as brand insistence. Early research on brand loyalty focused primarily on behaviour, specifically repeat purchases (Brown, 1952; Cunningham, 1956; Lau and Lee, 1999; Sari, Artha and Hadi, 2023). However, subsequent scholars have pointed out that consumers may also repeatedly purchase a brand due to external factors such as convenience, price discounts, or limited choice, but this does not necessarily indicate a deep emotional attachment to the brand (Doyle, 2016).

To address this limitation, Oliver's (1997) classic definition has been widely accepted (Sahin, Zehir and Kitapçı, 2011). He defines loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to continue or repurchase a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Moreover, researchers such as Guest (1955) and Jacoby (1971) have argued that brand loyalty has two components: behavioural brand loyalty and attitudinal brand loyalty (Kardes, Cronley and Cline, 2010; Bernarto, 2020). Attitude reflects customers' overall feelings towards a brand, while behaviour relates to the tendency to engage in repeat purchasing, and the underlying attitude is crucial, as it drives the behaviour (Yeh, Wang and Yieh, 2016). Finally, O'haughnessy (1992) suggests that loyalty is

rooted in trust, manifested in consumers' willingness to make purchase decisions in support of the brand even when short-term costs and benefits are not aligned (Lau and Lee, 1999)).

### *2.3.3 The Impact of Greenwashing on Brand Reputation*

Brand reputation is regarded as a valuable intangible asset (Bianchi, Bruno and Sanchez, 2019; Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023), yet it is also considered a volatile asset (Ewing et al., 1999; Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023). Reputation is based on consumers' perception of a company's ability to meet their expectations, and unethical behaviour can severely damage brand reputation, which, once harmed, is extremely difficult to repair (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Ewing, Caruana and Loy, 1999; Lin-Hi and Blumberg, 2018). Stravinskiene, Matuleviciene and Hopeniene (2021), after reviewing both the dimensions used by market research and consulting firms to evaluate corporate reputation and those mentioned in the literature, concluded that all considered dimensions can be traced back to the six key dimensions proposed by Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever (2000): financial performance, vision and leadership, products and services, workplace environment, social responsibility, and emotional appeal. Corporate engagement in social responsibility and provision of corresponding products and services can meet customers' emotional expectations and have a positive impact on brand reputation (Park, Lee and Kim, 2014; Samuel and Chandra, 2014; Tian, Wang and Yang, 2011). Conversely, greenwashing, as an ethical violation, can severely damage this hard-earned asset, leading to a decline in consumer trust and negative brand perceptions (Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla and Paladino, 2013; Amer and Ezz, 2023; Shi and Omar, 2024; Tu et al., 2024).

The primary direct consequence of greenwashing is a reduction in consumers' green trust and overall brand credibility (Amer and Ezz, 2023). Multiple studies have found that greenwashing significantly weakens consumers' attitudes towards the brand and their positive evaluations of advertising. Furthermore, high levels of perceived deception significantly reduce corporate credibility, leading to a decline in consumer favorability and purchase intention (Schmuck, Matthes and Naderer, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019; Bladt, Capelleveen, and Azan, 2023; Nicoleta et al., 2024). Such negative impacts operate both directly and indirectly through consumers' green scepticism (Khandai, 2025). As trust lies at the core of the brand and consumer relationship (Amer and Ezz, 2023), the findings of Santos, Coelho and Marques (2023) indicate that greenwashing behaviour negatively affects corporate reputation through perceived environmental performance and green perceived risk (Figure 3).

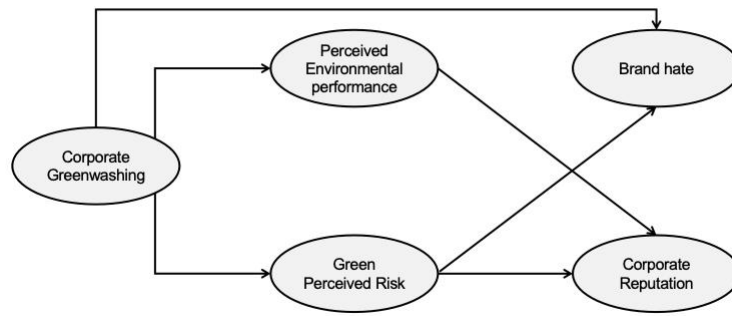


Figure 3: Conceptual model of Greenwashing Effects on Corporate Reputation (Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023)

### 2.3.4 The Impact of Greenwashing on Brand Loyalty

Corporate reputation is a prerequisite for brand loyalty, as a positive brand reputation can build loyalty and strengthen customers' confidence in a brand and its products (Walsh et al., 2009). However, reputational damage also affects brand loyalty (Bianchi, Bruno and Sanchez, 2019). Although some studies suggest that higher levels of brand loyalty can to some extent buffer the initial negative effects of greenwashing perceptions on scepticism and purchase intention (Nnindini and Dankwah, 2024; Shi and Omar, 2024), Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) similarly indicate that consumers who have already developed strong brand loyalty are emotionally and psychologically invested in the brand's values, including those related to environmental sustainability. These loyal consumers may initially experience cognitive dissonance when confronted with compelling evidence of misconduct. This implies that, while loyalty provides a certain degree of protection, once trust is completely broken, it also increases the brand's risk exposure. Similarly, numerous academic studies have shown that greenwashing by fashion brands significantly weakens consumer brand loyalty by reducing trust and triggering cognitive dissonance (Parguel, Moreau and Larceneux, 2011; Diandra and Aprilianty, 2024; Hossain, Hossain and Urme, 2025). Fashion industry scholars Hossain et al. (2025) found that consumers exposed to greenwashing messages in the fashion sector reported a significant decline in brand trust and loyalty, with the negative impact coefficient on brand loyalty reaching -0.45. This effect primarily operates through the reduction of consumers' trust in the brand. The Structural Path Model by Diandra and Aprilianty (2024) clearly illustrates this impact pathway (Figure 4).

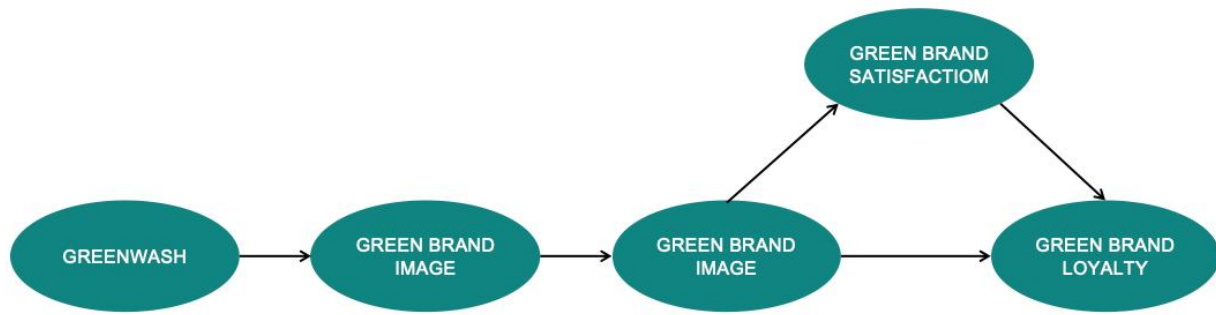


Figure 4: Structural Path Model of Greenwashing and Brand Loyalty (Diandra & Aprilianty, 2024)

### 2.3.5 Expectancy Violation Theory and the Impact of Greenwashing on Brand Reputation and Brand Loyalty

Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) is a communication theory proposed by Burgoon, who explained that EVT predicts and explains the impact of violations of non-verbal expectations on interpersonal communication outcomes such as attractiveness, credibility, persuasiveness, and smooth interaction (Burgoon and Hale, 1988; Burgoon, 2015; Mohammed, 2024). Over the past forty years, the theory has continued to evolve, expanding to cover other forms of non-verbal behaviour and being applied in diverse contexts ranging from interviews and interpersonal conversations to message comprehension, persuasive discourse, conflict, and deception (Burgoon, 2015; Mohammed, 2024). EVT explains the gap between corporate behaviour and how consumers perceive such behaviour (Burgoon and Hale, 1988; Mohammed, 2024), and research by Yang and Mundel (2022) suggests that negative expectancy violations may damage corporate reputation.

Individuals with high green expectancies hold stricter expectations of a brand's sustainability practices and are therefore more likely to perceive green expectancies as significant ethical violations (De Jong, Harkink, and Barth, 2017; Senan et al., 2025), which influences their subsequent behavior (Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023; Mohammed, 2024).

In cases of “greenwashing”, where false environmental attributes are deliberately communicated, a significant negative expectancy violation is created within the consumer and brand relationship (Paramitha, Tan and Lim, 2025). Based on a brand’s green claims, marketing, and perceived value, consumers form expectations of honesty, responsibility, and ethical behaviour from the brand (Lin-Hi and Blumberg, 2018; Park Cho and Kim, 2019). Green expectations heighten the salience of moral expectations, making violations more severe for environmentally conscious consumers. Individuals with high green expectations hold stricter standards regarding a brand’s sustainability

practices and are therefore more likely to view a violation of such expectations as a major moral transgression (De Jong, Harkink and Barth, 2017; Senan et al., 2025), which influences their subsequent behaviour (Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023; Mohammed, 2024). When these claims are revealed to be deceptive, the violation triggers emotional reactions, including a crisis of trust. These strong negative emotions sometimes manifest as retaliatory behaviours, such as brand betrayal and customer brand sabotage, as consumers attempt to punish the brand for betraying their trust (Kucuk, 2010; Sameeni et al., 2024; Senan et al., 2025). Santos, Coelho and Marques (2023), drawing on signalling theory, expectancy violation theory, and risk perception, examined the impact of greenwashing on corporate reputation and brand hate, finding that greenwashing exerts a negative impact on corporate reputation and green perceived risk, while having a direct positive effect on brand hate. Later, Mohammed et al. (2025) incorporated cognitive dissonance theory to explore the influence of greenwashing on brand avoidance, perceived risk, trust, and negative word-of-mouth. The present study adopts expectancy violation theory to investigate the effects of greenwashing on brand reputation, green risk perception, and brand loyalty.

## **2.4 Greenwashing and Green Perceived Risk**

### *2.4.1 Defining Green Perceived Risk*

The concept of perceived risk was originally developed by Bauer, who expanded on psychological concepts (Cunningham, 1967). He believed that consumers are unable to determine with certainty whether the expected outcomes of their purchase behaviour are correct, and that this uncertainty causes discomfort (Cunningham, 1967). Therefore, consumers will perceive a certain degree of risk in their actual purchasing decisions (Hoover, Green and Saegert, 1978; Akturan, 2018; Lu et al., 2022). Risk consists of uncertainty and consequences (Cunningham, 1967). According to existing literature, perceived risk can be classified into financial risk, social risk, psychological risk, performance risk, physical risk, functional risk, and time risk (Jacoby and Kaplan, 1972; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

Green perceived risk primarily reflects how consumers evaluate the potential negative environmental impact of their purchase decisions (Chen and Chang, 2012). It refers to consumers' subjective perception of the possible consequences of making an incorrect decision when purchasing environmentally friendly products (Chen and Chang, 2012). Greenwashing is a key antecedent of Green perceived risk, as it triggers consumers' green scepticism and heightens green perceived risk (Chen and Chang, 2013; Lin et al., 2017; Djakasaputra, Pramono and Juliana, 2020).

### *2.4.2 The Impact of Green Perceived Risk on Consumers*

Chen and Chang (2013) reported that greenwashing creates consumer confusion, increases risk

perception, and negatively affects green trust (Figure 5). A finding further confirmed by Lu (2022), who showed that green perceived value positively influences green trust and green purchase intention, whereas green perceived risk negatively affects both. Several studies have employed green scepticism as a mediating variable between greenwashing behaviour and purchase intention, a concept closely related to green perceived risk. Consequently, understanding perceived risk is essential for gaining consumer trust (Kakkos, Trivellas and Sdrolas, 2015). In recent years, it is undeniable that the rise of greenwashing has fuelled consumer scepticism, increased green perceived risk, and made consumers more cynical (Johnstone and Tan, 2015; Chen and Chang, 2013). Given the prevalence of greenwashing in the fashion industry, it is particularly important to understand what communication strategies brands can adopt to reduce green perception risks and maintain brand loyalty after greenwashing scandals.

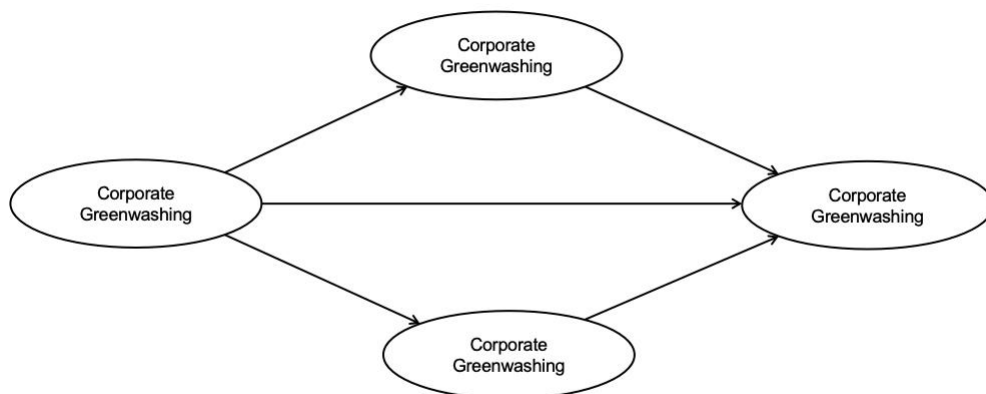


Figure 5: Conceptual model of Greenwash and Green Trust (Chen and Chang, 2013)

## 2.5 Strategies for Mitigating the Impact of Greenwashing Scandals

### 2.5.1 Existing and Implemented Crisis Communication Strategies in the Context of Greenwashing

When fashion brands face accusations of greenwashing, they may engage in dialogue with customers through a variety of communication channels to mitigate the impact of the incident and restore brand reputation and brand loyalty (Burchell and Cook, 2008; Rashid, Wisal and Hafizullah, 2023). According to stakeholder theory, companies must maintain open communication channels with their target audience, explaining their choices, behaviours, and actions in order to rebuild trust (Griffin, 2017; Richter and Dow, 2017; Voltan, Hervieux and Mills, 2017; Rashid, Wisal and Hafizullah, 2023).

The limited literature on trust repair has explored specific tools such as apology (Kim et al., 2004),

punishment (Dirks et al., 2011), commitment (Schweitzer, Hershey and Bradlow, 2006), denial (Bansal and Zahedi, 2015), and excuse (Tomlinson et al., 2004). These trust repair tools can be categorised into three groups: informational repair strategies, emotional repair strategies, and corrective repair strategies (Xie and Peng, 2009). Each approach can be implemented either in a “timeliness” mode (emphasising speed and efficiency) or a “deliberation” mode (emphasising accuracy, thoroughness, and effectiveness). However, timeliness and deliberation cannot be achieved simultaneously (Gillespie, Dietz and Lockey, 2014; Guo et al., 2018). Bozic (2017) highlighted the need to identify trust repair strategies beyond apology and denial and suggested incorporating other determinants such as advertising, commitments, and endorsements.

Guo et al. (2018), drawing on an organisational trust repair model, found that companies should adopt a three-stage trust repair strategy following a greenwashing incident, namely “timely–deliberate–timely” or “timely–deliberate–deliberate”, to achieve optimal restoration of green brand trust. They stated that companies should not only respond immediately to appease the public, but also launch carefully planned improvement measures to rebuild brand legitimacy and thus restore consumer trust. Zhou, Zhang and Feng (2024) further refined strategy selection from the perspective of brand legitimacy, showing that brands with a strong pre-crisis reputation may afford to focus on explanation and gradual improvement, whereas those with weaker reputations must act swiftly and decisively. Similarly, Wang and Walker (2023) focused on consumer psychological interventions following greenwashing incidents and identified trust-regulation (quantifying the product’s green attributes) and credibility-display (visualising environmental actions) as effective intervention strategies. It is worth noting that Rashid, Ahmad and Hafizullah (2023) highlight elements such as integrity, benevolence, and ability within their trust restoration model.

While the aforementioned literature offers valuable insights into restoring trust after greenwashing from various perspectives, existing research has underdeveloped the long-term maintenance of brand loyalty. Most studies use trust restoration or repurchase intention as outcome measures, paying insufficient attention to true relationship commitment and long-term loyalty. In other words, there is still no unified framework addressing how communication can reduce consumers’ perceived uncertainty about a brand’s environmental commitments and thereby foster long-term brand loyalty.

### *2.5.2 Commitment Trust Theory*

This article will use relationship marketing theory to broaden its research perspective. Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) Commitment-Trust Theory is one of the principal theories of relationship marketing, focusing on the quality of relationships. They argue that trust is the cornerstone of market relationships, and relationships without trust are difficult to sustain (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Trust fosters commitment, which in turn drives cooperation and loyalty (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

According to Chang and Guo (2021), trust and commitment reflect the extent to which retailers meet consumer expectations, translating into a strong relationship between the two partners in a transaction (Zinoubi, 2023). Therefore, trust reflects the degree of trust in the retailer, while commitment reflects the willingness to establish and maintain a relationship with the retailer (Elbeltagi & Agag, 2016; Zinoubi, 2023). Therefore, brands must not only restore consumer trust but also rebuild their commitment to the relationship in order to regain loyalty and help rebuild long-term relationships. For example, through continuous transparent communication and fulfillment of environmental protection commitments, we can continuously consolidate consumer trust, reduce consumers' perceived risks of brand green behavior, and transform it into stronger emotional commitment and loyal behavior.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Existing research has revealed the negative impact of greenwashing on brand reputation, trust, and loyalty, and has proposed various crisis recovery strategies. However, the overall body of research remains insufficient, particularly within the context of the Chinese fashion industry. The mediating role of green perceived risk and its long-term impact on brand loyalty have also received limited scholarly attention. This study aims to fill this gap, combining expectancy violation theory with trust-commitment theory to analyze the impact of greenwashing on the psychology and behavior of Chinese Generation Z consumers and propose strategies to reduce perceived green risk and rebuild brand loyalty. Based on this review, this study proposes the following sub research questions to guide subsequent research and address the research objectives:

Sub Research Questions:

- 1: How do Generation Z consumers understand and identify greenwashing in the fashion industry?
- 2: To what extent does greenwashing influence consumers' perceptions of brand reputation, and how does this subsequently shape their attitudes and loyalty toward the brand?
- 3: What mediating role does green perceived risk play in the relationship between greenwashing and consumers' brand loyalty?
- 4: After a greenwashing scandal, what communication and remedial strategies can brands use to rebuild consumer trust and recover brand loyalty?

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodological framework of this study is guided by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's (2023) research onion (Figure 6). In alignment with the research purpose and objectives, we have systematically considered and justified all methodological layers (Asher and Popper, 2019). This model helped to articulate the logical progression from broad philosophical assumptions to specific data collection and analysis techniques (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023).

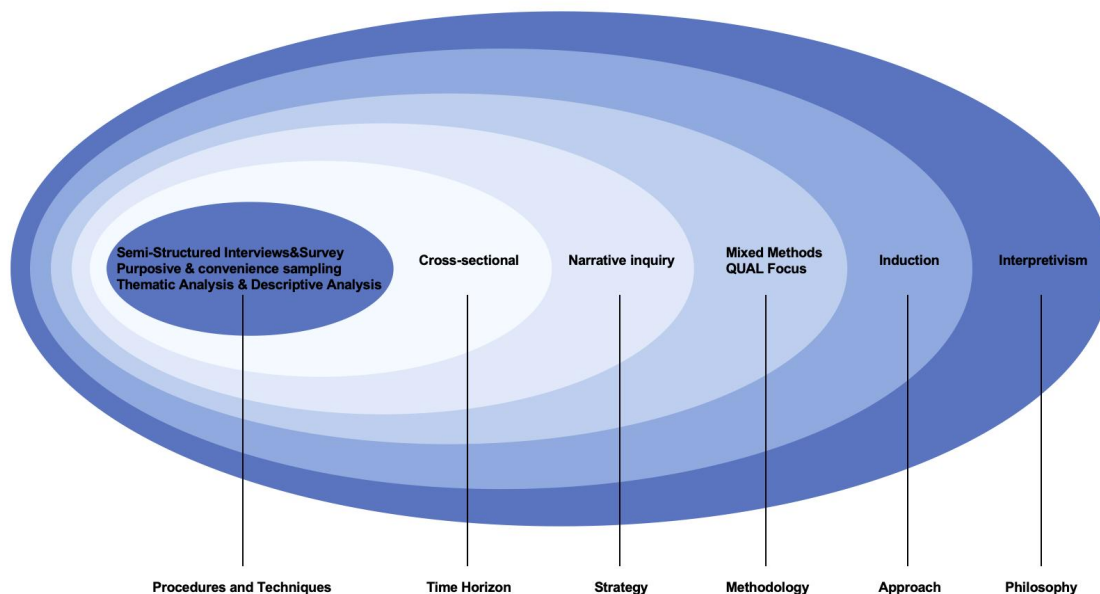


Figure 6: Research Onion, Adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2023)

This study aimed to understand the nuanced perceptions of greenwashing among Chinese Generation Z consumers, its impact on their trust and loyalty, and their expectations for brand remediation following greenwashing scandals. Given the complexity and subjectivity of consumer attitudes and behaviours, a single methodological approach cannot provide a comprehensive picture. Therefore, this research primarily adopts an exploratory, sequential mixed-methods design, with an emphasis on qualitative inquiry, complemented by a quantitative survey for broader validation. Qualitative insights were used to inductively generate understanding and hypotheses, which were then tested in a quantitative phase to assess their generalizability across a wider consumer base. By combining the depth of qualitative interpretation with the breadth of quantitative description, this study enhances overall validity through methodological triangulation.

### **3.1 Research Design**

#### *3.1.1 Epistemological Position*

Research philosophy relates to the system of beliefs and assumptions that inform the development of knowledge. It articulates the key assumptions researchers hold about the world (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). These assumptions encompass ontological, epistemological, and axiological considerations (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). These assumptions inevitably influence researchers' understanding of the research question, the research methods they use, and their interpretation of the findings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). There are five major philosophies in business and management, including positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). They fall roughly on a continuum between the opposing extremes of objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). Interpretivism, which emerged as a critique of positivism, is a subjectivist philosophy emphasising the distinction between human beings and physical phenomena, since humans are capable of creating meaning, and interpretivists study such meanings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). To design effective research, it is essential to integrate an understanding of philosophical approaches to research with those of the social sciences (Hatch and Yanow, 2016).

This study is grounded in interpretivism as its philosophical foundation. Although the present research employs a mixed-methods approach with a primary focus on qualitative methods, its core philosophical stance is interpretivist. Interpretivism emphasises that reality is subjective, diverse, and socially constructed, and understanding consumers' perspectives requires the interpretation of subjective meanings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). This study aims to explore how Chinese Generation Z consumers perceive and respond to greenwashing, brand reputation, and brand loyalty, as well as how they ascribe multi-layered meanings to brand actions in greenwashing contexts when interpreting and reacting to crisis communication strategies. These perceptions cannot be simply viewed as objective phenomena, but are instead shaped by personal values, cultural background, and personal experiences. By exploring these complex and diverse subjective perceptions, the study provides a deeper understanding of the evolving attitudes of Generation Z consumers toward brand reputation, trust, risk perception, and loyalty. Interpretivism emphasizes the understanding of the complexity, richness, and multiplicity of interpretations of social phenomena (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023), and therefore provides an appropriate philosophical framework for this study to uncover consumers' deeper perceptions and attitudes towards greenwashing and the associated risks.

Although the core philosophical stance of this study is interpretivism, a pragmatic orientation

underpins the overall research design, integrating different methods to address the research problem more effectively (Parvaiz, Mufti and Wahab, 2016). Pragmatism advocates the recognition that knowledge is not fixed or immutable but must be continuously questioned and interpreted (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023), which is particularly significant in the dynamic field of consumer behaviour and brand perception.

### *3.1.2 Research Approach*

Consistent with an interpretivist approach, this study primarily employed an inductive approach. Induction seeks to explore how individuals interpret the social world, to understand what is happening, to gain deeper insights into the nature of the problem, and to integrate the subjective understandings generated among different individuals (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). This approach allows for the study of participants' current perspectives and the context of their experiences (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2023). Furthermore, unlike deductive approaches, which aim to validate existing theories, inductive approaches do not impose preconceived assumptions. When the research topic is relatively new and lacks a substantial existing literature, various approaches can be used to establish diverse perspectives, including by collecting qualitative data and constructing patterns or theories through data analysis.

In the first phase, we collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. By analyzing key patterns and theoretical themes that emerged from these interviews, we conducted a thematic analysis of these data to understand what the data revealed. This process allowed for an exploration of the insights revealed by the data, thereby investigating how Generation Z consumers articulate the impact of greenwashing on their perceived risk and loyalty, as well as on their expectations of crisis mitigation strategies. Although Expectancy Violation Theory and Commitment-Trust Theory provided some theoretical orientation, unexpected themes may still emerge during the qualitative phase.

### *3.1.3 Methodological Choice*

The methodology of this study adopts a mixed-methods strategy with a primary focus on qualitative research, in order to combine the respective strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon of greenwashing and its impact on consumers. As mentioned above, because this study aims to explore the more complex and diverse subjective perceptions of consumers, qualitative research often employs interpretivist and inductive approaches to theory development, which can contribute to theory construction or the development of a theoretical perspective richer than that already

available in the literature (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2023). However, in order to establish the generalisability of the research and its relative significance, the use of mixed methods may contribute to enhancing the credibility of the study or generating more complete knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023).

Given the limited research on the impact of greenwashing on consumers' perceptions of fashion brand reputation and brand loyalty, as well as strategies for mitigating the effects of scandals on brand loyalty, exploratory research is an ideal choice. This study therefore adopts a sequential exploratory research design, in which the themes identified in qualitative semi-structured interviews are used to generate specific hypotheses that subsequently inform the design of quantitative survey questions. This ensures a strong connection between the two phases and maximizes the insights gained. Qualitative insights inform the survey, while survey findings contribute to the validation and generalisation of qualitative conclusions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). The integration of both methods provides a more comprehensive perspective and allows for triangulation of research findings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023).

#### *3.1.4 Research Strategy*

This study adopts a narrative inquiry approach, studying individuals' lives to retell their experiences and stories (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) highlights that researchers extract themes running throughout the narratives, which is crucial for analysing interview findings in order to identify commonalities in key success factors.

The first phase of qualitative research primarily employed semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method for this exploratory study because they allowed for a deep understanding of participants' personal experiences and perspectives while remaining sufficiently structured to cover key themes. Semi-structured interviews strike a balance between rigour and flexibility, enabling the collection of rich and in-depth data and allowing for further probing of ambiguous responses (Creswell, 2014). They are particularly suitable for exploratory and interpretive research (Creswell, 2014). This allows for deeper exploration of participants' multi-layered understanding of greenwashing, brand reputation and loyalty, and strategies to enhance loyalty, thereby better capturing participants' experiences and meanings.

The qualitative phase provided depth and context, while the quantitative phase offered breadth, serving to test hypotheses derived both from the existing literature and from emerging findings in the initial qualitative stage. Starting from general theories or propositions, these were examined against empirical data collected through the survey. The questionnaire survey allows for online surveys to be conducted among a larger group of Chinese Gen Z consumers, collecting

standardized data. The survey employed scales to quantify the findings of the qualitative research concerning greenwashing, brand reputation, brand loyalty, green risk perception, and post greenwashing remedial strategies. This approach facilitated the identification of generalisable perceptions or attitudes towards greenwashing.

### *3.1.5 Time Horizon*

Both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study employed a cross-sectional time horizon, capturing data from each participant within a specific time frame. This approach is appropriate for exploring perceptions, attitudes, and relationships between variables at a particular moment. The interviews and surveys were designed to capture Generation Z consumers' current attitudes towards greenwashing without involving repeated measurements. Although longitudinal research could track changes in brand loyalty over time following a greenwashing scandal, the cross-sectional design was more suitable given time constraints and the complexity of controlling for external factors over an extended period. Participants' reflections and recollections were relied upon to assess how their brand loyalty changed after encountering a greenwashing incident. Through semi-structured interviews and surveys, it was possible to reconstruct perceived differences before and after the event within a single time horizon. While this approach may not be as robust as genuine longitudinal data, it can nonetheless provide valuable indications of causal relationships.

## **3.2 Research Methods**

### **3.2.1 Qualitative Instrument Development**

Qualitative research often employs unstructured or semi-structured interviews to capture participants' multiple meanings and socially constructed experiences (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Both semi-structured and unstructured interviews are categorised as non-standardised forms of interviewing (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). Semi-structured interviews are typically based on a set of pre-determined questions aligned with one or more themes, but the interviewer may flexibly adjust the order of questions or add new ones depending on the flow of the conversation, thereby maintaining a focus on the research questions while providing participants with an open space to express themselves (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023). To ensure the validity and reliability of data collection (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2023), this study designed a semi-structured interview framework. The framework employed open-ended questions to encourage participants to discuss freely while enabling deeper exploration of relevant topics within the focus of the research questions. It was structured in tabular form, mapping research themes, research questions (RQ1–RQ4), theoretical underpinnings (e.g., Expectancy Violation Theory and

Commitment Trust Theory), existing literature, and specific interview questions. This alignment ensured systematicity and logical coherence through a theory-driven approach.

In addition, real brand cases were incorporated into the interview design, including greenwashing scandals involving the fast fashion brand H&M, the luxury brand Loro Piana, and the sportswear brands Nike and Lululemon (Figure 7). The selection of cases was informed by existing studies on greenwashing in the fashion industry. By situating participants within specific brand contexts during the interviews, the authenticity of the research setting was enhanced and thereby improving the credibility of the data (Creswell and Miller, 2010).

<b>Brand (Industry)</b>	<b>Scandal Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Research Relevance</b>
H&M (Fast Fashion)	Fibbing + Hidden trade-off	Accused of exaggerating the effectiveness of its “Let’s Close the Loop” recycling program, misleading consumers into believing garments would not end up in landfills(Changing Markets Foundation, 2023).	The H&M case study helps explore the interplay between low prices, fast consumption, and brand reputation and loyalty for fast fashion brands.
Loro Piana (Luxury Brands)	Hidden trade-off	The brand emphasizes ecological and animal welfare values; however, investigations reveal insufficient oversight of outsourced suppliers, with evidence of factory exploitation, contradicting its sustainability narrative (The Business of Fashion, 2024).	This case study facilitates research into whether consumers in the high-end consumer market exhibit stronger or weaker brand loyalty, as well as exploring the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and brand value.
Lululemon (Sportswear Brands)	Greenrinsing	Criticized for its “Be Planet” pledge as supply chain emissions continued to rise, contradicting its climate action claims(Vogue Business, 2023;Wu, 2025).	This case study helps analyze consumers' sensitivity to the gap between green promises and actual performance, and explores the impact of greenwashing on sports brand loyalty and reputation.
Nike (Sportswear Brands)	No proof + Fibbing	Faced a lawsuit alleging that only about 10% of products in its “Move to Zero” collection actually used recycled materials, contrary to marketing claims(Forrester Research, 2023).	Studying how consumers respond to both exaggerated and unsubstantiated greenwashing.

*\*Author’s Own Figure*

Figure 7: Greenwashing Case Examples Applied in Semi-Structured Interview

As shown in Figure 7, the study clearly outlined the content of the cases, the type of greenwashing, and their research relevance, linking the selected cases to specific types of scandals and the corresponding theoretical concepts under investigation. To reduce the potential influence of brand hierarchy or variations in types of greenwashing on participants' perceptions, comparisons were made across different brand tiers within the same type of greenwashing during the interviews, ensuring the robustness of the research findings.

The interview framework design were both informed by the research questions, theoretical basis, related research. The interview framework focused on four themes: (1) consumers' perceptions of and responses to greenwashing; (2) the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and loyalty; (3) the mediating role of green perceived risk; and (4) strategic brand responses to restore reputation and loyalty. Sub-interview questions were developed under each theme, with the detailed framework presented in Appendix C, while Figure 8 presents a simplified version of the interview framework.

Themes	Main Interview Questions
Consumers' Perceptions of and Responses to Greenwashing	1. What kinds of fashion brands do you usually like? Do you usually notice the eco-friendly or sustainability messages in their advertisements or promotions? 2. When a brand says it's eco-friendly or sustainable, do you care whether they actually do it? 3. Have you ever come across a brand whose environmental or sustainability promotion didn't really match what they were doing? If so, how did you feel at that time?
The Impact of Greenwashing on Brand Reputation and Loyalty	To guide the discussion, participants will watch brief case descriptions of greenwashing scandals and then answer the following questions: 4. When you hear this kind of news, how do you feel about it? 5. How would this affect your trust in the brand? 6. How might this news affect your view of the brand's reputation? 7. If you are a loyal customer of this brand, would this news change your loyalty or future purchase intentions, such as reducing the frequency of purchases, stopping purchases, or switching to a competing brand of the same type?
The Mediating Role of Green Perceived Risk	8. After a brand has been involved in a greenwashing scandal, would you become more cautious when you see its other environmental claims or products? 9. After hearing about greenwashing scandals from some brands, do you think there might be some risks in buying eco-friendly/sustainable products?

Themes	Main Interview Questions
Strategic Brand Responses to Restore Reputation and Loyalty	10. After such a scandal, what could the brand do or say to regain your trust?
	Introduce real communication and remedial cases with assumed strategies (e.g., apology, sustainability commitment, third-party audits, transparency reports, two-way communication) to discuss which participants find acceptable.
	11. If a brand immediately apologised, clarified, or ended a related partnership after a scandal, to what extent would that reduce your doubts and help you rebuild trust? 12. If a brand announced long-term sustainability goals, to what extent would that reduce your doubts and restore your trust? 13. If a brand continued to take action in the following years and fulfilled its commitments, would this help the brand regain your trust and loyalty? 14. If a brand released transparency reports or used third-party certification and audits to prove its commitments, would that make you trust them more? 16. What else would you expect a brand to do to regain your trust and loyalty?

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 8: Interview Framework

### 3.2.2 Quantitative Instrument Development

In the quantitative research phase, a structured questionnaire was designed based on the categories generated from the qualitative research findings (See Appendix D). A five-point Likert scale was employed. Key concepts from relevant theories were incorporated, including greenwashing perception, green scepticism, brand trust, brand reputation, perceived green risk, brand loyalty, as well as responses to greenwashing scandals and corresponding trust-repair strategies.

The questionnaire was designed to be completed within approximately five minutes, with concise wording, and a Chinese version was provided for Chinese respondents where necessary to avoid misunderstanding, with back-translation used to ensure accuracy. Prior to the formal survey, a pilot test was conducted with five individuals not involved in the interviews to ensure the clarity of the questions and to revise any wording found to be confusing.

### 3.2.3 Sampling Strategy

This study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For the qualitative sampling, a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was used, through which six Chinese consumers participated in semi-structured interviews (Figure 9). To ensure relevance, participants were required to be Chinese citizens or residents, thereby maintaining cultural consistency. They were approximately born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s (the definition of Generation Z), had an interest in or knowledge of fashion brands, and preferably possessed some awareness of environmental or sustainability issues. While the study sought diversity by including individuals both with and without sustainability-related experience in academic or professional contexts, the small sample size meant that the emphasis was placed on the depth of insights rather than representativeness.

Participant No.	Occupation	Age	Fashion Interest Level	Environmental and Sustainability Awareness
Participant 1	Landscape Designer	27	Interest	High (pays attention to environmental/sustainable brands)
Participant 2	Marketing Specialist	26	very Interest	Medium (sometimes pays attention to the environmental or sustainability aspects of products)
Participant 3	Post-Graduate Student	26	very Interest	Medium (occasionally pay attention to brand environmental protection information)
Participant 4	Salesperson	27	Interest	High (often pays attention to luxury brands' environmental and sustainability promotion)
Participant 5	Post-Graduate Student	24	very Interest	Medium (occasionally pays attention to brand environmental or sustainable information)
Participant 6	Post-Graduate Student	23	Interest	Low (less concerned with environmental issues)

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 9: Participant Table

In the quantitative phase, a convenience sampling method was employed to distribute an online survey, with the aim of collecting approximately 100 valid responses. The questionnaire link was posted on platforms such as WeChat, Rednote, and Weibo, and further disseminated through personal contacts using a snowballing approach. Screening questions were included to ensure

that participants were born between 1996 and 2010, had engaged with at least one fashion brand in the past year, and had noticed sustainability related information released by fashion brands during the same period.

#### *3.2.4 Data Collection and Analysis*

The six interviewees for the qualitative phase were recruited primarily through personal networks, Chinese student WeChat groups, and online posts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted one-on-one via the secure online platform Tencent Meeting. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently translated into English. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, following the six-stage framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data were deeply understood through multiple readings of the transcripts and initial observations. Manual coding was then performed to generate initial codes, which were then organized into broader themes. Finally, all interview themes were reviewed for plausibility, adequately capturing the data without missing key ideas or merging previously independent sections. The final codes were then refined to refine the meaning of each theme and its relationship to our research questions. Manual coding was chosen to ensure a close fit with the data, and careful attention was paid to the translation process to minimize semantic distortion.

In the quantitative phase, data were collected through an online survey distributed. A total of 103 valid responses were obtained. The questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5). For data analysis, descriptive statistics were employed to provide an overview of participants' responses. The analysis focused on calculating means, standard deviations (SD), and levels of agreement to summarize patterns in perceptions and attitudes towards greenwashing.

#### *3.2.4 Validity and Reliability*

This study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining the breadth of the survey with the depth of the interviews, thereby enhancing overall validity. The credibility and robustness of the findings were strengthened through triangulation. In the qualitative phase, the study followed the four trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to ensure the rigour of the findings. Specifically, in terms of credibility, semi-structured, theory-driven interview guides were employed to cover all core themes and reduce contingency. Regarding transferability, sufficient contextual information and verbatim quotations from the interviews were provided, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. In relation to dependability,

the use of Tencent Meeting generated complete interview records, while detailed documentation of the coding and theme development process was retained to ensure transparency and consistency in the research process. Finally, concerning confirmability, the mutual support between the quantitative results and qualitative themes, together with the application of triangulation, ensured that the conclusions were firmly grounded in the data rather than influenced by the researcher's subjective value judgements.

### *3.2.5 Limitations of the Research Design*

Although a series of measures were taken in the design and execution of this study to ensure rigour, several limitations remain. First, the qualitative sample size was relatively small ( $n = 6$ ), which restricted the diversity and representativeness of perspectives and therefore limited the generalisability of the findings to the wider population of Chinese Generation Z consumers. To mitigate this limitation, the qualitative phase emphasised depth of insight, and credibility was enhanced through triangulation with the quantitative survey results. Second, both the interviews and the survey employed purposive and convenience sampling, which may have led to sampling bias and thus affected the generalisability of the conclusions. Third, as this study adopted a cross-sectional design, it reflected perceptions and attitudes at a single point in time, without the capacity to dynamically track the evolution of consumers' brand loyalty and trust repair over time. Nonetheless, these limitations do not diminish the exploratory contribution of the research. The findings still provide valuable insights into Chinese Generation Z consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards greenwashing within the context of sustainable fashion.

## **3.3 Research Ethics**

This research was conducted in accordance with the UAL Code of Practice on Research Ethics, ensuring that ethical principles informed every stage of the study. Prior to data collection, a Research Ethics Approval Form was completed and authorised by the supervisor (see Appendix One). All participants received an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, their rights, and the voluntary nature of participation. Informed consent was obtained before data collection, and the signed consent forms are included in Appendix Two. Questionnaire respondents, Consent was embedded in the first section of the survey, requiring participants to acknowledge their voluntary participation before proceeding.

Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained, with no personal or organisational identifiers disclosed. Data were stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher, and audio recordings were deleted following transcription. Participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw. All supporting ethical documentation, including approval forms, participant information sheets, and consent records, is provided in the appendices.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings derived from the mixed-methods approach employed in this study, integrating qualitative interviews and quantitative survey analysis. Section 4.1 discusses the qualitative insights, providing an in-depth exploration of consumer perceptions, emotions, and behavioural tendencies, while Section 4.2 validates and extends these findings through quantitative analysis. Together, these results form the empirical foundation for the discussion and managerial implications that follow in Chapter 5.

### 4.1 Qualitative Findings and Analysis

#### *4.1.1 Data Structure*

After analysis, the data structure of the research was gradually clearly constructed. This framework reflects the analytical approach for the primary research content. The primary theme focuses on the impact of greenwashing on the reputation and brand loyalty of fashion brands among Chinese Generation Z consumers, further extending to the issues of perceived green risk and how to mitigate the negative impact of scandals on brand loyalty through appropriate strategies. These themes were integrated during analysis into several composite dimensions, each linked to corresponding dimensions. Finally, through data refinement and consolidation, overarching composite dimensions were distilled to present the study's core findings. Figure 10 illustrates this data structure formation process, with detailed coding procedures provided in Appendix C.

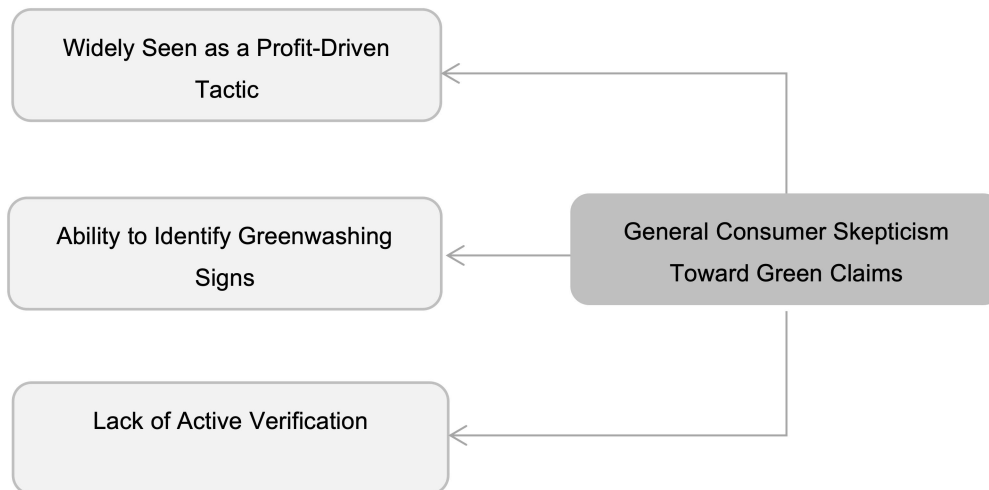
Sub Code	Code	Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skepticism as the Norm</li> <li>Viewing Green Claims as ‘Regular Advertising’</li> </ul>	Widely Seen as a Profit-Driven Tactic	General Consumer Skepticism Toward Green Claims
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative Media/Social Media Coverage</li> <li>Physical Product Experience</li> <li>Information Inconsistency</li> </ul>	Ability to Identify Greenwashing Signs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relying Mainly on Intuition</li> <li>Difficult to Verify</li> </ul>	Lack of Active Verification	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative Emotions (Betrayal, Disappointment)</li> <li>Decline in Brand Reputation and Trust</li> <li>Skepticism Toward the all Brand Claims</li> <li>Stopping or Reducing Purchases</li> <li>Considering Switching to Other Brands</li> </ul>	Sense of Betrayal and Loss of Trust	Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moral Boundaries</li> <li>Personal Relevance</li> <li>Influenced by the Severity of Greenwashing</li> </ul>	Tangible Harm and Differences in Perceived Severity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenwashing by Luxury Brands Causes Greater Reputational Damage</li> <li>Luxury Brands Are Hard to Substitute</li> <li>Reputation Impact on Fast Fashion Is Limited</li> <li>Fast Fashion Brands Are Easily Substitutable</li> </ul>	Brand Tier and Expectation Gap	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Damage to Social Identity Signaling</li> <li>Damage to Self-Image</li> </ul>	Social Image and Identity Risk	Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belief That Paying Extra for False Sustainability Is Not Worth It</li> </ul>	Value Risk	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scepticism about the durability of eco-friendly alternative materials</li> </ul>	Quality Risk	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness to Give the Brand a Chance</li> <li>Rapid and Decisive Short-Term Responses</li> <li>Remaining Skeptical</li> </ul>	Timely and Genuine Crisis Response and Commitment	Brand Remediation Measures and Trust Rebuilding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immature Actions Are Also Seen as Positive Efforts</li> <li>Need for Long-Term Evidence of Improvement</li> <li>Partial Loss of Trust Is Irreversible</li> </ul>	Continuous Improvement Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactive Disclosure of Supply Chain Transparency</li> <li>Introduction of Independent Third-Party Certification and Auditing</li> <li>Strengthened Two-Way Communication With Consumers (e.g., Livestreaming)</li> <li>Preference for Passively Receiving Development Updates</li> </ul>	Enhancing Transparency and Third-Party Oversight	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactively Taking Social Responsibility</li> </ul>	Social Responsibility Commitment	

*\*Author’s Own Figure*

Figure 10: Data Structure

#### 4.1.2 General Consumer Skepticism Toward Green Claims

RQ1 focuses on Generation Z consumers' perceptions and reactions to greenwashing, exploring how they understand and identify greenwashing by fashion brands. Findings reveal that Generation Z consumers generally approach brands' environmental claims with caution and scepticism(Figure 11).



*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 11: Coding for the Aggregate Dimension: General Consumer Skepticism Toward Green Claims

The research sample (n=6) revealed that Generation Z consumers generally harbour a default scepticism towards brands' environmental and sustainability claims. All respondents questioned the motivations and authenticity of brands' environmental or sustainability claims, tending to view them as profit-driven marketing rhetoric rather than genuine commitments.

P1: I can say without a doubt that I believe they haven't. Although I haven't seen it with my own eyes, my personal impression is that environmentalism is just a scam targeting middle-class consumption, or a way to sell a concept to make you pay for their products.

P4: It's just a company whitewashing itself, can I put it that way? In my view, all big conglomerates do this with an agenda, the primary goal is profit.

As internet natives, the respondents grew up in a highly information rich environment, where scepticism of environmental claims has become a subtle yet pervasive process, making this scepticism a common response when evaluating brand information. This default mistrust in environmental advocacy forces brands to start from a "negative asset" rather than a neutral point when building trust, resulting in higher communication and persuasion costs.

P1: But perhaps because you later saw some information on social media that made you realize they might not be genuinely doing this, you've gradually come to feel that many brands aren't.

The study also found that most respondents have a certain ability to identify greenwashing. They will judge the credibility of environmental protection propaganda through social media, news reports and actual product usage experience.

P1: But now that I've been buying it for a while, I often find that the recycled truck tarpaulin material I get is getting newer and newer. I feel that the materials have not gone through a long period of use. It feels like they might be producing the tarpaulin now just for the sake of making the bag.

P6: Although they claimed to use recycled fibers, they didn't specify which product, or exactly what material, so I felt what they said wasn't very credible.

P2: Some brands highlight their FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification on packaging, yet consumers' desire for a "sense of value" often leads to excessive packaging. Even when using eco-friendly paper, brands still add foams or thick materials, which contradicts the sustainability message they promote.

Despite widespread skepticism, this study found that half of the participants admitted to being less willing to proactively verify environmental claims. Due to the complexity of verifying greenwashing claims, they tend to rely on social media exposure or news investigations to shape their perceptions. This "passive verification" has reinforced their skepticism of brands to a certain extent. While demanding evidence to build trust, they are reluctant to proactively seek it out, instead waiting for brands or external organizations to provide transparent information.

P3: I generally haven't checked. But if it's for schoolwork, I would.

P4; I wouldn't want to know further whether they were actually implemented.

P6: Although they claimed to use recycled fibers, they didn't specify which product, or exactly what material, so I felt what they said wasn't very credible.

It is noteworthy that a small number of participants continued to purchase from brands even after perceiving greenwashing, citing product practicality, value for money, and design as their primary considerations. Some respondents even described mild greenwashing as "regular advertising," showing a relatively high tolerance for exaggeration or unmet targets within a "normal" range. P5 highlighted that, within the Chinese society, environmental protection is viewed as a plus point

rather than a core driver of consumer behavior, a contrast to some Western markets where environmental awareness is more deeply embedded.

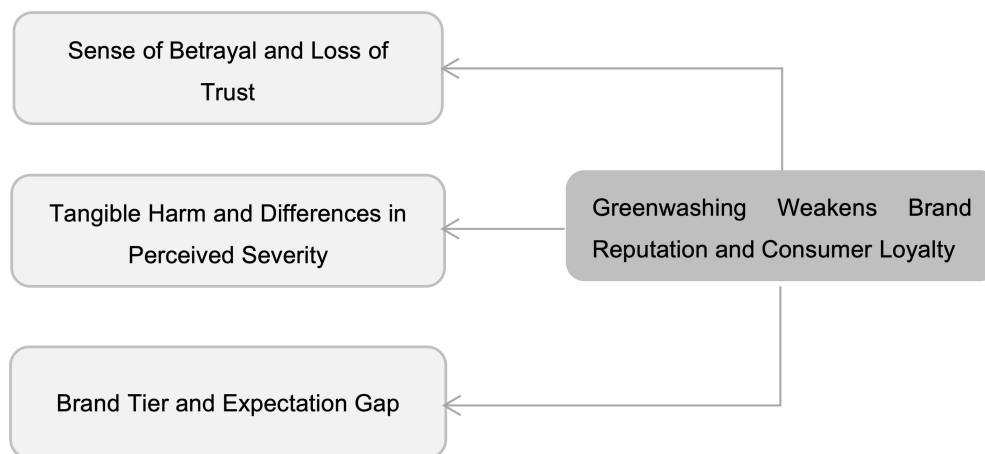
P2: As a consumer, I actually care more about the product itself. If a brand makes such a promotion, I think it's understandable, after all, everyone has to advertise.

P3: I would still buy it. It's purely about cost-effectiveness.

P6: Yes. When buying clothes I mainly look at style and quality.

#### 4.1.3 Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty

RQ2 aims to explore the extent to which greenwashing influences consumers' perceptions of brand reputation, and how it subsequently shapes their brand attitudes and loyalty. The findings of this study indicate that greenwashing has a clear negative impact on brand reputation and loyalty among Chinese Gen Z consumers (Figure 12). When consumers identify greenwashing, it is often accompanied by a strong sense of betrayal and loss of trust, which not only undermines the brand's reputational capital but also leads directly to reduced purchase intention and weakened loyalty. However, the perceived harm does not exert the same level of influence in all cases; its impact varies depending on the type of harm and the brand's market positioning.



*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 12: Coding for the Aggregate Dimension: Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty

A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the feeling of deception and betrayal. When participants became aware of greenwashing, five respondents explicitly stated that they felt deceived, a sentiment they described as stronger than mere disappointment, characterising it as a form of relational betrayal. Participants emphasised that their connection with brands is not purely transactional but also involves emotional investment. By accepting a brand's sustainability

narrative, consumers not only make a purchase decision but also invest trust and align with the brand's values. Consequently, when a brand is revealed to have acted inconsistently with its commitments, consumers experience not only a cognitive dissonance but also a profound sense of emotional betrayal.

P1: Because for me, if a brand does this, all the other potential things it promotes could also be done this way, in my perception.

P4: I think they're despicable.

P2: I would definitely feel cheated, and I would feel disgusted with this brand.

P6: I think I'd feel a sense of betrayal. If it were ultimately confirmed that they engaged in false promotion and real-world unethical exploitation, I'd definitely "blacklist" the brand.

This emotional response is often accompanied by behavioural consequences. Several participants reported a reduction in purchase intention and usage frequency, with some indicating that they would boycott the brand long term and actively switch to competitors. Importantly, the loss of trust was not limited to sustainability claims but tended to spill over into other brand promises, such as product quality and functionality, leading consumers to question the brand's overall credibility. Some respondents further noted that this collapse of trust extended beyond the focal brand, making them more sceptical of sustainability claims made by other brands. This overall trust collapse not only weakens the persuasiveness of individual sustainability claims but also undermines the brand's reputational capital, creating long-term challenges for the brand–consumer relationship.

P1: I will reduce the number of times I buy from it.

P2: I might feel that I won't buy from it anymore. I won't necessarily buy its competitor brands because I think most brands might be similar, and it's hard to distinguish them on your own.

P4: I would, and I probably wouldn't buy it anymore.

P6: At least during the period when the controversy and scandal were widely discussed, I would certainly avoid purchasing their products.

However, not all instances of greenwashing carry the same weight. Participants noted that the extent to which greenwashing affects brand reputation and loyalty depends on the perceived

tangibility and severity of the harm. When greenwashing was regarded as minor or somewhat expected, such as the exaggeration of carbon reduction data or the use of vague and redefined sustainability claims, participants typically reported only mild disappointment and did not significantly alter their attitudes or loyalty.

P2: It just not reaching its carbon emission promise, and not causing tangible harm, I think most people still wouldn't particularly care.

P5: So failing to reach them feels forgivable, I don't feel betrayed. They write such reports to complete a task.

By contrast, when incidents were perceived to cross clear moral boundaries or to have strong personal relevance, such as visible environmental destruction or exploitative labour conditions, participants exhibited more intense emotional reactions, and the resulting reputational damage was considered unforgivable.

P1: I think it depends on the severity. If you set a goal but don't achieve it, that's okay. But if you promise or claim to have achieved something and you haven't, I think that's a form of deception.

Brand positioning was also identified as an important factor influencing consumer responses. Four participants emphasised that the higher prices and added value associated with luxury brands create expectations that they should uphold stronger ethical and environmental standards. When such expectations are not met, the resulting reputational damage is perceived as more severe. Consequently, greenwashing by luxury brands was regarded as more serious, eliciting a stronger sense of betrayal and exerting the most significant negative impact on brand reputation and loyalty.

P3: Luxury brands have a huge brand premium, and this premium means they should do more and better things. What they're selling is a kind of psychological value in the first place, and if even that is fake, then they are going too far.

P5: Definitely less acceptable from luxury, there's a strong sense of betrayal.

Despite the intensity of these negative emotions, the uniqueness and emotional value of luxury products caused some consumers to hesitate before committing to a complete boycott. This perceived irreplaceability may, to some extent, mitigate the impact on brand loyalty.

P2: If it were truly substitutable, I'd switch. It is hard. They have the status they have today because certain things about them are irreplaceable.

In contrast to luxury brands, fast fashion brands were generally perceived as incapable of achieving genuine sustainability from the outset, and participants reported having little expectation of their environmental claims. As a result, instances of strong feelings of betrayal or a collapse of trust were relatively rare. Several participants further noted that when purchasing fast fashion, they prioritised price and style over sustainability performance, which moderated the negative impact on brand reputation. Only when greenwashing was considered severe and seen as crossing moral boundaries did it evoke a strong emotional response and affect brand loyalty.

P3: This result is actually better than I expected. I originally thought they didn't do anything at all, but they still did a little bit, and this is slightly higher than my expectation of them.

P5: I'm not shocked. No expectations, no disappointment.

However, because fast fashion brands have many available substitutes, some participants indicated that they would switch to competing brands in the event of a serious greenwashing scandal. This suggests that brand loyalty in the fast fashion sector may be more vulnerable to such incidents.

P3: Because fast fashion has too many substitutes; if not H&M, there's Uniqlo. I can choose not to buy from you and buy from another brand.

P2: I think H&M is more easily replaceable, so when this kind of greenwashing thing happens, it's easy for me to replace it.

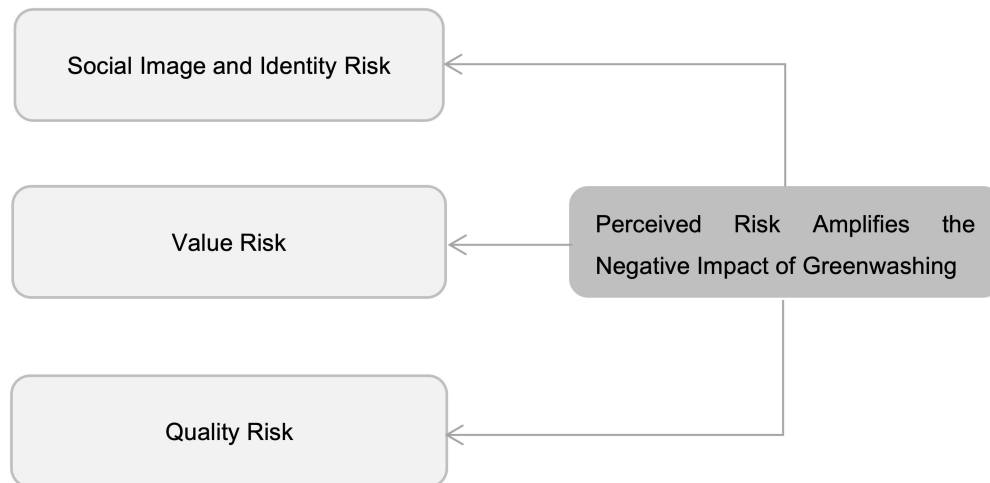
In addition, the study found that three participants explicitly stated that when a brand's products were highly appealing or difficult to replace, they would continue to purchase them even when disappointed by the brand's sustainability performance. This hard-to-refuse reality was particularly evident in the case of sportswear brands, which often fulfil functional needs and reflect personal preferences. In such cases, consumers weighed the unique value of the product against the severity of the brand's misconduct. Only when greenwashing was perceived as extreme and causing serious moral or social harm did it prompt them to cease purchasing.

P2: I think most people still wouldn't particularly care. They would still continue to buy because they're buying the product itself.

P3: I would feel a bit disappointed. It still might not affect my purchase directly. Lululemon is great to buy and wear

#### *4.1.4 Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing*

RQ3 examines the mediating role of perceived green risk in the negative relationship between greenwashing and brand loyalty. The study found that all participants mentioned that risk perception influenced their attitudes towards brands and their purchasing decisions (Figure 13). Greenwashing did not directly lead consumers to abandon a brand; rather, they evaluated the personal risks it posed. When greenwashing triggered strong emotional discomfort, threatened their social identity, or raised doubts about product value, brand loyalty declined significantly. By contrast, when the perceived risk was not closely related to themselves, the impact on loyalty was considerably weaker.



*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 13: Coding for the Aggregate Dimension: Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing

The interviews revealed that greenwashing primarily threatened their social identity. Four participants emphasised that consumption choices serve as an expression of personal values and social identity markers. When a brand was exposed for greenwashing, continuing to wear or use its products could make them worry about negative judgement from others and even lead to feelings of embarrassment or misunderstanding. Such situations weakened their ability to use the brand for self-expression and identity construction, rendering the brand incapable of representing the image they wished to project.

P1: I feel that if wearing it can't add a label to me, I might as well buy Montbell.

P1: I do care about what other people think.

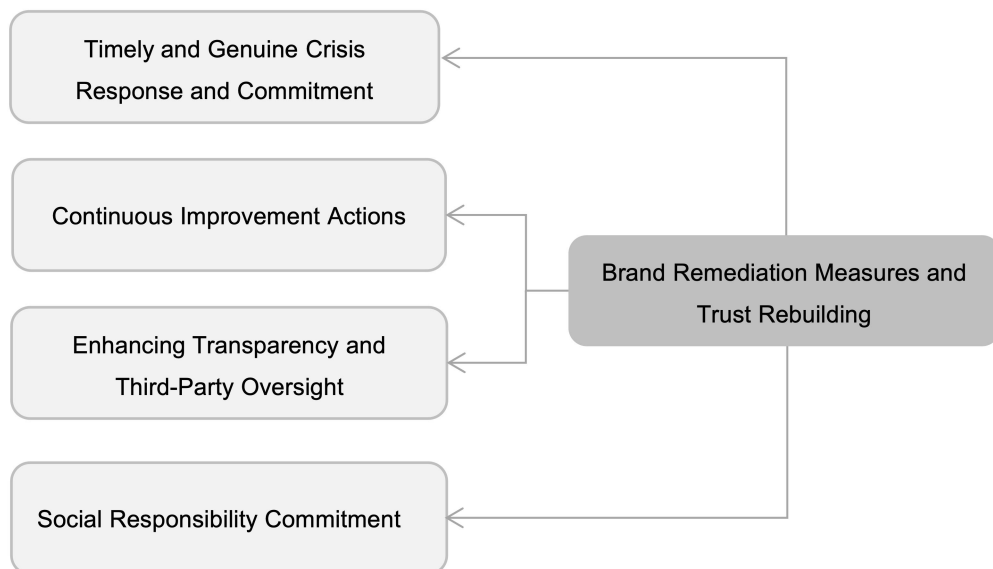
Participants also noted that a lack of authenticity in a brand's sustainability communication led them to question whether the brand might also be exaggerating product quality or durability, thereby heightening perceptions of value and quality risk. For luxury brand consumers, the high

price point made them particularly sensitive to this risk. When environmental or sustainability commitments were revealed to be false, consumers reported reassessing the product's value and questioning whether the price premium was justified. Once this value imbalance was perceived, they not only felt deceived but also believed that the price paid no longer matched the value received, which significantly reduced their willingness to purchase and increased the likelihood of switching to alternative brands.

P4; It feels like you fly the environmental banner and claim better materials, but the old ones were actually more durable

#### 4.1.5 Brand Remediation Measures and Trust Rebuilding

RQ4 explores how brands can rebuild consumer trust and loyalty following a greenwashing scandal (Figure 14). The findings reveal a clear divergence in participants' attitudes towards brands in such situations. Four participants stated that they were willing to give brands an opportunity to make amends and to re-evaluate their relationship with the brand, whereas two participants adopted a "zero-tolerance" stance, reporting a complete loss of trust once greenwashing was identified and refusing to believe any subsequent brand claims. These results suggest that post-greenwashing recovery efforts are not entirely ineffective; however, participants' expectations go far beyond a superficial apology, and remedial actions must be sufficiently robust to regain consumer confidence.



*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 14: Coding for the Aggregate Dimension: Brand Remediation Measures and Trust Rebuilding

The findings indicate that four participants emphasised the critical importance of a brand's initial response. A swift, decisive, and sincere apology, accompanied by a clear public statement, disassociation from non-compliant suppliers, an explanation of the incident's causes, and commitments for future improvement were seen as essential steps to defuse anger during the early, emotionally charged stage and to serve as a starting point for rebuilding the relationship. Participants also noted that such responses are not merely practical actions but also constitute a form of public commitment, which they approach with caution. If the initial response remains at the level of verbal assurances without follow-up details and concrete measures, it is perceived as a performative gesture, further undermining trust. Consequently, commitments must be paired with visible and verifiable improvements in order to be regarded as genuine and to effectively contribute to restoring consumer trust.

P3: Seeing this response, I feel like I've already been won back. This "cutting off cooperation within 24 hours" sounds very firm and decisive.

P1: I feel like I'd just laugh coldly. Are they blaming the supplier again? So all those people before were dead? Now they've suddenly come back to life?

P4: Whatever they do, my first reaction is negative, I wouldn't believe them.

P2: Issuing a statement within 24 hours can at least appease consumers and the public. But if they only issue this statement, I would feel they are very irresponsible. If subsequent measures follow, that's another story.

In addition to short-term responses, participants emphasised the necessity of long-term, sustained improvement efforts. Once trust is broken, it cannot be quickly restored. P2 and P6 in particular stressed that genuine trust recovery requires five to ten years of continuous progress rather than a one-off public relations campaign. Some participants stated that even if a brand's corrective measures were not yet fully mature, they could still be interpreted as a positive effort, and they were willing to observe and wait, provided that there were concrete follow-up plans and visible progress. However, several participants made it clear that once trust had been completely destroyed, it could not be regained, and no subsequent action would change their decision to boycott the brand. This divergence indicates that brand remediation measures can partially repair relationships but are limited in their ability to fully reverse the loss of trust caused by greenwashing. Overall, sustained and visible progress was regarded as instrumental in the recovery of loyalty. Brands that consistently demonstrated improvements, such as adopting better materials, ensuring fair labour practices, or reducing environmental impact, were considered more credible in regaining consumer trust.

P1: I think it would take a certain amount of time. It's a long-term thing. Also, they could release a very serious report every month or year, and some other things to prove themselves.

P2: If trust is to be rebuilt, then they have to keep doing things like this for five, eight, or ten years.

P6: I can accept the explanation. The key is whether they actually solve the problem afterward.

All participants emphasised that transparency is a crucial prerequisite for rebuilding trust. They expressed a desire for brands to provide specific and detailed information, supported by verifiable evidence, to substantiate their sustainability commitments. Participants widely agreed that third-party certifications, independent audits, or endorsements from authoritative institutions would enhance the credibility of such claims. As P6 stated, they could no longer simply trust what brands say themselves. At the same time, participants admitted that they were unwilling to spend time actively reading complex sustainability reports. Instead, they preferred to access information in a more passive and easily understandable format, such as through media coverage, third-party platforms, or real-time livestream updates on brand progress.

P5: I don't think complete transparency is possible; I can't go there myself. Unless it's a very niche, independent third party—like those public experiments tracking H&M with no ties to the fashion industry or brands. If it's truly proven they're improving, I might believe it.

P3: For example, Loro Piana could open a live stream in that community so we can see the real lives of the vicuñas and the herders; I would definitely watch.

Some participants noted that rebuilding trust requires not only crisis communication and transparent disclosure but also substantive changes in corporate social responsibility practices. They believed that brands should take proactive responsibility for their supply chains, directly engage in improving worker welfare, and reduce environmental impact, while demonstrating their commitment by adjusting profit structures.

P4: I feel they should lower their profit margins, I think I've seen some brands that allocate part of the money to the maker for each sweater sold. If it's like that, I'd be more inclined to believe. Similar to this kind of charity-oriented business model.

## 4.2 Quantitative Findings and Analysis

This section aims to systematically validate and quantitatively extend the findings derived from the qualitative study based on interview samples (n = 6) through statistical analysis of the survey data. Through descriptive analysis, the quantitative data are thematically discussed based on four core research questions of the qualitative study, with detailed elaboration of the means, standard deviations, and agreement rates for each indicator. The original descriptive statistics of the questionnaire data are provided in Appendix D.

A total of 125 questionnaires were collected. After excluding 12 respondents who did not meet the Generation Z age range and 10 respondents who had never purchased from or engaged with at least one fashion brand, a final sample of 103 valid responses was included for analysis. The questionnaire items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”), enabling the assessment of participants’ levels of agreement across the key constructs.

### 4.2.1 Skepticism Toward Environmental Claims

Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
1. I usually consider fashion brands’ environmental claims to be trustworthy.	3.06	1.13	35%
2. I believe that fashion brands’ environmental claims are mainly a marketing tactic to increase profits rather than a genuine commitment.	3.65	0.91	63%
3. I usually do not spend time verifying brands’ environmental claims myself, but rely on media or social platforms to expose them.	4.06	0.94	77%

*\*Author’s Own Figure*

Figure 15: Survey Results for Statements on Scepticism Toward Environmental Claims

Survey data (Figure 15) show that for the statement 1, the mean score was 3.06 (SD = 1.13), with 34.95% of respondents agreeing. This indicates that most participants do not fully trust brands’ environmental claims; however, the quantitative proportion also suggests that consumers do not completely reject such claims but rather maintain a cautious scepticism. Supporting this finding, the level of agreement with the statement 2 was even higher, with a mean of 3.65 (SD = 0.91) and an agreement rate of 63.1%. This reflects a widespread belief among consumers that such claims are profit-motivated. This finding is highly consistent with the

conclusions drawn from the qualitative interviews.

In addition, the vast majority of participants admitted that they rely on external sources for verification rather than actively verifying claims themselves. For the statement 3, the mean score reached 4.06 (SD = 0.94), with an agreement rate as high as 76.69%.

#### 4.2.2 Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty

Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
4. If a brand I frequently purchase from is exposed for greenwashing, I would feel deceived or betrayed.	4.05	0.91	76%
5. If a brand is exposed for greenwashing, its reputation in my mind would be damaged.	4.12	0.83	81%
5. If a brand deceives me about its environmental practices, I begin to question all its other claims (not just environmental ones).	4.18	0.86	82%
6. After learning that a brand has engaged in greenwashing, I would reduce or even stop purchasing its products, or switch to other brands.	3.58	1.05	51%
12. Even if I am disappointed by a brand's greenwashing behaviour, I may still purchase from it because of its unique products.	3.62	0.95	66%

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 16: Survey Results for Statements on Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty

The survey results (Figure 16) are consistent with the qualitative findings, showing that participants exhibited strong negative emotional reactions towards greenwashing behaviour. They unanimously agreed that if a frequently purchased brand were exposed for greenwashing, they would feel deceived or betrayed (Q4), with a mean score as high as 4.05 (SD = 0.91; Agreement = 76%). According to Statement 5, this sense of emotional deception or betrayal is directly and widely translated into negative perceptions of brand reputation, with a mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.83; Agreement = 81%). Most importantly, greenwashing behaviour undermines overall trust in the brand, for Statement 6, the mean reached 4.18 (SD = 0.86) with an agreement rate of 81.56%.

However, for Statement 7, the mean and agreement rate were significantly lower compared with

the first three questions, at 3.58 (SD = 1.05) and only 51% respectively. This suggests that there is a gap between emotional and cognitive attitudes and actual purchasing behaviour, and that negative emotions do not always translate into boycott. In support of this, most participants agreed that “even if I feel disappointed about a brand’s greenwashing behaviour, I may still continue to purchase because of its unique products” (Q12), with a mean of 3.62 (SD = 0.95) and an agreement rate of 66%.

Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
8. Mild greenwashing (e.g. exaggerated claims, lack of data) would not make me completely abandon a brand.	3.74	0.93	67%
9. If a brand engages in severe greenwashing that crosses ethical boundaries (e.g., concealing pollution or labour exploitation, falsifying or manipulating data), I would boycott that brand.	4.32	0.87	83%

*\*Author’s Own Figure*

Figure 17: Survey Results for Statements on Tangible Harm and Differences in Perceived Severity

This attitude behaviour gap can also be explained by consumers’ perceived severity of greenwashing. Survey data show that mild greenwashing behaviour is considered to be tolerable to some extent (Q8), with a mean of 3.74 (SD = 0.93). However, greenwashing behaviour that severely violates moral norms leads to a strong willingness to boycott (M = 4.32; SD = 0.87).

Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
10. Greenwashing by luxury brands makes me feel more disappointed and angry than greenwashing by fast fashion brands.	3.81	1	58%
11. I have relatively low expectations for fast fashion brands’ sustainability efforts, so I feel less disappointed if they are caught greenwashing.	3.5	1.02	60%

*\*Author’s Own Figure*

Figure 18: Survey Results for Statements on Brand Tier and Expectation Gap

In addition to the perceived severity of the incident, the survey results indicate that consumer expectations vary across brand tiers. Specifically, greenwashing by luxury brands evokes a higher level of disappointment ( $M = 3.81$ ), while the relatively lower expectations associated with fast fashion brands lead to a lower level of disappointment ( $M = 3.50$ ). These results quantitatively substantiate the qualitative finding regarding the expectation gap between luxury and fast fashion brands.

#### 4.2.3 Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing

Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
13. When a brand I trust is exposed for greenwashing, I fear being deceived by it again in the future.	3.91	0.75	73%
14. Wearing a product from a brand exposed for greenwashing would make me feel that my social image is damaged.	3.25	1.16	48%
15. False environmental claims make me suspect that I have paid an unreasonable premium for something that is not truly sustainable.	4.05	0.79	81%
16. When a brand is exposed for greenwashing, I worry that it may also be deceiving me in other areas (e.g., product quality, durability).	4.06	0.77	79%

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 19: Survey Results for Statements on Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing

Results for Statement 13 indicate that greenwashing behaviour triggers a general sense of uncertainty and fear among consumers regarding the brand's future commitments. The mean score was 3.91 ( $SD = 0.75$ ), with an agreement rate of 73%. It is noteworthy that perceptions of risk at the value and quality levels are more prevalent. For Statement 15, the mean was 4.05 ( $SD = 0.79$ ) with an agreement rate of 81%, indicating that consumers reassess product value after a commitment is proven false and feel deceived by an unreasonable premium. Similarly, Statement 16 recorded a mean of 4.06 ( $SD = 0.77$ ) and an agreement rate of 79%, echoing Statement 6 on the "systemic collapse of trust" and showing that the trust rupture caused by greenwashing further triggers concerns about product quality and functionality.

In contrast to the qualitative research, among all risk perception statements, the lowest mean was recorded for the statement that wearing products from a brand exposed for greenwashing

would damage social image (Q14), with a mean of only 3.25 (SD = 1.16) and the lowest agreement rate of 47.57%. This finding presents a certain inconsistency with the “social image risk” mentioned by some participants in the qualitative interviews.

#### 4.2.4 Brand Remediation and Trust Rebuilding

Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
17. If a brand can apologise quickly and sincerely and propose corrective measures (such as apologising within 24 hours and cutting cooperation with non-compliant suppliers), I am willing to give it a chance to correct itself.	3.75	0.89	71%
18. A brand must demonstrate long-term, continuous improvement in its sustainability practices (e.g., over five or ten years) before it can regain my trust.	3.84	0.8	70%
19. Actively disclose transparency, introduce independent third-party certification and audits, and publish regular reports.	4.23	0.63	91%
20. If a brand is willing to sacrifice part of its profit margin to improve its social and environmental responsibility, I appreciate its sincerity more.	4.4	0.7	92%
21. Even if a brand takes remedial measures, my trust in it can never fully return to the level before the greenwashing incident.	3.45	0.88	50%

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 20: Survey Results for Statements on Brand Remediation and Trust Rebuilding

The survey results also align with the qualitative insight that remedial measures can partially restore trust. For Statement 17, the mean was 3.75 (SD = 0.89) with an agreement rate of 70.87%. This indicates that timely and decisive initial responses can provide brands with an opportunity to repair relationships during the early stage of heightened emotions. At the same time, it emphasises that genuine trust recovery requires sustained and long-term efforts (M = 3.84, SD = 0.80).

A more central finding of the survey highlights the critical importance of verifiable transparency and substantive sacrifice of profit in rebuilding trust. For Statement 19, the mean was as high as 4.23 (SD = 0.63) with an agreement rate of 91.26%. Furthermore, for Statement Q20, the mean reached 4.4 (SD = 0.7) with an agreement rate of 92.23%, the highest among all statements in the survey. This indicates that only through tangible engagement in social responsibility can a

brand's improvements be recognised as credible.

Finally, some respondents believed that trust in the brand can never be fully restored to the pre-incident level after greenwashing ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ), which echoes the views of the zero-tolerance group identified in the interviews.

This chapter integrates qualitative and quantitative findings, revealing that Chinese Gen Z consumers generally respond to fashion brands' greenwashing with skepticism, emotional betrayal, and loss of trust. Although an attitude behavior gap exists, severe cases of greenwashing significantly damage brand reputation and loyalty. Perceived risk amplifies these negative effects, while loyalty recovery relies on genuine responses, long-term improvement, and transparent disclosure. Overall, both sets of results converge, providing a solid basis for the following discussion.

### 4.3 Summary

This chapter integrates qualitative and quantitative findings, revealing that Chinese Gen Z consumers generally respond to fashion brands' greenwashing with skepticism, emotional betrayal, and loss of trust. Although an attitude behavior gap exists, severe cases of greenwashing significantly damage brand reputation and loyalty. Perceived risk amplifies these negative effects, while loyalty recovery relies on genuine responses, long-term improvement, and transparent disclosure. Overall, both sets of results converge, providing a solid basis for the following discussion.

Category	Qualitative Findings (Keywords)	Quantitative Findings (Keywords)	Consistency
General Consumer Skepticism Toward Green Claims	Skepticism as norm, profit-driven, lack of active verification, reliance on social media	Limited trust, profit motive (63%), passive verification (77%)	Strong consistency
Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty	Betrayal, trust collapse, reduced purchases or switching, stronger effect for luxury brands	Betrayal (76%), reputation damage (81%), systemic trust crisis (82%), attitude-behavior gap (51%)	Consistent
Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing	Social image risk, value risk, quality risk, risk amplification	Value risk (81%), quality risk (79%), future uncertainty (73%), weaker social image risk (48%)	Partial difference
Brand Remediation Measures and Trust Rebuilding	Genuine response, long-term improvement, transparency, CSR commitment, partial irreversible trust loss	Quick response (71%), long-term improvement (70%), transparency (91%), profit sacrifice (92%), irreversible trust loss (50%)	Strong consistency

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 21: Qualitative vs Quantitative Findings

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Discussion

#### *5.1.1 Introduction*

This chapter aims to provide a systematic and in-depth synthesis and discussion of the mixed-methods research findings presented in the preceding sections. The discussion connects the research findings with the paper's aim and objective. In particular, Objective 3 focuses on empirically exploring consumers' perceptions of greenwashing, the mechanisms underlying perceived green risk, and their impact on brand loyalty. Objective 4 aims to propose actionable communication strategies to mitigate the negative effects of greenwashing, reduce consumer risk perceptions, and maintain brand loyalty. Building on this, the chapter reviews the key findings across the thematic dimensions, emphasising the connections between our results, existing literature, and key perspectives in the relevant field. Finally, the chapter outlines specific managerial implications, offering practical guidance for brands in addressing greenwashing crises and sustaining consumer loyalty.

#### *5.1.2 Green Skepticism and Brand Trust among Chinese Gen Z Consumers*

Consistent with existing research, the qualitative interviews in this study reveal that all participants instinctively questioned the motives and authenticity of brands' environmental or sustainability claims, tending to perceive them as profit-driven marketing strategies rather than genuine commitments. The emergence of green scepticism further undermines consumers' trust in brands. This finding aligns closely with the literature suggesting that greenwashing triggers consumer green skepticism (Khandai, 2025).

Although members of Generation Z demonstrate heightened sustainability awareness (Wang, 2021; Liang, Li, and Lei, 2022; Zhang, Liu, and Lyu, 2023; Li, Cavender, and Lee, 2025), and most participants possess a degree of ability to identify greenwashing (through social media, news reports, and direct product-use experiences), this study found that they generally do not proactively verify brands' environmental claims, passively accepting information presented in the media. Such a pattern of passive verification may represent a rational defensive mechanism developed by Generation Z as digital natives (Zhang, Liu, and Lyu, 2023; Li, Cavender, and Lee, 2025) in response to the environment of information overload.

#### *5.1.3 The Impact of Greenwashing Induced Negative Emotions on Brand Trust*

Consistent with existing literature, greenwashing generally triggers negative perceptions among

participants (Kucuk, 2010; Santos, Coelho, and Marques, 2023; Sameeni et al., 2024; Senan et al., 2025; Paramitha, Tan, and Lim, 2025). When participants identify greenwashing, they commonly experience negative emotions such as disappointment, anger, and betrayal. In quantitative data, 76% of participants reported feeling deceived or betrayed when their favorite brand was exposed for greenwashing ( $M=4.05$ ). In qualitative interviews, participants explicitly described this experience as a form of relational betrayal rather than mere disappointment, and characterised it as a despicable act. Expectancy violation theory (EVT) provides a solid theoretical explanation for this phenomenon. Consumers' identification with a brand forms the foundation of their relationship with it, and when a brand announces a green commitment, consumers develop corresponding moral expectations. However, when these expectations are revealed to be false, the significant negative violation triggers strong emotional reactions (Santos, Coelho, and Marques, 2023; Paramitha, Tan, and Lim, 2025; Mohammed et al., 2025).

Both qualitative and quantitative findings demonstrate that these negative emotions fundamentally undermine green trust. This response does not merely stop at scepticism towards a single environmental claim but systematically spills over into doubt about all of the brand's other promises. As many as 82% of participants stated that if a brand deceived them about its environmental practices, they would begin to question all of its other claims ( $M=4.18$ ). Consistent with Amer and Ezz (2023), the primary consequence of greenwashing is the erosion of consumers' green trust and the brand's overall credibility.

#### *5.1.4 The Mediating Role of Green Perceived Risk*

This study finds that greenwashing itself does not directly cause consumers to abandon a brand. Instead, it influences their purchasing decisions by triggering a series of perceived risks at the individual level. Consistent with the findings of Chen and Chang (2013) and Lu et al. (2022), greenwashing can cause consumer confusion, undermine green trust, increase risk perceptions, and further impact brand reputation and loyalty. This study refines existing literature on green risk perceptions, finding that consumers evaluate greenwashing through multiple risk perspectives: value risk, quality risk, and identity risk.

Quantitative research reveals that the perceived green risks of Chinese Generation Z consumers primarily manifest in value risk and quality risk. Greenwashing first disrupts consumers' trust in brands' green commitments. This loss of trust prevents consumers from factoring the added value of sustainability into the overall value of a product. 81% of participants believe that greenwashing makes them question whether they are overpaying for products that are not truly sustainable. This perceived value imbalance directly impacts brand loyalty, as consumers no longer believe that purchasing from a brand is worth the money. For luxury brands, this collapse of perceived value is particularly severe, since high premiums constitute a central element of

their brand appeal. Furthermore, 79% of participants are concerned that brands engaging in greenwashing may be deceptive about product quality and durability, echoing the view that false environmental claims can foster broader skepticism about product performance (Johnstone and Tan, 2015).

It is noteworthy that in the qualitative interviews, some participants highlighted the risk of social identity or the potential damage to identity labels, yet in the quantitative survey this risk received the lowest level of recognition, at only 48%. This discrepancy may be due to differences in research methodologies, the privacy and interactive nature of the interviews more readily encouraged participants to openly express potential social anxiety and identity concerns. However, this result does not suggest that the risk to social image is unimportant. For example, Arc'teryx recently faced widespread criticism in China for greenwashing (China Newsweek, 2025). Many core consumers, concerned that their own social image might be tainted by association with the brand's negative labelling, chose to stop purchasing from it and instead turned to competing outdoor brands (China Newsweek, 2025). This indicates that in cases of severe greenwashing incidents, the risk to social image may become a key factor driving consumer defection and brand switching. Moreover, within the cultural and social context of Chinese Generation Z, identity and social labels may carry a potential amplification effect. Thus, even if such risks receive lower explicit recognition in survey responses, they should not be overlooked.

#### *5.1.5 The Impact of Greenwashing on Brand Reputation and Loyalty*

Green scepticism and negative emotions undermine consumers' green trust in brands. As trust constitutes the core of the brand consumer relationship, its breakdown significant damage on brand reputation and loyalty (Amer and Ezz, 2023; Hossain et al., 2025). At the same time, perceived risk further amplifies the adverse consequences of greenwashing (Chen and Chang, 2013; Lu et al., 2022), deepening the erosion of both reputation and loyalty.

The quantitative findings reveal that 81% of participants believe greenwashing damages brand reputation. This confirms previous research (Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023), showing that corporate reputation represents a valuable intangible asset, it is also highly vulnerable (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Bianchi, Bruno and Sanchez, 2019). Corporate reputation is a prerequisite for brand loyalty, and declining reputation, eroded trust, and increased risk perceptions collectively weaken brand loyalty (Walsh et al., 2009; Bianchi, Bruno and Sanchez, 2019; Parguel, Moreau and Larceneux, 2011; Diandra and Aprilianty, 2024; Hossain, Hossain and Urme, 2025). Quantitative evidence further shows that greenwashing leads half of the participants to reduce or cease purchasing from the brand, or to switch to competitors (M = 3.58).

However, in contrast to some existing literature, 51% of participants expressed a reduced purchase intention after learning about brand greenwashing, but compared to their strongly negative attitudes toward emotion, reputation, and trust, the mean score for this behavior was relatively low ( $M=3.58$ ). This suggests that participants' negative feelings toward greenwashing did not translate into the same degree of boycott behavior.

#### *5.1.6 Moderating Factors: Perceived Severity, Product Uniqueness, and Brand Tier*

The findings indicate that this gap arises because the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and loyalty is moderated by a range of contextual variables. First, perceived severity determines consumers' tolerance threshold. Survey results show that 67% of participants say they can tolerate minor greenwashing (such as exaggeration), but as many as 83% would resist severe greenwashing (such as falsifying data or concealing pollution). This demonstrates that moral boundaries constitute a critical tipping point. When greenwashing shifts from being merely imprecise to being unethical, consumer tolerance declines sharply and translates into strong resistance behaviours.

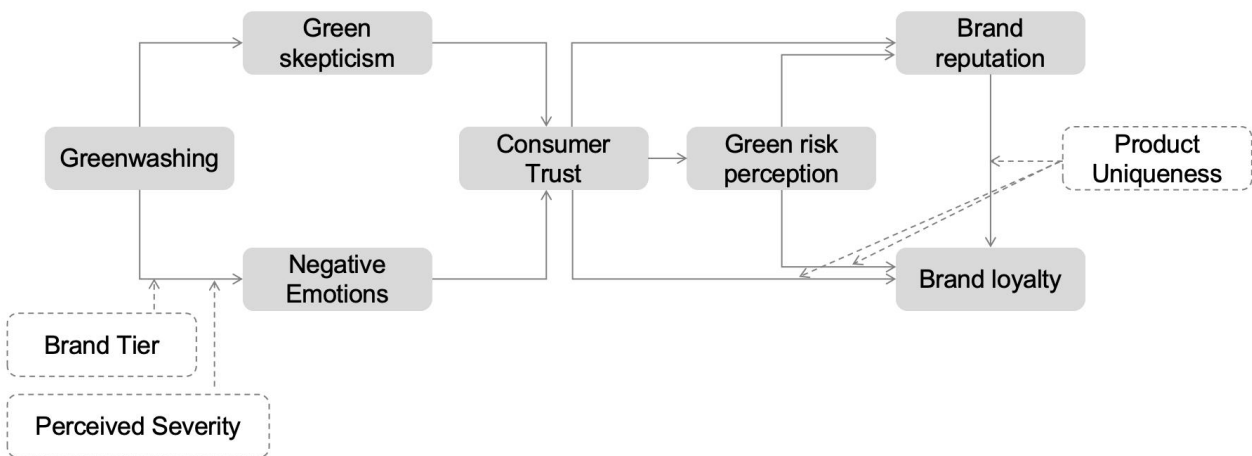
Second, brand tier influences consumer expectations and responses. The study found that 58% of participants felt more disappointed by greenwashing in the luxury sector ( $M = 3.81$ ). Qualitative interviews explain the reason that the high premium of luxury goods means higher moral and behavioral expectations, so once expectations are violated, consumers feel more betrayed. By contrast, participants reported that their environmental expectations of fast fashion brands were already relatively low, leading to more moderate feelings of disappointment (Agreement = 60%,  $M = 3.50$ ).

Finally, product uniqueness is a key factor in mitigating the erosion of loyalty. Qualitative findings indicate that although Lululemon has faced accusations of greenwashing, participants still expressed willingness to purchase its products due to their distinctive functionality and irreplaceable wearing experience. The quantitative results also confirm this, 66% of participants reported that despite feeling disappointed by greenwashing, they continued to purchase because of the product's uniqueness (Mean = 3.62). This suggests the coexistence of emotional betrayal and behavioral loyalty. Existing literature has distinguished between attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Kardes, Cronley and Cline, 2010; Bernarto, 2020). While previous studies have largely focused on the direct impact of greenwashing on overall loyalty, they have lacked a more detailed exploration of the underlying mechanisms. This study extends the discussion by tracing the evolutionary path of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty in greenwashing. Greenwashing first erodes attitudinal loyalty, manifested in declining emotional attachment and brand identification, before gradually weakening behavioural loyalty, such as reduced repurchase and recommendation intentions.

### 5.1.7 Conceptual Model

Overall, the impact of greenwashing on brand loyalty and brand reputation among Chinese Generation Z consumers is not a single, direct process, but rather a complex, multi-stage, multivariate process.

Based on the analysis and discussion, this study proposes an integrated conceptual model of the mechanisms by which greenwashing influences brand reputation and brand loyalty (Figure 22). Greenwashing is considered a negative expectation violation, which is amplified or mitigated by a series of mediating variables (green skepticism, negative emotions, risk perception, and consumer trust) and moderator variables (perceived severity, brand hierarchy, and product uniqueness), ultimately affecting brand reputation and loyalty. This logical relationship validates the "trust to loyalty" chain proposed by Diandra and Aprilianty (2024) and the "perceived green risk to brand reputation" chain proposed by Santos and Coelho (2022), confirming the role of expectancy violation theory in the influencing mechanism. Building on existing literature, the model is enriched by introducing moderating and buffering variables.



Note: Green risk perception is conceptualised in this study as comprising three dimensions: identity risk, value risk, and quality risk.

*\*Author's Own Figure*

Figure 22: Conceptual Framework: Mechanisms of Greenwashing's Impact on Brand Reputation and Brand Loyalty

### *5.1.8 Managerial Implications*

As environmental protection and sustainable marketing become increasingly core issues in the fashion industry, this study aims to provide practical strategies for brands committed to promoting sustainable communications and potentially facing greenwashing scandals to mitigate the negative impact.

The research finds that although a segment of zero-tolerance consumers exists (with quantitative data showing that 50% believe trust cannot be fully restored,  $M = 3.45$ ), for the majority of consumers trust can be partially repaired.

First, quantitative results reveal that 71% of participants ( $M = 3.75$ ) believe that timely and sincere public apologies and explanations can partially alleviate anger during the early stage of heightened emotions. However, the qualitative findings highlight that apologies may also be perceived as reactions to public pressure rather than genuine acts. Approximately 70% of participants indicated that only when apologies are combined with long-term, verifiable actions can trust gradually be restored. This conclusion validates the trust repair framework proposed by Xie and Peng (2009) and aligns with the “timely–deliberate–timely” three-stage strategy suggested by Guo et al. (2019).

Second, from the perspective of trust-commitment theory, brand remediation measures essentially aim to rebuild consumers' perceptions of competence, integrity, and benevolence, thereby restoring their psychological commitment (Rashid, Ahmad, and Hafizullah, 2023). Among Chinese Generation Z consumers, perceptions of integrity and benevolence are particularly valued. Quantitative evidence shows that 91% of participants strongly endorsed proactive disclosure and transparency ( $M = 4.23$ ), while 92% agreed with the sincerity of brands' willingness to sacrifice profits to enhance social and environmental responsibility ( $M = 4.40$ ).

Combines Xie and Peng's (2009) framework of informational, affective, and corrective strategies for trust repair, and integrating the reconstruction of perceptions of competence, integrity, and benevolence (Rashid, Ahmad and Hafizullah, 2023). This study proposes post-greenwashing remedial strategies from short-term, medium-term, and long-term perspectives. This approach can help brands mitigate green perception risks over the long term and rebuild trust and loyalty.

Timeframe	Managerial Objectives	Research Evidence	Recommended Actions
Short-term: Crisis Outbreak Phase (0–24 hours)	Immediate Crisis Response	71% of participants emphasized the importance of a timely response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue a public statement and sincere apology within the first 24 hours.</li> <li>• Communicate initial corrective actions.</li> <li>• Contain public opinion and prevent an information vacuum.</li> </ul>
Mid-term: Recovery Phase (1–6 months)	Rebuilding Perceived Competence	91% of participants demanded third-party certification and transparency disclosures; 70% of consumers expect to see continuous actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce third-party certification and audits, regularly disclose key metrics.</li> <li>• Utilize blockchain or traceability technologies to ensure data credibility.</li> <li>• Continuously implement visible environmental or sustainability actions to demonstrate real change.</li> </ul>
	Restoring Perceived Benevolence	92% of participants interpreted brands “sacrificing profit” as a sign of benevolence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively invest in social responsibility projects (e.g., environmental protection, public welfare partnerships) rather than merely reacting to crises.</li> </ul>
Long-term: Governance Phase (6+ months)	Rebuilding Perceived Integrity	Consumers expect consistency between brand promises and actions; otherwise, trust cannot be fully restored.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalize transparency disclosures (e.g., annual sustainability reports, KPI tracking).</li> <li>• Establish ongoing disclosure mechanisms (supply chain data, corrective action progress).</li> </ul>
	Reducing Green Skepticism	Findings show that Chinese Gen Z consumers tend to verify passively and prefer lower information-search costs; 91.26% support third-party certification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate authoritative third-party endorsements and independent audits to increase credibility.</li> <li>• Use livestreams and social media to enhance interactive communication with consumers.</li> </ul>
	Preventing Secondary Crises	Qualitative findings show that some consumers do not fully restore trust even after improvements, indicating a ceiling effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate crisis management into the long-term sustainability strategy.</li> <li>• Regularly review potential greenwashing risks to proactively prevent future crises.</li> </ul>

*\*Author’s Own Figure*

Figure 23: Managerial Implications

## 5.2 Final Conclusions

### *5.2.1 Originality and Scholarship*

This study makes several original contributions to the understanding of greenwashing in the fashion industry, both theoretically and empirically.

First, the research expands the theoretical understanding of greenwashing. It is the first to integrate Expectancy Violation Theory and Commitment Trust Theory, providing a comprehensive and localized theoretical framework for understanding the psychological impact of greenwashing and the subsequent trust repair process.

Second, this study refines the relationships between variables. In exploring the psychological impact of greenwashing on consumers, this study proposes an integrative conceptual model of the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and brand loyalty. This model validates the findings of Diandra and Aprilianty (2024), Santos, Coelho, and Marques (2023), and Chen and Chang (2013), integrating them to form a coherent and complete chain of influence mechanisms by introducing green skepticism, negative emotions, green risk perception, and consumer trust. Building on existing literature, the study further enriches the model by incorporating moderating and buffering variables such as perceived severity, brand tier, and product uniqueness. At the same time, this research extends the concept of perceived green risk by including value risk, quality risk, and identity risk, thereby enhancing the theoretical depth of the construct. Taken together, these contributions enrich the theoretical understanding of how greenwashing shapes consumer brand relationships within the Chinese cultural context.

Third, this study reveals that China's Generation Z consumers, driven by their high digital literacy, exhibit a high level of sensitivity and widespread skepticism toward green claims. Furthermore, this study also highlights the passive verification behavior of Chinese Generation Z consumers toward greenwashing and their heightened sensitivity to profit-sacrificing signals in trust-restoring strategies. These unique, localized findings offer new perspectives for China market research.

### *5.2.2 Research Limitations*

Although this study provides new insights into the mechanisms through which greenwashing affects the fashion industry at both theoretical and empirical levels, it nonetheless has limitations.

First, the qualitative sample size was relatively small ( $n = 6$ ), and the quantitative sample was obtained through convenience sampling. While this method is feasible under constraints of resources and time, it may result in sample structure bias, thereby limiting the external validity

and generalisability of the findings. Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, with data collection concentrated at a single point in time. While the questionnaire questions attempted to track changes in consumer attitudes and behaviors over time, the impact of greenwashing and trust repair are inherently dynamic processes, making it difficult to fully track their long-term evolution. Third, while moderating variables such as perceived severity, product uniqueness, and brand tier were identified, they were not subjected to systematic causal testing through experimental methods.

### *5.2.3 Areas for further research*

Future research could be expanded in the following areas.

First, a longitudinal design could be used to regularly track the dynamic changes in attitudes, loyalty, and trust levels of the same group of consumers after a greenwashing scandal. This would provide deeper insights for brand crisis management and help validate the long-term effectiveness of trust repair strategies.

Second, this study revealed that while Chinese Generation Z consumers may feel disappointed by greenwashing, they may still continue purchasing due to product uniqueness. Future studies could employ experimental designs to systematically test which specific product attributes (such as functionality, design, or scarcity) may moderate or even offset the negative effects of greenwashing. Furthermore, this study distinguished between attitudinal and behavioural loyalty, and found that greenwashing tends to erode attitudinal loyalty before gradually weakening behavioural loyalty. Future research could further explore this evolutionary path and examine the moderating role of different product attributes or brand factors, thereby more clearly revealing the long-term impact of greenwashing on loyalty.

Finally, this study uncovered several unique findings worthy of further exploration. For example, while some participants emphasized social image risk in qualitative interviews, this risk was least recognized in the quantitative survey. This paradox suggests that future research could further explore the underlying cultural factors behind Chinese consumers' low perception of social image risk. Furthermore, the recent Arc'teryx greenwashing incident in China provides a prime example. This incident sparked widespread negative consumer reactions on social media, including those who expressed fear of wearing Arc'teryx and removed the brand logo (China Newsweek, 2025). Future research could employ netnography to more systematically analyze the mechanisms by which negative greenwashing communication on social media influences social and identity risk, as well as brand reputation and consumer loyalty.

#### *5.2.4 Conclusion*

In conclusion, this study provides strong evidence that greenwashing undermines the reputation and loyalty of fashion brands among Chinese Generation Z consumers through mechanisms such as trust erosion, green perceived risk, and negative emotional responses. These findings both corroborate and extend existing literature by accounting for the influence of cultural and generational contexts, while highlighting the roles of perceived severity and brand tier as key moderating variables, and the buffering effect of product uniqueness in sustaining loyalty. The managerial implications emphasize that to mitigate the impact of greenwashing on brand loyalty and rebuild trust and commitment, fashion brands must implement genuine sustainable development practices. Through substantive measures such as long-term action, transparency, and profit sacrifice, brands may regain at least part of consumers' trust and commitment.

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## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A: RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

#### Educational Ethics Approval Form

Declaration to be completed by the student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have read the <b>Educational Ethics Code of Practice</b></li> <li>• I have accessed the <b>Ethics of Making</b> <a href="https://ethics.arts.ac.uk">https://ethics.arts.ac.uk</a> website and applied the learning to my work</li> <li>• I have reviewed the ethics resources on <b>Academic Support Online</b> to help me consider the ethical parameters of the Code of Practice</li> <li>• I have discussed my work with my <b>unit leader</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Please use these resources to inform your answers to questions 1 to 7 in the boxes below.</b></p>	Please tick: <b>Yes</b> <b>Yes</b> <b>Yes</b> <b>Yes</b>
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Applicant name:	Haijin Zhu
Course Title:	MA Fashion Marketing and Sustainability
Unit Title:	Master's Project

If you are a tutor applying on behalf of a student or student group, please give your name here:	
Tutor name:	Lan Wang

<b>1. The code of practice sets out four key areas for ethical consideration.</b> Which one or more of these ethical principles does this application for ethical consideration relate to?	
<b>a.</b> An <b>ethics of care</b> is supported by the Educational Ethics subcommittee as a positive ethic that is the University's responsibility to foster in relation to students, educational content, educational process including material resources, and in students' relations with anyone who participates or interacts with their work.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>b.</b> The principle of <b>social justice</b> obliges the student to identify the risks and benefits of participation in creative or investigative practice. Any risks to persons participating should be weighed against any potential benefits – to the participants or the student, and also the wider benefits to society of the knowledge gained. As with the principle of respect for persons, there is a need to promote equality and racial justice and protect vulnerable groups.	<b>Yes</b>

<p>c. <b>Respect for persons</b> recognises the capacity and rights of all individuals to make their own choices and decisions. It refers to the autonomy and rights to self-determination of all human beings, acknowledges their equality, dignity, freedom and rights. An important component of this principle is the need to provide special protection to vulnerable persons, both students and in student activity involving others.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p>d. <b>Beneficence</b> is the principle of acting for the good and wellbeing of others. It requires students to serve the interests of others. In so doing, students comply with the principle of neither doing, nor permitting, any foreseeable harm as a consequence of creative or investigative practice. This is the principle of <b>non-maleficence</b>, it is the principle of doing no harm. The specific duties of promoting equality and good relations are assumed under these principles, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>

<p><b>2. Please provide a 100-word summary of the ethical issues that relate to the work /enquiry that is planned.</b> Please relate it directly to one or more areas of the code and resources above.</p>
<p>This research uses semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to investigate how greenwashing affects Chinese Generation Z consumers' perceptions of fashion brand reputation and loyalty, as well as strategies to mitigate the impact of scandals on brand loyalty. Ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent, ensuring anonymity, and protecting personal data in accordance with the UAL Educational Ethics Code of Practice. Interview transcripts and survey responses will be stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. Given the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, participants' comfort will be prioritized, and they will retain the right to withdraw at any stage.</p>

Does your work or enquiry require you to work with participants, or reuse personal data that has been obtained elsewhere? If people are participating directly, please ensure they fill in the participant information and consent template (Ask your Course Leader to provide these). If not, go to Questions 6 to 9.

<p><b>3. Who will the participants be?</b> Please tick the boxes as appropriate.</p>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Students at the University</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Staff at the University</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Other. Please specify: Chinese Generation Z consumers, including both university</p>

students (within and beyond UAL) and young people already in employment

**4. What will participants be asked to do and/or how will their personal information be used?** Explain in terms appropriate to a layperson.

A small group of participants will first take part in semi-structured interviews to share their opinions on fashion brands and greenwashing. Based on these insights, a separate group of participants will then be invited to complete a short questionnaire to help confirm and extend the findings. There are no right or wrong answers; the research is only interested in personal views. All information will remain anonymous, stored securely, and used only for academic purposes. Participants may withdraw at any time.

**5. What potential risks to the interests of participants do you foresee and what steps will you take to minimise those risks?**

A participant's interests include their physical and psychological well-being, their commercial interests e.g. IP; and their rights of privacy and reputation. Please note that compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR is a legal obligation.

The risks to participants are minimal. However, as the study involves discussing perceptions of fashion brands and greenwashing, there is a small possibility of psychological discomfort when addressing sensitive topics such as scandals. To minimise this, participants will be reminded that they may skip any questions or withdraw at any time without consequence. All data will be anonymised to protect privacy and reputation, with no identifying details recorded. Information will be securely stored in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR, and used solely for academic purposes.

**6. Does your project involve children or minors (anyone under the age of 18) or vulnerable adults (e.g. a person with a learning disability)?**

√ **No.** Go to Question 6.

**Yes.** Please be aware that a project involving children or vulnerable adults is likely to require you to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Please discuss this with your unit or course leader. Please be aware that a DBS check normally takes 4 weeks but can take longer.

**7. What potential risks do you foresee to yourself and what steps will you take to minimise those risks?** E.g. does your work raise issues of personal safety, impact on vulnerabilities for you (or anyone with whom you are collaborating), especially if taking place

outside working hours or off University premises?

The risks to me as a researcher are minimal. Interviews and questionnaires will primarily be conducted online or in safe, public, and accessible spaces to ensure personal safety. Meetings will not be scheduled in isolated locations or outside reasonable working hours. No vulnerable groups are involved, and the study topics do not present significant emotional risks. Standard precautions, including keeping communication professional and maintaining appropriate boundaries with participants, will be followed to minimise any potential risks.

**8. Are there other areas of ethical concern? How do you plan to manage these ethical considerations?**

Beyond informed consent, privacy, and data protection, additional ethical considerations include designing interview and survey questions to avoid leading or biased wording. Findings will be reported accurately and responsibly, without misrepresenting participants' views. These measures will help ensure transparency, fairness, and respect throughout the research process.

**9. I confirm my responsibility to deliver the project in accordance with the Code of Practice on Educational Ethics of the University of the Arts London (the University)**

**If I am using personal data:** I will only store it on UAL-managed systems and will use the Participant Information and Consent Template to collect personal data. I will ensure I follow the [data protection principles](#) at all times.

Print name of applicant: Haijin Zhu

Signature of applicant: 

Date: 01/09/2025

**10. I support this project and have reviewed it with the applicant.**

Print name of Tutor: Lan Wang

Signature of Tutor: 

Date: 05/09/2025

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORMS

### B.1 Participant 1 Consent Form

# ual:

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Project Title: An empirical Study exploring the Impact of Greenwashing on Fashion Brand Reputation and Brand Loyalty Among Gen Z Chinese Consumers: Exploring Green Perceived Risk and Strategies to Mitigate Scandal Effects on brand loyalty  
Student Lead: Lan Wang  
Email address: h.zhu0320241@arts.ac.uk  
Phone number: 07818519927

Dear Qian Zhang,

You are invited to participate in:

To what extent does greenwashing affect brand reputation and consequently brand loyalty of Chinese gen z consumers and what are the communication strategies brands can employ to mitigate green perceived risk and maintain brand loyalty? There are no right or wrong answers. I'm simply interested in your honest thoughts and feelings.

Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate.

#### ***Why have you been approached?***

*You are invited to take part in this study. As a Chinese Gen Z consumer (born approximately between the mid-1990s and early 2000s), your perspectives are highly valuable in helping us understand how consumers perceive and interpret potential greenwashing practices by fashion brands, and how these perceptions may influence brand reputation and loyalty. By sharing your insights, you will contribute to a deeper understanding of how Gen Z consumers in China respond to sustainability-related messages and the perceived risks associated with greenwashing.*

#### ***If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?***

*If you agree to participate, you will be invited to take part in a one-to-one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. The interview may be conducted either online (via Microsoft Teams or Tencent Meeting) or face-to-face, according to your preference. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions focusing on your experiences and perceptions of fashion brands' sustainability claims and potential greenwashing practices. The interview is designed to encourage open discussion while allowing you to share your views freely.*

#### ***What are the possible risks or disadvantages?***

*There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. However, if any question causes discomfort or you feel uneasy, you are free to skip the question or withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason.*

# ual:

## **What are the benefits associated with participation?**

*There are no direct personal benefits associated with participation. However, your contribution will help generate valuable insights into how Chinese Gen Z consumers perceive fashion brands' sustainability claims and potential greenwashing practices. The findings may also inform academic discussions and provide useful implications for fashion brands seeking to communicate sustainability more effectively and authentically.*

## **What will happen to the information I provide?**

*Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored in the researcher's encrypted OneDrive folder and only used for academic purposes in line with UAL's research ethics guidelines. All personal identifiers (e.g., names, emails) will be kept confidential. Transcripts will use participant codes (P1, P2) instead of real names. Audio files will be permanently deleted within two months after thesis assessment. De-identified transcripts may be retained for future academic use. Only the researcher (and supervisor if necessary) will access identifiable data.*

## **What are my rights as a participant?**

- The right to withdraw from participation at any time
- The right to request that any recording cease
- The right to have any data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
- The right to be de-identified in any photographs intended for public publication, before the point of publication
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

## **Whom should I contact if I have any questions or want to withdraw my consent?**

Haijin Zhu, h.zhu0320241@arts.ac.uk

## **PRIVACY NOTICE**

Your personal data will be processed by UAL on its managed systems for research purposes with your explicit consent.

As part of this project, your data will be shared with Microsoft OneDrive cloud storage service for the same purpose.

Your personal data will be anonymised September 2025 and deleted on your request or November 2026 after the project end date.

You can find more information about UAL and your privacy rights at [www.arts.ac.uk/privacy-information](http://www.arts.ac.uk/privacy-information).

## **CONSENT TEMPLATE**

# ual:

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
3. I agree to the items checked below:
  - ✓ to be interviewed
  - ✓ that my voice will be audio recorded
  - ✓ to take part in a focus group
  - ✓ that my photo / a film of me will be taken
  - ✓ to be observed and for field notes to be taken
  - ✓ that information obtained may be published in an anonymised form.
4. I acknowledge that:
  - (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
  - (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
  - (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
  - (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

## Participant's Consent

'I agree to the above as indicated and give my explicit consent under GDPR Art.6(1)(a) and Art.9(2)(a) for my personal data to be processed by UAL as indicated on this form, including any special category data I may choose to provide'

Participant  
:



\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Date: 05/09/2025

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participants should be given a copy of this after it has been signed.**

# ual:

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
3. I agree to the items checked below:
  - ✓ to be interviewed
  - ✓ that my voice will be audio recorded
  - ✓ to take part in a focus group
  - ✓ that my photo / a film of me will be taken
  - ✓ to be observed and for field notes to be taken
  - ✓ that information obtained may be published in an anonymised form.
4. I acknowledge that:
  - (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
  - (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
  - (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
  - (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

## Participant's Consent

'I agree to the above as indicated and give my explicit consent under GDPR Art.6(1)(a) and Art.9(2)(a) for my personal data to be processed by UAL as indicated on this form, including any special category data I may choose to provide'

Participant : Chenmin Zhu Date: 05/09/2025  
(Signature)

**Participants should be given a copy of this after it has been signed.**

# ual:

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet

2. I agree to participate in the research project as described

3. I agree to the items checked below:

- ✓ to be interviewed
- ✓ that my voice will be audio recorded
- ✓ to take part in a focus group
- ✓ that my photo / a film of me will be taken
- ✓ to be observed and for field notes to be taken
- ✓ that information obtained may be published in an anonymised form.

4. I acknowledge that:


- (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
- (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
- (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
- (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

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Participant

:



\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Date: 05/09/2025

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**Participants should be given a copy of this after it has been signed.**


# ual:

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
3. I agree to the items checked below:
  - ✓ to be interviewed
  - ✓ that my voice will be audio recorded
  - ✓ to take part in a focus group
  - ✓ that my photo / a film of me will be taken
  - ✓ to be observed and for field notes to be taken
  - ✓ that information obtained may be published in an anonymised form.
4. I acknowledge that:
  - (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
  - (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
  - (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
  - (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

## Participant's Consent

'I agree to the above as indicated and give my explicit consent under GDPR Art.6(1)(a) and Art.9(2)(a) for my personal data to be processed by UAL as indicated on this form, including any special category data I may choose to provide'

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## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW FRAMEWORKS AND TRANSCRIPTS

### C.1 Interview Framework

Themes & Topics	Related Research	Research Question	Main Interview Questions	Sub-Interview Questions	Theoretical basis
Introduction/Opening of Interview with preliminary questions			Thank participant for participation; Introduction of the research, the purpose of the study, the procedures and rules of the research; Confidentially/Consent form/Cecording		
Consumer s' Perceptio ns of and Response s to Greenwas hing	Li, Cavender and Lee, 2025	RQ1: How do Generation Z consumers understand and identify greenwashin g in the fashion industry?	1. What kinds of fashion brands do you usually like? Do you usually notice the eco-friendly or sustainability messages in their advertisements or promotions?	· If so, could you share an example that impressed you the most?	
			2. When a brand says it's eco-friendly or sustainable, do you care whether they actually do it?	· If so, how do you typically tell if their claims are true or not?	
			3. Have you ever come across a brand whose environmental or sustainability promotion didn't really match what they were doing? If so, how did you feel at that time?	· And what do you think of this kind of situation?	
The Impact of Greenwas hing on Brand Reputatio n and Loyalty	Santos and Coelho, 2022; Amer and Ezz, 2023; Santos, Coelho and Marques, 2023; Diandra and Aprilianty, 2024; Shi and Omar, 2024	RQ2: To what extent does greenwashin g influence consumers' perceptions of brand reputation, and how does this subsequentl y shape their attitudes and loyalty toward the brand?	To better facilitate the discussion, participants will watch short descriptions of the greenwashing scandals involving H&M, Loro Piana, Lululemon, and Nike, one by one. After each case, participants will be asked the following questions:		
			4. When you hear this kind of news, how do you feel about it? 5. How would this affect your trust in the brand? 6. How might this news affect your view of the brand's reputation? 7. If you are a loyal customer of this brand, would this news change your loyalty or future purchase intentions, , such as reducing the frequency of purchases, stopping purchases, or switching to a competing brand of the same type?	· To what extent does this behavior contradict your expectations? · Would it also affect your choice when comparing brands? · In your opinion, what are the differences between luxury brands, fast fashion, and sportswear brands? When the same issue of greenwashing happens, which type of brand do you think would have the most serious impact?	Expectation Violation Theory (EVT)

Themes & Topics	Related Research	Research Question	Main Interview Questions	Sub-Interview Questions	Theoretical basis
The Mediating Role of Green Perceived Risk	Chen and Chang, 2013; Lu et al., 2022; Santos and Coelho, 2022; Mohammed et al., 2025	RQ3: What mediating role does green perceived risk play in the relationship between greenwashing and brand loyalty?	8. After a brand has been involved in a greenwashing scandal, would you become more cautious when you see its other environmental claims or products? 9. After hearing about greenwashing scandals from some brands, do you think there might be some risks in buying eco-friendly/sustainable products?	What kinds of risks would you be concerned about? For example: Being scammed/Financial risk/Social/identity risk/Real environmental impact/Others	
Strategic Brand Responses to Restore Reputation and Loyalty	Guo et al., 2019; Rashid, Wisal and Hafizullah, 2023; Wang and Walker, 2023; Zhou, Zhang and Feng, 2024	RQ4: After a greenwashing scandal, what communication and remedial strategies can brands use to rebuild consumer trust and recover brand loyalty?	10. After such a scandal, what could the brand do or say to regain your trust?	Can you think of any brand that you feel has handled greenwashing scandal well?	
			Introduce the real communication and remedial cases, include strategies identified in previous studies or reports as assumptions, in order to discuss which communication and remedial strategies participants would find acceptable.		
			11. If a brand immediately apologised, clarified, or ended a related partnership after a scandal, to what extent would that reduce your doubts and help you rebuild trust? 12. If a brand announced long-term sustainability goals, to what extent would that reduce your doubts and restore your trust? 13. If a brand continued to take action in the following years and fulfilled its commitments, would this help the brand regain your trust and loyalty? 14. If a brand released transparency reports or used third-party certification and audits to prove its commitments, would that make you trust them more? 16. What else would you expect a brand to do to regain your trust and loyalty?	·Among these measures, which three do you think are the most important? ·If this still wasn't enough, what else do you think the brand would need to do?	Commitment-Trust Theory

C.2 Interview Transcript and First Order Coding

C.2.1 Participant 1 Interview Transcript

Raw Data	First Order Coding
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you for participating in this interview. The entire interview will be around 40 to 50 minutes long. The research topic revolves around the impact of greenwashing on brand reputation and brand loyalty among Chinese Gen Z consumers, exploring the mediating role of green perceived risk and how to mitigate the impact of greenwashing scandals on brand loyalty. The first question is an introductory one: What are some of the fashion brands you usually like? Brands you often buy or follow?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> I often buy Muji, and recently Niko and, and some other Japanese brands. I can't think of any others, it's pretty much just these. I also remember FREITAG, but I don't buy that often. I buy one or two a year now, but I'm not planning to buy it anymore.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Do you usually notice if their promotions mention environmental protection or sustainability?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, but I personally won't choose a brand just because it's eco-friendly. I'll notice what kind of sustainable materials they use. I know Muji has an eco-friendly campaign about marine debris. I feel like once there's an environmental concept, like marine debris, a lot of brands will follow suit. I think Muji's campaign was quite successful.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> For example, when you see a brand making such environmental or sustainability claims, do you ever doubt if they've really followed through?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> I can say without a doubt that I believe they haven't. Although I haven't seen it with my own eyes, my personal impression is</p>	<p>notice what kind of sustainable materials</p> <p>" without a doubt that I believe they haven't "</p>

<p>that environmentalism is just a scam targeting middle-class consumption, or a way to sell a concept to make you pay for their products. If they were truly committed to environmental protection, wouldn't not producing anything be a 100% protection for the environment.</p>	<p>Environmentalism is for profit</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So you feel that capitalism, which is profit-driven, has created a scam.</p>	<p>Environmentalism is a business or a scam for middle-class consumers</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, I think any act of consumption will inevitably have an impact on the environment. But some might not be a complete scam; I think it might be that some are a little less of a scam, while others are a little more. Perhaps the production method they choose can slightly reduce the harm, but as long as they produce and sell, they will inevitably cause pollution.</p>	<p>Consumption behavior affects the environment</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Is it possible that you have this awareness—that brands' environmental or sustainable promotions are fake and that their purpose is to sell products which will inevitably harm the environment—because you've seen related information in China?</p>	
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> I can't think of any specific examples at the moment. I can only say it's been an insidious process. For example, a couple of years ago, I had a very good impression of the brand Patagonia. I might have initially thought they were very eco-friendly and that the founder was a philanthropist. But then I learned more about the brand's current development, and I just felt... well, you know. That kind of feeling!</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, at the very beginning, when a brand sends a signal that they are eco-friendly or sustainable, you might still have a good impression of it.</p>	<p>Long-term exposure to greenwashing</p>

<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Right.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> But perhaps because you later saw some information on social media that made you realize they might not be genuinely doing this, you've gradually come to feel that many brands aren't.</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> When you first saw a brand doing something like this, if it was a style you liked and you were satisfied with the product, would you develop a corresponding expectation of them at the same time you developed a good impression?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Let's take FREITAG as an example. When I first saw someone else carrying one, I thought it was cool. Then I searched for the brand and found out it had an eco-friendly philosophy. That's just "cool on top of cool," so I wanted to buy it. But now that I've been buying it for a while, I often find that the recycled truck tarpaulin material I get is getting newer and newer. It makes me feel that in the beginning, when it was a small workshop, it might have really been eco-friendly. But with the physical products I've received from my recent purchases, I feel that the materials have not gone through a long period of use. It feels like they might be producing the tarpaulin now just for the sake of making the bag. Of course, I haven't verified this, but that's the feeling the physical product gives me.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, you can feel that the brand might not be truly doing what it says, and you've perceived this by continuously buying its products.</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes. Including many of the new things and new products they release, I feel they are somewhat different from the very beginning.</p>	<p>information on social media</p> <p>Developed a distrust of environmental promotions</p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts enhance good impressions and purchasing desire</p> <p>Real-life product experience validates environmental promotions over time</p> <p>The brand has deviated from its original eco-friendly philosophy</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer:</b> In your experience, you've noticed that the materials a brand uses are becoming less like real recycled materials, a perception you've developed over time through continuously purchasing and using their products. So, would your trust in the brand decrease if you saw some related information exposing similar greenwashing behaviors?</p>	<p>Eco-friendly concepts enhance good impressions and purchasing desire</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes. But perhaps it's because I'm a bit older now. In recent years, the news and social media I consume have gone from initially touting environmentalism to gradually revealing the truth behind this "eco-friendly business." This has insidiously led me to no longer trust their promotions.</p>	<p>Real-life product experience validates environmental promotions over time</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> When you see this information, it's like a small-scale sustainability scandal, in a way. Does this affect your perception of the brand's reputation or your liking for it?</p>	<p>Suspicious of all brand promotions</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, it does. Because for me, if a brand does this, all the other potential things it promotes could also be done this way, in my perception.</p>	<p>"I will reduce the number of times I buy from it"</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> For example, you used to buy FREITAG all the time. After having this experience with FREITAG, would you choose other brands or reduce the number of times you buy from it for this reason?</p>	<p>Not buying is due to damaged credibility, not because it's not eco-friendly</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> I will reduce the number of times I buy from it. But I think the main reason is that I didn't start buying it because it was eco-friendly; for me, that was just a nice bonus. But my reason for not buying it is not that it's not eco-friendly; it's because I feel that something like this happening—where it may be greenwashing, or I suspect it's greenwashing—affects my trust in the brand. That's why I won't choose to continue buying it, let's just say that.</p>	

<p><b>Interviewer:</b> You just mentioned that you felt suspicious of the brand. Besides the psychological aspect, what about the financial side? How would you view continuing to buy this brand? For example, would you feel that its value for money or perceived value has changed?</p>	<p>Environmentalism enhances brand value</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> This is hard to say, because I believe that being eco-friendly can enhance a brand's value. Does carrying this bag make others think you are an eco-friendly person? I think its value might lie in this; it's given a label, although I personally don't care much about this label. I think anyone who buys this thing buys it because it has social attributes.</p>	<p>Social identity  Reflecting an eco-friendly identity label</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Do you think that these people might reduce their purchases of a brand because they are worried that the brand's greenwashing behavior will affect their identity or social labels?</p>	<p>Having social attributes</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> I think so. I feel that greenwashing could affect my own identity or social labels. You see, isn't that what happened with Patagonia? Initially, people who wore Patagonia were all seen as experts in outdoor gear, and everyone was supposed to have a piece of their equipment. Now it has become a must-have for "finance bros." But their domestic distributor seems to be doing a messy job; as a consumer, I feel that its positioning in China is not very sustainable.</p>	<p>Greenwashing affects personal identity and social labels</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Will you buy Patagonia?</p>	<p>Greenwashing has a negative impact on identity</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, I will. Because if I need to choose a piece of outdoor equipment, for example, a fleece, I feel that it gives me a more professional impression. And I think some people use this stuff to give themselves a label, to make others think they are a certain type of person. So if a scandal like greenwashing breaks out, it would make others think you're a fake environmentalist, and wouldn't that just ruin</p>	<p>Fake eco-friendly products damage</p>

<p>their "yuppie" image?</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> You said you always wanted to buy Patagonia, but after what you just mentioned happened, would you still like the brand as much as you used to?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> No, I wouldn't. I've already unfollowed their blog. Although I've never even purchased from them, I just had a good impression of them, which created a desire to buy. But when I found out they weren't what I imagined, I didn't want to spend that much money on them anymore.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Wow, you unfollowed them so decisively. So, knowing about this incident has a big impact on your decision to buy this brand?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, it does. And now I feel that if wearing it can't add a label to me, I might as well buy Montbell. When you buy that brand, people think, "Wow, you're an expert." And the value for money is quite good.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, similar to what you said before, do you feel a sense of being cheated by Patagonia, or is it just for the social attributes you mentioned?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> I feel like this can't be generalized. The main reason for Patagonia is that I haven't spent any money on it, and its price point is high for me, so it's more about its social attributes. But if it were a different brand, I would feel cheated.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So the situation is different because you didn't buy it, so you didn't feel cheated.</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, you could say that. When I don't own it, it's just a</p>	<p>personal social image</p> <p>Disappointment in sustainability expectations leads to a decrease in good impressions</p> <p>No longer following and reducing consumer desire</p> <p>"Wearing it can't add a label to me"</p> <p>Losing social label value and switching to other brands</p> <p>No sense of being cheated without a purchase history</p> <p>Idealized identity</p>
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<p>label for me. I want to own it so others will think I'm a certain way. But if I spend real money on it and it turns out to be greenwashing, then what is this thing in my hand? That's when I feel cheated.</p>	<p>label</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Regarding your decision to unfollow their blog, what was the main reason?</p>	<p>A strong sense of being cheated after spending money</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Actually, there wasn't a major scandal. I just felt that the actions of their domestic distributor significantly soured my impression of them.</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> But that is also a part of the domestic environment, and it's a big reason. I remember seeing that when Patagonia first did a pop-up store in the Hai 550 mall, people criticized them for having the air conditioning on full blast, which was very unsustainable. A lot of people criticized that.</p>	
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> I feel that in China's consumer environment, the economic foundation is what it is. I don't think we've reached a stage where we can talk about environmental protection yet. Everyone is still just trying to make ends meet. It's also possible that my personal level is limited, but that's how I feel. However, I do care about what other people think. Although I want to show off, I'm still a relatively simple person. When I buy things, I hope to convey a subtle "those who know, know" feeling. That is, if you know this thing I'm buying, you'll think I'm that kind of "niche, pretentious, artsy" youth. So, only this kind of person would pay for their eco-friendly concept.</p>	<p>"I do care about what other people think"</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, I think you've given me plenty of examples. I'll just show you a few small cases. So, Loro Piana made a documentary before. I'll show you this documentary first. The story is roughly this: In the Andean community in Peru, there is a group of endangered small</p>	

<p>vicuñas. Loro Piana signed a partnership with them to protect the vicuñas through sustainable shearing and pay the community for improving their local lives and protecting the ecology. This is also Loro Piana's main focus for their top-quality vicuña wool. A coat made from this vicuña wool can sell for thirty to forty thousand U.S. dollars. However, last year, many people started to accuse Loro Piana of beautifying itself by saying the partnership with the community was to improve their lives. In reality, they monopolized the community's business, meaning the community could only earn an income by providing vicuña wool to Loro Piana. Over ten years, their purchase price dropped by 36%. From 2012 to 2023, the price per kilogram dropped by 80%. A survey in 2018 showed that 41% of the people there were in poverty. According to local statistics, each person's monthly living expenses might be less than \$91, and they couldn't afford other machines to earn money. Furthermore, they were required to perform unpaid labor for the farmers once a year. After hearing this news, how do you feel? What is your opinion on a luxury brand like Loro Piana?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> I would feel that those capitalists are just being pretentious again. I think that for big brands, environmentalism is just a business. If a brand were truly doing environmental work or community work, it would be a very small brand that can't create a lot of economic value, so they can focus more on their social value. When I was in Vietnam, there was a very small brand. I follow their Instagram account, and it feels a bit like a community-building activity. So I think the smaller the brand, the more likely they are to be genuine.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> After seeing such news, would your feelings about this brand change?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> My personal preference would definitely change. Isn't this</p>	<p>Luxury brands' greenwashing is seen as a capitalist show-off</p> <p>Big brands treat environmentalism as a business package</p> <p>Small brands are more likely to genuinely focus on social value</p> <p>Negative news leads to consumer refusal ("sweatshop-made sweater")</p>
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<p>"sweatshop-made sweater"? I don't want to wear that.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> How do you view the relationship between luxury brands' profitability and their environmental responsibility?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> I think they should definitely take on more environmental responsibility. That's my value judgment, but I know they definitely won't.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Lululemon released an ESG report, proposing the "Be Planet" goal and committing to achieving full-chain decarbonization by 2030. However, their 2022 report shows that their climate pollution increased by 100% between 2020 and 2022, and 60% of their materials still come from fossil fuels. In other words, Lululemon is on one hand committing to decarbonization, but on the other hand, it's not truly fulfilling its promise and is still continuously expanding production.</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> ESG is just for show.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> This report might be more about giving an account to investors, or because it's a common practice in the industry that they have to follow suit. But from the actual data, the results are not ideal. So, do you think this situation would have any impact on your view of the brand's reputation?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> For me, when they first released this announcement, I wouldn't think to verify it. So I think it's fine. And these data, for me, I don't care about them. But if it were to involve people or certain animals, if there were more direct pictures or negative news, that would affect my perception of the brand. If they just shout a slogan but don't achieve it, I think it's okay.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> For example, I just presented this information to you, like a</p>	<p>Luxury brands should take on more environmental responsibility</p> <p>There are expectations for luxury brands' environmental responsibility</p> <p>There's a gap between expectations and reality</p> <p>ESG goals are considered to be for show</p> <p>Won't proactively verify environmental information</p> <p>Data discrepancies have little impact on perception</p>
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<p>piece of news. After hearing it, are your feelings still the same as before?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes. I shout slogans every year myself, and I don't achieve them either. If they say they want to reduce harm but don't succeed, I think it's okay. But if they promote that they haven't caused harm, and it turns out they lied, then that's unacceptable.</p>	<p>Direct negative news affects brand perception</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> It still depends on the degree.</p>	<p>Can accept not meeting goals</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, I think it depends on the severity. If you set a goal but don't achieve it, that's okay. But if you promise or claim to have achieved something and you haven't, I think that's a form of deception.</p>	<p>False promises are seen as deception</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, so to some extent, can we say that this is because people's perception of carbon emissions isn't strong enough? Because even though the brand claims to achieve full-chain decarbonization, it's actually going in the opposite direction. Or, is it just hard to verify and hard for consumers to perceive?</p>	<p>False promises are seen as deception</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes. Because I don't really care about this, unless it's like the vicuñas you just showed me, where they are oppressing the local farmers. I can quickly relate to that. This data, it's hard for me, I can't feel it.</p>	<p>Low perception of carbon emissions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> What if, for example, Lululemon's annual carbon emissions are more than that of 500,000 cars? Would a number like that be more perceptible to you?</p>	<p>Direct victim situations are easier to resonate with</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, I'd perceive that. But some people said that the ozone layer hole was a hoax, and I even believe that.</p>	<p>Doubts about environmental issues</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, another one is Nike. It released a sustainability series, giving the impression that all the products in the series were</p>	

<p>sustainable. But in reality, out of 2,452 products, only 329 were actually made with eco-friendly materials, which is only 10%. When you learn this information, what are your feelings or thoughts?</p>	
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> It would affect my trust in them. They exaggerated this, so would they exaggerate other things too? I choose Nike for some of its functional products. If they exaggerate about environmentalism, would they also exaggerate about their functional products?</p>	<p>Exaggerated environmental claims lead to a decrease in trust</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If a brand is deceptive in this regard, would you worry that it might also be untrustworthy in other areas, such as product function or durability? How would this affect your overall trust?</p>	<p>Production process emissions have no direct harm perception</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Yes, because with Lululemon, it's not the product itself that's the problem; it's a problem with the production process. But with Nike, it's more direct because the product I'm going to buy has a problem. So I'd naturally doubt the brand's credibility.</p>	<p>Greenwashing of the eco-friendly product itself leads to a decrease in brand trust</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would something like this affect your future purchases from Nike?</p>	
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> I don't buy it much anyway.</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> What if it happened to a sports brand you frequently buy from?</p>	
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> In that case, I would. I would feel that all your other stuff is also untrustworthy. It would make me suspicious of everything, so I would naturally reduce my choice of your products.</p>	<p>Damaged trust leads to a reduction in purchasing options</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Finally, combining the examples of Patagonia and FREITAG, you were a continuous buyer of FREITAG before it was suspected of greenwashing. But when you saw or suspected it had</p>	

<p>greenwashing behavior, you might have felt cheated or betrayed. In this situation, what do you think the brand needs to do to win back your good impression and loyalty and make you willing to buy from it again?</p>	<p>Difficult to regain trust after greenwashing</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> If this were to happen, I think they would have to abandon their original brand and start a new one.</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So you'll never believe them again?</p>	<p>Trust and social attributes are both ruined</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> Wouldn't that mean both their brand trust and their social attributes are completely ruined?</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> But if the brand were to take some measures, like Loro Piana, for example, which promptly issued a statement saying that the supplier they collaborated with had violated rules, but they weren't informed, and that they cut ties with the supplier within 24 hours of finding out and would continuously strengthen their supply chain audit. What is your view on this kind of timely handling, apology, and promise of future measures?</p>	<p>Brand blaming the supplier is considered untrustworthy</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> I feel like I'd just laugh coldly. Are they blaming the supplier again? So all those people before were dead? Now they've suddenly come back to life?</p>	<p>Apologies and remedies are seen as post-facto shows</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Yes, but what if they issued such a notice and then continued to do other sustainable things for the next one to three years, similar to how H&amp;M would improve their sustainable practices and develop new areas to make up for their previous actions? Do you think that would be acceptable?</p>	<p>Continuous improvement is compared to a</p>
<p><b>Participant 1:</b> That's a difficult choice. It's like asking if you would forgive a cheating ex who guarantees they'll never cheat again after you marry</p>	<p>cheating ex's promise, making it hard to regain trust</p>

<p>them.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> What if this "cheating ex" is now being monitored by someone else, like your mom, for example?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> Being monitored? Are you emphasizing that the brand's time is more important, or that their actual actions will make me change my mind? I think it would take a certain amount of time. It's a long-term thing. Also, they could release a very serious report every month or year, and some other things to prove themselves.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, for example, if they continuously release such reports every year and consistently achieve their goals, and perhaps after a long time, you might go back to buying from them?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> If they manage to do what they didn't do before, I might continue buying this thing. Also, I think there would need to be other third-party organizations to get involved and prove it. Because I don't trust the brand itself anymore.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Finally, I would like you to consider this: If a brand takes certain actions, how would you rebuild your trust in it? How can these actions reduce your perception of risk in terms of finances, social standing, and psychology? At the same time, would they prompt you to go back to purchasing from the brand? Among these possible actions, which three are most important to you?</p> <p><b>Participant 1:</b> For me, to regain my trust, the most important thing is transparency, second is two-way communication, and third is third-party certification and auditing. It's like I don't trust any of the things they do as a main entity; I only trust some of the objective data they provide.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, I understand. Thank you very much for your time.</p>	<p>Long-term monitoring</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Regularly publishing credible reports</p> <p>Long-term fulfillment of goals</p> <p>Third-party organizations' involvement</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Two-way communication with consumers</p> <p>Third-party certification and auditing</p>
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C.2.2 Participant 2 Interview Transcript

Raw Data	First Order Coding
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, thank you for your participation. This interview will last for about 40 minutes. Our main research topic is to explore the impact of greenwashing on Chinese Gen Z consumers' brand reputation and brand loyalty. We will also explore the mediating role of green perceived risk and the strategies to mitigate the impact of greenwashing scandals on brand loyalty.</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> Okay.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> First question, what are some of the fashion brands you usually like and often buy?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> The first question is so hard to answer.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> It's okay, it's not a very important question.</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I feel like I usually buy more fast fashion or mass-market fashion brands, like Adidas and Nike, those kinds of sports brands.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. Have you noticed any related environmental or sustainability promotions before? You can also mention brands you haven't bought but have noticed.</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I have. I feel that most brands will emphasize the recyclability of their materials or that their materials come from natural sources. Some brands will also say that they help the local economy by developing in less developed regions.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Right. Have you seen any similar news reports or accusations that a certain brand emphasized environmental protection and sustainability but actually exaggerated the facts, was deceptive, or</p>	<p>Renewable or natural materials</p> <p>Helping underdeveloped regions' economies</p>

<p>didn't follow through?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I've seen fewer accusations in the clothing industry. Generally, I've seen them about brands that don't usually promote environmentalism. I've seen some denim companies before because making denim clothing is very harmful to the environment, especially in terms of water pollution. As for some of the brands I often buy, like Uniqlo and Muji, I think their reputation in this regard is quite good. I personally buy more beauty and skincare products, so I see more in that area. Some brands will emphasize on their packaging that they have FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification. I remember this is a certification related to forest conservation. This certification means that the packaging may come from renewable natural plants, and brands use this method to show that they have a sense of social responsibility and have made efforts in environmental protection. But from what I've observed, the reality is that consumers sometimes want better packaging for a "sense of value." So even if they use this eco-friendly paper, brands will still use various foams or thickened materials for excessive packaging. In addition to product packaging, the express boxes are also overly designed. I don't think this is consistent with the philosophy they emphasize.</p>	<p>Greenwashing accusations in the fashion industry are less noticed</p> <p>Denim production causes great environmental harm</p> <p>Beauty brands have FSC eco-friendly certified packaging</p> <p>Excessive packaging is inconsistent with eco-friendly promotions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> I see. If a brand you often buy and think is very good, but you later discover it has the kind of behavior you just mentioned, how would you feel about this brand?</p>	<p>Focus on the product itself rather than promotion</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> As a consumer, I actually care more about the product itself. If a brand makes such a promotion, I think it's understandable, after all, everyone has to advertise. Since they made this kind of advertisement, it will naturally attract an audience that accepts this kind of thing. I think the existence of this kind of thing is very normal. In this</p>	<p>Seeing greenwashing as a normal advertising tactic</p>

<p>society, selling things requires promotion, requires advertising, and requires finding what appeals to consumers. I think this is different from things you eat or drink. I still care a lot about things that go into my body. But for a fashion product, if it's good to use, I think it's not contradictory for them to exaggerate a bit in their promotions.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> I see. So for brands like fashion, clothing, or accessories, even if they're not eco-friendly or claim to be but don't actually follow through, consumers won't particularly care.</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> Right, because they don't feel that this will pose a risk to their own interests or health. I wouldn't disparage it because of this behavior and say I'll never use it again. Unless it really causes a lot of harm to the environment. If it's just the minor harm produced in a normal industrial process, I wouldn't care so much.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Do you think this might be because of less government and media supervision and reporting on these brands in China, which leads to a lack of public environmental awareness?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I think that's a reason. Public environmental awareness hasn't increased; people are still more inclined towards pragmatism and won't think so much about it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. Let's look at a specific case. You buy a lot of fast fashion and sports brands, so let's take H&amp;M as an example. H&amp;M launched a clothing recycling program in 2013, claiming it was very successful and that they had collected nearly 15,000 tons of old clothes. Of these, 70% were reused, 22% were recycled, and only 8% were discarded. If you saw H&amp;M doing something like this, as a regular customer, how would you feel?</p>	<p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as normal advertising behavior</p> <p>Perception of no direct risk to personal interests from fast fashion greenwashing</p> <p>Can tolerate harm from normal industrial processes</p> <p>Lack of government and media supervision limits the rise of environmental awareness</p> <p>More inclined towards pragmatism than environmental considerations</p> <p>Clothing recycling programs can bring a positive feeling</p>
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<p><b>Participant 2:</b> I think it's pretty good. I would think it's really great. If I were a loyal consumer, I would feel quite proud. After all, consumption is also a way of branding one's own identity or philosophy now.</p>	<p>Loyal consumers will feel proud of a brand's environmental initiatives</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would this make you more loyal and have more expectations for this brand?</p>	<p>"Consumption is also a way of branding one's own identity or philosophy"</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> For example, would I expect it to make greater efforts in environmental protection? I think I would. Because since they've already done it, they definitely need to upgrade their environmental efforts every year.</p>	<p>Will have expectations due to environmental promotions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, but many years later, some media reported that H&amp;M's program was a case of greenwashing. In 2023, two Swedish journalists put 10 H&amp;M clothes into a recycling bin and installed trackers to track them for five months. The results showed that only one was resold in a second-hand market in Sweden, two went to Romania, one went to a cleaning factory in Poland, another three were shipped to India or Africa, and three were lost during transit. Two of them eventually ended up in landfills in Ghana or Benin, Africa. The journalists learned during their local interviews that about 22 million tons of clothes are sent there every year, and the local area has a hard time processing them; half of them will be buried or incinerated. Some reports described this phenomenon as "garbage colonialism." H&amp;M initially claimed that over 90% of the clothes were recycled and reused, but according to this investigation, the actual proportion may be far lower. How do you feel after seeing this news?</p>	<p>Greenwashing causes a feeling of being cheated and even disgust</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> I would definitely feel cheated, and I would feel disgusted with this brand. But the reason I'm angry isn't because the recycling rate is low, but because they shipped this trash to other places, which had a</p>	<p>Greenwashing causes a feeling of being cheated and even disgust</p>

<p>negative impact on other people in society.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> In other words, if they had just violated a promotion, it would have been okay. But because they actually did something that harmed people, it's more serious.</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> Right. Because if it's just a promotion, I would think it's just a corporate advertising tactic, and they've been doing it all along.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would you feel betrayed? Would you stop buying from it or switch to a competitor brand because of this?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I might feel that I won't buy from it anymore. I won't necessarily buy its competitor brands because I think most brands might be similar, and it's hard to distinguish them on your own.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would you become suspicious of similar brands?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> Yes, in a more extreme case, I might think, "Well, everyone is like this anyway, so I might as well just buy what I like."</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. If a brand really donates 1% of its profits to charity, like Patagonia, and the entire process is transparent, how would you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I would feel much better. Because you also said that their donation is tangible. If a brand's green claims have very clear evidence to prove their efforts, it will appear more authentic.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Now let's look at the Lululemon case. When some sports brands do sustainability promotions, they involve recycled or sustainable fabrics and content related to carbon emissions. Lululemon's promotions also include these aspects.</p>	<p>Causes strong resentment in cases of social harm</p> <p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as normal advertising behavior</p> <p>Severe greenwashing leads to stopping purchases</p> <p>Severe greenwashing leads to stopping purchases of similar brands</p> <p>Under universal suspicion, turns to ignoring greenwashing scandals and buying based on personal preference</p> <p>Tangible donation behavior can enhance positive feelings</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Lululemon was accused of greenwashing in Canada. They promised on their official website to achieve decarbonization across their entire value chain by 2030. But according to their 2022 report, their climate pollution increased by 100% in the two years from 2020 to 2022, and 60% of their materials come from fossil fuels. When faced with the accusations, Lululemon responded that they had reduced their carbon emissions by 20%. However, analysis shows that this 20% mainly involves Scope 1 and Scope 2 (emissions from the company's internal operations and stores), while 99.7% of their carbon emissions actually come from Scope 3, which is the supply chain. How would you feel about a situation like this?</p>	<p>Clear evidence is more authentic and credible</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> In my impression, Lululemon has always been a brand that particularly emphasizes natural and healthy concepts. I haven't come across this news on social media. I think their brand value promotion in China is very well done.</p>	<p>Failure to meet carbon reduction goals is not considered serious</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If you did see this, what would you think?</p>	<p>Carbon emission issues do not affect loyalty and reputation</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> I think its behavior is actually similar to H&amp;M, just not as serious. It just didn't achieve the level of carbon emissions it said it would.</p>	<p>Greenwashing that crosses a moral bottom line causes a strong negative reaction</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Right, but it didn't cause explicit harm to people and the environment like H&amp;M did. Would this affect your impression of its reputation, likability, or loyalty?</p>	<p>Focus on the product itself rather than environmentalism</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> No, this wouldn't really affect my impression of its loyalty and reputation. It's because H&amp;M crossed my moral bottom line. In Lululemon's situation, I wouldn't choose not to buy, but I might scoff at some of its promotions. I think this feeling is everyone's personal standard of judgment. I'm not a particularly environmentalist person, so it</p>	<p>The impact of minor greenwashing is limited in the Chinese</p>

<p>just not reaching its carbon emission promise, and not causing tangible harm, I think most people still wouldn't particularly care. They would still continue to buy because they're buying the product itself. And in the domestic environment, Lululemon's behavior hasn't had a huge impact on its reputation, so the people who were going to buy it will still buy it.</p>	<p>market</p> <p>Purchase intention depends on the severity of greenwashing</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Right. You think you would continue to buy it because of its quality. What would be your reaction if it had a situation like H&amp;M's?</p>	<p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as advertising tactics</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> Then I might not buy it. It still depends on the severity.</p>	<p>Exaggerated promotions do not cross the bottom line</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Now let's look at the Nike case. Nike released a sustainability series, giving the impression that all its products are sustainable. But in reality, out of 2,452 products, only 239 used recycled materials, which is 10%. Would this make you suspicious of the brand?</p>	<p>Exaggerated promotions do not cross the bottom line</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> This is just them using a single product's selling point for a large-scale promotion, making consumers mistakenly think it covers all product lines. I think this is a small trick in their advertising.</p>	<p>Exaggerated promotions do not cross the bottom line</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. What about Arc'teryx? They've now changed their core technology GORE-TEX to the more eco-friendly GORE-TEX EPE, and the price has also increased. But according to information on social media, many consumers have found that the products are not as durable as before with the new fabric. The brand recommends that consumers use more of their brand's detergent for maintenance.</p>	<p>Greenwashing at the product level can create disgust towards the brand</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> In other words, they might have degraded the raw materials but claimed to have upgraded them, and also made consumers pay more.</p>	<p>Greenwashing at the product level can create disgust towards the brand</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> You can understand it that way. How would you feel about</p>	<p>Greenwashing at the product level can create disgust towards the brand</p>

<p>this brand?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I would feel disgusted. But the people who were going to buy it will still buy it. I think many people who buy Arc'teryx don't buy it because it's a professional outdoor brand, but because it's Arc'teryx.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> That's true. For Chinese consumers, the brand image is different.</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> Right. So, outdoor enthusiasts might switch to more professional brands. But for most people in China who just buy the brand, they might not care so much.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So if these sports brands have similar products in the future, would you become suspicious?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I would definitely be suspicious, but there's nothing I can do. Because many things are just everyone being coerced by consumerism. What you're buying is the identity it represents. If everyone around you is doing the same thing, and you can't refuse the halo it represents, you'll just keep doing it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, now let's look at a case about a luxury brand. First, let's watch a documentary. Loro Piana is a luxury brand. A coat from them can cost 30,000 to 70,000 yuan. Their promotions have always emphasized their collaboration with the Andean community in Peru, protecting small vicuñas through sustainable shearing and giving local herders corresponding rewards to help them improve their lives. Their parent company, LVMH, also stated that this project aligns with their long-term commitment to environmental protection. How do you feel about Loro Piana after watching this promotional video?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> It's pretty good. It really feels like companies at their level</p>	<p>Greenwashing by a reputable brand does not affect its market popularity</p> <p>Buying for brand identity, not caring about environmental issues</p> <p>Becomes suspicious of similar products</p> <p>Hard to refuse consumerism</p> <p>Will continue to buy after greenwashing due to social identity</p> <p>Herd mentality continues purchases</p> <p>Luxury brands are expected to take on environmental and social responsibilities</p>
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<p>should be doing things like this. And these luxury companies especially love to collaborate with poor and backward areas to enhance their brand image.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> If your financial situation allowed it, would this brand's promotional story have any impact on your purchasing decision or brand impression?</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I think if I could, I would want to buy it to some extent. But it's more because it represents a kind of "understated luxury," so it's still driven by social attributes. But seeing this kind of promotional video is definitely an added bonus. It's not enough to be the original motivation for your purchase, but if you're hesitating between different brands, it will add a weight to the scale and make them stand out.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> At the end of last year, some media reported that Loro Piana had signed some agreements with the local community, which gave them a dominant position in the vicuña wool supply. The report stated that local herders gradually became dependent on this channel for a living, and the purchase price dropped by 36% over ten years. According to 2023 data, the local community could only get \$280 for a kilogram of vicuña wool, while the price in 2012 was \$420. In 2018, 41% of the people in the community were in poverty, with an average monthly income of about \$91. In addition, the local herders were also required to do one day of unpaid labor each year. Some people believe that the brand's external promotions emphasized protecting vicuñas and helping the community, but the actual situation may not fully align with this statement.</p> <p><b>Participant 2:</b> I think what's different from the previous brands is that Loro Piana is already a high-end luxury brand. Its consumer base may be different from the previous brands. The people who oppose</p>	<p>Sustainability promotions play a bonus role in brand selection</p> <p>Greenwashing has a limited impact on the purchasing behavior of high-end consumers</p>
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<p>greenwashing and the people who buy this brand are not in the same class, so they think differently. So I think that while environmental initiatives will have some effect, it's hard to influence the consumers who buy this brand.</p>	<p>Most rich people don't care much about environmentalism</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> In other words, their loyalty is very high, and the scandal won't really affect their purchases?</p>	<p>Social responsibility is more likely to influence the middle class</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> I think sometimes it's not a matter of loyalty. Some people just don't care. Haven't rich people done a lot of heartless things? Many people buy it because it's comfortable and a symbol of identity. Not everyone cares so much about the planet. People who care about this kind of thing are probably more from the middle class or newly rich families. They might care more about concepts like social responsibility. For this group of people, I think a little more promotion would still have a greater impact. For me, when I'm faced with many similar brands or product choices, if I watch a promotional video like this from a certain brand and think it's good, I will give that brand extra points. But if I later discover some problems or flaws in the brand's behavior, I will deduct points and even give up on this brand, but I won't say I completely hate this brand. Because there are many other brands to choose from in the market, so the final decision will not only depend on a single promotional video but will be a comprehensive consideration.</p>	<p>Sustainability promotions can add points, but greenwashing will deduct points</p> <p>Brand evaluation is a comprehensive consideration, not based on a single promotion</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Some people feel that when they consider buying this brand again in the future, it might still bring some psychological burden. What do you think?</p>	<p>Lacking guilt from buying unethical products</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> Oh no, I don't have this guilt. I think there should be corresponding sanctions against them or something. But as a consumer, the power I can exert is very small. I also know that if more and more people have the same idea, the power they can exert is very great, but</p>	<p>Believes brands should face external sanctions</p> <p>The power of individual</p>

<p>overall, everyone's awareness is not that high, so personally, I won't be too affected. Even if I know this is very important, the people around me don't think it's important.</p>	<p>consumers is limited; Collective action can produce a greater impact</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, next question. Compared to brands with other positioning, do you think that when a luxury brand has a problem in this area, it would make a difference in terms of reputation, loyalty, or a feeling of betrayal? And how would it compare to H&amp;M, if the same type of thing happened?</p>	<p>Overall public environmental awareness is insufficient</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> I think H&amp;M is more easily replaceable, so when this kind of greenwashing thing happens, it's easy for me to replace it.</p>	<p>Luxury brands are harder to replace when problems occur</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. Now let's look at the brand's remedial measures. If Loro Piana responded quickly after the incident, saying that the supplier had violated the rules, they were not informed in time, and they cut off the cooperation within 24 hours, and promised to strengthen supply chain auditing in the future, how would you feel?</p>	<p>Fast fashion is highly replaceable</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> As long as they blame the supplier, it's fine. I think for such a large and complex company, it's understandable for one link to go wrong. Issuing a statement within 24 hours can at least appease consumers and the public. But if they only issue this statement, I would feel they are very irresponsible. If subsequent measures follow, that's another story.</p>	<p>Fast fashion greenwashing easily leads to customer loss Timely statements can appease emotions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> In other words, if it not only apologizes but also explains the reason and adds future remedy plans, you would feel that trust would rebound.</p>	<p>Blaming suppliers seems irresponsible</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> Yes. And it's not just a future plan; there also needs to be tracking and feedback later on.</p>	<p>Apology + explanation + promised plan</p>

<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So let's assume that Loro Piana later continuously strengthened its supply chain auditing and also launched a traceable blockchain project. How would you feel?</p>	<p>Requires subsequent tracking and feedback on remedial measures</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> Then I would feel that this brand is genuinely doing this. Because I've seen what they've done. We have to give these brands a chance. I think the main problem is that I'm not that sensitive to this issue. As long as they do what I want to see, that's fine. I won't dig deep to see if they've really done it. Since they've already done these things and no other environmental organizations have come out to refute them, I might just accept it.</p>	<p>Strengthening supply chain and blockchain traceability</p> <p>Accepting giving brands a chance to correct</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> In other words, consumers still rely on third-party supervision?</p>	<p>Accepting as long as actions are seen</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> Of course. How can I judge for myself? I wouldn't stop choosing this brand just because I was cheated once.</p>	<p>Relying on third-party supervision to determine authenticity</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> H&amp;M also immediately apologized, admitted their mistakes, and announced they would change suppliers. If H&amp;M also took these actions, would your attitude towards it change?</p>	<p>Being cheated once doesn't mean completely abandoning the brand</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> I would indeed feel that it's improving. But it has many substitutes, so I might still not choose to buy it anymore.</p>	<p>Apology + continuous action</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> But what if it continues to do this kind of circular supply chain, invests in technology, and collaborates with universities?</p>	<p>Apology + continuous action</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> How should I put it? This makes me seem so vulgar. Because I don't have any particular preference for H&amp;M; I buy it purely for the product itself. If I see a very nice piece of clothing, I might still buy it.</p>	<p>Fast fashion is highly replaceable, so they initially choose to stop</p>

<p><b>Interviewer:</b> In other words, you might not buy it at first, but if it continues to do these things, you'll gradually go back to the state of "if there's a good one, it's okay for me to buy it here." To some extent, this is equivalent to rebuilding trust.</p>	<p>buying</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> If trust is to be rebuilt, then they have to keep doing things like this for five, eight, or ten years.</p>	<p>Good-looking products will still attract purchases</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If H&amp;M's Conscious Collection was also later accused of greenwashing, do you think measures like increased transparency or third-party certification would have an impact on you? How do you usually view this kind of information?</p>	<p>It takes five to ten years of continuous improvement to truly restore trust</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> If I were a consumer who highly valued this aspect, I should continue to pay attention, but I wouldn't specifically search their official website myself. This information needs to be presented to me.</p>	<p>Sustainability/greenwashing information needs to be passively received, not actively sought out</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Among the follow-up actions of these brands, which one do you think is most important for regaining trust, reducing perceived risk, and mitigating the impact on loyalty and reputation?</p>	<p>Long-term action</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> Long-term sustained action, as well as transparency, third-party certification, and third-party auditing.</p>	<p>Transparency</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. In China, consumers usually get more one-way information from brands. In this environment, do you think the importance of transparency and third-party certification would change?</p>	<p>Third-party certification</p>
<p><b>Participant 2:</b> Yes. Because I don't believe the brand's own statements.</p>	<p>Doesn't trust the brand's own statements</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. My interview is over. Thank you very much for your time!</p>	

C.2.3 Participant 3 Interview Transcript

Raw Data	First Order Coding
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, thank you for participating in my interview. The interview will last for about 40 minutes. My research topic is mainly to explore the impact of "greenwashing" on Chinese Gen Z consumers in terms of brand reputation and brand loyalty, and to explore the mediating role of "green perceived risk," as well as how to mitigate the negative impact of "greenwashing" scandals on brand loyalty.</p>	<p>Sustainability promotion is quite common</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> Thank you for inviting me!</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> First question, are there any fashion brands you like or frequently buy?</p>	<p>A lot of sustainability promotions on clothing tags</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> There are many. I buy some fast fashion, some vintage, and also some discounted designer brands.</p>	<p>Environmental slogans: ocean protection and "buying one piece of clothing is equivalent to saving something"</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Do you notice any environmental or sustainability content mentioned in these brands' promotions or advertisements?</p>	
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> I think it's quite common, especially on clothing tags. For example, they'll indicate which part is recyclable or have some environmental slogans, like about ocean protection, or "buying one piece of clothing is equivalent to saving something". I mainly see this information on clothing tags, and I haven't paid much attention to large-scale advertising campaigns.</p>	<p>Low attention to large-scale environmental advertising campaigns</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> When you see this environmental or sustainability information, do you doubt its authenticity?</p>	<p>Environmental promotions are</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> I think it's possible that it's fake. I roughly feel that maybe half of it is genuinely being done, and half is fake, but I can't tell the</p>	<p>believed to be half true, half false</p>

<p>difference right away.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Have you ever verified its authenticity afterwards?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> I generally haven't checked. But if it's for schoolwork, I would. For example, I did a joint project with BOSS before and needed to research the brand, and at that time, I would check its official website. Big brands like this release a lot of information, such as recycling programs, the source of their wool, new eco-friendly yarns, etc.. I would follow the clues to check the companies they cooperate with and then see what certifications those companies have; in that situation, I would investigate in depth.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Have you heard or seen any reports that accuse certain brands of claiming to be eco-friendly but are actually charged with not doing so or with exaggerating the facts?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> I haven't heard of reports targeting a specific brand, but I often see titles and discussions about "greenwashing" in some fashion media, like articles from 1 Granary. These articles generally mention some brands, but I haven't paid attention to reports that specifically criticize a certain brand.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> It seems you have a certain understanding of "greenwashing" and sustainable development. Let's look at the first case, using fast fashion brand H&amp;M as an example.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> H&amp;M launched a clothing recycling program starting in 2013, setting up recycling bins in stores. After the program had been running for a while, they claimed it was very successful, collecting 15,000 tons of old clothes in 2022. According to their annual report, 70% of these were reused, 20% were recycled, and only 8% were discarded.</p>	<p>Does not proactively verify authenticity</p> <p>Big brands have more information sources, making it easier to track and verify</p> <p>Fashion media has many greenwashing reports</p> <p>Rarely pays attention to reports about specific brands</p>
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<p>This program earned them a high reputation at the time. When you hear this story, how do you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> First of all, this is the first time I've heard this story. I've been to H&amp;M many times but have never seen this recycling bin. Second, as a person who does clothing design, I would be very skeptical about this. Because the reuse of old clothes is a complex process, and they didn't make it clear whether they break down the clothes to make new yarn or recycle the metal parts.</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> In my opinion, this program's description only talks about the beginning and the end, but it ignores the most crucial intermediate transformation steps, which makes me very suspicious. The technology of breaking down old clothes and remaking them into yarn is something we've researched before, and it's actually very immature. If it's polyester fiber (plastic), it's okay, but if it's natural fibers like cotton or wool, the fibers will become shorter and less resilient after being broken down, and the quality of the new clothes made from them will be hard to meet standards. So, if they generally say they're recycling all clothes but don't sort them, I would find it hard to believe.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, assuming you are an H&amp;M consumer, would seeing them launch such a program affect your good impression of the brand or your loyalty?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> I think it would actually improve my good impression of them. Regardless of whether they do it successfully or not, at least they are trying. My first reaction wouldn't be that they are purely deceiving me, but that they might be trying to do it, just that it's not mature enough yet. Although these fast fashion brands are often criticized, they still "brazenly" try to do something, and I think this is at least a positive effort.</p>	<p>Never seen a recycling bin, skeptical about the program</p> <p>Suspects a lack of transparency in the process</p> <p>Incomplete/vague/illogical promotional details can lead to a decrease in credibility</p> <p>Environmental attempts can improve brand reputation and loyalty</p> <p>Immature actions are also seen as positive efforts</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Then would you have any expectations for H&amp;M's future sustainable development?</p>	<p>Fast fashion consumption is mainly about style</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> No. I think the most important thing for fast fashion is whether the style looks good.</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. In reality, a lot of subsequent reports have pointed out that this whole project was a scam. In 2023, two Swedish journalists put trackers in 10 H&amp;M clothes and tracked them, finding that only one was resold in Sweden, and most of the rest were shipped to places like Africa and India, where they eventually became trash. Local merchants said that these clothes couldn't be sold at all and could only be landfilled or incinerated, forming a huge "landfill".</p>	<p>Fast fashion is not expected to be sustainable</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> This result is actually better than I expected. I originally thought they didn't do anything at all, but they still did a little bit, and this is slightly higher than my expectation of them. When I saw their promotion, I had already assumed that it was impossible for them to achieve the 90% they claimed; I guessed the actual proportion they achieved was probably something like this. For me, doing something is better than doing nothing. Although they're "helplessly rolling in the mud," they are still rolling forward. And their scale is so large that even 10% is a huge number.</p>	<p>No expectations, so the result is seen as exceeding expectations</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So after seeing this news, would you still buy H&amp;M (or ZARA)?</p>	<p>Buys fast fashion mainly for cost-effectiveness</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> I would still buy it. I buy ZARA because its basic styles are very cheap during sales; it's purely about cost-effectiveness. This incident wouldn't affect my purchasing decision. Because I didn't have much expectation for fast fashion in the first place, I wouldn't have a strong feeling after something like this happened. The time cost is also</p>	<p>Greenwashing incidents do not affect fast fashion purchasing decisions</p>

<p>very important; if I've been shopping all day and finally find something I like, I won't not buy it because of its "greenwashing".</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. The next case is a luxury brand, Loro Piana. Assume this is a brand you can afford and like.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Loro Piana has a widely known story about their collaboration with the Andean community in Peru, where they obtain vicuña wool in a humane, sustainable way, thus protecting the endangered vicuña and improving the lives of local herders. Would this story affect your good impression and trust in this brand?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> Yes, and it would increase it a lot. For example, when I see some product descriptions that say they are hand-stitched by mountain girls, or that a wig comes from the naturally grown hair of women in impoverished areas, I would really believe it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Your attitude towards environmentalism and human care seems to be very different?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> Yes, there's a big difference. Regarding environmentalism, I don't think the fashion industry is the main source of pollution; industry, infrastructure, and daily electricity consumption are the big culprits. Environmental issues are a huge, unavoidable systemic problem, and fashion's responsibility in it is relatively small. But human issues are different; they are closely related to people. If a brand says it helped a certain group of people but didn't in reality, or even harmed them, I think this is much more serious than "greenwashing" in the environmental sense.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. However, last year there were reports that Loro Piana signed a monopoly agreement with the local community,</p>	<p>Sustainable stories significantly boost good impressions and trust in luxury brands</p> <p>Human-centric promotions are more likely to generate trust</p> <p>The fashion industry's responsibility for environmental issues is limited</p> <p>Human issues are more personal</p> <p>Fake human-centric narratives are more serious than environmental greenwashing</p>
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<p>suppressing the purchase price given to the herders, which dropped by as much as 80% over ten years. This led to 41% of the local community still being in poverty, living difficult lives, and even being required to do compulsory free labor for the brand every year. They use these squeezed, cheap raw materials to make sky-high products to sell to consumers, and market them with a "sustainable" story. After seeing this report, what is your attitude towards it?</p>	<p>Exploitation of labor makes the brand lose its luxury identity</p> <p>The severity of labor exploitation can be compared to "insulting China" brands</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> I think this brand can no longer be called a luxury brand. In my opinion, the seriousness of this matter is no less than that of brands that have "insulted China".</p>	<p>Severe greenwashing makes consumers feel a strong sense of being cheated and betrayed</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So you felt a strong sense of being cheated and betrayed?</p>	<p>Severe greenwashing completely eliminates the original desire to buy</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> I think so. Although I haven't bought anything for myself, I had tried on a pair of Loro Piana pants before, thinking they were very well-made, for my boyfriend. But if I knew about this incident, I would no longer pay attention to this brand.</p>	<p>Fast fashion greenwashing is easily replaceable</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Then what if the same thing happened to H&amp;M?</p>	<p>Luxury brands' mistakes are more unforgivable</p>
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> Then I might just stop buying it directly. Because fast fashion has too many substitutes; if not H&amp;M, there's Uniqlo. I can choose not to buy from you and buy from another brand.</p>	<p>High premium of luxury goods means higher social responsibility</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, in your opinion, it's more unforgivable for a luxury brand to make this kind of mistake?</p>	
<p><b>Participant 3:</b> Yes. Luxury brands have a huge brand premium, and this premium means they should do more and better things. What they're selling is a kind of psychological value in the first place, and if even that is fake, then they are going too far. As for fast fashion, I didn't have such</p>	

<p>high expectations in the first place.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> After going through these things, when you see a brand's environmental promotions again, what would your vigilance mainly come from? For example, the fear of being cheated, worrying about poor value for money, or social risks?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> I think it's the risk in the social attributes. I would think, "If I believe their promotion again, would I look a little stupid?" Or if I wear it out, people might say, "Don't you know about that thing? Why are you still wearing it?" I would worry about that.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Last case, the sports brand Lululemon. It promised to achieve full-chain decarbonization by 2030, but a report shows that its climate pollution increased by 100% in two years. What do you think about this?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> I would be more lenient with sports brands if their functionality is very good. But I wouldn't be lenient with Lululemon because, in my opinion, it's not a brand that specializes in functionality, but a marketing-driven brand. I've always felt that they were just doing marketing, so I was already suspicious that they would "greenwash," and this news just confirmed my thoughts.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, after a brand scandal, what can it do to regain your trust? Taking Loro Piana as an example, it responded quickly within 24 hours of the incident, stating that the problem was with the collaborating supplier and immediately cut off ties with them, while also promising to strengthen future auditing. What would you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> Seeing this response, I feel like I've already been won back. This "cutting off cooperation within 24 hours" sounds very firm and</p>	<p>Greenwashing brings social risks</p> <p>Worries about being seen as lacking discernment</p> <p>More lenient towards sports brands with strong functionality</p> <p>Already suspicious of their greenwashing, and the news just confirms it</p> <p>A rapid, firm response can effectively regain trust</p>
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<p>decisive.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, this kind of rapid, firm short-term response, plus a future plan, works for you?</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> Yes, I think them changing a supplier is the most important thing. As long as they separate immediately after the incident, I think that's enough. Of course, I might pay attention later to see if they've really cut off the cooperation. If it's exposed that they're still secretly connected, then the brand would have completely lost my trust.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, in your opinion, among the following strategies, which one is most important for rebuilding trust? 1. Short-term response and correction; 2. Third-party certification; 3. Public transparency; 4. Two-way communication with consumers; 5. Long-term continuous action.</p> <p><b>Participant 3:</b> I think "short-term response" ranks first, it's the most important. The second most important is "third-party certification". "Two-way communication" is also very useful; for example, Loro Piana could open a live stream in that community so we can see the real lives of the vicuñas and the herders; I would definitely watch.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, I understand. My interview is over. Thank you very much for your time!</p>	<p>Cutting off cooperation within 24 hours is seen as a decisive move</p> <p>Changing suppliers is a key remedial measure</p> <p>If later exposed for not truly cutting ties, trust is completely lost</p> <p>Short-term response</p> <p>Third-party certification is secondary but key</p> <p>Two-way communication (e.g., live streaming) can enhance trust</p>
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#### C.2.4 Participant 4 Interview Transcript

Raw Data	First Order Coding
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> First, thank you for participating. This interview will last about 40 minutes. The topic of my dissertation is mainly about "greenwashing" and its impact on brand reputation and brand loyalty</p>	

among Chinese Gen Z consumers. At the same time, I also want to explore the mediating role of perceived green risk, and how to mitigate the impact of greenwashing scandals on brand loyalty.

**Participant 4:** Okay, thank you.

**Interviewer:** Okay, the first question is: which fashion brands do you usually like? Or which brands do you often buy? Do you pay attention to the environmental or sustainability content they mention in ads or promotions?

**Participant 4:** Okay. May I ask whether you mean clothing, bags, or jewelry? Because that might be a bit different. Which category are you targeting?

**Interviewer:** Any fashion category is fine.

**Participant 4:** Okay. If it's clothing, I most often buy Primark and Uniqlo. I haven't specifically followed their environmental claims, especially Primark, because it doesn't have an online store, so I don't follow its Instagram or other platforms. As for Uniqlo, I check its official site because there are frequent discounts. Their clothing quality is good. If it's bags, I pay more attention to big brands, like Chanel and Hermès. I usually watch the new collections they launch each year or each season to see what's trending, or whether there's anything I'm interested in.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And have you noticed any related environmental or sustainability content from them?

**Participant 4:** Uniqlo should have some. You can bring back old Uniqlo clothes and they give you a voucher. They also encourage people to use reusable/eco-friendly bags when shopping—basically emphasizing sustainability and caring for the environment. And for bags, I remember

Used-clothing recycling for vouchers

Promotes using eco

<p>that Chanel <b>doesn't use certain exotic animal skins now</b>, like crocodile. I've also heard that <b>Chanel doesn't use real pearls</b>; for environmental reasons they use glass pearls. Those are the brands I know about.</p>	<p>bags when shopping</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Alright. The second question: many brands emphasize their environmental or sustainability concepts. Have you found any brands that were later accused or reported by the media of exaggerating, or where there was no evidence they actually did it?</p>	<p>Chanel stopped using exotic animal skins; uses glass pearls instead of natural pearls</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Oh, <b>I haven't looked into that; I haven't noticed such things.</b></p>	<p>Has not noticed specific brands being accused of greenwashing</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> That's okay. Regarding what you mentioned—Chanel using glass pearls, or Uniqlo's used-clothes collection with vouchers, claiming reuse—when you see similar claims, how do you usually view them? Do you care whether they truly do it? Would you want to look further to see whether it's actually implemented?</p>	<p>Would not proactively verify the truth of brands' environmental claims</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> <b>I wouldn't.</b></p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. Next I'll show you a case about Loro Piana. This is a documentary about their vicuña wool story. (plays video)</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> This is a story about Loro Piana. Hearing their messaging that they protect the endangered vicuña and improve local community life, how do you feel?</p>	<p>Views sustainability messaging as whitewashing</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> <b>It's just a company whitewashing itself</b>—can I put it that way? <b>In my view, all big conglomerates do this with an agenda; the primary goal is profit.</b> Loro Piana has basically monopolized the wool.</p>	<p>Believes environmental initiatives are essentially profit-driven</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. The brand emphasizes in its messaging that they collaborate with communities, protect animals through sustainable</p>	

<p>shearing, and improve local livelihoods. But there have indeed been media reports—such as BoF and Bloomberg—pointing out that purchase prices have fallen 36% over the past decade. According to 2023 data, the purchase price was \$280 per kilo, compared with \$420 in 2012. Reports also mentioned local farmers needing to perform unpaid labor. Some argue this harms the community. Hearing this, how do you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> You know why? They're under LVMH, and LVMH is accustomed to squeezing people. I also read a report saying that if the vicuña wool grade isn't good, they will deduct money. It's pure exploitation. In recent years China has hyped this brand a lot—calling it the “logo-less Hermès,” the “old money style.”</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Mhm, yes—they even held an exhibition in Shanghai. When you first learned these negative reports, how did you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I think they're despicable. As a big conglomerate, you exploit other people's labor to produce your raw materials, and by signing unequal contracts with the government it looks like you're helping them, but in reality your profits are unimaginably high. The most expensive coats cost 60–70 thousand. So this brand feels like the old-money exploitative landowners—just in a different era.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Mhm. The brand's official site has consistently emphasized that it is a “sustainable luxury brand” and upholds the highest standards. But some reports pointed out that beyond the vicuña issue, media also mentioned labor problems at their Italian factories. Reportedly, more than half the workers were undocumented migrants, working about 90 hours a week for roughly €4 an hour, with no days off, and with rather harsh living conditions.</p>	<p>After hearing greenwashing scandals, considers the brand despicable</p> <p>Accuses them of profiting by exploiting labor and via unequal contracts</p> <p>Compares the brand to a new-era exploiter</p>
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<p><b>Participant 4:</b> I think I once saw a post saying that at an Italian factory a girl's parents were undocumented workers, and she was born in Italy but is illiterate—she can speak but can't read. Born “undocumented” there—really tragic. I think Dior had similar scandals exposed too.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Many big brands have faced controversies regarding sustainability. If a brand you often buy—say, Prada, which you like—were exposed for similar issues, how would you react? Would you doubt it?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I would, and I probably wouldn't buy it anymore.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> What kind of impact do you think this would have on the brand's reputation?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> For me, I think their brand reputation would drop a lot. May I explain why? Luxury goods are so expensive because labor costs are high and there is very little mechanization—so it should be handmade. I don't mind that cost. But if I learn they use subcontractors and small workshops and you don't check the workers, even using undocumented labor—why would I still spend so much to buy your stuff? Then you're no longer luxury.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Beyond the products themselves, luxury brands often come with added value like scarcity, cultural symbolism, and storytelling. If such a brand had a “greenwashing” issue, do you think the impact would differ from that of an ordinary brand?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I think the shock from a luxury brand would be more severe.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Some people think that because luxury goods carry status symbolism and retain value, consumers may care less about their</p>	<p>If a favored brand greenwashes, will lose trust and stop buying</p> <p>Greenwashing scandals in luxury brands lead to a major drop in reputation</p> <p>High prices should correspond to high labor costs</p> <p>If a luxury brand is found to seriously greenwash, it loses its luxury status</p> <p>Luxury greenwashing brings a more severe shock</p> <p>The impact of luxury greenwashing is greater</p>
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<p>“greenwashing,” whereas for fast fashion—with many substitutes—such issues may be seen as more serious. What do you think? Between fast fashion and luxury, which kind of greenwashing affects you more?</p>	<p>Buying luxury involves real, hard-earned money</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Luxury affects me more. Because the money for luxury items is either what I earn myself or what my husband buys—so we’re not trust-fund kids, you know? Money is real money. I really like a brand before I buy it; it’s not a casual purchase. Even though I love buying bags, I still consider whether the brand is worth it. When I was younger I wouldn’t think about it, but now that I’m a bit older, I do.</p>	<p>Cares a lot about the value and integrity of luxury items</p> <p>Will more cautiously evaluate whether a luxury item is worth buying</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Indeed. The next case is about H&amp;M, but I think your stance is already clear. H&amp;M has a similar used-clothing recycling program; they publicly claim about 70% is reused and 8% discarded. However, there are media reports that a significant portion of these clothes end up in landfills in Africa. What do you think of this?</p>	<p>Consumers are not surprised when a brand’s emissions rise contrary to its commitments</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> I feel like how could reuse be possible? It’s more expensive than buying raw materials. This is all in Jordan, right?</p>	<p>Falsifying ESG is thought to be possibly a tax-avoidance tactic</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Right. Some journalists placed trackers in H&amp;M’s collected clothes and found that only one item was resold in Sweden; the rest largely went to Africa and India.</p>	<p>Has no perception of carbon-emissions issues</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Another case is Lululemon’s 2022 ESG report, which proposed “decarbonizing the entire value chain” by 2030. According to public data, between 2020 and 2022 their climate pollution increased by around 100%, and 60% of their materials come from fossil fuels. How do you feel about this?</p>	<p>Does not care whether</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> I feel that they’re releasing new products rapidly now, so they’re producing constantly. I feel it won’t affect me. In my view, even if</p>	

<p>they falsify things, it might be to avoid taxes. These are all illusory and don't affect me. As for emissions, first I can't see them, and second I don't know whether they actually did what they claimed. Even if they didn't, honestly it doesn't really affect me because I can't perceive it. I'm not sensitive to this topic—I don't care much.</p>	<p>the brand fulfills its emissions commitments</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. Nike has a “sustainable collection,” but in fact, out of 2,452 products, only 239 use recycled materials—just 10%. When you see such a report, how do you feel?</p>	<p>Believes emissions are indistinguishable/imperceptible</p> <p>Exaggerated sustainability claims</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> It's fine, not much impact—just a bit of exaggeration. Because the price is relatively low, I don't feel deceived. Even if I was, I only spent a few hundred yuan on a pair of shoes, and the value these shoes bring me might last longer than a luxury item.</p>	<p>Believes emissions are indistinguishable/imperceptible</p> <p>Exaggerated sustainability claims have little impact</p> <p>Low purchase investment leads to weaker risk perception</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If Nike and Adidas both released similar products, and Nike was exposed for sustainability issues, would this affect your choice? If so, how would you consider it?</p>	<p>Greenwashing scandal in a sports brand would lead to switching to a competitor</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Then I might choose Adidas. Because if Nike tells me its materials are fake and not what it advertised, I would find it hard to trust the brand again; I might switch to a brand without scandals.</p>	<p>Greenwashing triggers a sense of betrayal</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Got it. Would you feel a sense of betrayal?</p>	<p>Becomes cautious about other brands as well</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Yes, a sense of betrayal.</p>	<p>Becomes cautious about other brands as well</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. After seeing this brand's environmental claims, would you be more cautious about similar claims from other brands?</p>	<p>Skeptical about the durability of eco materials</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> I would. Like our company's new Beta AR—it says it uses more environmentally friendly materials, but I don't believe it at all.</p>	<p>Eco alternative</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Mhm. So will you be more cautious about any “eco-friendly”</p>	<p>Eco alternative</p>

<p>product in the future?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I'll be very cautious. I'll consider many aspects. If it says the material is more eco-friendly, does that mean the lifespan is shorter? Although you've improved the formula, maybe the original formula was the best. I feel you're using more "disposable-like" materials. It's like when they promoted no plastic utensils and every restaurant switched to paper; when you eat soup and rice they give you a paper spoon and the rice sticks to it. It feels like you fly the environmental banner and claim better materials, but the old ones were actually more durable.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, let's move to the second part to discuss possible responses after such issues arise. Take Loro Piana as an example: they immediately issued a statement and apologized, saying they were not informed of the supply chain violations in time and cut off cooperation within 24 hours, while pledging to strengthen supply chain audits. What is your first reaction to such a response?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I feel very averse to it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> What if they kept silent?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I wouldn't trust them either. Whatever they do, my first reaction is negative—I wouldn't believe them.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. They later said they would strengthen supply chain audits and start implementing supply chain traceability—for example, adding QR codes to products so consumers can trace every step of production. Do you think this is useful?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I don't believe it. Not at all.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Why?</p>	<p>materials may be seen as less durable than the originals</p> <p>Aversion to brands' buck-passing apologies and rapid responses</p> <p>Silence or response—neither wins trust</p> <p>Completely distrusts supply-chain traceability as well</p> <p>Brand remediation is seen as patching holes rather than genuine action</p> <p>True sustainability should proactively manage suppliers and</p>
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<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Because I feel that when big companies do this, it's just patching a loophole rather than truly acting. Honestly, if you really want to be sustainable, it's not about producing so many new products; it's about controlling your suppliers, auditing their contracts, and investigating workers' wages. I feel they should lower their profit margins—but that's impossible; the board wouldn't allow it.</p>	<p>labor conditions</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If Loro Piana published all the details on their website, including employees' incomes, would you feel better?</p>	<p>True sustainability means lowering profit margins</p> <p>Board's pursuit of profit fundamentally conflicts with sustainability</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> I think I've seen some brands that allocate part of the money to the maker for each sweater sold. If it's like that, I'd be more inclined to believe.</p>	<p>More credible if the brand directly allocates part of profits to makers</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Right, I know that.</p>	<p>Charity-oriented</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Similar to this kind of charity-oriented business model.</p>	<p>business models are thought to earn more trust</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Do you think that would work?</p>	
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> I would believe it a bit more.</p>	
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> For example, Patagonia donates 1% of profits to charity.</p>	<p>Will not proactively pay</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Yes, yes—something like that.</p>	<p>attention to brands' sustainable tech investments and improvements</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. After that incident, H&amp;M also did many things. They announced changes in partners, established a circular supply chain, and invested in new technologies and startups. Do you think your trust in them would ease a bit?</p>	<p>Long-term actions are hard to see</p>
<p><b>Participant 4:</b> Realistically, if there's too much information, I won't want to read it. Right. Because whatever tech they invest in, the clothes I buy may not use that tech. And usually their so-called eco series sell at</p>	<p>Believes eco lines are often priced higher</p>

<p>higher prices. Like Nike running shoes or Arc'teryx's Beta AR, they claim to be eco-friendly and the price even goes up. And in H&amp;M's case, no matter how many long-term actions they take, I still wouldn't believe them.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> What about Lululemon?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> I wouldn't believe them either; anyway, they're the same type as H&amp;M. I think all short-term responses are lies.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Looking at the long term, if they actually share profits with employees and communities in need, publish all data, and have third-party audits and verification, what effect would that have on your feelings or trust?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> It would—then I'd believe them a bit more, though I still might not necessarily buy.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Among these steps, which do you think is most important—commitment, action, or third-party certification and transparency?</p> <p><b>Participant 4:</b> Third-party certification is the most important, but I might not proactively look at it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, thank you very much for your time.</p>	<p>Still finds it hard to trust long-term actions</p> <p>“All short-term responses are lies.”</p> <p>Sharing profits long-term with employees or laborers + data disclosure + third-party audits would restore some trust</p> <p>After greenwashing, it's hard to reach the point of resuming purchase</p> <p>“Third-party certification is the most important, but I might not proactively look at it.”</p>
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C.2.5 Participant 5 Interview Transcript

Raw Data	First Order Coding
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you for participating in my interview. The whole interview will last about 40 minutes. The research topic centers on greenwashing and its impact on brand reputation and brand loyalty among Chinese Gen Z consumers. It also explores the mediating role of perceived green risk and how to mitigate the impact of greenwashing scandals on brand loyalty. So, the first question: which fashion brands do you usually like to buy? And do you pay attention to any environmental or sustainability content they mention in advertisements or promotions?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Among the fashion brands I usually purchase, I think Uma Wang is one I keep buying consistently. As for others, they're designer brands as well, but with most other designers I buy occasionally because of a specific style.</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Uma Wang is a brand I buy continually. <b>Although sustainability is not something it promotes—or at least it's not its core selling point—I feel its craftsmanship and durability make the product itself sustainable.</b> Also, because it doesn't over-promote, it's more about letting consumers feel the <b>durability</b> themselves. So all of my friends who wear Uma Wang feel it's something that <b>accompanies them long term.</b> First, it's really comfortable—like the ballet flats; I've already bought two pairs. My teacher is also a fan of Uma Wang; he basically buys five or six pairs—whenever a new color comes out, he might buy one, because they're truly comfortable. And after being comfortable, they're also long-wearing. I wore one pair for a long time, and it got some water stains, but I feel those stains become part of my memories with the shoes. I wore them and left traces on them, so I want to keep them even more, because functionally they aren't damaged at all; they just have some water stains. And because of the material, the water stains tend to</p>	<p>Some brands don't promote sustainability, but their craftsmanship and durability reflect sustainable value.</p> <p>The durability of some brands brings a sense of long-term companionship and emotional connection.</p>

<p>spread in a kind of feathered way. I think since it's a tactile fabric, it actually looks quite beautiful.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Beyond Uma Wang, are there any brands you don't buy often but that you've seen do advertising or promotion around environmental or sustainability topics? Any particularly impressive example?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Yes, there are many. Patagonia's slogan "Don't buy this jacket" is very impressive—very impactful. But it didn't really hit my personal "trigger."</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would you buy it then?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> I find that this brand's advertisement is blunt. As a consumer, I want to buy your product, but as a fashion brand you put out an ad like that...I don't know. I feel like I'm being "educated," and after being "educated" I don't feel especially good or bad toward your brand. It's just not very comfortable. But it's not uncomfortable to the point where I'd never buy it again, nor does it make me want to buy it. That kind of sustainability stance isn't what makes me want to purchase the brand.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Does this kind of messaging make you doubt its authenticity?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Yes, I would doubt it. As a fashion brand, if you tell me not to buy this, you might as well tell me how much carbon you've reduced.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Let's continue and look at the first case. Can you see the screen? Great. First, I'll tell you about a Loro Piana case—mainly about wool and cashmere. I'll show you a documentary (plays video). The basic story is that there are vicuñas—an endangered camelid—in the</p>	<p>Direct, blunt sustainability ads leave a deep impression and have impact, but don't necessarily resonate with consumers.</p> <p>Blunt sustainability ads can feel like being "lectured," causing discomfort.</p> <p>There is skepticism about the authenticity of blunt sustainability ads.</p> <p>Prefer concrete data (e.g., carbon-reduction figures) over slogans.</p> <p>Sustainability storytelling can enhance understanding of and</p>
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<p>Peruvian Andes. Loro Piana formed a partnership with them, protecting the animals through sustainable shearing, paying the community to improve local livelihoods, and carrying out ecological conservation. With sustained efforts, the vicuña population indeed grew and gradually recovered. An article on LVMH's (Loro Piana's parent company) website once said this endangered species was safeguarded, reflecting Loro Piana's long-term commitment to environmental protection. After seeing this messaging, including the article and the video, how do you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> I feel I have a better understanding of its brand culture. Previously I wasn't their consumer—can't really afford it—but I've gone into the store to try things on and feel the textures; the quality is truly excellent. If I knew at the same time that they were doing this kind of protection work, then in the future, when I can afford it, I would buy not only because it's comfortable, but this ad would genuinely influence my purchase decision.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So, such measures can significantly elevate the brand's image and reputation in your mind, and might even convert you into a customer. If you had already bought a few pieces and liked them, could this make you become a loyal customer?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Yes. It's like wanting to be friends with someone—at first because they're pretty and the personality fits, and later you discover the things they do align with your values, so you want a long-term friendship.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> After seeing reports like this about the brand's sustainability, would you have expectations for it?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Yes, I might have even higher expectations.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Here's a related report from the brand itself. In late 2024,</p>	<p>goodwill toward brand culture.</p> <p>Sustainability promotion can increase purchase intention.</p> <p>Sustainability measures can significantly enhance brand reputation.</p> <p>Sustainable actions may convert consumers into loyal customers.</p> <p>The brand–consumer relationship is likened to friendship: from external attraction to value alignment, leading to long-term loyalty.</p> <p>Sustainability promotion raises expectations for the brand.</p>
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<p>they were accused by multiple media outlets (e.g., Bloomberg) of selling extremely expensive coats while paying very low compensation to Peruvian herders. After they began cooperating with the community, later on—after government personnel changed—they established a more monopolistic agreement, essentially making that area supply vicuña only to Loro Piana. Then they started squeezing the community’s compensation. Over the past ten years, purchase prices fell by 36%. By 2023, herders received only USD 280 per kilo sold, whereas in 2012 it could be sold for USD 420—equivalent to an 80% drop.</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> So after supporting the community, they went on to monopolize it?</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Right, but it wasn’t only them at the start. It wasn’t a monopoly initially; many other brands were involved. The issue likely happened after the monopoly formed. Because the compensation was very low and the area was monopolized, this became their only source of income. They couldn’t do anything else; they could barely build houses. Large fenced enclosures were set up exclusively for vicuña roundups, and the whole community served that purpose and relied on it for income. In 2018, the poverty rate there was recorded in detail—about 41% of people were in poverty. According to local figures, the average monthly living cost per person was less than USD 91.</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Oh my god.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Moreover, later on they set up an elected president who could allocate resources, but due to contracts and various arrangements, local farmers were also forced to join vicuña roundups for free as “volunteers,” while outside workers could earn USD 20 per day. Local farmers had to labor unconditionally. Seeing this news, how do you</p>	<p>Feeling shocked after learning of negative news.</p> <p>Believes the brand’s sustainability efforts are profit-driven.</p> <p>Questions the sincerity of the brand–consumer relationship.</p> <p>Comfort and beauty remain the primary purchase motivations.</p>
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<p>feel now?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Wow—I really didn’t know about this. I just feel capitalism is still capitalism. Sometimes with fashion brands you can’t tell if the brand is genuinely trying to build the kind of relationship with consumers I just described, or if it’s fake. Maybe they did that support precisely to build a relationship, but ultimately it’s for profit. That said, whether I buy still depends on comfort and beauty; what you described earlier is just a bonus. This new information wouldn’t immediately stop me from buying. But if the brand keeps having incidents like this—similar negative stories—then I’d probably stop buying.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would this affect your view of the brand’s reputation?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Definitely. Suddenly I feel that executives aren’t doing good deeds purely for goodness’ sake through sustainability—it reminds me they’re capital. It wakes you up: don’t put a filter on capital. The earlier things might have made me feel an emotional connection over time, but this makes me feel again that capital is capital and I shouldn’t romanticize it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> If, as a luxury brand, Loro Piana had such issues—you might still keep buying it, but if there were a similar luxury brand whose culture and story are different, would you switch because of this?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> If it were truly substitutable, I’d switch—especially if the other brand hadn’t done or been exposed for such things. I would choose the other one.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> But if it’s hard to replace, you might still keep buying it?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> It is hard. They have the status they have today because</p>	<p>Sustainability is only a bonus factor.</p> <p>A single greenwashing incident won’t stop purchase, but continual scandals will.</p> <p>Greenwashing scandals weaken identification with brand reputation.</p> <p>Emotional connection with the brand is weakened.</p> <p>Reminds oneself not to romanticize the nature of capital.</p> <p>Will switch to substitutable luxury brands if greenwashing is severe.</p> <p>If hard to replace, will continue buying.</p> <p>Part of a luxury brand’s status comes from irreplaceability.</p>
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<p>certain things about them are irreplaceable.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Next, Loro Piana had another scandal. They have long claimed to follow the highest standards of ethics and business responsibility and launched sustainable capsule collections. But in the past two years there were reports that a factory in the suburbs of Italy employed a large number of undocumented workers. These workers were forced to work up to 90 hours per week for EUR 9 per hour with no days off. They lived in dorms above the factory under harsh conditions. Some were even beaten and hospitalized when asking for unpaid wages. In other words, they lowered costs and gained huge profits by exploiting labor. After this, how do you feel? Would you still buy?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Oh my god.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So—after something like this happens, how do you feel? Would you still buy?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> There are substitutes on the market for part of their offering—not complete replacements—but I would probably really look at other brands. If most consumers still choose to buy after knowing about such a thing, the brand won't deal with it, and it will keep happening. As consumers, we can't change capital, but we can take small actions. If a large group of consumers stop buying and it hits sales, they'll take measures to change.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> That's the luxury part. Now let's look at fast fashion, using H&amp;M as an example. They have a used-clothing recycling program. H&amp;M claims the project is very successful: in 2022 they collected nearly 15,000 tons of clothing; 70% was reused, 22% recycled, and only 8% discarded. Seeing these numbers, what impression do you have of</p>	<p>Severe moral-bottom-line violations in greenwashing trigger strong shock and negative feelings.</p> <p>With ongoing greenwashing, will firmly switch to other brands.</p> <p>Collective consumer resistance is needed to force brand change.</p> <p>Acknowledges the limits of individual power.</p> <p>Environmental/sustainability promotion can raise favorability.</p>
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<p>H&amp;M?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> I'd think, oh, fast fashion can also do some environmental initiatives. Sometimes I don't strictly avoid fast fashion in the name of sustainability, because the quality of H&amp;M and Zara can be pretty good. If I can wear something for a long time, then for me it doesn't become "fast fashion." Under that premise, if they also undertake such actions and the project is implemented successfully, I do feel good about them.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> There were reports by outlets like The Guardian. In 2023 two Swedish journalists did an experiment: they put 10 H&amp;M items embedded with AirTags into recycling bins and tracked them for five months. Only one item might have been reused locally in Sweden; the others went to Romania and Poland, and three jackets went directly to second-hand markets or landfills in Africa and India, with the rest lost in transit. In Africa they found that half of the clothing delivered there is ultimately landfilled or incinerated because there's far more than needed and many styles aren't suitable. Locals felt they were living in "garbage clothing" and called it "waste colonialism." After seeing this, how do you feel about fast fashion brands?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> As for fast fashion, even if they do these things, my view doesn't change much. I buy them because they're comfortable, and if I decide I can wear them for a long time, I'll buy. Whether a fast fashion brand does these initiatives doesn't add many points for me; I just think it's "nice" that they're trying. Unlike a luxury brand like Loro Piana—which is not about fast fashion style—these brands can tell stories at the level of raw-material origin, social change, craft heritage, etc., and that moves me more. Fast fashion's circular clothing and data-driven claims—I think those numbers can be faked. They show me the side they want me to see. So when they're exposed, I'm not shocked.</p>	<p>For fast fashion, purchase motives remain "comfortable and long-wearing."</p> <p>Do not expect much from fast-fashion environmental promotion.</p> <p>No expectations, no disappointment.</p> <p>As long as fast fashion undertakes environmental measures, even if exaggerated, it's viewed as "pretty good."</p> <p>Fast fashion lacks the storytelling and cultural value that truly moves people.</p> <p>Luxury greenwashing is less acceptable than fast fashion's.</p> <p>Luxury more easily triggers a strong sense</p>
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<p>No expectations, no disappointment. Data is easy to falsify and doesn't feel tangible. But with Loro Piana, regardless of later monopolization, they did help that village in the early stages; to make the project work, they had to do something.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> If similar issues occur—whether labor exploitation or direct landfilling/incineration—do you find it less acceptable from luxury or from fast fashion?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Definitely less acceptable from luxury—there's a strong sense of betrayal. When the origin of materials is exposed so clearly and with such low purchase prices, the costs become concrete. Before, I might have known abstractly, but after this I feel luxury is just a more explicit capitalist game. So I'd be more inclined to look for brands with similar materials but without such a huge premium.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> After such incidents, when you see environmental products from any brand, would you worry that it might be greenwashing? Would you doubt it?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Definitely. After being betrayed multiple times, when I see similar initiatives from other brands, I'll think of this. For Loro Piana, I truly didn't expect it. I thought even if they didn't help the village that much, at least they wouldn't do harm. But they gave me this logic, so next time a brand does a similar type of sustainability project—since there are only so many types—I'll definitely be suspicious.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> There's also Lululemon. They claimed they would "decarbonize the entire value chain" by 2030. But the 2022 report shows that from 2020 to 2022 their climate pollution increased by 100%, and 60% of their materials come from fossil fuels—highly polluting, non-recyclable, non-degradable, and releasing microplastics into the</p>	<p>of betrayal.</p> <p>Luxury is seen as a magnified version of the capitalist game.</p> <p>After scandals, will lean toward brands with similar materials and less excessive premium.</p> <p>More greenwashing leads to generalized suspicion toward other brands' environmental initiatives.</p> <p>Repeated betrayal breeds a prior distrust.</p> <p>Will suspect similar initiatives in the future.</p> <p>Types of sustainability initiatives are limited, making it easy to recall past negatives.</p> <p>No strong sense of betrayal when carbon-reduction</p>
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<p>ocean. In addition, Scope 3 emissions account for 99.7% of their total. How do you feel about this? What impact does it have on you?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> As a consumer, I don't feel a strong sense of betrayal here. I might notice sustainability reports, but I think it's understandable that targets aren't met because people make visions sound too beautiful and specific. So failing to reach them feels forgivable; I don't feel betrayed. They write such reports to complete a task.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> In a year, their emissions are greater than those of 500,000 cars. If you knew that?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Oh my god. If that's a fact, as an ordinary consumer, just looking at data and knowing they didn't meet prior commitments—maybe it's okay. But with such a concrete comparison, I would feel a bit disappointed. It still might not affect my purchase directly. Lululemon is great to buy and wear, but in recent years there are many competitors with good craftsmanship. When a brand excels in craftsmanship, I might still choose a different brand if it offers superior quality. Functionally, they might be stronger. The added value of Lululemon isn't that hard for customers to understand.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Here's another example: Nike says it has a "sustainable collection," but in fact only 139 items use sustainable materials—about 10%. Would this change your view of the brand?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> They're blurring the concept intentionally or not, but it wouldn't stop me from buying. Whether Nike or Lululemon, they still have irreplaceable positions in sportswear.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Now about their subsequent measures. For Loro Piana, first they said a middleman partner in their supply chain violated rules</p>	<p>targets aren't met.</p> <p>Brand sustainability reports are seen as "visions" or assignments.</p> <p>Consumers find failure to meet commitments "understandable."</p> <p>Carbon-emissions data are hard to perceive.</p> <p>Concrete analogies for emissions create some disappointment but don't directly affect purchase.</p> <p>For sports brands, functionality and comfort remain key purchase drivers.</p> <p>With more competitors and better craftsmanship, may switch to other brands.</p> <p>Exaggerated claims won't affect purchase</p>
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<p>and didn't inform them in time. After they learned of it, they cut ties within 24 hours and promised to strengthen audits and ethical conduct. How do you feel about such a quick response?</p>	<p>intention.</p>
<p><b>Participant 5:</b> It looks like crisis PR. Very obviously crisis PR.</p>	<p>Sports brands have their own irreplaceability.</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> After the crisis PR, suppose in the long run they continue to strengthen supply-chain audits and constrain suppliers by standards. If they commit long-term and say everything will be digitally traceable and they'll publish labor wages more transparently?</p>	<p>Brand's quick response is viewed as insincere crisis PR.</p>
<p><b>Participant 5:</b> For consumers, much of this is still invisible. Since they've already made a mistake in my eyes, I will question them. I don't think complete transparency is possible; I can't go there myself. Unless it's a very niche, independent third party—like those public experiments tracking H&amp;M with no ties to the fashion industry or brands. If it's truly proven they're improving, I might believe it. But if the brand itself claims its supply chain is sound and it's not doing those things anymore, I won't readily believe it. If it's a platform, there can be collusion risks. I mean independent people with no interest connection to the industry.</p>	<p>Distrust of brand-initiated long-term commitments and measures.</p> <p>Consumers cannot directly verify supply chains and thus remain skeptical.</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> For Loro Piana, what could they do to rebuild consumer trust and improve their reputation?</p>	<p>Only independent third-party verification without interest ties may enhance trust.</p>
<p><b>Participant 5:</b> It depends. Since their mistake is about human rights, have they tried new projects to help more villages or groups? At least, even if they can't guarantee not doing bad things, if they can do more other good things—good things can be seen. Don't keep "self-proving" whether the past was right or wrong; do more visible sustainable actions.</p>	<p>Greenwashing on human-rights issues can be offset by helping more villages/groups.</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If they act again, would you still doubt them? Would you think it's real?</p>	<p>"Don't keep</p>

<p><b>Participant 5:</b> I would still have doubts. But if they keep doing it and aren't afraid of being exposed again, they'll be cautious and not go too far. If they can hide it and I don't know, I might choose to trust a bit more.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> After H&amp;M's incident, they first stated they took the issue very seriously and admitted fault. They changed partners as a prompt response. In the long run they said they would build a circular supply chain and promote advances in recycling technology—cooperating with The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and some startups, possibly with investment, constantly working to improve the system so that genuine recycling becomes possible. What do you think of these ongoing actions?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Maybe because they're still a fast-fashion brand, no matter how hard they try, they can't change the fact that they continuously generate waste. Doing this is better, and I understand them, but we're all powerless in a way. This is already good: since they can't change the main supply chain, they can only do sustainability through these means. Doing a bit is already something.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> If they keep doing this long term, making commitments, taking action, and communicating through open and transparent channels, would that make up for what happened before?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> I think so. They've been doing things—not doing nothing or getting worse. If there's progress, I think it's pretty good.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> For you—among transparency, third-party certification, and continuous action—which is most effective in rebuilding trust and increasing your loyalty?</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> Definitely continuous action—at least it's something I can</p>	<p>self-proving.”</p> <p>Do new, visible sustainable actions.</p> <p>Will still carry doubts about the brand's future actions.</p> <p>If the brand continues visible actions and no longer gets accused of greenwashing, trust will gradually recover.</p> <p>The essence of fast fashion is constant waste-generation, making it hard to change impressions through sustainability efforts.</p> <p>Fast fashion's long-term actions can't resolve the fundamental contradiction.</p> <p>Later actions are acknowledged but insufficient to generate</p>
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<p>see again. The other things—third-party bodies or short-term quick responses—can't solve the problem at its root. Long-term action also can't fundamentally solve it, because the problem itself can't be fundamentally solved. As a consumer, if I can see progress, I'll choose to provisionally trust.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Got it. That's all my questions. Thank you very much for your time!</p> <p><b>Participant 5:</b> You're welcome.</p>	<p>full trust.</p> <p>Continuous action.</p> <p>Third-party certification and short-term responses can't solve problems at the root.</p> <p>Although problems can't be fundamentally solved, "visible progress" is enough to generate provisional trust.</p>
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C.2.6 Participant 6 Interview Transcript

Raw Data	First Order Coding
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> First, thank you very much for participating. This interview will last about 40 minutes.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> My research topic examines "greenwashing" and its impact on brand reputation and brand loyalty among Chinese Gen Z consumers. I will also study the mediating role of "perceived green risk" and explore strategies to mitigate the impact of greenwashing scandals on brand loyalty.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> To start, could you tell me which fashion brands you usually like or buy?</p>	

<p><b>Participant 6:</b> I buy most often from Taobao shops, those count as relatively small clothing brands. If it's bigger brands, I'll buy Uniqlo or ZARA.</p>	<p>Pays relatively little attention to</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. Have you noticed that some brands emphasize “eco-friendly” or “sustainable” features in their publicity or ads?</p>	<p>sustainability promotion</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> I pay relatively little attention when watching ads. But I remember that after the Xinjiang cotton incident, many people listed brands that stated they do not use Xinjiang cotton. I deliberately look into a brand and check its official website, I sometimes see related information. In day-to-day scrolling on social media, I feel I see relatively few of their sustainability promotions.</p>	<p>Will proactively check the official website due to specific incidents</p> <p>Low exposure on social media</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> In fact, many stores—like MUJI, they also use tags in physical stores to indicate that a product is sustainable. That counts too.</p>	<p>Sustainability messaging often</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> If that counts, then it would be things like hangtags stating the source of materials and so on.</p>	<p>appears on hangtags/labels</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Have you encountered situations where a brand claims to be eco-friendly or sustainable, but media reports or findings show it didn't do so perhaps exaggerating or outright deceiving?</p>	<p>Generally skeptical toward brands' sustainability promotions</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> I haven't seen such reports. However, when some brands promote themselves as “sustainable,” I do feel skeptical. For example, I think their wording can be rather ambiguous. I remember once looking at a brand that claimed to use recycled fibers. Because I was interested, I wanted to check its website to see exactly how they do it, but I couldn't find any further description of the process anywhere on the site. That didn't inspire much trust. Although they claimed to use recycled fibers, they didn't specify which product, or exactly what material, so I felt what</p>	<p>Vague or insufficient details cause skepticism</p>

<p>they said wasn't very credible.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> What you just described is actually a kind of "greenwashing", for example, vagueness, concealment, or ambiguity all count. A brand may claim a product is sustainable, but perhaps only part of it is, while giving consumers the impression that all of it is.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> To expand the discussion, I'll show you several concrete cases. The first is the luxury brand Loro Piana (plays a promotional video about protecting vicuñas). Let me summarize the video. It tells how, in the 1980s, Loro Piana worked with communities in the Peruvian Andes, and through sustainable shearing protected the endangered vicuña while paying compensation to improve local herders' lives. Thanks to their efforts, the vicuña population recovered significantly. After watching this story, how do you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> I think it comes across as quite candid, because they also acknowledged that their initial purchasing and selling of vicuña fiber, to some extent, contributed to the killing of vicuñas by locals. Later they improved how they procured raw materials. I feel this seems candid and transparent, making their claims relatively trustworthy.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would this story influence your favorability toward the brand, for example, its reputation?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> I think it would. Compared with other brands, I'd feel they're a bit more responsible.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would you have expectations for its future sustainability actions?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> I hope it can maintain this level of social responsibility. I don't particularly expect it to go further; I just hope it doesn't lower its</p>	<p>Documentary-style sustainability storytelling is perceived as candid and transparent, increasing trust</p> <p>Sustainability promotion helps enhance brand reputation</p> <p>Sustainability promotion makes the brand seem more responsible</p>
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<p>standards.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would this make you choose to buy its products?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> It would make me want to explore the brand. I still focus mainly on the product itself, but if I watch this video and feel the brand image is especially good, I'd be willing to actively look for items I can afford. This somewhat increases my purchase intention and could create some loyalty.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. However, later multiple media outlets accused Loro Piana. Because vicuña fiber is a top-tier material, a coat can sell for tens of thousands of dollars, yet the purchase price paid to local farmers fell by 36% over the past decade. The reason was that Loro Piana later signed a monopolistic agreement with local authorities, fully controlling the community's fiber supply. Local farmers could only rely on selling vicuña fiber for a living, living conditions were rudimentary, poverty was high, and they even had to participate in unpaid labor. When you see such news, what do you think?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> Then I'd feel it's very different from the image it previously presented, and I'd distrust it. Moreover, this isn't just about sustainability; it's a scandal in itself. At least during the period when the controversy and scandal were widely discussed, I would certainly avoid purchasing their products.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> You previously had goodwill due to the sustainability story; now finding it's not the case, how would you feel?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> I think I'd feel a sense of betrayal. But since information is abundant now, if the report had just come out and I had already purchased because of the earlier goodwill, I'd definitely hope the brand</p>	<p>Expectation for the future is to maintain current standards</p> <p>Environmental/sustainability messaging sparks a desire to explore the brand</p> <p>Product remains the primary purchase driver</p> <p>Willing to actively look for affordable items due to sustainability messaging, generating potential loyalty</p> <p>The strong contrast between greenwashing scandals and earlier sustainability image leads to distrust</p> <p>Labor issues go beyond sustainability and are seen as major scandals</p>
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<p>would explain. I'd watch how the whole incident developed to see what actually happened. If it were ultimately confirmed that they engaged in false promotion and real-world unethical exploitation, I'd definitely "blacklist" the brand.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. Next let's look at the fast-fashion brand H&amp;M. Its used-clothing recycling program claims to be very successful: in 2022 they collected nearly 15,000 tons of garments, with more than 90% reused or recycled. Seeing this, what impression do you have of H&amp;M?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> I feel that at least they've provided a recycling channel, which reduces the storage burden of idle clothes at home. This doesn't necessarily add much goodwill toward the brand, but if I found a drop-off point near my home, I might use it. However, I think Chinese consumers are quite wary about clothing recycling. In residential compounds there are recycling bins, but there have been reports that these clothes are reprocessed and resold, so I remain cautious about clothing recycling.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Later, reports indicated that H&amp;M's recycling data was false. In 2023, two Swedish journalists placed AirTags in 10 H&amp;M garments and found that some weren't recycled locally but were shipped to Africa, India, and elsewhere; ultimately over 80% were landfilled or incinerated, causing major environmental pollution. What do you think about this information?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> First, this is indeed false advertising and can create some sense of betrayal. But regarding this specific case, I think implementing a clothing-recycling program is inherently very difficult. Looking back, their own promotion had loopholes. For example, they didn't say what would be done with the recovered clothes whether they would be washed, sorted, screened for damage, etc. None of that was made clear.</p>	<p>Will explicitly avoid purchasing during periods when the scandal is widely discussed</p> <p>Goodwill turning to discovering falsehood results in a sense of betrayal</p> <p>Hopes the brand explains in a timely manner</p> <p>If severe greenwashing is confirmed, will completely blacklist the brand</p> <p>Chinese consumers generally remain wary of clothing recycling</p> <p>Greenwashing generates some sense of betrayal</p> <p>Brand publicity sometimes has informational</p>
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<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Would this behavior affect H&amp;M's brand reputation in your mind?</p>	<p>loopholes</p> <p>After greenwashing,</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> It would lower it a bit, but I don't think the impact is that big. Fast fashion, for me, is a value-for-money choice. To some extent, I separate the particular store from the corporate group behind it.</p>	<p>fast-fashion reputation declines slightly</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Why?</p>	<p>Greenwashing's impact on fast fashion is limited</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> It's a bit like McDonald's—McDonald's in different regions may take different stances, but that doesn't much affect whether I eat there. Or like Disney—the parent company may have some controversial positions, but that doesn't stop me going to Shanghai Disneyland. If a brand's product is unique enough and you have no alternative or really like it, actions at the group level—which feel distant—will have a slightly smaller impact. But there's definitely an impact; at least for a while I wouldn't want to shop there.</p>	<p>Fast fashion is chiefly about value for money</p> <p>Tends to view the brand separately from the corporate group level</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Do you mean your loyalty to H&amp;M's products themselves (for their value and styles) would offset the scandal's negative impact?</p>	<p>If the product is unique, scandal impact is smaller</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> Yes. When buying clothes I mainly look at style and quality. If a brand has a scandal, it will reduce my willingness to check it out; at least for a period I won't go in. But if I come across something I especially like, I might still buy it.</p>	<p>If the product is unique, consumption may dip short-term, not necessarily a long-term boycott</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If H&amp;M and ZARA have very similar styles, and H&amp;M has a scandal while ZARA doesn't, would you switch to ZARA?</p>	<p>Loyalty to the product itself can mitigate the</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> I might try to avoid H&amp;M, but I wouldn't increase my trips to ZARA just because I'm going to H&amp;M less. In other words, I wouldn't project my negative feelings about one brand onto another.</p>	

<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Next is sports brands. For example, Lululemon claimed it would “decarbonize the entire value chain” by 2030. But from 2020 to 2022 its climate pollution actually increased by 100%, and it uses a large amount of non-recyclable fossil-fuel-based materials. When accused, it responded that emissions decreased in some areas (Scope 1 and 2—company and store level) but avoided discussing supply-chain (Scope 3) emissions, which account for 99.7% and are still growing. What are your feelings?</p>	<p>scandal’s impact</p> <p>Chooses short-term avoidance after a greenwashing scandal</p> <p>May still purchase if encountering a style they like</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> First, I feel they’re shifting the terms a bit; the brand feels a bit “sly,” but it’s not as serious as the previous two cases. A brand has to grow, and expanding capacity inevitably increases carbon emissions. So rather than describing changes in total emissions, promoting a reduction in emissions per unit product might be more reasonable. Still, only telling part of the good news is indeed sly and makes me think less of them, but it doesn’t affect my purchase loyalty that much. Since Lululemon’s rise, it’s always had controversies, so my impression has never been perfect. But the product quality is commendable, so if there’s a discount, I’d still buy.</p>	<p>Limited substitution effect between brands</p> <p>“Concept-shifting” greenwashing doesn’t greatly affect brand reputation and loyalty</p> <p>Understands when brands fail to meet carbon-reduction targets</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> If Lululemon had labor exploitation as serious as Loro Piana’s, and it were proven, would your feelings be the same?</p>	<p>The severity of greenwashing determines consumer attitudes toward the brand</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> If it were confirmed and the case settled with clear findings, then I’d certainly have a negative view. Previously I might pop in when passing by; afterward I’d probably just walk past.</p>	<p>Severe greenwashing triggers strong</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> After these cases, when you see environmental or sustainability claims in the future, will you be more suspicious and vigilant?</p>	<p></p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> Definitely. I was already cautious about their sustainability</p>	<p></p>

<p>claims and would closely examine whether there are loopholes in their language. I think after being exposed, brands themselves may also become more cautious in their wording. So I might maintain roughly the same level of skepticism as at the outset.</p>	<p>negative emotions and unwillingness to engage with the brand</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Where does this cautious mindset mainly come from? Is it emotional—feeling deceived—or concern over financial loss or other risks?</p>	<p>Maintains long-term skepticism toward brands'</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> There may be some monetary considerations, but more than that, I'm naturally wary of brands trying to entice me through promotion—or perhaps a bit rebellious.</p>	<p>environmental claims</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Comparing them, if a luxury brand (Loro Piana) and a fast-fashion brand (H&amp;M) committed equally serious wrongdoing, which would you find less acceptable?</p>	<p>Identifies greenwashing through loopholes in promotional wording</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> I think it's still luxury. Because with higher pricing comes greater social responsibility. The brand value of luxury is far higher than fast fashion, so as the brand, you should have higher moral requirements at the very least, not commit fraudulent acts.</p>	<p>The high pricing of luxury implies higher social responsibility and moral requirements</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> From the loyalty perspective: if you buy both, after a luxury brand scandal would you continue to purchase it because you can't find substitutes?</p>	<p>Willing to give a chance for improvement after greenwashing</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> In real life, I haven't encountered anything completely irreplaceable. I would look at subsequent performance. And with clothing, it's unlikely that I urgently need that one item from that one brand. I'd wait a while—say until autumn/winter—to see if they make improvements. If they do, I might reconsider.</p>	<p>Loyalty recovery depends on subsequent performance and</p>

<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So you're still willing to give it a chance to improve, right?</p>	<p>improvements after greenwashing</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> Yes. I think all companies or brands have issues to some degree. Media prefer to focus on big companies, but small ones also do plenty of bad things. Of course, big companies make so much money that they should do better and lead the industry. So I'm somewhat inclined to "let bygones be bygones," depending on what comes next.</p>	<p>Large companies receive more attention and are at greater risk of being exposed for greenwashing</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> How do you usually judge the authenticity of a brand's environmental claims?</p>	<p>Judges authenticity of promotion through concrete and quantifiable statements</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> First, whether the claim is specific. If it says it uses recycled fabric, at least tell me what region it comes from and what material it is—the information should be sufficient. Second, if it promotes an already-implemented project, such as recycling, it's best to show pictures or videos—how the recycled products are sold, what the processing looks like. I think if you've truly done these things and want to publicize them, you should present the whole process clearly. I need more details and transparency.</p>	<p>Visual evidence of the entire process</p> <p>Lack of detail reduces credibility</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay. After a brand crisis—for example, Loro Piana responded quickly, saying the issue lay with an intermediary partner and promising stronger supply-chain audits—how do you view this response?</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> As crisis PR, that's about what they can do. Although I think the claim of "having no knowledge" is somewhat questionable, I can accept the explanation. The key is whether they actually solve the problem afterward. If they just switch suppliers and keep doing the same thing, that's merely old wine in a new bottle—very sly.</p>	<p>Crisis PR response is timely</p> <p>Explanation is acceptable</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> And if they adopt long-term measures—like implementing</p>	<p></p>

<p>blockchain to trace the supply chain and increase transparency—do you think that helps?</p>	<p>Skepticism about the brand's timely response</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> Since consumers already distrust them, increasing transparency is certainly good. But I think if a brand is just beginning its promotion, there's no need to publish every detail, because I'm too lazy to read it. For a brand that's had issues, doing so shows sincerity. These actions can pull my trust back somewhat—to a neutral level. It's like my earlier goodwill turned negative because of the scandal; now the remedial measures bring it back to zero. Past good and bad cancel out, and if they continue to do good things, my goodwill may rise again.</p>	<p>"The key is whether it truly solves the problem afterward."</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> So continuous action can make you feel the brand is trying and may rebuild trust and loyalty in the future.</p>	<p>Transparency Long-term measures can pull trust from negative back to neutral, but won't immediately restore goodwill</p>
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> Yes. I think after a brand's just had an incident, it probably won't dare to make the same mistake again in the short term—otherwise it would be too bold.</p>	<p>Ongoing future actions are conducive to goodwill</p>
<p><b>Interviewer:</b> Finally, please rank the following crisis-response strategies in order of importance for rebuilding trust in your mind:</p>	
<p>Short-term immediate action and apology</p>	
<p>Transparency (e.g., open data)</p>	
<p>Long-term continuous action</p>	
<p>Third-party certification or audits</p>	
<p>Two-way communication with consumers</p>	
<p><b>Participant 6:</b> I think first is "short-term action," second "transparency," third "long-term continuous action," then "third-party certification," and</p>	<p>Short-term immediate action is most critical</p>

<p>last “two-way communication.” I don’t really like two-way communication because I’m lazy and don’t have the time to study the raw data they open up. I hope the brand can provide a “TL;DR version” summary. Of course, if I want to verify, I want to be able to find more detailed supporting data.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Understood, but a “TL;DR” can also involve shifting concepts or incomplete information.</p> <p><b>Participant 6:</b> That’s true, but I really don’t have the time to argue with them.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Okay, I completely understand. Thank you very much! That’s the end of my interview.</p>	<p>Transparency</p> <p>Long-term continuous action</p> <p>Even knowing greenwashing risks, consumers won’t invest time to probe deeply</p> <p>Consumers are reluctant to engage in two-way communication and prefer to passively receive concise information</p>
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### C.3 Coding Iterations

#### C.3.1 Second Iteration: From First-Order to Second-Order Codes

First-Order Codes	Grouped Codes	Second-Order Codes
<p>Notice what kind of sustainable materials</p> <p>" without a doubt that I believe they haven't "</p> <p>Environmentalism is for profit</p> <p>Environmentalism is a business or a scam for middle-class consumers</p> <p>Consumption behavior affects the environment</p> <p>Long-term exposure to greenwashing information on social media</p> <p>Developed a distrust of environmental promotions</p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts enhance good impressions and purchasing desire</p> <p>Real-life product experience validates environmental promotions over time</p> <p>The brand has deviated from its original eco-friendly philosophy</p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts enhance good impressions and purchasing desire</p> <p>Real-life product experience validates environmental promotions over time</p> <p>Suspicious of all brand promotions</p> <p>"I will reduce the number of times I buy from it"</p>	<p>" without a doubt that I believe they haven't "</p> <p>Environmentalism is for profit</p> <p>Environmentalism is a business or a scam for middle-class consumers</p> <p>Luxury brands' greenwashing is seen as a capitalist show-off</p> <p>Big brands treat environmentalism as a business package</p> <p>ESG goals are considered to be for show</p> <p>Doubts about environmental issues</p> <p>Environmental promotions are believed to be half true, half false</p> <p>Views sustainability messaging as whitewashing</p> <p>Generally skeptical toward brands' sustainability promotions</p> <p>Maintains long-term skepticism toward brands' environmental claims</p> <p>Identifies greenwashing through loopholes in promotional wording</p> <p>Believes the brand's sustainability efforts are profit-driven.</p> <p>Questions the sincerity of the</p>	<p>Expressing general scepticism towards sustainability claims</p> <p>Environmentalism is for profit</p> <p>Recognising craftsmanship and durability as implicit</p>

<p>Not buying is due to damaged credibility, not because it's not eco-friendly</p> <p>Environmentalism enhances brand value</p> <p>Social identity</p> <p>Reflecting an eco-friendly identity label</p> <p>Having social attributes</p> <p>Greenwashing affects personal identity and social labels</p> <p>Greenwashing has a negative impact on identity</p> <p>Fake eco-friendly products damage personal social image</p> <p>Disappointment in sustainability expectations leads to a decrease in good impressions</p> <p>No longer following and reducing consumer desire</p> <p>"Wearing it can't add a label to me"</p> <p>Losing social label value and switching to other brands</p> <p>No sense of being cheated without a purchase history</p> <p>Idealized identity label</p> <p>A strong sense of being cheated after spending money</p> <p>"I do care about what other people think"</p> <p>Luxury brands' greenwashing is seen as a capitalist show-off</p> <p>Big brands treat environmentalism as a business package</p> <p>Small brands are more likely to</p>	<p>brand–consumer relationship.</p> <p>Already suspicious of their greenwashing, and the news just confirms it</p> <p>Some brands don't promote sustainability, but their craftsmanship and durability reflect sustainable value.</p> <p>The durability of some brands brings a sense of long-term companionship and emotional connection.</p> <p>Most rich people don't care much about environmentalism</p> <p>Social responsibility is more likely to influence the middle class</p> <p>Sustainability promotion is quite common</p> <p>Overall public environmental awareness is insufficient</p> <p>Low attention to large-scale environmental advertising campaigns</p> <p>Rarely pays attention to reports about specific brands</p> <p>Pays relatively little attention to sustainability promotion</p>	<p>forms of sustainable value</p> <p>Showing class differences in concerns for environmentalism and social responsibility</p> <p>Sustainability promotion is quite common</p> <p>Overall public environmental awareness is insufficient</p> <p>Rarely pays attention to reports about specific brands</p> <p>Experiencing frequent exposure to greenwashing through social and fashion media</p> <p>Having low awareness of greenwashing accusations in the fashion industry</p>
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<p>genuinely focus on social value</p> <p>Negative news leads to consumer refusal ("sweatshop-made sweater")</p> <p>Luxury brands should take on more environmental responsibility</p> <p>There are expectations for luxury brands' environmental responsibility</p> <p>There's a gap between expectations and reality</p> <p>ESG goals are considered to be for show</p> <p>Won't proactively verify environmental information</p> <p>Data discrepancies have little impact on perception</p> <p><u>Direct negative news affects brand perception</u></p> <p>Can accept not meeting goals</p> <p>False promises are seen as deception</p> <p>False promises are seen as deception</p> <p>Low perception of carbon emissions</p> <p>Direct victim situations are easier to resonate with</p> <p>Doubts about environmental issues</p> <p>Exaggerated environmental claims lead to a decrease in trust</p> <p><u>Production process emissions have no direct harm perception</u></p>	<p>Long-term exposure to greenwashing information on social media</p> <p>Fashion media has many greenwashing reports</p> <p>Greenwashing accusations in the fashion industry are less noticed</p> <p>Has not noticed specific brands being accused of greenwashing</p> <p>Low exposure on social media</p> <p>Seeing greenwashing as a normal advertising tactic</p> <p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as normal advertising behavior</p> <p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as normal advertising behavior</p> <p>Failure to meet carbon reduction goals is not considered serious</p> <p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as advertising tactics</p> <p>Exaggerated claims won't affect purchase intention.</p> <p>Notice what kind of sustainable materials</p> <p>Renewable or natural materials</p> <p>Helping underdeveloped regions' economies</p>	<p>Interpreting "exaggerated greenwashing" as a form of "normal advertising"</p> <p>Noticing diverse sustainability messages and practices in fashion (e.g., materials, promotions, social good, and recycling initiatives)</p> <p><u>Prefer concrete data (e.g., carbon-reduction figures)</u></p> <p>Rarely verifying the authenticity of environmental claims</p>
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<p>Greenwashing of the eco-friendly product itself leads to a decrease in brand trust</p> <p>Damaged trust leads to a reduction in purchasing options</p> <p>Difficult to regain trust after greenwashing</p> <p>Trust and social attributes are both ruined</p> <p>Brand blaming the supplier is considered untrustworthy</p> <p>Apologies and remedies are seen as post-facto shows</p> <p>Continuous improvement is compared to a cheating ex's promise, making it hard to regain trust</p> <p>Long-term monitoring</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Regularly publishing credible reports</p> <p>Long-term fulfillment of goals</p> <p>Third-party organizations' involvement</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Two-way communication with consumers</p> <p>Third-party certification and auditing</p> <p>Renewable or natural materials</p> <p>Helping underdeveloped regions' economies</p> <p>Greenwashing accusations in the fashion industry are less noticed</p> <p>Denim production causes great environmental harm</p>	<p>Denim production causes great environmental harm</p> <p>A lot of sustainability promotions on clothing tags</p> <p>Environmental slogans: ocean protection and "buying one piece of clothing is equivalent to saving something"</p> <p>Used-clothing recycling for vouchers</p> <p>Promotes using eco bags when shopping</p> <p>Chanel stopped using exotic animal skins; uses glass pearls instead of natural pearls</p> <p>Sustainability messaging often appears on hangtags/labels</p> <p><u>Prefer concrete data (e.g., carbon-reduction figures)</u></p> <p>Won't proactively verify environmental information</p> <p>Does not proactively verify authenticity</p> <p>Would not proactively verify the truth of brands' environmental claims</p> <p>Real-life product experience validates environmental promotions over time</p> <p>The brand has deviated from its original eco-friendly philosophy</p> <p>Real-life product experience validates environmental promotions over time</p>	<p>Evaluating the authenticity of sustainability claims through real-life experience, consistency, and transparency of information</p> <p><u>The fashion industry's responsibility for environmental issues is limited</u></p> <p><u>Limited impact of greenwashing due to low awareness and weak supervision in the Chinese market</u></p>
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<p>Beauty brands have FSC eco-friendly certified packaging</p> <p>Excessive packaging is inconsistent with eco-friendly promotions</p> <p>Focus on the product itself rather than promotion</p> <p>Seeing greenwashing as a normal advertising tactic</p> <p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as normal advertising behavior</p> <p>Perception of no direct risk to personal interests from fast fashion greenwashing</p> <p><u>Can tolerate harm from normal industrial processes</u></p> <p><u>Lack of government and media supervision limits the rise of environmental awareness</u></p> <p>More inclined towards pragmatism than environmental considerations</p> <p>Clothing recycling programs can bring a positive feeling</p> <p>Loyal consumers will feel proud of a brand's environmental initiatives</p> <p>"Consumption is also a way of branding one's own identity or philosophy"</p> <p>Will have expectations due to environmental promotions</p> <p><u>Greenwashing causes a feeling of being cheated and even disgust</u></p> <p><u>Causes strong resentment in</u></p>	<p>Excessive packaging is inconsistent with eco-friendly promotions</p> <p>Never seen a recycling bin, skeptical about the program</p> <p>Suspects a lack of transparency in the process</p> <p>Incomplete/vague/illogical</p> <p>Will proactively check the official website due to specific incidents</p> <p>Vague or insufficient details cause skepticism</p> <p>Brand publicity sometimes has informational loopholes</p> <p>Judges authenticity of promotion through concrete and quantifiable statements</p> <p><u>The fashion industry's responsibility for environmental issues is limited</u></p> <p><u>The impact of minor greenwashing is limited in the Chinese market</u></p> <p><u>Lack of government and media supervision limits the rise of environmental awareness</u></p> <p>Focus on the product itself rather than promotion</p> <p>More inclined towards pragmatism than environmental considerations</p>	<p>Prioritising product attributes over environmental considerations</p> <p><u>Tolerating perceived normal harms from industrial production</u></p> <p><u>Sustainability is only a bonus factor</u></p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts fostering positive impressions, purchase intention, and loyalty</p> <p>Sustainability promotion enhancing brand reputation, value, and consumer goodwill</p>
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<p><u>cases of social harm</u></p> <p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as normal advertising behavior</p> <p>Severe greenwashing leads to stopping purchases</p> <p><u>Severe greenwashing leads to stopping purchases of similar brands</u></p> <p><u>Under universal suspicion, turns to ignoring greenwashing scandals and buying based on personal preference</u></p> <p><u>Tangible donation behavior can enhance positive feelings</u></p> <p>Clear evidence is more authentic and credible</p> <p>Failure to meet carbon reduction goals is not considered serious</p> <p>Carbon emission issues do not affect loyalty and reputation</p> <p><u>Greenwashing that crosses a moral bottom line causes a strong negative reaction</u></p> <p>Focus on the product itself rather than environmentalism</p> <p><u>The impact of minor greenwashing is limited in the Chinese market</u></p> <p><u>Purchase intention depends on the severity of greenwashing</u></p> <p>Exaggerated promotions are seen as advertising tactics</p> <p><u>Exaggerated promotions do not cross the bottom line</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing at the product</u></p>	<p>Focus on the product itself rather than environmentalism</p> <p>Product remains the primary purchase driver</p> <p><u>Can tolerate harm from normal industrial processes</u></p> <p><u>Exaggerated promotions do not cross the bottom line</u></p> <p><u>Production process emissions have no direct harm perception</u></p> <p><u>Sustainability is only a bonus factor</u></p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts enhance good impressions and purchasing desire</p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts enhance good impressions and purchasing desire</p> <p>Sustainable actions may convert consumers into loyal customers.</p> <p>Environmentalism enhances brand value</p> <p>Environmental attempts can improve brand reputation and loyalty</p> <p>Sustainable stories significantly boost good impressions and trust in luxury brands</p> <p>Environmental/sustainability promotion can raise favorability.</p> <p>Sustainability promotion can</p>	<p>The brand-consumer relationship is likened to friendship: from external attraction to value alignment, leading to long-term loyalty.</p> <p><u>Sustainability messaging raising expectations, exploration, and potential loyalty</u></p> <p><u>After greenwashing, brand reputation declines slightly</u></p> <p>If a favored brand greenwashes, will lose trust and stop buying</p> <p>Disappointment in sustainability expectations leads to a decrease in good impressions</p> <p><u>Sustainability promotions can add points, but</u></p>
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<p><u>level can create disgust towards the brand</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing by a reputable brand does not affect its market popularity</u></p> <p><u>Buying for brand identity, not caring about environmental issues</u></p> <p>Becomes suspicious of similar products</p> <p><u>Hard to refuse consumerism</u></p> <p><u>Will continue to buy after greenwashing due to social identity</u></p> <p><u>Herd mentality continues purchases</u></p> <p>Luxury brands are expected to take on environmental and social responsibilities</p> <p>Sustainability promotions play a bonus role in brand selection</p> <p><u>Sustainability promotion is quite common</u></p> <p>A lot of sustainability promotions on clothing tags</p> <p>Environmental slogans: ocean protection and "buying one piece of clothing is equivalent to saving something"</p> <p><b>Low attention to large-scale environmental advertising campaigns</b></p> <p>Environmental promotions are believed to be half true, half false</p> <p>Does not proactively verify</p>	<p>increase purchase intention.</p> <p>Sustainability promotion helps enhance brand reputation</p> <p>Sustainability promotion makes the brand seem more responsible</p> <p>Sustainability storytelling can enhance understanding of and goodwill toward brand culture.</p> <p>Sustainability measures can significantly enhance brand reputation.</p> <p><b>The brand-consumer relationship is likened to friendship: from external attraction to value alignment, leading to long-term loyalty.</b></p> <p><u>Sustainability promotion raises expectations for the brand.</u></p> <p><u>Environmental/sustainability messaging sparks a desire to explore the brand</u></p> <p><u>Willing to actively look for affordable items due to sustainability messaging, generating potential loyalty</u></p> <p><u>After greenwashing, brand reputation declines slightly</u></p> <p><b>If a favored brand greenwashes, will lose trust and stop buying</b></p> <p><b>Disappointment in sustainability</b></p>	<p><u>greenwashing will deduct points</u></p> <p>Greenwashing generating distrust and generalised suspicion of brands' sustainability initiatives</p> <p>Greenwashing leading to future suspicion of similar initiatives, products, and other brands' promotions</p> <p>False promises as deception</p> <p>Damaged credibility and social image leading to reduced purchase intention</p> <p><u>Feeling __ shocked __ after learning of negative news.</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing causes a</u></p>
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<p>authenticity</p> <p>Big brands have more information sources, making it easier to track and verify</p> <p>Fashion media has many greenwashing reports</p> <p>Rarely pays attention to reports about specific brands</p> <p>Never seen a recycling bin, skeptical about the program</p> <p>Suspects a lack of transparency in the process</p> <p>Incomplete/vague/illogical promotional details can lead to a decrease in credibility</p> <p>Environmental attempts can improve brand reputation and loyalty</p> <p>Immature actions are also seen as positive efforts</p> <p>Fast fashion consumption is mainly about style</p> <p>Fast fashion is not expected to be sustainable</p> <p>No expectations, so the result is seen as exceeding expectations</p> <p>Buys fast fashion mainly for cost-effectiveness</p> <p>Greenwashing incidents do not affect fast fashion purchasing decisions</p> <p>Sustainable stories significantly boost good impressions and trust in luxury brands</p> <p>Human-centric promotions are more likely to generate trust</p>	<p>expectations leads to a decrease in good impressions</p> <p>Sustainability promotions can add points, but greenwashing will deduct points</p> <p>Developed a distrust of environmental promotions</p> <p>Exaggerated environmental claims lead to a decrease in trust</p> <p>The strong contrast between greenwashing scandals and earlier sustainability image leads to distrust</p> <p>Doesn't trust the brand's own statements</p> <p>Types of sustainability initiatives are limited, making it easy to recall past negatives.</p> <p>Will suspect similar initiatives in the future.</p> <p>Suspicious of all brand promotions</p> <p>Becomes suspicious of similar products</p> <p>Becomes cautious about other brands as well</p> <p>More greenwashing leads to generalized suspicion toward other brands' environmental initiatives.</p> <p>False promises are seen as deception</p>	<p>feeling of being cheated and even disgust</p> <p>Purchase intention shaped by the severity of greenwashing</p> <p>Greenwashing at the product level can create disgust towards the brand</p> <p>Labour exploitation and waste colonialism feel personally relevant and trigger major scandals</p> <p>Severe greenwashing crossing moral boundaries triggers strong resentment, feelings of betrayal, and complete rejection of the</p>
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<p><u>The fashion industry's responsibility for environmental issues is limited</u></p> <p><u>Fake human-centric narratives are more serious than environmental greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>Exploitation of labor makes the brand lose its luxury identity</u></p> <p><u>The severity of labor exploitation can be compared to "insulting China" brands</u></p> <p><u>Severe greenwashing makes consumers feel a strong sense of being cheated and betrayed</u></p> <p><u>Severe greenwashing completely eliminates the original desire to buy</u></p> <p><u>Fast fashion greenwashing is easily replaceable</u></p> <p><u>Luxury brands' mistakes are more unforgivable</u></p> <p><u>High premium of luxury goods means higher social responsibility</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing brings social risks</u></p> <p><u>Worries about being seen as lacking discernment</u></p> <p><u>More lenient towards sports brands with strong functionality</u></p> <p><u>Already suspicious of their greenwashing, and the news just confirms it</u></p> <p><b>A rapid, firm response can effectively regain trust</b></p> <p><b>Cutting off cooperation within</b></p>	<p><u>False promises are seen as deception</u></p> <p><u>Not buying is due to damaged credibility, not because it's not eco-friendly</u></p> <p><u>Trust and social attributes are both ruined</u></p> <p><u>Feeling shocked after learning of negative news.</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing causes a feeling of being cheated and even disgust</u></p> <p><u>Purchase intention depends on the severity of greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>The severity of greenwashing determines consumer attitudes toward the brand</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing at the product level can create disgust towards the brand</u></p> <p><u>Fake human-centric narratives are more serious than environmental greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>Exploitation of labor makes the brand lose its luxury identity</u></p> <p><u>The severity of labor exploitation can be compared to "insulting China" brands</u></p> <p><u>Accuses them of profiting by exploiting labor and via unequal</u></p>	<p><u>brand</u></p> <p><u>Negative news and damaged trust reducing consumer desire and purchase frequency</u></p> <p><u>Short-term avoidance of purchasing during greenwashing scandals</u></p> <p><b>Greenwashing scandals weakening brand identification and emotional connection, prompting consumers to switch to competitors</b></p>
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<p>24 hours is seen as a decisive move</p> <p>Changing suppliers is a key remedial measure</p> <p>If later exposed for not truly cutting ties, trust is completely lost</p> <p>Short-term response</p> <p>Third-party certification is secondary but key</p> <p>Two-way communication (e.g., live streaming) can enhance trust</p> <p>Greenwashing has a limited impact on the purchasing behavior of high-end consumers</p> <p>Most rich people don't care much about environmentalism</p> <p>Social responsibility is more likely to influence the middle class</p> <p>Sustainability promotions can add points, but greenwashing will deduct points</p> <p>Lacking guilt from buying unethical products</p> <p>Believes brands should face external sanctions</p> <p>The power of individual consumers is limited</p> <p>Collective action can produce a greater impact</p> <p>Overall public environmental awareness is insufficient</p> <p>Luxury brands are harder to replace when problems occur</p>	<p>contracts</p> <p>Compares the brand to a new-era exploiter</p> <p>Labor issues go beyond sustainability and are seen as major scandals</p> <p>Causes strong resentment in cases of social harm</p> <p>Greenwashing that crosses a moral bottom line causes a strong negative reaction</p> <p>Severe greenwashing makes consumers feel a strong sense of being cheated and betrayed</p> <p>Severe greenwashing completely eliminates the original desire to buy</p> <p>If severe greenwashing is confirmed, will completely blacklist the brand</p> <p>Severe greenwashing triggers strong negative emotions and unwillingness to engage with the brand</p> <p>Severe moral-bottom-line violations in greenwashing trigger strong shock and negative feelings</p> <p>A single greenwashing incident won't stop purchase, but continual scandals will.</p> <p>"I will reduce the number of times I buy from it"</p>	<p>Greenwashing generating a sense of betrayal, intensified in luxury and reinforced through repetition</p> <p>Fast fashion greenwashing easily causing customer loss due to high replaceability</p> <p>Direct negative news and victim narratives strongly influencing brand perception</p> <p>Using sustainable consumption to express social identity and personal philosophy</p>
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<p>Fast fashion is highly replaceable</p> <p>Fast fashion greenwashing easily leads to customer loss</p> <p>Timely statements can appease emotions</p> <p>Blaming suppliers seems irresponsible</p> <p>Apology + explanation + promised plan</p> <p>Requires subsequent tracking and feedback on remedial measures</p> <p>Strengthening supply chain and blockchain traceability</p> <p>Accepting giving brands a chance to correct</p> <p>Accepting as long as actions are seen</p> <p>Relying on third-party supervision to determine authenticity</p> <p>Being cheated once doesn't mean completely abandoning the brand</p> <p>Apology + continuous action</p>	<p>No longer following and reducing consumer desire</p> <p>Negative news leads to consumer refusal ("sweatshop-made sweater")</p> <p>Damaged trust leads to a reduction in purchasing options</p> <p>Will explicitly avoid purchasing during periods when the scandal is widely discussed</p> <p>Chooses short-term avoidance after a greenwashing scandal</p> <p>Greenwashing scandal would lead to switching to a competitor</p> <p>Greenwashing scandals weaken identification with brand reputation.</p> <p>Emotional connection with the brand is weakened.</p> <p>Reminds oneself not to romanticize the nature of capital.</p> <p>With ongoing greenwashing, will firmly switch to other brands.</p> <p>With more competitors and better craftsmanship, may switch to other brands.</p> <p>Greenwashing triggers a sense of betrayal</p> <p>Goodwill turning to discovering</p>	<p>Greenwashing undermining identity expression and self image, prompting consumers to switch brands</p> <p>Purchasing driven by herd mentality and brand identity rather than environmental concern</p> <p>Continuing consumption after greenwashing due to consumerism and social identity</p>
<p>Fast fashion is highly replaceable, so they initially choose to stop buying</p> <p>Good-looking products will still attract purchases</p> <p>It takes five to ten years of continuous improvement to truly restore trust</p> <p>Sustainability/greenwashing information needs to be</p>	<p>Greenwashing triggers a sense of betrayal</p> <p>Goodwill turning to discovering</p>	<p>Expecting luxury brands to bear greater environmental and social responsibility in line with their high pricing</p>

<p>passively received, not actively sought out</p> <p>Long-term action</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Third-party certification</p> <p>Doesn't trust the brand's own statements</p> <p>Used-clothing recycling for vouchers</p> <p>Promotes using eco bags when shopping</p> <p>Chanel stopped using exotic animal skins; uses glass pearls instead of natural pearls</p> <p>Has not noticed specific brands being accused of greenwashing</p> <p>Would not proactively verify the truth of brands' environmental claims</p> <p>Views sustainability messaging as whitewashing</p> <p>Believes environmental initiatives are essentially profit-driven</p> <p>After hearing greenwashing scandals, considers the brand despicable</p> <p>Accuses them of profiting by exploiting labor and via unequal contracts</p> <p>Compares the brand to a new-era exploiter</p> <p>If a favored brand greenwashes, will lose trust and stop buying</p> <p>Greenwashing scandals in luxury brands lead to a major</p>	<p>falsehood results in a sense of betrayal</p> <p>Greenwashing generates some sense of betrayal</p> <p>Luxury more easily triggers a strong sense of betrayal.</p> <p>Repeated betrayal breeds a prior distrust.</p> <p>Fast fashion greenwashing is easily replaceable</p> <p>Fast fashion is highly replaceable</p> <p>Fast fashion greenwashing easily leads to customer loss</p> <p>Fast fashion lacks the storytelling and cultural value that truly moves people</p> <p>Direct negative news affects brand perception</p> <p>Direct victim situations are easier to resonate with</p> <p>Social identity</p> <p>Reflecting an eco-friendly identity label</p> <p>Having social attributes</p> <p>"Consumption is also a way of branding one's own identity or philosophy"</p> <p>Greenwashing affects personal identity and social labels</p>	<p>Low sustainability expectations for fast fashion limit the impact of greenwashing</p> <p>Low purchase investment leads to weaker risk perception</p> <p>Believes eco lines are often priced higher</p> <p>Fast fashion consumption is mainly about style</p> <p>Scepticism about the durability of eco-friendly alternative materials</p> <p>Luxury brand irreplaceability sustaining continued purchase despite problems</p>
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<p><u>drop in reputation</u></p> <p>High prices should correspond to high labor costs</p> <p><u>If a luxury brand is found to seriously greenwash, it loses its luxury status</u></p> <p><u>Luxury greenwashing brings a more severe shock</u></p> <p><u>The impact of luxury greenwashing is greater</u></p> <p><u>Buying luxury involves real, hard-earned money</u></p> <p><u>Cares a lot about the value and integrity of luxury items</u></p> <p><u>Will more cautiously evaluate whether a luxury item is worth buying</u></p> <p>Consumers are not surprised when a brand's emissions rise contrary to its commitments</p> <p>Falsifying ESG is thought to be possibly a tax-avoidance tactic</p> <p>Has no perception of carbon-emissions issues</p> <p>Does not care whether the brand fulfills its emissions commitments</p> <p>Believes emissions are indistinguishable/imperceptible</p> <p>Exaggerated sustainability claims have little impact</p> <p><u>Low purchase investment leads to weaker risk perception</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing scandal would lead to switching to a competitor</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing triggers a sense</u></p>	<p>Greenwashing has a negative impact on identity</p> <p>Fake eco-friendly products damage personal social image</p> <p>"Wearing it can't add a label to me"</p> <p>Losing social label value and switching to other brands</p> <p>Idealized identity label</p> <p>"I do care about what other people think"</p> <p>Worries about being seen as lacking discernment</p> <p><u>Herd mentality continues purchases</u></p> <p><u>Buying for brand identity, not caring about environmental issues</u></p> <p><u>Hard to refuse consumerism</u></p> <p><u>Will continue to buy after greenwashing due to social identity</u></p> <p>Luxury brands should take on more environmental responsibility</p> <p>There are expectations for luxury brands' environmental responsibility</p> <p>Luxury brands are expected to take on environmental and social responsibilities</p> <p>High premium of luxury goods means higher social responsibility</p>	<p><u>Luxury greenwashing seen as less acceptable and more damaging, undermining brand status and reputation</u></p> <p><u>High financial and emotional investment in luxury leading to cautious evaluation and stronger sense of betrayal</u></p> <p><u>Functionality and comfort make sports brands irreplaceable and elicit greater consumer leniency</u></p> <p><u>Fast fashion purchases driven by cost-effectiveness, comfort, and wearability</u></p>
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<p><b>of betrayal</b></p> <p>Becomes cautious about other brands as well</p> <p><u>Skeptical about the durability of eco materials</u></p> <p><u>Eco alternative materials may be seen as less durable than the originals</u></p> <p><b>Aversion to brands' buck-passing apologies and rapid responses</b></p> <p><b>Silence or response—neither wins trust</b></p> <p>Completely distrusts supply-chain traceability as well</p> <p><b>Brand remediation is seen as patching holes rather than genuine action</b></p> <p><b>True sustainability should proactively manage suppliers and labor conditions</b></p> <p><b>True sustainability means lowering profit margins</b></p> <p><b>Board's pursuit of profit fundamentally conflicts with sustainability</b></p> <p><b>More credible if the brand directly allocates part of profits to makers</b></p> <p><b>Charity-oriented business models are thought to earn more trust</b></p> <p><b>Will not proactively pay attention to brands' sustainable tech investments and improvements</b></p> <p><b>Long-term actions are hard to</b></p>	<p>High prices should correspond to high labor costs</p> <p>The high pricing of luxury implies higher social responsibility and moral requirements</p> <p><u>Fast fashion is not expected to be sustainable</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing's impact on fast fashion is limited</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing incidents do not affect fast fashion purchasing decisions</u></p> <p><u>Low purchase investment leads to weaker risk perception</u></p> <p>Believes eco lines are often priced higher</p> <p><b>Fast fashion consumption is mainly about style</b></p> <p><u>Skeptical about the durability of eco materials</u></p> <p><u>Eco alternative materials may be seen as less durable than the originals</u></p> <p><u>Will switch to substitutable luxury brands if greenwashing is severe.</u></p> <p><u>Luxury brands are harder to replace when problems occur</u></p> <p><u>If hard to replace, will continue</u></p>	<p><u>Minimal expectations of fast fashion sustainability promotions, leading to little disappointment and occasional surprise</u></p> <p>Tolerance towards unmet goals and exaggerated sustainability claims</p> <p><u>Immature actions are also seen as positive efforts</u></p> <p><b>Unique style, comfort, and beauty sustaining purchase despite scandals</b></p> <p><b>Brand/ Product Loyalty Shields Against Negative Impact</b></p> <p>Low perception of carbon emissions and limited impact of unmet targets on loyalty or purchase behaviour</p>
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<p><u>see</u></p> <p>Believes eco lines are often priced higher</p> <p>Still finds it hard to trust long-term actions</p> <p>"All short-term responses are lies."</p> <p>Sharing profits long-term with employees or laborers + data disclosure + third-party audits would restore some trust</p> <p>After greenwashing, it's hard to reach the point of resuming purchase</p> <p>"Third-party certification is the most important, but I might not proactively look at it."</p> <p>Pays relatively little attention to sustainability promotion</p> <p>Will proactively check the official website due to specific incidents</p> <p>Low exposure on social media</p> <p>Sustainability messaging often appears on hangtags/labels</p> <p>Generally skeptical toward brands' sustainability promotions</p> <p>Vague or insufficient details cause skepticism</p> <p>Documentary-style sustainability storytelling is perceived as candid and transparent, increasing trust</p> <p>Sustainability promotion helps enhance brand reputation</p> <p>Sustainability promotion makes</p>	<p><u>buying.</u></p> <p>Part of a luxury brand's status comes from irreplaceability.</p> <p>Greenwashing has a limited impact on the purchasing behavior of high-end consumers</p> <p>Luxury brands' mistakes are more unforgivable</p> <p>Luxury greenwashing brings a more severe shock</p> <p>The impact of luxury greenwashing is greater</p> <p>If a luxury brand is found to seriously greenwash, it loses its luxury status</p> <p>Greenwashing scandals in luxury brands lead to a major drop in reputation</p> <p>Luxury greenwashing is less acceptable than fast fashion's.</p> <p>Luxury is seen as a magnified version of the capitalist game.</p> <p>Buying luxury involves real, hard-earned money</p> <p>Cares a lot about the value and integrity of luxury items</p> <p>Will more cautiously evaluate whether a luxury item is worth buying</p> <p>Luxury more easily triggers a strong sense of betrayal.</p> <p>More lenient towards sports</p>	<p>Perceiving sustainability data gaps, "Concept-shifting" and unmet commitments as understandable, with limited impact on brand reputation or loyalty</p> <p><u>Lacking guilt from buying unethical products</u></p> <p>Recognising limited individual power and the need for external sanctions or collective consumer</p>
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<p>the brand seem more responsible</p> <p>Expectation for the future is to maintain current standards</p> <p><u>Environmental/sustainability messaging sparks a desire to explore the brand</u></p> <p><b>Product remains the primary purchase driver</b></p> <p><u>Willing to actively look for affordable items due to sustainability messaging, generating potential loyalty</u></p> <p>The strong contrast between greenwashing scandals and earlier sustainability image leads to distrust</p> <p><u>Labor issues go beyond sustainability and are seen as major scandals</u></p> <p><u>Will explicitly avoid purchasing during periods when the scandal is widely discussed</u></p> <p><b>Goodwill turning to discovering falsehood results in a sense of betrayal</b></p> <p><b>Hopes the brand explains in a timely manner</b></p> <p><u>If severe greenwashing is confirmed, will completely blacklist the brand</u></p> <p>Chinese consumers generally remain wary of clothing recycling</p> <p><b>Greenwashing generates some sense of betrayal</b></p> <p>Brand publicity sometimes has</p>	<p><u>brands with strong functionality</u></p> <p><u>For sports brands, functionality and comfort remain key purchase drivers.</u></p> <p><u>Sports brands have their own irreplaceability.</u></p> <p><u>Buys fast fashion mainly for cost-effectiveness</u></p> <p><u>Fast fashion is chiefly about value for money</u></p> <p><u>For fast fashion, purchase motives remain “comfortable and long-wearing.”</u></p> <p><u>No expectations, so the result is seen as exceeding expectations</u></p> <p><u>Do not expect much from fast-fashion environmental promotion.</u></p> <p><u>No expectations, no disappointment.</u></p> <p>Can accept not meeting goals</p> <p>Exaggerated sustainability claims have little impact</p> <p><u>Immature actions are also seen as positive efforts</u></p> <p><b>If the product is unique, scandal impact is smaller</b></p> <p><b>If the product is unique, consumption may dip short-term, not necessarily a long-term boycott</b></p>	<p><u>action to drive brand change</u></p> <p>Brand deflections and post-facto remedies perceived as untrustworthy, hindering trust recovery</p> <p><u>Authentic CSR Actions Foster Trust and Positive Emotion</u></p> <p><b>Transparency and independent third-party certification seen as essential yet limited in building consumer trust</b></p>
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<p>informational loopholes</p> <p>After greenwashing, brand reputation declines slightly</p> <p><u>Greenwashing's impact on fast fashion is limited</u></p> <p><u>Fast fashion is chiefly about value for money</u></p> <p>Tends to view the brand separately from the corporate group level</p> <p><u>If the product is unique, scandal impact is smaller</u></p> <p><u>If the product is unique, consumption may dip short-term, not necessarily a long-term boycott</u></p> <p><u>Loyalty to the product itself can mitigate the scandal's impact</u></p> <p><u>Chooses short-term avoidance after a greenwashing scandal</u></p> <p><u>May still purchase if encountering a style they like</u></p> <p><u>Limited substitution effect between brands</u></p> <p>"Concept-shifting"</p> <p>greenwashing doesn't greatly affect brand reputation and loyalty</p> <p>Understands when brands fail to meet carbon-reduction targets</p> <p><u>The severity of greenwashing determines consumer attitudes toward the brand</u></p> <p><u>Severe greenwashing triggers strong negative emotions and unwillingness to engage with</u></p>	<p><u>May still purchase if encountering a style they like</u></p> <p><u>Comfort and beauty remain the primary purchase motivations.</u></p> <p><u>Loyalty to the product itself can mitigate the scandal's impact</u></p> <p><u>Limited substitution effect between brands</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing by a reputable brand does not affect its market popularity</u></p> <p>Low perception of carbon emissions</p> <p>Carbon emission issues do not affect loyalty and reputation</p> <p>Has no perception of carbon-emissions issues</p> <p>Does not care whether the brand fulfills its emissions commitments</p> <p>Believes emissions are indistinguishable/imperceptible</p> <p>No strong sense of betrayal when carbon-reduction targets aren't met.</p> <p>Carbon-emissions data are hard to perceive.</p> <p>Understands when brands fail to meet carbon-reduction targets</p> <p>Concrete analogies for emissions create some disappointment but don't directly affect purchase.</p>	<p><u>Relying on third-party supervision and passively receiving sustainability information rather than actively seeking it</u></p> <p><u>Even knowing greenwashing risks, consumers won't invest time to probe deeply</u></p> <p><u>Apology</u></p> <p><u>Trust and loyalty recovery requiring long-term, continuous, and visible sustainable actions</u></p>
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<p><u>the brand</u></p> <p>Maintains long-term skepticism toward brands' environmental claims</p> <p>Identifies greenwashing through loopholes in promotional wording</p> <p>The high pricing of luxury implies higher social responsibility and moral requirements</p> <p>Willing to give a chance for improvement after greenwashing</p> <p>Loyalty recovery depends on subsequent performance and improvements after greenwashing</p> <p>Large companies receive more attention and are at greater risk of being exposed for greenwashing</p> <p>Judges authenticity of promotion through concrete and quantifiable statements</p> <p>Visual evidence of the entire process</p> <p>Lack of detail reduces credibility</p> <p>Crisis PR response is timely</p> <p>Explanation is acceptable</p> <p>Skepticism about the brand's timely response</p> <p>"The key is whether it truly solves the problem afterward."</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Long-term measures can pull</p>	<p>Data discrepancies have little impact on perception</p> <p>Consumers are not surprised when a brand's emissions rise contrary to its commitments</p> <p>Falsifying ESG is thought to be possibly a tax-avoidance tactic</p> <p>"Concept-shifting"</p> <p>greenwashing doesn't greatly affect brand reputation and loyalty</p> <p>Brand sustainability reports are seen as "visions" or assignments.</p> <p>Consumers find failure to meet commitments "understandable."</p> <p><u>Lacking guilt from buying unethical products</u></p> <p><u>Believes brands should face external sanctions</u></p> <p><u>The power of individual consumers is limited</u></p> <p><u>Collective action can produce a greater impact</u></p> <p><u>Collective consumer resistance is needed to force brand change.</u></p> <p><u>Acknowledges the limits of individual power.</u></p> <p>Brand blaming the supplier is considered untrustworthy</p> <p>Apologies and remedies are</p>	<p><u>Fast fashion's long-term efforts seen as insufficient to resolve fundamental contradictions</u></p> <p><u>Brand-initiated long-term measures only shift trust from negative to neutral and are met with scepticism</u></p> <p><u>Two-way communication (e.g., live streaming) can enhance trust</u></p>
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<p>trust from negative back to neutral, but won't immediately restore goodwill</p> <p>Ongoing future actions are conducive to goodwill</p> <p>Short-term immediate action is most critical</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Long-term continuous action</p> <p>Even knowing greenwashing risks, consumers won't invest time to probe deeply</p> <p>Consumers are reluctant to engage in two-way communication and prefer to passively receive concise information</p> <p>Some brands don't promote sustainability, but their craftsmanship and durability reflect sustainable value.</p> <p>The durability of some brands brings a sense of long-term companionship and emotional connection.</p> <p>Blunt sustainability ads can feel like being "lectured," causing discomfort.</p> <p>There is skepticism about the authenticity of blunt sustainability ads.</p> <p>Prefer concrete data (e.g., carbon-reduction figures)</p> <p>Sustainability storytelling can enhance understanding of and goodwill toward brand culture.</p> <p>Sustainability promotion can</p>	<p>seen as post-facto shows</p> <p>Continuous improvement is compared to a cheating ex's promise, making it hard to regain trust</p> <p>Tangible donation behavior can enhance positive feelings</p> <p>Human-centric promotions are more likely to generate trust</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Regularly publishing credible reports</p> <p>Third-party organizations' involvement</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Third-party certification and auditing</p> <p>Clear evidence is more authentic and credible</p> <p>Third-party certification is secondary but key</p> <p>Strengthening supply chain and blockchain traceability</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Third-party certification</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Consumers cannot directly verify supply chains and thus remain skeptical.</p> <p>Only independent third-party verification without interest ties may enhance trust.</p>	<p>Rapid and decisive short-term responses (timely statements, supplier changes, explanations) seen as critical for regaining trust</p> <p>Scepticism toward brands' apologies and rapid responses, seen as superficial remediation rather than genuine action</p> <p>Shifting blame and vague communication reducing brand credibility</p>
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<p>increase purchase intention.</p> <p>Sustainability measures can significantly enhance brand reputation.</p> <p>Sustainable actions may convert consumers into loyal customers.</p> <p>The brand–consumer relationship is likened to friendship: from external attraction to value alignment, leading to long-term loyalty.</p> <p>Sustainability promotion raises expectations for the brand.</p> <p><u>Feeling shocked after learning of negative news.</u></p> <p>Believes the brand’s sustainability efforts are profit-driven.</p> <p>Questions the sincerity of the brand–consumer relationship.</p> <p>Comfort and beauty remain the primary purchase motivations.</p> <p>Sustainability is only a bonus factor.</p> <p>A single greenwashing incident won’t stop purchase, but continual scandals will.</p> <p>Greenwashing scandals weaken identification with brand reputation.</p> <p>Emotional connection with the brand is weakened.</p> <p>Reminds oneself not to romanticize the nature of capital.</p> <p><u>Will switch to substitutable</u></p>	<p>Third-party certification and short-term responses can’t solve problems at the root.</p> <p>“Third-party certification is the most important, but I might not proactively look at it.”</p> <p>Relying on third-party supervision to determine authenticity</p> <p>Sustainability/greenwashing information needs to be passively received, not actively sought out</p> <p>Will not proactively pay attention to brands’ sustainable tech investments and improvements</p> <p>Even knowing greenwashing risks, consumers won’t invest time to probe deeply</p> <p>Apology</p> <p>Long-term fulfillment of goals</p> <p>Requires subsequent tracking and feedback on remedial measures</p> <p>It takes five to ten years of continuous improvement to truly restore trust</p> <p>Long-term action</p> <p>Loyalty recovery depends on subsequent performance and improvements after greenwashing</p>	<p>Willingness to give brands a chance to improve after greenwashing</p> <p>True sustainability tied to supplier and labour management, profit-sharing, transparency, visible evidence, and tangible social contributions</p> <p>Difficulty trusting long-term actions after greenwashing, with later efforts seen as insufficient to restore full trust</p>
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<p><u>luxury brands if greenwashing is severe.</u>  <u>If hard to replace, will continue buying.</u>  <u>Part of a luxury brand's status comes from irreplaceability.</u>  <u>Severe moral-bottom-line violations in greenwashing trigger strong shock and negative feelings.</u>  <u>With ongoing greenwashing, will firmly switch to other brands.</u>  <u>Collective consumer resistance is needed to force brand change.</u>  <u>Acknowledges the limits of individual power.</u>  <u>Environmental/sustainability promotion can raise favorability.</u>  <u>For fast fashion, purchase motives remain "comfortable and long-wearing."</u>  <u>Do not expect much from fast-fashion environmental promotion.</u>  <u>No expectations, no disappointment.</u>  <u>As long as fast fashion undertakes environmental measures, even if exaggerated, it's viewed as "pretty good."</u>  <u>Fast fashion lacks the storytelling and cultural value that truly moves people.</u>  <u>Luxury greenwashing is less</u></p>	<p><u>Long-term continuous action</u>  <u>"The key is whether it truly solves the problem afterward."</u>  <u>Ongoing future actions are conducive to goodwill</u>  <u>Do new, visible sustainable actions.</u>  <u>If the brand continues visible actions and no longer gets accused of greenwashing, trust will gradually recover.</u>  <u>Continuous action.</u>  <u>Although problems can't be fundamentally solved, "visible progress" is enough to generate provisional trust.</u>  <u>Accepting as long as actions are seen</u>  <u>Fast fashion's long-term actions can't resolve the fundamental contradiction.</u>  <u>The essence of fast fashion is constant waste-generation, making it hard to change impressions through sustainability efforts.</u>  <u>Long-term measures can pull trust from negative back to neutral, but won't immediately restore goodwill</u>  <u>Distrust of brand-initiated long-term commitments and measures.</u></p>	
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acceptable than fast fashion's.

**Luxury more easily triggers a strong sense of betrayal.**

Luxury is seen as a magnified version of the capitalist game.

After scandals, will lean toward brands with similar materials and less excessive premium.

More greenwashing leads to generalized suspicion toward other brands' environmental initiatives.

**Repeated betrayal breeds a prior distrust.**

Will suspect similar initiatives in the future.

Types of sustainability initiatives are limited, making it easy to recall past negatives.

No strong sense of betrayal when carbon-reduction targets aren't met.

Brand sustainability reports are seen as "visions" or assignments.

Consumers find failure to meet commitments "understandable."

Carbon-emissions data are hard to perceive.

Concrete analogies for emissions create some disappointment but don't directly affect purchase.

For sports brands, functionality and comfort remain key purchase drivers.

Two-way communication with consumers

Two-way communication (e.g., live streaming) can enhance trust

Consumers are reluctant to engage in two-way communication and prefer to passively receive concise information

A rapid, firm response can effectively regain trust

Cutting off cooperation within 24 hours is seen as a decisive move

Changing suppliers is a key remedial measure

Short-term response

Timely statements can appease emotions

Apology + explanation + promised plan

Hopes the brand explains in a timely manner

Skepticism about the brand's timely response

Explanation is acceptable

Short-term immediate action is most critical

Aversion to brands' buck-passing apologies and rapid responses

<p>With more competitors and better craftsmanship, may switch to other brands.</p>	<p>Silence or response—neither wins trust</p>	
<p>Exaggerated claims won't affect purchase intention.</p>	<p>Brand remediation is seen as patching holes rather than genuine action</p>	
<p>Sports brands have their own irreplaceability.</p>	<p>Skepticism about the brand's timely response</p>	
<p>Brand's quick response is viewed as insincere crisis PR.</p>	<p>"Don't keep self-proving."</p>	
<p>Distrust of brand-initiated long-term commitments and measures.</p>	<p>"All short-term responses are lies."</p>	
<p>Consumers cannot directly verify supply chains and thus remain skeptical.</p>	<p>Blaming suppliers seems irresponsible</p>	
<p>Only independent third-party verification without interest ties may enhance trust.</p>	<p>Lack of detail reduces credibility</p>	
<p>Greenwashing on human-rights issues can be offset by helping more villages/groups.</p>	<p>Accepting giving brands a chance to correct</p>	
<p>"Don't keep self-proving."</p>	<p>Being cheated once doesn't mean completely abandoning the brand</p>	
<p>Do new, visible sustainable actions.</p>	<p>Willing to give a chance for improvement after greenwashing</p>	
<p>Will still carry doubts about the brand's future actions.</p>	<p>True sustainability should proactively manage suppliers and labor conditions</p>	
<p>If the brand continues visible actions and no longer gets accused of greenwashing, trust will gradually recover.</p>	<p>True sustainability means lowering profit margins</p>	
<p>The essence of fast fashion is constant waste-generation, making it hard to change impressions through sustainability efforts.</p>	<p>More credible if the brand directly allocates part of profits to makers</p>	
<p>Fast fashion's long-term actions can't resolve the</p>	<p>Charity-oriented business models are thought to earn more trust</p>	

<p>fundamental contradiction.</p> <p>Later actions are acknowledged but insufficient to generate full trust.</p> <p>Continuous action.</p> <p>Third-party certification and short-term responses can't solve problems at the root.</p> <p>Although problems can't be fundamentally solved, "visible progress" is enough to generate provisional trust.</p>	<p>Sharing profits long-term with employees or laborers + data disclosure + third-party audits would restore some trust</p> <p>Visual evidence of the entire process</p> <p>Greenwashing on human-rights issues can be offset by helping more villages/groups.</p> <p>Board's pursuit of profit fundamentally conflicts with sustainability</p> <p>Long-term actions are hard to see</p> <p>Still finds it hard to trust long-term actions</p> <p>After greenwashing, it's hard to reach the point of resuming purchase</p> <p>Will still carry doubts about the brand's future actions.</p> <p>Later actions are acknowledged but insufficient to generate full trust.</p>	
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C.3.2 Second Iteration: From Second-Order to Third-Order Codes

Second-Order Codes	Grouped Codes	Third-Order Codes
<p>Expressing general scepticism towards sustainability claims</p> <p>Environmentalism is for profit</p> <p>Recognising craftsmanship and durability as implicit forms of sustainable value</p> <p>Showing class differences in concerns for environmentalism and social responsibility</p> <p>Sustainability promotion is quite common</p> <p>Overall public environmental awareness is insufficient</p> <p>Rarely pays attention to reports about specific brands</p> <p>Experiencing frequent exposure to greenwashing through social and fashion media</p> <p>Having low awareness of greenwashing accusations in the fashion industry</p> <p>Interpreting “exaggerated greenwashing” as a form of “normal advertising”</p> <p>Noticing diverse sustainability messages and practices in fashion (e.g., materials, promotions, social good, and recycling initiatives)</p> <p>Prefer concrete data (e.g., carbon-reduction figures)</p>	<p>Evaluating the authenticity of sustainability claims through real-life experience, consistency, and transparency of information</p> <p>Experiencing frequent exposure to greenwashing through social and fashion media</p> <p>Expressing general scepticism towards sustainability claims</p> <p>Environmentalism is for profit</p> <p>Interpreting “exaggerated greenwashing” as a form of “normal advertising”</p> <p>Rarely verifying the authenticity of environmental claims</p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts fostering positive impressions, purchase intention, and loyalty</p> <p>Sustainability promotion enhancing brand reputation, value, and consumer goodwill</p> <p>The brand–consumer relationship is likened to friendship: from external attraction to value alignment, leading to long-term loyalty.</p> <p>Sustainability messaging raising expectations, exploration, and</p>	<p>Negative Media/Social Media Coverage</p> <p>Physical Product Experience</p> <p>Information Inconsistency</p> <p>Widely Seen as a Profit-Driven Tactic</p> <p>Viewing Green Claims as ‘Just Regular Advertising’</p> <p>Lack of Active Verification</p> <p>Relying Mainly on Intuition</p> <p>Difficult to Verify</p> <p>Sustainability Claims Can Enhance Brand Perception, but Greenwashing Damages It</p> <p>Negative Emotions</p>

<p>Rarely verifying the authenticity of environmental claims</p> <p>Evaluating the authenticity of sustainability claims through real-life experience, consistency, and transparency of information</p> <p>The fashion industry's responsibility for environmental issues is limited</p> <p>Limited impact of greenwashing due to low awareness and weak supervision in the Chinese market</p> <p>Prioritising product attributes over environmental considerations</p> <p>Tolerating perceived normal harms from industrial production</p> <p>Sustainability is only a bonus factor.</p> <p>Eco-friendly concepts fostering positive impressions, purchase intention, and loyalty</p> <p>Sustainability promotion enhancing brand reputation, value, and consumer goodwill</p> <p>The brand-consumer relationship is likened to friendship: from external attraction to value alignment, leading to long-term loyalty.</p>	<p><u>potential loyalty</u></p> <p><u>Sustainability promotions can add points, but greenwashing will deduct points</u></p> <p><b>Greenwashing generating a sense of betrayal</b></p> <p><u>Feeling shocked after learning of negative news.</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing causes a feeling of being cheated and even disgust</u></p> <p>Disappointment in sustainability expectations leads to a decrease in good impressions</p> <p>False promises as deception</p> <p><u>After greenwashing, brand reputation declines slightly</u></p> <p><u>Direct negative news and victim narratives strongly influencing brand perception</u></p> <p>Greenwashing generating distrust and generalised suspicion of brands' sustainability initiatives</p> <p>Greenwashing leading to future suspicion of similar initiatives, products, and other brands' promotions</p> <p><b>If a favored brand greenwashes, will lose trust and stop buying</b></p>	<p><b>(Betrayal, Disgust, Disappointment)</b></p> <p>Fear of Deception and Betrayal</p> <p><u>Decline in Brand Reputation and Trust</u></p> <p>Skepticism Toward the Brand and Similar Brands (Beyond Green Claims)</p> <p>Stopping or Reducing Purchases</p>
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<p><u>Sustainability messaging raising expectations, exploration, and potential loyalty</u></p> <p><u>After greenwashing, brand reputation declines slightly</u></p> <p><b>If a favored brand greenwashes, will lose trust and stop buying</b></p> <p>Disappointment in sustainability expectations leads to a decrease in good impressions</p> <p><u>Sustainability promotions can add points, but greenwashing will deduct points</u></p> <p>Greenwashing generating distrust and generalised suspicion of brands' sustainability initiatives</p> <p>Greenwashing leading to future suspicion of similar initiatives, products, and other brands' promotions</p> <p>False promises as deception</p> <p>Damaged credibility and social image leading to reduced purchase intention</p> <p><u>Feeling shocked after learning of negative news.</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing causes a feeling of being cheated and even disgust</u></p> <p><u>Purchase intention shaped by the severity of greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>Greenwashing at the product</u></p>	<p>Damaged credibility and social image leading to reduced purchase intention</p> <p>Negative news and damaged trust reducing consumer desire and purchase frequency</p> <p><u>Short-term avoidance of purchasing during greenwashing scandals</u></p> <p><b>Greenwashing scandals weakening brand identification and emotional connection, prompting consumers to switch to competitors</b></p> <p><u>Purchase intention shaped by the severity of greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>Severe greenwashing crossing moral boundaries triggers strong resentment, feelings of betrayal, and complete rejection of the brand</u></p> <p><u>Labour exploitation and waste colonialism feel personally relevant and trigger major scandals</u></p> <p>Tolerance towards unmet goals and exaggerated sustainability claims</p> <p>Low perception of carbon</p>	<p><b>Considering Switching to Other Brands</b></p> <p><u>Moral Boundaries</u></p> <p><u>Personal Relevance</u></p> <p>Influenced by the Severity of Greenwashing (Exaggeration/Vagueness, False Promises/Lies, Product-Level Deception)</p>
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<p><u>level can create disgust towards the brand</u></p> <p><u>Labour exploitation and waste colonialism feel personally relevant and trigger major scandals</u></p> <p><u>Severe greenwashing crossing moral boundaries triggers strong resentment, feelings of betrayal, and complete rejection of the brand</u></p> <p>Negative news and damaged trust reducing consumer desire and purchase frequency</p> <p><u>Short-term avoidance of purchasing during greenwashing scandals</u></p> <p><b>Greenwashing scandals weakening brand identification and emotional connection, prompting consumers to switch to competitors</b></p> <p><b>Greenwashing generating a sense of betrayal, intensified in luxury and reinforced through repetition</b></p> <p><u>Fast fashion greenwashing easily causing customer loss due to high replaceability</u></p> <p><u>Direct negative news and victim narratives strongly influencing brand perception</u></p> <p><u>Using sustainable consumption to express social identity and</u></p>	<p>emissions and limited impact of unmet targets on loyalty or purchase behaviour</p> <p>Perceiving sustainability data gaps, “Concept-shifting” and unmet commitments as understandable, with limited impact on brand reputation or loyalty</p> <p><u>Greenwashing at the product level can create disgust towards the brand</u></p> <p><u>Tolerating perceived normal harms from industrial production</u></p> <p>Expecting luxury brands to bear greater environmental and social responsibility in line with their high pricing</p> <p><b>Greenwashing generating a sense of betrayal, intensified in luxury and reinforced through repetition</b></p> <p><u>High financial and emotional investment in luxury leading to cautious evaluation and stronger sense of betrayal</u></p> <p><u>Luxury greenwashing seen as less acceptable and more damaging, undermining brand status and reputation</u></p> <p><u>Luxury brand irreplaceability sustaining continued purchase despite problems</u></p>	<p><b>Greenwashing by Luxury Brands Causes Greater Reputational Damage</b></p> <p><u>Luxury Brands Are Hard to Substitute</u></p> <p><u>Reputation Impact on Fast Fashion Is Limited (Unless Very Severe)</u></p> <p><u>Fast Fashion Brands Are Easily Substitutable</u></p>
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<p>personal philosophy</p> <p>Greenwashing undermining identity expression and self image, prompting consumers to switch brands</p> <p><u>Purchasing driven by herd mentality and brand identity rather than environmental concern</u></p> <p><u>Continuing consumption after greenwashing due to consumerism and social identity</u></p> <p>Expecting luxury brands to bear greater environmental and social responsibility in line with their high pricing</p> <p><u>Low sustainability expectations for fast fashion limit the impact of greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>Low purchase investment leads to weaker risk perception</u></p> <p>Believes eco lines are often priced higher</p>	<p><b>Fast fashion consumption is mainly about style</b></p> <p><u>Fast fashion purchases driven by cost-effectiveness, comfort, and wearability</u></p> <p><u>Minimal expectations of fast fashion sustainability promotions, leading to little disappointment and occasional surprise</u></p> <p><u>Low sustainability expectations for fast fashion limit the impact of greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>Low purchase investment leads to weaker risk perception</u></p> <p><u>Fast fashion greenwashing easily causing customer loss due to high replaceability</u></p> <p><u>Functionality and comfort make sports brands irreplaceable and elicit greater consumer leniency</u></p>	<p>Damage to Social Identity Signaling</p> <p>Damage to Self-Image</p> <p><u>Belief That Paying Extra for False Sustainability Is Not Worth It</u></p> <p><u>Scepticism about the durability of eco-friendly alternative materials</u></p> <p><b>Willingness to Give the Brand a Chance to Improve</b></p> <p>Rapid and decisive short-term responses (timely statements, supplier changes, explanations)</p> <p><b>Apology</b></p> <p><b>Remaining Skeptical</b></p>
<p><b>Fast fashion consumption is mainly about style</b></p> <p><u>Scepticism about the durability of eco-friendly alternative materials</u></p> <p><u>Luxury brand irreplaceability sustaining continued purchase despite problems</u></p> <p><u>Luxury greenwashing seen as less acceptable and more damaging, undermining brand</u></p>	<p>Using sustainable consumption to express social identity and personal philosophy</p> <p>Greenwashing undermining identity expression and self image, prompting consumers to switch brands</p> <p>Believes eco lines are often priced higher</p> <p><u>Scepticism about the durability</u></p>	<p><u>Immature actions are also seen as positive efforts</u></p> <p><b>Need for Long-Term</b></p>

<p><u>status and reputation</u></p> <p><u>High financial and emotional investment in luxury leading to cautious evaluation and stronger sense of betrayal</u></p> <p><u>Functionality and comfort make sports brands irreplaceable and elicit greater consumer leniency</u></p> <p><u>Fast fashion purchases driven by cost-effectiveness, comfort, and wearability</u></p> <p><u>Minimal expectations of fast fashion sustainability</u></p> <p><u>promotions, leading to little disappointment and occasional surprise</u></p> <p>Tolerance towards unmet goals and exaggerated sustainability claims</p> <p><u>Immature actions are also seen as positive efforts</u></p> <p><u>Unique style, comfort, and beauty sustaining purchase despite scandals</u></p> <p><u>Brand/ Product Loyalty Shields Against Negative Impact</u></p> <p>Low perception of carbon emissions and limited impact of unmet targets on loyalty or purchase behaviour</p> <p>Perceiving sustainability data gaps, "Concept-shifting" and unmet commitments as understandable, with limited impact on brand reputation or</p>	<p><u>of eco-friendly alternative materials</u></p> <p><u>Willingness to give brands a chance to improve after greenwashing</u></p> <p><u>Rapid and decisive short-term responses (timely statements, supplier changes, explanations) seen as critical for regaining trust</u></p> <p><u>Apology</u></p> <p><u>Shifting blame and vague communication reducing brand credibility</u></p> <p><u>Scepticism toward brands' apologies and rapid responses, seen as superficial remediation rather than genuine action</u></p> <p>Brand deflections and post-facto remedies perceived as untrustworthy, hindering trust recovery</p> <p><u>Immature actions are also seen as positive efforts</u></p> <p><u>Trust and loyalty recovery requiring long-term, continuous, and visible sustainable actions</u></p> <p><u>Brand-initiated long-term measures only shift trust from negative to neutral and are met with scepticism</u></p> <p><u>Difficulty trusting long-term actions after greenwashing, with later efforts seen as insufficient</u></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Improvement</b></p> <p><b>Partial Loss of Trust Is Irreversible</b></p> <p>Proactive Disclosure of Supply Chain Transparency</p> <p><b>Introduction of Independent Third-Party Certification and Auditing</b></p> <p><b>Strengthened Two-Way Communication With Consumers (e.g., Livestreaming)</b></p> <p><b>Preference for Passively Receiving Development Updates</b></p> <p><b>Proactively Taking Social Responsibility</b></p> <p><u>Sustainability promotion is quite common</u></p>
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<p>loyalty</p> <p><u>Lacking guilt from buying unethical products</u></p> <p>Recognising limited individual power and the need for external sanctions or collective consumer action to drive brand change</p> <p>Brand deflections and post-facto remedies perceived as untrustworthy, hindering trust recovery</p> <p><u>Authentic CSR Actions Foster Trust and Positive Emotion</u></p> <p>Transparency and independent third-party certification seen as essential yet limited in building consumer trust</p> <p>Relying on third-party supervision and passively receiving sustainability information rather than actively seeking it</p> <p>Even knowing greenwashing risks, consumers won't invest time to probe deeply</p> <p>Apology</p> <p>Trust and loyalty recovery requiring long-term, continuous, and visible sustainable actions</p> <p><u>Fast fashion's long-term efforts seen as insufficient to resolve fundamental contradictions</u></p> <p>Brand-initiated long-term</p>	<p>to restore full trust</p> <p><u>Fast fashion's long-term efforts seen as insufficient to resolve fundamental contradictions</u></p> <p>Transparency and independent third-party certification seen as essential yet limited in building consumer trust</p> <p>Two-way communication (e.g., live streaming) can enhance trust</p> <p>Relying on third-party supervision and passively receiving sustainability information rather than actively seeking it</p> <p>Even knowing greenwashing risks, consumers won't invest time to probe deeply</p> <p><u>Authentic CSR Actions Foster Trust and Positive Emotion</u></p> <p>True sustainability tied to supplier and labour management, profit-sharing, transparency, visible evidence, and tangible social contributions</p> <p>Sustainability promotion is quite common</p> <p>Noticing diverse sustainability messages and practices in fashion (e.g., materials, promotions, social good, and recycling initiatives)</p>	<p><u>Overall Low Environmental Awareness, Limited Impact of Greenwashing</u></p> <p>Consumerism and conformity lead to continued purchases after greenwashing</p> <p><u>Lacking guilt from buying unethical products</u></p>
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<p>measures only shift trust from negative to neutral and are met with scepticism</p> <p>Two-way communication (e.g., live streaming) can enhance trust</p> <p>Rapid and decisive short-term responses (timely statements, supplier changes, explanations) seen as critical for regaining trust</p> <p>Scepticism toward brands' apologies and rapid responses, seen as superficial remediation rather than genuine action</p> <p>Shifting blame and vague communication reducing brand credibility</p> <p>Willingness to give brands a chance to improve after greenwashing</p> <p>True sustainability tied to supplier and labour management, profit-sharing, transparency, visible evidence, and tangible social contributions</p> <p>Difficulty trusting long-term actions after greenwashing, with later efforts seen as insufficient to restore full trust</p>	<p>Overall public environmental awareness is insufficient</p> <p>Rarely pays attention to reports about specific brands</p> <p>Limited impact of greenwashing due to low awareness and weak supervision in the Chinese market</p> <p>Having low awareness of greenwashing accusations in the fashion industry</p> <p>Sustainability is only a bonus factor.</p> <p>Prioritising product attributes over environmental considerations</p> <p>Purchasing driven by herd mentality and brand identity rather than environmental concern</p> <p>Continuing consumption after greenwashing due to consumerism and social identity</p> <p>Unique style, comfort, and beauty sustaining purchase despite scandals</p> <p>Brand/ Product Loyalty Shields Against Negative Impact</p> <p>Lacking guilt from buying unethical products</p>	
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#### C.4 Coding Results

Category	Code
General Consumer Skepticism Toward Green Claims	Ability to Identify Greenwashing Signs
	Widely Seen as a Profit-Driven Tactic
	Lack of Active Verification
Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty	Sense of Betrayal and Loss of Trust
	Tangible Harm and Differences in Perceived Severity
	Brand Tier and Expectation Gap
Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing	Emotional and Psychological Risk
	Social Image and Identity Risk
	Financial and Functional Risk
Brand Remediation Measures and Trust Rebuilding	Timely and Genuine Crisis Response and Commitment
	Continuous Improvement Actions
	Enhancing Transparency and Third-Party Oversight
	Social Responsibility Commitment

## APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

### D.1 Questionnaire Design and Structure

<p><b>Questionnaire introduction</b></p>	<p>Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. I am conducting a study on how greenwashing influences Chinese Generation Z consumers' views of fashion brand reputation and brand loyalty. The research looks at how people think and feel when they see brands promoting environmental or sustainability messages and how their attitudes and behaviour might change if a brand is found to be greenwashing. We are also interested in learning what types of communication and improvement measures can help brands rebuild trust and consumer loyalty.</p> <p>The questionnaire will take approximately 3–5 minutes to complete. All responses will be collected anonymously and used solely for academic research purposes. No personal data will be disclosed.</p>
<p><b>Ethics and Participant Consent</b></p>	<p>Before completing this questionnaire, please read the following statements carefully. By continuing, you confirm that you have understood and agreed to the conditions of participation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I confirm that I am aged 18 or above and voluntarily agree to take part in this research.</li> <li>2. I have read and understood the participant information provided and know whom to contact if I have questions about the study.</li> <li>3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any point before submission, without providing a reason and without penalty.</li> <li>4. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous, and that no personal identifying information will be collected or shared.</li> <li>5. I understand that the data I provide will be used solely for academic research purposes as part of a Masters project at London College of Fashion.</li> <li>6. I consent to the anonymous use of my responses in research reports, publications, or presentations.</li> </ol> <p>By proceeding to the questionnaire, you indicate your consent to participate under the above conditions.</p>
<p><b>Screening Questions</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which of the following age groups do you belong to? 1996–2010 Other</li> <li>2. In the past 12 months, have you purchased from or followed at least one fashion clothing brand? Yes (I have purchased or followed at least one brand) No (I have neither purchased nor followed any brand)</li> <li>2. In the past 12 months, have you noticed any environmental or sustainability-related campaigns from fashion brands? Frequently noticed Occasionally noticed Rarely noticed Never noticed</li> </ol>

**Formal  
Questions**

Questionnaire Instructions

The following statements use a five-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Category 1: General Consumer Skepticism Toward Green Claims

1. I usually consider fashion brands' environmental claims to be trustworthy.
2. I believe that fashion brands' environmental claims are mainly a marketing tactic to increase profits rather than a genuine commitment.
3. I usually do not spend time verifying brands' environmental claims myself, but rely on media or social platforms to expose them.

Category 2: Greenwashing Weakens Brand Reputation and Consumer Loyalty

4. If a brand I frequently purchase from is exposed for greenwashing, I would feel deceived or betrayed.
5. If a brand is exposed for greenwashing, its reputation in my mind would be damaged.
6. If a brand deceives me about its environmental practices, I begin to question all its other claims (not just environmental ones).
7. After learning that a brand has engaged in greenwashing, I would reduce or even stop purchasing its products, or switch to other brands.
8. Mild greenwashing (e.g. exaggerated claims, lack of data) would not make me completely abandon a brand.
9. If a brand engages in severe greenwashing that crosses ethical boundaries (e.g., concealing pollution or labour exploitation, falsifying or manipulating data), I would boycott that brand.
10. Greenwashing by luxury brands makes me feel more disappointed and angry than greenwashing by fast fashion brands.
11. I have relatively low expectations for fast fashion brands' sustainability efforts, so I feel less disappointed if they are caught greenwashing.
12. Even if I am disappointed by a brand's greenwashing behaviour, I may still purchase from it because of its unique products.

Category 3: Perceived Risk Amplifies the Negative Impact of Greenwashing

13. When a brand I trust is exposed for greenwashing, I fear being deceived by it again in the future.
14. Wearing a product from a brand exposed for greenwashing would make me feel that my social image is damaged.
15. False environmental claims make me suspect that I have paid an unreasonable premium for something that is not truly sustainable.
16. When a brand is exposed for greenwashing, I worry that it may also be deceiving me in other areas (e.g., product quality, durability).

Category 4: Brand Remediation Measures and Trust Rebuilding

17. If a brand can apologise quickly and sincerely and propose corrective measures (such as apologising within 24 hours and cutting cooperation with non-compliant suppliers), I am willing to give it a chance to correct itself.

	<p>18. A brand must demonstrate long-term, continuous improvement in its sustainability practices (e.g., over five or ten years) before it can regain my trust.</p> <p>19. Actively disclose transparency, introduce independent third-party certification and audits, and publish regular reports.</p> <p>20. If a brand is willing to sacrifice part of its profit margin to improve its social and environmental responsibility, I appreciate its sincerity more.</p> <p>21. Even if a brand takes remedial measures, my trust in it can never fully return to the level before the greenwashing incident.</p>
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**D.2 Descriptive Statistics of Questionnaire Data**

As noted in Chapter 3 (Methodology), a total of 103 valid responses were retained for analysis after screening. Detailed descriptive statistics of questionnaire items are presented below.

Statement	Mean	SD	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
1.I usually consider fashion brands' environmental claims to be trustworthy.	3.06	1.13	11%	18%	36%	24%	11%
2.I believe that fashion brands' environmental claims are mainly a marketing tactic to increase profits rather than a genuine commitment.	3.65	0.91	1%	12%	24%	48%	16%
3.I usually do not spend time verifying brands' environmental claims myself, but rely on media or social platforms to expose them.	4.06	0.94	1%	7%	16%	39%	38%
4.If a brand I frequently purchase from is exposed for greenwashing, I would feel deceived or betrayed.	4.05	0.91	1%	5%	18%	40%	36%
5.If a brand is exposed for greenwashing, its reputation in my mind would be damaged.	4.12	0.83	0%	5%	15%	45%	36%
6.If a brand deceives me about its environmental practices, I begin to question all its other claims (not just environmental ones).	4.18	0.86	1%	3%	15%	40%	42%
7.After learning that a brand has engaged in greenwashing, I would reduce or even stop purchasing its products, or switch to other brands.	3.58	1.05	3%	11%	35%	28%	23%
8.Mild greenwashing (e.g. exaggerated claims, lack of data) would not make me completely abandon a brand.	3.74	0.93	2%	9%	22%	48%	19%
9.If a brand engages in severe greenwashing that crosses ethical boundaries (e.g., concealing pollution or labour exploitation, falsifying or manipulating data), I would boycott that brand.	4.32	0.87	0%	5%	13%	28%	54%
10.Greenwashing by luxury brands makes me feel more disappointed and angry than greenwashing by fast fashion brands.	3.81	1	1%	8%	33%	26%	32%

Statement	Mean	SD	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
11.I have relatively low expectations for fast fashion brands' sustainability efforts, so I feel less disappointed if they are caught greenwashing.	3.5	1.02	5%	13%	22%	48%	13%
12.Even if I am disappointed by a brand's greenwashing behaviour, I may still purchase from it because of its unique products.	3.62	0.95	2%	14%	18%	52%	14%
13.When a brand I trust is exposed for greenwashing, I fear being deceived by it again in the future.	3.91	0.75	0%	3%	24%	51%	21%
14.Wearing a product from a brand exposed for greenwashing would make me feel that my social image is damaged.	3.25	1.16	6%	25%	21%	33%	15%
15.False environmental claims make me suspect that I have paid an unreasonable premium for something that is not truly sustainable.	4.05	0.79	0%	5%	15%	51%	29%
16.When a brand is exposed for greenwashing, I worry that it may also be deceiving me in other areas (e.g., product quality, durability).	4.06	0.77	0%	3%	18%	49%	30%
17.If a brand can apologise quickly and sincerely and propose corrective measures (such as apologising within 24 hours and cutting cooperation with non-compliant suppliers), I am willing to give it a chance to correct itself.	3.75	0.89	3%	6%	20%	55%	16%
18.A brand must demonstrate long-term, continuous improvement in its sustainability practices (e.g., over five or ten years) before it can regain my trust.	3.84	0.8	1%	3%	26%	50%	19%
19.Actively disclose transparency, introduce independent third-party certification and audits, and publish regular reports.	4.23	0.63	0%	1%	8%	58%	33%
20.If a brand is willing to sacrifice part of its profit margin to improve its social and environmental responsibility, I appreciate its sincerity more.	4.4	0.7	1%	0%	7%	43%	50%
21.Even if a brand takes remedial measures, my trust in it can never fully return to the level before the greenwashing incident.	3.45	0.88	2%	11%	38%	40%	10%

**APPENDIX E: Generative AI Mapping Document**

Gen AI tool Which tool did you use?	What AI interaction does this tool have?	What prompt did you use (please copy and paste)	What output was generated from this prompt?	How did you use this output in your work?	Date of use
ChatGPT	Text-based generative AI for translation and rewriting	Please translate the following Chinese text into clear academic English: [paste Chinese text]	Initial English translation of my Chinese text	I reviewed and edited for accuracy and style. Used the translated and revised text as part of my semi-structured interview transcript for analysis	2024-06-15 (and repeatedly June–Sept )
Gemini	Text-based generative AI for translation and rewriting	Translate this Chinese interview transcript into English suitable for academic research context: [paste Chinese text]	Draft English translation of the transcript	I corrected and adapted to academic language. Used the refined translation as primary data for thematic analysis in my dissertation	2024-07-10 (and repeatedly July–Sept)
ChatGPT	Text-based generative AI for translation and rewriting	Please help refine this sentence for academic English: [paste sentence]	Suggested polished English version of the sentence	I further adjusted to keep my intended meaning, and incorporated into my draft writing for improved clarity and readability	2024-07-10 (and repeatedly July–Sept)