



How Marketing Narratives Transform Products into Aspirational Lifestyle Brands

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing has evolved from simple word-of-mouth into storytelling that sells lifestyles, not just products. As consumers grew resistant to traditional ads, brands adapted by using emotion, imagery, and identity to attract buyers.

Key Examples: Louis Vuitton, BMW, Hermès

Focus: How narratives create aspiration and status for brands

Question: How do ordinary products become lifestyle symbols?

This project explores how psychology and storytelling shape consumer desire in modern markets.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

This study uses a hybrid observational and experimental design to analyze luxury marketing. Observational research examines branding strategies of companies like Louis Vuitton and Hermès, while experimental methods test mock marketing campaigns.

Data Collection: Surveys (~200 participants between the two), campaign testing, engagement tracking

Data Types: Quantitative (demographics, patterns) and qualitative (perceptions of luxury and identity)

Sampling: Voluntary U.S. participants (nationally), general consumers

Experimental Focus: Compare narratives, visuals, and brand archetypes

Analysis: Statistical patterns + thematic coding

*All participation is anonymous and based on informed consent

DATA AND FINDINGS

Data confirms **preset codes** that heritage, craftsmanship, European origin, scarcity, high pricing, and controlled branding across luxury brands serves as a baseline for perceived luxury status

Emerging codes in the data suggest that luxury brands adapt to current market trends like sustainability, diversity, and digital innovation to appear high-end to the current consumer class, reflecting Gen Z's market influence

Visual findings: respondents favored cinematic, slow-paced, and minimalist campaigns, reinforcing “timeless” and “iconic” perceptions

Brand strategy divergence observed:

Louis Vuitton → high visibility & cultural saturation

Hermès → scarcity & minimalism

BMW → performance & innovation

Survey Insight (Round 1): consumers value emotional engagement, authenticity, and identity alignment over pure status signaling

Survey Insight (Round 2): understated, atmospheric campaigns performed better than vibrant or trend-driven visuals

Key finding: consumer stated preferences are not equal actual choices; subtle prestige cues are more effective in action

Overall conclusion: aspirational value is driven by narrative meaning and emotional resonance, not just exclusivity or price.

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

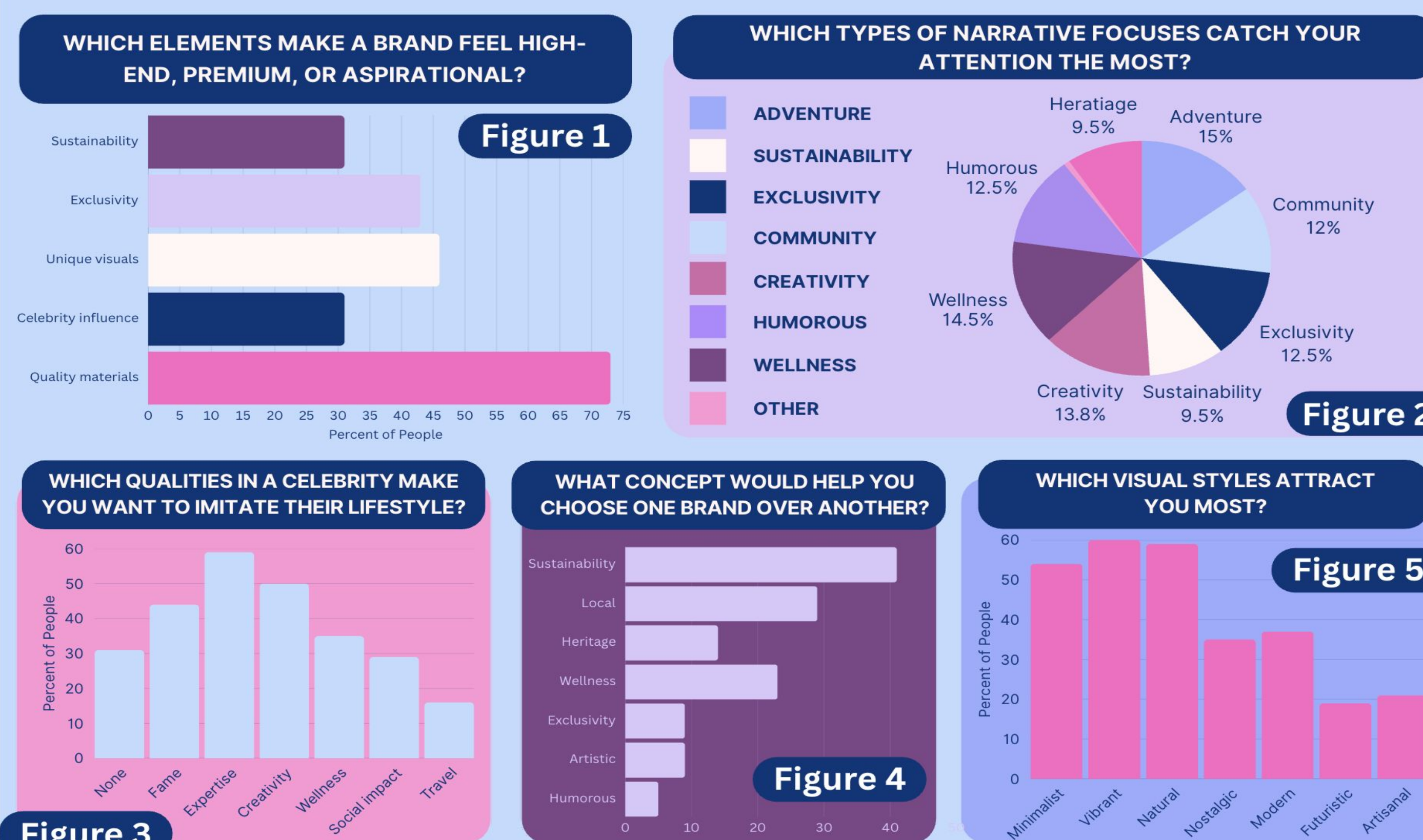
1. Brand research ambitions and statistical relevance

- The research aims to provide several real-world biases for the project's future surveys, testing collected survey data with emerging marketing styles and preset trends
- Gives a holistic view of the current luxury market, allowing for an informed approach to relevant marketing factors to test for in the first- and second-round surveys

2. Collection of first-round survey data

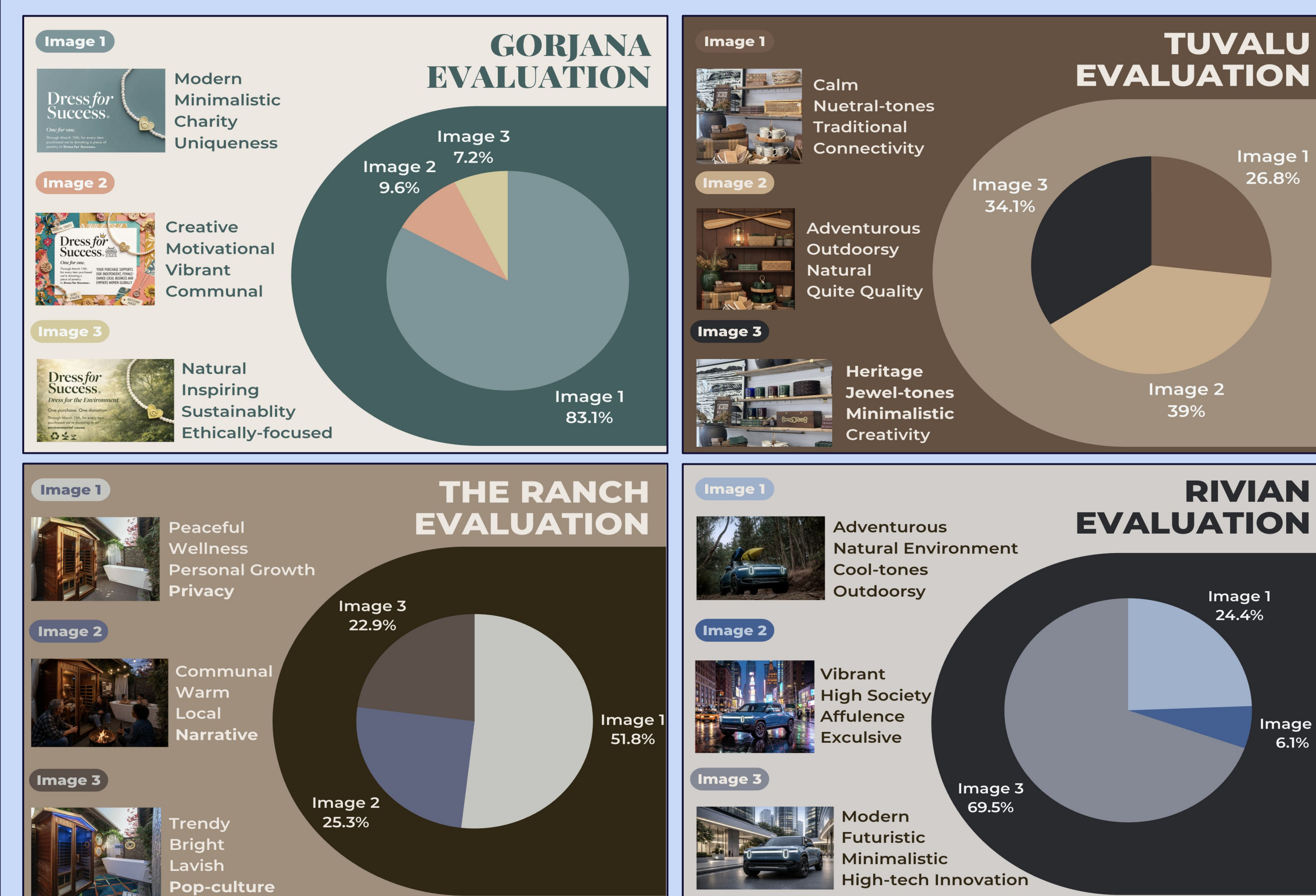
- Discovers the general marketing preferences of consumers
- Provides baseline data on how different types of marketing affect consumer's purchase desirability

MARKETING PREFERENCES SURVEY



3. Collection of second-round survey data

- Tests the consumer preferences discovered through the first-round survey in action using real and AI-generated marketing images
- Dives into the behavioral economics aspect of this project and enhances overall depth



CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions:

- Marketing narratives, not product quality alone, create aspirational value
- There is a shift from traditional luxury (exclusivity, heritage) to more identity-driven, emotional branding from businesses
- Consumers' stated preferences differ from actual behavior
- Subtle, cohesive, and atmospheric campaigns outperform bold, trend-heavy ones
- Products become aspirational when tied to meaningful lifestyles and personal identity

Implications:

- Brands should prioritize:
 - Authenticity and emotional connection
 - Alignment with consumer values like sustainability, culture, and identity (emerging codes)
 - Restraint and consistency are preferred over excessive visibility and overwhelming presence
 - Indicates a shift from status-based to meaning-based consumption
 - Consumers should be more aware of how marketing shapes their perceptions and desires in action rather than in theory

Next Steps:

- Provide the collected data from the second-round survey to the local businesses featured
 - Will act as an informant for these local businesses on the efficiency of their marketing practices
- Spread this information on luxury branding preferences and campaign success
 - Will provide brands with ways to make their products stand out in the currently saturated luxury market
- Use this information to inform consumers on how they are being affected by these successful marketing techniques
 - Highlights how consumers can still find good “high-end” products outside the established luxury market (brands/products excluded due to advertisements)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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