Sophie
Raynaud

COMILLAS
UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA

NEOMA
BUSINESS SCHOOL
REIMS · ROUEN · PARIS

ICADE

Programma de Doctorado en Competitividad Empresarial y Territorial, Innovación y Sostenibilidad

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THE PHOEBE BUFFAY PARADOX: ANALYSING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER STEREOTYPING PROCESSES IN POPULAR SITCOMS

Autor: Sophie Raynaud

Directores: Carmen Valor, Maria-Carolina Zanette y Paolo Antonetti

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of media in creating and perpetuating stereotypes, with a focus on sustainable consumption stereotypes. This context is especially relevant due to the current climate crisis. In response to the increasing concerns surrounding sustainability and the pivotal role of consumer behaviour in mitigating environmental issues, the thesis articulates key research questions regarding the role of media stereotypes when their depiction in popular culture has been proven to significantly affect public perceptions. This work seeks to determine whether the portrayals of sustainable consumption in sitcoms sustain a shift towards responsible consumer citizenship or whether they entrench negative stereotypes that may obstruct meaningful behavioural change.

Central to the investigation is the foundational question: How are stereotypes created, and how do cultural popular products contribute to their formation? The research explores the current knowledge of stereotypes of sustainable consumers and stereotyping, offering insights from a close examination of academic literature and from empirical exploration of TV series. The first chapter provides a comprehensive literature review on sustainable consumer stereotypes, identifying core traits often associated with sustainable consumers, highlighting the paradoxical nature of these representations and the main gaps in this literature. In the second chapter, an empirical analysis evidences the textual mechanisms of stereotyping in *Friends,* focusing particularly on how repetitions progressively construct a character and associated stereotypes. Finally, the third chapter presents a longitudinal empirical study on the role of humour and its performative nature in shaping stereotypes of sustainable consumers.

The findings of this research underscore the dynamic nature of consumer stereotypes as they manifest in popular media, specifically sitcoms. Rather than being static, stereotyping processes reflect an ongoing dialogue within society about values, beliefs, and responsibility concerning sustainability. Ultimately, this research conceptualises the "Phoebe Buffay paradox" in reference to the eponymous character from the acclaimed sitcom *Friends*, used as a focal point to investigate how stereotypes about sustainable consumers are constructed, perpetuated, and challenged in the context of comedic narratives. This thesis not only addresses comprehensive gaps in the literature about the stereotyping process but also offers a new framework for discussing non-functional barriers to sustainable consumption, paving the way for future research in consumer behaviour, environmental transition, and media studies.

Keywords: stereotypes, stereotyping, sustainable consumers, TV series, sitcoms

Resumen

Esta tesis explora la función de los medios de comunicación en la creación y perpetuación de estereotipos, centrándose en los estereotipos del consumo sostenible. Este contexto es especialmente apropiado en este momento de crisis climática. En respuesta a las crecientes preocupaciones en torno a la sostenibilidad y la función fundamental del comportamiento del consumidor en la mitigación de los problemas ambientales, la tesis articula preguntas de investigación clave respecto a la función de los estereotipos mediáticos cuando su representación en la cultura popular ha demostrado afectar significativamente las percepciones públicas. Este trabajo intenta determinar si las representaciones del consumo sostenible en las *sitcoms* sostienen un cambio hacia una ciudadanía de consumo responsable o si cimentan estereotipos negativos que pueden obstaculizar un cambio conductual significativo.

Este trabajo responde a una pregunta fundamental: ¿Cómo se crean los estereotipos y cómo contribuyen los productos mediáticos de cultura popular a su formación? La investigación explora el conocimiento actual sobre los estereotipos de los consumidores sostenibles y la estereotipación, ofreciendo perspectivas desde un examen detallado de la literatura académica y desde la exploración empírica de series televisivas. El primer capítulo proporciona una revisión bibliográfica exhaustiva sobre los estereotipos del consumidor sostenible, identificando los rasgos centrales frecuentemente asociados con los consumidores sostenibles, destacando la naturaleza paradójica de estas representaciones y las principales lagunas en esta literatura. En el segundo capítulo, un análisis empírico evidencia los mecanismos textuales de estereotipación en *Friends*, enfocándose particularmente en cómo las repeticiones construyen progresivamente un personaje y sus estereotipos asociados. Finalmente, el tercer capítulo presenta un estudio empírico longitudinal sobre las funciones del humor y su naturaleza performativa en la configuración de estereotipos de consumidores sostenibles.

Los hallazgos de esta investigación subrayan la naturaleza dinámica de los estereotipos del consumidor tal como se manifiestan en medios populares como las *sitcoms*. En lugar de ser estáticos, estas representaciones reflejan un diálogo continuo dentro de la sociedad sobre valores, creencias y responsabilidad concernientes a la sostenibilidad. En última instancia, esta investigación conceptualiza la "paradoja de Phoebe Buffay" en referencia al personaje epónimo de la aclamada comedia de situación *Friends*, empleada como punto focal para investigar cómo los estereotipos sobre consumidores sostenibles son construidos, perpetuados y desafiados en el contexto de narrativas cómicas. Esta tesis no solo aborda lagunas comprehensivas en la literatura sobre el proceso de estereotipación, sino que también ofrece un nuevo marco para discutir las barreras no funcionales al consumo sostenible, allanando el camino para futuras investigaciones en comportamiento del consumidor, estudios de transición y estudios mediáticos.

Palabras clave: estereotipos, estereotipación, consumidores sostenibles, series televisivas, *sitcoms*

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Avant-Propos

Use of GenAI Statement

During the preparation of this dissertation, I used Grammarly Gen AI for copy-editing purposes and Claude IA for sources and guidelines on drafting the introduction. After using these tools, I reviewed and edited the content as needed, and I take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

CRediT Taxonomy

When no mention of a specific chapter, this taxonomy is valid for all three chapters of the thesis.

Sophie Raynaud: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Roles/Writing - original draft; and Writing - review & editing

Paolo Antonetti: Conceptualization; Data curation; Project administration (for Chapter 1); Supervision; Validation; Writing - review & editing

Carmen Valor: Conceptualization; Supervision; Validation; Writing - review & editing

Maria Carolina Zanette: Conceptualization; Project administration; Supervision (for Chapters 2 & 3); Validation; Writing - review & editing

« […] on oublie donc d'un côté ; que les hommes n'arrivent précisément à résoudre ces problèmes « réels » […] que *parce qu*'ils sont capables d'imaginaires ; et d'un autre côté, que ces problèmes réels ne se constituent comme *ces* problèmes-*ci* que telle époque ou telle société se donne comme tâche de résoudre qu'en fonction d'un imaginaire central de l'époque ou de la société considéré. »

"[…] on the one hand, then, we forget that human beings are only able to solve these 'real' problems […] only because they are capable of imagining; and on the other hand, that these real problems are only constituted as such that a given period or society sets itself the task of solving, as a function of the imaginary central to the period or society in question."

Castoriadis (1975, p. 201)

Introduction

My sister and I have always loved Asian takeaway food. It is weird considering that we grew up in the middle of the most isolated French countryside in the 90s. We did not have access to takeaways before our student years, when we moved to bigger cities. One day, I visited her in her first apartment, and she said something I still remember. She was excited to take me to an Asian restaurant down her street. She said, "You'll see, we will order takeaway; they have those cardboard boxes that you see in *Castle* when they stay late on a case [a TV series]". Back then, her dream car was also a massive American pick-up, 'just like Piper in *Charmed'*, another popular TV show we grew up with. Even though my sister has been very aware of the climate crisis, these TV series have created in her a positive emotional attachment to behaviours that should be considered wasteful or non-sustainable. This was the starting point of my research. At a time when environmental issues have become central to our societies and consumer behaviour is changing due to ecological concerns, it is essential to examine how culture and media participate in shaping these representations and their effects on consumption practices (Russell et al., 2019).

Representations are rooted in cultural and social aspects that previous research has overlooked when exploring sustainable transition (Khöler et al., 2019). This thesis directly addresses this gap by focusing on fictional (but mass-consumed) representations. While sitcoms may appear as harmless, mass-produced entertainment products, paying attention to how they represent sustainable consumption is enlightening. Environmental issues implicitly span those emblematic products of pop culture. Phoebe Buffay, in *Friends*, is often mocked for her vegetarianism and commitment to the environment. Sheldon Cooper, from the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, regularly mocks Penny when she talks about her interest in organic produce. Their characters and jokes embody a specific representation of sustainable consumers: idealistic, sometimes naïve outsiders, often reduced to caricatures to serve the comedic purposes of television series. Yet, over and above their entertainment value, these media representations contribute to constructing collective imaginations and stereotypes that may influence our perception of responsible consumption. Previous research suggested the influence of TV series on consumption practices (Russell et al., 2019; Russell & Stern, 2006) or even advocated for a political responsibility of TV series heroes (Chalvon-Dermersay, 2015).

This thesis, therefore, explores what I call the "Phoebe Buffay paradox", i.e. the process by which sitcoms simultaneously acknowledge and marginalise sustainability discourse, creating a tension where environmental consciousness is regularly referenced, yet consistently positioned as peripheral, eccentric, or comedically excessive. Unlike the explicit messages of environmental awareness campaigns, this phenomenon operates at an implicit level, through entertainment and humour, thus addressing a much wider audience. The character of Phoebe Buffay perfectly embodies this dynamic. Committed vegetarian, animal rights activist and supporter of alternative practices: she is depicted as the ultimate sustainable consumer. However, she is systematically portrayed as eccentric, naïve or idealistic. Her ecological stance is regularly mocked or used as a comedic device, creating a cognitive association between sustainable behaviour and social marginality. Additionally, she is part of a show, *Friends*, that is still extremely popular worldwide and has become a neo-cult series by having multiple generations of fans (Jones, 2023). This dimension relates to the longevity of sustainable consumption stereotypes and how they may interrogate our current practices and representations. The representation of Phoebe is not neutral: it contributes to the construction of a collective imagination in which environmental concerns are relegated to the sphere of impractical idealism or eccentricity.

Social psychology research has long established that stereotypes conveyed by the media significantly influence our attitudes and behaviour (Mastro & Tukachinsky, 2012). Studies on sustainable consumption highlight the psychological and cultural barriers to adopting environmentally responsible behaviour (Gifford, 2011; Khöler et al., 2019; Mazar & Zhong, 2010; White et al., 2019). Several papers suggest that media regularly echo the same negative stereotypes, anchoring those stereotypes in the cultural and social environment (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Brough et al., 2016; Pinna, 2020; Shang & Peloza, 2016). At the same time, the stereotyping processes are overlooked in the stereotype literature. The way those stereotypes form and propagate among a group is only tackled by a few psychological studies, exploring the stereotyping process at the individual level (Martin et al, 2014; 2017) but not on the social level. At the intersection of these two gaps, a largely unexplored area of research emerges: how do media representations of sustainable consumers, particularly in mass cultural products such as sitcoms, help to shape or reinforce stereotypes that would contribute to hindering the ecological transition? As Köhler et al (2019) point out, we need more research exploring the social and cultural dimensions of the ecological transition. While public policies and businesses are stepping up initiatives to promote more sustainable modes of consumption, looking at cultural resistance and collective representations offers a new perspective on barriers to these necessary transformations.

This thesis explores this fascinating intersection between popular culture, stereotypes and responsible consumption marketing through three complementary papers. As detailed in the following section, this thesis examines how series themselves construct and maintain the sustainable consumer as a marginalised figure over time. It contributes to understanding how media contribute to the stereotyping process of sustainable consumers and develops the implications of such a process for marketing research and practitioners.

1. Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this study is to deepen our understanding of the stereotyping processes and to explore the role of television series, as a key element of the social and cultural environment, in the formation of these stereotypes. Specifically, this thesis focuses on the stereotyping of sustainable consumers and addresses a key issue in tackling the barriers to a shift towards more sustainable consumption practices (Khöler et al., 2019; White et al., 2019). This research is structured in three Chapters, each building on the previous and each addressing one aspect of the research objective. Table 1 below summarises the research questions leading each Chapter.

Table 1 - Summary of research

Chapter	Research gaps	Research contributions	Research questions
Chapter 1	• Fragmented academic knowledge about sustainable consumer stereotypes across disciplines and terminologies	Offering a thorough review of the literature related to stereotypes surrounding sustainable consumers.	• RQ 1.1: What are the stereotypes surrounding sustainable consumers? • RQ 1. 2: Through which methodological and theoretical tools was this knowledge built?
Chapter 2	• The actual stereotyping processes within cultural objects remain unexplored • The role of repetition in the formation of stereotypes is evidenced by the literature in psychology, but has been overlooked in the literature on stereotypes	How repetitions act as a stereotyping mechanism in a cultural object like a TV series	• RQ 2.1: What types of repetitions are enacted in the text, and how do they work together? • RQ 2.2: What do they repeat precisely, and how do they create characters that may affect the stereotypical representations portrayed in the series?
Chapter 3	• Limited understanding of humour's role in perpetuating stereotypes • Lack of longitudinal perspective on stereotypes	How stereotyping mechanisms like humour performativity operate over time	• RQ 3: How does the performativity of humour contribute to the maintenance of stereotypes associated with sustainable consumers, and to the marginalisation of this group over time?

The first gap addressed by this research centres around the particularly scattered academic knowledge about the stereotypes of sustainable consumers (Chapter 1). This area is fragmented for three reasons. First, the importance of issues around sustainable consumers resulted in a large diversity of fields exploring it, from psychology to gender studies or urban studies.

Second, the concept of stereotypes can be captured through different terminologies such as "representations" or "images", which contributes to scattering the literature. Third, sustainable consumption practices encompass a wide variety of behaviours, ranging from specific activities like dumping divers (Gollnhofer, 2017) to the broader concept of sustainable consumption itself (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Séré de Lanauze et al., 2018). These three aspects multiply and fragment the knowledge among a diverse range of studies, with diverse methodological and theoretical approaches. Chapter 1 offers a comprehensive review of this literature. The first research question intends first to provide an exhaustive panorama of sustainable consumers' stereotypes (RQ1.1: *What are the stereotypes surrounding sustainable consumers?*). The second question aims to critically inventory the theories and methods used to obtain those results, intending to better capture the blind spot of this literature (RQ1.2: *Through which tools was this knowledge built?*). This Chapter also provides a comprehensive backdrop to frame the two empirical studies that follow in Chapters 2 and 3. The empirical analysis presented in Chapters 2 and 3 builds upon the extensive overview of sustainable consumer stereotypes established in this opening Chapter, which facilitated further coding of these stereotypes. This first Chapter also uncovers gaps in the literature, which the empirical sections aim to address.

The second gap this thesis addresses revolves around the specific role of TV series in stereotyping sustainable consumers. Most studies in the review explore the content of sustainable consumers' stereotypes present in individuals' minds, while suggesting the role of cultural and social environment in their formation (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Brough et al., 2016; Pinna, 2020; Shang & Peloza, 2016). However, the stereotyping processes in the cultural and social environment are overlooked. Chapters 2 and 3 aim to address this gap by offering an empirical exploration of the stereotyping processes in a social and cultural object: sitcoms. Two studies from psychology (Martin et al., 2014; 2017) uncovered mechanisms of stereotyping that I further explain in Chapter 1 (section 2.2). Chapter 2 draws from this work to explore how stereotyping mechanisms, especially repetition, are used in a similar way in TV series, through the case of *Friends*. It creates a parallel between the role of repetition in stereotyping, as explained by psychological studies, and the role of fiction in structuring narrative, as explained by the work of Hillis Miller. Two research questions guided the empirical work presented in Chapter 2. RQ2.1 (*What types of repetitions are enacted in the text, and how do they work together?*) aims to differentiate between different types of repetitions and explore their synergy. RQ2.1 (*What do they repeat precisely, and how do they create characters that may affect the stereotypical representations portrayed in the series?*) explores how they operate individually and how they each affect the stereotypes in their own way. The rich results from the study presented in Chapter 2 reveal an evolution in the sustainable character of the analysed series and in the stereotypes associated with her. However, the sample in this Chapter consists of only one series and does not allow for an extended exploration of this evolution. Additionally, the analysis left out the humorous dimension and focused only on the textual mechanisms.

A third gap, addressed in Chapter 3, emerges from these two limitations. Chapter 3 presents a second empirical analysis which explores the effect of humour on stereotypes in a larger number of sitcoms. Specifically, it examines the role of humour's performativity in

stereotyping, an overlooked dimension of the comedic text in marketing and consumption, which may affect the stereotypes of sustainable consumers. It aims to explore the performativity of discourses, notably the humorous discourse, in the stereotyping process, guided by one research question (RQ3: *How does the performativity of humour contribute to the maintenance of stereotypes associated with sustainable consumers, and to the marginalisation of this group over time?*). Additionally, this Chapter also aims to offer a much-needed overview of the evolution of sustainable consumer stereotypes. It intends to fill a gap, as evidenced in Chapter 1, about the lack of longitudinal studies on stereotypes, which are mostly considered snapshots rather than processes.

2. Research Epistemology

Grasping the fundamental assumptions of a research study is essential for understanding its scope and objectives. The current thesis is deeply rooted in social constructivism, which states that reality is socially constructed through shared meanings, language, and social processes (Berger & Luckmann, 2016). In social constructivism, sense is created through the social interplay of interpretations (Burr, 2015). The performativity of discourses is a key ontological assumption of social constructivism (Gond et al., 2016). It was first conceptualised by Austin (1962), who states that discourses not only describe reality but also actively create it through their speaking. However, in Austin's view, the performativity of speech only happens under specific, "felicitous" conditions, such as when the speaker has a type of authority, which makes this performativity a very institutional, rule-governed process (Gond et al., 2016).

Later work by Butler expanded this definition of performativity. Focusing on gender performance, Butler argues that identity categories, such as gender, are created through repeated performative acts rather than expressing some pre-existing essence (Butler, 1990; Jenkins & Finneman, 2017; Lloyd, 1990). Where Austin sees the performativity of discourses with clear success and failure conditions, Butler sees ongoing, iterative processes. Gender performativity does not require conscious intention or institutional authority - it operates through everyday repetitions of gendered behaviours, speech patterns, and bodily presentations (Jenkins & Finneman, 2017; Lloyd, 1990). The current thesis builds on this understanding of discourse's performativity, in which the grounding ontological assumption is that by repeatedly framing reality in one way, discourses shape it.

In this work, I applied these key assumptions throughout the current thesis by examining stereotypes as objects constructed through discourse. Chapter 1 focuses on how the academic research process may construct this object, for instance, through the cues used in experiments or through the theoretical framing itself. Chapter 2 examines how the portrayal of fictional characters shapes stereotypes in cultural objects like sitcoms (Dyer, 2002). Finally, Chapter 3 dives into the role of humour in constructing stereotypes (Billig, 2005; Kuipers, 2015). The thesis explores those different stereotyping processes and their effect on sustainable consumer stereotypes.

In this context, sitcoms function as powerful cultural texts that both reflect and shape social understanding of consumer identities (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997; McCracken, 1986). The representations of sustainable consumers in popular media do not simply mirror existing attitudes but actively participate in constructing what Moscovici (1984) calls "social representations" that influence collective perceptions and behaviours. Previous work by Stern (1996) on literary criticism in consumer research and Russell's (2002) on product placement and narrative transportation paved the way for studies on TV series in consumer studies. Media narratives provide interpretive frames through which viewers make sense of sustainability practices, potentially reinforcing or challenging existing stereotypes (Thompson, 2004). This thesis, therefore, approaches sitcoms not merely as entertainment but as sites of meaning-making where sustainable consumer identities are negotiated, contested, and legitimised through narrative and humour (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008; Kozinets, 2008).

The methodologies employed in this thesis are consistent with a social constructivist perspective. The thesis maintains coherence through a focus on specific vocabulary, from the literature review to the empirical methods used. These methods are primarily based on text and discourse analysis. For instance, the review presented in Chapter 1 pays specific attention to the terminology used to designate the sustainable consumer in the studied papers and the words used to describe them. It also highlights how negative stereotypes may emerge from using certain theories. Chapters 2 and 3 both employ the same methodology on different-sized samples. This methodology consists of a systematic text detection combined with a deconstructionist analysis as developed by Stern (1996). It is designed to interpret every reference as part of a reality in construction. This deconstructionist approach I employ, especially in Chapter 2, insists on developing the multiplicity of interpretation to go beyond my sole personal interpretation (Stern, 1996).

Reflexivity in personal interpretation and subjectivity are key aspects of the social constructivist stance (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Bettany & Woodruffe-Burton, 2014). Consistently, I acknowledge that my position inevitably shaped this research. This research project was written right after the COVID-19 lockdowns, at a time when TV series had become one of the main escapes from routine and one of the only practices that allowed a certain connection beyond restrictions. This, added to my background in literature and professional experience from the cultural and audiovisual industry, may position me differently in relation to media narratives than viewers from other backgrounds. Additionally, having engaged with sustainability practices such as zero-waste practices, I also acknowledge my own alignment with certain stereotyped representations, which may affect my interpretative position.

To maintain methodological rigour and mitigate the influence of my position on the research outcomes, I implemented some distancing strategies throughout the study. Regular discussions with my supervisory team were useful in critically examining my interpretations and conclusions. These exchanges with the supervisory team served as an external validation mechanism, helping to identify and address potential blind spots or biased interpretations that might arise from my background in literature, audiovisual industry experience, or personal engagement with sustainability practices. I also presented my work regularly to various audiences of researchers during internal and external seminars, as well as academic

conferences. Discussing my work in its different stages with researchers from various fields of expertise was a valuable tool to ensure the credibility of my research strategies and findings.

3. Thesis outline

The current thesis unfolds three papers to explore the above research questions. The first one reviews the literature on stereotypes of sustainable consumption, which has primarily appeared in psychological studies. This review is a crucial first step in my thesis as it highlights a complex and fragmented understanding of sustainable consumer stereotypes. Initially, it focuses on the content of stereotypes as evidenced by previous studies, with a specific focus on the vocabulary used to designate sustainable consumers, whether in the studies or by the very participants of the studies. The review then dives into the main methodological approaches and offers a mapping of theories used to approach sustainable consumer stereotypes. The Chapter concludes with an agenda for future research with some considerations for how the theories may affect the outcome. It emphasises the importance of examining stereotypes from longitudinal and cultural perspectives. Two key findings form the foundation for the empirical work of this thesis. First, the review reveals the challenge of capturing the evolution of stereotypes since they are often viewed as snapshots in time. Second, various studies indicate that the media plays a significant role in shaping or perpetuating collective stereotypes of sustainable consumers, yet no research has specifically examined this aspect. These gaps call for approaches that can consider interpretation, social contexts and longitudinal evolution. Chapters 2 and 3 aim to fill these epistemological and methodological gaps. They offer empirical studies investigating how stereotypes evolve in mass media and how this evolution may contribute to the construction or reinforcement of such stereotypes.

Chapter 2 is an empirical study that unfolds the mechanisms of repetition in sitcoms and how they contribute to constructing and cementing the stereotypes of sustainable consumers. This paper contributes to the literature on pop culture and the literary tradition in consumer research by applying deconstructionist methods to the stereotyping process at stake in serial fiction. In doing so, we explore the role of repetition, a mechanism typical of TV series that is key to creating both stereotypes and characters. One main contribution of this paper is its unique methodological approach that blends semi-automatic text detection with a literary deconstructionist approach (Stern, 1996). The study aims to reveal the detailed, implicit stereotypes present in popular discourse framed as entertainment. The semi-automatic detection tool allows for including every reference to sustainability issues, even the smallest ones, thereby enabling a thorough examination of how these stereotypes are constructed. The deconstructionist approach to analysing these data is consistent with how much detail the analysis requires and with the multiplicity of interpretations happening in a diverse, broad audience. For this approach results in a massive amount of findings, I limited my sample to the ten seasons of one TV series only, *Friends*, which I chose for its status as a neo-cult TV series (Jones, 2023). Chapter 3, however, extends the exploration of sustainable consumer stereotyping in a longitudinal study.

Chapter 3 presents a longitudinal study of three sitcoms that covers over 20 years of study. To explore this amount of data, I chose a more structured methodological approach, focusing on the narrative and discursive analysis of all the scenes referring to sustainability issues. The study builds on the performative dimension of humour to explain its role in the stereotyping process. It contributes to a better understanding of humour performativity on a social level by examining how it affects the stereotyping process. It developed specifically three functions of humour in stereotyping sustainable consumption: *updating*, *diffracting* and *foreclosing*, and discusses its performativity effects. These results demonstrate how sitcoms implicitly feed and support discourses of inaction and maintain a neo-liberal system that matches sitcoms' commercial imperatives and delays climate actions (Lamb et al., 2023).

This thesis builds on two streams of literature. It builds on literature from psychology, social psychology and cultural studies on stereotypes and stereotyping processes. It offers a unique approach by offering a longitudinal perspective on those issues, which are most of the time treated as snapshots. Second, it builds on the literature exploring media representations and their impact, taking the case of sustainable consumption as context. It provides a methodological foundation for using series in marketing and consumer studies. Series are not used here only to illustrate a social phenomenon but as a consumption practice that may affect consumers' behaviours and attitudes towards sustainability issues.

Chapter 1

Beyond Green Stereotypes: A Review of Sustainable Consumer Stereotypes

Abstract

Stereotypes of sustainable consumption have received increasing attention in the last decade. This research has shown vast differences in the stereotype content or meanings attached to the social category "sustainable consumer". This review focuses first on the content of stereotypes evidenced by previous studies. It then explains these differences based on the methods chosen by past studies. In the second part, the paper offers a typology of the theoretical approaches previously employed to explore the stereotypes of sustainable consumers. Based on these findings, an agenda is outlined for future research to explore this topic, which is essential for the societal aspect of sustainable transition, with some considerations for the specificities of the topic and the state of the art around the topic. In particular, the agenda considers the necessity of approaching stereotypes from longitudinal and cultural perspectives. It also offers directions for future research, which include the conclusions of previous works regarding the evolving and malleable nature of stereotypes and their components.

Keywords: sustainability; sustainable consumer; review, stereotypes

1. Introduction

Adoption of sustainable lifestyles is a crucial objective for societies to be able to face the socioenvironmental crisis. Research aiming to facilitate the transition to more sustainable consumption has mainly focused on the intrapersonal factors driving sustainable consumption, such as personality traits or motivation (White et al., 2019). However, other external factors, such as stereotypes of sustainable consumption, should be considered. Stereotypes can be either a source of rejection or inspiration for sustainable behaviours (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). Understanding sustainable consumer stereotypes and how they form can provide a deeper insight into the motivations for adopting sustainable consumption.

Various conflicting perceptions, which are not necessarily harmful, are associated with sustainable consumers. Previous research suggests that sustainable consumers are perceived as a dissociative group that other consumers do not wish to imitate or affiliate with (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bashir et al., 2013; Burgess et al., 2013). Sustainable consumption perception can endanger gender identity (Shang & Peloza, 2015), moral identity (Groeve et al., 2022a) or social desirability (Borau et al., 2021; Burgess et al., 2013; Séré de Lanauze et al., 2018). Imitation or affiliation with sustainable consumers can only occur with the assurance that it will result in a higher social status (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; White &Argo, 2011). While most papers indicate negative stereotypes (Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Brough et al., 2016; Gollnhofer, 2017), some other studies account for positive stereotypes associated with sustainable consumption (Borau et al., 2021; Funk et al., 2020). Together, past work depicts a contradictory social construction of sustainable consumers as they are perceived as both warm and aggressive (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Séré de Lanauze & Lallement, 2018), poor and rich (Olson et al., 2016; Séré de Lanauze & Lallement, 2018), and conformist and transgressive (Minson & Monin, 2012; Séré de Lanauze & Lallement, 2018). Specific aspects of sustainable stereotypes, such as their perceived morality, social status, or interpersonal behaviours, are found to be ambivalent.

These conflicting and ambivalent stereotypes may result from manifold contexts and labels used to study stereotypes of sustainable consumers. While I acknowledge the importance of other disciplinary treatments of the same topic (e.g., sociology, cultural studies), this discussion will concentrate exclusively on the psychological processes behind the creation of stereotypes since this approach has dominated research on the stereotyping of sustainable consumption to date. Even with this limitation, our review reveals that knowledge on the topic of sustainable consumption stereotypes is scattered across methods and theoretical lenses. This multiplicity also evidences the interest in the topic among researchers from different disciplines and fields of research. This study presents a thorough analysis of 45 papers from 2002 to 2022, focusing on stereotypes of sustainable consumers across different fields (Psychology, Marketing, Gender Studies, etc.). These papers mainly focus on psychological processes but employ various methodological approaches, including experimental and conceptual, and various methodological lenses. This review details the content of sustainable consumer stereotypes

unveiled by previous research and then examines the methodological and theoretical perspectives used to evidence this content.

This review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the literature on sustainable consumer stereotypes, but also critically examines this knowledge. Stereotypes are very sensitive to the context and/or the wording employed in the *stimuli*, which can be affected by theoretical or methodological tools (Lee & Aaker, 2004; Wheeler & Berger, 2007). Hence, two main research questions guided this review. First, what are the stereotypes surrounding sustainable consumers? This question intends to offer an exhaustive panorama of stereotypes surrounding sustainable consumers. Second, through which tools was this knowledge built? This second research question aims to assess the methodological and theoretical tools used by past research and to highlight the blind spots of the literature on sustainable consumer stereotypes.

The paper is structured as follows. After defining stereotypes, how they are formed, and their conceptual framework, the paper dives into reviewing the literature about sustainable consumer stereotypes. This review revolves around the content of stereotypes associated with the sustainable consumer, the methods used to study them and the theories that have informed extant studies. A critical reflection on these findings reveals that the discrepancies could be due to differences in the methodological approaches used, the samples studied, and the context in which the study was conducted. The paper finally offers a theory mapping and depicts how certain theoretical perspectives may induce negative stereotypes from the participants. Finally, the paper offers a research agenda based on the factors that influence the formation and maintenance of stereotypes and the strategies that can be used to change them. This research contributes to a better understanding of how stereotypes operate and how they can be effectively addressed in various contexts.

2. Conceptual framework on stereotypes and stereotyping

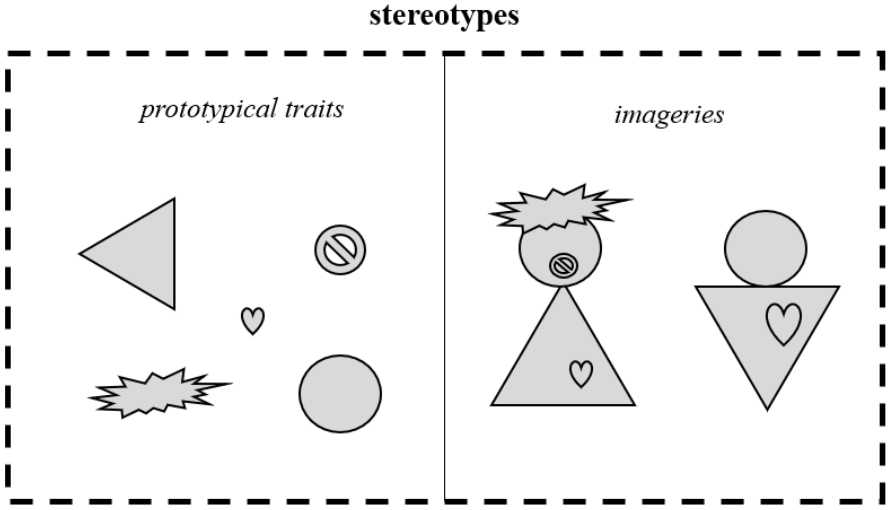
2.1. What is a stereotype?

The broad definition of stereotype I use here is stereotypes as "template-like cognitive representations whereby membership of social groups is associated with the possession of certain attributes" (Martin et al., 2014, p. 1). However, other concepts are useful for understanding stereotypes, such as prototypical traits (Ratliff et al., 2017) or imagery (Angle et al., 2016), which are slightly different from stereotypes. This section will provide definitions of these concepts to articulate the conceptual boundaries of this research.

Prototypical traits and imagery are two different levels of abstraction at which the content of stereotypes can be defined. Figure 1 illustrates those two levels of the stereotype. Prototypical traits represent the lowest level of abstraction as they comprise the specific traits attributed to the stereotyped person. For instance, an example of a trait is the sustainable consumer being perceived as a "leftist" (Klas et al., 2019, p. 8). In contrast, imagery represents an encompassing representation usually defined as the "mental image of the representative person whom [people] think of when thinking of the category" (Ratliff et al., 2017, p. 133). This imagery includes

many different mental images which combine different traits, not limited to images about the physical appearance of the sustainable consumer. Several studies present the image of the hippie (Bashir et al., 2013; Barnhart & Mish, 2017), which encompasses several prototypical traits like "unhygienic", "drug-user" or "utopian" (Bashir et al., 2013). Previous studies have provided evidence of different imageries associated with the sustainable consumer, such as the snobbish, who is an image of a condescending person, motivated by trends rather than convictions, who is easily influenced and very politically correct (Séré de Lanauze et al., 2018). One prototypical trait can be part of several images. Traits and imagery can be thought of as two levels of analysis of stereotype content. This distinction of levels must be considered when studying any stereotype content, as it may create possible inconsistencies in the different stereotypes held by a given individual or group, as I will later show.

Figure 1 - Representation of the different levels of stereotypes



One of the major theories on stereotypes, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), suggests that all prototypical traits are eventually reducible to two dimensions. The SCM from Fiske (1998) is a theoretical framework from social psychology that helps to understand the content and function of stereotypes associated with different social groups. According to the SCM, stereotypes are formed based on two fundamental dimensions: warmth and competence. Fiske (1998) proposes that two dimensions are important from an evolutionary perspective, for these dimensions answer two fundamental questions that individuals ask when evaluating a social entity. The first question concerns how friendly, trustworthy and warm a social entity is, which is covered by the warmth dimension. The second question is about how competent, skilled, and capable a social entity is in achieving its goals, which is covered by the competence dimension (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Fiske, 1998; Kervyn et al., 2012). Based on these dimensions, the SCM suggests that social groups can be classified into four categories: high warmth/high competence (admired and respected), high warmth/low competence (pitied and protected), low warmth/high competence (envied and feared), and low warmth/low competence (disliked and marginalised) (Fiske, 1998). The SCM has become a widely used model in marketing research.

It has been applied to study stereotypes related to various social groups, including sustainable consumers. The SCM has proven to be a valuable tool for understanding the content and function of stereotypes.

2.2. Stereotypes and information processing

From a psychological perspective, stereotypes are a tool for understanding the world or for the individual to assess their environment (Fiske, 1998; Fiske et al., 2002). Stereotypes serve as mental shortcuts, for they allow our memories to store information by associating prototypical traits. When one trait is *perceived* - albeit not necessarily existent - in an individual, it activates the whole network of associated traits and the encompassing imagery (Martin et al., 2014). The associations allow quick access to a set of knowledge about a given social group by creating networks of associations (Haugtvedt et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2014). This set of meanings integrated into an associative network is called a *schema*. Stereotypes can be equated with schemata, for they work similarly.

Those schemata tend to multiply and overlap due to the complexity of identities. Individuals develop complex, multifaceted identities with different social and personal identities (Randers et al., 2021). In different situations, certain aspects of our identities may be more apparent than others (Randers et al., 2021). Such aspects, when expressed, are associated with specific traits that are stereotyped, resulting in a network of different stereotypes associated with one individual. Additionally, one prototypical trait can form part of different schemata, so those different schemata will also be activated when this trait is activated.

Once stored in memory, these schemata operate as processed knowledge. Thus, the more recent and regularly an individual's processed knowledge is used, the more accessible it gets (Haugtvedt et al., 2018). Similarly, the frequency and recency of using certain associations will make them more accessible and more salient than others (Haugtvedt et al., 2018, pp. 35-36).

Any part of the schemata can be activated using linguistic cues. Cox et al. (2015) pointed out how words can reveal a highly heterogeneous network of associations. Two examples they present are the association of "black" with "criminal" and of "gay" with "fashionable" (Cox et al., 2015). Interestingly, the associations are reciprocal, meaning, for instance, that "gay" induces an association with "fashionable" as much as "fashionable" induces one with "gay". Additionally, the associative networks may differ based on the label one could use to refer to the identity, as different labels activate distinct associative networks. For instance, Kotzur et al. (2017) demonstrated how the label "economic refugee" is perceived more negatively than "refugee" or "war refugee". These linguistic cues activate parts of one or several associative networks. Similarly, research on sustainable consumers may label them as responsible consumers, ecologists or green consumers, each of these labels potentially activating different associative networks.

These examples demonstrate that encounters with individuals or categories are not the primary source of stereotypes. Instead, several papers suggest that social and cultural knowledge environments play an important part as a context for stereotypes to exist and evolve outside of the encounters (Caprariello et al., 2009; Fiske, 2000; Martin et al., 2017). Then, cultural and sociological explanations are important when studying stereotypes, as developed later in this paper.

2.3. How stereotypes work: Associating stereotypes and individuals

While stereotypes pre-exist any encounter with an individual or a group, the first encounter is a key moment in which a stereotype is activated and associated with an individual (Fiske, 1998). The interaction between an encounter (of an individual, for instance) and the stored information results in the activation of a stereotype. Thus, the evaluation of a social entity is done at first sight. One will reconstitute the image of an individual based on the remembrance of attributes memorised from past encounters (Fiske, 1998; Kervyn et al., 2012) and from schemata culturally produced and transmitted in socialisation (Martin et al., 2014; 2017).

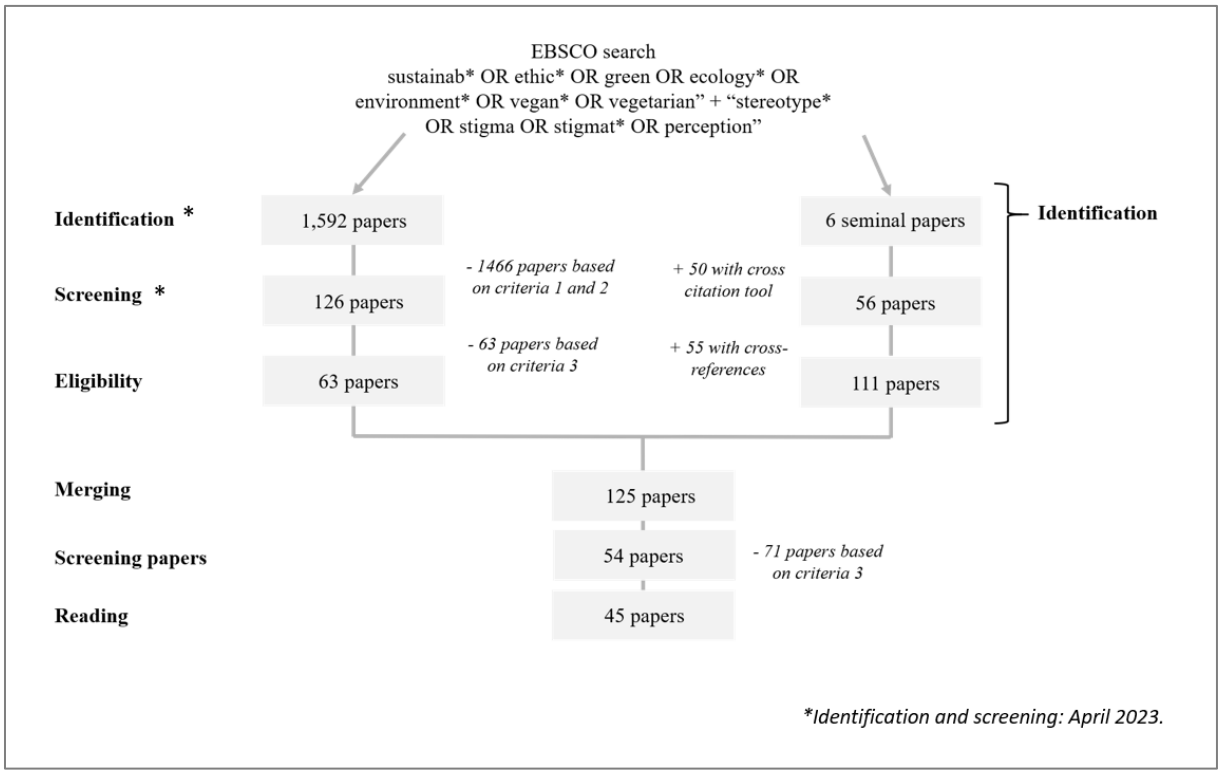
Martin and colleagues (2014) provide more details about how stereotypes are socially transmitted and how they evolve. They explain, in particular, the role of simplification. According to the authors, stereotypes result from combining two distinct processes: generalisation and reduction. The first phase consists of the generalisation process, creating a link between the individual level and the group level. Generalisation attributes individual characteristics to a group or group characteristics to an individual perceived as belonging to that group in a reciprocal relationship (i.e., “Any person with this X characteristic belongs to this Y social group” and “Any person belonging to a Y social group possesses this X characteristic”). In the second phase, the individual is *reduced* to a pre-defined set of prototypical traits, which makes them diminished, reduced from a whole person to a list of unchecked facts that will define him or her (Martin et al., 2014). For the review I conducted, I paid specific attention to the prototypical traits associated with the sustainable consumer. The following section presents the methodological steps used to collect and analyse the reviewed papers.

3. Method

3.1. Data collection

Scholarship on stereotypes and societal perceptions of sustainability actions have been studied in manifold streams of literature, such as brand value (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Kervyn et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2019), luxury studies (Athwal, 2019; Eastman, 2021) or product perceptions (Bickart & Ruth, 2012; Luchs et al., 2010; Mazar & Zhong, 2010). Assembling a stock of studies when the literature is scattered across many streams is challenging due to the difficulties in compiling an exhaustive list of keywords that reflect the state of the art. In these situations, a systematic search is not suitable. To assemble the pool of studies, I used three different procedures. Figure 2 summarises the methodological path of this sample.

Figure 2 - Methodological flow chart



First, I followed the procedure used by Khamitov et al. (2020). I identified six seminal papers based on their relevance to the research question and on their field relevance in citing counts (see Table 2). Then, a co-citation tool (inciteful.xyz) was employed to identify the papers cited by these seminal papers. These observations were made between April 21st and April 28th, 2023. The tool provided a list of 56 papers, including the six seminal ones. Next, I manually checked the reference lists of each seminal paper to find additional articles consistent with the inclusion criteria (see section below). This added 37 cross-referenced papers to my list. At this stage, no restriction was applied to the journals or fields.

Table 2 - Seminal papers citations (screenshot from inciteful.xyz)

Title	Journals	Authors	Date of publication	Nb of cite (inciteful.xyz)
Is Eco-Friendly Unmanly? The Green-Feminine Stereotype and Its Effect on Sustainable Consumption	*Journal of Consumer Research*	Brough et al.	2016	289
Electric vehicle drivers' reported interactions with the public: Driving stereotype change?	*Transportation Research*	Burgess et al.	2013	129
How to SHIFT Consumer Behaviors to be Mo Sustainable: A Literature Review and Guiding Framework	*Journal of Marketing*	White et al.	2019	496

Reverse stigma in the Freegan Community	*Journal of Business Research*	Nguyen et al.	2014	30
Do-Gooder Derogation: Disparaging Morally Motivated Minorities to Defuse Anticipated Reproach	*Social Psychological and Personality Science*	Minson and Monin	2012	216
Hippies, Greenies and Tree Huggers: How the "Warmth" Stereotype Hinders the Adoption of Responsible Brands	*Psychology & Marketing*	Antonetti & Maklan	2016	29

Second, I performed a search on several databases, which included Wiley Online Library, Scopus, Cairn and Business Source Elite, using two sets of keywords such as "sustainable* OR ethic* OR green OR ecology* OR environment* OR vegan* OR vegetarian*" associated with "stereotype* OR stigma OR stigmat* OR perception". I targeted journals ranked 3, 4, and 4* on the ABS list in the fields of Marketing, Ethics, Public Administration, Organisational Behaviour, Psychology, and Sociology. This extraction contained 1,592 academic papers, which I reduced progressively to 63 papers matching the inclusion criteria (see below). This list was merged with the one obtained in the step above, and duplicates were removed. This procedure increased my pool by 14 papers. Finally, I checked recent doctoral dissertations on the topic. I identified three doctoral dissertations, and again, I manually screened their list of references. This helped add another 18 papers. Again, this stage did not include any restrictions on the journals or fields. Because the doctoral dissertations have been published as papers that were already part of the pool, the dissertations will be taken out of the statistics. After these three procedures, my pool contained 125 papers (Figure 2).

3.2. Inclusion criteria

I set up inclusion criteria that ensured a common framing of the pool. I manually screened the abstracts of this initial pool of 125 articles and had them checked by one researcher from the supervision team to ensure that the papers met the inclusion criteria. After this stage, I read 54 papers in full, including three doctoral theses and two book Chapters. Finally, nine articles did not meet the inclusion criteria and were disqualified for further analysis. With these exclusions, the final sample totalled 45 papers.

The two core concepts of the review – stereotypes and sustainable behaviour – helped me define the boundaries of the sample thanks to their specific definitions (Khamitov et al., 2020). Stereotypes are understood here as any belief, representation, or perception that people have about another group or individual, whether implicit or explicit (Bennett et al., 2018; Luomala et al., 2020; Monin et al., 2008; Ratliff et al., 2017; Rozin et al., 2012). This excluded any paper dealing with stereotypes about sustainable products or brands (e.g., Luchs et al., 2012; Möller & Herm, 2021).

Sustainable behaviour concerns attitudes, behaviour, and consumption modes that are perceived to have either nil, minimal, or reduced impact on the environment. Literature acknowledges that what is perceived to have a perception of minimal or reduced impact is not directly related to its actual impact (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Perkovic & Orquin, 2018), which is why it is important to frame this as perceived as sustainable behaviour.

These two definitions provided a frame for the inclusion/exclusion of papers. Included in the studies were those examining stereotypes, generalised perceptions, or preconceived notions about individuals or groups with sustainable behaviours. I used a broad definition inspired by the work of Franck and Brock (2019), which defines sustainable behaviour as attitudes, behaviour and consumption modes that are perceived to have either nil, minimal or reduced impact on the environment. This definition enables us to include a multitude of sustainable behaviours, from veganism to organic purchasing or electric car driving. Finally, I limited the sources to peer-reviewed papers and doctoral theses, excluding conference papers. No other restrictions regarding discipline or time frame were used as exclusion criteria.

3.3. Data analysis

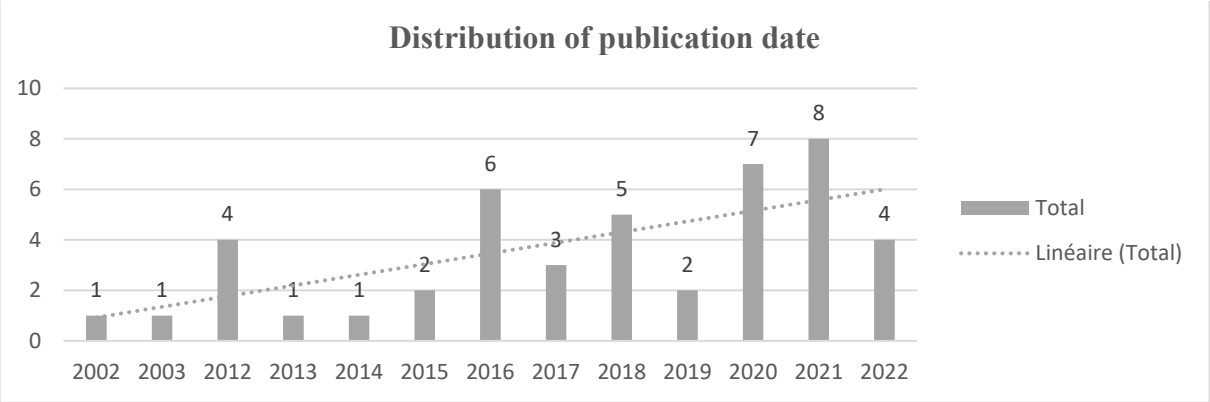
I used a standardised data extraction sheet to ensure consistency in information collection and facilitate pattern-matching among studies. This comprehensive tool comprised a range of bibliographic characteristics, including publication date, journal, abstracts, and method details. I incorporated supplementary columns to capture several relevant elements such as main theories, labels (e.g., activists or organic consumers) or prototypical traits.

To analyse this sample, I focused on the content of the stereotypes. Firstly, regardless of its valence, I extracted every prototypical trait mentioned in the reviewed papers. The traits were obtained either when mentioned by the participants or tested experimentally by the authors. After organising these traits into six themes based on their focus, I cross-tabulated them to understand the relationships between the information provided in the papers. The description will be provided later in the paper.

3.4. Description of the pool

The analysed papers illustrate the growing interest in this topic (see Figure 3). All articles were published between 2002 and 2022. Regarding methodology, a substantial majority (78%) of the studies conducted were experimental.

Figure 3 - Distribution of publication dates



Confirming the multidisciplinary approach to the study of stereotypes, I observed that studies were published in broad, diverse journals of several fields, including marketing (7 papers), psychology (5 papers) and environmental studies (10 papers) (see Table 1). Seventeen papers (38%) were published in 3- or 4-star journals (ABS, 2021). Table 3 - Academic publications represented in the pool provide a distribution of journals. Doctoral theses are noted as n/a in this table.

Table 3 - Academic publications represented in the pool

Row Labels	Nb of Papers Per Journal	Fields	Ajg 2021 Ranking
Frontiers in Communication	1	Communication	/
Energy Research and Social Science	1	Environmental	/
Environmental Sciences	1	Environmental	/
Urban Studies	1	Environmental	3
Journal of Cleaner Production	1	Environmental	2
Transportation Research	1	Environmental	4
Environmental Communication	1	Environmental/Com	/
Journal of Environmental Psychology	4	Environmental/Psy	/
Journal of Business Ethics	2	Ethics	3
Journal of Business Research	2	Ethics	3
Food Quality and Preference	1	Food	/
Critical Studies in Men's Fashion,	1	Gender Studies	/
Sex Roles	1	Gender Studies	2
Decisions Marketing	1	Marketing	/
European Journal of Marketing	1	Marketing	3
Journal of Consumer Research	3	Marketing	4*
Journal of Macromarketing	1	Marketing	2

Journal of Marketing Management	1	Marketing	2
Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	1	Marketing	3
Psychology & Marketing	3	Marketing	3
Group Processes & Intergroup Relations	1	Organisation	2
Appetite	5	Psychology	/
European Journal of Social Psychology	1	Psychology	3
Frontiers in Psychology	1	Psychology	1
Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin	1	Psychology	4
Social Psychological and Personality Science	1	Psychology	3
International Journal of Public Administration	1	Public Sector	2
Journal of Social Issues	2	Social Studies/Pub	/
Total	45		

It is also important to consider the countries where empirical data have been collected. The cultural context shapes the content and understanding of stereotypes because it frames the environment in which the individual perceiving these stereotypes is situated (Gollnhofer, 2017). Table 4 offers an overview of the countries used for data collection; doctoral theses were excluded (coded as "n/a"), and reviews that covered several countries (coded as "review"). Finally, two studies did not specify their place for data collection (coded as "not specified"). It should be noted that most studies were conducted in North America and Northern Europe (96% of all empirical studies), of which 48% were carried out in the US (US and US/Canada). Half of the studies were performed with US samples.

Considering the other regions where studies have been performed, the UK is the second most studied (12%), as well as Northern Europe, which includes the Netherlands, Denmark, and Finland, for a total of 12%. Only two papers were carried out in non-OCDE countries, Mongolia and Ecuador (respectively Plueckhahn, 2022; Pohlmann & Muñoz-Valencia, 2021).

Table 4 - Countries used for data collection

Row Labels	Count of Country tested
Australia/New Zealand	1
Denmark	1
Ecuador	1
Finland	1
France	1
Germany	1
Mongolia	1
Netherlands	2
Switzerland	1
UK	5

US	21
US/Canada	1
Doctoral thesis	2
Not specified	4
Review	2
Grand Total	45

4. Content, consistency and contradictions

This section will review the previous literature on stereotypes of sustainable consumers to describe the complexity and then sometimes contradictory content of stereotypes. I will first provide an analytical insight into the content of sustainable consumer stereotypes. Then, I will focus on the methods used to study them and how they may affect the stereotype content identified in past studies, and finally, the theories applied in past studies on the topic and how the use of certain theoretical focuses may affect the results of studies. I claim that those approaches may result in incompatible archetypal models of sustainable consumers, which I will discuss further.

A review of prototypical traits reveals that stereotypes are multifaceted, as the prototypical traits of this category refer to manifold aspects of sustainable consumers, from physical appearance to moral identity. Table 5 summarises the extracted prototypical traits for each theme and provides an overview of the traits ascribed to sustainable consumers. These aspects are grouped into six themes. ***Physical Appearance and Health*** reflect how sustainable consumers are perceived based on their external appearance and inferred health. ***Political and ideological*** *affiliations* refer to perceived or attributed political beliefs. Features include activism and ideology, not just specific party affiliations. ***Values and morality*** traits gather inferences people make about sustainable consumer morality. ***Social status and lifestyle*** indicate the sustainable consumer's hierarchical position in society, whether lower or higher. Other features within this category include traits that set them apart, such as being trendy, untraditional, eccentric, or conformist. Finally, ***social and interpersonal behaviours*** reveal how they typically interact with others.

Table 5 also offers a cross-tabulation of prototypical traits per labels of sustainable consumers. My pool of studies includes very different groups of sustainable consumers. Some focus on the broad category of sustainable consumers, using terms like "responsible consumers" (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Séré de Lanauze et al., 2018) or "concerned people" (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Geiger & Swim, 2018). Other studies focus on specific groups of sustainable consumers, such as vegans and vegetarians (Groeve et al., 2022a; 2022b; Groeve & Rosenfeld, 2022). I will refer to the names given to the different subtypes as labels. The labels used to elicit stereotypes in participants can act as prime, i.e. "a stimulus event that triggers a pre-activation of social constructs or knowledge structures" (Pechmann & Knight, 2002, p. 6). The labels used may activate – i.e. induce – different stereotypes of sustainable consumers. Therefore, the labels used in the research can lead to differences in the content of sustainable consumer stereotypes.

In Table 5, prototypical traits are also organised by aspect based on the labels used in the study to refer to sustainable consumers. It includes Activists/environmentalists who actively advocate on environmental issues; Concerned people who are conscious but do not necessarily act sustainable; Sustainable/responsible consumers who act sustainably in their everyday consumption; People with sustainable practices that are non-consumption practices (e.g. dumpster divers or non-bather during a water crisis); and three categories of specific consumption practices which are Organic buyers, Electric drivers and Veg*ns (which includes, Vegetarians and Vegans).

Table 5 - Categories of prototypical traits attributed to the sustainable consumer

Labels designating the studied type of sustainable consumer	Papers	Physical and health	Political and Ideological Affiliations	Values and Morality	Social status and Lifestyle	Social and Interpersonal Behaviour
Activists Environmentalist	Bashir et al. (2013)	Hippie Drug user Unhygienic Hairy	Democrat Liberal Unrealistic Utopian Irrational Tree-hugger	Animal-lovers	Educated Untraditional Weird, crazy	Argumentative Confrontational Intelligent
	Hoffarth & Hodson (2020)		Communist			
	Klas et al. (2019)		Leftist Liberal			
	Ratliff et al. (2017)			Judgmental	Cool Not fun, boring	Intelligent Stupid
Concerned People	Barnhart & Mish (2017)	Hippie Wearing Birkenstock unfashionable clothes	Liberal Unrealistic Utopian Irrational	Non-judgmental Open-minded Self-righteous	Rich Monitoring others' habits	Aggressive
	Geiger & Swim (2018)		Activist, militant	Brave		
Sustainable Consumer/ Responsible Consumer	Antonetti & Maklan (2016)	Hippie				Friendly Sweet, nice Good-natured Tolerant
	Séré de Lanauze et al. (2018)			Sense of effort Self-sacrificed Moralistic	Poor Frustrated Rich	Antisocial

				Overcommitted	Isolated Antiprogressive / Technologically crude Sheep, conformist Sad Not fun, boring	
	Johnston & Tan (2015)			Sense of effort Self-sacrificed Honest Altruistic Preachy	Rich Enhanced social status Serious	
People With Sustainable Practices	Gollnhofer (2017) (Dumpster divers)				Beggar/homeless	
	Minson & Monin (2012) (Non-bather during a water crisis)					
Organic Consumers	Luomala et al. (2020)					
	Olson et al. (2016)			Moral Hypocrite	Rich Enhanced social status Lower social status	
	van de Grint et al. (2021)			Moral Altruistic Trying to signal an inflated morality	Enhanced social status	

Electric Drivers	Burgess et al. (2012)				Antiprogressive Technologically crude Geeky Modern	
	Bennett & Vijaygopal (2018)			Political	Eccentric Bohemian	
Veg* (Vegans, Vegetarians)	Funk et al. (2020)	Healthy	Less bourgeois	Generous	Modern	
	Groeve et al. (2022)	Hippie Healthy	Liberal Pacifist	Moral Committed, dedicated		
	Groeve & Rosenfeld (2022)			Moralistic Overcommitted		
	Minson & Monin (2012)	Tired Pale Malnourished Skinny	Liberal Radical Opinionated	Brave Committed, dedicated Conscious Arrogant Hypocrite Self-righteous Sadistic Animal-lovers	Sheep, conformist Weird, crazy	Annoying Friendly, sweet, nice Careful Stupid Strict
	Patel & Buckland (2021)*					
	Pearson et al. (2018)*	Malnourished	Radical	Brave Caring, Thoughtful Arrogant Self-righteous	Weird, crazy	Careful Stupid
	Randers et al. (2021)*		Activist, militant	Self-righteous	Trendy	Annoying
	Weiper & Vonk (2021)*			Judgmental Arrogant Self-righteous Preachy		

*veg*ns studies in regard to meat eaters

4.1. The content of sustainable consumer stereotypes

This section will discuss the content of sustainable consumer stereotypes evidenced by previous research. The content of these stereotypes can be studied at the two different levels of aggregation I previously described, namely, prototypical traits and imagery. First, this section will describe the consistency and coherence among these stereotypes of the sustainable consumer. Secondly, it will focus more specifically on the contradictory traits and images evidenced by my findings. Thirdly, some sources of contradiction will be examined, such as the labels used or the moderators, which may affect the results at both levels, i.e. the prototypical traits and the imagery.

4.2. Consistency and coherence in stereotype content

Overall, representations of sustainable consumers express the same recurrent and consistent imagery, such as the hippie imagery. This imagery intersects several traits physical (suggested by the unhygienic, hairy adjective), a political ideology – as suggested by the "pacifist" (Groeve et al., 2022a, p. 10) and "leftist" adjectives (Klas et al., 2019, p. 7) – a particular social status of "marginalised" (Séré de Lanauze et al., 2018, p. 13). Antonetti and Maklan (2016) explore the representation of sustainable consumers as warmer and its consequences, grounding their studies on the Stereotype Content Model I explained earlier and on previous studies suggesting such a trait in sustainable consumers. The word "Hippie", however, never appears in the paper, only in the title. The study focuses on the studies of specific prototypical traits as suggested by the SCM, while the imagery is not studied. However, the results of this study (sustainable consumers are seen as warmer but less competent) are implicitly linked to a particular imagery of hippies through the use of the title. Interestingly, the paper also refers to media portrayals of sustainable consumers, suggesting specific visual imagery that underpins the ideas behind the study. The paper implicitly connects its results on the prototypical traits to hippie imagery, which resurges in the analysis.

The reminiscence of the marginalised figure of the hippie appears throughout my pool along with more modern figures such as the sustainable consumer as an activist, political and argumentative (Bashir et al., 2013) or the sustainable consumer as a hipster, rich and trendy (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). As suggested by the associative network theory, these figures are connected. This is also consistent with other works suggesting a link between those two figures specifically (Arsel & Thompson, 2011). Thus, hipster imagery can be easily compared with hippie imagery, which both share several traits such as environmental consciousness or physical traits like bearded men. However, they differ in their marginalisation because the hipster figure is perceived as trendy (Groeve & Rosenfeld, 2022, p.10; Groeve et al., 2021, pp. 11-12), while the hippie figure is perceived as marginalised (Séré de Lanauze et al., 2018, p. 13). Similarly, the activist connects with the imagery of the hippie through the original advocacy of both figures. However, the activist is represented as more political, argumentative, and confrontational than the hippie figure, who resurged more in traits like being friendly, warm and pacifist. The connection between these different imageries and their corresponding traits contributes to the coherence of the content of stereotypes.

At the level of prototypical traits, my results also show consistency and coherence across studies. For instance, the political views attributed to the sustainable consumer are similar. The sustainable consumer is mainly perceived as a “liberal” (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Bashir et al., 2013; Groeve et al., 2022; Klas et al., 2019; Minson & Monin, 2012) and “pacifist” (Groeve et al., 2022) or “utopist” (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Bashir et al., 2013) and sometimes “radical” (Pearson et al., 2018; Minson & Monin, 2012) or “militant” (Geiger & Swim, 2018; Randers et al., 2021). The nuances expressed reflect the different positions of the observers towards the sustainable consumer. When utopian implies a positive stance from the observer’s point of view, radical suggests a negative stance from the observer. However, these two imageries are not significantly different across studies. Furthermore, this political orientation is consistent with the imagery of the hippie/hipster I described previously. However, the analysis of traits in other aspects of the sustainable consumer suggests more meaningful differences.

4.3. Contradictions within and between papers

Upon closer examination of the traits presented in Table 5, it becomes apparent that there are some contradictions in how sustainable consumers are perceived, both between and within papers. Some of these contradictions arise between papers as they present incompatible archetypes of sustainable consumers. For instance, while Antonetti and Maklan (2016) found that they can be perceived as "friendly", "sweet", and "good-natured," other papers, such as Séré de Lanauze et al. (2018) and Barnhart & Mish (2017), respectively found them to be seen as "antisocial" and "aggressive". Similar contradictory content is found between the imagery of the hippie and that of the hipster. The imagery of the "hippie" (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bashir et al., 2013; Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Groeve et al., 2022) includes traits such as being "malnourished", "liberal", "weird", "friendly", "drug user", "unhygienic", "hairy", "utopian", "tree hugger", and "communist" (Bashir et al., 2013; Minson & Monin, 2012). These traits are very different from those comprising the second imagery of the modern bourgeois hipster. These consumers are described as "rich", "serious", and having "enhanced social status" (Johnstone & Tan, 2015), as well as being "modern" and "healthy" (Funk et al., 2020, pp. 6-7). Whereas there was some coherence between these two imageries in political beliefs, there are contradictions regarding their socio-economic status.

Contradicting prototypical traits are also evidenced within the same paper. Within one paper, for example, Ratliff et al. (2017) discovered that sustainable consumers can be seen as both "intelligent" and "stupid," and Séré de Lanauze et al. (2018) found that they can be viewed as both "rich" and "poor." Similarly, Burgess et al. (2012) suggested that they can be seen as "antiprogressive" and "technologically crude," as well as "geeky" and "modern." Lastly, Olson et al. (2016) found that sustainable consumers can be perceived as having either a "lower social status" or an "enhanced" one. These contradictions call for deeper examinations, which the following sections will provide.

4.4. Sources of contradictions

a. Label used

Across studies, researchers have investigated different types of sustainable consumers. Thus, researchers have referred to the sustainable consumer with different labels such as "concerned people" (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Geiger Swim, 2018), "organic consumers" (Luomala et al., 2020; Olson et al., 2016; van de Grint et al., 2021), or "responsible consumers" (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). Previous studies show that linguistic cues may elicit distinct associative networks (Cox et al., 2015; Kotzur et al., 2017). Indeed, my results show that labels generate different political, consumerist, or social features in their results. This suggests that these labels act just like linguistic cues and elicit different associative networks. For instance, Activists/environmentalists and Concerned individuals are perceived with more political views as they are attributed political objectives aligning with their advocacy for a cause. The label "environmentalist" can also lead to assumptions about their beliefs, such as being "unrealistic", "utopian", and "irrational" (Bashir et al., 2013). This is supported by studies previously mentioned about the role of linguistic cues in activating associative networks (Cox et al., 2015; Kotzur et al., 2017) and the reciprocal activation between traits – for instance, "gay" and "fashion lover" (Cox et al., 2015) elicit each other. Along with those assumptions about sustainable consumers' political views are assumptions about other aspects of one's identity. Individuals who challenge dominant norms, such as Activists/Environmentalists, may be associated with a negative label in their *Social and interpersonal behaviours*, as shown in Table 5. One study even compared environmentalists and feminists to conclude that they elicit similar negative stereotypes (Bashir et al., 2013). The authors suggest that activists are associated with hostile militancy and eccentricity, regardless of their advocacy, due to their aggressive promotion of change and advocacy for unconventional practices (Bashir et al., 2013, p. 624).

In this aspect, the case of Veg*ns is similar to the activist/environmentalist label, as this label also elicits the same associative network about a person's political beliefs. This specific group of consumers generally base their dietary choices on strong moral convictions, which can make it perceived as a political stance against the prevailing carnist norm (Groeve et al., 2022a). Similarly, those who identify as "vegans or vegetarians" may be associated with political views such as "liberal" (Groeve et al., 2021, p. 10), "less bourgeois" (Funk et al., 2020, p. 7), "radical" or "opinionated" (Minson & Monin, 2012, p. 3). While the label "activist-environmentalist" implies a desire for a political utopia, the label "vegan" or "vegetarian" represents specific sustainable behaviours. Their associate networks can also include militant and ideological associations.

While the stereotypes of sustainable consumers cover an extensive range of features, from physical to psychological and ideological, labels do not activate prototypical traits for every feature of the sustainable consumer. For instance, labels that are not politically charged, such as "organic buyers" or "electric vehicle drivers", whose focus is on consumption habits, do not activate any traits of the political views of the sustainable consumer. As opposed to the Vegans, whose identities are politically loaded, the "organic buyers" or "electric vehicle drivers" labels mainly elicit traits related to consumption, with attention given to their values, morals, social status, and lifestyle. However, these consumption behaviours are generally viewed as politically neutral and mainstream; hence, no prototypical trait about political views

is elicited for this type of label. This supports the idea of coherence between prototypical traits and imagery across each type of sustainable consumer (see Figure 1 in section 2.1). The presence – or absence – of associated prototypical traits reflects an imagery with a political load. The prototypical traits and the imageries are connected.

b. Moderators

Some studies report contradictory prototypical traits, such as the organic buyer being perceived as both poor and rich (Olson et al., 2016) regarding their perceived socio-economic class. Indeed, Olson et al. (2016) empirically evaluate the effect of socioeconomic status on the perceptions of sustainable consumers by manipulating the traits attributed to organic buyers when they are (or are not) receivers of state financial aid. When individuals receiving public financial support buy organic food, they are perceived as hypocrites with lower morality and social status. Individuals with higher socio-economic status are perceived as having more moral status. Their socio-economic status acts as a moderator, which results in contradictions in the traits reported by the study.

While these results are not surprising, they support two conclusions. First, they capture the malleability of the associations made with the different subtypes of sustainable consumers. The attribution of intention here, moderated by socioeconomic status, makes the case for the complexity of sustainable consumer stereotypes. This also provides one explanation for the difficulties researchers have in reaching consistent and non-contradictory saturation on this topic. Second, they support the idea that certain prototypical traits necessarily lead to certain imageries. For instance, in the study previously mentioned, the socio-economic status expressed here as a trait (poor *versus* rich) can be traced back to broader and contradicting imageries. Traits related to the poor, sustainable consumer may elicit the hippie imagery, while conversely, traits associated with the rich, sustainable consumer may elicit the imagery of the hipster. Such empirical studies focus on the prototypical traits without acknowledging that the change in the moderator may result in different imagery. Their results, however, clearly show the different imageries that lie behind the contradictory traits, even if this is not considered in the analysis.

Another moderator is which sustainable behaviour is studied. Olson et al. (2016) focus on one specific sustainable behaviour – i.e., buying organic food – and their results may not extend to other sustainable actions, which are less associated with premium prices, such as second-hand clothing. Indeed, studies show that certain specific sustainable behaviours may activate other stereotypes. Bloodhart and Swim (2020) showed that some sustainable behaviours are more associated with masculine or feminine attributes, which may impact how people perceive sustainable consumers' gender. For example, performing tasks such as "caulking windows and maintaining tire pressure in cars to conserve energy" (Bloodhart & Swim, 2020, p. 5) are perceived as more masculine, as they are associated with traditional masculine attributes. On the opposite, when sustainable behaviours are associated with traditional feminine tasks, such as "line-drying clothes", the stereotype is more feminine. The paper suggests that sustainable behaviours have an effect similar to the labels: traits can be elicited by certain sustainable behaviours.

Specifying a sustainable behaviour can elicit stereotypes based on gender. To avoid this, one strategy is to focus on sustainable behaviours in general instead of being specific. However, previous research has shown that there is a gender gap in sustainable behaviour, where women are more likely to act sustainably because sustainable behaviour is associated with femininity (Brough et al., 2016). Traits such as caring, nurturing, and future orientation are identified as feminine, and as such, environmental concerns are often considered feminine-oriented. Bloodhart and Swim (2020) suggest that sustainable consumption is associated with femininity because conspicuous consumption, which is the opposite of sustainable consumption, is associated with stereotypical masculine attributes such as power, status, or wealth. Therefore, sustainable consumers are often stereotyped as feminine. The association of sustainable behaviour with gender can affect the outcome of a study on sustainable consumer stereotypes. It should be considered carefully when designing examples for such a study, as linguistic cues may activate association with gender.

5. Methodological approaches

5.1. Diversity of methods

The pool under study reflects a great diversity of research methods, which adds to the complexity of knowledge on sustainable consumer stereotypes. The pool contains ten qualitative papers (22%), quantitative papers (56%), mixed methods papers (7%) and conceptual papers (11%). While quantitative papers dominate the pool, the pool also reflects a great diversity of research methods, which adds to the complexity of knowledge on sustainable consumer stereotypes. Those studies are very different in terms of focus, findings, and research methods. These methods have varying implications, reflecting the intricate and multifaceted nature of sustainable consumer stereotypes.

However, two trends are observable through the methodological lens. First, the quantitative method has a very specific goal of evaluating the turn from positive to negative stereotype associations with sustainable behaviours. Several experimental studies focus on the boundary conditions that affect the positive/negative aspects of the stereotypes. Hence, the existence of stereotypes is not the question here. Rather, they focus on the consequences of this stereotype. It can be the consequences for people willing to act sustainably (Borau et al., 2021; Swim et al., 2020), the perceptions of sustainable consumers which may discourage people holding these perceptions from acting sustainably (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; van de Grint et al., 2021) or the evaluation of solutions aimed at promoting sustainable behaviours (Sparkman & Attari, 2020; Weiper & Wonk, 2021). No similar trend in terms of objectives is as obvious in qualitative studies or conceptual studies.

Second, the research methods used in the pool can be distinguished between free and forced elicitation methods. Free elicitation methods are methods where participants are encouraged to list all the traits and representations that come to their minds. Forced elicitation methods are methods in which participants are presented with a limited number of traits to associate (or not) with the sustainable consumer. Forced elicitation uses pre-existing literature to define a set of

traits for the study. Participants are presented with *stimuli* or scenarios and asked to evaluate their perception of the predetermined traits using scales. In the pool, qualitative studies are the only ones with free elicitation methods (10 studies). In comparison, quantitative studies include all the papers with forced elicitation methods (23 studies) and papers with both methods (4 studies). Papers with a conceptual approach were not evaluated on this aspect, for these studies do not include participants. The differences between free and forced elicitation methods contribute to the complexity of sustainable consumer stereotypes.

5.2. Description of methods

The free and forced elicitation methods contain a variety of different research methods that this section will describe. Free elicitation methods include qualitative techniques such as semi-structured interviews (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Burgess et al., 2012; Séré de Lanauze et al., 2018; Ertz et al., 2016; Gollnhofer, 2017; Randers et al., 2021) and focus groups (Johnstone & Tan, 2015), or written methods such as free association (Groeve et al., 2021; Minson & Monin, 2012; Patel & Buckland, 2021; Rozin et al., 2020), free writing (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Bashir et al., 2013) and open-ended survey questions (Klas et al., 2016; Weiper & Vong, 2021).

Forced elicitation methods include a wide range of quantitative approaches. In particular, studies used scales to evaluate participants' perceptions (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Ertz et al., 2016; Olson et al., 2016; Swim & Geiger, 2018). Studies have used scales developed by the previous literature (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Olson et al., 2016), while some others have adapted (Shang & Peloza, 2018) or developed new scales (Swim & Geiger, 2017) that have been later used by papers from the pool (Geiger & Swim, 2021). Other studies combine several pre-existing scales to control for potential moderators (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016). While most of the surveys have been administered online, some studies deserve particular attention, for they offer a different design. Thus, Monin and Norton (2019) administered a survey in university dormitories five nights in a row. The idea behind this was to capture perceptions during the specific moment of a water crisis.

Experimental designs have also been used in our pool. Experimental designs include visual *stimuli* (Borau, 2021; Brough et al., 2016; Luomala et al., 2020), audiovisual *stimuli* (Shang & Peloza, 2018), textual *stimuli* – for instance, fake items (Funk et al., 2020; van de Grint et al., 2020), vignettes (Groeve et al., 2022; Sparkman & Attari,2020; Swim et al., 2020), or scenarios (Weiper & Vonk, 2021). They can be combined with other measures prior to the experiment, as with the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018), or with a free association task (Groeve et al., 2021).

5.3. Different methods for different objectives

Reviewing the objectives of previous studies through this methodological lens reveals that the free/forced methods serve different purposes. The free elicitation method helps reveal prototypical characteristics, as it tends to encompass a broader range of features than forced

elicitation. However, this also means that it may identify less commonly mentioned stereotypes, such as "drug user" (Bashir et al., 201, p. 4) or "sadistic" (Minson & Monin, 2012, p. 3), reported only by a minority of respondents. Some studies measure the prevalence of traits by tallying the number of times they are reported (Minson & Monin, 2012; Patel & Buckland, 2021), but not all free elicitation studies use this approach. Through this method, the unveiled prototypical traits can also be very specific, such as "wearing Birkenstock and unfashionable clothes." Additionally, the question used to generate prototypical traits includes the label of sustainable consumer, which could influence the elicitation, as previously demonstrated.

Quantitative studies often use forced elicitation approaches this method to confirm traits that have been previously documented in the literature (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bashir et al., 2013; Bloodhart et al., 2020; Brough et al., 2016; Hoogendoorn et al., 2019; Geiger & Swim, 2018; Groeve et al., 2022; Luomala et al., 2020; Pearson et al., 2018; Rettie et al., 2012; Sparkman & Attari, 2020; Swim & Geiger, 2018; van de Grint et al., 2020). However, this approach has limitations, such as testing fewer traits than free elicitation methods. Concerns about the relevance of certain traits associated with sustainable consumer stereotypes may exist. One way to identify these traits through forced elicitation methods is to refer to previous literature, even if it does not exclusively focus on consumer stereotypes. For example, some studies from the pool ground their list of traits on Grahaw-Rowe's (2012) research, which focuses on sustainable product stereotypes rather than individual stereotypes. As a result, these studies may only evaluate the transferability of such traits from products to consumers, limiting the understanding of their impact since other characteristics or moderators may not be examined.

Finally, mixed-method studies often combine free and forced elicitations to achieve two objectives: identifying traits and validating them (Groeve et al., 2021; Minson & Monin, 2012; Pearson et al., 2018; Weiper & Vonk, 2021). In such studies, the forced association stage is usually grounded on the first stage of free association. This compensates for the weakness of a limited set of traits, as studies only test the most prevalent traits in the experimental stage. The prevalence of a trait in representations determines its inclusion in the validation stage through forced elicitation (Bashir et al., 2013; Minson & Monin, 2012; Patel & Buckland, 2021). This method ensures that less prevalent stereotypes may emerge from free elicitation and do not outweigh the effects of more common traits.

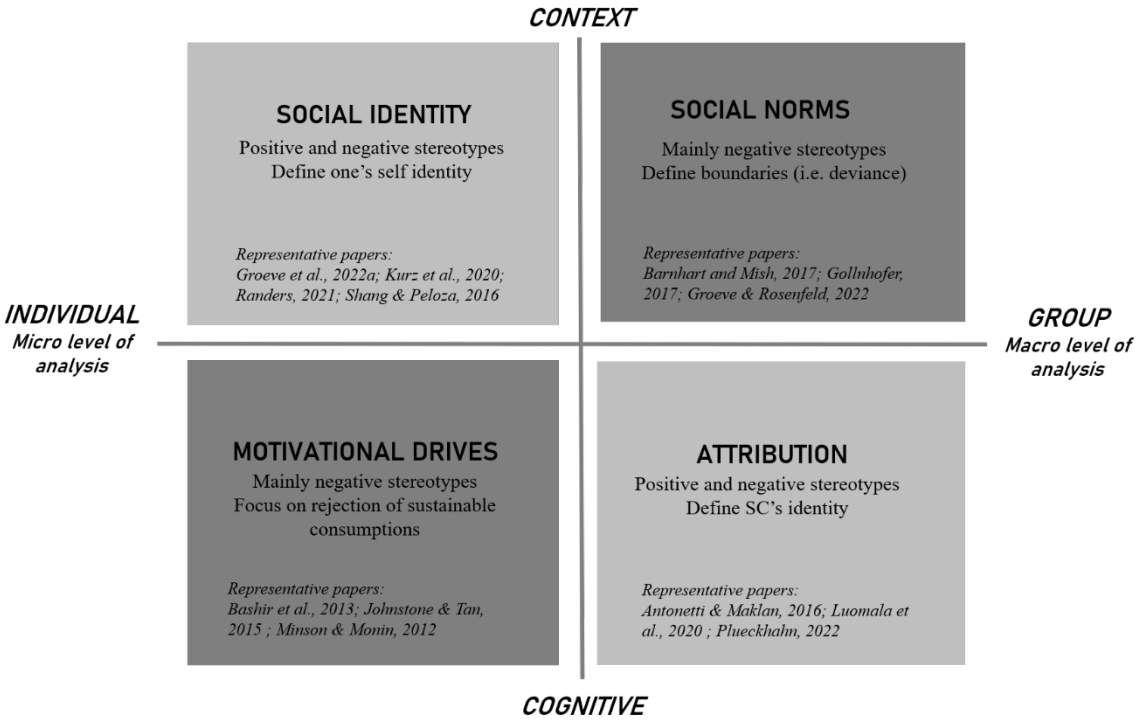
6. Theory mapping

This section maps out the main theories used in previous studies and classifies them to provide an agenda for future research on this topic. These theories have been summarised along two dimensions. The classification reflects the angles that have been used to explore stereotypes. One dimension captures the level of analysis at which the theory is used, whether it is at the individual level or the group level. A second dimension captures whether the theory focuses on cognitive aspects – it explains intrapersonal psychological mechanisms– or on contextual aspects – it explains what happens in the social environment of a person. It is

important to recall that all these theories concern the behaviour of individuals expressing the stereotypes and do not concern the behaviour of actual sustainable consumers.

This classification results in four main theoretical approaches to the stereotypes: Social Identity, Social Norms, Attribution, and Motivational drives (see Figure 4). Social Identity regroup theories that are used to examine how individuals use stereotypes of sustainable consumers to express their social identity. Social norms regroup theories examining stereotypes from the perspective of group norms and context. Attribution regroups theories that focus only on how one forms stereotypes of sustainable consumers. Motivational drivers regroup theories, focusing on the motivational drives linked to sustainable consumer stereotypes that influence individuals to reject sustainable behaviours.

Figure 4 - Classification of sampled papers based on their theoretical approaches



6.1. Theoretical framing on social identity

The theories in this group aim to explain how sustainable consumer stereotypes are used to define and express one's social identity to the world. These theories highlight the differences, boundaries, and demarcations among social categories, especially between sustainable and regular consumers. However, while all studies in this group use sustainable consumer stereotypes to define individuals' identities, two main streams of theories underlying this social identity group can be identified. One stream of research relies on the Social Identity Theory and emphasises the opposition between sustainable and regular consumers. The second stream of research focuses on the identity expressed by individuals' behaviours and consumption regarding sustainable consumer stereotypes. While they both explain location in the social world, one is used to insist on the opposition and the other on the belonging expressed by their consumption behaviour.

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposes that a person's connection with a group determines their behaviour and self-concept. According to SIT, individuals can see themselves as either group members or individuals in different situations, depending on how similar or different they feel in a social context (Groeve et al., 2022a, p. 4). While SIT resurges in several papers of the pool, only one study uses it explicitly (Kurz et al., 2020). The study focuses on the practice-based identities of moralised minorities, such as cycling or veganism, and uses SIT to define the boundaries of these groups. However, despite not drawing explicitly from SIT theories, several papers use the SIT lexicon and appear to implicitly draw from SIT (Groeve et al., 2022a; Groeve & Rosenfeld, 2022; Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016; Klas et al., 2019; Patel & Buckland, 2021; Randers, 2021; Swim & Geiger, 2018; Shang & Peloza, 2016). These papers tend to view stereotypes, especially negative ones, as a tool used by ingroups and outgroups to differentiate themselves from one another, which is a central tenet of SIT.

Some of these papers also introduce an interesting notion of domination between ingroups and outgroups, though it is not originally part of SIT. Hence, Kurz et al. (2020) use SIT to define a Moralised Minority, which includes sustainable consumers and demonstrates how sustainable behaviour can be "read by others as a sign of performing a particular identity" as opposed to their own identity (Kurz et al., 2020, p. 3). Groeve & Rosenfeld (2022) focus on veg* as an ingroup minority group, as opposed to the dominant outgroups of meat-eaters or flexitarians. Shang & Peloza (2016) differentiate between outgroup and dissociative groups, suggesting that the outgroup is dominant while minority dissociative groups are not. Finally, Brough et al. (2016) studied ingroup identity as aspirational, specifically focusing on the masculine identity consumers aim to fit into. The authors claim that this identity often leads consumers to avoid sustainable consumption behaviours. With this claim, this last paper also uses the second stream of theories on social identity, which deals with individuals' identity.

This second stream of theories explores the construction of individuals' identities regarding the stereotypes of sustainable consumers. Moral identity and gender identity were the two aspects that studies have mainly considered, consistently with the same approach: the identity must be maintained (self-congruence), or the identity is threatened (identity threat).

Studies focusing on the maintenance of self-identity rely on two theories, namely self-image congruence and self-verification theory. Self-image congruence theory defends the idea that people seek consumption behaviours consistent with their self-image. In research on stereotypes, self-image congruence theory has been applied to understand how certain sustainable behaviours – for instance, electric cars – can generate negative attributes for those performing such behaviours – electric car buyers (Bennett et al., 2018). Self-verification theory claims that people have a need to be recognised and confirmed in their self-perception by external observers (Swann & Buhrmester, 2014). While self-verification theory highlights the desire for others to validate one's self-perception (Kurz et al., 2020), self-image congruence focuses on the alignment between one's self-perception and external elements such as products or consumption (Bennett et al., 2018). Both theories focus on the way people express their identity, using the stereotype as a referent to which they distance themselves. This is also used to explain why consumers may avoid the purchase of sustainable goods or the adoption of sustainable practices, as they want to perform a social identity different from the one expressed

in the sustainable consumer stereotypes they hold. The focus is on the social identity expressed by the regular consumer individuals.

As for the aspects of social identity that are explored, moral identity and gender identity are the main aspects investigated by those studies. Many researchers have investigated, in particular, the green-feminine stereotype, a well-known stereotype about sustainable consumers stereotype whereby greenness is associated with female/feminine identities (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020; Brough et al., 2016; Pinna, 2020). Among papers addressing this gender aspect, some use theories very much related to gender in a binary conception of masculine/feminine roles resulting from social construction.

Multiple studies have explored the links between gender and sustainable actions, especially based on the social construction of gender roles and identity. Through a quantitative study, Swim and Geiger (2018) demonstrate the existence of gendered inferences based on gender norms and roles. Research with a similar construct, namely gender role inferences, takes the perspective of the sustainable consumer to show through a set of surveys that women are more likely to act/consume ethically (Shang & Peloza, 2016). Finally, Swim et al. (2020) offer a quantitative approach to measure how much pro-environmental behaviours (PEB) are gendered. Their results are consistent with the study by Brough et al. (2016) on the femininity of sustainable consumption practices (Swim et al., 2020). However, they also suggest that engaging in PEB consistent with one's perceived gender may create inferences about the sexual orientation of the sustainable consumer. In all those studies, gender congruence theory is implicitly suggested as an important background to understand the ramifications of such representation of genders, especially when a discrepancy appears between self-perception and external perception.

Moral comparison with the sustainable consumer is another key theory to understand the shift from positive to negative stereotyping of the sustainable consumer. Studies show that in the case of sustainable consumption, the sustainable consumer is perceived to act in terms of morality and is subjected to backlash for it (Sparkman & Attari, 2020). Moral comparison with Do-Gooders may threaten the moral identity and moral self-perception of people acting otherwise. Studies suggest that negative stereotypes of Do-Gooders – and sustainable consumers in my case – are used as a defence mechanism to counter the moral threat and, by extension, social threats such as social acceptance or social desirability.

In studies with a theoretical focus on social identity, the sustainable consumer stereotype is used to "dis-identify" with the sustainable consumer based on one's expressed self-identity (Randers et al., 2021). However, when this identity is threatened, another group of theories, namely theories focusing on individuals' motivational drive to reject sustainable behaviours, comes into play.

6.2. Theoretical framing on motivational drives

Another group of theories mainly focuses on the motivational drives behind the rejection of sustainable behaviours. This group of theories is named after a typology previously established

(Van Lange et al., 2012). These theories focus on the person who expresses the sustainable consumer stereotype and the motivational drives to reject sustainable behaviour. This approach includes two main theories: Anticipated Moral Reproach and the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The Anticipated Moral Reproach (AMR) results from a moral comparison with the ideal or stereotypical sustainable consumer, which may threaten one's moral identity (Bashir et al., 2013; Hoogendoorn et al., 2019; Minson & Monin, 2012; Sparkman & Attari, 2020; van de Grint et al., 2021; Weiper & Vonk, 2021). The concept of AMR was first introduced by Minson and Monin (2012). AMR refers to the negative consequences that arise when a person compares oneself to "Do-Gooders", i.e., individuals who perform exceptionally well in a specific domain. This comparison may potentially damage the person's self-esteem and self-identity (Minson & Monin, 2012). Additionally, it results in a negative perception of the do-gooder in comparison to the one evaluating them. Studies suggest that this negative stereotyping serves as a defence mechanism to counter the identity threat and other consequences like a threat to social acceptance or social desirability.

Sustainable consumers ground their behaviour on morality, which is considered to be a universal standard. As a result, anyone who chooses a different behaviour may feel judged, even when the person does not directly question or judge the observer's behaviour. For instance, a study conducted by Minson and Monin (2012) showed that meat-eaters rated vegetarians less positively after being asked about the vegetarians' moral judgments of them. This strong rejection of vegetarians by meat eaters is another clear example of this phenomenon. Veg* base their identities on high moral principles that are difficult to contradict (Groeve et al., 2022; Groeve, Rosenfeld et al., 2022). This generates a damaging moral comparison for the self-perception of meat eaters' moral identity, resulting in negative stereotyping of veg*and a strong rejection from meat eaters. Furthermore, Groeve et al. (2021) suggest that the stricter the diet, the more moralistic it is perceived, and the stronger the reactions against it may be.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is a psychological model developed by Ajzen (1985). It posits that three primary constructs – namely attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control - predict one's behavioural intentions, which in turn predict one's actual behaviour. According to the TPB, attitudes refer to one's personal evaluation of the behaviour in question; subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to engage in the behaviour; and perceived behavioural control refers to the individual's assessment of their ability to perform the behaviour. Usually, the TPB is a theory used on a motivational or affective level (Van Lange et al., 2012). The paper exploiting the TPB explores the gap between an individual's attitude towards green behaviours and their actual behaviours. One explanation for the green gap, as it is called, is the negative perceptions of sustainable behaviours. The authors suggest adding a new construct, the "green perception construct" (Johnstone & Tan, 2015, p. 12), to the TPB model, capturing an individual motivation. This addition would consider the stereotypes surrounding sustainable consumption and allow for a more accurate understanding of the green-gap phenomenon (Johnstone & Tan, 2015).

6.3. Theoretical framing on social norms

Theories from this group approach stereotypes from the perspective of norms and symbolic meanings. These theories focus on the roles of stereotypes concerning the implicit rules and the implicit representations of social groups. Theories on social norms include the dominant social paradigm, the carnist theory and the institutional theory, and other symbolic meanings theories. This group of theories results in highly negative stereotypes of the sustainable consumer, as the sustainable consumer has been set as deviant from the norms and rules.

The Dominant Social Paradigm (DPS) theory states that the ideology or belief systems of a society shape people's behaviour and attitudes (Pirages & Ehrlich, 1974). Hence, any sign of a belief inconsistent with the ongoing DSP leads to rejection of the individual or the group expressing such belief. Using this socio-political prism, Barnhart and Mish (2017) use the DSP to explain how regular consumers perceive sustainable consumers as holding abnormal beliefs (Barnhart & Mish, 2017). Stereotyping here is defined as "a process of social construction that defines what is normal and abnormal" (Barnhart & Mish, 2017, p. 58). Indeed, in the context I am studying, the dominant ideology being Western capitalism, the sustainable consumer expresses incompatible beliefs such as environmental sustainability or restrained consumption. They defy or transgress this dominant ideology; hence, they are considered deviant, connected to highly negative stereotypes. The carnist theory is very close to the dominant social paradigm, but it concerns only the dominant diets. It has been conceptualised by Groeve and Rosenfeld (2022) to summarise the meat-eater ideology. The carnist ideology is indeed developed by meat-eaters to legitimate the fact that the carnist diet is responsible for the death of animals. These stereotypes rely on the idea that there would be natural laws that make the carnist diet necessary on several grounds. According to the carnist theory, the veg* diet is in opposition to natural laws (Groeve & Rosenfeld, 2022). Hence, they are stereotyped as being "not nice, not nutritional, not natural and not normal" (Groeve et al., 2022a, p. 9).

Studies drawing from institutional theory result in similar negative stereotypes. It states that groups are governed by three types of rules: regulatory (laws), normative (moral rules), and cultural-cognitive pillars (cultural rules). Gollnhofer (2017) used this theory to analyse how dumping diving in Germany, as a sustainable practice to fight food waste, challenges the formal and informal rules reflecting the three pillars of legitimacy. Stereotypes surrounding dumpster divers, such as "beggars," "homeless," and "thieves," stem from an unspoken German conception that taking private food for free is either a sign of necessity or a violation of the law. When individuals adopt this practice for environmental reasons, not out of necessity, they are assimilated to outlaws. In the paper, stereotypes are used as a tool to measure the progressive legitimation of sustainable behaviours within the different categories of rules from institutional theory. The author's objective is to expose the negative stereotypes of sustainable consumers and the cultural models that underpin these negative stereotypes to reduce them progressively. The results reveal the imagery attached to this specific sustainable behaviour. They also reveal how much imagery can be related to the cultural context: the authors insist on the link between the stereotypes and the German cultural context.

6.4. Theoretical framing on attribution

Finally, theories can approach stereotypes from the attribution perspective. These theories focus on the stereotypes people attribute to sustainable consumers. The main theories from this group include Cost Signalling Theory, Stereotype Content Model and Stigma by Association. Unlike theories working on social norms, which tend to produce stereotypes about deviance, the use of these theories can explore both negative, deviant stereotypes and positive, aspirational stereotypes.

The Costly Signalling Theory, as adapted by Luomala et al. (2020), differs from its original evolutionary psychology framework but maintains the core principle that costly behaviours serve as credible signals. While evolutionary CST focuses on fitness displays and mate selection, Luomala et al. (2020) apply this theory to consumption patterns, suggesting that the premium cost of organic food acts as a credible signal of the consumer's values and character. Luomala et al. (2020) explore the impressions formed about people engaging in organic consumption through a survey, and they demonstrate that organic food purchases enhance the consumer's social image, as people tend to perceive organic food buyers as more honest, more altruistic, and of higher social status. This adaptation of CST to consumer contexts shows how costly consumption choices can function as social signals, even when removed from their original evolutionary framework.

Interestingly, the study from my pool using the Stereotype Content Model also deals with the aspirational dimension of stereotypes of sustainable consumers (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). As explained in section 2.1 of this chapter, the SCM states that, at first sight, people are categorised into one of the four groups of stereotypes described by Fiske et al. (1998) based on two dimensions: their competence and their warmth (Fiske et al., 1998). Studies on sustainable consumer stereotypes used it to understand why the sustainable consumer does not constitute a solid role model for a shift to sustainable consumption (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). Based on previous literature suggesting that brand stereotypes can be transferred to consumers (Kervyn et al., 2012), results show that the sustainable consumer is perceived as warm but less competent (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). These results are consistent with other studies that found vegetarians to be rated high in morality (generating admiration) but low in potency (not generating imitation) (Monin & Norton, 2003). Whereas the warmth sustainable consumer stereotype generates a feeling of admiration, it also decreases the feeling of envy, which is a driving force for people to imitate a behaviour (ibid.). Representing a sustainable consumer as a friendly, nice individual may actually decrease its strength as a model for consumption change.

The stigmatisation by association is a theory with a similar effect as the brand stereotypes transferred to consumers. Previous work has suggested that stigmatisation can be transferred from inanimate objects to people. One paper, in particular, demonstrated how the stigma associated with old, polluting neighbourhoods is transferred to their inhabitant (Plueckhahn, 2022). It echoes how brand stereotypes are transferred to brand users (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Keryvn et al., 2012). Plueckhahn (2022) showed that this effect happens to both positive stereotypes of the new neighbourhood and the negative stereotypes of the old ones. According

to the paper, inhabitants of stigmatised areas suffer consequences such as lower social desirability or low quality of life because of the attribution of these stereotypes (Plueckhahn, 2022).

7. Research agenda

The theoretical foundations and empirical evidence reviewed above provide valuable insights into the nature and consequences of sustainable consumer stereotypes, significant gaps remain in our understanding of these complex phenomena. Moreover, as sustainability concerns continue to evolve and diversify across different contexts, there is an urgent need for more comprehensive and dynamic approaches to studying these stereotypes. This section presents a research agenda with three critical areas where future scholarship can advance both theoretical understanding and practical implications of sustainable consumer stereotyping. Table 6 offers an overview of this research agenda, which I detail in this section. These lines of inquiry consider the global rise of concerns for sustainable issues and some theoretical issues, such as the nature of stereotypes or the inherent relationship they imply between imageries and traits.

Table 6 - Summary of research agenda

Research Avenue	Current Gap	Key Research Focus	Example Research Questions
7.1 Time and Contextual Perspectives	Snapshots approach lacking temporal and contextual analysis	Longitudinal and cross-cultural studies of stereotype evolution and normalisation processes	How does the evolution of social norms affect stereotypes? How do cultural differences affect stereotypes' content and consequences?
7.2 Comprehensive Stereotyping Process	Limited understanding of stereotype formation and media influence	Systematic analysis of media discourse and stereotype lifecycle processes	How are stereotypes formed and their content constructed? What is the displayed image of sustainable consumers in media? Can stereotypes be transformed or deactivated?
7.3 Mapping Imageries and Stereotypes	Fragmented focus on traits vs. imageries; limited positive stereotype research	Comprehensive mapping of trait-imagery relationships across different sustainable practices	What is the relationship between prototypical traits and imageries? Are all sustainable practices equally subject to negative stereotypes? What are the positive stereotypes about sustainable consumers?

7.1. A need for time and contextual perspectives

A close look at previous work highlighted an unexpected complexity in the context of sustainable consumer stereotypes. This is due to two areas of research that require further attention. First, most of the papers study stereotypes as a snapshot at a given time and place. Even if the malleability of stereotypes is acknowledged (Gollnhofer, 2017), no study examines the evolution and complexity of stereotypes over time. Indeed, the theoretical mapping provided here captures the different roots of stereotypes that have been examined by previous literature, many of which evolve across time and culture. Hence, it is fair to presume that the evolution of ideologies or institutionalised beliefs concerning sustainability may affect the content of stereotypes. How does the evolution of social norms affect stereotypes? How do contexts and its components such as cultural differences affect the stereotypes' content and consequences? Future research could explore such research questions.

Furthermore, while sustainable issues have progressed significantly in public concerns in past years, future research could investigate what this progression implies for the stereotypes of sustainable consumers. Indeed, our research suggests that the rise in sustainable concerns does not necessarily go along with the normalisation of sustainable behaviours. Several studies in the pool point out a number of negative consequences of sustainable behaviours (Bashir et al., 2013; Groeve et al., 2022b), which may result from a more offensive resistance of regular consumers (Groeve et al., 2022a; Minson & Monin, 2012). More research is needed to evaluate the normalisation and stigmatisation processes of sustainable behaviours at stake as societies are increasingly concerned with sustainability.

7.2. A need for a comprehensive perspective on stereotyping

A potential avenue for future research is to fully understand the process of stereotyping. While there is evidence of the consequences of stereotypes, there is no evidence of how these stereotypes are formed and how their content is constructed. The social construction of stigmatised identities, as conceptualised by Goffman (1963), suggests that stereotypes emerge through complex interactions between individual attributes and societal reactions, making it essential to examine how sustainable consumption practices become marked as deviant or socially undesirable. Several studies reviewed in this paper suggest, in a very general way, the role of media and advertising in portraying negative and derogatory images of environmentalists (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Shang & Peloza, 2016). This echoes studies that source the green-feminine stereotypes back to the discourse held in advertisements and media about sustainable products and behaviours (Brough et al., 2016; Pinna, 2020). Even though the influence of cultural products is invoked, literature misses a systematic analysis of how they influence stereotype content. Hence, future research could investigate the media discourse and its content – what is the displayed image of sustainable consumers? How does it evolve? – but also through its rhetorical and textual tools – how is this discourse built? Does the construction of the text suggest a general intention towards the

sustainable consumer? Responding to these questions implies considering the context in which the stereotypes of sustainable consumers exist, which may allow those stereotypes to last.

Similarly, the stereotyping process can be a tool for future research to investigate the evolution of the stereotypes' content. Literature suggests that stereotypes are malleable and evolving (Angle et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Valor et al., 2021), either because of new associations or moderators (Olson et al., 2016) or a change in the perception of the stereotypes (Gollnhofer, 2017). Gollhnhofer (2017), in particular, viewed this malleability as an opportunity to offer strategies to decrease, or even erase, the stigma around dumpster divers. Future research can extend this path and investigate if and how stereotypes, more than stigma, can be transformed or even deactivated. Considering stereotyping as a process could also open new paths of research on identifying the different stages of stereotypes' lifecycle. This appears as a promising lead for future, more comprehensive models and associated solutions. This could also resolve some conflicting results by suggesting different stages of stereotypes' lifecycles and how they interact in their evolution.

7.3. A need for mapping imageries and stereotypes

The third avenue for future research is to investigate the relationship between prototypical traits and imageries that have been previously described. Most of the studies reviewed have focused only on either the traits or the imageries. It would be interesting to create a mapping of the different aspects of the sustainable consumer's representations. Séré de Lanauzé and Lallement (2020) have already started this work with negative stereotypes, but their study only addressed negative stereotypes. A similar, inductive work could explore the positive stereotypes that exist about sustainable consumers. Although some studies have suggested that there could be a possible backlash of those positive stereotypes (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016), little is still known about their content and consequences, as most studies have focused on negative perceptions. Therefore, a study that maps the positive stereotypes and links traits and imagery would be a significant complement to current knowledge. We would also recommend future research to explore interdisciplinary studies and, in particular, the use of a socio-historical perspective on stereotypes attached to sustainable consumers. A genealogical approach would be helpful to trace back the origin and epoch of different imageries and understand their starting point (Thompson & Tian, 2007). For instance, it would be interesting to explore when some imageries were constructed and how they may be maintained, for instance, through discourses. Those new approaches could be useful in explaining persistent associations.

Similar work could be conducted to produce a mapping based on the different types of sustainable consumers. Emerging from the literature is also the complexity of defining sustainable consumption, which leads to different perceptions of what the practice entails and who is considered a sustainable consumer. The progression of sustainable issues in our societies has also resulted in a scattered and diverse typology of sustainable consumers. Our findings evidence that the different types of sustainable consumers have different associative networks – for instance, vegans versus organic buyers. Future research could investigate this diversity of practices, such as organic consumption, zero waste consumption, locavore consumption, or the

return to a barter economy. Are all sustainable practices equally subject to negative stereotypes? If not, why? Do the results in the production of new stereotypes? Are some oppositions appearing between those practices? How does the appearance of these new sustainable practices affect the more normalised, established ones? This opens another promising lead to capture the establishment of new norms and practices and, consequently, of new stereotypes.

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Chapter 2 –

Repetitions and Stereotyping in *Friends*: an empirical exploration of sustainable consumers' stereotypes[1]

Abstract

Television (TV) series have emerged as the quintessential entertainment product in popular culture, amplifying their potential for affecting stereotypical representations. However, how stereotypes are embedded and transformed through media has been overlooked. This study investigates repetitions, an essential feature of serial narratives that plays a key role in stereotyping through the construction of characters in TV series. Through a literary deconstructionist analysis of Phoebe Buffay, one of the main characters from the neo-cult TV series *Friends*, we offer a typology of different repetitions – namely, reproduction, layering and evolution – and show how they contribute to cementing the stereotypes of morally desirable yet deviant behaviours, such as sustainable consumption. This paper contributes to the literature on pop culture and to the literary tradition in consumer research by applying deconstructionist methods to the stereotyping process at stake in serial fiction. In doing so, we explore the role of repetitions, a mechanism typical of TV series that is key to creating both stereotypes and characters. We explain how such a process unfolds.

Keywords**:** *TV series; Friends; character; stereotypes; sustainable consumer*

1. Introduction

Television (TV) series are quintessential entertainment products whose narrative and serial nature, similar to reality television's, can conflate both social and intimate experiences (Pradhan & Drake, 2023), enacting in consumers a strong emotional bond with characters (van Laer et al., 2014). Their "infinite serial structure" (Russell & Stern, 2006, p. 16) favours consumption in high flow. Through binge-watching practices, series transport consumers into their narratives (Feiereisen et al., 2021), arguably provoking significant cultivation effects or offering

[1] This Chapter was presented at the Association Française de Marketing Conference 2024 and the Academy of Marketing Conference 2024. It was also published as a journal article (Raynaud, S., Zanette, M. C., Valor Martínez, C., & Antonetti, P. (2024). "I want world peace… oh, and bigger boobs": repetitions and stereotyping on Friends' sustainable character Phoebe. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 40(15–16), 1384–1410. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2024.2380795)

"television answers" to real-world problems (Gerbner et al., 1978; Green & Brock, 2000; Oliver et al., 2019). Thus, it can be inferred that the nature of series and particularly their characters can considerably influence the stereotypes or social representations of specific groups (Napoli & Ouschan, 2019; Patterson, 2013; Russell & Stern, 2006; Russell et al., 2019; Stern et al., 2007; Thakar et al., 2010; Zanette et al., 2023). However, extant literature has not yet explored the textual elements through which TV series' characters are built and how fiction mobilises social representations.

Here, we explore one relevant representation: the stereotypes of sustainable consumers. While sustainability may cover many topics, we mainly focus here on the environmental dimension of sustainability. Such relevance is justified by the need to normalise sustainable behaviours (Rettie et al., 2012) and how culture can play a role in sustainable transition (Köhler et al., 2019; Milkoreit, 2017; Ritch, 2023). However, evidence suggests that such consumers and their practices – for instance, vegetarianism/veganism (De Groeve et al., 2021, 2022) or activism (Bashir et al., 2013; Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016) – are still negatively represented, for example, as "judgmental" and "preachy" (Minson & Monin, 2012; Ratliff et al., 2017) or simply as "eccentric" (Burgess et al., 2012). These representations could be a barrier to sustainable transition (Burgess et al., 2012; Johnstone et al., 2015). Nevertheless, how series mobilise representations of sustainable consumers and how they portray and construct deviance is still unknown. Here, we investigate how discreet and peripheral but repeated representations can create stereotypes about sustainability.

Studying character construction can shed light on the above-mentioned research gap. Here, we examine the TV series *Friends*, considered a neo-cult series – a highly popular series across different generations of viewers (Jones, 2018). The sad passing of *Friends* star Matthew Perry in 2023 has provided evidence, if needed, of the still-vivid importance of the show to today's popular culture. This study specifically focuses on one of *Friends*' main characters: Phoebe Buffay, an unconventional character who embodies different facets of sustainable consumption. She leads a minimalist lifestyle, cares about community and animal wellbeing and subtly critiques consumerism. However, she also embodies the contradictions that have been evidenced by previous literature on sustainable consumers (Johnstone & Tan, 2014; Mazar & Zhong, 2010), as illustrated by one of the opening scenes in which she wishes to have "world peace, no more hunger, good things for the rainforest... and bigger boobs!" (S01E04).

Viewers learn Phoebe's traits and their nuances through the "infinite serial structure" (Russell & Stern, 2006, p. 16) of the series, which allows for countless similar but slightly different repetitions in tropes and jokes. Because stereotypes themselves are formed through similar repetitions (Angle et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Valor et al., 2021), we claim that the mobilisation of representations in series is achieved through repeated textual mechanisms. What types of repetitions are enacted in the text, and how do they work together? What do they repeat precisely, and how do they create characters that may affect the stereotypical representations portrayed in the series?

To address these questions, we combined an automatic detection technique for identifying the scenes conveying sustainable consumers' stereotypes with deconstructionist literary

analysis (Stern, 1996a, 1996b). This method ensures a close focus on the text and enables us to capture both the details that an approach based only on watching would miss and the multiple meanings, as the audience may have multiple interpretations (Patterson et al., 1998). Our findings reveal how different types of repetitions contribute to character complexity while reproducing stereotypical representations. We describe three types of repetitions (reproduction, layering and evolution) and show their different functions in establishing and conveying stereotypes in characters. They do so by progressively building on the previous type of repetition to create fully developed characters. In sum, our study contributes to previous literature on popular culture and stereotyping by (1) showing the parallel role of repetitions both in stereotyping (Fiske, 1998; Martin et al., 2014, 2017) and in character construction (Miller, 1982) and by (2) typifying these roles in different mechanism that create fully developed characters, conveying and reinforcing negative stereotypes of sustainable consumption. In our discussion, we also touch upon the theoretical links between these fully developed characters and their contribution to narrative transportation, resulting in a cultivation effect. Finally, we make valuable practical contributions on the impact and construction of serial narration, which can be used in advertising and public policies.

2. Conceptual background

2.1. Repetitions and stereotypes

Stereotypes are implicit or explicit beliefs, representations or perceptions that people have about another group or individual (Bennett et al., 2018; Luomala et al., 2020; Monin et al., 2008; Ratliff et al., 2017; Rozin et al., 2012). People classify others through stereotypes (Akestam et al., 2017; Fiske, 1998; Martin et al., 2014), attributing to their targets certain prototypical traits (Ratliff et al., 2017), which are used to ostracise those individuals who are out of the norm (Fan et al., 2020) or considered deviant (Valor et al., 2021). This seems to be the case for stereotypes of sustainable consumers.

The growing importance of consumer responsibility in terms of sustainable behaviour (Gonzalez-Arcos et al., 2021) has had unexpected effects on the representations of sustainable consumers. Literature has evidenced negative (Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Brough et al., 2016; Gollnhofer, 2017) and positive stereotypes (Borau et al., 2021; Funk et al., 2020) but with backlashes for the desirability of sustainable behaviours (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Brough et al., 2016). Indeed, recent studies point out that consumers might feel threatened or even attacked (Kurz et al., 2020; Minson & Monin, 2011) by sustainable consumers' behaviours, and one of their reactions is to negatively classify sustainable consumers (Bashir et al., 2013; De Groeve et al., 2021, 2022; Gollhofer, 2017; Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016; Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Séré et al., 2018). Consequently, different types of sustainable consumers (vegetarians, vegans, activists, etc.) are generally associated with deviance, are perceived as holding abnormal beliefs and are rejected by regular consumer groups (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Kurz et al., 2020). Some studies highlight the crucial role of media in creating and spreading stereotypes of sustainable consumers (Antonetti & Malklan, 2012; Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Brough et al., 2016; Shang & Peloza, 2020).

Stereotypes are nonetheless malleable (Angle et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Valor et al., 2021). Individuals build, reinforce, spread and modify them through repetitive social exchanges (Martin et al., 2014, 2017; Pechman & Knight, 2002). This claim of stereotypes' malleability is also supported by the evidence of how fiction may affect public opinion and general behaviours (Chalvon-Demersay, 2015; Kennedy & Lawton, 1992; Napoli & Ouschan, 2019; Patterson et al., 2013). Although consumers do not have social exchanges with characters and narratives, cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 1978) suggests that substantial exposure to TV content can influence viewers' perceptions of reality, as consumers are transported into fictional narratives (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2008; Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000; van Laer et al., 2014), and produce similar effects as personal experiences. In particular, both empathy with characters (van Laer et al., 2014) and characters' role as behaviour models create bonds between the audience and the character, which result in narrative transportation (Napoli & Ouschan, 2019; Patterson et al., 2013; Takhar et al., 2010; van Laer et al., 2014).

However, the prototypical character traits and emotions enacted by a character result from an important aspect of fictional media: a text constructed with intentions. Characters cannot be anything but the results of the text's structure and organisation (Miller, 1982), and their existence in literary studies is constrained by a fictional, structured set of actions (Propp V., 2012 [1928]) that gradually builds their development. For example, Holbrook and Grayson (1986) have shown how the consumption choices of Karen's character in the movie *Out of Africa* illustrate her development and nuances. Changes in her clothes and furniture, in particular, operate as subtle clues to the development of this character. In other words, they provide evidence that her actions – in terms of consumption choices – reflect her evolution. As such, audiences' emotions and psychological engagement arise from the text, and repetition is a central element for character development, as explained next.

Different streams of scholarship have shown the influence of fictional content on consumers. Pechman and Shih (1999) have demonstrated the role of movies in normalising smoking by offering specific imagery with which consumers want to be associated. Similarly, TV series have been shown to affect consumption behaviours, such as the consumption of alcohol (Russell et al., 2019) or healthy food (Charry, 2014). Studies on TV series argue in favour of including socially desirable messages in TV series owing to their effect on their audiences' representations (Chalvon-Demersay, 2011; Russell & Stern, 2006). These studies highlight the educational value of TV series in particular (Russell & Stern, 2006; Stern et al., 2007).

2.2. Series and repetition

Series' infinite serial structure comprises sets of actions, which are repeated to form characters' unique and recognisable behaviours. These repetitions of behaviours are then ensured throughout the series' multiple seasons, episodes and scenes. By nature, repetition is a core property of seriality and a mechanism for its development. The use of repetition facilitates the development of audiences' unique bond with characters (Chalvon-Demersay, 2011; Pasquier, 1995), as it maintains the characters' familiarity with the audience (Russell & Stern,

2006), which leads them to internalise messages from movies or TV series (Södergren & Vallström, 2021).

Hillis Miller's work sheds light on how repetitions in *texts* also act in forming such bonds. Miller is an American literary critic widely recognised for his association with the post-structuralist school of thought at Yale and for his work on deconstructionist methods (Dunne, 2017). In particular, his book *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), on which this study relies, presents several analyses of influential novels in which he reviews different patterns of repetition as the source of narrative immersion – very similar to the narrative transportation mentioned by marketing scholars. He argues that readers notice, enjoy and engage in the identification of the text's recurrent motives (Miller, 1982, pp. 1–3). Those repetitions include various forms such as words, characters, scenes, plots or motives of any sort (pp. 1–3). For Miller, the identification of repetitions enables a reader to get immersed in a narrative (pp. 1–3).

His work method shares similarities with that of Stern, one of the few scholars who explored Miller's work in consumer research, whose exemplary papers on literary analysis also advocated for interpretations based on a "close reading" of the text (Stern, 1996, p. 138). Furthermore, Miller's work echoes a parallel mechanism for stereotype construction, evidenced by previous works in psychology and consumer studies (Martin et al., 2014, 2017), therefore inspiring an explanation for the formation of stereotypes through media and popular culture.

Under Miller's lens, repeated patterns in the long run (such as in series) would determine, consolidate and adapt associations of certain prototypical traits in characters. It would also strengthen the bonds audiences share with the characters and the story. Repetitions forge stereotypes, but repetitions in a literary context also forge characters. Importantly, fictional texts might have unintentional performative effects; they can cement stereotypes even when not necessarily written and produced with this persuasive intent (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2008). However, what types of repetitions are enacted in the text, and how do they work together? What do they repeat precisely, and how do they create characters that may affect the stereotypical representations portrayed in the series?

2.3. Context: Friends and Phoebe

Some series have gained the special status of neo-cult TV series (Jones, 2023). This status is achieved by rekindling interest in the series, creating a new community of fans with both old and new viewers. Neo-cult series are initiated by a reboot, which updates the series to address contemporary issues (Jones, 2023). However, we argue that this concept can also be applied to TV series that move to streaming platforms, freeing themselves from the constraints of TV squares (Jones, 2023; Sepulchre, 2011) without losing their success, in addition to attracting new viewers. We infer from this that neo-cult series may have a lasting impact on representations and stereotypes and have thus prioritised them in this study.

Friends can be defined as a neo-cult TV series, as it created a cultural phenomenon that significantly impacted the entertainment industry and society (Cobb et al., 2018; Leppert et al., 2018). *Friends* is a popular American sitcom that aired from 1994 to 2004 and depicts the lives of six friends living in Manhattan. The show revolves around the lives of Ross, Rachel, Chandler, Monica, Joey and Phoebe, each with unique personalities and quirks. Monica is a chef, and her older brother, Ross, is a palaeontologist. Rachel is Monica's best friend and a fashion enthusiast. Chandler is Ross's college friend and works in statistical analysis and data reconfiguration. Joey is an aspiring actor and "ladies' man", and Phoebe is an eccentric musician with a unique outlook on life.

The show continues to be successful even after 30 years since it first aired. In 2018, its estimated number of streams represented 4.13% of Netflix streams in the US (James, 2019). In 2022, *Friends* was still one of the most-streamed series of the year on HBO Max, with 14.5 billion streams in the US alone (Nast, 2023). The show's continued success highlights its importance in the world of entertainment, bringing together a community of both original and new viewers. This neo-fandom (Jones, 2023) is another reason for attributing the status of neo-cultivated TV series to *Friends.* Studying *Friends*, even 20 years after its first release, is valuable. The show constitutes an appropriate context to study how a series conveys stereotypes to its new and original viewers who repeatedly watch it.

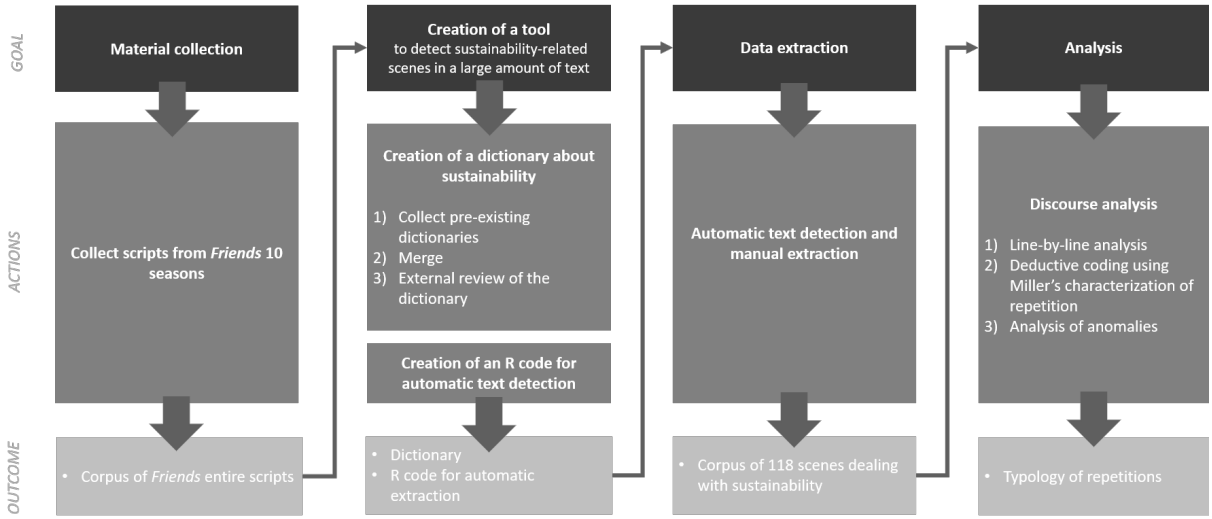
We focus here on the character of Phoebe, who embodies the ultimate sustainable character in the series. Phoebe's character has several facets. She has a chaotic past with a traumatic childhood: her father abandoned her family, her mother committed suicide when she was 14, and she was then adopted. She has a twin sister, Ursula, with whom she had a strained relationship. She went from homelessness in New York to becoming a masseuse, a guitarist and a singer. Despite these hardships, she has a very naive and enthusiastic mindset and tries to push away every darkness of the world. Throughout the series, she refers several times to her New Age spirituality, with a touch of conspiracy theory and superstition. She is also a vegetarian, a tree hugger and a fierce defender of animals. She is against fur and displays sustainable practices such as thrifting. For these reasons, she embodies the sustainable consumer of the series, especially if we focus on the environmentalism aspect of sustainability. By considering Phoebe as a representative of sustainable consumers, we can unveil how the mechanisms of repetition work together in the series to both construct this character and portray sustainable consumers as deviant.

3. Method

We performed a literary analysis of the script of *Friends*, a widely studied series (Porter et al., 2023). Scripts, previously used in analysing movies, reflect real-life conversations and, therefore, can be used to describe real-life phenomena (Holbrook & Grayson, 1986). Additionally, series are part of "industrial art" (Stern et al., 2007, pp. 9–10). This double nature, unique to the script, allows us to consider it as an object constructed with conscious or unconscious intentions from the scriptwriting team towards the audience. We use automated content analysis to select relevant scenes from the entire series' script; we then use discourse

analysis to scrutinise them using deconstructionist techniques and thematic analysis (Stern, 1996a, 1996b) combined with the approach presented by Miller (1982) on repetitions. Next, we describe the several steps of the method. The overview of the method is presented in Figure 5 which follows.

Figure 5 - Research method flow chart



Data sources. The PDF transcripts of the entire series are publicly available on several open-source websites. We downloaded our data from Kaggle, a data science platform. The use of script' extracts in this non-commercial study comes under the fair use of copyright-protected work. The complete list of authors can be found on the Writers' Guild of America West website[2].

Dictionary. A dictionary of words related to environmental issues was necessary to automatise text detection. A dictionary approach is recommended when focusing on a particular object or cultural phenomenon, as "text can be specified in relatively precise or finite ways that can be easily represented by word presence or absence" (Berger et al., 2022, p. 4). The dictionary was created using two pre-existing, published dictionaries of sustainability issues. The standardised one was the FOREST dictionary, comprising several categories of words related to the environmental language (Bengston & Xu, 1995; Xu & Bengston, 1997). The second dictionary used was the one developed by Humphreys (2014), which covered a lot of different aspects related to sustainability. These two dictionaries were aggregated to create a dictionary with a total of 1602 words divided into 22 categories such as "Calamities", "Awards & Certifications" and "Climate & Emissions".

[2] https://www.wga.org/writers-room/101-best-lists/101-best-written-tv-series/friends

This first version of the dictionary considers environmental issues' broad meaning and extended consequences. Adapting the dictionary to this research's objectives required refining it to enhance its accuracy and the validity of the words used (Xu & Bengston, 1997). This refinement comprised two tasks. First, it was necessary to simplify the list and avoid redundancy in combining words, as the R code, used for data extraction, could only take one sole word as a valid entry. This was achieved by removing or reducing existing expressions to their core words. For instance, "SOLID_WASTE", "WASTE_CHEMICALS", "WASTE_MATERIALS" and "WASTE_MANAGEMENT" were replaced by "WASTE", "CHEMICALS", "MATERIALS" and "MANAGEMENT", respectively. Similarly, the word "ENVIRONMENTAL" would be able to detect different expressions such as "ENVIRONMENTAL-FRIENDLY", "ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST" and "ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS". We also included other forms of the word, such as plural or gerundive. With this procedure, we ensured that an entry containing any of these words would be identified. Further, "friendly" and "organisations" could be removed, especially because they are too broad and could create several false positives. Second, some categories or words were irrelevant to our experiment and were removed from the dictionary because they were too ambiguous (e.g. "SAFETY") or they distantly referred to environmental issues (e.g. "EDUCATION"). We decided at this stage to focus mostly on environmental issues to avoid too many false occurrences.

With these refinements, the dictionary amounted to 500 words. This dictionary is available in Appendix 2. Words that were not directly linked to environmentalism but could refer to environmental problems were retained (e.g. "CRISIS"). Although retaining these words resulted in many false positives, we decided to keep them to avoid the risk of missing key occurrences.

After the refinement was completed, the dictionary was validated by three independent coders trained in marketing, consumer and green studies. The coders were briefed about the goals of this study and were instructed not only to check whether the existing words should be kept but also, more importantly, to add any critical words missing in the current version. These coders added 426 words. After their additions, we went through the dictionary again to eliminate expressions or simplify the composed words. The final version of the dictionary comprised 582 words.

Automated text detection. The data *corpus* was submitted to text mining using an R code adapted to the study (see Appendix 1). Our code is now accessible on the Open Science Repository[3]. Version 4.2.2 of R was used (see Appendix 1 for further information on the packages used). Each positive occurrence was manually checked within its context using the line number to find the scene in the script. The context helped us understand whether the word relates to sustainability. This procedure was necessary owing to the number of false positives. For instance, the word "GREEN" produced many false positives because the family name of

[3] Available at https://osf.io/n8sv4/?view_only=a85774051c6e490c9e4ff3db11bab1b3

one of the characters was Green. In total, we screened 4,046 occurrences, of which 306 were positive. This resulted in a sample of 118 valid scenes. The script of these scenes was then extracted. The boundaries of each scene were defined by tracking any character's entrance into or exit from the ongoing action. An examination of these scenes led us to centre the analysis on Phoebe: the lines containing references to environmental-related themes were largely Phoebe's, although previous studies have evidenced that she is the main character with the least number of lines (Porter et al., 2023).

Data analysis. A discourse analysis approach with deconstructionist techniques was used for the analysis (Stern, 1996a, 1996b). This method is particularly adequate for capturing multiple meanings, intertextuality and potential subjective interpretations from audiences (Patterson et al., 1998). According to Stern (1996a), a text from the media is a "persuasion to consume that can be analysed in a systematic way" (Stern, 1996a, p. 62). Hence, for each scene, we applied the three-step deconstructionist protocol by Stern (1996a), analysing textual elements through rhetorical and grammatical analysis. The first step involves identifying textual elements to pay close attention to the text. The second step involves constructing meaning by comparing text attributes with some characteristics of repetitions as explained by Miller (1982). The third and final step aims to expose the different and possibly contradictory meanings of the text and focuses on understanding the position forced on the audience about the sustainable character.

Each round of analysis included two stages: the first author performed the analysis and then discussed the results with the other authors, who could assess the validity of the analysis. All co-authors also watched the entire show to be able to provide contextual elements; however, binge-watching was not used for this study. We started by analysing each scene line by line, focusing on identifying textual elements and structure (Stern, 1996a, 1996b) using rhetorical and grammatical analysis tools (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996). Our next step was constructing meaning (Stern, 1996a) by identifying the recurring traits mentioned about sustainable consumers. As previous literature suggests that stereotypes are used as categories to classify, we start with the assumption that we could find recurrent types of stereotypes. We identified which sustainable consumer stereotype was expressed, which character it was about and whether it conveyed negative or positive traits. In addition, we followed Stern's (1996a) recommendation to identify the scene's aim, such as introducing a character, a first-sight scene or a conflict scene. The second round of analysis was inspired by the work of Hillis Miller and the examples of repetition he provided. We tried to characterise how the stereotypes were expressed in the different scenes: for instance, we coded the length of the scenes, interactions between characters and the content of sustainable consumer stereotypes using the previous typology (Séré de Lanauzé & Lallement, 2020). We also tried to code based on the examples provided by Miller (1982). However, at this stage, the typology did not account for the consequences of the characters' construction and the stereotyping process at work. Finally, we performed a third round of analysis using open coding to explore these anomalies. In this round of analysis, for instance, we focused on how jokes are used to signal to the audience whether to laugh at a character or to empathise with them. This helped identify when the text suggested deviance. Taking all our codes into consideration, we developed a typology that includes the textual characteristics, the effects on the character and the stereotypes.

Following Stern's protocol, our coding process involved deductive and inductive codes. Deductive codes included categories such as a scene's multiple meanings, viewers' positions and the development of sustainability issues. These were decided before the analytical stage. Inductive codes included transgression, the position of the viewer and the effect of the scene on stereotypes. These were developed through all three rounds of analysis. We also considered the context of production of the show, especially towards sustainability issues, and of global environmental consciousness in general. Appendix 3 presents the main figures and events of global environmental consciousness.

4. Findings

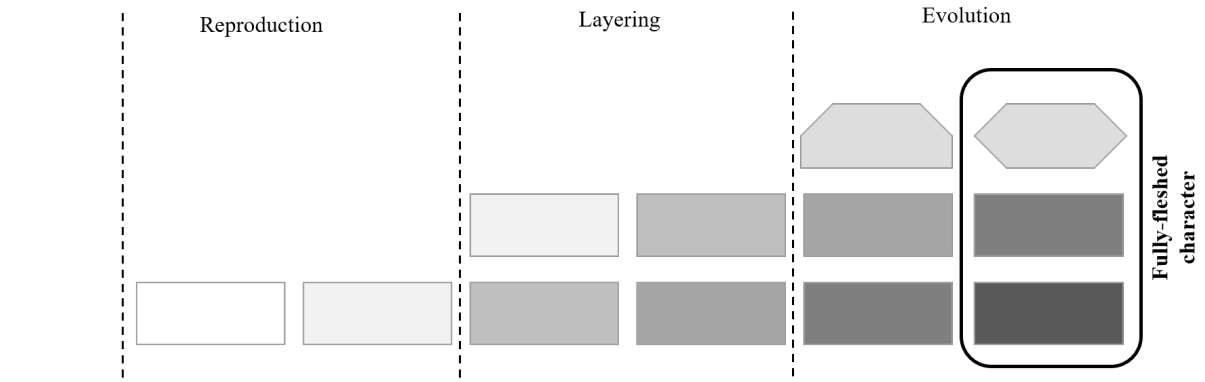
Our analysis uncovered three distinct types of repetition: reproduction, layering and evolution. Our typology (1) focuses on the effect of these repetitions on stereotypes, (2) focuses on elements that are typical of series, such as the length of repetitions and their placement, and (3) considers the differences and the articulation of the different types of repetitions (Figure 6).

Reproduction is a type of repetition whereby a single prototypical trait (Ratliff et al., 2017) is briefly mentioned, often in a hint or a joke, without modifying the trait. For instance, the traits can be naïve, eccentric or animal lover, but they are introduced only one at a time. Several times, vegetarianism is stereotyped as a deviance and a nuisance. The purpose of this repetition is to reinforce the trait and associate it with the sustainable consumer character, building the foundation or, metaphorically speaking, the "bones" of the character.

Layering is a type of repetition in which one stereotype is placed next to another through longer developments in the same scene. Layering creates a more complex, multifaceted stereotype (Comunello et al., 2016) by associating the traits of one stereotype with those of another. For instance, vegetarianism is associated with another set of stereotypes, such as esotericism or homosexuality. This more complex stereotype can then be reused in reproduction and evolution, giving more depth to the original stereotypes. Continuing with the metaphor, layering gives flesh to stereotypes.

Evolution occurs when an established set of prototypical traits is transformed and given a new direction, resulting in characters with added complexity and nuances. This type of repetition may create ambivalence and paradoxes with the original traits introduced in reproduction. It generally takes place over a more extended number of lines, often through a series of scenes or even an entire episode. The transformation of Phoebe into a regular consumer takes place over several episodes, even seasons, which show her shopping or eating meat. Evolution adds more skin to the stereotype, turning it into a fully fleshed character. Each of these patterns of repetition creates the structure (or bones), substance (or flesh) and nuance (or skin) of stereotypes.

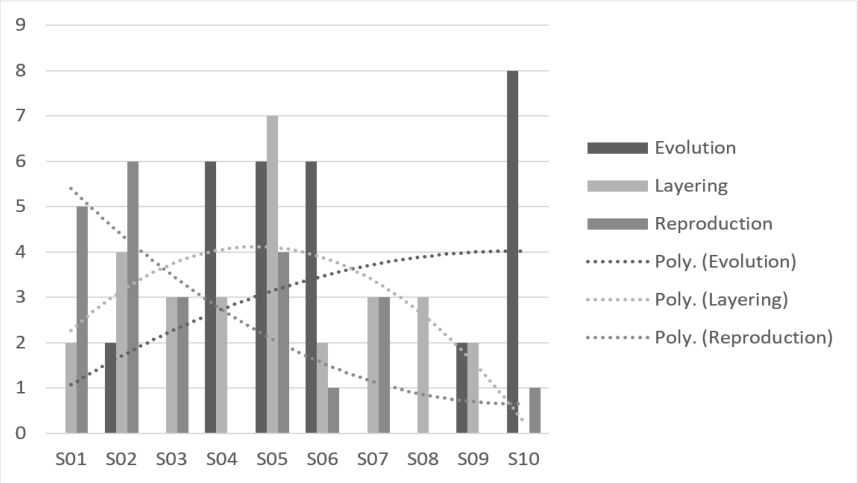
Figure 6 - Types of repetition constructing a character and their effect on stereotyping



	Reproduction	Layering	Evolution
Distinctive traits	In one or two lines, the stereotype is briefly mentioned	The stereotype is simple, nearly archetypical	Is characterized by one or two typical traits
Effect on stereotype	Stereotype is the topic of an exchange between two characters	The stereotype becomes multifaceted	Becomes multifaceted: previous traits are combined with new ones on very different aspects
Construction of character	The stereotype is the topic of a series of several scenes, with a major change between the beginning and the end.	The stereotype is multifaceted, nuanced and with different logics	Evolves: ues the layers previously implemented as a basis to develop in a new direction

Figure 6 highlights the hierarchy of the three types of repetition that maintain the character's coherence throughout the show. Once the rules are clear, they can evolve. The three types of repetition gradually add complexity, nuance and plausibility to the character. Figure 7 shows the types of repetition by season, illustrating this argument. Reproduction provides the base for the character, and indeed, it is more present at the beginning of the show and then declines. In contrast, evolution, built on the two other types, increases over the seasons to peak in the last season. Layering, which acts as a step between the two, peaks by the middle of the show.

Figure 7 - Count of the types of repetition per season



4.1. Reproduction: the bones

Reproduction is found in brief scenes in which only one line refers to the prototypical trait. The line is often not even picked up by any other characters. An example is a scene from S01E07 where Phoebe is alone in Monica's apartment, working on a new song.

> PHOEBE (singing): New York City has no power, and the milk is getting sour. But to me it is not scary, 'cause I stay away from dairy.... la la la, la la, la la...

This line is not useful to the plot. However, it solidifies the association between Phoebe's vegetarianism and the ridicule of her song. Because of this brevity, the content of reproduction centres around one prototypical trait, such as being silly or ridiculous here, linked to the vegetarian stereotype. From the perspective of the stereotyping process, repeating a single trait creates a simplified image that can be passed on to the audience (Martin et al., 2014; Pechman & Knight, 2002). The character's portrayal of the trait reinforces the stereotype because it is presented as factual and taken for granted rather than a matter for debate. In addition, using emotions and humour stalls questioning or condemning the trait as inappropriate or offensive.

Although sustainable behaviours are mentioned in scenes using reproduction, they are not the primary focus. For instance, in a scene from S01E9, Monica prepares Thanksgiving dinner for the entire group. She spent the whole day cooking to prepare everyone's favourite Thanksgiving meal, and they all complained while she cooked. The conflict escalates, and the first person she blames by name is Phoebe, and her special meal for the outburst.

> MONICA: Why? Because everything is my responsibility? Isn't it enough that I'm making Thanksgiving dinner for everyone? You know, everyone wants a different kind of potatoes, so I'm making different kinds of potatoes. Does anybody care what kind of potatoes I want? Nooooo, no, no! (starting to cry) Just as long as Phoebe gets her peas and onions, and Mario gets his tots, and it's my first Thanksgiving, and it's all burned, and, and I... I... (S01E9)

Phoebe did not demand her special meal, as opposed to Joey (nicknamed Mario here because of an ad in which he modelled), who is very demanding several times throughout the episode. Phoebe also helped Monica cook, unlike Joey, and suggested that she do her special dish herself. Finally, in this scene, she is trying to calm the escalating conflict. Despite this, she is the first one Monica points out as responsible for Monica's workload.

The vegetarian meal is not the main focus of the scene. Vegetarianism is implicit because Phoebe's vegetarianism is well-known, as she repeatedly mentions it out of the blue earlier in the season (S01E07 or S01E04, for instance). However, this scene associates this special (vegetarian) meal with another implied meaning that encapsulates the prototypical trait affixed to vegetarianism: deviance (De Groeve et al., 2021). Indeed, Monica's line puts on Phoebe and her special vegetarian dish the burden of the extra work she had. By this, she conveys the idea that vegetarian meals require extra effort because they are unconventional. She hints at vegetarianism as a nuisance because it deviates from the common or ordinary practice.

This is an example of a typical repetition of one prototypical trait of sustainable consumers: being annoying for being different. This attributed characteristic of sustainable consumers is found in different interactions in different episodes, but because it is repeated in different contexts and with different emotional appeals (Miller, 1982), it gets solidified as a central aspect

of the sustainable consumers' stereotype. The recurring rhetorical questions, the constant repetition of the word "No", and Monica's crying all convey her intense emotions of pain and anger for the burden she has to endure. As viewers, we feel empathy for, if not relate to, Monica's situation and find Phoebe annoying.

This specific trait of vegetarians as untraditional and requiring extra effort is reproduced in a subsequent scene (S01E12) with the same emotions and the same character. This episode is titled "The One with the Dozen Lasagnas" because Monica cooks a dozen lasagnes for her aunt, Syl, and does not know how to get rid of them. Monica set the tone with this opening line about lasagne.

> Opening Credits
>
> [Scene: Monica and Rachel's, Monica is on the phone in the kitchen.]
>
> MONICA: Aunt Syl, stop yelling! All I'm saying is that if you had told me vegetarian lasagna, I would have made vegetarian lasagna. (pauses, listens to the person on phone) Well, the meat's only every third layer, maybe you could scrape.

The line is brief and reinforces the trait invoked in the previous scene: Monica hints that preparing a vegetarian meal requires additional effort and information because it is not a traditional meal. This is essentially a repetition of the previous statement, but with a minor variation in wording. Reproduction can also imply more significant variations in the emotions used to convey the content. For example, consider the effort required for vegetarianism, as depicted in S02E13. In this scene, Chandler is about to tell Phoebe and Monica about his date with a girl named Susie.

> CHANDLER: Hey, stick a fork in me, I am done.
> PHOEBE: Stick a fork what?
> CHANDLER: Like, when you're cooking a steak.
> PHOEBE: Oh, OK, I don't eat meat.
> CHANDLER: Well then, how do you know when vegetables are done?
> PHOEBE: Well you know, you just, you eat them and you can tell.
> CHANDLER: OK, then, eat me, I'm done.

In this scene, we meet Phoebe, a sustainable consumer, and Chandler, a regular consumer. The two have different reference systems owing to their dietary choices: Phoebe is a vegetarian, and Chandler eats meat. The scene revolves around Phoebe misunderstanding one of Chandler's jokes, requiring him to go the extra mile to explain it and understand her perspective. Chandler's final joke is not picked up by Phoebe. The underlying trait remains the same: dealing with a vegetarian requires more mental effort owing to different reference systems. However, here it is not about cooking but about talking to a vegetarian. The scene emphasises the gap of common references between Chandler, the regular consumer, and Phoebe, the vegetarian, which makes her a greater outsider. The scene also takes a different tone but conveys the same idea as previously. An amusing tone is used here to point out deviance; this contrasts with the first scene shown here, where deviance was conveyed by Monica's expression of frustration and

anger. The implied stereotype is reproduced in this content – the prototypical trait of deviance is the same – although the form slightly changes.

4.2. Layering: the flesh

Layering is a type of repetition that introduces a prototypical trait (e.g. deviance) through an interaction with other characters, whose reactions will create associations with new traits (e.g. esoteric). Layering assembles a multifaceted stereotype that seems more human-like to the audience because it echoes the multiple facets of human behaviours (Miller, 1982; Randers et al., 2020). This technique is often employed in extended scenes rather than reproduction, as it needs more text to associate a prototypical trait with other aspects. Finally, in scenes that use layering, stereotypical behaviour, specifically, sustainability, is the topic of interactions between two characters, unlike in reproduction, for which the stereotype is mentioned in passing. In S08E09, we see a stereotype confronted by other characters' reactions. In the scene, Phoebe's vegetarianism is the reason for changing the Thanksgiving menu. Joey's lines reflect his indignation as Monica suggests not cooking a turkey for Thanksgiving.

> MONICA: All right, okay, just so you know, I'm not gonna make a turkey this year.
> JOEY: What?!
> MONICA: Well Phoebe doesn't eat turkey…
> JOEY: Phoebe!
> PHOEBE: Turkeys are beautiful, intelligent animals!
> JOEY: No they're not! They're ugly and stupid and delicious!
> MONICA: All right! Okay, it's not just Phoebe. Will's still on a diet, Chandler doesn't eat Thanksgiving food, and Rachel's having her aversion to poultry.

The exclamation marks and the scandalised "What" serve as a rhetorical question. The apostrophe to Phoebe conveys Joey's feelings about transgressing an American tradition, which is based on the domination of humans over animals (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016). Vegetarianism – or veg*nism in general – questions this identity (Barboza & Veludo-de-Oliveira, 2022; Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016). A few lines later, Joey goes on comparing Thanksgiving with the Fourth of July – the American National Day:

> JOEY: But you gotta have turkey on Thanksgiving! I mean, Thanksgiving with no turkey is like-like Fourth of July with no apple pie! Or Friday with no two pizzas!

This scene repeats the trait of deviance associated with the stereotype of vegetarianism. Phoebe is presented not only as an animal lover/veg*n who takes the defence of turkeys but also as a betrayer of American culture. Instead of an allusion, it develops the stereotype with positive (animal care) and negative (anti-Americanism) traits, but without being at the scene's core.

Similarly, in S02E09, Phoebe's grandmother discloses the truth about her father. In this scene, Phoebe embodies the (controversial) hippie stereotype, but other dimensions get layered into this.

GRANDMOTHER: Alright, that is not your father, that's just a picture of a guy in a frame.
PHOEBE: Oh God.
GRANDMOTHER: It was your mother's idea. Ya know, she didn't want you to know your real father because it hurt her so much when he left, and, I didn't want to go along with it, but, well then she died and, and it was harder to argue with her. Not impossible, but harder.
PHOEBE: Alright, so, what, he's not a famous tree surgeon? And then, I guess, OK, he doesn't live in a hut in Burma[4] where there's no phones?
GRANDMOTHER: Last I heard, he was a pharmacist somewhere upstate.
PHOEBE: OK, that makes no sense. Why would the villagers worship a pharmacist?
GRANDMOTHER: Honey.
PHOEBE: [realizes] Oh.

First, the primary focus is on Phoebe's search for information about her (sad) family history. This adds an emotional layer to her, making her more than an embodied set of environmental convictions. This emotional bond also gives her a background to which one can relate and that audiences may interpret as a reason for her eccentricity. Second, although the main topic revolves around the revelation of the truth about her father, the scene also touches upon environmental issues, revealing the values that Phoebe grew up with. Her father is portrayed as a "famous tree surgeon", an occupation that may not exist in reality but ironically symbolises his connection to nature. This aligns with Phoebe's character as a hippie and her love for the environment.

The issue of sustainability is often linked with other meanings, including esoteric beliefs. The grandmother's statement implies this – "she died, and it was harder to argue with her. Not impossible but harder" – suggesting a possible attempt to argue with her deceased daughter. Similarly, Phoebe believed that her father was worshipped by the villagers, implying a connection to divine or alternative cults that are juxtaposed with his connection to nature. Esoteric beliefs are associated with marginalised identities (Zanette et al., 2023), and juxtaposing this meaning with environmentalism implies a connection between the two. This may reinforce the perception of the individual advocating for sustainability as, though caring, an odd, awkward person.

It is also suggested that sustainable behaviour is connected to marginality and frugality. Phoebe looks up to her father, who lives in a remote village in Burma, South Asia, and defends trees. Despite her father's lack of communication and living in a hut, Phoebe sees his lifestyle as an idealised hippie utopia. By embracing this identity, Phoebe blends esoterism and sustainability through her connection to nature (Zanette et al., 2023). In sum, the layering mechanism of this scene combines the eccentricity of the sustainable consumer with esoterism, marginalisation and isolation. Once these layers are associated, they can be *reproduced* later. For instance, Rachel will later say that Phoebe can throw "her vegetarian, voodoo, goddess circle shower" (S07E06, line 417).

[4] Since 1989, this country is now called the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Another example of this layering is a scene from S08E8 wherein Rachel and Phoebe are having dinner with Rachel's dad, Dr Green. When he offers to order chicken, Phoebe mentions that she does not eat meat. He answers: "I'll never understand you lesbians" (S08E8, line 80). The exchange on sustainable behaviour – vegetarianism – lasts only five lines. The connection made by Dr Green between homosexuality and vegetarianism is based solely on the fact that they deviate from the norm. His remark reinforces the deviance: the opposition between the "I" and the "You" accentuates his will to distinguish himself as part of the dominant norm, as opposed to the "you lesbians", which stands like a rebuff. This remark is intended as a joke, even if it now seems outdated for the newest audiences, as the stigma around LGBTQ+ has reduced (Eichert & Luedicke, 2022). Humour gives the audience the possibility to deny this insult. Finally, it combines the first deviant – being a sustainable consumer – with another one – being a lesbian – which reinforces both. Thus, this reaction reinforces deviance and extends its meaning by combining two stereotypes.

In sum, layering reinforces an already introduced trait. It extends its meaning by associating it with other prototypical traits or stereotypes, which come with its complete package of already grounded associations. With this mechanism of repetition, a sustainable consumer is more intricately portrayed. Layering adds depth, making the character more human-like, similar to a living, breathing person. Note that the added layers in this process are consistent with the character's internal rules. This layering mechanism invariably adds substance without affecting the character's internal consistency. It builds on a consistent, already grounded set of traits (here, the eccentricity of vegetarianism) and extends it. Yet, evolution impacts the character's traits and internal rules, as we explore in the next section.

4.3. Evolution: the skin

Evolution is a combination of repetitions that results in the transformation of the stereotype. This process requires multiple scenes that are usually part of the same episode, but also manifest throughout the series. Through evolution, the complexity of the stereotype is built. The critical factor is that the character must change between the beginning and the end of the scene or set of scenes. This evolution is possible only because the previous mechanism of repetitions has established a solid identity base for the character. Thus, through evolution, the character changes.

The plot of S06E11 revolves around Rachel purchasing new furniture for the apartment she shared with Phoebe and attempting to conceal from her roommate that she bought it from Pottery Barn, a large, mainstream retailing brand inserted in this episode as product placement. Phoebe apparently "hates all mass-produced stuff" and "thinks her furniture should have a history, a story behind it" (Monica, S06E11, line 92). Interestingly, the argument against mass consumption is not about sustainability but about expressing individuality (Fuchs et al., 2015; Judge et al., 2020). Five scenes from this episode are relevant to our analysis, as they discuss the sustainable practice of buying second-hand (Farrant et al., 2010) and the anticipated moral reproach – when consumers feel judged by others' consumption choices (Minson & Monin, 2012).

In the first scene, Monica, Rachel, Chandler and Joey discuss Rachel's new furniture purchase. They caution her about Phoebe's negative views on Pottery Barn. To avoid Phoebe's criticism, Rachel fabricates a story about the furniture being an antique apothecary table. In the second scene, Rachel repeats this lie to Phoebe, claiming to have bought it for only $1.50 at a flea market (SO6E11, line 204). The gap between Rachel's and Phoebe's reference systems is so evident that it is where the humour comes from (Yoon & Kim, 2016).

> PHOEBE: Well, what period is it from?
>
> RACHEL: Uh, it's from yore. Like the days of yore. Y'know?
>
> PHOEBE: Yes, yes I do. God, oh it's just perfect! Wow! I bet it has a great story behind it too. Did they tell you anything? Like y'know where it was from or…
>
> RACHEL: Yes! That I know, this is from White Plains.
>
> PHOEBE: (gasps) White Plains. Oh, it sounds like such a magical place.

In this exchange, Phoebe asks specific questions about the furniture's price or history; Rachel cannot respond because visiting flea markets and buying second-hand are not in her habits. Rachel's answers are vague. She adjusts her answers to Phoebe's reactions: Rachel says the furniture cost her $500 and corrects herself after Phoebe's reaction. The audience empathises and forgives Rachel's lies, as they understand she is trying to avoid Phoebe's moral reproach (Minson & Monin, 2012). Indeed, lying to or hiding a behaviour from close family or friends reflects a strategy of developing multiple identities to cope with the different reproaches that the different social circles could express (Randers et al., 2021).

Conversely, Phoebe's reference system appears to be imprecise, dreamy and disconnected from the other characters. She accepts the period of "the days of yore" despite its vagueness. She also fantasises when Rachel mentions the place of origin of the furniture, "White Plains", which is one of the largest cities in New York's suburbs. Rachel's every answer seems to contribute to building Phoebe's character: a "magical place", from "the days of yore" when apothecaries would "make their potions" (S06E11, line 182) out of "opium" (S06E11, line 186). This sequence anchors both Rachel and Phoebe in their distinguished characters.

The third sequence is a combination of the two previous ones but takes place at Ross's apartment (S06E11, lines 220–278). In the first part of the sequence, Rachel enters Ross's apartment and discovers that he bought the same piece of furniture as her. She asks him to hide it before Phoebe arrives, repeating nearly the same line from Monica earlier: "she [Phoebe] says it's all mass-produced, nothing is authentic, and everyone winds up having the same stuff" (S06E11, line 246). She reproduces – and by doing so, reinforces – the argument of Phoebe being a weird do-gooder. Ross replies that Phoebe is "weird" because she hates Pottery Barn (S06E11, line 256), anchoring the regular view of sustainable consumers as deviant.

In the second part of the sequence, as Phoebe arrives, she notices the sheets covering the furniture. Rachel hastily responds that they are again from a flea market, but in reality, they are from Pottery Barn. However, Phoebe reacts differently from the first time:

> RACHEL: He got it at a flea market!

PHOEBE: You bought your sheets at a flea market? Ross come on, you gotta loosen the purse strings a little.

Despite being a sustainable character, she perpetuates the stereotype that associates certain second-hand products – here sheets – with poverty or stinginess, leading her to look down on Ross. She establishes boundaries for acceptable, sustainable behaviour, beyond which it becomes undesirable and even pitiful.

The fourth sequence reproduces what happens with the apothecary table following an accumulation distinctive of comedy. Rachel and Phoebe's apartment is full of new pieces from Pottery Barn, about which Rachel has lied to Phoebe off-screen. They comment about all the furniture to Ross as being an "early colonial bird cage" (S06E11, line 436) or "a room separating apparatus from Colonial times" (S06E11, line 442). Rachel invents three historical periods to convince Phoebe: colonial times, yore and yesteryear. Phoebe still does not notice and is caught in her wonder; she is full of exclamations and superlatives: "another amazing find" (line 440), "great story" (line 440) and "Rachel has such a great eye" (line 450). Building on this accumulation, the sequence ends with Ross suggesting that Rachel take Phoebe to the so-called flea market. This line prepares the following sequence, where Phoebe and Rachel will both behave out of character.

In the final scene, Rachel and Phoebe return from the flea market. Rachel, who used to be a shopaholic at Pottery Barn, now guides Phoebe through the market. She is – temporarily – using the sustainable consumer identity. Phoebe, on the contrary, borrows the regular consumer identity of conspicuous consumption. Indeed, as they pass Pottery Barn, Rachel confesses to her past lies. Despite this, Phoebe is tempted by the products. To avoid compromising her values, she creates a (fake) moral dilemma about buying a lamp (Randers et al., 2021).

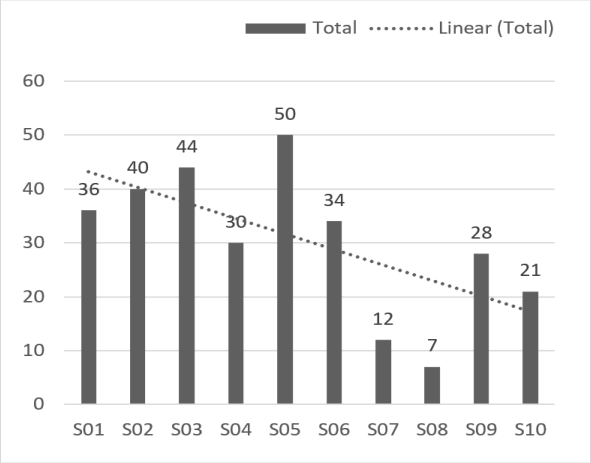
PHOEBE: No-no-no, but I am mad! I am mad! Because this stuff is everything that is wrong with the world! And it's all sitting up in my living room and all I can think about is how I don't have that lamp!

RACHEL: Well then honey, buy the lamp! Hey, we have that 60 bucks from Ross.
PHOEBE: I can't! I can't! Unless… Well are you saying that-that you would move out if-if I didn't buy that lamp?
RACHEL: What?! No! I'm not gonna move out!
PHOEBE: But are you saying that you would move out if I didn't buy that lamp?
RACHEL: (gets it) Oh. Yes! I would so move out!
PHOEBE: Okay then I don't have a choice! I have to buy that lamp!
RACHEL: That's right!

By the end of the series of sequences, Phoebe has converted from the anti-consumerist, sustainable character to a character consumed by the desire to buy at a mass-produced brand. This evolution enables the series to add nuance to the character: Is she a hypocritical sustainable consumer (Minson & Monin, 2012), is she just a sustainable consumer with a moral dilemma and moral identity crisis to solve (Randers et al., 2021), or has she turned into a more consensual character by the capitalist dominant ideology (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016)?

The mechanism of evolution can be found throughout the series. The evolution of sustainability issues through the seasons supports the logic. As the series goes on, environmental issues progressively disappear. Figure 8 shows the decrease in the number of sustainability occurrences per season, indicating that once Phoebe's prototypical traits are consolidated, she can be nuanced and adapted.

Figure 8 - Occurrence of sustainability-related words per season



Although several previous scenes have shown Phoebe expressing more consumerist, regular behaviours – dreams of "piloting a commercial jet" (S05E11, line 100), "love the casino" (S05E23, line 354), being the first to want a ride in Ross's new sports car (S07E14, line 114) and even eating meat (S09E07, lines 349–353; S04E16, line 32; S04E16, line 346) – these peak at final season. In the last season, the only occurrence of sustainability issues can be found in Phoebe's wedding preparations (S10E07). Initially, she wants to donate the entire wedding budget to charity, aligning with her values ("It does seem like this money could be put to better use") (S10E07, line 37). She, with her fiancé, makes the donation. Later, she confesses that she wants a lavish wedding for herself. The script specifies a stage direction of her covering her mouth while saying it, as if she is ashamed of this desire that goes against her beliefs. After that, she returns to the charity to retrieve the check (S10E07):

> CHARITY GUY: So you're asking us to refund your donation to the children?
> MIKE: Yeah! This feels really good.
> PHOEBE: I am sorry. I am, but this wedding is just really important to me.
> CHARITY GUY: Hey, it's not my business, (he takes their check from a drawer) besides it's probably a good thing. We really would have been spoiling the children, all those food, and warm clothing…
> PHOEBE: Hey, that's not fair! A person's wedding is important! And especially to me! Ok? I didn't have a graduation party! And I didn't go to Prom. And I spent my sweet sixteen being chased round a tire yard by an escaped mental patient who is his own words wanted to "kill me" or whatever. So I deserve a real celebration and I am not gonna let some sweaty little man make me feel badly about it. (She storms out)

This scene progressively reveals Phoebe's true spirit. She starts with an apology but quickly gets angry. The pronoun "I" appears five times in her last line, unlike the "we" pronoun used in the Charity Guy's line. When she tells her fiancé about the incident later (S10E07, lines 434–452), she even suggests that she could have used violence to retrieve the money: "And if that guy at the charity gives us a hard time, my friend hasn't shot anyone in a really long time" (S10E07, lines 434–452). Situated at the end of the series, this wedding episode shows the final evolution of the sustainable character whose sustainable identity is neutralised.

5. Discussion

Studies on the impact of media on representation have mostly explored the reception of TV series, focusing on the emotional connection between audiences and fictional characters (Napoli & Ouschan, 2019; Thakar et al., 2010; van Laer et al., 2014) but leaving aside the construction of characters in the analysis of their effects. Our study offers a distinct perspective by examining the structure of texts in fictional products and focusing on repetition mechanisms that both enable the construction of a fully fleshed character and portray stereotypical representations. Through this approach, we draw a parallel between the role of repetition in the process of stereotyping, as found in psychological studies (Fiske, 1998; Martin et al., 2014, 2017), and the use of repetition in constructing characters, as supported by literary tradition (Miller, 1982).

We also identify three types of repetition – reproduction, layering and evolution – that interconnect and build upon each other to create a fully fleshed character from a collection of prototypical traits and give it life by making it evolve. The hierarchy of these types of repetition is crucial to maintaining character coherence and gradually adding complexity to the character, as shown in Figure 6. The chronological repartition of each type supports our claim of a hierarchical, progressive organisation of the types, as shown in Figure 7.

Through reproduction, Phoebe is represented as eccentric and is associated with sustainable/vegetarian stereotypes. Layering adds more meanings to these traits, associating the sustainable/vegetarian stereotype with other traits such as naivete or even anti-Americanism. Finally, evolution transforms her into a more consensual character. Through Phoebe, all these traits repeat and reinforce the idea of the sustainable consumer as a deviant or abnormal individual. Additionally, her small number of lines mechanically put her – and the topics she holds - on the margins of the group (Porter et al., 2023). Although she progressively gains the protagonism of sustainability-related occurrences throughout the seasons, by the show's end, Phoebe progressively loses these deviant traits as the script makes her *evolve* into a more consensual character, closer to the regular consumer, who wants world peace, yes, but also bigger boobs.

5.1. Academic contributions

This work offers a new perspective on TV series. Most past studies on TV series have focused on audiences and reception (Jones et al., 2018; Pechmann & Shih, 1999; Pradhan & Drake, 2023; Russell et al., 2019; Stern et al., 2007; Takhar et al., 2010). They examined the mechanisms that fiction triggered, but not how mechanisms unfold in fiction. By adopting an

approach from the literary tradition, our study draws attention to the text as an object of "industrial art" (Stern et al., 2007, pp. 9–10) that deserves to be analysed from this perspective. As an art, series both draw from and reinforce cultural schemes such as stereotypes. Our study shows the potential of fiction to contribute to the study of public discourses and contributes to promoting fiction in academic work, as fiction is still an under-researched but promising object to study public discourse.

In particular, our work aligns with and extends the work of Russell and Stern (2006). By combining literary analysis and literature on stereotypes, we provide an understanding of the mechanisms that precede the bond between the character and the audience (Napoli & Ouschan, 2019; Paterson et al., 2013; Takhar et al., 2010). We encourage further studies to approach the repetition mechanisms detailed here from the perspective of the audience's reception.

Our study also supports previous research on stereotypes and offers a new perspective on it. First, it supports two major tenets from previous research: the use of stereotypes as a categorisation tool (Fan et al., 2020; Fiske, 1998; Valor et al., 2021) and the malleability of stereotypes (Angles et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2017; Valor et al., 2021). Stereotypes are drawn upon to develop Phoebe's character, making her stand out as a deviant character. The mechanisms identified in this study could also explain the malleability of stereotypes: through repetitions and especially layering, disparate meanings get associated with a social category.

The study also suggests that the evolution mechanisms at work in serial fiction can be one of the sources of the paradoxical stereotypes of sustainable consumers. The evolution mechanisms in fiction may explain the ambivalence found in social representations because they enable the development of contradictory prototypical traits attached to the sustainable consumer. Future research can consider this claim to explore the reception of such a contradiction by audiences. In particular, for neo-cult series, research can consider whether characters similarly influence old and new audiences.

Finally, our study can inspire new perspectives on our understanding of narrative transportation (van Laer et al., 2014) and cultivation (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2008; Gerbner et al., 1978; Green & Brock, 2000) by showing how certain textual structures may favour such processes. Previous work on narrative transportation has claimed that the character is the entry point for the process to operate (van Laer et al., 2014). Our findings support Miller's claim that repetitions in narrative structure could facilitate the audience's immersion (Miller, 1982). Moreover, considering that literary analysis has proven useful in investigating the gradual development of a character with whom the audience can empathise (Napoli & Ouschan, 2019; Thakar et al., 2010; van Laer et al., 2014), we possibly gain a deeper understanding of how empathy with characters could be established, which is a crucial aspect of narrative transportation. We suggest that future research use literary analysis tools to explore how the second criterion of narrative transportation – a plot that stimulates the audience's imagination (van Laer et al., 2014) – is created in various media forms.

5.2. Managerial and societal contributions

Our study has several interesting implications for marketers and policymakers. First, it showed that repetitions (reproduction in particular) are useful to establish and consolidate certain prototypical traits of stereotypes; therefore, marketers and policymakers could use reproduction in advertising pieces or online content campaigns to consolidate positive traits connected to socially desirable stereotypes. However, practitioners should also be aware of the effects of stereotypes, especially in comedic contexts. Our findings demonstrate stereotypes' potential for generating performative effects, showing how repetitions can reinforce stereotypes. Hence, we urge professionals to be vigilant about repetitions in humorous communications and to use them wisely. Stereotypes, even when perceived as harmless and funny, can have unexpected consequences, such as stalling the sustainability transition by associating sustainability with negative traits. In sum, managers, marketers and policymakers should consider the ethical concerns raised by the use of stereotypes for comedy.

Our study also showed that stereotypes can evolve and gain complexity through layering and evolution. This study makes significant contributions about using repetition as a tool to build consistent storytelling, and the findings can consequently inform advertising campaigns such as serial advertisements that are likely to use similar communication strategies. Marketers and policymakers could conceive storytelling-based campaigns that allow for the development of characters – perhaps positively influencing consumer behaviours. In 2005, the French government created a serial advertising campaign starring Sam, a fictional character who embodies the designated driver, who would not drink during a night out and drive friends home. The character was appreciated, leading to the campaign's success among the target population, mainly young people (Frenette et al., 2016). The government used this character for several years in road safety campaigns, and the name Sam entered the common language to designate the person who would not drink. Similarly, through several repetitive campaigns that reinforced the image of the Barbie Doll as representative of the professional woman, Mattel tried to turn Barbie into a positive, inspiring feminist figure (*Where My Girls At?*, 2021). This attempt culminated with the (controversial) anti-patriarchal, though still commercial, tale told in the Greta Gerwig's iconic *Barbie* movie, which, from a branding perspective, is considerably successful in dealing with the contradictions inherent to Barbie's prototypical traits. The movie is an evolution of the dolls and YouTube campaigns. Professionals can thus extend the use of repetitions, applying it through multiple forms of media, to implement new representations for an external audience, such as consumers about a brand, or an internal audience, such as employees about a company's strong common identity. Managers can use the different types of repetitions to develop strong identities in their communication campaigns.

Because repetitions enable stereotypes' evolution, this research also opens avenues for developing new destigmatisation strategies for stereotyped groups in media and fiction, such as religious and cultural minorities, the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities (Södergren et al., 2023). Using strong characters with whom an audience can connect appears to be an effective strategy for destigmatisation, especially through the serial narrative. *Ru Paul's Drag Race* is a serial reality show with a repetitive structure and strong main characters, who participate in the normalisation of the queer community through their strategy. In the show, the

repetitions progressively normalise the spectacle of a stigmatised practice of drag shows by creating a new social reality around it (Campana et al., 2022). It uses repetition to transform the stigma and make it the core of the show's commercial strategy. The identification of discourse strategies in this study can prove useful for developing similar destigmatisation strategies for campaigns or fiction (Södergren et al., 2023). If repetitions are employed for character construction, can they be arranged so that they undo a stereotypical image? Could Phoebe be shown as smart and socially accepted in some episodes without compromising her sustainable identity?

5.3. Limitations and areas for further research

Some limitations of our study should be acknowledged. First, although *Friends* is a top-rated show, it was produced in a period when certain modern consumption trends, such as binge-watching, did not yet exist. Yet, the audience response may be affected by binge-watching practice (Canavan, 2023). Hence, binge-watching should also be considered as a method for future research. Furthermore, *Friends* is a sitcom and, therefore, needs to respect the structure and constraints of this genre. Future research can explore the differences in textual mechanisms between series belonging to different genres. Another limitation of our study is that it only considers the text and not its reception. Further studies are needed to investigate the reception of the text by the audience in terms of its effects – do the mechanisms influence audiences as expected? – or in terms of its content – does the audience establish a critical distance from the presented stereotypes owing to the age of the show? The literature on media effects has shown that the critical mind of the audience should not be neglected (Oliver et al., 2019). Finally, and in line with the previous limitation, although we can hint at the potential effects of narrative transportation, establishing them demands a different methodological approach.

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Chapter 3 –

Longitudinal exploration of stereotypes of sustainable consumption in sitcoms[5]

Abstract

This study investigates the performative role of humour in shaping stereotypes of sustainable consumption in three prominent sitcoms, defined as industrial art forms that uphold neoliberalism: *Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and *The Good Place*. Drawing on the performative dimension of humour, we explore how it can challenge and perpetuate stereotypes over time. Using a semi-automatic text detection method combined with discourse and narrative analysis, we identified and analysed all scenes from the above series that refer to sustainability. Our findings reveal how sitcoms simultaneously update stereotypes of sustainable consumers while reinforcing cultural marginalisation through humour's performative function. This polyphony of humour performs an ambivalence that ultimately undermines sustainable consumption narratives. We expose how character trajectories in sitcoms reproduce climate delay discourses maintaining the status quo and serving commercial imperatives while the sitcoms appear to engage with sustainability issues.

Keywords*: sustainable consumption; sitcoms; stereotypes; TV series; humour; performativity; stereotyping; climate delay*

[5] This Chapter was accepted and presented at CCT Conference 2025 and AFM Conference 2025.

1. Introduction

"I think it's easier to write cruel jokes. To indulge that urge for ridicule, mockery, anger, whatever. I think it's an easy way out in comedy," Michael Schur, scriptwriter of *The Good Place*, said in an interview from 2022 (Slate audio, 2022). His statement illustrates a recurring aspect of comedic content that easily targets the weakest social groups and tackles the question of humour's consequences on society. Understanding the social role of humour and the sociocultural consequences of comedic content in mass media can be a challenge, especially looking back at older productions, still popular thanks to video on demand. However, as Schur tries to do in his work, these questions are essential to curating and writing new forms of humorous content in the audiovisual and entertainment industry.

Research suggests that humour can convey socially desirable ideas and representations, like promoting sustainable behaviours (Gulas et al., 2014; Howard, 2023; Kong, 2024; Lyytimaki, 2015; Timmerman et al., 2012). Conversely, several studies have shown that humour can reinforce negative stereotypes and contribute to increased violence against targeted social groups (Andreasen, 2021; Billig, 2001; Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998), echoing Schur's earlier statement. While both streams of literature acknowledge that stereotypes often serve as material for humour (Golstraw, 2023), they paid less attention to the process that leads to humour creating or reinforcing those stereotypes.

The literature on humour recognises that humour is a dynamic and interactive process between an audience and a text, serving a performative social function (Kravets, 2021). I understand performativity from the perspective of Judith Butler's work (Butler, 1990). Humour's performativity relates to how humorous acts do not just describe something funny but actually create social realities, relationships, and identities through their performance, constituting identity through "the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" rather than expressing pre-existing characteristics (Andéhn et al., 2019; p. 324). This performative dimension of humour is suggested in many studies exploring the effects of humour on the social level (Golstraw, 2023; Kravets, 2021; Wiid et al., 2015). Previous research extensively explored the instrumental functions of humour and its social effects (Cameron, 2015; Yoon et al., 2023; Yoon & Tickam, 2013; Warren et al., 2018; Weinberger & Gulas, 2021). This definition of performativity has great consequences for the stereotypes, as the performance of these stereotypes through humour enacts their social reality. Yet, how the humour performativity specifically operates to affect stereotyping has been overlooked.

This gap in understanding humour's performative mechanisms becomes particularly significant when examining contemporary sustainability challenges. The concept of sustainability has evolved significantly, and while the acceptability of sustainable consumption practices has grown, those practices are still not mainstream (Hult, 2010; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2013; Rettie et al., 2014). This acceptance-adoption gap represents a fundamental puzzle in sustainability research and points to the potential role of cultural narratives and media representations in maintaining barriers to sustainable behaviour change (Köhler et al., 2019; White et al., 2019). Indeed, persistent negative stereotypes

surrounding sustainable consumption can impede the transition to sustainability, as such representations may hinder individual behavioural changes (Khöler et al., 2019; Rettie et al., 2012).

These stereotypes of sustainable consumption are rooted in deeper discursive patterns. Recent research highlighted the existence of discourse of climate delay deployed in the media or public discourses (Lamb et al., 2020). This echoes a previous claim that media can promote stereotypes related to sustainable consumption (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Brough et al., 2016; Shang & Peloza, 2020). Given humour's documented capacity to both reinforce and challenge social representations, examining how comedic content shapes sustainability stereotypes offers a promising avenue for discussing the cultural mechanisms that maintain this acceptance-adoption gap.

Comedic content, such as sitcoms, which rely heavily on humour and the use of stereotypes, is particularly sensitive to cultural tensions in society (Weinberger & Gulas, 2019; Yoon & Tickam, 2013). Sitcoms represent a specific category of humorous content. They share characteristics with TV series, including a large audience and repetitive elements, making them valuable for transforming sociocultural representations (Stern et al., 2007), but they are entirely dependent on humour (See Chapter 2). Although research acknowledges the performative dimension of humour, it also understands that this performativity is shaped by audience interpretation. Humour must adapt to sociocultural changes to maintain its relevance and comedic effect. Sitcoms then offer a promising longitudinal perspective to theorise how humour, over time, changes the stereotyping of a social group against a fluid socio-cultural context. The current study will explore the following research question: How does the performativity of humour contribute to the maintenance of stereotypes associated with sustainable consumers, and to the marginalisation of this group over time?

This study explores humorous uses of sustainable consumption stereotypes in three major sitcoms produced from 1994 to 2020: *Friends*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and *The Good Place*. Using a semi-automatic text detection method combined with a sustainability dictionary (See Chapter 2), we systematically identified every scene with dialogue referring to sustainability. The sample included 229 scenes (131 from *Friends*, 59 from *How I Met*, 39 from *The Good Place*). We applied discourse, content, and narrative analysis to these scenes to capture the evolution of stereotypes and how humour supports and feeds this evolution. Our findings evidence three functions of humour through which its performativity affects the stereotypes: *updating*, *diffracting* and *foreclosing*. Updating is the process through which the use of new traits in the comedic content renews the stereotypes associated with sustainable consumption. Diffracting designates the process through which the inherent polyphony of humour creates a multiplicity of contradicting voices about sustainability. Finally, foreclosing refers to the way the narrative, for comedic purposes, doomssustainable action to failing.

This research is the first step in understanding how the performative dimension of humour operates on stereotyping. This perspective for research on humour opens a new path to better understanding the cultural narratives and representations that shape consumer identities (Kravets, 2021). It also proposes a path for research on stereotypes lacking a longitudinal

conceptualisation of stereotyping processes. Finally, it offers a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of sustainable consumption collective representations, which can benefit transition studies dealing with sustainable consumption's social and cultural acceptance (Khöler et al., 2019).

2. Conceptual background

2.1. The social and normative function of humour in stereotyping

In media and advertising, marketers and creators use humour with the intention of creating amusement, laughter, or delight in their audience (Weinberger & Gulas, 2019), often through a combination of incongruity, disparagement, and arousal strategies (Gulas et al., 2010; Kravets, 2021; Yoon, 2013). While some humour provokes booming laughter, (Weinberger & Gulas, 2019), humour manifests in many forms and styles, such as satire, irony, or comedic violence (Hietalahti, 2020). Research in consumer studies also mentions humour's importance in audience engagement and the persuasiveness of messages (Cameron, 2015; Yoon et al., 2023). Other intentional uses of humour can increase the acceptance of activist messages (Howard, 2023) and influence the effectiveness of education about environmental (Kong, 2024; Lyytimaki, 2015) or health issues (Conway & Dubé, 2002).

Beyond a psychological lens, which has been dominant in consumer studies focusing on humour (Weinberger & Gulas, 2019; Yoon et al., 2013; Yoon et al., 2023), humour is a significant social practice that can challenge cultural codes and norms (Kravets, 2021; Timmerman et al., 2012). It can be a tool for resistance or conflict mitigation (Verkerke, 2018). For example, humour allows for the exploration of ethical and moral boundaries with victims of genocide and violence (Verkerke, 2018). Laughter is a tool for critique from a popular voice because it exposes what can be laughed at and what is outside the boundaries of norms and also challenges norms by erasing the difference between individuals (Kravets, 2021). In sum, this suggests a liberating performative function of humour, even if temporarily.

Research has also suggested some negative consequences of humour, such as reinforcing violence, offending individuals, and strengthening stereotypes and negative attitudes about its targets (Golstraw, 2023; Wiid et al., 2015). Mobilising stereotypes for humour generally harms the target of the joke, even when the individuals using this humour report having no primary negative intention (Golstraw, 2023; Wiid et al., 2015). This is because humour reinforces social norms by highlighting what is deviant. Laughter rises from the gap between the ideal and the deviant, aiming to alleviate this gap to make it acceptable or comprehensible (Mendiburo-Seguel et al., 2023) but also to correct it by ridiculing and dismissing the target. Studies suggested that humour can be used to shame and humiliate its targets (Gulas et al., 2010; Smith-Oka, 2022). It increases the audience's acceptance of discriminatory and violent behaviours (Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Ford et al., 2001). The use of sexist or racist jokes, for instance, has been proven to both reflect and reinforce an underlying, rooted hatred, such as misogyny or racism (Andreasen, 2021; Billig, 2001; Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998). This approach underlies that

humour is a legitimised means of performing cultural violence against social groups (Guilherme, 2017).

Hence, humour performs a normative social function that can at the same time enable resistance and liberate its target while disciplining it. Previous work has examined the social consequences of humour, suggesting its performativity, but omitting a systemic understanding of how it operates. We consider that the performativity of humour not only reflects an existing social environment but also actively contributes to its formation by establishing a set of norms, representations, and cultural references within that social environment (Butler, 1990; Coskuner-Balli & Tumbat, 2017; Jenkins & Finneman, 2018; Gond & Nyberg, 2016). The performative dimension of humour can uphold, challenge, or transform the established social order (Godfrey, 2016; Humonen & Whittle, 2023).

The performativity of humour derives from humour being a relational phenomenon. Humour is a process experienced and interpreted by the audience, with this interpretation being significantly shaped by the surrounding cultural and normative environment that seemingly is in a state of flux (Weinberger & Gulas, 2019; Yoon & Tinckam, 2013; Yoon et al., 2023). When humour conflicts with an audience's moral values, for example, its effectiveness may be limited (Paramita et al., 2021). Additionally, the interpretation of humour can vary greatly from one individual to another (Golstraw, 2023). Audiences, along with their social and cultural context, play a crucial role in creating the meaning of a joke. As a result, humour and humorous content are very sensitive to shifts in representations and changes in the sociocultural environment (Wiid et al., 2015), which opens space for investigating their role in creating, maintaining, and transforming stereotypes in society.

Psychological studies define stereotypes as a set of typical traits (Ratliff et al., 2017) associated with a group or individual and conveyed through a belief or perception (Bennett et al., 2018; Luomala et al., 2020; Monin et al., 2008; Ratliff et al., 2017; Rozin et al., 2012). From a sociological perspective, stereotypes are used to label social groups and categorise the legitimacy of their practices (Valour et al., 2021). They provide an amputated version of individuals, reducing them to simplified images that strip away nuance to operate categorisation, often accompanied by systemic violence (Valor et al., 2021). The characteristic simplification of stereotypes mirrors the fundamental trait of humour (Kravets, 2021). Humour performs stereotypes by isolating certain traits, simplifying complex identities, and reinforcing or challenging categorisations through repetition and social circulation. While we focus primarily on the textual performativity of humour, these textual performances have material consequences for how sustainable consumers are perceived and treated in social contexts.

2.2. Discourses and stereotypes of sustainability

The stereotyping of sustainable consumers has been pointed as a potential brake on the cultural transformation necessary for the transition to sustainability, for consumers may avoid identifying with negative stereotypes (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). Seré de Lanauzé et al. (2018)

propose a typology of negative stereotypes for these consumers. This typology is based on two dimensions – normativity and hedonism – and outlines four types of sustainable consumers' stereotypical figures: the integrist, marginal and aggressive; the hermit, frugal and marginal; the killing-joy, boring and conformist; and the snob, condescending and elitist. Several other works have focused on representations of certain types of sustainable behaviour, such as veganism (Groeve & Rosenfeld, 2022; Minson & Monin, 2012) or dumpster divers, suggesting, for instance, that the physical appearance was a crucial issue in the stereotyping of sustainable consumers (Gollnhofer, 2017). Amongst this dense literature, however, few studies offer a longitudinal perspective on the stereotypes of the sustainable consumer that can explain how these stereotypes were created, cemented or challenged.

Psychological studies suggest these stereotypes may constantly undergo transformation (Angle et al., 2017). However, Chapter 1 evidenced the lack of longitudinal studies in the literature on stereotypes. Studies focusing on these stereotypes in particular are still quite recent (see Chapter 1), and do not provide a clear picture of the evolution of the transformation inherent to the stereotyping process (Angle et al., 2017). Recent studies suggest the emergence of new stereotypes linked to sustainable practices, such as richness (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Olson et al., 2016; Seré de Lanauzé et al., 2018) and the progressive disappearing of physical appearance stereotypes of the sustainable consumer found in older studies (Barnhart & Mish, 2017; Bashir et al., 2013; Minson & Monin, 2012). By examining these issues longitudinally, our study offers a unique perspective on how humour contributes to the making and unmaking stereotypes, particularly those related to sustainable consumption. Additionally, these individual-level stereotype transformations occur within a larger cultural framework that shapes sustainable consumption discourse, which the current study examines.

Beyond individual stereotypes, broader discursive patterns shape how sustainable consumption is perceived and enacted. Recent research identifies "climate delay discourses" as an ideology that acknowledges climate change while justifying inaction or incremental responses (Lamb et al., 2020). These discourses operate through four main strategies: redirecting responsibility to the individuals, for instance, or to other countries; emphasising downsides such as the decrease in well-being; pushing non-transformative solutions, like promoting technological optimism and claiming that meaningful action is already underway; or finally surrendering, claiming that no solution is actually feasible (Lamb et al., 2020). Such narratives create a cultural context where sustainable consumption remains marginalised despite growing awareness of environmental crises.

Climate delay discourses align with institutional theory's concept of decoupling, where organisations separate their formal environmental commitments from actual practices (Bothello et al., 2023; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This creates a "legitimacy façade" where companies can appear environmentally responsible while maintaining unsustainable operations (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Similarly, media representations may decouple environmental awareness from genuine behavioural change by presenting sustainability through stereotypical, dismissive portrayals. Media representations, including fictional portrayals, often reproduce these climate delay discourses, embedding them within seemingly innocuous entertainment. This intersection

between individual stereotyping and systemic delay discourses creates a complex landscape where sustainable consumption practices face dual challenges: negative stereotyping at the individual level and legitimised inaction at the societal level. While research on stereotypes addresses the former, it is then fundamental to pay attention to how these stereotypes interact with broader delay discourses, particularly in longitudinal contexts where both may evolve simultaneously. Therefore, this study investigates how media, particularly sitcoms, perpetuate stereotypes associated with sustainable consumers under the guise of humour.

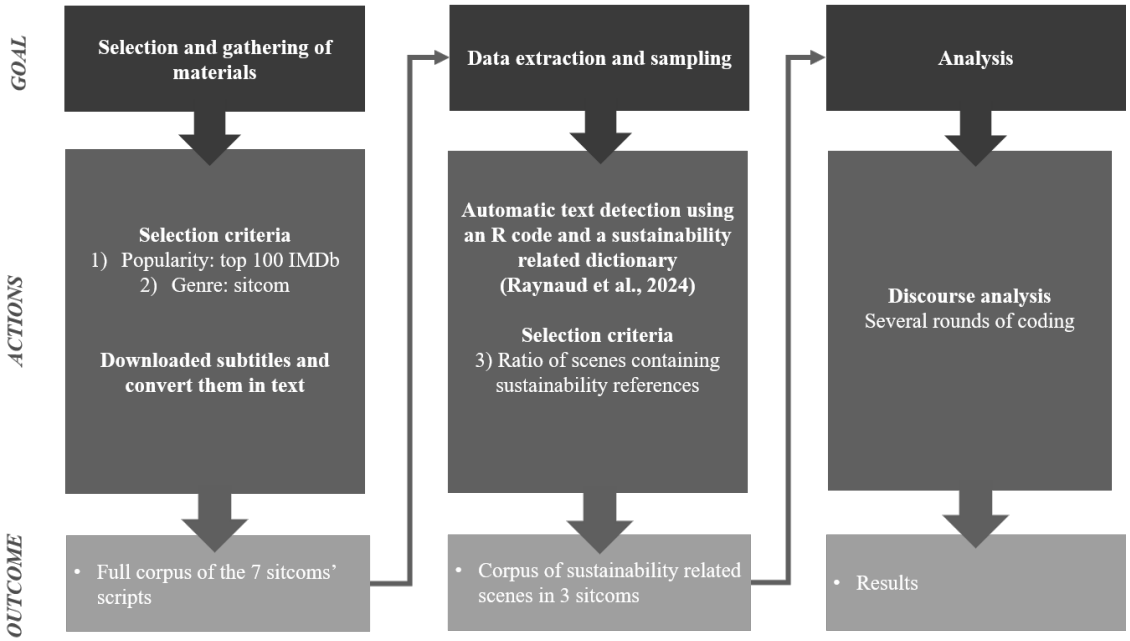
3. Method

3.1. Sampling and data collection

For this study, we selected three series produced between 1994 and 2020 for a data set covering almost 20 years. Stern et al. (2007) described TV series as an "industrial art" (p. 10), meaning they should be examined through three dimensions: as a form of art, as an industrial product, and as cultural product for mass consumption. TV series occupy a unique position at the intersection of these perspectives. The artistic dimension allows us to explore the impact of fiction. Research has shown that fictional characters can significantly influence specific groups' stereotypes and social representations (Napoli & Ouschan, 2020; Stern et al., 2007; Takhar et al., 2010). As a result of industrial production, repetition is prevalent in TV series, especially in the comedy genre (Kravets, 2021). This extensive repetition may perpetuate and reinforce stereotypes about certain groups, such as sustainable consumers (Goldman, 2023; See Chapter 2). As cultural products, TV series also reflect the cultural tensions and stereotypes present in society. Sitcoms - as the ultimate vehicle of humorous content – add another layer of complexity by bringing the theoretical and social tensions around the use of humour.

For the current study, we focused again on script analysis, which previous research has used to conceptualise systemic dynamics (Molesworth & Grigore, 2019). Figure 9 below presents a flowchart of the steps of this method. We established three criteria for the series' selection: (1) the popularity of the series and, therefore, choosing the ones with the broadest audience for the displayed representations; among the most popular shows then (2) the series genre; and (3) the number of scenes containing sustainability references in the series. We used the most-watched TV series list from the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) to select the most popular series. Genre was a necessary criterion since the series had to have a humorous dimension to resonate with the literature on humour summarised above. We excluded animated series to maintain similar characteristics across the sample. At this stage, our sample included seven series.

Figure 9 - Methodological flow chart



We downloaded the subtitles of each series and pre-processed each file into clean text files that were easy to input into a text detection program. We then applied the semi-automatic text detection method described in Chapter 2 to identify every scene referencing sustainability. This method used a program built on R associated with a sustainability dictionary, to which we added manual screening to verify the relevance of the identified line of dialogue. Both the R code and the dictionary can be found in the appendix. We subjected the seven series to this approach and selected the three series with the highest ratio of sustainability references over the total number of seasons.

The three series include *Friends* (1994–2004), *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2014), and *The Good Place* (2016–2020). All three were written and produced in the US, which avoided cultural context discrepancies between scripts, affecting the analysis of the sitcom humour. For those three series, we ended up with 833 scenes related directly to sustainability: 274 for *Friends* (208 episodes), 446 for *How I Met Your Mother* (236 episodes) and 113 for *The Good Place* (58 episodes). This totals 229 scenes. The authors previously watched the shows, partly or entirely, using this knowledge for context and interpretation. The first author also watched some episodes again during the analysis. Table 7 below presents the technical characteristics of each sitcom.

Table 7 - Characteristics of the three sampled sitcoms

Title	Director(s)	Dates	Country	Nb of seasons	Nb of episodes	Episode average length

Friends	Marta Kauffman and David Crane	1994-2004	US	10	236	22’
How I Met Your Mother	Carter Bays and Craig Thomas	2005-2014	US	9	208	22’
The Good Place	Michael Schur	2016-2020	US	4	52	22’

3.2. Description of the sample

The three series offer three different storylines, introducing sustainable consumption from three different angles. Table 8 summarises the key aspects of each plot. *Friends* depicts the lives of six thirty-something friends in New York and the beginning of their adult lives. The narrative of *Friends* introduces sustainable consumption from the angle of the social integration of the sustainable consumer, whose behaviour offers a critical counterpoint to American society. The character of Phoebe, for example, readily uses comedic violence in her songs to denounce mass production and animal exploitation. *How I Met Your Mother* (henceforth referred to here as *How I Met*) uses flashbacks to explore the love and professional lives of Ted Mosby and his best friend, Marshall Eriksen. Through the latter character—who dreams of becoming an environmental lawyer—the series introduces questions about the organisation of professional life and its inadequacy regarding environmental issues. Finally, *The Good Place* projects the afterlife of four characters, sent to the Good Place or the Bad Place, depending on the morality of their lives. Here, sustainable consumption comes up against consumerism, while the classic consumer faces a moral standard that has changed to include the protection of the environment. Sustainability is not a primary topic in those three series, making its representations and mentions more valuable with regard to implicit representations and stereotypes.

Table 8 - Details of the plots for sampled sitcoms

Sitcom	*Friends*	*How I Met Your Mother*	*The Good Place*
Main plot (Netflix description)	Follows the merry misadventures of six 20-something pals as they navigate the pitfalls of work, life and love in 1990s Manhattan.	Ted's epic search for his soul mate is told largely through flashbacks, as an adult Ted recounts to his kids how he met their mother.	Due to an error, self-absorbed Eleanor Shellstrop arrives at the Good Place after her death. Determined to stay, she tries to become a better person.
Main characters	Rachel Green Monica Geller Phoebe Buffay Joseph "Joey" Tribbiani Chandler Bing Ross Geller	Ted Mosby Marshall Erisken Lily Aldrin Barney Stinson Robin Scherbatsky Tracy McConnell	Eleanor Shellstrop Michael Tahani Al Jamil Chidi Anagonye Jason Mendoza Janet
Sustainable characters	Phoebe Buffay	Marshall Erisken	Chidi Anagonye Temporarily: Eleanor Shellstrop
Main tensions for the sustainable character	How to find her place as an adult with a strong commitment to animal welfare and sustainable practices	How to reconcile his convictions and dream of working for an environmental company with the desire to provide for his family	How to improve themselves to reach the Good Place

3.3. Analysis

The analysis combined several approaches. The first approach I employed was a text analysis on the extracted scenes. I applied several rounds of manual line-by-line analysis, a deconstructionist method suitable to explore multiple interpretations (Stern, 1996). This stage included rhetorical and linguistic analysis of the humoristic processes in the text (Hay, 1996; Stern, 1996). I coded in particular the targets of humour, its audience and the content of stereotypes that are mobilised by the joke (Gulas et al., 2010). Coding the targets of humour, which could be the sustainable consumer but sometimes the non-sustainable consumers, allows us to identify when a sitcom could deploy various discourses on sustainability. This was helpful to identify situations where the joke could have multiple interpretations. For instance, a scene in which a character is self-deprecating through a joke includes that this character is both the target and the audience of the joke, since she/he is laughing about her/himself. It allows for a clearer understanding of who the different audiences and targets were in each interpretation. The third important code was about the content of stereotypes mobilised by humour. We compared this content with the stereotypes evidenced in the literature in Chapter 1. This enabled

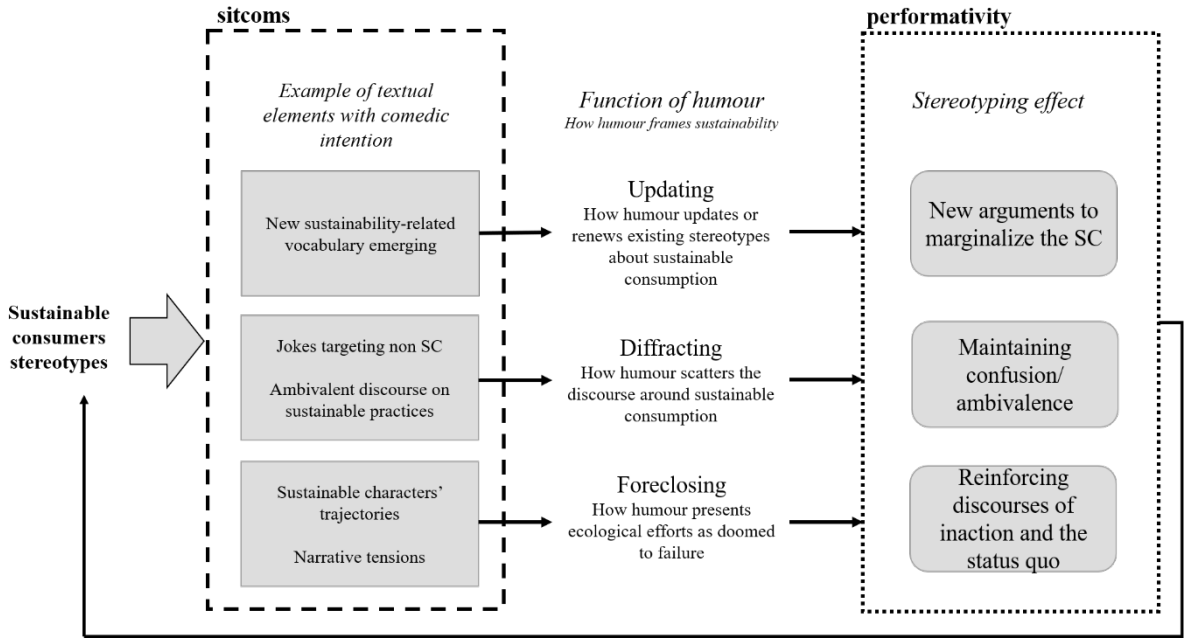
us to evaluate which positive or negative stereotypes the text mobilised (Holzberg et al., 2018) and to identify the normative transference, i.e. who is depicted as the target of the joke through negative stereotypes (Wiid et al., 2015, p. 176).

In a second step, I performed a narrative analysis of each selected series, i.e., analysing the essential storyline to capture character trajectories and narrative tensions (Wiid et al., 2015, p. 175), with a specific focus on characters with sustainable practices, even temporarily. In one episode from *The Good Place*, Eleanor Shellstrop is offered a second life in which she tries to improve herself, and she temporarily turns into a sustainable consumer. This moment is very interesting for the narrative analysis. This approach allowed us to contextualise the analysis by identifying each series' key moments as well as its key topics and concepts. For instance, *How I Met Your Mother* is very much oriented toward workplace issues, which necessarily affect the focus and representations in the series. Finally, I compared these trajectories with the discourses of climate inaction identified in previous studies (Lamb et al., 2020). For each stage of coding, I discussed the codes, the coded elements and the results with other authors from the supervision team.

4. Findings

The analysis revealed how the performativity of humour operates on multiple levels of stereotyping, producing contradictory effects. First, it illustrates how humour performativity operates as a process for updating stereotypes of sustainable consumers over time. Through our longitudinal sample, we trace a progressive evolution in these representations, revealing how comedic devices acknowledge shifting cultural attitudes while subtly reconfiguring the boundaries of acceptable sustainable consumption practices. This evolutionary process, however, does not operate in isolation, but rather exists within a broader framework of ambivalence and commercial imperatives that shape sitcoms' engagement with sustainability discourse. Second, humour's natural polyphony allows contradicting voices to discuss sustainability, developing both supportive and dismissive arguments. This polyphony reflects the cultural tensions present in society, but also diffracts its discourse about sustainability, creating confusion about the broad positioning towards sustainable issues. Thirdly, my narrative analysis reveals how humour forecloses any potential for sustainable actions by using sustainability issues as the basis for comic narratives of failure. This approach is particularly harmful as it masquerades as a means of updating and including the discourse around sustainable consumers while simultaneously perpetuating sustainable consumers' marginalisation and ridicule. It highlights that the journeys of these sustainable characters reflect certain discourses surrounding climate delay (Lamb et al., 2020). It suggests that sitcoms serve as dynamic cultural texts that both reflect and shape societal attitudes toward sustainability.

Figure 10 - Performative effects of humour on stereotyping



4.1. Performing marginalisation of sustainability: updating stereotypical traits

As sustainability issues have gradually become mainstream, sitcoms have integrated them by using humorous sustainable practice stereotypes. The longitudinal perspective of this study allows us to capture how these traits evolve and how humour performs – i.e. creates and perpetuates – such changes. The vocabulary, the practices that are displayed, and the traits of the sustainable characters evolve to maintain the dramatic tension with the audience.

The vocabulary linked to sustainability issues shifts from specific micro-issues to a more global understanding of them. In *Friends*, the most commonly used words from the sustainability dictionary tend to focus on specific problems, such as animal protection, featuring terms like "vegetarian", "meat", and "fur". Another prominent word is "trees", in singular and plural forms. This specific term closely relates to the "tree-hugger" stereotype, which has resurfaced in studies on stereotypes involving sustainable consumers (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bashir et al., 2013). In *How I Met*, the vocabulary includes new terms referring to nature more generally. The most frequently used words from our dictionary included terms such as "lake", "rain," "earth", "tree", and "environmental", all of which reflect a broader connection to nature. Prevalent words in the most recent show, *The Good Place*, reflect even broader issues. Notably, the word "life" appears often in relation to sustainability, alongside other terms such as "world", "earth", and "environmental" or "environment". The emergence of these last two in both noun and adjective form suggests a more abstract understanding of sustainability. Additionally, some newer terms among those most used include more technical words such as "footprint", "pesticides", and "toxic", suggesting a more specific focus on sustainable problems. This vocabulary, on which jokes rely, attests to the progressive integration of sustainable issues in the sitcoms.

We observe a clear evolution in how sustainability is referenced, reflecting a deeper and more specific popular understanding of sustainability-related issues. First, the series progressively allows more and more space for scenes that treat sustainability. In *Friends*, sustainability references are confined, with few exceptions, to the character of Phoebe Buffay, presented as the ultimate sustainable consumer. Conversely, *The Good Place* shows several characters experimenting with or joking about sustainable and non-sustainable behaviours. Second, we also observed more lines referring in detail to sustainable practices in the most recent episodes of the sample. In *Friends*, sustainability practices are merely evoked but rarely justified. In a scene from S02E16, Joey comments on a set of plastic spoons that Chandler offered him as a gift for his new home: "I can't use those forever. I mean, let's face it, they are no friend to the environment. The reason why the spoons are not sustainable is not specified. Similarly, Phoebe's veganism is barely justified by her will to protect animals. In contrast, *The Good Place* shows a much more sophisticated understanding of sustainability-related issues. In S02E12, the script allows Eleanor, in a version where she tries to improve herself, time to explain the benefits of vegetarianism:

ELEANOR: I'm actually trying to eat vegetarian.

GIRL ROOMMATE: Ew! Why? Is it because you feel bad for all the wild animals with their cute wild faces because people stuff them into tiny cages just so that we can eat them?

ELEANOR: Yeah, that's exactly why, actually. Also, it's the easiest way to lower your carbon footprint.

"Cute wild faces" actually echoes one of Phoebe's arguments when she refused to eat chicken because she eats "no food with a face" (S01E17). The lack of arguments is associated with the mockery and condescending tone displayed by her interlocutor in that scene. In *The Good Place* scene, Eleanor's roommate, the non-sustainable consumer, also uses that ironic condescending tone. However, Eleanor's own position affirms a specific, fact-based argument that is difficult to mock as opposed to the "cute wild faces" argument.

Similarly, traits associated with sustainable character also evolve. Over the years, humour develops a range of traits, such as deviance or naivety, that it associates with the sustainable consumer for comedic purposes. The growing number of traits associated contributes to updating the stereotypes of sustainable consumption. For instance, the series *Friends* layers stereotypes of sustainability with stereotypes of esoterism or lesbianism as demonstrated in past research (See Chapter 2). In *How I Met*, jobs that are related to sustainability are connected to stereotypes of the naïve dreamer. In S02E06, the off-voice introduces Lily's professional perspective:

LILY: I wanna find my passion.

NARRATOR: And she did find it.

LILY: I'm going to be a life coach.

NARRATOR: In fact, she found it again and again.

LILY: I'm going to be a marine biologist.

LILY: Slam poet.

LILY: Beekeeper.

NARRATOR: Her newest lifelong dream? Singing in a punk rock band. What's she doing for money through all this? Oh, she has been waiting tables at Big Wave Luau.

The script alternates between jobs related to either artistic practices or environmental protection. This alternance highlights the similarities between the two stereotypes and culminates in the final line – "waiting tables at Big Wave Luau" - emphasising how one's dreams can conflict with the inevitable necessity of furnishing basic material needs. Moreover, the sequence jokes about a popular trend from the early 2010s among environmentally conscious young people who develop a specific interest in marine biology (Lucrezi et al., 2017). The comedic elements create an absurd and humorous juxtaposition of these opposing vocations, linking old stereotypes of environmentalists to new stereotypes of moneyless dreamers, and associating the naivety and lack of realism with environment-related professions.

The hermit figure is a comprehensive example of those evolutions in the sustainable consumer's vocabulary, practices, professions and other traits. The hermit is a consistent, stereotypical figure (Séré de Lanauzé et al., 2018). In all three series, the hermit makes an appearance at some point. In *Friends*, this hermit figure is embodied in Phoebe's father; she believes he is a tree surgeon who "lives in a hut in Burma where there is no phone" (S02E09). In *How I Met*, Marshall, as a kid, attends the conference of an anthropologist who had lived with gorillas (S01E17). In *The Good Place*, Michael, a demon, seeks to understand how to be

a good person. He encounters Doug, a man who optimises his life to get the best score in the afterlife. He lives as a hermit, growing his own food, using filtered urine for water, and avoiding social interaction and transportation to minimise his environmental impact (S03E08). All share similar fundamental characteristics: they have lived outside of society geographically, literally, and symbolically. Geographically, they live in a hut in Burma (*Friends*), in the western lowlands in Cameroon (*How I Met*), or outside a village (*The Good Place*), respectively. Literally, they are disconnected from modern society as they live with no phone, running water, or links to any human being. Symbolically, they are marginal, eccentric figures. However, each three incarnates a variation of the same stereotypical figure of the hermit.

The three variations are based on their show's focus and contemporary context. For instance, since *How I Met* is very much focused on the professional life of its character, the hermit figure includes this dimension: she is defined primarily by her job, being an anthropologist, whose profession necessarily positions her as an observer, a person somehow removed from urban contemporary Western society. *The Good Place*, in which characters' actions generate points for their afterlife destiny, pays closer attention to the details of the hermit's sustainable practices. An entire episode is dedicated to observing how the hermit lives (S03E08). His practices include recycling, composting, urine filtration to produce water, gardening for organic food, calculating the footprint for everything, and volunteering to replace animal testing in the cosmetic industry (S03E08). With these granular descriptions, specific, modern, and relevant practices are associated with the older stereotype of sustainable consumption, i.e. the hermit. The comedic tension is maintained through the variation. In *The Good Place*, the absurd accumulation of sustainable practices creates a comedic tension around the hermit. The character lives an ascetic life, deprived of social life or pleasure, and subjects himself to painful habits to maintain a radically sustainable lifestyle. In *How I Met*, the radicality of the hermit figure answering a child willing to become an anthropologist creates the comedic tension around her: "Oh, that's wonderful, but I'm afraid you can't. They'll all be dead by then. And if economic sanctions and trade restrictions aren't enforced, the destruction of the rainforests will continue, and over a million species will be wiped out" (S01E17).

The variations maintain a comedic relevance, updating the stereotype's expression to make it more relevant for the comedic tension with regard to its context and audience, but they also cement the marginal position. Across time, humour renews the stereotype and revitalises the representations of sustainable consumers. Jokes using contemporary consumption practices draw their comedic dimension from the audience's relatability to more contemporary consumption practices. Rather than depicting sustainable consumers as eccentric, anti-patriotic individuals, or impoverished dreamers, the jokes capitalise on absurdities like a character drinking his own urine or having a snail as his only friend. This way, each stereotypical figure is updated and its relevance maintained. However, they also create new shortcuts to stereotyping sustainable consumption that keep up to date with the fundamental negative assumptions—marginalisation, for instance. The hermit is still a marginal, socially excluded character and is depicted as a weird, negative ideal for whoever aspires to sustainability. In this regard, and despite a seeming evolution of sustainable consumer representation, this suggests that humour performs an ambivalence around the sustainable consumer's stereotyping.

4.2. Performing ambivalence around sustainability: diffracting voices

Sitcoms deploy multiple, sometimes contradictory voices around sustainable consumption, creating an ambivalent position on sustainable consumers' stereotypes. Polyphony is a central characteristic of humour (Kravets, 2021). It implies that multiple and contradicting voices coexist at the same time without necessarily being a unified chorus. Sitcoms rely on this natural characteristic of humour to create different perspectives on sustainability. Humour attacks both the sustainable and the non-sustainable consumers alike. As contemporary figures are introduced into the series, the polyphony of humour diffracts the discourses surrounding sustainability, performing an ambivalence through the stereotypes portrayed by sitcoms.

A first example that lies in the polyphony, deploying contradicting voices when referring to sustainability, can be seen in *Friends*, where most of the characters engage in non-sustainable practices. This constitutes one voice, which normalises non-sustainable consumption. Phoebe protests against those practices, constituting a second opposing voice, arguing in favour of sustainable consumption. She uses the vocabulary of living animals (cows) to refer to meat (beef) and strikes people's minds with the reality of meat-eating. For instance, she uses sound-biting periphrases like "two cows [which] made the ultimate sacrifice so you guys could watch TV with your feet up" (S02E15) to refer to leather chairs or "ground-up flesh of formerly cute cows and turkeys" (S01E24) to refer to steaks. However, most of the time, her protest is only a device to generate comedic tension, and the effect is more comedic as the other characters laugh at her and dismiss or ignore her remarks. In parallel, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, Phoebe is mocked for her sustainable practices, and she also progressively adopts unsustainable behaviours such as eating meat (S04E16) or shopping in Pottery Barn (S06E11). This leads to jokes targeting her inconsistency in sustainable actions. The sitcom deploys a polyphony of conflicting viewpoints regarding sustainability issues, generating confusion around these topics through its humorous portrayal.

Similarly, the narrative trajectory of the hermit figure creates a double discourse around these idealised figures of sustainability. We observed that all hermit figures follow the same path in the series. At first, they are presented as inspirational for the character trying to become more sustainable despite the forced image of marginality. Phoebe (*Friends*) definitely idealises her father. The anthropologist greatly inspires Marshall (*How I Met*), who literally "changed his life" (S01E17). Michael (*The Good Place*) also feels very inspired by his hermit at first sight; he refers to him as "cool", "down-to-earth", and "thoughtful of his actions" (S03E08). But soon, those figures reveal themselves to be disappointing. The idealised father turns out to be a lie invented by Phoebe's grandmother. The great anthropologist destroys the dream of little Marshall. The supposedly perfect sustainable consumer reveals deceitfulness when he exposes his true motivations: he inflicts upon himself a lifeless, painful, lonely life to ensure he earns enough points to reach the Good Place. All three hermits are deceptive ideals for the would-be sustainable characters. This supports the idea that humour performs a negative stereotype of the sustainable consumer, portrayed as eccentric and disappointing, while introducing them as positive and inspiring figures.

Finally, in the most recent show, some comedic sequences also directly target the non-sustainable consumer, adding even more ambivalence to the discourse by multiplying the targets of comedic attacks. In the following scene from *The Good Place*, Michael reads the file of a regular consumer who doesn't practice sustainability and who is then deemed a bad person who will go to a Bad Place:

> MICKAEL: In 2009, Doug Ewing of Scaggsville, Maryland, also gave his grandmother a dozen roses, but he lost four points. Why? Because he ordered roses using a cell phone made in a sweatshop. The flowers were grown with toxic pesticides, picked by exploited migrant workers delivered from thousands of miles away, which created a massive carbon footprint, and his money went to a billionaire racist CEO who sent his female employees pictures of genitals.

The accumulation of subordinate clauses illustrates the detailed negative consequences of regular consumption. Not only is regular consumption presented from a very negative prism, but sustainable consumption is presented as a desirable ideal. The environmentalist is presented regularly as good and the non-environmentalist as bad. The polyphony around sustainability increases as more characters speak about it, with longer lines and more developed arguments. For instance, in the following scenes, Eleanor attends a welcoming cocktail reception in what she thinks is *The Good Place*. She seems to be surrounded by only good people. One introduces himself to Eleanor as follows:

> MAN: So, I was a hotshot corporate lawyer in the 1980s. I only cared about making money and doing cocaine. One night, I had an epiphany, right? I needed to do something good with my life. So, I drew up plans for this foundation that would help kids all over the world, would advance human rights, revolutionize agriculture, and just improve every nation [in] every possible way.
>
> (S01E12)

The revolution of agriculture is set at the same level of goodness as human rights or helping the kids. Throughout the show, sustainability is a necessary facet of a good person. In this quote, sustainable practices are portrayed as part of the morally good actions leading one to Heaven, in opposition to corporate life, integrated in capitalist society ("making money"). Additionally, sustainable practices are linked to a general improvement of life on Earth, which is a new voice in the discourses around sustainability. However, a major twist in the scenario is revealed later: the place where Eleanor was sent turns out to be a Bad Place designed as a conceit for the Good Place, aiming to torture its four inhabitants with guilt. The former corporate lawyer is, in fact, a demon acting as a human, again torturing Eleanor during this event. The intention of this character in praising sustainable practices in the heavens becomes ambivalent: his line could be interpreted as a way to ridicule sustainable and other "do-gooder" practices (Minson & Monin, 2012). The double interpretation directly feeds the ambivalence of discourses around sustainability in the sitcoms.

The natural polyphony of humour increases this ambivalence of discourses surrounding sustainable practices, especially in the most recent use of these stereotypes. In the following scene from S01E12 in *The Good Place*, the four main characters try to understand which of their behaviours caused them to end up in the Bad Place. Jason and Eleanor are "trash bags", always involved in shady frauds to take advantage of others or avoid working. Tahani, a famous influencer involved in charity work, admits that "her motivations were corrupt" (S01E12).

Chidi, a professor of morals and ethics, in his life, seems to be the most innocent of the four characters, and he finds one explanation for going to hell. He confesses for the first time in a scene where three others have just admitted serious offences for which they could be considered bad people:

> CHIDI: Well, there is something you don't know about me. I read an article saying that growing almonds was bad for the environment, and yet, I continued to use almond milk in my coffee …
>
> (S01E12)

The gap between the use of almond milk and the fundamental lack of morality of the other characters is most probably the comedic device of the scene. Chidi repeats this argument in other scenes, such as in S02E01:

> ELEANOR: I don't know, dude. Were you a good person on Earth?
> CHIDI: I… I think so. I spent my life in pursuit of fundamental truths about the uni… Oh no! I used almond milk in my coffee, even though I knew about the negative environmental impacts.

Humour here can be interpreted in different ways (Golstraw, 2023), and the polyphony of humour allows spaces for those multiple interpretations. For this specific quote from S02E01, one could laugh at the gap between Chidi's dramatic tone in both scenes, employing forms of dramatic confession ("there's something you don't know about me") and tone, with the dramatic exclamation ("Oh no!") interrupting his serious sentence. Another interpretation could be that laughter abides in the exaggeration of Chidi as a stereotype of sustainable consumption, overthinking, overcomplicating, and dramatising the consequences of his choices. A concerned consumer could laugh at seeing their own internal debate on display in this scene. Another viewer might simply laugh at the running gag, which repeats the dumb mechanical formula of self-recrimination over several scenes. All of these interpretations are valid for the researcher, as each is anchored in a specific theoretical approach to humour and a specific level of understanding from the audience. Notably, those multiple interpretations are meant for opposite audiences to laugh for various reasons, but they all embody ridicule.

This polyphony performs an ambivalent discourse on both the sustainable and non-sustainable consumers. Humour could enact a form of cultural violence on the sustainable consumer by disparaging them, but expressed it in more modern, relevant forms; simultaneously, it seems to exert a new form of violence over non-sustainable, reflecting an evolution of social context. Humour's polyphony creates simultaneous spaces for opposing discourses in society, permitting multiple voices to co-exist and putting cultural tensions in the spotlight. Tensions are temporarily suspended and resolved by the laughter, maintaining a status quo from which a mass consumption product like sitcoms could benefit.

4.3. Performing the failure of sustainability: foreclosing actions

The third function of humour, namely foreclosing, operates in a more systematic manner. Narrative analysis indicates that this ambivalence is not simply incidental; it serves a systematic purpose by impeding sustainable character development and narrative arcs. By examining how these character arcs progress, we can identify a pattern where initial ambivalence is resolved in favour of maintaining the status quo, thereby foreclosing the transformative potential of sustainability narratives. This pattern suggests that while sitcoms may occasionally provide a platform for progressive environmental ideas, they ultimately confine these ideas within structures that do not significantly challenge existing consumption patterns. It foregrounds the argument of the impossibility and incompatibility of a sustainable life in a capitalist society, in which the three series are deeply rooted. The efforts toward sustainable practices often fall short when wrapped in a comedic narrative. The sitcoms justify these failures through climate delay discourses, which include portraying the downsides of sustainable lifestyles, suggesting that surrendering to change is futile or impossible, and redirecting responsibility or promoting non-transformative solutions (Lamb et al., 2020). Analysing how humour reinforces the status quo through the lens of climate delay discourse adds a new dimension to understanding the performative effects of humour on stereotypes.

First, sustainable characters are represented as weak, not only in their social position but also in their material or financial strength. Physical weakness has already been identified as a stereotypical trait in the literature dealing with sustainable consumer stereotypes (Minson & Monin, 2012; Pearson et al., 2018). Behind this lies the argument that the carnivore diet is natural and healthy (Groeve et al., 2022). In our sample, both old and recent series use it. In *Friends*, Phoebe eats meat during pregnancy, justifying it with the baby's will ("Maybe he wants me to eat meat" S04E16, line 32) and needs ("I can't help it. I need the meat. The baby needs the meat." S04E16, line 346). In *The Good Place*, Eleanor approaches an environmental activist to learn how to be more sustainable. Frightened by her brutal manners, he jumps and moves away: "Ah! Don't hurt me. My bones are brittle. I have [a] calcium deficiency" (S02E12). In S03E08, the ideal sustainable consumer also confesses: "I'll try, but the last time I went down there [to donate blood], they said I was so anaemic they gave me blood." The financial weakness is more significant in *How I Met*. These collections of jokes highlight our sense of superiority over sustainable consumers (Warren & McGraw, 2016), often depicting them as weak. This portrayal of weakness as a stereotypical trait of sustainable consumers is the foundation for the humour, ultimately creating an undesirable image of sustainable consumers. This theme recurs through the behaviours of characters who aspire to adopt sustainable practices; they admire these eco-friendly figures but struggle to fully embrace a sustainable lifestyle themselves. The incompatibility of the sustainable lifestyle is presented, this time based on the discourse of climate delay, arguing the downsides, particularly in the well-being of individuals.

Second, even when characters try to engage in sustainable practices in all three sitcoms, the series foreground their renunciation of a sustainable lifestyle. Phoebe, who is a vegetarian, eats

meat several times while claiming to defend animals. She bets in an animal race she organises with Joey (S05E11, lines 381 to 417), and falls in love with the fur coat her mother sent her (S05E06, line 251), even though she finally renounces it (ibid., line 551). She also severely injures a dog in S02E21 (lines 180 to 204) and lies about it, pretending later that, as a vegetarian, she cannot harm animals (ibid., lines 426 to 440). Marshall (*How I Met*) desperately tries to find a job as an environmental lawyer; when he finally finds a position, he refuses it for a corporate lawyer position to make more money. *The Good Place* gives its characters some time to try a sustainable lifestyle. Eleanor spends six months trying to become "horny for the environment" (S02E12). She eventually drops it because "no one cares" (S02E12). Another illustrative example of this failure of the sustainable path is the narrative trajectory of the three hermit figures who turn out to be deceptive. It highlights the misguided aspirations of consumers attempting to adopt sustainable practices as they continue to idealise these deceptive characters despite their true nature. A sustainable consumption lifestyle is presented, therefore, as unreliable and unbearable when characters actually attempt it. They seem unable to escape regular life, whether because of a need for strength (*Friends*), money (*How I Met*), or social and moral recognition (*The Good Place*). The effort to create laughter also maintains the sustainable consumer as marginal and eccentric. Humour performs the surrender argument among discourses of climate delay (Lamb et al., 2020).

The turnaround of characters aspiring to be sustainable ultimately positions sustainable practices within a utilitarian, neo-liberal framework. Sustainable consumption is portrayed as being difficult to maintain: due to perceived deficiencies in their sustainable lifestyle, such consumers need acknowledgement of their efforts or their search for compensation. This echoes a rising stereotypical trait linked to the morality of the sustainable consumer. Some studies suggest that the intentions behind the sustainable practice may affect the perceived moral value of this practice (Olson et al., 2016). In our sample, the question of rewards for sustainable practices appears several times. After 10 seasons as the show's most sustainable character, Phoebe has a major crisis because she says she "deserves a real celebration" of her wedding without "some sweaty little man (making) her feel bad about it" (S10E07). Putting the responsibility on the individual who is incapable of maintaining a sustainable lifestyle echoes a third type of climate delay discourse of redirecting responsibility. The turnaround of sustainable characters is built with comedic intent. But this humour also performs the argument of individual responsibility. It also constitutes an ironic commentary about Phoebe's commitment to sustainability that echoes theorisation from literature about status signalling through sustainable consumption (Luomala et al., 2020; van de Grint et al., 2021), allowing oneself unsustainable behaviours (Mazar & Zhong, 2010; Peloza et al., 2013) or about the perceived hypocrisy of sustainable consumers whose practices turn out to be impossible to maintain (Minson & Monin, 2012; Olson et al., 2016; Sparkman & Attari, 2020).

In the series, sustainable practices are presented as incompatible within the reality of the system in which the characters live and struggle. In *Friends*, when Phoebe abandons her vegetarianism, it is because of the carnivore ideology, which views meat as needed to be strong and natural (Groeve & Rosenfeld, 2022). Phoebe progressively becomes less deviant throughout the show. In *How I Met*, the series presents sustainability as a naïve ideal

incompatible with the real harshness of material needs. The environmental cause is also depicted as a lost battle, as indicated in this line of Marshall's boss in S01E16: "Marshall, I can't let you waste a suit this nice fighting a losing battle for our planet's survival. This suit is for winners." The sitcom regularly depicts environmental issues worthy enough to fight for, ideally, but less important than other preoccupations. In S03E06, Marshall is taken to a restaurant by Jeff Coatsworth, who tries to hire him in his company that defends fossil fuel industries:

> JEFF: Listen, I know. You're not gonna be tempted by big numbers and fancy perks. You're gonna do the noble thing. Take the low-paying job at the NRDC, live off your family money…
> MARSHALL: Family money?
> JEFF: You do have family money, don't you?
> MARSHALL: No, not that I know of. I do have an uncle who owns a pretty successful bait shop.
> JEFF: NRDC, no family money. Oh, so you don't plan on having kids?
> MARSHALL: Actually, I want to have four kids.
> JEFF: Well, New York public schools make a lot of parents nervous, but the kids who walk out walk out proud.

In *The Good Place*, the question revolves around the amount of effort and sense of impossibility and unrecognition of these efforts in the afterlife. In the following scene, Mickael, the architect of the Bad Place where the four main characters were sent, is trying to discuss the misfit of the afterlife point system regarding globalisation to convince the Supreme Judge (a figure of God) to change this system:

> MICKAEL: Life now is so complicated. It's impossible for anyone to be good enough for the Good Place. I know you don't like to learn too much about life on Earth to remain impartial, but these days, just buying a tomato at a grocery store means that you unwittingly support toxic pesticides, exploit labour, and contribute to global warming. Humans think that they are making one choice, but they're actually making dozens of choices they don't even know they are making.
> THE JUDGE: Your big revelation is that life is complicated. […] And as for unintended consequences, there will always be consequences. You don't want the consequences? Do the research. Buy another tomato.
>
> (S03E11)

The question of responsibility is at the heart of this scene. The implacable figure of the Judge is reminiscent of either the neo-liberal system or climate change, involving consequences no matter the human choices or history. The main characters will then try to change the afterlife sorting system to better fit their needs, meaning that Michael is right: once again, sustainability is impossible, and the system is too radical. In this radical system, no sustainable practices fit; the only way is to change the system. This last move is particularly twisted. The radical system change that the characters create produces a less radical system. They create a grey zone for average people for a more progressive system. The resolution of the series echoes the fourth type of discourse of climate delay: push non-transformative solutions as a humorous resolution (Lamb et al., 2020).

5. Discussion

This study evidences how the performative dimension of humour contributes to perpetuating stereotypes used to marginalise sustainable consumers, ultimately maintaining a status quo in sitcoms. Through three distinct mechanisms—updating, diffracting, and foreclosing—humour constructs particular social representations of sustainable lifestyles. Our analysis reveals how humour's performative dimension operates beyond simply reflecting existing representations; rather, we defend that it actively constructs and maintains them. By updating stereotypes with new dimensions of sustainable consumption, humour keeps these representations relevant while preserving their marginalising function. The inherent polyphony of humour should theoretically allow sitcoms to deploy diverse ideological landscapes. Instead, humour performs a diffraction of discourses, creating ambiguity around sustainability where multiple contradictory voices counterbalance any genuine critique of unsustainable behaviour. This diffracting function creates a cultural environment favourable to deploying climate delay discourses. Under comedic cover, humour opens paths for fatalistic character trajectories and depicts sustainable practices as virtually impossible to maintain. With this function, termed foreclosing, humour condemns sustainable behaviours to narrative failure, effectively precluding sustainable paths for characters. Together, these mechanisms enforce a specific social order dictated by utilitarian and neo-capitalist ideology, with humour ultimately performing and feeding contemporary discourses while avoiding profound systemic change. This work provides fruitful contributions to the literature on humour's performativity, media studies, and transition studies.

Firstly, this work provides a transferable analytical lens for examining how humour maintains marginalisation across diverse social groups. The three mechanisms we identified echo previous works showing how sustainability issues are neutralised in corporate discourse (Banerjee, 2008; Gond & Nyberg, 2017; Wright & Nyberg, 2016), while extending this understanding to popular media contexts. Our framework also applies readily to other marginalised identities. Other fields, such as feminist studies (Littler, 2013; Scaraboto & Fisher, 2013) or studies on counterculture (Bradshaw et al., 2004; Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015) or on LGBTQ+ representations reported similar consequences on the neutralisation of representations, interrogating the very notion of *popularisation*. Studies of LGBTQ+ representations could investigate how *updating* allows media to appear progressive through inclusion while reinforcing marginalisation through comedic treatment. Similarly, foreclosing operates when humorous narratives depict non-heteronormative relationships as inherently unstable, mirroring how sustainable practices are rendered ultimately unsustainable. Studies of racial, class-based, or age-related stereotypes could also employ our performativity-based approach to understand how humour simultaneously acknowledges social change and resists it. Our findings suggest that any social group challenging dominant norms may face similar comedic marginalisation strategies.

Secondly, our findings directly illuminate the persistent gap between sustainability acceptance and mainstream adoption. While sitcoms introduce sustainable consumption practices into public discourse through updated stereotypical representations, they simultaneously undermine their viability through diffracting and foreclosing mechanisms. This

paradox—where sustainable practices appear more frequently yet are consistently depicted as impossible or incompatible with contemporary society—helps explain why sustainability remains marginal despite growing acceptance. These outcomes extend previous work on corporate discourse neutralisation (Banerjee, 2008; Gond & Nyberg, 2017; Wright & Nyberg, 2016) by demonstrating how popular culture diffuses this neutralised vision to consumers. This interrogates the very notion of popularisation: increasing visibility while simultaneously distorting meaning, often to increase consumption (Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Littler, 2013).

Thirdly, this research advances understanding of the media's role in performing specific visions of society. As products intended for mass consumption (Stern et al., 2007), sitcoms require broad audience endorsement, making them particularly sensitive to commercial pressures since humour depends on audience understanding and acceptance. Our findings illustrate how sitcoms navigate contemporary cultural tensions around sustainability: while engaging with increasingly prominent sustainability issues, they use humour to undermine them, maintaining social structures that reinforce utilitarian and neoliberal values while marginalising opposing voices.

This research opens paths for investigating how cultural environments enable climate delay discourse acceptance across institutional, organisational, and advertising contexts. Future research should examine whether humour similarly creates ambiguous discursive environments in these domains and identify other tools employed for this purpose. We advocate for more conscious use of sustainable practices in comedic content, urging entertainment and advertising professionals to consider their humour's broader implications on societal norms. By fostering nuanced representations of sustainable consumers, sitcoms can cultivate cultural shifts toward embracing sustainability as normal rather than deviant. This study establishes groundwork for exploring intersections between humour, media representation, and sustainability, calling for critical approaches to how comedic narratives shape social stereotypes. It serves as a reminder of humour's power in shaping cultural values, extending well beyond sustainability to encompass any crucial social transformation.

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Conclusion

This thesis originally aimed to investigate if and how TV series construct social representations of sustainable consumption. Specifically, it intended to explore the portrayal—either positive or negative—of sustainable practices, as this portrayal could affect the audience's consumption practices as suggested by previous research (Pechmann & Shih, 1999; Russell et al., 2019; Russell & Stern, 2006). The previous three chapters thoroughly examined the research questions presented in the introduction. They progressively examine the stereotyping process through a unique perspective by conceptualising the discursive processes whereby TV series construct stereotypes of sustainable consumers that can later influence consumption, as suggested by psychological literature analysed in Chapter 1.

Answering RQ 1.1 (*What are the stereotypes surrounding sustainable consumers?*) and RQ 1.2 (*Through which methodological and theoretical tools was this knowledge built?*), Chapter 1 catalogues recurring stereotypical traits identified by the literature and analyses how methods and theories may construct stereotypes of sustainable consumers. It offers a mapping of theories based on two dimensions: the level of analysis (individual vs. group) and the field of application (cognitive vs. context). This mapping reveals that negative stereotypes are the only outcomes of studies using motivational drives theories and social norms. Answering RQ 2.1 (*What types of repetitions are enacted in the text, and how do they work together?*) and RQ 2.2 (*What do they repeat precisely, and how do they create characters that may affect the stereotypical representations portrayed in the series?*), Chapter 2 proposes a typology of repetitions used in the construction of a character, namely *reproduction*, *layering* and *evolution*. These findings suggest that repetitions act both as a narrative tool and a stereotyping mechanism and contribute to cementing stereotypes. Finally, answering RQ 3 (*How does the performativity of humour contribute to the maintenance of stereotypes associated with sustainable consumers, and to the marginalisation of this group over time?*), Chapter 3 develops three functions of humour (*updating*, *diffracting* and *foreclosing)*, through which humour's performativity affects the stereotyping of sustainable consumers over time. It suggests that when humour targets a group, it performs and cements stereotypes, which contributes to the marginalisation of this very group.

However, this research also evidences a systematic effect in the representation of sustainable practices, which I call the "Phoebe Buffay paradox". The paradox is named after the *Friends* character Phoebe Buffay, whose vegetarianism, animal rights activism, and general environmental consciousness are consistently portrayed as extensions of her overall quirkiness

and disconnection from mainstream sensibilities, often becoming punchlines rather than respected positions. The “Phoebe Buffay paradox" refers to the phenomenon where sitcoms systematically present sustainable behaviours through contradictory representation, regularly featuring environmental consciousness while simultaneously containing it within negative stereotypes and comedic characterisations that maintain its marginalised status in popular discourse. The use of a neo-cult character to name this effect is intentional. Series become neo-cult when they gain a new generation of fans through new broadcasting means such as VOD platforms (Jones, 2023). The studies presented in this thesis suggest that stereotypes gain a new echo through new traits and new voices, even though they perpetuate an established delegitimised image. The persistence of old stereotypes, even in recent studies, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, and the repetition of traits or the narratives valorising dominant discourse on consumption, as illustrated by Chapters 2 and 3, illustrate this paradox.

As developed in those preceding Chapters, the “Phoebe Buffay paradox” affects stereotypes, but its consequences may damage sustainable consumption practices in the long term (Stern et al, 2007). First, this phenomenon contributes to the marginalisation of sustainable behaviours by presenting them as associated with eccentric, quirky, or fringe character traits. At the same time, it normalises the dismissive or aggressive attitudes toward environmental concerns and practices through the normalisation of dismissal by "normal" or "central" characters. Second, this may propose conflicting representations in viewers who may develop positive associations with unsustainable behaviours (such as takeout in disposable containers) through their portrayal as normal and desirable. The reinforcement of cultural barriers to sustainable transition by framing environmentally responsible choices as extreme, inconvenient, or socially awkward.

Ultimately, TV series could be interpreted as a lever for collective resistance to the necessary changes in our consumption patterns. This work illustrates the challenges of adopting sustainable practices, highlighting the tension between the need to move away from marginalisation and the risk that mainstream acceptance could dilute the sustainability discourse. It also offers a new perspective on the barriers to sustainable consumption. Finally, it suggests that resistance to sustainability is shape-shifting and adapts its discourse to maintain the marginalisation of sustainable practices. These findings also provide contributions on the theoretical, methodological and managerial levels, which the following sections will develop.

1. Theoretical contributions

This thesis provides contributions to different streams of literature through three interconnected theoretical advances that reshape our understanding of stereotyping processes, particularly in the context of sustainable consumption. The first major contribution lies in extending the theorisation of stereotyping by moving beyond static conceptualisations toward a comprehensive understanding of stereotyping as a dynamic, discursive process. Chapter 1 establishes the theoretical foundations for this shift by framing stereotypes as an ongoing stereotyping process rather than fixed constructs. This theoretical reframing directly addresses the malleability and evolving nature of stereotypes noted in existing literature (Angles et al.,

2016), positioning this temporal dimension as essential to stereotype theorisation rather than peripheral to it. Building on this foundation, Chapter 1 reveals how specific theoretical perspectives can inadvertently participate in creating negative stereotypes, while simultaneously identifying a critical gap in our comprehensive understanding of stereotyping processes. Chapters 2 and 3 then provide the empirical exploration needed to address this gap through detailed studies of stereotyping processes at the social level using sitcoms and humour. These empirical chapters demonstrate how discourses interfere with stereotyping processes through specific mechanisms, notably repetitions and humour performativity. While research has highlighted the role of repetitions in stereotyping at the individual level (Martin et al., 2014; 2017), Chapter 2 transposes this understanding to the social level, showing how cultural repetition operates in media consumption. Chapter 3 creates a crucial bridge by connecting humour as a social practice (Kravets, 2019) with its role in perpetuating stereotypes (Goldstraw, 2023; Wiid et al., 2015), offering a complement to previous works that examined stereotyping processes primarily at individual levels. This is the first step in answering the gap, as evidenced in Section 7.2 of Chapter 1, on the need for a more comprehensive understanding of stereotyping processes.

The second contribution centres on demonstrating how cultural products, particularly media representations, actively contribute to the formation and maintenance of stereotypes. By framing stereotypes as a discursive process, this research opens new pathways for understanding stereotype formation by illuminating the cultural environment in which they are forged and cemented. This approach addresses a significant limitation in stereotype research, which has predominantly focused on static measurements while missing the temporal dynamics of stereotype formation and change, as evidenced in Section 7.1 of Chapter 1. Chapter 3 provides particularly compelling evidence of these temporal dynamics, revealing tensions in stereotype evolution, specifically how new traits become integrated while older stereotypical elements remain relevant. The longitudinal perspective offered through television series analysis in Chapter 3 represents a unique contribution to understanding how stereotypes evolve over time. The empirical chapters also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the sustainable consumption stereotype, as suggested in the agenda by Section 7.3 of Chapter 1. They reveal important distinctions between imageries linked to different sustainable practices, such as the vegetarianism embodied by Phoebe Buffay *versus* the autonomous composting practices embodied by Doug in *The Good Place*, demonstrating how different sustainable behaviours become associated with distinct stereotypical frameworks.

The third and most distinctive contribution is the progressive development and theorisation of the "Phoebe Buffay paradox" throughout the thesis. This paradox addresses a persistent question in sustainable consumption research: why media representations of sustainable consumers and their practices remain predominantly negative (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016; Bennett & Vijaygopal, 2018; Brough et al., 2016; Pinna, 2020; Shang & Peloza, 2016) despite growing environmental awareness. By theorising this paradox, the thesis draws critical attention to how entertainment content creates discourses that contribute to the negative stereotyping of sustainable practices, ultimately contributing to delays in climate action. This contribution extends beyond consumer studies approaches to sustainable consumption by opening new paths

for understanding cultural barriers to sustainable transitions, complementing existing transition studies research on functional barriers to sustainable change (Köhler et al., 2019; White et al., 2019). The "Phoebe Buffay paradox" reveals how television series cement a particular ideology surrounding the "green gap"—the persistent disconnect between positive attitudes toward sustainability and actual sustainable behaviours. This theoretical framework provides a novel lens for understanding how cultural representations can inadvertently undermine the very behaviours they might seem to promote.

Collectively, these contributions work synergistically across multiple research domains. The dynamic reconceptualisation of stereotyping (Chapter 1) provides the theoretical foundation that enables the social-level empirical explorations (Chapters 2 and 3), which in turn reveal the cultural mechanisms through which the "Phoebe Buffay paradox" operates. This integrated approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of how stereotypes function in contemporary media landscapes while providing practical insights for addressing cultural barriers to sustainable behaviour change. This work opens a new path to understanding the cultural barriers to sustainable transition by showing how series cements a certain ideology of the green gap identified by the literature.

2. Methodological contributions

This thesis offers two key methodological contributions. The first one is on the position of TV series as a rich object for consumer studies. While previous work suggested the interest of TV series for consumer studies (Stern et al., 2007), the current thesis grounds TV series as an epistemological object with multiple methodological interests. It extends the definition of TV series as an “industrial art” (Stern et al., 2007, pp. 9–10), developing its three dimensions of industrially produced object, cultural object and mass-consumption product. The thesis examines industrial production’s interest, highlighting notably the repetition’s role in structuring these series. It discusses how they function as cultural objects within an environment that shapes collective representation. Additionally, the thesis addresses how series are framed as mass consumption products and suggests how this framing affects consumption practices and discourses in the series. This work contributes to framing TV series as valuable study objects. The intersection of these three dimensions offers a promising path for future research, particularly in business studies, considering they have the theoretical tools to encompass consumption and production aspects. This work establishes a methodological framework for using TV series or, more generally, entertainment media in consumer studies.

The second important methodological contribution lies in the approach used in the two empirical Chapters. Building on previous works by Barbara Stern (Stern, 1996) regarding deconstruction and by Ashley Humphreys’ work (Berger et al., 2020; Humphreys & Latour, 2013; Humphreys & Wang, 2018) on automatic text analysis, I integrated a semi-automatic text detection program with text analysis methods. The goal was to be able to systematically identify every reference to sustainability, even the smallest, among a huge amount of text. This systematic approach is somewhat unusual in qualitative research, where data collection typically relies on saturation. In this study, however, I may have reached saturation before the

end of the series. By employing a systematic method to identify scenes related to sustainability, I was able to capture the evolution of stereotypes throughout the series effectively. Using a systematic approach to identify the scenes referring to sustainability ensured that the data collection could capture the evolution of stereotypes until its very end. Thanks to this systematic approach, I was also able to sequence the use of certain stereotypes or mechanisms. For example, Chapter 2 includes a compelling figure demonstrating how the three types of repetitions are distributed across the seasons (see Figure 7). In Chapter 3, I could also trace the evolution of stereotypical traits through the different eras. Introducing semi-automatic text detection into qualitative research opens promising avenues for combining topic modelling with qualitative analysis.

3. Managerial and Societal Contributions

This thesis also offers contributions to various stakeholders, including media creators, educators, policymakers, and sustainability advocates, to foster more effective and positive discourse surrounding sustainable consumption, as well as other types of stereotyped discourses. The main practical application of these findings concerns directly policy makers and professionals advocating for sustainability. It highlights the potential for entertainment media and narratives in general to normalise rather than marginalise sustainable behaviours. This thesis offers interesting strategic paths for advertising campaigns that offer a more balanced but also more efficient representation of sustainable issues. By uncovering narrative mechanisms, this empirical part of the thesis provides a step-by-step guide for creating effective representations to foster sustainable practices.

On a similar note, this work gives valuable information on cultural barriers to sustainable consumption and how they are created. Identifying and naming the "Phoebe Buffay paradox" offers a lens through which the representations and discourses around sustainable issues can be discussed. This could be of particular use for marketers aiming to overcome barriers for more sustainable products, as well as for policymakers and other stakeholders aiming to smooth the shift toward sustainable practices in general.

Beyond this aspect of sustainable consumption, this work informs about other stereotyped issues. It offers tools to examine how their messaging may be undermined by cultural stereotypes perpetuated through popular sitcoms, but also through other types of media discourses. Finally, it offers tools for consumers to develop a critical appreciation of media representations.

4. Limitations

The thesis naturally has some major and minor limitations. First of all, the sample used for this work consists only of US sitcoms, with none covering the same period. While this approach ensures consistency and allows for longitudinal analysis, it also precludes the possibility of comparing series from different countries or genres produced during the same era. These

contextual differences could significantly influence the portrayal of stereotypes. Additionally, focusing on three sitcoms does not represent the entire spectrum of how the media represent sustainable issues. It establishes an interesting methodological framework, but it should be applied to other types of media content, such as fictional but from other media support, like video games.

Another main limitation of this work is that it focuses on the written discourse by using only the scripts of the TV series. However, audiovisual content also displays discourse through non-verbal language. Focusing on verbal content might undervalue visual cues, body language, or production elements (laugh tracks, camera angles). The cinematic language, like frame or photography, can suggest other discursive elements. More importantly for the stereotypes, the visual appearance of characters and their set can definitely contribute to the stereotyping of sustainable consumers, particularly since Chapter 1 demonstrates the existence of stereotypes related to the physical appearance. Finally, the performance itself can suggest characteristics of sustainable consumers, which may be built into stereotypes.

Another limitation stems from my focus on discourse without exploring its reception. This work mainly focuses on how cultural objects like sitcoms can construct discourses; it does not include any aspect of the reception of those discourses and stereotypes. Several studies suggest, for instance, that the interpretation of humour can be affected by several elements such as cultural norms (Weinberger & Gulas, 2019; Yoon & Tickam, 2013). For instance, the sitcom studies here have a broad audience from various countries. The cultural context may affect the reception of humour and of the displayed stereotypes. The lack of direct audience research also puts aside the way the TV series is delivered. Streaming and binge-watching might have an impact compared to weekly broadcasts. This is particularly interesting in the case of neo-cult series, as it differentiates between the original audience and the newest.

On this particular aspect, neo-cult series like *Friends* mobilise a nostalgic dimension that was not conceptualised in this thesis. The dissonance between these negative representations and the nostalgia evoked for the audience could affect how viewers actually interpret and internalise these representations. Negative stereotypes in *Friends* or *How I Met* also concern other issues, such as women's representation or LGBTQ+ representations. These limitations offer promising paths for future research to follow.

5. Future research lines

This thesis opens promising paths for future research. Since each Chapter already offers detailed paths for future research specifically based on the study presented, this section will suggest future research lines based on the comprehensive understanding provided by the entire thesis. I differentiate four directions for future research: a first one focusing on general conceptualisation for stereotypes literature; a second one focusing on the contents of stereotypes; a third one focusing on the reception of these stereotypes; and a last one focusing on different discursive objects.

The analysis of the evolution of stereotypes presented in the three Chapters of this thesis, though on different scales, shows that more work is necessary to trace the emergence of sustainable consumer stereotypes. While stereotypes linked to sustainability have the potential to become highly political, they are also quite new, and still less weighted with political or historical load than other categories of stereotypes, like racial stereotypes or sexist stereotypes. They constitute an interesting category for studies aiming to capture the evolution of stereotypes. Hence, one exciting path could be to explore the lifecycle of stereotypes, drawing on the innovation lifecycle, for instance. For such general theorisation on stereotypes, I would recommend longitudinal approaches such as media discourse analysis or interviews, though they are more difficult to implement on a long-term basis, or other methods inspired, for instance, by research in history. This would valuably inform our understanding of the stereotyping process on the social level.

In this thesis, the focus is on sustainable consumer stereotypes. Future research could delve deeper into the specifics of these stereotypes. Chapter 1 suggests that the different practices can evoke different stereotypes. Furthermore, Chapter 3 suggested that the popularisation of sustainability issues comes along with a multiplication of stereotypes linked to the different categories of practices. Accordingly, future research should explore the different types of practices to explore whether stereotypes differentiate between practices and why, if needed. On another note, future research could also delve into an entirely different set of stereotypes. The stereotyping mechanisms described in Chapters 2 and 3 should be examined in another context, such as gender stereotypes, for instance.

Moving slightly for the social lens adopted in this thesis, future projects could explore how individuals receive and interpret those stereotypes displayed through entertaining media. The deconstructionist approach employed in the empirical sections aimed to cover a large range of possible interpretations. However, it is very possible that the audience could not grasp all these different interpretations. This could be done through qualitative interviews, which would offer rich information on the relations with a character and the different layers of interpretations grasped by the audience. Future research should differentiate between people belonging to the stereotyped group and those who do not. Finally, the type of consumption behaviours of TV series could also affect the reception and interpretation of those stereotypes. Repeated binge-watching of a beloved, cult series may result in a stronger engagement than a series watched once, with one episode per week. Promising work on narrative engagement has started (Silver & Slater, 2019; Slater et al., 2017). Combining this recent quantitative approach with the theorisation brought by this thesis on stereotyping could enrich our understanding of the effect of old characters' behaviour on this process.

One direction for future research involves exploring discourse display in other media using a method similar to the one presented in the empirical section of this thesis. These media could include TV series from different genres. This thesis has demonstrated the importance of seriality in examining the link between popular culture and stereotypes. Additionally, a repeated immersion in other forms of fiction, such as video games, could present an interesting field of study. More generally, the method outlined here includes a comprehensive dictionary of sustainability issues, which could be extremely useful for future work on sustainability

discourse. Therefore, future research could use my method to analyse discourse about sustainability in various forms of media. This could enrich the concept of the "Phoebe Buffay paradox," which I theorised in this thesis, by exploring whether the trajectories of sustainability practices identified in Chapters 2 and 3 can emerge in other media, both fictional and non-fictional.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – R code for automatic text detection

```
library(tm)
library(stringr)
library(tokenizers)

# Set working directory to where the text file and dictionary are located
setwd("C:/Users/sophie.raynaud/Documents/PAPER 2_DATA")

dictionary <- readLines("environmentdictionary.txt")
  text <- readLines("S10E17-S10E18 The Last One Part I  II.txt")

# Create a list of sentences and their line numbers
sentences <- lapply(seq_along(text), function(i){
  data.frame(line_number=i, sentence=text[i], stringsAsFactors = FALSE)
})

# Combine all sentences into a single data frame
sentences_df <- do.call(rbind, sentences)

sentences_df$words="NA"
for(i in sentences_df[,1]){
  sentences_df$words[i]=tokenize_words(sentences_df[i,2])
}
print(sentences_df)
print(dictionary)

n_dict <- length(dictionary)
n_sentences <- length(sentences_df$words)
match<-matrix(FALSE, nrow=n_dict, ncol=n_sentences)
match_df <- data.frame(z=logical(), word=character(), line_number=integer())
print(sprintf("%d words, %d sentences", n_dict, n_sentences))
for(i in 1:n_dict){
  dic <- dictionary[i]
  #print(sprintf("%d dic %s", i, dic))
  for(h in 1:n_sentences){
    sentence <- sentences_df$words[[h]]
    #print(sprintf("  %d sentence %s", h, sentence))
    for(j in 1:length(sentence)){
      word <- sentence[j]
      #print(sprintf("    %d word %s", j, word))
```

```
    if (length(word) > 0 && !is.na(word)) {
      if (dic == word) {
        #print(sprintf("=> %s %s", dic, word))
        match[i,h] <- TRUE
        match_df[nrow(match_df) + 1,] = c(TRUE,word,h)
      }
    }
  }
 }
}
rownames(match) <- dictionary
print(match_df)

library(writexl)
write_xlsx(match_df, "C:/Users/sophie.raynaud/Documents/PAPER 2_DATA/EXTRACTIONS/S10E17-18.xlsx")
write_xlsx(sentences_df, "C:/Users/sophie.raynaud/Documents/PAPER 2_DATA/SCRIPT NUMBERED/S10E17-18.xlsx")
```

Appendix 2 – Sustainability dictionary

16001	atmosphere	boycott	climate	contaminate
aa1000	atmospheric	boycotting	climatic	contaminated
abundance	award	bribery	co2	contamination
accident	awards	business	coal	corruption
accidental	awareness	businesses	colonial	cost
accidents	batteries	bycicle	commercial	cost-effetive
accreditation	benefaction	c02	commitment	council
acid	bike	calamities	communities	countryside
activism	biking	calamity	community	creek
activist	bio	campaigns	companies	crisis
activists	biocentric	cancer	company	crop
afforestation	biodegradable	carbon	compliance	cultural
air	biodiesel	carbonated	compost	culture
alternative	biodiversed	certificate	compostable	customer
alternatives	biodiversity	certification	composting	customers
animal	bio-diversity	certified	conscience	cycles
animals	biofuels	change	conscious	cyclone
anthropocentric	bio-fuels	changing	conscious	dairy
anti	biogas	charitable	conservation	dam
antibiotics	biological	charities	conservationist	danger
anticorruption	biologically	charity	conservative	dangerous
approved	biomass	chemicals	conserve	deadly
aquatic	biosphere	cholesterol	conserved	decarbonisation
artificial	biospheric	circular	consumed	decarbonise
artificially	biota	clean	consumer	de-carbonise
assimilation	biotic	clean energy	consumers	decarbonised
assimilative	botanicals	clean-up	consumption	decarbonization

decarbonize
decarbonized
decay
defend
deforest
deforestation
deforesting
degradable
degradation
degrade
degrading
destroy
destroying
destruction
destructions
desulphurisation
deteriorate
deteriorated
deterioration
detritus
development
dioxide
disaster
disastered
disposal
disposing
diversity
donate
donation
donations
downstream
drainage
earnings
earth
earthquake
eco
eco-conscious
eco-design
eco-efficiency
eco-friendly
ecolabel
ecological
ecologically
ecologist
ecology
economic
economical
economically
economies
economy
ecosystem
eden
edenic
education
efficiency
effluent
electric
electricity
emas
emergencies
emergency
emission
emissions
employment
endangered
endemic
energies
energy
engagement
enterprises
entropy
environment
environmental
environmentalism
environmentalist
environmentalists
environmentally
equity
erode
eroded
erodible
eroding
erosion
ethical
ethically
ethics
eutrophication
exploitation
exploited
exporter
exporting
exports
extinct
extinction
fair
fairness
farmer
farmers
fatalities
fertilisers
fertilization
filtration
firewood
fisherman
fishing
flood
flooding
floods
food
footprint
footprints
forest
forestry
forests
fossil
foundation
foundations
fragment
fragmentation
fragmented
fragmenting
fraud
frauds
fraudulent
fsc
fsc
fuel
fuels
fur
future
garbage
gas
gases
ghg
global
globalization
globally
governmental
grazing
green
greenhouse
greenwashing
groundwater
growing

growth
habitat
habits
haccp
harm
harmful
harms
harvest
harvesting
hazardous
health
healthy
heritage
holding
homeostasis
homeostatic
hunt
hunter
hunters
hunting
hurricane
hurt
hydrologic
hydrological
ifs
illegal
illegally
illness
ilo
impact
impacts
incidence
incidents
incinerator
indigenous
industrial
industries
industry
inheritance
inundation
investment
investments
investors
iso
jeopardized
junk
justice
kyoto
lagoon
lake
landfill
landfills
landscape
landscapes
landslide
laundering
law
laws
legacies
legacy
legislation
life
lifesupport
liquid
local
logger
logging
lumber
lumberman
luxuriant
marine life
market
marketing
markets
measures
meat
methane
mines
minimalism
minimize
mining
mitigation
monetary
monetization
monetizing
moral
mycorrhizae
mycorrhizal
natural
naturally
nature
ngo
nitrogen
nonanthropocentric
nutrient
nutrition
nutritious
oak
obligations
ocean
oceanic
oceans
ohsas
oil
organic
organically
oxygen
ozone
packages
packaging
panorama
panoramic
paradise
penalties
pesticide
pesticides
petition
petitions
philantropy
photosynthesis
photovoltaic
planet
plant
plantation
plantations
planting
plants
plastic
policies
policy
pollutant
pollutants
pollutants
pollute
polluting
pollution
pollutions
pond
poor
posterity
poverty
precipitation
preservation
preservation
preserve

preserved
preserving
pressures
production
productivity
products
profitable
profits
promises
promotional
propaganda
protect
protected
protection
protest
protesting
purifier
purify
purifying
quality
radiation
rain
rainstorms
rangeland
recyclable
recycle
recycled
recycling
reduce
reducing
reduction
reductions
reforest
reforestation
refugee
regulation
regulations
renewable
reserve
reserves
reservoir
residue
residues
resource
resources
responsibilities
responsibility
responsible
restorate
restoration
reusable
re-usable
reuse
reused
revegetate
revolution
rights
riparian
risks
river
rivers
rural
sa8000
safety
salary
saving
scarcity
sea
seas
seaside
sedimentation
share-holders
shortage
siltation
smoke
socially
society
soil
solar
solvent
source
sources
species
spill
sponsorship
stakeholder
stakeholders
storm
strategies
stratospheric
stream
streamside
strikes
studies
sulphur
sustainability
sustainable
threatened
timber
topsoil
toxic
toxicity
toxin
trade
transparency
transparent
transportation
trash
tree
trees
trophic
tsunami
typhoon
typhoons
uncertainty
unethical
unfair
unnatural
unnaturally
unraveling
unsustainable
upcycle
upcycling
usage
utility
value
vegan
vegans
vegetarian
vegetarian
vegetarians
vegetation
veggie
victims
villages
violation
volunteering
volunteerism
vote
warming
waste
water
waters
watershed
wealth

wetland	wildlife	woodland	young
wild	wind	workforce	youngs
wilderness	wood	world	zone

Appendix 3 – Global Environmental Conscious: Key Events and Figures