PhDr. Eliza Bachega Casadei, PhD.
School of Advertising and Marketing
R. Joaquim Távora, 1240.
São Paulo, 04015-013, Brazil
eliza.casadei@espm.br
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0769-1820

Full Professor of the Graduate Programme in Communication and Consumer Practices at the School of Advertising and Marketing in São Paulo (PPGCOM ESPM). PhD in Communication Sciences from the School of Communications and Arts of the University of São Paulo.

CONSUMER AGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY PERCEPTIONS: COMMENTS ON HOME APPLIANCES ADVERTISING ON INSTAGRAM

Eliza BACHEGA CASADEI

ABSTRACT:

This article examines the roles of symbolic, material, and competence agencies as reflected in consumer comments on Electrolux's sustainability campaigns on Instagram, and how these agencies shape consumer perceptions of the brand's environmental responsibility. Drawing on the theoretical and methodological foundations of Content Analysis, the study reveals that communications promoting technological innovations that facilitate sustainable practices – without demanding significant changes to consumers' daily habits – are better received. In contrast, campaigns urging more active changes in daily practices face resistance and generate substantial backlash, including accusations of greenwashing. This study underscores the importance of balancing technological innovation with culturally sensitive communication strategies that resonate with consumers' socio-cultural contexts and personal agency.

KEY WORDS:

advertising, consumer agency, consumption, Instagram, sustainability

1 Introduction

According to Bäckman (2024), sustainable consumption practices rest on three key elements: materials, competencies, and meanings. "Materials" refer not only to physical and technological resources but also to how consumers interact with and exercise agency over them, shaping their choices and usage of available resources (Aro 2020). "Competencies" involve the knowledge and skills necessary to adopt sustainable behaviours, while "meanings" pertain to the cultural and social frameworks that lend significance to sustainable actions, often shaped by competing discourses on what constitutes sustainability.

"For brands promoting sustainable consumption, the challenge lies not only in developing environmentally responsible technologies but also in navigating the social meanings attached to sustainability – particularly how these meanings align with aesthetics, tastes, styles, and cultural codes." (Frig & Jaakkola, 2024, p. 6). As Frig and Jaakkola (2024, p. 5) argue, "brands must carefully balance their messaging to convince the public that consumption is inevitable, but not necessarily unsustainable. How effectively this message resonates with the public often depends on the interplay between material and competence agencies".

This article aims to explore the interconnections between symbolic, material, and competence agencies within the specific context of sustainable consumption in the home appliance sector. To do this, we will analyse the comments on Electrolux Brazil's advertising campaigns published on Instagram (@electroluxbr) with sustainability-related themes. We will specifically analyse the comments from the campaigns posted on Instagram in 2023 by Electrolux with the hashtags #Don'tThrowAnythingAway, #Don'tWasteWater, and #YourClothesWithoutExpirationDate, based on the theoretical-methodological assumptions of Content Analysis (Bardin, 2009).

The article aims to discuss how symbolic, material, and competence agencies are manifested in consumer comments about Electrolux's sustainability campaigns on Instagram, and how these agencies influence consumer perceptions of the environmental responsibility promoted by the brand.

2 Theoretical Framework

Various advertising campaigns focusing on sustainability issues are part of a broader movement that emerges "within the context of capitalist organisations and the consumer culture they promote, from the discourse on ethical consumption as one of the possible solutions for addressing the environmental crisis" (Fontenelle, 2023, p. 319). According to Fontenelle (2023), ethical consumption emerged as a discourse aimed at mitigating environmental problems caused by consumer culture but contains important contradictions within its own terms that need to be considered. It is a discourse that proposes an approach seeking to mitigate the negative impacts of consumer culture through responsible production systems and practices, including the choice of products that are environmentally friendly, socially just, and that minimise environmental damage. However, this approach does not deeply question the culture of consumption itself and its roots in capitalism. Thus, although there is, on a discursive level, a call for environmental responsibility and damage mitigation, the discourse still operates within a paradigm that encourages continuous consumption and economic expansion.

The contradictions present in the ethical consumption discourse create fertile ground for accusations of greenwashing, potentially impacting the reputation of brands adopting this perspective. Companies that fail to clearly and concretely demonstrate their sustainable initiatives run the risk of being perceived as deceptive, leading to serious damage to their brand image. Understanding how different agencies and meanings are mobilised by consumers in their daily sustainability practices can provide insights into how social meanings are framed around the theme, particularly in relation to the interaction consumers have with product competencies and materialities.

For home appliance brands, one of the key challenges tied to competence-based agencies lies in the fact that norms around practices like communication, entertainment, cleaning, organising, food storage, and meal preparation are structured around socially accepted ways of doing things and carry emotional significance (Sahakian, 2019). Typically, they are associated with family teachings passed down from generation to generation, correlating washing

or cooking in a certain way not just with a technique but with a set of cultural values and traditions. These teachings go beyond the efficiency or outcome of tasks, incorporating aspects such as care, affection, cultural identity, and negative judgments toward those who do things differently. According to Sahakian (2019), this impacts how discourses proposing to disconnect, wash less, or store food differently are received, which can pose a challenge to sustainability proposals in home appliances.

How consumers relate to the materiality of products is also a potential challenge. In a study on how upper-class families justify and negotiate their consumption decisions, Aro (2020) points out that the concept of material necessity, for example, is often expanded to include luxury items: a larger living room, for example, is often used as justification for purchasing a larger television, turning a consumption desire into a perceived necessity. Families interviewed by Aro (2020) use practical justifications to explain their purchasing decisions through narratives that align their consumption choices with ideas of functionality and efficiency. Such narratives may be framed in terms of sustainability (such as energy savings), but this framing is usually linked to functional aspects of the product. This means that sustainability does not appear as an independent priority, materialised in abstract values of environmental preservation, but rather as something articulated to the practical function of the product.

Aro (2020) also points out that one of the main barriers to the adoption of sustainable practices is the difficulty in establishing practical meanings for sustainable products that are solidified enough to compete with other factors such as price or the perception of comfort.

There is still little consensus on the social meanings of sustainability (Wilk, 2010; Frame & Newton, 2007; Carvalho, 2008; Howard, 2008; Brydges et al., 2022). Since the agencies that correlate sustainable consumption practices with other issues related to the choice of home appliances (Aro 2020; Sun et al., 2021; Mackenzie et al., 2010) and everyday practices (Godfrey et al., 2021; Cooper, 2002) are broad and diverse, the meanings of what consumers understand by sustainability are equally vast and subject to various symbolic influences.

Based on these assumptions, we will analyse, in the following sections, the comments on sustainability campaigns on Electrolux Brazil's Instagram profile (@electroluxbr), with the aim of understanding how consumers engage with the brand's advertisements within this platform. The analysis will focus on the relationship between values linked to sustainable consumption and the agencies related to materiality and competencies expressed in these comments.

3 Methodology and Presentation of Results

The initial research corpus consists of comments on campaigns posted by Electrolux on Instagram in 2023, using the hashtags "#Don'tThrowAnythingAway," "#Don'tWasteWater," and "#YourClothesWithoutExpirationDate," totalling 47 posts published throughout the year. These campaigns were selected because they encompass the brand's sustainability-related themes and are available at the following links:

Table 1: Electrolux campaigns on Instagram

ID	LINK
1	https://www.instagram.com/p/C1AbJU5uj_A
2	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0U3kgYPvEs
3	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0MSdRdMGsx
4	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cy6qVOIuVGs
5	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyyzDiHBbHM
6	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cyglf4MOdCp
7	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyeB7n3R6SG
8	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyV_aIhL04H
9	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyTK0eTtyZ0
10	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyO-OKGgKYa
11	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyMOg4KuC09

12	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyEkb6huRYf/
13	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx_jS_Jrgjq
14	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx6Mo2wuRL2
15	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxyqHHXrzWM
16	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cxv-sgcurVQ
17	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cxs-h5JrMPF
18	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cxq4Jjlr6Qx
19	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxoT1mNrpTs
20	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxaqxvEsX3h
21	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxVj5jVMF4S
22	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxJUKsGPCDf
23	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxGC8BtMOvL
24	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxDqO1EMDu6
25	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw7kbjCOF-U
26	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwpvJJwrGec
27	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwnTPPpoeXf
28	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwlSTfAA2PX
29	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwiGPgrgLYb
30	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cwf_KfloOlw
31	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqtciyypCIn
32	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqoPDBVPszk
33	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqfpRDTv20Z
34	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cqd-8u-O9BF
35	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqOWCWLsSF1
36	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqEQCvGMKuM
37	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cp56R4AsowB
38	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cpnt40HL8UP
39	https://www.instagram.com/p/CnXjRQfv2gK
40	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqL_9sKOJQM
41	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqJYFUKu159
42	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqGwDVVuAtS
43	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cu7b-URhaRr
44	https://www.instagram.com/p/CuW7w6QM2ct
45	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtNI3r1JnQV
46	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cs_Izlksd2R
47	https://www.instagram.com/p/CslsIK8tqc8

Source: Own processing, 2024

A total of 3,624 comments were collected from the analysed videos. Following data extraction, 855 comments were removed, as they were responses from the @electroluxbr profile to its users. Since the analysis focuses solely on user perceptions, these comments were deemed irrelevant to the study's scope. After this exclusion, the final sample comprised 2,768 comments, which formed the data set for the subsequent analyses. Below, we present a chart illustrating the distribution of comments across the analysed videos:
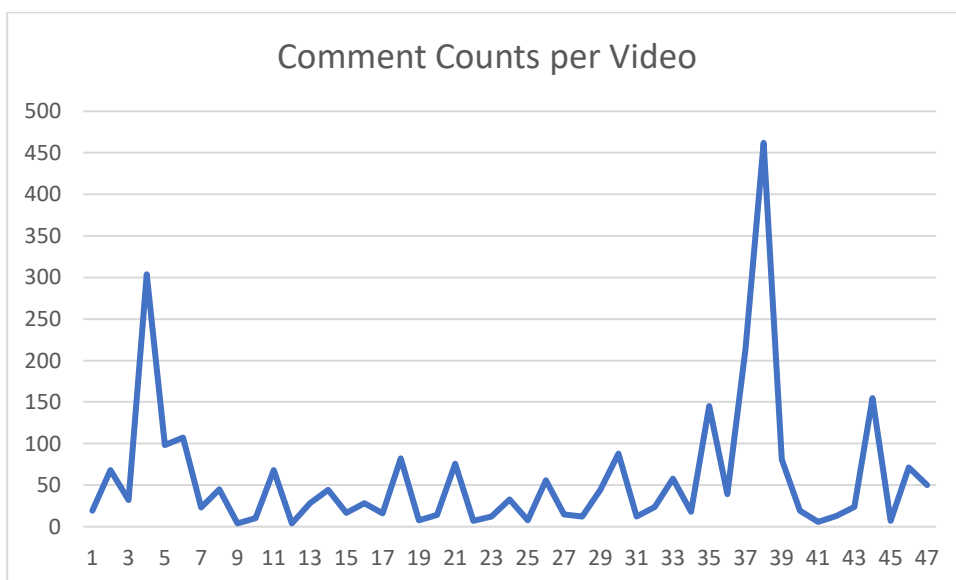
Figure 1: Comments count per video
Source: Own processing, 2024

The comments were analysed using the methodology of Content Analysis, which enables the identification of recurring thematic patterns through the development of coding units. These units are established by segmenting the text into comparable categories, allowing for thematic analysis and the systematic recording of data (Bardin, 2009). Coding involves transforming raw data into organised units, making it possible to describe the key characteristics of the content accurately. To achieve this, both recording and context units were defined (Bardin, 2009). Recording units refer to specific content segments that serve as the foundation for categorisation and frequency counts. Context units, on the other hand, provide a broader scope, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the meaning behind each recording unit.

The recording units are structured around specific themes aligned with the researcher's main questions, focusing on the core ideas that shape the communication (Bardin, 2009). To establish these recording units, keywords representing relevant themes were identified, and the comments were categorised based on the occurrence of these keywords. The proposed themes and their corresponding keywords, which form the basis of the recording units, are as follows:

- Expressions of satisfaction with the product or brand: associations with "love," "adore," "excellent," "satisfied," "happy," "beautiful," "wonderful," "🤩," "❤️," among others.

- Complaints about products or brand: "problem," "defective," "bad," "terrible," "broken," "return," "exchange," among others.

- Questions about the products: "how," "which," "when," "why," "information," "detail," "specification," "price," among others.

- Requests for recommendations/opinions about products to other users: "how," "which," "when," "why," "information," "@user," among others.

- Endorsement of the campaign: "love," "excellent," "congratulations," "🤩," "❤️," "👏," among others.

- Themes related to sustainability: "energy efficiency," "durable," "smart resources," "innovative," "technology," "eco-friendly," "contribution to the environment," "habit change," "positive impact," among others.

- Miscellaneous comments on other aspects of the campaign.

The context units, in turn, provide the coding for studying a recording unit (Bardin, 2009). For instance, if we choose a specific theme as the recording unit, enabling categorisation through thematic criteria, the context units provide the parameters through which these themes can be analysed. To organise and cross-code the units present in the comments, the Atlas TI software was used due to the large volume of data.

In the analysed sample (N = 2,107), the comments were classified into several categories related to aspects of the product, brand, or company. The distribution of comments was as follows:

- **Expressions of satisfaction with the product or brand**: n = 876, representing 41.6% of the sample.
- **Complaints about products or the brand**: n = 257 (12.2% of the sample), primarily focused on delivery times, manufacturing defects, and product pricing.
- **Questions about the products**: n = 435, or 20.6% of the sample.
- **Requests for recommendations/opinions about products to other users**: n = 172, corresponding to 8.2% of the sample.
- **Other themes with lower frequency of occurrence**: n = 367, constituting 17.4% of the sample, including comparisons with other brands, irrelevant links to the videos shared, and comments unrelated to the product or advertisement.

Additionally, within the analysed sample (N = 2,107), a total of n = 1,017 comments focused on specific themes related to the campaigns. The distribution of these comments is detailed as follows:

- **Endorsement of the campaign**: n = 298 (29.3% of thematic comments), primarily identified through the use of emojis such as hearts, applause, smiling faces, and expressions of support.
- **Themes related to sustainability**: n = 186 (18.3% of thematic comments), focusing on environmental issues and sustainable practices promoted by the brand.
- **Comments on other aspects of the campaign**: n = 177 (17.4% of thematic comments), mentioning characteristics such as the attractiveness of the actress or the cuteness of the children featured in the videos.
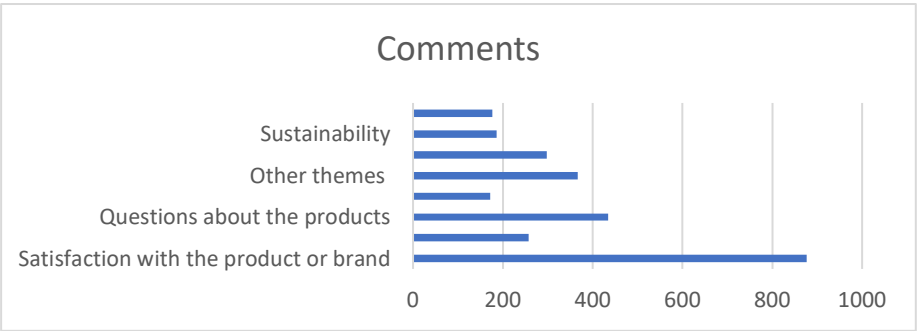

Figure 2: Comments categories
Source: Own processing, 2024

The initial analysis of the data reveals that user comments primarily focus on themes related to purchase intention, product satisfaction, criticism, and inquiries or requests for information. It is observed that only 6.7% of the total sample comments (N = 2,107) mention keywords related to sustainability, such as "sustainability," "environment," "recycling," and "planet." This data suggests that a small proportion of comments (n = 141) reflect concerns or discussions about environmental issues. Despite sustainability being the central theme of the campaigns, these results indicate that the environmental message was not a predominant focus in user interactions, which may imply a disconnection between the content of the campaigns and consumer responses.

Following this initial analysis, we took a closer look at the posts that generated the highest number of comments regarding sustainability. Notably, the only videos that generated ten or more comments on the subject were #39, #38, #16, #11, #37, and #47, as shown in the table below:

Table 2: Comments about sustainability

ID	NUMBER OF COMMENTS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY
39	47
38	17
16	11
11	10
37	10
47	10

Source: Own processing, 2024

The significant quantity of Electrolux campaigns with sustainability-related hashtags in 2023 suggests an attempt to shape the social discourse around environmental responsibility. However, the relative scarcity of direct references to the campaign themes in the comments may indicate a disconnect between the brand's message and the ways consumers engage with sustainability. The discursive analysis of the comments allows us to observe how consumers engage with the theme of sustainability and how meanings of environmental responsibility are negotiated with other circulating discourses and everyday elements.

The comments related to sustainability in the six videos listed in the table were subjected to an in-depth analysis to examine in greater detail the agencies and discursive frames concerning sustainability. These videos underwent a frequency recategorization process, allowing for the identification of agencies associated with materiality and competence. The total volume of comments from each video was analysed according to the following established categories:

- **Praise for the brand, product, or advertisement**: associations with "love," "adore," "excellent," "satisfied," "happy," "beautiful," "wonderful," "😍," "❤️," and similar terms.
- **General criticisms of the brand or product**: "problem," "defective," "bad," "terrible," "broken," "exchange," "return," and similar terms.
- **Direct attacks on the brand or perceptions of greenwashing**: comments expressing distrust or accusing the brand of greenwashing, frequently using terms like "fake," "deceptive," "hypocritical," "lie," "green marketing," "not sustainable," "just advertising," "eco-scam," "manipulation," "opportunists," among others. These comments generally highlight the perceived inconsistency between the brand's environmental discourse and its real practices, reflecting dissatisfaction with the lack of authenticity in the company's sustainable initiatives.
- **Neutral**: comments that do not fit into the previous categories.

The figure below illustrates the percentage distribution of comments on sustainability categorised across six distinct videos. Each bar represents a specific video identified as #11, #16, #37, #38, #39, and #47, with a total of N=903 comments analysed.
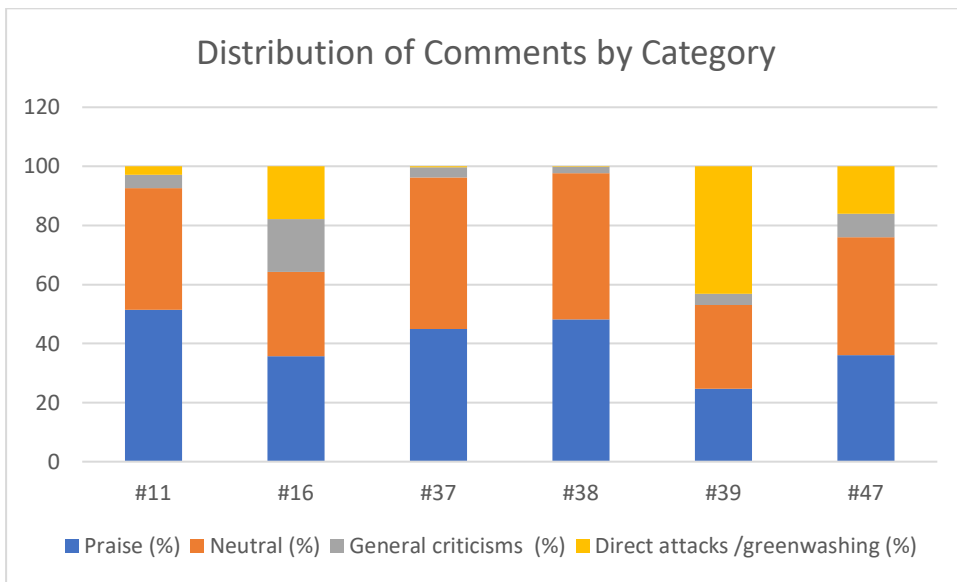
Figure 3: Distribution of comments by category
Source: Own processing, 2024

Based on this categorisation, it is possible to observe that:

- **Praise** is the predominant category, with n=401 comments, representing approximately 44.4% of the total. These comments reflect satisfaction or approval regarding the brand, product, or advertisement.

- **General criticisms** total n=32 comments, or approximately 3.5% of the total. These criticisms are generic in nature and refer to dissatisfaction with the brand or product.

- **Direct attacks on the company and/or perceptions of greenwashing** were identified in n=52 comments, representing approximately 5.8% of the total, highlighting distrust or accusations against the brand regarding sustainable practices.

The most relevant data emerging from this categorisation refers to the unequal distribution between categories in the analysed videos, particularly concerning "direct attacks on the company and/or perceptions of greenwashing." When analysing the distribution of these comments across the videos:

- **Video #39** concentrates the highest number of direct attacks or perceptions of greenwashing, with n=35 comments. This value represents approximately 43.2% of all comments received by this video, indicating a significantly negative public reaction to the sustainable practices presented.

- **Video #47** has n=8 comments in this category, corresponding to 16.0% of the total comments on this video. Although lower than in video #39, this percentage still demonstrates notable concern among viewers regarding the authenticity of the brand's sustainable practices.

- **Video #16** has n=5 comments in this category, representing 17.9% of its total comments.

- **Videos #11, #37,** and **#38** show a lower incidence of direct attack comments or perceptions of greenwashing. Video #11 has n=2 comments (approximately 2.9%), while videos #37 and #38 each have n=1 comment, corresponding to 0.5% and 0.2% of their total comments, respectively.

The variation observed in the frequency of direct attacks and perceptions of greenwashing indicates a disparity in the communicative effectiveness of the videos. While some of them successfully conveyed sustainable practices and received statistically significant positive comments, others performed worse in terms of public perception. The high

percentages of negative perceptions in certain videos, such as #39, #47 and #16, may indicate problems in communicating sustainability initiatives or in the public perception of the authenticity of these actions.

From these data, we can cross-reference the thematic approach of these videos with the comments, analysing how these productions relate to issues of materiality and competence.

Post #39, which generated significantly more comments related to sustainability than other posts by @electroluxbr and had the highest number of comments directly criticising the company and expressing perceptions of greenwashing, focuses on the need to reduce meat consumption to protect the environment. The post is titled "Understand why eating less meat is all about sustainability". The cards show: "One day without eating meat makes all the difference: -14kg of CO_2 in the atmosphere, 3,400 litres of water saved per person, 24 m² of land preserved". The caption reads: "Aligned with the movement's principles and objectives, we share the focus on reducing water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by 80% in operations by 2025. And you? How do you make a difference in your day-to-day life?".

As shown, the majority of the comments challenge Electrolux's commitment to sustainability, including: "And here starts the politically correct wave for @eletroluxbrasil!!! 😣 🥵 😔 "; "I eat meat and crops cause more damage to the environment. End of story"; "Oh Elux! Very strange post! A bit too persuasive! It would be much more interesting to teach recycling, using fewer appliances, and unpacking less than to stop eating protein!"; "Now @electroluxbr is messing with people's protein intake. Who doesn´t nail it doesn't profit!"; "Is this serious? Globalist agenda now? Do your part and stop trying to persuade others on what they should do. Why not give tips on conservation and reducing waste? That would be much better!"; and "Lettuce doesn't use water, huh? Even you @electrolux are in on this globalist agenda?".

Post #47, on the other hand, features a video about an Electrolux washing machine. The piece begins with Brazilian actress Claudia Raia saying, "Unrestrained consumption is over, right?!". The Brazilian cartoon character Monica, from Maurício de Souza, then says: "You can make history by repeating outfits". After showing the product's water-saving technology, the piece concludes with the narrator saying, "Because well-cared-for clothes have no expiration date". The caption reads: "Your #ClothesWithoutExpirationDate, so you can wear and repost whenever you want. Every day is a day to enjoy your favourite look if you take care of it with the Electrolux Care Machine". Although the campaign received significant praise in the comments, there were perceptions of greenwashing in comments like: "Unrestrained consumption is over. LOL, coming from a millionaire who collects shoes. LOL" and "@denisededau exactly, I'm also not buying after seeing this ad".

Post #16 features a child interviewing influencer @_marinamorais about her energy-saving habits and food preparation practices. Among the comments, we highlight: "The time she spent explaining with the fridge open was already a waste of energy 😂 😂 😂 " and "Trying to blame the population for energy waste, but what the population spends doesn't even come close to what industries consume. Oh, please".

These posts share a common discursive strategy of encouraging consumption: they appeal to people's ability to make relatively simple changes in their daily habits to contribute to environmental protection. Whether by eating less meat in their daily lives or repeating outfits to buy fewer clothes, these posts appeal to the individual competencies of consumers in their everyday practices, emphasising that everyone has the capacity to make conscious changes to positively impact the environment. This approach not only promotes sustainability but also appeals to individuals' competencies in adopting practices that minimise the ecological impact of their daily actions.

Posts #38, #11, and #37 adopt different discursive strategies to promote consumption.

Post #38 features influencer @danni.ricci showcasing the Electrolux Bottom Freezer refrigerator, highlighting its technological features that promote sustainability, such as energy savings and the ability to preserve food more effectively. The caption reads: "Only Electrolux Bottom Freezer refrigerators have the #Don'tThrowAnythingAway technology: a set of features that help you preserve food for much longer, and at the ideal temperature! @danni.ricci shows us how it works! #YourHomeWellLived 😊 ." The majority of the comments expressed support for the campaign, with statements like: "Mine is perfect, never had problems, and the energy consumption dropped significantly. I love this model ❤️ "; "I bought mine in December 2022. So far, I have no

complaints. I researched a lot before purchasing this model. It's beautiful, silent, spacious, and super economical. I love it"; "I've had an Electrolux for over 10 years and have no complaints. It survived a flood and still going strong!"

Posts #11 and #37 follow similar themes and approaches, with influencers @larissagloor, and @thaisdutrasa, respectively, showcasing the technology behind Electrolux refrigerators for food preservation and energy savings. The comments also align with the positive tone, as evidenced by comments like: "Great tips! Loved it <3"; "The easiest way I found to regulate and save energy was by using Autosense, it worked perfectly 😍"; "I'm in love with mine 😍 it really preserves food for sooo much longer! I'm so happy with my purchase 😍"; "I love mine, and it truly doesn't waste a thing"; and "I own one, and the energy savings are real and very satisfying. Plus, my fridge is beautiful 😍😍😍."

In this set of videos, the primary focus is not on consumers' competence in their everyday practices but rather on the materiality of Electrolux products, which are portrayed as capable of promoting energy savings, water efficiency, and better food preservation, among other features. The emphasis is on the technological and innovative characteristics of the products, which are presented as automatic and efficient solutions for sustainability, shifting the responsibility for environmental action from individuals to the objects they use. This narrative suggests that simply choosing these products represents a commitment to sustainable practices, reducing the need for active changes in consumer behaviour.

The different forms of engagement with the theme of sustainability in these comments, and the varying levels of adherence to the topic, will be discussed next.

4 Results and Discussion

Frame and Newton (2007) emphasise that many sustainability-promoting advertisements, particularly those from government campaigns, tend to adopt an authoritative tone. Advertisers often position themselves as experts on sustainability and sustainable consumption, overlooking the fact that citizens and consumers also possess specialised knowledge about the scope and implementation of sustainable practices. This is a characteristic present in Electrolux's campaigns analysed in this article. Although the posts with the highest number of comments related to sustainability differ from each other, they share a discourse that positions the brand as knowledgeable about the subject, as an expert in environmental issues.

This authority manifests itself in two ways. In one set of ads (notably represented in posts #39, #16 and #47), the campaigns seem designed to involve individuals in a sustainable lifestyle. They are not directed at consumers already committed to a "green" lifestyle but instead appeal to individuals' ability to make relatively simple changes to their behaviour to contribute to sustainability. The brand's authority is discursively built by encouraging change to adopt positive attitudes toward the environment. Environmental change, in this context, is directed toward individuals' daily competencies, emphasising the active role each person can play by adopting small sustainable actions, such as reducing meat consumption or reusing clothing.

In a second set of ads (#38, #11, and #37), the authority discourse materialises differently: the brand is not just an encourager for individual change but assumes the role of possessing technology capable of driving the change. Here, the consumer's daily actions are not questioned, but their purchase decisions are: opting for an Electrolux appliance, according to this discourse, already demonstrates a commitment to sustainability. In this case, the materiality of Electrolux products is central, highlighting attributes such as energy efficiency, water conservation, and greater food durability. These products are presented as tangible, technological solutions that facilitate a more sustainable lifestyle without requiring significant behavioural changes from the consumer. Thus, sustainability is embedded in the technology itself, suggesting that the mere act of acquiring these products constitutes a sustainable practice, shifting responsibility from the individual's competence to the effectiveness of the product purchased. The brand, therefore, positions itself as a provider of tools that make sustainability accessible and practical through its technological innovations.

While both groups of advertisements engage with social relationships and individuals' sense of responsibility towards themselves, their families, the environment, and society at large (Frame & Newton, 2007), the driving force for change varies between the consumer groups: in the first group of posts, it lies in changing everyday habits and competencies; in the second, it is structured around a purchasing decision and materiality, as the technology employed by Electrolux is presented as helping to build a more sustainable world, even if there is no significant change in daily habits by individuals.

Regarding these two thematic approaches to sustainability solutions, a pattern can be observed in the comments on the posts. Ads that encourage more active engagement from the consumer and propose changes in daily practices tend to receive more negative comments compared to those that suggest Electrolux's technology can address environmental problems.

By criticising consumers' supposedly "wrong" daily practices, the brand seems to provoke negative feelings in the comments. A larger number of comments that directly attack the company or accuse it of greenwashing can be observed in comparison to other posts. By holding individuals accountable, as seen in many comments, there is a defensive and reactive stance from consumers, who then begin to blame the brand for environmental issues.

Regarding the defensive stance observed in the comments, research by Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2011) highlights that recycling and electronic consumption behaviours at the individual and family levels are more influenced by personal connections than by external factors like government policies or advertising campaigns. Given that domestic tasks are learned through family relationships, correlated with a "know-how" that, while varying from family to family, establishes aspects that individuals internalise as correct or incorrect actions in daily life (such as washing dishes with more or less water or eating certain types of food), these behaviours are imbued with a strong disciplinary character and are difficult to change. Washing dishes differently from how it was taught in the family context not only implies a change in technique but also involves a value judgment about the individual's hygiene. The authors suggest that normative social influence on environmental conservation can produce a greater change in behaviour compared to information that highlights other reasons for conserving (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2011). Thus, questioning individuals' everyday habits is also risky, as it involves confronting deeply rooted norms and values acquired and reinforced over time (Sahakian, 2019).

Attacking individuals' everyday practices could be a risky move for advertising campaigns. According to Aro (2020, p. 498), "it is important to critically account for the 'stickiness' (capacities for resisting change) of non-negotiable parts of domestic practices with embedded consumption of materials, water and electricity". This resistance refers to individuals' reluctance to change ingrained practices that involve the use of natural resources. As mentioned earlier, domestic practices are heavily influenced by family norms and values and are seen as non-negotiable aspects of everyday life (Aro, 2020). This occurs because such practices are not merely operational techniques but carry cultural and identity meanings. Moreover, the argument for sustainability does not involve only rational information on the subject but also considers the emotional and symbolic aspects associated with it.

The set of ads offering Electrolux technology as a solution to the sustainability problem engaged more positive comments about the brand. This can largely be explained by the fact that choosing products considered sustainable reflects not only a concern with environmental impact but also a way of expressing the consumer's identity, seeking to align consumption practices with personal values, self-image, and social expression. In this sense, Carfagna et al. (2014) highlight the role of social interactions in how sustainable consumption practices are reproduced and transmitted. For the authors, environmental responsibility practices are far from being individual actions and are instead collective consumption strategies that constitute an emerging eco-habitus, a kind of cultural capital linked to a strategy of distinction (Carfagna et al., 2014). In this sense, social networks serve as a showcase for individuals to demonstrate their adherence to environmental concerns, provided their practices are not subject to censorship and that a more practical solution to the problem is offered.

In the analysed corpus, this is evident in comments that praise the technology used by Electrolux. This is particularly noticeable in **Post #11**, titled "POV: The person who opens the fridge to think". The video shows influencer @larissagloor opening the fridge and thinking, "Girl, no food or electricity bill can handle you opening the fridge every time you think". What could sound like a reprimand of a consumer's daily habit is quickly reversed by the solution offered by Electrolux technology: "This Electrolux fridge has artificial intelligence that helps me

preserve food for longer". This appliance monitors the consumer's door-opening habits and programmes itself to save energy. Although the ad doesn't explain exactly how the fridge's artificial intelligence works to achieve these goals, the relief of responsibility from the consumer generated positive reactions in the comments. Many of them read: "My mom freaks out if someone keeps the fridge door open"; "Opening the fridge to think cools the ideas 😂"; "🤣 🤣 🤣 🤣 I've done this a lot"; "The fridge's temperature refreshes your memory"; "My husband freaks out when I leave it open while I cook, grabbing things as I need them". In these reactions, consumers confess their environmental "sins" but feel absolved by the brand's technology, allowing them to publicly acknowledge behaviours that are less environmentally friendly in a humorous way.

The volume of positive comments on this type of post can be explained not only because the ads offer a solution that is easier to incorporate into everyday life (buying a specific fridge instead of changing habits) but also because they consider that consumer agency is distributed across their sociocultural contexts and mental dispositions, as well as in the material world (Aro, 2020). In these comments, sustainability moves away from a generic ideal to be pursued in the future and instead becomes rooted in a material element of daily life – the extension of food shelf life, product durability, or the energy savings they offer.

The dispute over meanings regarding how consumers reacted to, interpreted, and negotiated the meanings of sustainability in the analysed comments relates closely to the discussion articulated by Strengers, Nicholls and Maller (2016). The authors point out that in many contemporary communicative practices, there is a dominant ideal of the consumer, who is typically an adult human capable of making autonomous, functional, and rational decisions about the energy consumption in their home. However, this model of the ideal consumer is inadequate, as " non-traditional consumers of energy, such as babies, pets, pests and pool pumps" are also "performers of or materials in practices that consume energy". Authors argue that it is more appropriate to direct policies and educational and communicative practices related to sustainability toward a different articulation of the ideal consumer, one that includes understanding consumers as human and non-human actors operating in distributed practice sets (Strengers et al., 2016). In sustainability-related advertising campaigns, this seems to be a framework that should be taken into consideration.

Bäckman (2024) also argues that since practices are shaped by materials, this perspective supports the view that agency is distributed among elements and includes non-human agency, such as the materiality of household appliances, in sustainable practices. He suggests that, although human and non-human actors differ in nature, human agency should not be privileged, as humans do not solely control the social world. From this sociomaterial perspective, both human and non-human elements contribute to practices that achieve agency through their interconnectedness.

The comments present in Electrolux's posts about sustainability seem to corroborate this interpretation. The meanings consumers assign to sustainability practices involve less their own actions toward the environment and instead reveal the value placed on non-human agents, particularly embodied in the analysed products as technology imagined as solving environmental problems. It is this approach of technology as the redeemer of environmental issues that garnered the highest positive engagement with the sustainability theme.

5 Conclusion

This study aimed to discuss how symbolic, material, and competence agencies are manifested in consumer comments on Electrolux's sustainability campaigns on Instagram and how these agencies influence consumer perceptions of the environmental responsibility promoted by the brand on its Instagram profile.

The results reveal that the **material agencies** represented by Electrolux's technological innovations tend to generate more favourable perceptions among consumers. Positive comments predominate when products are presented as enablers of a sustainable lifestyle that does not require significant changes in consumers' daily habits. This approach, which shifts the responsibility for sustainable action to the technology embedded in the products, seems to resonate more with consumers' expectations and everyday practices.

On the other hand, posts that refer to consumers' **competence** in relation to sustainability – i.e., that appeal to consumers' ability to make conscious changes in their habits to contribute to environmental sustainability – face more resistance and scepticism, as evidenced by perceptions of greenwashing and direct attacks on the brand.

This contrast suggests that consumers' perceptions of sustainability are influenced by how these practices are communicated in relation to how easily they can be integrated into daily life. Technology, when presented as a facilitator of sustainable behaviour, is better received, while messages that challenge established practices face resistance.

For brands aiming to effectively promote sustainable practices, it is crucial to understand and address the multiplicity of agencies involved in consumption practices. Recognising that consumers operate within specific sociocultural contexts and considering the agency of both human and non-human actors can offer a more effective path to engagement and acceptance of sustainability messages. Lastly, this research contributes to the understanding of the dynamics between brands and consumers in the context of sustainable consumption practices, highlighting the importance of communication strategies that respect and acknowledge the complexity of the social and material interactions that permeate consumption.
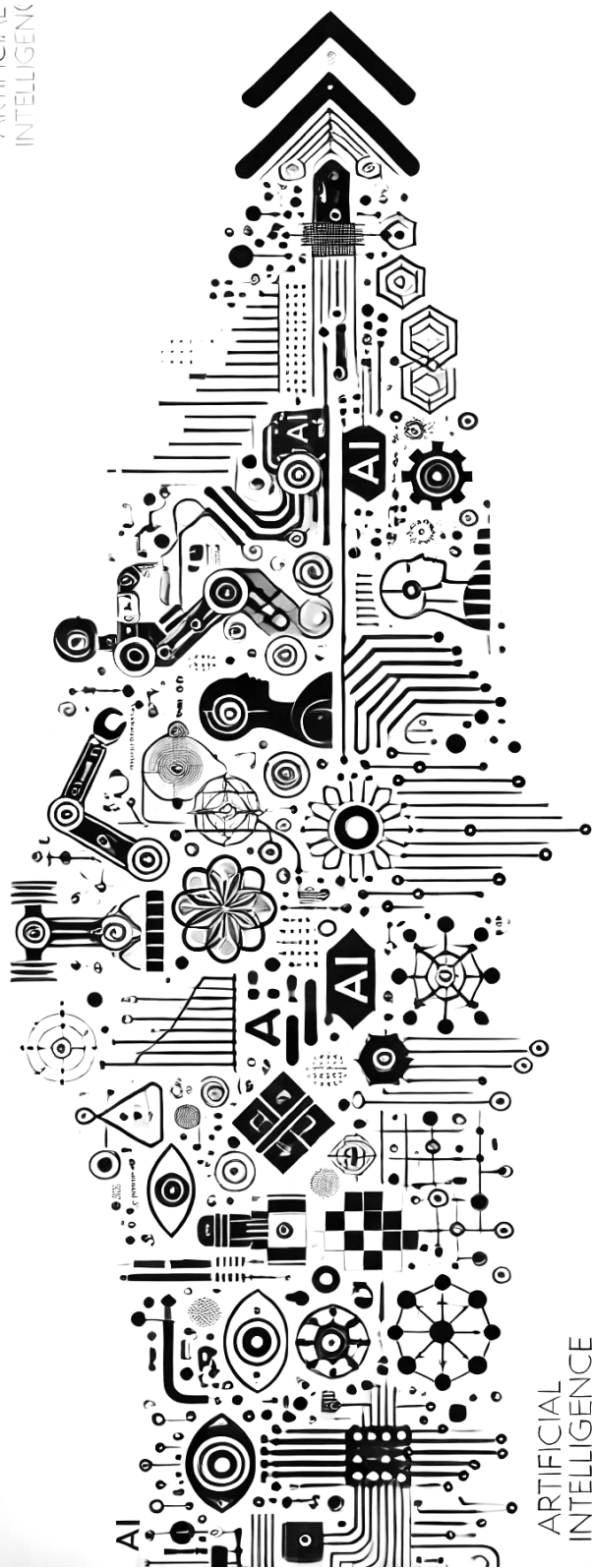
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