

## RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

# When Luxury Brands Meet Artificial Intelligence: How Brand Longevity Shapes Consumer Responses to AI-Designed Products

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## ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming branding, extending to core creative functions such as product design. This raises a broader question of when adopting a new technology coheres with a brand. This tension is most acute in the luxury sector, which is deeply symbolic and historically resistant to technology adoption. While some heritage-rich luxury houses and emerging brands are experimenting with AI-designed products, such adoption may pose strategic risks. For high-longevity brands, whose identity is built on history, heritage, and symbolic continuity, AI's associations with automation and technological modernity can conflict with the brand schema consumers rely on. This research examines how brand longevity, operationalized through heritage-related associations, impacts consumer evaluations of AI-designed luxury products, drawing on four online experiments across fictitious and real brands, functional (technology) and emotional (fashion) product categories, and different countries. Results show that AI-designed products from high-longevity brands are perceived as a poor brand–AI fit, leading to lower brand authenticity, less favorable product attitudes, and reduced product prestige. Simulated behavioral contexts revealed that consumers were more likely to ignore and less likely to favor or seek more information about AI-designed products from long-lived brands. Individual AI attitudes moderate these effects. The research extends luxury branding theory by introducing brand longevity as a critical factor in AI integration in luxury product design and offers managerial guidance for balancing innovation with luxury brand longevity in AI adoption strategies.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping global branding strategies across different business sectors (Davenport et al. 2020; Grewal et al. 2021; Puntoni et al. 2021). Even the traditionally tech-averse luxury sector, long reliant on human interactions (Okonkwo 2009), is undergoing a paradigm shift. In luxury branding, AI is moving brands beyond basic retail applications (e.g., chatbots; Chung et al. 2020) into core activities such as product design, which was once the exclusive domain of human designers (Xu and Mehta 2022). For example, LVMH uses its MaIA platform, powered by generative and predictive AI, to inspire product designs across 75 brands (Bousquette 2025). Moncler, in collaboration with Maison Meta, created the

Verone AI Jacket, using AI to reimagine quilted textures (Gonzalez 2024). BIng, a high-end jewelry startup, applies generative AI to turn sketches or text prompts into photo-realistic 3D jewelry renderings (Vogue Business 2024). As is evident, both long-established and emerging luxury firms are experimenting with using AI for product design.

However, luxury brands are typically slower to embrace digital transformation than nonluxury brands (Xu and Mehta 2022) because they prioritize heritage and timelessness over digital innovation to preserve a coherent brand identity (Kapferer and Bastien 2017; Pantano et al. 2022). Notable exceptions are

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luxury brands whose core offering is inherently technological—such as watchmakers, automotive manufacturers, or high-end electronics—where innovation is part of the brand's fundamental value proposition and thus more readily embraced (Chandon et al. 2016). Nonetheless, the luxury-technology tension is especially salient in emotional and experiential product categories such as fashion, perfumes, or fine jewelry (Pantano et al. 2024). Also, consistent with the brand ambidexterity concept, consumer acceptance of innovation may depend on whether a brand adopts technology for exploration (disruptive change) or exploitation (incremental enhancement of existing operations) (O'Reilly and Tushman 2008). Research shows mixed consumer responses to AI in such luxury categories: AI can enhance functional perceptions and, when perceived as highly creative, sustain brand essence, but it can also reduce emotional appeal, authenticity, and perceived effort, leading to weaker brand evaluations (Jung et al. 2025; Kim et al. 2025; Rahman et al. 2023; To et al. 2025; Xu and Mehta 2022). These ambivalent responses to AI may stem from consumers' shared core associations with luxury, cultivated over time by luxury brands, which center on heritage, timelessness, history, continuity, and, as emphasized in this study, longevity (Kapferer and Florence 2016; Ko et al. 2019; Shukla et al. 2022).

In fact, brand longevity is a core element of luxury heritage (Kapferer and Florence 2016; Pecot, Merchant, et al. 2022; Zhou et al. 2025). It refers to the length of time a brand has existed while maintaining competitiveness and relevance (Perron-Brault et al. 2024; Preece et al. 2019). Luxury companies often use brand longevity as a resource that is impossible to copy (Dion and Borraz 2015). However, a luxury brand's longevity can create rigid consumer expectations that resist the brand's change (Perron-Brault et al. 2024; Preece et al. 2019). In the context of AI-designed products, high-longevity brands risk a perceived poor fit between their heritage-centered identity and the modern, disruptive image of AI. This tension represents a promising research avenue in the luxury industry, where many brands center their identity on longevity. For example, Hermès builds its identity on longevity, using its 1837 founding date, equestrian heritage, iconic designs, and family legacy (Leitch 2020).

The existing literature on AI in luxury has yet to examine the role of brand longevity. Prior research has primarily addressed emotional versus functional value perceptions of AI-designed products (Xu and Mehta 2022), the role of AI-human creativity (Pantano et al. 2024; To et al. 2025), and the relational aspects of AI interactions (Kim et al. 2025). However, no studies have explored how consumers perceive the fit between AI-designed products and luxury brands' longevity, nor the evaluations such perceptions generate.

Therefore, this study investigates how luxury brand longevity influences consumer evaluations of AI-designed products. The study uses a multicountry sample. It includes economically and culturally diverse markets with varying attitudes toward AI: the United States, Italy, the United Kingdom, and South Africa (IPSOS 2023; KPMG 2025).

Methodologically, the study tests the effect through four online experiments. Initial studies use fictitious brand stimuli. A

subsequent replication with real luxury brands confirms external validity. Results are consistent across functional (technology) and emotional (fashion) luxury product categories and across different approaches to product innovation (brand ambidexterity). Theoretical contributions are primarily offered to the literature on technology acceptance in the luxury context. We show that for high-longevity brands, AI-designed products trigger a sequential mediation: perceived poor brand-AI fit undermines brand authenticity, which in turn drives more negative product attitudes and diminished product prestige. Individual attitudes toward AI moderate the relationship between brand longevity and brand-AI fit. These results hold consistently across our multicountry sample. Furthermore, on a simulated retail website, consumers showed negative behavioral reactions to AI-designed products from high-longevity brands. Consumers clicked to ignore such products more often, rarely adding them to favorites or seeking further information. For low-longevity luxury brands, this chain attenuates. Managerial implications suggest that high-longevity luxury brands should integrate AI cautiously to protect their heritage and target tech-enthusiastic niches selectively.

## 1 | Theoretical Background

### 1.1 | The Impact of AI on the Luxury Sector

Luxury is characterized by strong symbolic meaning, controlled scarcity, exceptional craftsmanship and heritage, and premium pricing that reflects its cultural and experiential value (Ko et al. 2019). Luxury brands have traditionally been reluctant to adopt technology (Xu and Mehta 2022), as they prefer to remain anchored in the traditional values that the concept of luxury represents, namely heritage, know-how, craftsmanship, artisanship, human capital, and timelessness (Pantano et al. 2022). Accordingly, they are slower to embrace digital transformations than nonluxury brands, as this adoption can potentially damage the prestige and authenticity of their products and the heritage they convey to customers (Pantano et al. 2022). However, this resistance may vary by product category. Functional luxury categories, such as automotive, watchmaking, and high-end audio, naturally integrate innovation into their brand promise, whereas emotional luxury categories, such as fashion, perfumes, and cosmetics, derive their value primarily from symbolic and experiential associations rooted in longevity and heritage (Chandon et al. 2016). This makes them more sensitive to the perceived disruption that AI adoption may introduce. Also, from a brand ambidexterity perspective, consumer reactions to AI may depend on how a luxury brand's technology adoption is perceived. Technology adoption can be exploratory, introducing disruptive changes that redefine brand practices and capabilities. Alternatively, it can be exploitative, incrementally enhancing and reinforcing existing heritage-consistent operations (O'Reilly and Tushman 2008).

Across the emerging literature, AI in luxury is welcomed for functional contributions, yet remains problematic when it threatens the emotional, symbolic, and creative foundations of luxury. AI-generated outputs can reduce perceived effort and emotional intensity, leading to lower authenticity evaluations and poorer brand assessments—unless the output is sufficiently creative (To et al. 2025; Xu and Mehta 2022). Conversely, AI can

enhance perceptions of technical competence and novelty, particularly when performance cues complement the luxury offering (Xu and Mehta 2022). Also, AI can preserve symbolic brand essence when consumers interpret its creative contribution as meaningful rather than mechanical (Pantano et al. 2024). Generative AI that conveys creativity increases trust and perceived humanness, thereby enhancing advertising evaluations (Jung et al. 2025). At the experiential level, AI-powered technologies can strengthen brand personality and willingness to buy among status-oriented consumers (Sestino 2024). Critically, AI in luxury must feel relational and supportive rather than mechanical (Kim et al. 2025). AI should be integrated invisibly, without disrupting the brand's aura or ritualized consumption (Cenizo 2025). Table 1 summarizes the research on AI in luxury.

In summary, these studies position AI not as inherently damaging to luxury but as a tool whose effectiveness depends on the brand's context. Each luxury brand's identity has a unique set of elements (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. 2019; Ko et al. 2019). Some studies already acknowledge that luxury brand identity tends to resist technological adoption to preserve heritage and tradition (Pantano et al. 2022, 2024; Xu and Mehta 2022). However, there appears to be little empirical research on how specific identity elements, such as brand longevity, interact with AI adoption in product design. This study aims to address this gap by examining the relationship between the longevity of luxury brands and AI-designed products.

## 1.2 | Brand Longevity, Brand-AI Fit, and Consumer Evaluations of Ai-Designed Products

Brand longevity refers to how long a brand has existed and endured in the market through social salience and sustained consumer engagement (Perron-Brault et al. 2024; Preece et al. 2019). Brand longevity implies consistency, historical depth, and a track record of quality (Aaker 1996; Pecot, Merchant, et al. 2022). In the luxury sector, particularly, longevity contributes to a brand's inimitable symbolic capital (Dion and Borraz 2015; Kapferer and Florence 2016; Zhou et al. 2025). Luxury brands intentionally embed longevity into their identity through founding dates, visual symbols, and heritage narratives (Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022). The most immediate signal of brand longevity is the founding date ("established since..." or "since 18XX") (Pecot, Merchant, et al. 2022). Yet this is far from the only way brands communicate their longevity. Visual and graphic elements (such as vintage imagery, aged textures, and period-appropriate typography) also serve to evoke longevity (Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022). Longevity claims are further reinforced by foregrounding brand narrative: drawing on the company's history, its founder's story, early production methods, and original retail spaces (Pecot et al. 2019; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022; Preece et al. 2019). Nevertheless, brand longevity in luxury can be a constraint, as it creates rigid consumer expectations (particularly around history and heritage) which may force the brand to resist change or innovation, such as AI, in order to preserve its identity of longevity (Han et al. 2021; Perron-Brault et al. 2024; Preece et al. 2019).

This mismatch can be explained through Schema Theory (Fiske 1982), which holds that individuals organize prior

knowledge into cognitive structures (schemata) that shape expectations, guide information processing, and facilitate decision-making (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Sujan et al. 1989). In marketing contexts, consumers develop brand schemata comprising all associations attached to a brand and the relationships among them (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016). Brand schemata form a pattern of expectations against which new brand information is evaluated (Halkias 2015). When new information disrupts an established schema, incongruence arises (Fiske and Taylor 1991). For high-longevity brands, consumer schemata are built around expectations of history and brand age (Dion and Borraz 2015). Low-longevity brands, by contrast, anchor their identity in contemporaneity and modernity, and thus carry no such deeply rooted expectations. AI's association with automation and technological efficiency violates expectations of high longevity, leading to a perceived lack of fit between the brand and its AI-designed products.

"Fit" denotes the perceived congruence between a brand and a new element—such as a product, influencer, or cause—and reflects how well that element aligns with the brand's established image (Breves et al. 2019; DelVecchio 2005; Mazodier and Merunka 2012). We extend this concept to introduce *brand-AI fit*, defined as the degree to which consumers perceive AI as consistent with and appropriate for a brand's identity, values, and associations. In this study, brand-AI fit specifically reflects whether consumers view the integration of AI into luxury product design as compatible with the brand. Drawing on schema theory, we propose that for high-longevity brands, AI-designed products clash with entrenched expectations of heritage, history, and timelessness, resulting in poor brand-AI fit. In contrast, low-longevity brands, whose identity is not anchored in historical legacy, present fewer expectations for consumers to violate, and thus AI integration is perceived as a better fit with their brand identity.

Low brand-AI fit then may undermine brand authenticity. Authenticity in luxury is grounded in a brand's perceived faithfulness to its heritage and identity-consistent practices across time (Morhart et al. 2015; Moulard et al. 2016). When brand-AI fit is low, consumers interpret the use of AI in product design as a deviation from timelessness, history, and heritage (Morhart et al. 2015). Authenticity judgments are sensitive to perceived consistency between a brand's actions and its core identity. When a brand's behavior appears to contradict its defining values, consumers question whether it remains true to what it has always stood for (Beverland 2005). In contrast, if low-longevity brands implement AI in product design, this may be seen as a better brand-AI fit and, thus, more authentic for their contemporary and "young" brand.

Finally, diminished brand authenticity propagates downstream to product-level evaluations. A product designed by AI, seen as inauthentic relative to the brand's longevity, no longer inherits the symbolic capital that longevity confers (Kapferer and Bastien 2017). Consumers evaluate the product less favorably overall (product attitude), as the incongruence signals a failure to embody the qualities they associate with the brand (Sujan et al. 1989). Indeed, attitudes toward a product are shaped not only by its functional attributes but by the degree to which it is perceived as a legitimate expression of the brand's identity—

TABLE 1 | Summary of the studies on the implementation of AI in luxury operations.

| References            | Research goal                                                                                                                                                      | Theory                                                                                              | Method                                                                    | Main findings                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cenizo (2025)         | Explore how luxury professionals perceive AI integration and the conditions needed to adopt it without compromising exclusivity or customer                        | Consumer Culture Theory; Service-Dominant Logic; Experience Economy                                 | Qualitative, semistructured interviews with luxury sector experts         | AI should be invisibly integrated, reinforcing narrative and emotional dimensions, serving as symbolic mediator rather than purely technical tool.                                                                         |
| Jung et al. (2025)    | Investigate how perceived artificial creativity affects purchase intentions via trust, perceived humanness, and advertising attributes in AI-generated luxury ads. | Creativity Theory; Advertising Effectiveness Model; Trust Theory                                    | Online survey ( $n = 461$ ) with exposure to AI-generated luxury ads      | Perceived artificial creativity boosts trust and perceived humanness, enhancing informativeness, entertainment, credibility, and novelty. This leads to higher purchase intentions.                                        |
| Kim et al. (2025)     | Examine how social presence and emotional appeal influence adoption of AI assistant services in luxury brands using an extended UTAUT framework.                   | Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) with emotional and relational extensions | Survey of South Korean consumers, Structural Equation Modeling            | Emotional appeal influences all UTAUT dimensions; social presence affects all but effort expectancy. Effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions predict adoption intention; trust moderates effects. |
| Pantano et al. (2024) | Understand how generative AI and LLMs influence creativity, brand essence, and symbolic values in luxury product design.                                           | Creativity and Brand Essence Framework                                                              | Three qualitative studies                                                 | GAI-designed luxury products can reflect and reinforce brand essence; perceptions depend on awareness of AI authorship; proposes product/brand essence matrix based on creativity and quality.                             |
| Rahman et al. (2023)  | Examine the role of AI-powered digital assistance and multisensory cues in enhancing online luxury shopping experience via engagement.                             | Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R); Technology Readiness and Acceptance Model (TRAM)                | Mixed-method: semistructured interviews + survey (PLS-SEM, fsQCA)         | AI-powered digital assistance boosts engagement, improving shopping experience; multisensory cues strengthen AI-engagement relationship.                                                                                   |
| Sestino (2024)        | Assess how varying levels of AI/IoT integration in luxury shopping environments affect brand personality appeal and purchase intention.                            | Brand Personality Appeal; Status Consumption Orientation                                            | Two experiments manipulating tech level (Voice Assistants, Smart Mirrors) | High-intelligence environments enhance brand personality appeal, increasing purchase intention; effect moderated by status consumption orientation.                                                                        |
| To et al. (2025)      | Investigate why disclosing AI-generated imagery in luxury ads leads to negative consumer responses.                                                                | Effort Heuristic; Brand Authenticity                                                                | Three experiments (field and lab)                                         | Disclosure of AI-generated ads lowers perceived effort and authenticity, reducing ad evaluations; effect mitigated when AI output is highly creative.                                                                      |

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

| References          | Research goal                                                                                                                                                                         | Theory                                                                            | Method                | Main findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Xu and Mehta (2022) | Examine how AI-led design affects consumers' perceptions of emotional and functional values of luxury brands, brand essence, and purchase intentions, especially among excursionists. | Psychology of Automation; Luxury Value Framework (emotional vs. functional value) | Series of experiments | AI-led design reduces perceived emotional value but can enhance functional value. Negative effects are stronger for emotionally driven luxury (e.g., fashion) but attenuated when functional value is salient (e.g., automobiles). |
| Present paper       | Investigate how luxury brand longevity influences consumer evaluations of AI-designed products                                                                                        | Schema theory; Brand Longevity, Brand fit                                         | Series of experiments | For high-longevity brands, AI-designed products are often perceived as a poor fit with the brand, leading to reduced perceptions of brand authenticity, and more negative product attitudes and perceived prestige.                |

when authenticity is in doubt, the product itself becomes a source of dissonance rather than desire (Park et al. 2010). Similarly, because longevity-based prestige depends on the continuity of practice and the narrative of lineage it sustains (Kapferer and Florence 2016; Zhou et al. 2025), an AI-designed product from an inauthentic-seeming high-longevity brand is perceived as lacking the rarity and distinction that justify premium status, thereby reducing perceived product prestige.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, we hypothesize that:

**H1.** *For high- (vs. low-) longevity luxury brands, consumers will report less favorable attitudes toward AI-designed products (H1a) and lower perceived prestige of AI-designed products (H1b), sequentially mediated by lower brand–AI fit and lower brand authenticity.*

### 1.3 | The Moderating Role of Attitude Toward AI

Longoni et al. (2019) define attitude toward AI as consumers' affective and cognitive evaluations of decisions made by AI rather than by humans. Empirical evidence shows that consumer attitudes to AI are highly heterogeneous (Ghazali et al. 2024; Hasan et al. 2021; Prentice and Nguyen 2020; Wien and Peluso 2021). On the one hand, some individuals hold a general belief that technology, including AI, will improve society and daily life, a mindset known as technological optimism (Blut and Wang 2020; Ghazali et al. 2024). Optimists see more benefits in specific technologies (Ghazali et al. 2024). For example, AI technologies are often valued for their functional benefits, such as enhanced efficiency, precision, and speed in information processing (Chan and Choi 2025; Ma and Sun 2020). Some consumers experience excitement and enthusiasm toward novel technologies (Jain et al. 2024), particularly those with a high need for uniqueness, who may appreciate the personalization and customization capabilities AI offers in product design and communication (Pantano et al. 2024). This is especially true for early adopters with high innovativeness in the innovation diffusion curve (Ghazali et al. 2024). However, some consumers express distrust toward AI due to concerns about privacy, fraud, and power asymmetries (Grewal et al. 2021; Hasan et al. 2021; Prentice and Nguyen 2020). Moreover, AI is often perceived as lacking emotional value, leading some consumers to prefer human advice over algorithmic recommendations (Wien and Peluso 2021). This can be intensified by the “uncanny valley” effect, in which individuals experience psychological discomfort when interacting with an AI tool that appears nearly, but not quite, human (Oliveira et al. 2024). Users who experience discomfort with new technology often lack knowledge and confidence in its use, which can lead to increased anxiety (Blut and Wang 2020). Finally, broader societal concerns, such as job displacement, algorithmic bias, and environmental concerns, further contribute to negative attitudes toward AI (Kumar and Suthar 2024). Therefore, attitudes toward AI are not uniform but rather shaped by a combination of individual differences and social context.

Research consistently shows that attitudes toward AI predict behavioral and emotional responses. Positive attitudes increase

the likelihood of engaging with AI assistants, sharing favorable word of mouth (Beeler et al. 2022), and even forming emotional attachments to AI (Kim et al. 2022). This logic also holds in the luxury sector, where consumers evaluate AI-designed products more positively when the brand emphasizes functionality (e.g., automobiles) rather than emotional or symbolic value (e.g., fashion) (Xu and Mehta 2022). Furthermore, consumers respond more favorably to highly creative AI products than to those perceived as low in creativity (Pantano et al. 2024).

Consequently, attitudes toward AI may influence how consumers evaluate AI-designed products by luxury brands with high longevity. According to Schema Theory, consumers rely on cognitive structures (schemata) developed through prior experiences to make evaluations (Fiske and Taylor 1991). Schema processing is not static; it is influenced by individual differences, including attitudes (Fiske and Taylor 1991). Attitudes can shape not only the content of a schema but also its flexibility—that is, the ability to assimilate novel information without triggering resistance (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989; Stayman et al. 1992). Consumers with a positive attitude toward AI are more likely to have developed favorable AI-related schemas, characterized by expectations of AI usefulness (Chan and Choi 2025; Ghazali et al. 2024). These consumers are better equipped to integrate AI into their mental models of what a high-longevity brand should be. They may interpret AI implementation as strategic evolution, which strengthens brand-AI fit and resolves schema conflict (Stayman et al. 1992). Therefore,

**H2.** *The relationship between brand longevity and brand-AI Fit is moderated by consumer attitude toward AI: when consumers have a more positive attitude (vs. negative) toward AI, the negative effect of high brand longevity on brand AI-fit is reduced (vs. increased).*

## 1.4 | Behavioral Reactions to AI-Designed Luxury Products

As previously stated, when high-longevity brands create luxury products with AI, consumers may perceive a poor fit between the brand's longevity and the AI-designed product, thereby diminishing perceptions of brand authenticity. This sequential process may have direct behavioral consequences. Research consistently identifies brand authenticity as a key predictor of consumers' behavioral reactions (Hoppner et al. 2026; Nunes et al. 2021). Positive authenticity perceptions are associated with approach-oriented behaviors, such as seeking further information about a product, purchasing the offering, and sharing positive word of mouth (Nunes et al. 2021). In contrast,

when authenticity perceptions deteriorate following a poor brand-AI fit, the AI-designed product becomes an aversive stimulus that triggers withdrawal rather than engagement (Elliot 2006). Brand inauthenticity is experienced by consumers as a form of betrayal—through deception, ulterior motives, or adulteration—driving coping behaviors such as detachment and avoidance (Hoppner et al. 2026). Specifically, disappointment arising from inauthenticity leads consumers to disengage from further brand interactions and distance themselves from the product (Hoppner et al. 2026).

To capture these behavioral reactions in an ecologically valid way, we draw on research showing that consumers' online shopping patterns reveal varying behavioral levels without relying on self-report (Moe 2003). Accordingly, consumers' behavioral reactions to AI-designed luxury products are organized into three levels: disengagement, information-seeking, and approach-oriented behavior (Moe 2003). Disengagement reflects avoidance of the product (e.g., ignoring it); information-seeking aims to reduce uncertainty or learn more about the offering (e.g., clicking to learn more); and approach-oriented behavior reflects purchase consideration and desire (e.g., adding the product to favorites). Together, these behaviors capture a naturalistic continuum from withdrawal to active approach (Elliot 2006). When brand authenticity is undermined by a poor brand-AI fit, consumers are expected to gravitate toward the avoidance end of this continuum (Elliot 2006; Hoppner et al. 2026). Accordingly,

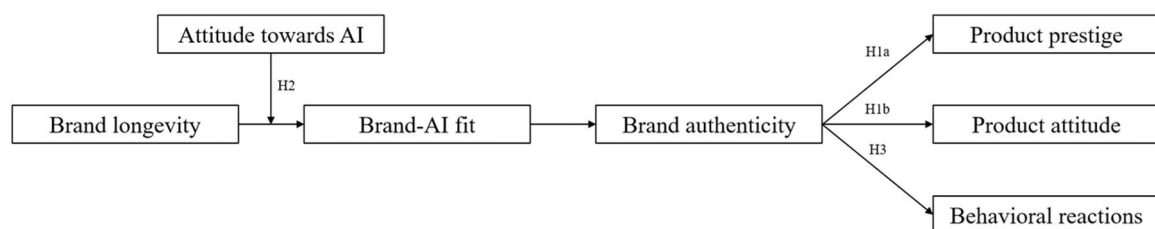
**H3.** *For high- (vs. low-) longevity luxury brands, consumers will exhibit less favorable behavioral reactions toward AI-designed products (being less likely to add the product to favorites or seek further information, and more likely to ignore it), sequentially mediated by lower brand-AI fit and lower brand authenticity.*

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model, and Figure 2 presents the logic of the studies.

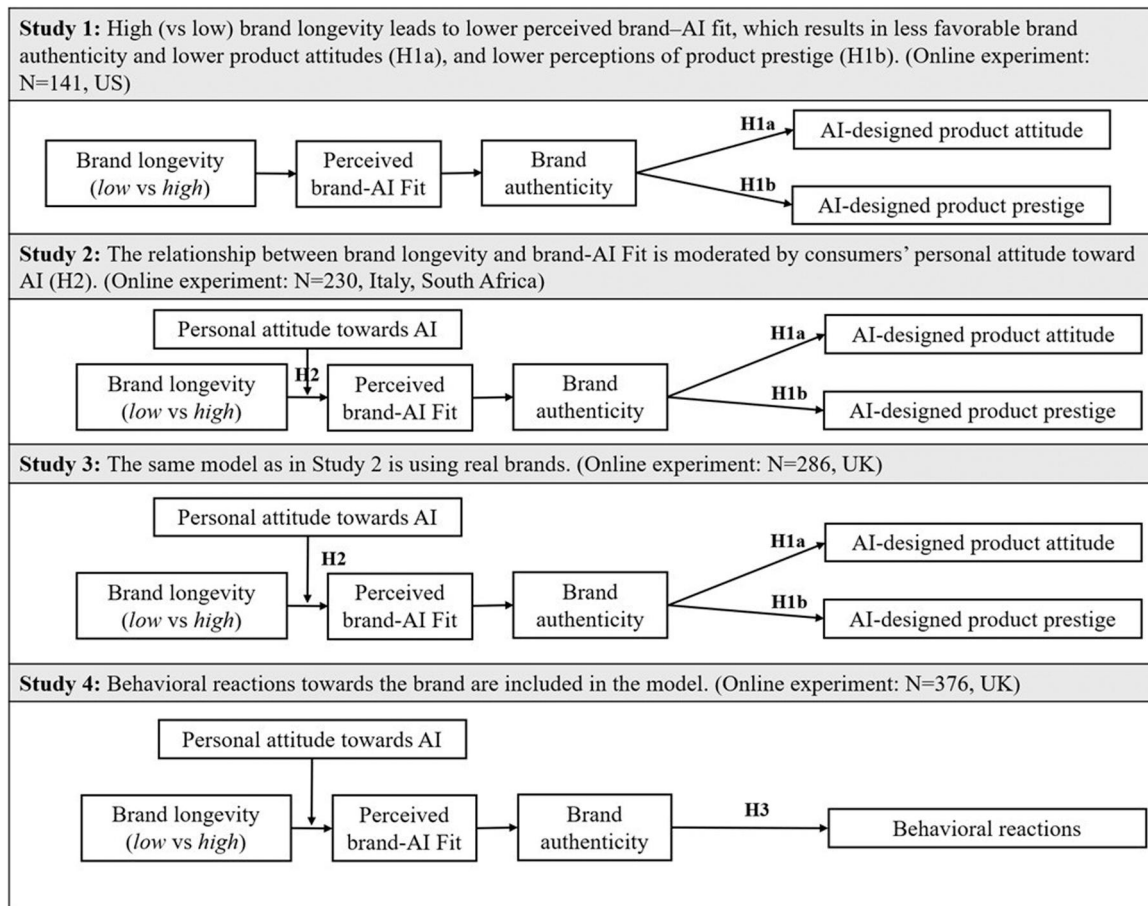
## 1.5 | Empirical Studies

### 1.5.1 | Study 1: Testing the Mediating Role of Brand-AI Fit and Brand Authenticity

Study 1 tests the effect of brand longevity (low vs. high) on AI-designed product perceptions (i.e., product attitude and perceived product prestige) via brand-AI fit and brand authenticity (H1). This work proposes that, for high-longevity brands, luxury consumers reduce their perceptions of AI-designed products due to the negative impact of brand longevity on brand-AI fit, which, in turn, influences brand authenticity.



**FIGURE 1** | Conceptual model.



**FIGURE 2** | Logic of studies.

#### 1.5.1.1 | Methodology, Measures, and Procedures

Study 1 was conducted via an online experiment. A single-factor experimental design (brand longevity: low vs. high) was adopted. A total of 141 US consumers were recruited via Prolific Academic in exchange for monetary compensation ( $M_{\text{age}} = 40.79$ , 69.2% females). Participants were recruited using a pre-established screening criterion to target consumers of luxury fashion brands. Responses were reviewed to identify participants who failed attention checks as the attitude toward AI become stronger (Leys et al. 2013).

After providing informed consent via a form, participants were randomly assigned to one of two brand longevity conditions (low vs. high). In Study 1, they used a fictitious brand name called VADE (Theodorakis et al. 2015). Respondents were told that they would be exposed to a website of a luxury fashion brand. Accordingly, participants first viewed a website screenshot with the brand description, followed by a second screenshot showing the new product (a bag) created with AI (see Web Appendix A for the Study 1 stimuli). Then, consumers' perceptions regarding brand-AI fit ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ), brand authenticity ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ), product attitude ( $\alpha = 0.98$ ), and perceived product prestige ( $\alpha = 0.98$ ) were measured via validated scales. Product attitude was measured with a five-item scale adapted from MacKenzie and Spreng (1992). Perceived product prestige was measured with a three-item scale adapted from Baek et al. (2010). Brand-AI fit was measured on a three-item scale

adapted from Aaker and Keller (1990). Finally, we measured brand authenticity on a four-item scale adapted from Morhart et al. (2015). We also measured brand familiarity (Dall'Olmo Riley et al. 2015) and AI literacy (Ng et al. 2024;  $\alpha = 0.77$ ) as control variables. All items used in Study 1 are included in the Web Appendix S1B.

To establish the discriminant validity of Brand-AI Fit and Brand Authenticity, we conducted a series of confirmatory analyses. First, the proposed two-factor measurement model showed a substantially better fit than an alternative one-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 180.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Second, discriminant validity was further supported by the Fornell-Larcker criterion ( $\text{AVE}_{\text{Brand-AI Fit}} = 0.888$ ;  $\text{AVE}_{\text{Authenticity}} = 0.827$ , both exceeding the squared latent correlation) and by the heterotrait-monotrait ratio ( $\text{HTMT} = 0.837$ ). Complete measurement validation results are reported in Web Appendix S1C.

Study 1 examined manipulation of brand longevity using the brand longevity scale (4 items; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022;  $\alpha = 0.71$ ). Finally, participants' demographic data were collected. Participants were then thanked and debriefed.

#### 1.5.1.2 | Study Results

First, regarding the manipulation check, the results show that participants in the high-longevity condition rated the brand longevity significantly higher than did those in the low-

longevity condition ( $F = 119.612$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.46$ ;  $M_{\text{high\_long}} = 6.54$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ;  $M_{\text{low\_long}} = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 2.24$ ).

Study 1 predicted that, in the case of the high (vs. low) brand longevity, consumers would reduce their perceptions toward the AI-designed product and the brand, proposing perceptions of brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the underlying mechanisms (H1a; H1b).

A mediation model using the PROCESS macro (Model 6; 10,000 bootstrapped samples) developed by Hayes (2017) was therefore tested, with brand longevity as the independent variable and brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the serial mediators. The low brand longevity condition was coded as 0, while the high brand longevity condition was coded as 1. Finally, the model included AI literacy, age, and gender as control variables.

Results showed a significant indirect effect of brand longevity through brand AI-fit and brand authenticity ( $b = -1.042$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.282$ , 95% CI:  $[-1.649, -0.556]$ ). Brand longevity has a significant direct effect on product attitude ( $b = 0.585$ ,  $SE = 0.237$ ,  $t = 2.466$ ,  $p = 0.015$ , 95% CI:  $[0.116, 1.054]$ ) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 0.647$ ,  $SE = 0.253$ ,  $t = 2.560$ ,  $p = 0.012$ , 95% CI:  $[0.147, 1.147]$ ). High brand longevity has a significant and negative effect on brand-AI fit (mediator 1) compared to low brand longevity ( $b = -1.553$ ,  $SE = 0.289$ ,  $t = -5.383$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI:  $[-2.123, -0.982]$ ), which in turn has a significant and positive effect on brand authenticity (mediator 2;  $b = 0.866$ ,  $SE = 0.054$ ,  $t = 16.180$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI:  $[0.760, 0.972]$ ), which finally has a positive impact on product attitude ( $b = 0.775$ ,  $SE = 0.976$ ,  $t = 7.938$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI:  $[0.582, 0.968]$ ) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 0.773$ ,  $SE = 0.104$ ,  $t = 7.430$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI:  $[0.567, 0.979]$ ).

Longevity remains a significant predictor of all dependent variables after controlling for the mediator ( $b_{\text{pr\_attitude}} = 0.585$ ,  $SE = 0.237$ ,  $t = 2.466$ ,  $p = 0.015$ , 95% CI:  $[0.012, 1.054]$ ;  $b_{\text{prestige}} = 0.647$ ,  $SE = 0.253$ ,  $t = 2.560$ ,  $p = 0.012$ , 95% CI:  $[0.147, 1.147]$ ), which suggests a competitive mediation of brand-AI fit and brand authenticity, whereby the direct and indirect effects operate in opposite directions. While the indirect pathway suggests that longevity undermines evaluations through reduced brand-AI fit and authenticity, the positive direct effect indicates that longevity simultaneously carries favorable associations that enhance product evaluations. We obtained the same effects, including in the analysis the control variables, namely gender, age, and AI literacy, as controls.

As a robustness check of the proposed mediation mechanism, we ran a reversed mediation using PROCESS (Model 6; 10,000 bootstrapped samples). Results showed a non-significant indirect effect of brand longevity through brand authenticity and brand AI-fit both on product attitude ( $b = -0.034$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.070$ , 95% CI:  $[-0.091, 0.198]$ ) and brand prestige ( $b = -0.036$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.069$ , 95% CI:  $[-0.098, 0.189]$ ), as longevity does not have a significant effect on brand authenticity ( $b = -0.575$ ,  $SE = 0.182$ ,  $t = -1.869$ ,  $p = 0.064$ , 95% CI:  $[-1.183, 0.033]$ ), and brand AI-fit does not have any significant effect on product attitude ( $b = -0.078$ ,  $SE = 0.104$ ,  $t = -0.751$ ,  $p = 0.454$ , 95% CI:  $[-0.284, 0.128]$ ) and product prestige ( $b = -0.082$ ,  $SE = 0.111$ ,  $t = -0.738$ ,  $p = 0.461$ , 95% CI:  $[-0.301, 0.138]$ ).

## 1.5.2 | Study 2: Testing the Moderating Role of Attitude Toward AI in Other Countries

Study 2 replicates the relationships tested in Study 1 (H1a, H1b). It also examined the interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude towards AI on brand AI-fit (H2). The same stimuli used in Study 1 were applied to manipulate brand longevity. To test the model in a different cultural context—one characterized by different attitudes and levels of literacy toward AI compared to the US context (KPMG 2025; IPSOS 2023)—the sample used in Study 2 consisted of individuals residing in Italy and South Africa. The choice of these two countries was guided by global studies on cross-national differences in AI adoption, trust, and attitudes, particularly KPMG (2025) and IPSOS (2023), which provide country-specific rankings based on large-scale surveys. KPMG surveyed over 48,000 adults across 47 countries, and IPSOS surveyed 22,816 adults across 31 countries. Both found that emerging economies tend to show more positive perceptions and greater trust in AI than developed economies. South Africa consistently ranked in the top 10 for positive attitudes, the United States in the bottom 10 for negative views, and Italy near the middle, representing a midpoint between the two (IPSOS 2023; KPMG 2025). As the US sample was selected for Study 1, Study 2 identified South Africa and Italy to represent distinct stages of public perception toward AI.

The questionnaire administered to the Italian sample was translated into Italian. Testing the model in a different context reinforces its internal validity (Viglia et al. 2021). The stimuli used in Study 2 are provided in the Web Appendix S1A.

### 1.5.2.1 | Methodology, Measures, and Procedures

Study 2 was conducted via an online experiment. A single-factor experimental design (brand longevity: low vs. high) was adopted. A total of 230 Italian and South African consumers were recruited via Prolific Academic in exchange for monetary compensation ( $M_{\text{age}} = 34.46$ , 65.2% females). Participants were recruited using a pre-established screening criterion to target consumers of luxury fashion brands. As in Study 1, responses were reviewed to identify participants who failed attention checks (Leys et al. 2013).

Same procedures and measures as in Study 1 were followed. Besides product attitude ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), perceived product prestige ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ), and brand authenticity ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ), we measured attitude toward AI ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) with a four-item scale adapted from Grassini (2023). All items used in Study 2 are included in the Web Appendix S1B. We used the same manipulation check included in previous studies for brand longevity ( $\alpha = 0.98$ ). Consistent with Study 1, confirmatory factor analyses supported the discriminant validity of Brand-AI Fit and Brand Authenticity. The proposed two-factor model exhibited excellent fit ( $\chi^2(13) = 41.35$ , CFI = 0.984, TLI = 0.973, RMSEA = 0.099, SRMR = 0.017) and significantly outperformed the alternative one-factor model ( $\chi^2(14) = 293.82$ , CFI = 0.838, TLI = 0.756, RMSEA = 0.300, SRMR = 0.070;  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 252.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Complete measurement validation results are reported in Web Appendix S1C.

### 1.5.2.2 | Study Results

First, regarding the manipulation check, participants in the high-longevity condition rated the brand's longevity significantly higher than those in the low-longevity condition ( $F = 641.73$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.738$ ;  $M_{\text{high\_long}} = 6.35$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ;  $M_{\text{low\_long}} = 2.03$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ).

In line with Study 1, Study 2 predicted that, in the case of high (vs. low) brand longevity, consumers would reduce their perceptions of the product and the brand, proposing perceptions of brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the underlying mechanisms (H1a; H1b). Moreover, it predicted an interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude towards AI on brand-AI fit (H2).

To further validate H1, a mediation model using the PROCESS macro (Model 83; 10,000 bootstrapped samples) developed by Hayes (2017) was therefore tested, with brand longevity as the independent variable, brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the serial mediators, and product attitude and perceived product prestige as dependent variables. The low brand longevity condition was coded as 0, while the high brand longevity condition was coded as 1. Finally, the model included AI literacy ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ), age, gender, and country of residence (Italy and South Africa) as control variables. AI literacy refers to the level of awareness of AI tools and applications (Ng et al. 2024), and it is a concept distinct from attitudes toward AI, which measure the valence of sentiment toward AI.

Results showed a significant index of moderated mediation on product attitude ( $b = 0.047$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.029$ , 95% CI: [0.004, 0.116]) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 0.065$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.036$ , 95% CI: [0.005, 0.148]). High brand longevity has a significant and negative effect on brand-AI fit (mediator 1) compared to low brand longevity ( $b = -3.603$ ,  $SE = 0.767$ ,  $t = -4.697$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-5.115, -2.091]), which in turn has a significant and positive effect on brand authenticity (mediator 2;  $b = 0.659$ ,  $SE = 0.044$ ,  $t = 15.088$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.573, 0.745]), which finally has a positive effect on product attitude ( $b = 0.330$ ,  $SE = 0.182$ ,  $t = 2.029$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.161, 0.499]) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 0.458$ ,  $SE = 0.085$ ,  $t = 5.415$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.292, 0.625]). The interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude towards AI on brand-AI fit is positive and significant ( $b = 0.218$ ,  $SE = 0.102$ ,  $t = 2.147$ ,  $p = 0.033$ , 95% CI: [0.018, 0.418]). The conditional effects of the focal predictor are significant at all values of the moderator, but the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit tends to decrease as the attitude toward AI becomes stronger ( $b_{\text{low}=5.25} = -2.459$ ,  $SE = 0.290$ ,  $t = -8.491$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-3.030, -1.888];  $b_{\text{medium}=7.50} = -1.969$ ,  $SE = 0.204$ ,  $t = -9.650$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-2.371, -1.566];  $b_{\text{high}=9.25} = -1.587$ ,  $SE = 0.285$ ,  $t = -5.579$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-2.148, -1.026]). The Johnson-Neyman method revealed no statistically significant transition points within the observed range of the moderator. We obtained the same significant effects, including gender, age, AI literacy, and country as control variables.

To ensure that mediation holds across other countries, we estimated the mediation model with the PROCESS macro (model 6, 10,000 bootstrapped samples) separately in the Italian and South African samples, thereby reinforcing the generalizability

and robustness of the mechanism. Given that the sample sizes are unequal, these analyses should be interpreted as supportive evidence of the robustness of the proposed mechanism across contexts, rather than as equally precise replications or direct comparisons of effect magnitudes between countries. For the Italian sample ( $n = 138$ ), results showed a significant indirect effect of brand longevity through brand AI-fit and brand authenticity ( $b = -0.430$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.144$ , 95% CI: [-0.735, -0.161]). Brand longevity has a marginally significant direct effect on product attitude ( $b = 0.578$ ,  $SE = 0.302$ ,  $t = 1.918$ ,  $p = 0.057$ , 95% CI: [-0.018, 1.175]) and a significant effect on perceived product prestige ( $b = 1.347$ ,  $SE = 0.279$ ,  $t = 4.821$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.794, 1.899]). High brand longevity has a significant and negative effect on brand-AI fit (mediator 1) compared to low brand longevity ( $b = -2.583$ ,  $SE = 0.260$ ,  $t = -9.939$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-3.097, -2.069]), which in turn has a significant and positive effect on brand authenticity (mediator 2;  $b = 0.681$ ,  $SE = 0.055$ ,  $t = 12.494$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.573, 0.789]), which finally has a positive impact on product attitude ( $b = 0.359$ ,  $SE = 0.116$ ,  $t = 3.083$ ,  $p = 0.003$ , 95% CI: [0.129, 0.589]) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 0.458$ ,  $SE = 0.108$ ,  $t = 4.252$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.245, 0.672]). Longevity does not remain a significant predictor of product attitude after controlling for the mediator ( $b_{\text{pr\_attitude}} = 0.578$ ,  $SE = 0.302$ ,  $t = 1.918$ ,  $p = 0.057$ , 95% CI: [-0.018, 1.175]), but it remains a significant predictor of brand prestige ( $b_{\text{prestige}} = 1.347$ ,  $SE = 0.279$ ,  $t = 4.821$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.794, 1.899]).

For the South African sample ( $n = 83$ ), results showed a significant indirect effect of brand longevity through brand AI-fit and brand authenticity ( $b = -0.308$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.172$ , 95% CI: [-0.728, -0.063]). Brand longevity has a significant direct effect on product attitude ( $b = 0.694$ ,  $SE = 0.318$ ,  $t = 4.065$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.587, 1.713]) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 1.261$ ,  $SE = 0.306$ ,  $t = 4.118$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.651, 1.870]). High brand longevity has a significant and negative effect on brand-AI fit (mediator 1) compared to low brand longevity ( $b = -1.229$ ,  $SE = 0.366$ ,  $t = -3.360$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-1.957, -0.501]), which in turn has a significant and positive effect on brand authenticity (mediator 2;  $b = 0.720$ ,  $SE = 0.072$ ,  $t = 10.032$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.577, 0.862]), which finally has a positive impact on product attitude ( $b = 0.349$ ,  $SE = 0.125$ ,  $t = 2.800$ ,  $p = 0.006$ , 95% CI: [0.101, 0.596]) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 0.489$ ,  $SE = 0.135$ ,  $t = 3.631$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.221, 0.757]). Longevity does not remain a significant predictor of product attitude after controlling for the mediator ( $b_{\text{pr\_attitude}} = 1.150$ ,  $SE = 0.283$ ,  $t = 4.065$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.587, 1.713]), but it remains a significant predictor of brand prestige ( $b_{\text{prestige}} = 1.261$ ,  $SE = 0.306$ ,  $t = 4.118$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.651, 1.870]). Taken together, these results indicate that the pattern of relationships proposed in our framework is substantively similar across the Italian and South African samples. While we do not claim full cross-cultural invariance, the replication of the serial mediation pathway in both countries increases confidence in the robustness and external validity of the proposed mechanism.

### 1.5.3 | Study 3: Testing the Model With Real Brands

Study 3 tests how brand longevity (low vs. high) influences AI-designed products and brand perceptions of real luxury brands.

It replicates Study 2's results by testing the mediation of brand AI-fit and the moderating effect of attitude towards AI (H2). We chose Balenciaga and Hermès as they represent different luxury brands with different brand longevity. This choice was validated by one focus group and one pretest.

Before selecting real-brand stimuli for the main experiment, we conducted an exploratory focus group (Adaval 2001) ( $n = 5$ ) with participants familiar with luxury fashion. Participants were recruited from the researchers' personal networks. The group included culturally diverse young adults ( $M_{\text{age}} = 26$ ), including one Italian, one African, one British, and two American participants. The purpose of this session was to identify ecologically valid, category-consistent examples of high- versus low-longevity luxury brands for use in the real-brand study (Huang and Ha 2020). First, participants were asked to think about luxury brands they perceived as very old and heritage-based, and those they perceived as contemporary and "young." Each participant freely listed brands in both groups. They then selected the three brands they believed best represented high longevity and the three that best represented low longevity. Second, participants were asked to rank their selected brands within each group from strongest longevity associations to weakest longevity associations. They also provided brief explanations for their rankings, describing the cues that made certain brands feel "very old" (e.g., heritage, founding date, design icons) versus "young" (e.g., trend-driven products). Across participants, Hermès was ranked at the top of the high-longevity list, cited as a heritage house. In contrast, Balenciaga was ranked with the weakest longevity associations, described as contemporary and experimental.

In the pretest, we used these two brands (i.e., Hermès and Balenciaga) to assess whether the manipulations were perceived as intended, and we also provided a brief description of each brand. To increase the realism of the stimuli (Viglia et al. 2021), we incorporated excerpts from actual brand descriptions and used layouts from existing websites. This was followed by a description of a new luxury product designed with AI. As in previous studies, a bag was chosen as a new product (Pantano et al. 2024). Compared to Study 1 and Study 2, we decided to include in the experiment a scenario in which AI plays a more salient role in product development. In this way, we wanted to assess whether the brand ambidexterity approach to innovation (Nguyen et al. 2016) represents a potential boundary condition in this context. Thus, in the product description, the bag was presented as the result of two distinct AI-driven innovation strategies (exploitation and exploration). The exploitation framing described AI-generated product design as an incremental improvement within the brand's existing product development process. In contrast, the exploration framing positioned AI as a disruptive force that enables radically new approaches to product development. See the pre-test stimuli in the Web Appendix A.

Thus, the pretest used a  $2 \times 2$  between-subjects experimental design, with the two independent variables being brand longevity (high vs. low) and brand ambidexterity (exploitation vs. exploration). We included this second independent variable (brand ambidexterity) in the pretest to test whether different uses and framing of AI would affect consumers' perceptions.

This would reinforce the validity and generalizability of our conceptual model (Viglia et al. 2021) by reflecting both incremental and radical innovation framing.

For this pre-test, we measured brand longevity with the same four-item scale adapted from Pecot, Merchant, et al. 2022;  $\alpha = 0.95$ ), and brand ambidexterity on an eight-item scale adapted from Nguyen et al. (2016), composed of two dimensions (i.e., exploitation;  $\alpha_{\text{exploitation}} = 0.91$ ; exploration;  $\alpha_{\text{exploration}} = 0.73$ ). 109 participants (50% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 37.23$ ) took part in this pretest. The manipulations were perceived as intended. Participants in the high longevity condition rated longevity as significantly higher than those in the low longevity condition ( $M_{\text{high}} = 5.60$ ,  $SE = 1.27$ ;  $M_{\text{low}} = 3.46$ ,  $SE = 1.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Participants in the exploitation condition rated the exploitation dimension of ambidexterity significantly higher than those in the exploration condition ( $M_{\text{exploitation}} = 5.60$ ,  $SE = 1.01$ ;  $M_{\text{exploration}} = 4.07$ ,  $SE = 1.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, participants in the exploration condition rated the exploration dimension of ambidexterity significantly higher compared to those in the exploitation condition ( $M_{\text{exploration}} = 5.97$ ,  $SE = 0.84$ ;  $M_{\text{exploitation}} = 5.60$ ,  $SE = 0.96$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ).

In Study 3, we test the H1 and H2 with real brands, excluding the brand ambidexterity approach to innovation as a potential boundary condition.

#### 1.5.3.1 | Methodology, Measures, and Procedure

Study 3 was conducted as an online experiment. A factorial experimental design (brand longevity: low vs. high)  $\times$  (brand ambidexterity approach to innovation: exploitation vs. innovation) was adopted. A total of 286 luxury brand consumers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 42.01$ ; 48.6% females) from the UK panel of Prolific Academic were recruited in exchange for monetary compensation.

The stimuli used in Study 3 are similar to those in Studies 1 and 2, but in this study, we used Balenciaga as the low longevity condition and Hermès as the high longevity condition. We used the same stimuli included in the second pretest, as well as the same measures of Study 2 for brand-AI fit, brand authenticity ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ), product attitude ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ), product prestige ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ), and attitude towards AI ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ). We also measured brand attitude (Mitchell and Olson 1981), brand familiarity (Dall'Olmo Riley et al. 2015) and AI literacy as control variables. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, confirmatory factor analyses supported the discriminant validity of Brand-AI Fit and Brand Authenticity. The proposed two-factor model provided a substantially better fit ( $\chi^2(13) = 151.94$ ,  $CFI = 0.941$ ,  $TLI = 0.904$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.194$ ,  $SRMR = 0.083$ ) than the alternative one-factor model ( $\chi^2(14) = 634.53$ ,  $CFI = 0.735$ ,  $TLI = 0.602$ ;  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 482.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). AVE values (0.910 and 0.764) and the HTMT ratio (0.729) further supported discriminant validity. Full measurement results are reported in Web Appendix S1C.

Importantly, Hermès and Balenciaga differ on dimensions beyond brand longevity (e.g., brand personality, price tier, design, and public controversies). The potential confounding role of brand-specific attributes is mitigated by the convergence of Study 3's findings with those of Studies 1, 2, and 4, which

used fictitious brands. The consistency of results across real and fictitious brand contexts strengthens confidence that the observed effects are driven by perceived brand longevity rather than by idiosyncratic characteristics of Hermès or Balenciaga specifically.

A manipulation check of brand longevity was performed to determine whether the manipulations were perceived as intended. In particular, we used the same manipulation check as in Studies 1 and 2. Finally, participants' demographic data were collected.

### 1.5.3.2 | Study Results

First, regarding the manipulation check, the results show that participants in the high-longevity condition rated the brand longevity significantly higher than did those in the low-longevity condition ( $F = 165.86$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.37$ ;  $M_{\text{high\_long}} = 5.64$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ;  $M_{\text{low\_long}} = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ).

In line with Study 2, Study 3 predicted that, in the case of high (vs. low) brand longevity, an interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude towards AI on brand-AI fit (H2) would serve as the underlying mechanism for the reduction in product attitude, product prestige, and brand authenticity.

To further validate H2, we tested the interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude toward AI on brand-AI fit using the moderated mediation model of PROCESS macro (Model 83; 10,000 bootstrapped samples) developed by Hayes (2017). The model comprised brand longevity as the independent variable, attitude towards AI as the moderator, brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the serial mediators, and product attitude and perceived product prestige as dependent variables. We controlled for age, gender, AI literacy, brand attitude, and brand familiarity.

Results showed a significant index of moderated mediation for product attitude ( $b = 0.069$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.033$ , 95% CI: [0.007, 0.136]) and perceived product prestige ( $b = 0.073$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.035$ , 95% CI: [0.007, 0.145]), indicating that the negative serial indirect effect became weaker as attitude toward AI increased. High brand longevity has a significant and negative effect on brand-AI fit (mediator) compared to low brand longevity ( $b = -3.532$ ,  $SE = 0.673$ ,  $t = -5.245$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-4.858, -2.206]), which in turn has a significant and positive effect on brand authenticity ( $b = 0.561$ ,  $SE = 0.036$ ,  $t = 15.733$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.491, 0.631]), which finally has a positive effect on product attitude ( $b = 0.624$ ,  $SE = 0.070$ ,  $t = 8.929$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.486, 0.761]), and product prestige ( $b = 0.661$ ,  $SE = 0.076$ ,  $t = 8.715$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.512, 0.810]). The interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude toward AI on brand AI-fit is significant ( $b = 0.197$ ,  $SE = 0.090$ ,  $t = 2.188$ ,  $p = 0.030$ , 95% CI: [0.020, 0.375]). The conditional effects of the focal predictor are significant at all values of the moderator, but the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is higher for low and medium AI attitude and it tends to decrease as the attitude toward AI is at a high level ( $b_{\text{low}=4.82} = -2.580$ ,  $SE = 0.292$ ,  $t = -8.853$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-3.155, -2.006];  $b_{\text{medium}=7.50} = -2.051$ ,  $SE = 0.210$ ,  $t = -9.767$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-2.465, -1.638];  $b_{\text{high}=9.00} = -1.755$ ,  $SE = 0.269$ ,  $t = -6.530$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-2.284, -1.226]). The Johnson-Neyman method revealed no

statistically significant transition points within the observed range of the moderator. By including brand familiarity, brand attitude, age, gender, and AI literacy as control variables, we obtained the same significant effects. Among the control variables, brand attitude consistently exerted a positive effect across the mediating mechanisms and outcome variables. Gender, age, and familiarity generally showed limited influence. Notably, none of these controls significantly predicted brand prestige, whereas gender and familiarity were positively associated with product attitudes.

Finally, we wanted to exclude the brand ambidexterity approach to innovation as a potential boundary condition that could affect the effect of brand longevity on perceptions of brand-AI fit. Thus, we ran a moderated mediation model of PROCESS macro (Model 83; 10,000 bootstrapped samples) developed by Hayes (2017), comprising brand longevity as the independent variable, brand ambidexterity (manipulated) as the moderator, brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the serial mediators, and product attitude and perceived product prestige as dependent variables. We controlled again for age, gender, AI literacy, brand attitude, and brand familiarity. Results showed a nonsignificant index of moderated mediation for product attitude ( $b = -0.114$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.152$  95% CI: [-0.431, 0.173]), and perceived product prestige ( $b = -0.121$ ;  $\text{BootSE} = 0.161$  95% CI: [-0.451, 0.185]). The interaction effect between brand longevity and brand ambidexterity on brand AI-fit is not significant ( $b = -0.326$ ,  $SE = 0.416$ ,  $t = -0.783$ ,  $p = 0.434$ , 95% CI: [-1.145, 0.493]). Based on these results, we excluded the brand ambidexterity approach to innovation as a potential boundary condition in the relationship between brand longevity and brand AI-fit.

### 1.5.4 | Study 4: Testing the Model on Actual Behaviors

The purpose of Study 4 was to test the model using proxies for actual behaviors as dependent variables and to exclude the sector as a potential boundary condition. Thus, study 4 was conducted as an online experiment. A factorial experimental design (brand longevity: low vs. high) x (sector: fashion vs. technology) was adopted. A total of 376 luxury brand consumers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 40.64$ ; 51.3% females) from the UK panel of Prolific Academic were recruited in exchange for monetary compensation.

The stimuli used in Study 4 are the same as those used in Study 1 and Study 2 for the fashion sector. These stimuli were then adapted to the technological context. We used the same measures of Study 2 for brand-AI fit ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ), brand authenticity ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ), and attitude toward AI ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Behavioral engagement was measured using an interactive product interface embedded in Qualtrics that simulated a luxury e-commerce environment. Participants were presented with clickable buttons corresponding to three behavioral responses: *ignore*, *learn more*, and *add to favorites*. These buttons were implemented using embedded JavaScript and response logic to record participants' real-time interactions. Each click was automatically logged and coded as a behavioral outcome (0 = ignore, 1 = learn more, 2 = add to favorites) (Moe 2003). We also used AI literacy ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ), age, and gender as control variables. Consistent with the previous studies, confirmatory factor analyses supported the discriminant validity of Brand-AI Fit and Brand Authenticity.

The proposed two-factor model provided an excellent fit to the data ( $\chi^2(13) = 93.27$ , CFI = 0.971, TLI = 0.954), substantially outperforming the alternative one-factor model ( $\chi^2(14) = 513.40$ , CFI = 0.821, TLI = 0.732;  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 420.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, AVE values (0.883 and 0.749) exceeded the squared interconstruct correlation, while the HTMT ratio (0.799) remained below the recommended threshold, providing further evidence of discriminant validity. Full measurement results are reported in Web Appendix [S1C](#).

A manipulation check of brand longevity was performed to determine whether the manipulations were perceived as intended. In particular, we used the same manipulation check as in Studies 1 and 2. Finally, participants' demographic data were collected.

#### 1.5.4.1 | Study Results

First, regarding the manipulation check, the results show that participants in the high-longevity condition rated the brand longevity significantly higher than did those in the low-longevity condition ( $F = 506.44$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.58$ ;  $M_{\text{high\_long}} = 6.05$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ;  $M_{\text{low\_long}} = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ).

In line with Study 2, Study 4 predicted that, in the case of high (vs. low) brand longevity, an interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude toward AI on brand-AI fit (H2) would serve as the underlying mechanism, which has a positive effect on brand authenticity, which finally has a negative effect on behavioral reactions toward the brand (H3).

To further validate H2, we tested the interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude toward AI on brand-AI fit using the moderated mediation model of PROCESS macro (Model 83; 10,000 bootstrapped samples) developed by Hayes (2017). The model comprised brand longevity as the independent variable, attitude toward AI as the moderator, brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the serial mediators, and behavioral reactions as dependent variables. We controlled for age, gender, and AI literacy.

Results showed a significant index of moderated mediation for behavioral reactions ( $b = 0.020$ ; BootSE = 0.009, 95% CI: [0.005, 0.039]). High brand longevity has a significant and negative effect on brand-AI fit (mediator 1) compared to low brand longevity ( $b = -3.083$ ,  $SE = 0.562$ ,  $t = -5.444$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-4.189, -1.978]), which in turn has a significant and positive effect on brand authenticity ( $b = 0.660$ ,  $SE = 0.032$ ,  $t = 20.950$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.598, 0.722]), which finally has a positive effect on behavioral reactions ( $\beta = 0.125$ ,  $SE = 0.029$ ,  $t = 4.341$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [0.068, 0.181]). The interaction effect between brand longevity and attitude toward AI on brand AI-fit is significant ( $b = 0.232$ ,  $SE = 0.078$ ,  $t = 2.966$ ,  $p = 0.032$ , 95% CI: [0.078, 0.386]). The conditional effects of the focal predictor are significant at all values of the moderator, but the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is higher for low and medium AI attitude and it tends to decrease as the attitude toward AI is at a high level ( $b_{\text{low}=5} = -1.923$ ,  $SE = 0.221$ ,  $t = -8.687$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-2.358, -1.488];  $\beta_{\text{medium}=7.25} = -1.401$ ,  $SE = 0.170$ ,  $t = -8.265$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-1.734, -1.068];  $b_{\text{high}=9.00} = -0.995$ ,  $SE = 0.236$ ,  $t = -4.211$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI: [-1.459,

$-0.530$ ]). The Johnson-Neyman method revealed no statistically significant transition points within the observed range of the moderator. By including age, gender, and AI literacy as control variables, we obtained the same significant effects.

Finally, we wanted to exclude the sector as a potential boundary condition affecting the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit perceptions. Thus, we ran a moderated mediation model of PROCESS macro (Model 83; 10,000 bootstrapped samples) developed by Hayes (2017), comprising brand longevity as the independent variable, sector (manipulated) as the moderator, brand-AI fit and brand authenticity as the serial mediators, and product attitude and perceived product prestige as dependent variables. Again, we controlled for age, gender, and AI literacy. Results showed a nonsignificant index of moderated mediation for behavioral reactions ( $b = -0.020$ ; BootSE = 0.029, 95% CI: [-0.082, 0.034]). The interaction effect between brand longevity and the sector on brand AI-fit is not significant ( $b = -0.244$ ,  $SE = 0.347$ ,  $t = -0.701$ ,  $p = 0.484$ , 95% CI: [-0.927, 0.440]). Based on these results, we excluded the sector as a potential boundary condition in the relationship between brand longevity and brand AI-fit, thereby strengthening the model's generalizability.

Key findings for each study are summarized in Table 2.

## 2 | Discussion

This study aimed to explore how luxury brand longevity influences consumer perceptions of AI-designed products. First, this study underscores brand longevity as a predictor of consumers' perceptions of brand-AI fit. Specifically, for high-longevity brands, AI-designed products are often perceived as a poor fit with the brand's longevity, leading to reduced perceptions of brand authenticity, more negative product attitudes and lower perceived prestige of the product. Importantly, brand longevity in this study is operationalized through heritage-related associations (such as tradition, rootedness, and the reinforcement of long-held values) rather than chronological age alone (Pecot et al. 2019; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022). As such, the effects observed here should be interpreted as pertaining to longevity-as-communicated-through-heritage. This finding aligns with branding literature, which suggests that high-longevity brands accumulate a complex set of elements, meanings, and associations that become embedded in consumer memory and expectations beyond just the founding date (Aaker 1996; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022; Perron-Brault et al. 2024; Preece et al. 2019). The challenge for high-longevity brands lies in maintaining internal coherence between brand preservation and brand development (Preece et al. 2019). For luxury brands, brand longevity can act as both a strategic asset (Dion and Borraz 2015; Kapferer and Florence 2016; Zhou et al. 2025) and a constraint (Perron-Brault et al. 2024). The results from Study 1 highlight this dual role of brand longevity. On one hand, high brand longevity directly benefits product evaluations, likely because consumers associate heritage brands with expertise, quality, and the ability to survive in a competitive market over time (Desai et al. 2008; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022). On the other hand, high brand longevity hurts product evaluations indirectly: it creates a sense of poor fit between the brand and AI, which in turn undermines brand authenticity and ultimately lowers

**TABLE 2** | Summary of studies and hypotheses tested.

| Study                                                                                            | Hypotheses tested | Sample                                                                                                           | Product                          | Key findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Study 1<br>Single factor (high vs. low brand longevity)                                          | H1                | 141 U.S. participants, Prolific Academic                                                                         | Luxury Bag                       | High brand longevity reduces brand-AI fit perceptions, which reduces brand authenticity perceptions negatively affecting product attitudes and perceived product prestige.                                                                                                                                    |
| Study 2<br>Single factor (high vs. low brand longevity)                                          | H1, H2            | 221 Italy (medium attitude toward AI) and South Africa (high attitude toward AI) participants, Prolific Academic | Luxury Bag                       | The effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is moderated by attitude toward AI. When the attitude toward AI is higher, the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is reduced.                                                                                                                            |
| Study 3<br>2 (high vs. low brand longevity) x 2 (exploration vs. exploitation)                   | H1, H2            | 286 U.K. participants, Prolific Academic                                                                         | Luxury Bag (real brands)         | The effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is moderated by attitude towards AI. When the attitude toward AI is higher, the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is reduced. The brand ambidexterity approach to innovation does not affect the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit perceptions. |
| Study 4<br>2 (high vs. low brand longevity) x 2 (fashion vs. technology) between-subjects design | H1, H2, H3        | 376 UK participants, Prolific Academic                                                                           | Luxury bag and luxury headphones | The effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is moderated by attitude toward AI. When the attitude toward AI is higher, the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit is reduced. The sector of the luxury brand does not affect the effect of brand longevity on brand-AI fit perceptions.                  |

product attitude and perceived prestige. Notably, the negative influence of high brand longevity on brand-AI fit, brand authenticity, and, consequently, on consumers' evaluations and behavioral responses holds across luxury product categories, whether emotional (fashion) or functional (technology). Even when the product category naturally accommodates technological integration, high brand longevity still produces a perceived misfit with AI, leading to negative consumer evaluations. Thus, brand longevity consistently emerges as a stronger determinant of brand-AI fit than product category type.

Next, the study reveals that individual attitudes toward AI moderate this relationship. Consumers with a generally positive attitude toward AI are more likely to view AI-designed products favorably and exhibit positive behavioral responses, even when those products are offered by high longevity brands. This suggests that a positive attitude toward technology can buffer the poor fit between high-longevity luxury and AI-designed products. This finding aligns with prior research on consumer innovation adoption, which emphasizes the role of individual differences. Highly innovative individuals adopt new technologies more readily, while less innovative ones need more reassurance and proof of value before adopting (Hoyer et al. 2020). For example, the diffusion of innovation theory shows that innovators and early adopters are more open to novelty, willing to take risks, and less bound by tradition (Rogers et al. 2014). They are therefore more likely to embrace AI-designed products, even when they have a poor fit with high-longevity luxury brands. Also, this moderating effect aligns with the brand-consumer congruence literature (Malär et al. 2011; Sirgy 1982; Wallace et al. 2017), which suggests that consumers evaluate brands more positively when their personal values and convictions align with the brand. In this study, AI-enthusiastic consumers may perceive less incongruity between a high-longevity brand and an AI-designed product when the brand's positive stance on AI matches their own. It is also worth noting that these effects were observed under conditions of explicit AI disclosure, which may not reflect typical luxury brand communication practices.

From an international marketing perspective, the findings were replicated across different national contexts: South Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy. Although the present research does not formally test cross-cultural equivalence, the convergence of the findings across countries suggests that the proposed mechanisms may be relatively robust across different market settings. One possible explanation is that brand longevity constitutes a symbolic brand attribute that is closely tied to a brand's core identity and is therefore communicated consistently across markets. This interpretation aligns with the strategic imperative of global luxury brands to maintain a coherent brand image worldwide (Douglas et al. 2001; Osmanoglu et al. 2024; Özsomer 2012). Brand longevity is widely regarded as a defining identity attribute of luxury (He and Ge 2023; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022). As a result, consumers share a clear understanding of brand longevity, which AI-designed products may fail to uphold. Likewise, the integration of AI into brand operations is positioned as a global innovation strategy to reach broader audiences (Huang and Rust 2021; Kopalle et al. 2022). In luxury branding, shared global expectations for luxury combined with individual attitudes toward AI may outweigh national differences.

## 3 | Conclusions and Limitations

### 3.1 | Theoretical Contributions

The present study contributes to the intersection of luxury branding and AI technology research. First, we present empirical evidence on the effects of brand longevity, brand-AI fit, and brand authenticity on consumers' perceptions and behavioral responses toward AI-designed products across a multi-country sample. Previous studies have shown mixed consumer responses to AI in luxury contexts, including AI-designed products (Pantano et al. 2024; Xu and Mehta 2022), AI-generated advertising (To et al. 2025), and AI assistants (Rahman et al. 2023). Some findings suggest AI may backfire by reducing perceived effort, authenticity, and brand essence (To et al. 2025; Xu and Mehta 2022). However, these studies do not examine the specific brand characteristics that determine whether AI adoption in product design succeeds or backfires among consumers. The present study helps reconcile these findings by identifying brand longevity as a key boundary condition that determines when and why AI integration is likely to harm consumer perceptions.

Second, we contribute to the research on brand longevity. Luxury branding studies have traditionally framed brand longevity as an unqualified and universally positive asset, symbolizing heritage, prestige, and authenticity (Dion and Borraz 2015; Kapferer and Florence 2016). Our findings both confirm and complicate this view. On one hand, we support the well-established "longer is better" effect (Desai et al. 2008; Pecot, Merchant, et al. 2022; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022): high brand longevity directly benefits product evaluations, as consumers may associate heritage brands with expertise, quality, and the ability to survive in a competitive market over time. On the other hand, our findings show that brand longevity can function as a liability in contexts of technological integration. We demonstrate that for high-longevity brands, AI-designed products are often perceived as a poor fit with the brand's identity, leading to perceptions of brand inauthenticity, more negative consumer attitudes, and lower perceived prestige of the product.

Third, we propose a new type of "fit" (brand-AI fit) to the existing fit research. Prior work has examined different types of brand fit—such as brand-category fit, brand-partner fit, and brand-CSR fit—as judgments about whether a brand's associations align with an external entity or action (Breves et al. 2019; DelVecchio 2005; Mazodier and Merunka 2012). So far, no study has viewed AI adoption as something that should fit the brand. In the present research, drawing on Schema Theory (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos 2016; Fiske 1982), we propose a new application of fit: consumers' evaluations of whether the use of AI in a core creative activity is consistent with a luxury brand's identity. Although prior work has examined fit as the congruence between a brand and an external entity such as a category, partner, or cause (Breves et al. 2019; DelVecchio 2005; Mazodier and Merunka 2012), these conceptualizations primarily focus on brand-object fit, that is, whether the brand is appropriate for the domain, partnership, or action involved. In contrast, brand-AI fit concerns the alignment between a brand's identity and a mode of value creation, namely the use of AI in a core branded activity such as product

design. This is a different evaluative process: consumers assess the legitimacy of AI inside the brand's value-creation system, not the brand's suitability for an external domain. Importantly, the consistency of the measurement model across four independent studies further supports the conceptual distinctiveness of brand-AI fit from brand authenticity. This reinforces our theoretical argument that these constructs capture related but different mechanisms underlying consumers' evaluations of AI-generated luxury products.

Fourth, this research extends the brand authenticity literature. The vast majority of authenticity research relies on self-reported scales to capture consumer responses (Morhart et al. 2015; Moulard et al. 2016; Nunes et al. 2021). It leaves open the question of whether diminished authenticity actually changes what consumers do, rather than merely what they say. This study provides direct behavioral evidence that perceptions of brand inauthenticity translate into negative behavioral reactions. Consumers exposed to AI-designed products from high-longevity brands disengaged, ignoring the product rather than exploring or saving it. This methodological contribution strengthens the ecological validity of authenticity research and responds to longstanding calls for behavioral trace measures.

Fifth, we contribute to the literature on consumers' evaluations of brands' technologies. Prior research has shown that consumer responses to AI are highly heterogeneous, shaped by individual differences in technology optimism and discomfort, privacy concerns, preferences for human advice, and perceived warmth and competence of AI agents (Blut and Wang 2020; Hasan et al. 2021; Prentice and Nguyen 2020; Wien and Peluso 2021). However, these studies treat attitude toward AI primarily as a main effect driver of technology acceptance, without examining how it interacts with brand-level characteristics to shape consumer responses. Our study shows that consumers with more positive attitudes toward AI attenuate the negative effect of high brand longevity on brand-AI fit. It suggests that individual positive attitudes toward AI can buffer the schema incongruence that high longevity brands typically encounter when adopting AI in product design.

### 3.2 | Managerial Implications

This study offers several practical guidelines for managers of luxury brands considering integrating AI into their product design.

For high-longevity luxury brands, accumulated symbolic longevity is both an asset and a limitation. Managers should assess

whether AI-driven innovations, especially AI-designed products, fit with the brand's long-established identity and heritage narratives. Where perceived fit is low, AI should not be intentionally leveraged in promotional communications as a unique selling proposition. Instead, it should be closely tied to the brand's longevity narrative in a way that supports, rather than overshadows, existing identity elements and avoids triggering perceptions of ill-fitting innovation. Achieving this requires targeted market research and pre-launch testing to evaluate consumer reactions before large-scale rollout. Conversely, brands for which longevity is not a strategic asset, and which instead emphasize modernity and contemporary identity, can benefit from more prominently positioning AI as part of their value proposition.

Because individual attitudes toward AI influence perceived brand-AI fit, managers should apply behavioral and psychographic segmentation to identify consumer groups based on their technology openness and innovation adoption tendencies. If a high-longevity brand chooses to launch an AI-designed luxury product, it should recognize that technologically open, AI-enthusiastic consumers may constitute only a niche within its audience. In such cases, the launch could take the form of a limited or special edition, targeted and promoted specifically to this segment, rather than positioned to the brand's broader customer base.

Importantly, our findings reveal a remarkably similar pattern of relationships across the countries examined. Although we do not claim cross-cultural equivalence, the replication of the effects across national contexts suggests that the tensions between brand longevity and AI integration may represent a broader challenge for global luxury brands. Accordingly, firms should maintain a coherent positioning strategy when introducing AI, ensuring that both AI initiatives and brand longevity are aligned with the brand's overarching identity. Table 3 offers the strategic decision matrix for global luxury brand managers.

### 3.3 | Limitations and Future Research

This research has several limitations that offer opportunities for future investigation.

First, we focused exclusively on AI's role in product design. Other forms of AI integration (e.g., customer service automation, supply chain technologies, personalization algorithms, or creative advertising) may activate different expectations and thus different forms of brand-AI fit. Future studies could map the "fit landscape" of AI along the luxury value chain,

**TABLE 3** | Strategic decision matrix.

|                      | Low attitude toward AI                                                                                                          | High attitude toward AI                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High brand longevity | Avoid AI as a visible selling point.<br>Integrate discreetly ("invisible integration") to preserve heritage cues.               | Introduce AI-designed products selectively (e.g., limited editions) for receptive segments, but maintain strong heritage framing |
| Low brand longevity  | AI-designed products can be introduced without major fit concerns but emphasize other differentiators to appeal to this segment | Actively leverage AI use as part of brand positioning to signal innovation and modernity                                         |

identifying where technological integration is welcomed, tolerated, or rejected for high- versus low-longevity brands.

A limitation concerns the operationalization of brand longevity. Following Pecot et al. (2019), Pecot, Celhay, et al. (2022), longevity was measured through a scale capturing heritage-related associations rather than chronological age alone. The stimuli similarly included heritage narratives beyond a simple founding date (Pecot et al. 2019; Pecot, Celhay, et al. 2022). The findings should therefore be interpreted as applying to longevity-as-perceived-through-heritage rather than to brand age in isolation. It remains an open question whether similar effects would emerge if longevity were communicated more minimally, for instance, only through a founding date. In such a scenario, the observed effects may be attenuated. A founding date alone may not convey the symbolic continuity that anchor consumers' schema-based expectations that AI-designed products are perceived to violate.

Further, Study 1 revealed a competitive mediation pattern in which the indirect effect of brand longevity through brand-AI fit and brand authenticity was negative, while the direct effect on product outcomes was positive. This suggests the existence of a positive pathway through which longevity benefits product evaluations that was not captured in our model. Future research could explore what mediates this positive direct pathway. One possible mediator could be perceived product quality. Brand longevity can function as an extrinsic quality signal because consumers may infer that a brand capable of surviving and remaining competitive over an extended period must have consistently delivered high-quality products (Desai et al. 2008). Research shows that communicating brand longevity enhances perceived quality and willingness to pay a price premium, and that brand heritage transmits the positive effect of communicated longevity on quality evaluations (Pecot et al. 2018; Pecot, Merchant, et al. 2022). A second potential mediator is brand credibility, particularly consumers' perceptions of the brand's expertise and trustworthiness. A long and visible track record may imply accumulated knowledge and proven competence. This can increase confidence in the brand's ability to deliver valuable products. Brand credibility, defined in terms of expertise and trustworthiness, has been shown to increase brand consideration and choice (Erdem and Swait 2004). Finally, a third mediator is reduced perceived performance risk. A longer operating history provides consumers with a more extensive record from which to predict future performance and may therefore make the product appear to be a safer and more reliable choice (Desai et al. 2008). This possibility is also consistent with evidence that older brands are associated with stability and reliability (Kim and Srivastava 2024).

A further limitation concerns the operationalization of the behavioral outcome in Study 4. The variable was coded as ordinal (0 = ignore, 1 = learn more, 2 = add to favorites) but treated as continuous in the PROCESS macro analyses. This assumes equal psychological intervals between response categories. Particularly, it implies that the distance between ignoring a product and seeking more information is equivalent to the distance between seeking information and adding it to favorites. This assumption may not hold, as these categories likely reflect qualitatively distinct levels of behavioral engagement.

Another promising research avenue concerns strategies to mitigate the negative impact of AI in luxury product design. In our study, neither strategic framing (positioning AI as a tool for incremental improvement or radical innovation) nor product category (functional technology vs. emotional fashion) was sufficient to attenuate or reverse the negative effect of high brand longevity on brand-AI fit. This suggests that the schema incongruence triggered by brand longevity is robust and cannot be resolved solely by framing or category-level boundary conditions. Future research could explore alternative mitigation strategies, such as transparency about the human-AI collaboration process, emphasizing the role of artisans in guiding AI, or gradually communicating AI adoption to consumers over time to allow schema accommodation. A boundary condition of the study concerns the salience of AI disclosure. Across all studies, participants were informed that the product was designed using AI. This disclosure could maximize the activation of schema incongruence between brand longevity and AI. In practice, luxury brands may not make such disclosures. It is therefore possible that the negative effects of high brand longevity on brand-AI fit and brand authenticity would attenuate under conditions of lower AI salience, as consumers would have less reason to evaluate the compatibility between the brand's longevity and its use of AI. Future research could examine how varying levels of AI disclosure salience moderate the relationship between brand longevity and consumer evaluations of AI-designed products.

Finally, this research examined only luxury brands and therefore did not assess whether brand longevity functions similarly in non-luxury contexts. Longevity and luxury are orthogonal constructs: many non-luxury brands have long histories (e.g., Levi's, Ford, Kodak). Future research should investigate whether brand-AI fit is driven by luxury-specific meanings or whether similar effects occur for high-longevity brands more generally. Such work would clarify whether the mechanism uncovered here is unique to luxury identity or a broader cognitive response to perceived misalignment between tradition and technological innovation.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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## Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.

**Supporting File:** mar70253-sup-0001-Web\_Appendices\_R2.docx.