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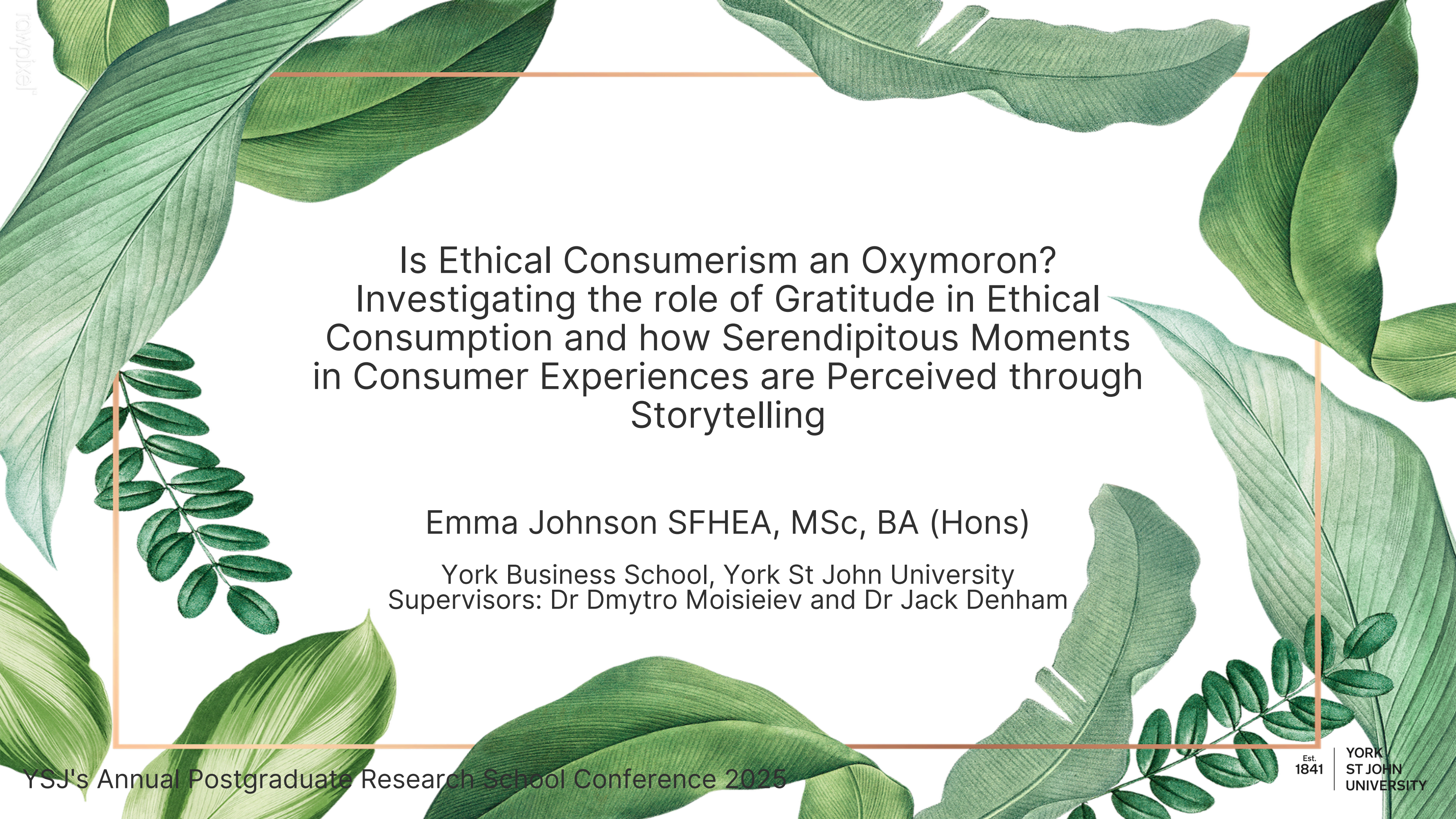
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Is Ethical Consumerism an Oxymoron?
Investigating the role of Gratitude in Ethical
Consumption and how Serendipitous Moments
in Consumer Experiences are Perceived through
Storytelling

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Abstract
3. Question
4. Literature Review
5. Research Gap
6. Research Objectives
7. Methodology
8. Analysis
9. Conclusion
10. Questions
11. References



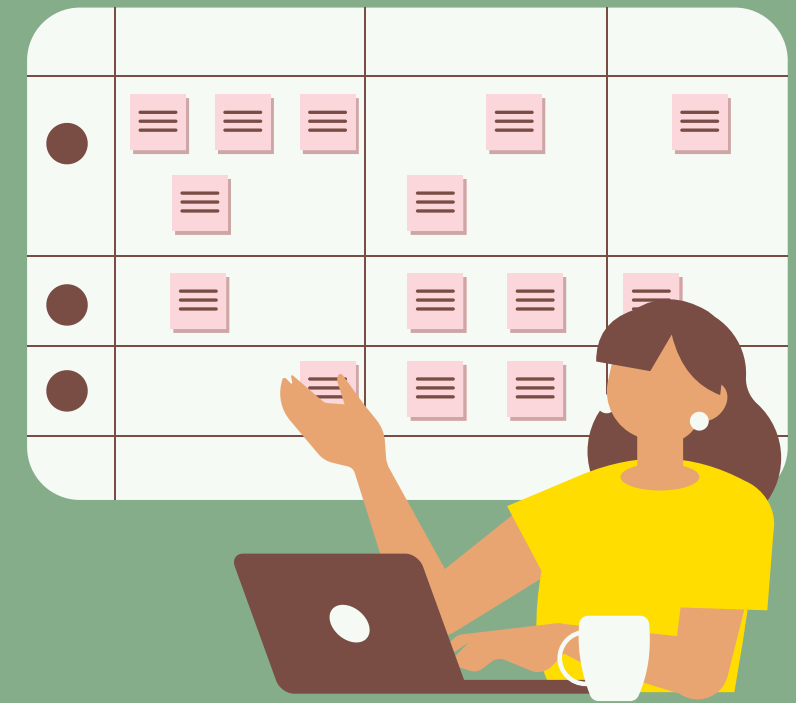
INTRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The research will conduct interviews and diary method data collection. The diary method involves the study participants logging activities in chronological order during a certain period of time (Rieman, 1993). Diaries are predominately used in social sciences for gather ethnographic data (Koriat, Goldsmith and Pansky, 2000; Robinson-Riegler and Robinson-Riegler, 2009). The structure of the diary varies in structure, complexity and layout, which may influence the outcome of the study (Hylegard, 2006). The format of the diaries could be paper or electronic based (Wild et al., 2009).

The diaries will ask participants to describe and reflect on the activities related to ethical consumption, certain emotions included gratification and guilt, and storytelling. Participants can include visual aids of photos within their diaries to allow for creativity and explain its relevance. The diaries will be structure with fixed response categories to facilitate data analysis, include the steps towards decisions, motivations, reflections, conflicts and others.

Analysis of the diary data may be conducted based on the qualitative data analysis approach suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three phases (1) data reduction, (2) display data and (3) conclusion drawing and verification. Phase 1 involves searching for themes, summarising, coding, categorising and registering excerpts from the diary data. Phase 2 includes interpreting the emerging meanings based on patterns and by identifying regularities and possible explanation. Phase 3 conclusions are verified by going through the diaries for a final time and searching for corresponding results in other literature in the field (Babapour, Rehammer and Rahe, 2012).





Would you consider yourself an ethical consumer?

Groceries

Cosmetics

Green Home

Fashion

Travel &
Transport

Leisure &
Hobbies





LITERATURE REVIEW - ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

A voluntary decision by a consumer to buy goods and services, aiming to positively affect certain social and/or environmental issues (Doane, 2001; Jones, 2017).

Toti and Moulins (2016, p.53), define ethical consumption behaviour “as a way to acquire and use products and brands as much as possible marrying consumers’ moral principles and values’.

Ethical consumption can be perceived as a concept of mindful consumption, which is characterised as a sense of caring for community, self and for nature (Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas, 2010).

Ethical consumption is used to describe consumers purchase and use of products that incorporate a salient ethical or moral dimension. The hedonic function and product usage can be subordinated by concerns about right and wrong and consequences of consumption acts (Starr, 2009).

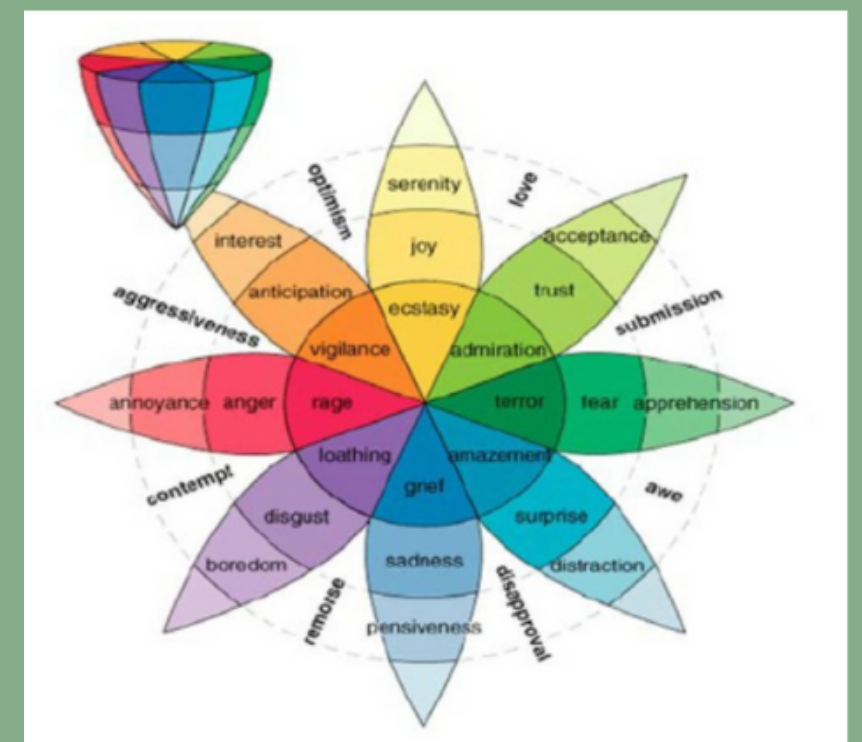




LITERATURE REVIEW - EMOTIONS

- Lazarus's (1975) suggests that three attributes outline emotions – subjective affect, physiological changes, and action impulses.
- Emotions have a high intensity and short duration, and it implies the identification of an object as a direct source for its elicitation (Cohen and Areni, 1991).
- Cohen and Areni (1991) suggest emotions to be markers, which are stored in an individual's memory and subsequently recovered to inform a decision.
 - Primary emotions - Sadness, joy, fear, anger, disgust and surprise.
 - Secondary emotions - nostalgia, compassion, pride and remorse.
- Plutchik (1980) suggests that the eight emotions have adaptive significance in the struggle for survival.
- Emotions are drivers for change (Greenberg, 2012).

Figure 1: Plutchik Emotional Index (Swack, 2012)





LITERATURE REVIEW - STORYTELLING

- Storytelling is the most ancient and influential vehicle for transmitting knowledge, wisdom, and beliefs from one generation to the next (Edensor, 2002; Hurlburt and Voas, 2011),
- As social animal, humans crave narratives than can enhance their experiences, and with cognitive engagement it can build a unique connection by tapping into consumers' curiosity and intellect, thus creating a memorable engagement (Ahmed, Sharif, Ting and Sharif, 2024).
- Storytelling fosters emotional connections, engaging consumers in compelling narratives and cultivates an authentic brand identity, that leads to fostering deep connections and brand loyalty (Lund et al., 2018; Appel et al., 2021).
- Narrative transportation theory helps to comprehend how storytelling influences consumer attitudes and behaviours, with the idea of immersion and emotional connection (Green and Brock, 2002).

STORY OF MY LIFE





LITERATURE REVIEW – SERENDIPITY

Serendipity – “the fact of finding interesting or valuable things by chance” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025, p.1)

- Serendipity refers to finding something valuable by chance or experiencing positive outcomes in unexpected situations (Kim et al. 2021; Balzano, 2022).
- Emotional cues in stories can help consumers connect with a product, and strong emotional reactions often lead to more favourable impressions (Huang and Guo 2021; Ryu, Lehto, Gordon and Fu. 2019).
- Kuai and Wei (2025) finding that serendipitous stories increased consumer interest in the focal product, as the serendipitous story would awaken their positive emotions.
- The experience of gratitude leads to a variety of positive outcomes (Walker, Kumar and Golovich, 2016).





RESEARCH GAP



Humans are naturally better suited to understand stories than arguments (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus and Van Riel, 2013).

Gratitude promotes wellbeing and prompts prosocial behaviour (Walker, Kumar and Golovich, 2016).

The psychological literature on gratitude is clear that people would be better off if they were grateful. The experience of gratitude leads to a variety of positive outcomes (Walker, Kumar and Golovich, 2016).

Emotions are feelings that can evoke different expressions. When you are happy you behave differently, as compared to when you are sad. Emotions affect our judgment and play a significant role in our lives (Reeve, 2018).

Well-structured and organised storytelling has a prominent effect on consumers' memory (Burke & Srull 1988; Tulving & Psotka, 1971).





RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- How does the act of ethical consumption foster gratitude and contribute to individual wellbeing?
- What role do serendipitous moments play in shaping consumer narratives and perceptions of ethical consumption as a fulfilling experience?
- How can storytelling be used as a tool to explore and communicate the emotional and moral dimensions of ethical consumerism?





METHODOLOGY

- The diary method involves the study participants logging activities in chronological order during a certain period of time (Rieman, 1993).
- Diary Method - Participants logging experiences over 6 months.
- Electronic diaries to reflect on experiences.
- Diaries will ask participants to describe and reflect on activities related to ethical consumption, certain emotions included gratification and guilt, and storytelling

Question - If you were writing this diary, would you be happy to share with the other participants?

Question -What are your thoughts on a focus groups or interview beforehand?





ANALYSIS

- Qualitative data analysis approach suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three phases:
 - a. Data reduction
 - b. Display data
 - c. Conclusion drawing and verification





CONCLUSION

Research Questions: (Broad statements that guide the overall direction of the research)

- How does ethical consumption influence gratitude and contribute to an individual's sense of wellbeing?
- What is the impact of serendipitous moments on consumer narratives and their perception of ethical consumption as an enriching or meaningful journey?
- In what ways can storytelling be employed to uncover and communicate the emotional and moral dimensions of ethical consumerism?



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THANK
YOU



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