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Uniqueness, The Self and Luxury Fashion Brand Congruence

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was four-fold: to investigate the importance of uniqueness for consumers when seeking congruence between the self and luxury fashion brands; to articulate a contemporary definition of luxury fashion from a consumer perspective; to investigate consumers' desire for self and brand congruity; and to examine consumer need for uniqueness both in themselves and in luxury fashion products, to provide an in-depth understanding of the consumer.

It builds upon previous research which has identified consumers have a greater likelihood of purchasing luxury fashion products which they view as congruent with the self. However, there has been little research into the importance of uniqueness within this relationship. By demonstrating that uniqueness is a key characteristic individuals' attributes to both luxury fashion brands and themselves. This thesis makes a significant and timely intervention in the field, as the luxury market continues to grow and there is limited research on the subject area.

The research is based on a two-stage methodology utilising mixed methods. Stage one used a quantitative approach, examining the perceptions and behaviours of 200 luxury fashion consumers via a survey. This was analysed and the results validated through a chi-squared probability test. The second stage of the research took a qualitative approach, interviewing 18 generation Y and Z luxury fashion consumers; this stage of the methodology was shaped by previous literature examined and the findings from the survey. The interviews were analysed via code, identifying the thematic patterns and anomalies providing a unique insight.

The research demonstrates that luxury fashion consumers seek self and brand congruence because they view the brands and/or products as extensions of the self. Individuals who view themselves' as unique have a greater desire to purchase unique products. This research has shown that consumers desire luxury fashion brand congruence from the viewpoint that both the self and brand and/or product in question is perceived as being unique. The research results demonstrate that there is a clear relationship between generational groups and need for uniqueness. It is statistically shown that there is a relationship between generations Y and Z perceiving themselves as unique versus participants outside of the generational categorisation, which was identified in the survey.

The results contribute to an understanding of this area which can be used by scholars and industry members to better understand their consumers, for consumers to better understand themselves and to understand what has informed their behaviour. The results can be utilised in a managerial capacity when implementing marketing strategies within the luxury market. Additionally, the focus on generation Y and Z provides information that brands can use when targeting specific consumer groups. A full discussion of theoretical and practical implications, along with the recommendations for further research can be seen at the end of this thesis.

Key Words – Luxury Fashion Brands, The Self, Uniqueness, Congruence, Generation Y and Z, Consumer Perception, Consumer Behaviour

Contents

Due to the size and format of the survey findings and analysis, a link to the location of the following document on The University of Huddersfield K drive will be provided.

Figure List

Section 1: Introduction

The purchasing of luxury fashion goods is increasing at a considerable rate, with recent reports highlighting the importance of generation Y and Z as luxury fashion consumers. In 2017, 85% of luxury growth came from generation Y and Z, with 45% of luxury consumers deriving from those generations, and forecasts predict that 50% of all luxury consumers will be under the age of 30 by 2025 (Trunzo, Deleon, & Dressen, 2018). It is important to understand the generation Y and Z mindset and the reasons behind purchase behaviour in order to ensure continued growth in the sector, examining both functional and psychological needs which require fulfilment prior to purchase. It is important to consider and apply a psychological perspective to the fashion industry, as this will lead to an improved understanding of consumers and assist in the prediction of human behaviour (Mair, 2018).

This research provides insight into this area for scholars and industry members. It can be used to better their understanding of the consumer, and provide information on which marketing method is most appropriate for luxury fashion brands, identity based or lifestyle based. This would ensure consumers are targeted in a way they would most likely respond to, in turn increasing brand engagement, sales and overall success. Additionally, this research can be used by consumers to better understand themselves, understand what has informed their behaviour, and the impact this has on their daily life even if there is not a change in behaviour, the research will raise awareness amongst participants.

1.1 Aim & Objectives

The aim of this research was to provide an insight into consumer behaviour and understand the importance of unique qualities for fashion brands and for individuals when seeking self and brand congruence within the luxury fashion market. This was achieved through a two-stage methodology examining consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour of luxury fashion consumers among generation Y and Z participants.

Objectives:

- To develop an appropriate contemporary definition of luxury fashion that includes consumer perceptions and to define the characteristics of luxury.

- To investigate consumer desire for self- and brand- congruity, through a critical examination of luxury fashion brand characteristics and consumer characteristics.
- To evaluate the importance of uniqueness, in relation to the self.
- To examine uniqueness in relation to individuals' self-perception and why consumers view luxury fashion brands as being unique.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

Consumers will seek luxury fashion brand congruence from the viewpoint that both the self and brand or product in question is perceived as being unique.

1.3 Overview of Literature

This review of the literature focuses on three predominant areas: the luxury fashion industry, the concept of the self from a psychological viewpoint, and unique value, which has been examined on an individual level and luxury fashion brand and/or product level. This section provides a brief overview of the aforementioned subjects, and are discussed in greater depth in sections 2, 3 and 4.

Recent reports conducted by Bain & Company (2017) have highlighted the growth of the luxury market place, with a 5% increase in the fashion sector, which is estimated to grow at a rate of 5% per annum until 2020. As the luxury market continues to grow, there is fluidity in relation to the definition of luxury. For the purpose of this research, the definition of fashion used throughout is that offered by the historian John Styles which states three contexts to understand fashion; the third is of particular significance in the context of luxury and therefore will be used as the standard definition throughout this study: "the self-consciously extreme/exclusive innovation in dress pursued as a form of cultural and economic self-promotion by a narrow elite" (Styles in Breward & Evans, 2005 p.35). This best reflects fashion as understood by this research due to the focus on the consumers' self being central to decisions regarding dress, which is the particular concern of this study. However, through the primary and secondary research undertaken, a new definition of luxury has been created reflecting consumer perceptions and industry perspectives, as this subject area is governed by individual differences.

Whilst it is not the preoccupation of this research, it is important to note the importance of semiotics in relation to the defining of luxury. Semiotics refers to the study of signs and their meaning, which includes the written language or any other form of communication; thus the way an object is presented may lead to varied definitions and meanings developing around the object in question (Welters & Lillethun, 2011). It is important to have knowledge and awareness of semiotic theories throughout the progression of this research as it may impact how participants distinguish and define luxury fashion. As luxury fashion brands use signs and symbolisation as a tool to differentiate and influence consumers to purchase, and the foundation of semiotics is within the study of signs and symbols, they are both closely linked.

Through an examination of the literature around self and brand congruity, it is suggested that consumers are more likely to buy luxury fashion goods which they see as congruent with the self, as possessions are used as extensions of the self (Belk 1988, 2002). It is apparent that consumers often purchase and use luxury goods as a form of self-monitoring (Snyder, 1986) with the goal of reaching the ideal self (Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin, 2017). The literature identified the predominant characteristic which could be attributed to both luxury fashion brands and the individual, is the term uniqueness. It is apparent that consumers use luxury fashion products to differentiate themselves within society, (Ruvio, 2008), as an extension which highlights their own personal uniqueness (Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001). Additionally, it was found that consumers purchase from luxury brands as opposed to mainstream brands as a method of style enhancement and again differentiation (Butcher, Phau and Shimul, 2017).

Despite this research focusing on the examination of uniqueness, the self and luxury fashion brand congruence, it is worth noting other theories may have relevance. Economic theories, including The Veblen Effect as discussed in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Veblen, 1995) has been discussed in this field by scholars. Thorstein Veblen proposed the idea of 'conspicuous consumption', which refers to when an individual purchases goods or experiences to indicate wealth and status (Bayley, 1991). Thus, it is important to consider how consumers perceive luxury, and whether they consume luxury for their own personal gratification or for those around them.

1.5 Gap In Knowledge

The literature reviewed suggests consumers have a greater likelihood of purchasing luxury fashion products which they view as congruent with the self. However, the research and scholars examined provided limited information on how congruence was examined. Therefore, this research seeks to understand what consumers perceive as the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand, with the assumption that consumers must believe the qualities are somewhat comparable to their own for congruence to be prominent. The literature identified that the main adjective that could be attributed to both luxury fashion brands/products and individuals is 'unique/uniqueness'. A gap in knowledge is evident in relation to the importance of unique value when seeking self and luxury brand congruence, which will be examined in this research.

Section 2: Luxury

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the history and evolution of the luxury market and its current status in the sector including its potential for growth. It then examines consumer perspectives on luxury and perspectives of those who work in the luxury industry.

2.2 History and Growth of Luxury

Luxury exists as a global phenomenon and has a noteworthy history; this research examines luxury specifically in the context of fashion. The concept of luxury and its connection to fashion became prominent in the Ancient Egyptian period (3100 BCE – 30BCE), during which Pharaohs used extravagant dress and embellishment to position themselves as elite within Egyptian society (Okonkwo, 2007). Pharaohs were buried with their belongings, and they believed that their belongings travelled with them to the afterlife suggesting that luxury may have had a mythological, semi-religious quality in this society (Okonkwo, 2007). Since then, luxury has been a cornerstone of philosophical thought and a preoccupation of thinkers from Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle (Berry, 1994), to Roman theorists, the thinkers of the Byzantine Empire, the artists of the Italian Renaissance and the artisans of the French Baroque (Okonkwo, 2007). However, it was not until the eighteenth century that the debate of how to define luxury came to the fore, with contributions including that of Hume who defined luxury as a "great refinement in the gratification of the senses" (Berry, 1994, p.143). Despite the popularity of the term luxury throughout the years, there is little consensus on the definition with the term often being used as an abstract noun for the purpose of marketing.

For the purpose of this research, it is important to examine the history and growth of luxury in relation to fashion. Sociologists Patrik Aspers and Frédéric Godart define fashion "as an unplanned process of recurrent change against a backdrop of order in the pubic realm" (Blaszczyk & Wubs, 2018 P.4). Aspers and Godart's definition of fashion is somewhat close to Georg Simmel's proposed definition outlined in his seminal article "Fashion" (1904).

> "Fashion is a form of imitation and so of social equalisation, but paradoxically, in changing incessantly, it differentiates one time from another and one social stratum from another. It unites those of social class and segregates from them others. The elite

initiates a fashion and, when the mass imitates it in an effort to obliterate the external distinctions of class, abandons it from a new mode - a process that quickens with the increase of wealth." (Blaszczyk & Wubs, 2018 P.4)

The fashion industry has evolved extensively over the past century as illustrated in figure 1. Couturiers and fashion houses such as Chanel and Dior came to prominence in the twentieth century and laid the foundations for today's fashion industry. However, it is not only fashion designers which influenced the fashion industry, historical events such as World Wars and women receiving the right to vote, had an impact. Yet, the arrival of ready-to-wear clothing, haute couture runway collections and shows, fashion retail stores, comprehensive branding, and extensive marketing activities are a direct result of Creative Director visions and their lifetime of work (Ewing, 2014).

Pre-War	• End of the Victorian era • Birth of Chanel, Prada, Elizabeth Arden
Post-war	• Rise of Hollywood's effect on fashion • Era of Minimalism, "New Look" of Dior
Sixties	• Women's emancipation: the stiletto • Youth movements: unconventional dressing (rise of Mary Quant)
Seventies	• American ready-to-wear and understated designs: Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein • Rock musicians as fashion icons
Eighties	• Rise of supermodels • Punk culture becomes fashionable
Nineties	• Japan and Russia rise as major consumers • Increased competition leads to professionalisation and diversification
21st Century	• Rise of e-retail • Democratization of luxury with new designers, new consumers and new markets

Figure 1 – The Evolution of the Luxury Fashion Industry (Som & Blanckaert, 2015. P.35)

The term luxury is used frequently in the fashion industry, whilst the phrases coexist and are often used in conjunction in literature and marketing materials, luxury and fashion should not be viewed as coequal (Som & Blanckaert, 2015). However, this is often the case as until the nineteenth century and change in consumer behaviour, only those in a high socio-economic groups where in the financial position to follow fashion and trends. Thus, only those who could incur the financial cost of luxury could afford to follow fashion - this is often known as the Trickle Down effect, which suggests the elite differentiated themselves through fashion, often linked to conspicuous consumption. This fashion is then imitated by the lower class,

this practice has been embedded in the fashion system for many decades from home dressmakers to high street designers sketching in the salons in Paris. As fashion is imitated, the elite are driven to differentiate themselves from the masses (Holland & Jones, 2017).

However, in the twenty-first century, the cost of a product does not correlate with being viewed as fashionable or on trend, for example, Zara, whilst Zara is trend driven and viewed as fashionable, the products are also affordable. This is often where the disparity lies, purchasing a high price fashion product, does not infer luxury. Nowadays, there is a prominence of Trickle Up/Bubble Up and Trickle Across (Simultaneous Adoption Theory) which refers to the elite class imitating the lower classes and movement and adoption across all market levels simultaneously (Holland & Jones, 2017). Democratised fashion, the internet and social media has provided the opportunity for fashions to start at the mid market and spread outwards – or go straight from a subculture to a luxury brand without even hitting the mainstream.

Additionally, whilst it is not the preoccupation of this research, it is acknowledged that there are several defining factors which have had impact on the history and context of fashion in relation to luxury, including the availability of couture, the valuation of craft, the concept of scarcity and social stratification, all of which have been influenced via the rise in consumer culture (Som & Blanckaert, 2015). Whilst, this research has a greater focus on luxury fashion as a communication of the self, focusing on the consumption of luxury fashion goods, symbolic consumption and branding - brands are defined as "an organisation, or a product, or service with a personality" (Olins, 2008. P.8) and are often thought to reflect consumerist society, which will be explored in this research in the context of luxury fashion.

As reported by Bain & Company (2017) there has been clear and evident growth in the luxury marketplace as is highlighted in their market analysis for Fondazione Altagamma, the Italian luxury body. It was found that the global luxury market grew by 5% between 2016 and 2017, to approximately €1.2 trillion, inclusive of all segments. Luxury fashion goods are considered 'Personal Luxury Goods' with growth in this area also at 5%, valued at €262 billion, it is worth noting Personal Luxury Goods may also include apparel, footwear, accessories and beauty products – however, this is not a definitive list. Furthermore, it is estimated that the luxury market will continue to grow at a rate of 5% per year over the next three years with the personal luxury goods sector reaching a value of €305 billion by 2020.

Figure 2 provides an illustration of the luxury market and the size of each sector with personal luxury goods making up a large proportion of the market, (Bain & Company, 2017). As such, it would be imprudent to disregard the ever-increasing size and importance of the luxury market to consumers and therefore an understanding of consumer perceptions of luxury goods is vital in order to understand the market through that essential consumer lens.

Worldwide luxury market, 2017E (€ billions)

262	489	191	70	49	40	35	23	2	1,160
Personal luxury goods	Luxury cars	Luxury hospitality	Fine wines & spirits	Fine food	Fine art	Designer furniture	Private jets & yachts	Luxury cruises	Total 2017E

| Annual growth, 2016–17E | 5% | 6% | 4% | 6% | 6% | 1% | 4% | –2% | 14% | 5% |

Notes: Figures for 2017 are estimated, based on data from January to September; discrepancy in total is due to rounding
Source: Bain & Company

Figure 2 – The Global Luxury Market 2017 (Bain & Company, 2017)

2.3 Consumer Perspectives on Defining Luxury

The following section examines consumer-based conceptualisations of luxury to provide an overview of what consumers perceive luxury to be. Dubois (2001) analysed consumer attitudes to and rapport with luxury goods through two studies. The first involved interviews with 16 participants to gain a variety of perspectives on luxury, and the findings identified six main components used to define luxury: excellent quality, very high price, scarcity and uniqueness, aesthetics and polysensuality, ancestral heritage and personal history and superfluousness. Dubois' findings are supported by De Barnier et. al., (2006) who examined how consumer perceptions of luxury affect purchasing behaviour across three countries, thereby providing cross-cultural observation. Both studies agreed in their conclusions - luxury can be defined by six key components as aforementioned. Additionally, De Barnier et. al., also identified self-pleasure, aspiration, conspicuousness, functionality and luxury atmospherics as additional characteristics which are important to participants. However, this research used only a limited sample size of ten participants from each country, the United

Kingdom (UK), France and Russia, therefore it would be unwise to generalise the findings to the wider population.

Dubois (2001) conducted an extension of the research and identified the four main aspects of consumer attitudes towards the concept of luxury:

Mental Reservations and Excessive Conspicuousness

Personal Distance and Uneasiness Involvement

Pleasure and Deep Interest

Involvement: Sign Value

Dubois then goes on to explore segments based on attitudes towards luxury in 20 countries, which led to the classification of luxury consumers into three categories: elitist, democratic and distant (Dubois, 2005). Dubois' work is important to the development of this research as it provides an analysis of consumer perceptions of luxury within a variety of demographic groups, identifying the key qualities consumers associate with luxury. Furthermore, the six key points have been supported by Dubois (2001) and De Barnier (2006) despite the five-year difference between the two sets of research. In addition, Dubois's (2001) research extension surveyed 420 individuals from 20 countries, however it should be noted that this survey was based upon sixteen interviews conducted in France, which may increase the likelihood of bias in the survey.

Subsequent research conducted by Becker et al., (2018) largely supports the findings of Dubois (2001) and De Barnier et. al., (2006). It aimed to create a definition of luxury brands and understand the relationship between consumer and brand. This was achieved through a survey measuring consumer personality and psychological characteristics. The findings indicated five of the key words associated with luxury by consumers are consistent with that of Dubois (2001) and De Barnier et. al., (2006), which are heritage, uniqueness, quality, aesthetics, and price. However, Becker et al., (2018) suggested symbolic and exclusive qualities have an impact on consumers' perceptions of luxury products, yet this was not identified in the previous literature discussed. This may be due to a change in consumer behaviour in the intervening years between 2001 and 2018.

The *Becker Model*, developed from the findings, identifies the relationship between luxury characteristics and consumer psychological characteristics and how this impacts on consumer and brand relationships, as illustrated in figure 3. *The Becker Model* provides value to this

research as it identified a link between luxury fashion products and consumer psychological characteristics, both of which are relevant to this research as it seeks to define luxury fashion brands and understand the link this has to the consumers 'self' inclusive of psychological characteristics. *The Becker Model* is defined by three hierarchical levels, a base level of cognitive attributes, a secondary level of extrinsic attributes and at the highest level, intrinsic attributes. The research was considerate of three factors when defining luxury brands, (a) luxury product characteristics (b) consumer psychological characteristics towards the luxury product, and (c) the personal relationship between the consumer and product and/or brand – this combines the individuals personality and brand attributes.

The model is relevant to this research as it was developed through the examination of consumer psychological characteristics including the self and the impact this has on how consumers perceive luxury products. Thus, it will be interesting to compare to the findings of this research, as the aim of this research is to provide an insight into consumer behaviour and understand the importance of unique qualities for fashion brands and for individuals when seeking self and brand congruence within the luxury fashion market – of which the three important elements, luxury fashion brands, uniqueness and the self, feature in *The Becker Model*. However, the participant samples for the survey were identified in a Portugal shopping mall (177 participants) or Boston University students and staff (194 participants) making the findings difficult to generalise.
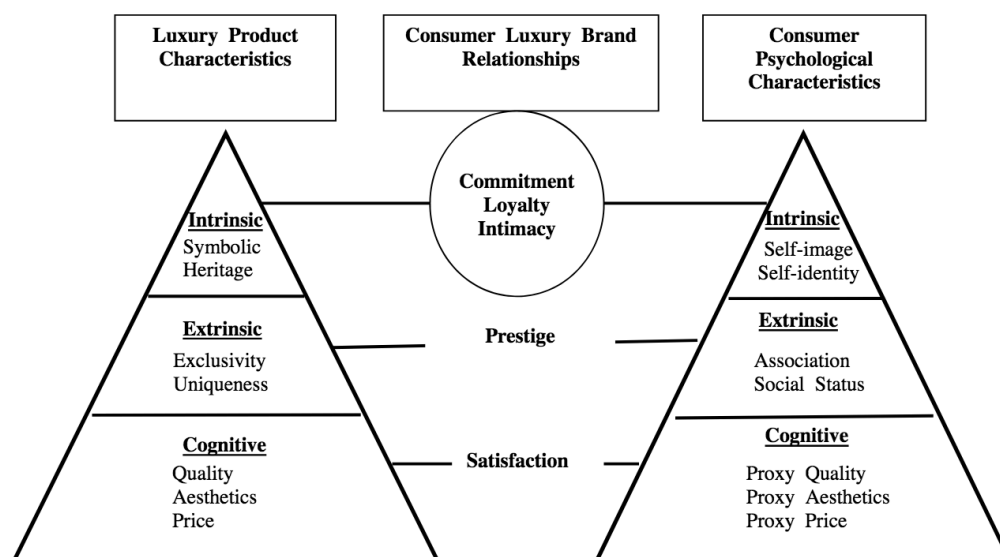
Figure 3 - The Becker Model of Consumer Luxury Brand Relationships (Becker et al, 2018, P.59).

Additionally, Kapferer (1998) identified product uniqueness as a key characteristic consumers use to identify luxury products as did the three aforementioned research papers. However, Kapferer proposed further key qualities not identified in previous studies; the top four excluding uniqueness were beauty, excellence, magic, and great creativity this was achieved through a survey of 200 students studying in Paris. In addition, Kapferer & Bastien (2009) discuss a separate study by Dubois (Year & Participant Count Unknown), which aimed to understand the factors that induce people to believe something is luxury. The key qualities and ideas consumers identify with luxury are: expensive, quality, prestige, expectation, minority, dream, fashion, pleasure, art, beauty and avant garde. Furthermore, Godey et. al., (2013), analysed consumer perceptions of luxury via a sample of 233 students in European, Asian and American universities, focusing solely on young consumers. In this study, the top three adjectives associated with luxury were identified as being expensive, quality and exclusive. This suggests that these elements are key for consumers when distinguishing if a product is luxury. However, the same point can be made that a large proportion of the words which appear in the findings are abstract nouns as can be seen appendix 1. This suggests that consumers may use vague language to articulate a concept such as luxury that they have a limited understanding of, which will be important to consider in this research when drawing conclusions. This is the predominant driver and reasoning for undertaking a content analysis of the literature examining consumer and industry attitudes towards the luxury market, as it was used to inform the methodology e.g. the quantitative survey and the range of options used to describe luxury – ensuring the language used is clear and there is no industry jargon.

Nueno and Quelch (1998, p.62) proposed that "luxury brands are those whose ratio of functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high". The researchers believe that luxury brands share a variety of characteristics: premium quality, craftsmanship, recognisable style, limited products, clear marketing support, global reputation, strong relationship with brand heritage, uniqueness, and personality and values of creator. It is worth noting that this proposal of qualities was based on secondary research untaken by Nueno and Quelch, it is not based on their own study conducted with participants. Yet, this is supported by Bellaiche et. al., (2010, p.1) who acknowledge traits of luxury including "superiority to the ordinary" and craftsmanship, however, this was based upon secondary findings and not through their own primary research investigation. It is worth noting that the idea of product craftsmanship is rarely mentioned in research. In addition to

Nueno and Quelch's point regarding symbolisation, Vickers and Renand (2003) conducted a study examining consumer perceptions of luxury goods to identify if three dimensions are vital to the label luxury, functionalism, experimentalism and symbol features, this was established through fifteen interviews. The findings suggest that the brand symbolisation including logos, seen on luxury products have a clear impact on consumer choices when differentiating between luxury and 'non' luxury goods, thus should be considered for this research.

Despite, Vigneron and Johnson's (2004) research not focusing on consumer perspectives of luxury, they sought to examine the concept of luxury with the intention of creating a framework which could be used to measure and understand the differences between luxury brands. To establish a definition of luxury, a review of three large studies in the area was undertaken to look at key describing words, along with twelve qualitative interviews of luxury fashion brand managers and focus groups with twenty five post graduate students, all of whom resided in Australia. This led to the creation of a proposed framework and the researchers identified the following factors to be of importance when distinguishing luxury: -

- Conspicuous
- Elitist
- Extremely Expensive
- For Wealthy
- Very Exclusive
- Precious
- Rare
- Unique
- Crafted
- Luxurious
- Best Quality
- Sophisticated
- Superior
- Exquisite
- Glamorous
- Stunning
- Leading
- Very Powerful
- Rewarding
- Successful

Vigneron and Johnson's framework identified five key dimensions; - conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, hedonic and extended self – a combination of both personal and interpersonal factors which affect consumer purchasing behaviour of luxury goods. This is

known as the *Brand Luxury Index* (BLI) scale, a theoretical framework of the key dimensions of luxury brands forming a sematic network, which is illustrated in figure 4.

The personal perceptions include Perceived Hedonism and Perceived Extended Self. Luxury consumers are often viewed as hedonic as they seek self-fulfilment through the purchase and consumption of luxury products, because of the emotional benefit. Additionally, the researchers agree there is a consensus in scholarship that consumers use luxury brands to distinguish themselves, using luxury products to differentiate and enhance their self-concepts. Whereas, the non-personal perceptions include Perceived Conspicuousness, Uniqueness and Quality. Conspicuousness refers to the consumption of luxury products to enhance have an individual may be perceived within society. Furthermore, consumers may seek out products which are scarce, with a need for uniqueness often referring to difficulty in obtaining a product. Whereas, consumers often view luxury brands and products as having a higher quality than a cheaper counterpart, often seeing quality as a factor of reassurance. Thus, a luxury brand should integrate a combination of the elements to create a strong luxury brand and captivate target consumers (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004).

Vigneron and Johnson sought to understand the defining features of a luxury brand, creating the framework to measure the dimensions of perceived luxury. This framework could be utilised in many respects, including in the creation of a luxury brand, to monitor existing luxury brands but to also understand consumer behaviour within the sector. This research acknowledges that luxury fashion brands allow consumers to express to ideal or actual self.
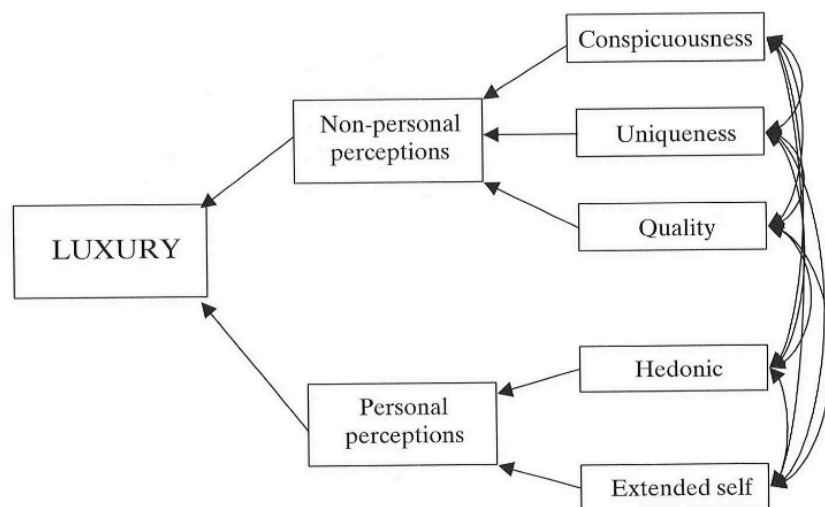
Figure 4 – Proposed Framework of Brand Luxury Index (Vigneron and Johnson 2004, P.488)

This is highly relevant to this research as it pinpoints two of the areas: the extended self and uniqueness as important components of luxury frameworks. Furthermore, this research supports that the luxury construct is influenced by both personal and interpersonal perceptions, in addition to highlighting the importance of consumer perceptions of luxury in the decision making process. All of which is applicable to this research as it seeks to understand and provide an insight into consumer behaviour and understand the importance of unique qualities for fashion brands and for individuals when seeking self and brand congruence within the luxury fashion market.

However, it is important to note, there are limitations to the research conducted by Vigneron and Johnson, with some scholarship suggesting abstract constructs including The Brand Luxury Index are difficult to measure, with participants often being led by the terms used to define luxury. Additionally, to improve the validity of the framework, the research should be replicated with a nationally representative sample across several countries to avoid bias.

There is some agreement in scholarship that luxury brands can be defined by key characteristics which appeal to different consumer groups. The table in appendix 1 provides a concise overview of what each researcher found to be the defining points of luxury. It is important to state there would be an issue generalising any of the research findings cross-nationally as the research only focused on particular demographics, including a large focus on students. In addition, it should be noted in some studies, the researchers pre-wrote a list of adjectives which participants then had to select their choice from when defining luxury. Therefore, only key words, which have been mentioned on several occasions, will be used to create a definition of luxury to improve the validity of this method, such as quality - this key word was prevalent in eight pieces of the research examined in the literature review when investigating consumer perspectives of defining luxury as shown in appendix one.

Research in this area is minimal when considering the fast growth of the luxury market in recent years, particularly with little focus on generations Y and Z. This research will provide a comprehensive overview of these generations and their perceptions and attitudes towards luxury fashion. The following section explores current definitions of luxury from bodies within the fashion and luxury sector, as it is important to have an understanding of what is deemed luxury across the sector.

2.4 Industry Perspectives on Defining Luxury

It is important to understand both consumer perspectives of luxury fashion and the perspective of those who work within the fashion and/or luxury industry to provide a well-rounded representation of opinions. This section examines the key characteristics of luxury fashion brands from industry bodies and corporations.

Mintel researchers examined consumer attitudes towards luxury goods in 2011 and found that 66% of British consumers purchase from luxury brands and understand the defining elements of luxury goods as superior quality and craftsmanship as well as exclusivity and product uniqueness. The data provided an analysis of how different age brackets and genders consume luxury goods and from which category they are most likely to purchase, with over 50% of consumers aged 16 to 24 believing that high price points and designer symbolisation including logos and notable aesthetic style defines luxury. Furthermore, females in this age bracket say product personalisation adds to their perception of a brand's luxury qualities. In contrast, consumers over the age of 55 understood luxury more in the context of high-quality goods and evidence of strong craftsmanship.

Walpole, the UK body for the luxury goods industry (who curiously have little detailed information on how to define luxury), published a report on the *FT Business Luxury Summit 2017*, on what speakers discussed and stated at the conference. The report emphasised the importance of the following characteristics which can be attributed to luxury, craftsmanship, creativity, high-quality materials and a strong aesthetic (Jackson, 2017). Furthermore, Altagamma, the Italian luxury body has partnered with many companies to conduct research and analysis into the luxury industry, yet all fail to provide a definition of luxury. Fashion trade publications Drapers and Business of Fashion (BoF) report daily on changes in the fashion industry, yet neither company defines luxury. BoF and McKinsey & Company (2018) published a report which identified the forces shaping fashion and an industry outlook for the coming year. The report estimated the luxury fashion market will have 5% growth in 2018, which is in line with the estimation made by Bain and Company as discussed in section 2.2.

WGSN (2015) provide evidence that for many in the luxury sector heritage and history are the cornerstones of luxury, along with product quality and the creation of bespoke goods. Additionally, rarity is an important factor, as the larger the luxury market becomes, the harder

it is to navigate and find true luxury. As Williams (2015, p. 8) notes, "To avoid commoditisation, luxury will need to be unique, infrequent and exceptional".

The information available from companies in the luxury industry provides little if any definition of luxury from their perspective. Whereas, IPSOS a global market research company, which conducts annual analysis and publishes yearly reports on changes in the luxury industry, put forward a definition of luxury, providing context for their content, stating luxury goods are "an inessential, desirable item which is expensive or difficult to obtain" (2018). According to the *Luxury Horizons Report* (2017), 85% of consumers believe quality is the main characteristic of a luxury brand and that 64% of consumers believe luxury products are unique and timeless. IPSOS stated in the report "luxury brands need to reassure on their fundamentals: exceptional quality, history, know-how, rooting in the past, made-in and quality of the materials" giving a clear indication of what their report found as important to the luxury consumer. The report states consumers no longer consume luxury goods to express themselves; the purchasing of luxury goods acts as a "fluid interaction" for knowledgeable consumers to identify how luxury is perceived and its code as a lifestyle choice. The 2018 *World Luxury Tracking Report* focused on "The Great East" and the importance these countries have on the global luxury economy, including China, Hong Kong, South-Korea, Japan and Russia. From those surveyed 79% of consumers use luxury goods as a social marketer and as a tool for personal empowerment, specifically in women. Consumers are interested in a product being able to express their personality to onlookers (Ipsos, 2018). The point regarding personal empowerment is very relevant to this research as it suggests some consumers purchase luxury goods to improve their self-concept. This idea is explored further in section 3.

During this section of the literature review the key insights into industry perceptions and attitudes have been identified. Please refer to appendix 2 which has a chart providing a concise overview of what companies view to be luxury using keywords and phrases. The information presented identifies the ever-changing consumer needs and the impetus behind the purchase of luxury goods.

2.5 Summary

This section of the literature review has identified key definitions of luxury fashion, and the defining factors of the luxury fashion concept from both a consumer and industry perspective. The most popular words used to describe luxury by consumers was excellent quality, brand and product uniqueness, a high price point, a clear brand heritage, and finally a strong aesthetic. Whereas, the main characteristics, which reoccurred most in the research focusing on industry bodies, suggest key factors are product quality, product craftsmanship, a strong and clear brand history and product uniqueness. The terms that appear in both consumer viewpoint and industry viewpoint most frequently are excellent quality, product uniqueness and a strong and clear brand history/heritage.

Given the various qualities associated with luxury as identified in the secondary research, the definition of luxury for the purpose of this research is "a product or service which is distinguished through excellent quality and uniqueness from a heritage brand. This product or service may have craftsmanship value, a strong aesthetic and a high price point". To conclude, this section of the literature review has explored the history and evolution of the luxury market along with the examination of both consumer and industry perspectives on luxury, leading to the creation of a definition of luxury for the purpose of this research, in line with the objectives.

Section 3: Self

3.1 Introduction

Many fashion scholars acknowledge the importance of understanding the consumer mind and consumer behaviour from a psychological viewpoint. Consumer behaviour refers to "the mental, emotional and physical activities that people engage with when selling, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires" (Statt, 1997 p.6). An understanding of consumer needs (both physically and mentally), will ensure brands remain competitive, and therefore analysing the consumer's mind and behaviour is vital (Gunter, 1992). This area is closely linked to consumer psychology, including biological, cognitive, social and developmental sub-disciplines all of which assist in the underpinning of consumer behaviour and marketing (Mair, 2018). Thus, understanding the influential factors which may affect consumers' behaviour in this field is vital.

The following section explores the psychological factors which influence consumers' attitudes, including an overview of perception to provide a foundation before examining the concept of the self and the relevant theories. This leads to a discussion of consumer congruence between the self and luxury brands, and consumers' need for uniqueness is examined. All of the factors explored are analysed to establish how this may alter consumer attitudes.

3.2 The Power of Perception

Perception is a product of an individual's immediate response to sensory receptors when presented with a stimulus which is referred to as sensation. An individual's brain selects, organises and interprets what is seen which informs perception. Perception can be divided into three main categories object, person and physical perception (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a phenomenological philosopher who studied human behaviour, experience and perception during the nineteenth century. Merleau-Ponty's work on phenomenology was extensive in attempting to understand perception from a neurological and psychological view point. Merleau-Ponty discussed the importance of perception through the senses and the impact this has on Gestalt psychology (Gallagher, 2010). Gestalt refers to when an object is perceived as a full sum as opposed to perceiving each individual part (Statt, 1997). Foxall and Goldsmith (1998) offer a Gestalt approach in their works suggesting that

individuals' perceptions of stimulus happen within a known context which is ultimately affected by their view of the world. Therefore, perception occurs at an unconscious level as individuals use what they see in the environment to create beliefs which are then stored in one's memory and later acted upon (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1998).

It is important to acknowledge, there are many cognitive factors, which affect consumer perceptions and behaviour. This includes, but is not restricted to, memory, the communication process, needs drives goals and untimely decision making, which encompasses theories including Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

3.3 The Concept of the Self

Fashion has the power to affect how one views oneself, those around them, and identity, all of which directs individuals in a specific direction when navigating throughout life. To understand the impact of these factors on consumers, a psychological approach will be taken (Mair, 2018).

> One's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces. It is in the coincidence of placements and announcement that identities becomes a meaning of our self.
>
> Gregory Stone (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009, p.157).

Self-concept theory, is classified within the area of personality and is one of the main strategies to approaching and understanding consumer personality (Rath, 2014). This theory has been developed from humanistic psychology, with the concept self, developing from the Freudian term 'ego' (Statt, 1979).

Malhotra (1988, p.7) defines self-concept as

> the totality of the individuals' thoughts and feelings having reference to themselves as subjects as well as objects. Hence, self-concept includes (a) the self as knower, or subject, or I; and (b) the self as known, or object, or me. Furthermore, the ideal self (the person as I would ideally like to be), actual self (the person that I believe I actually am), and social self (the person as I believe others see me) are retained as important components of this multidimensional construct.

The ideal self is connected with self-esteem, individuals self-esteem is related to the proximately between their actual and ideal self (Rath, 2014). The ideal self refers to how we would like to be, whereas the actual self is a realistic evaluation of qualities one may or may not have (Somolon & Rabolt, 2009). Both of which are examined in this research.

3.4 Possessions as Extensions of The Self

Within the theory of self-concept, the term 'extended self' refers to the consumer's relationship with their personal possessions (Rath, 2014) suggesting that they are objects which are believed to contribute and make up ones' self (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Belk (1988) proposed that the extended self is within the scope of consumer behaviour and that individuals possessions are a contributing factor to ones' identity with there being a clear relationship between self-concept and their brand of choice. Belk (1988) proposed this theory following an extensive investigation reviewing research conducted in all areas of the self. This led to the conclusion that individuals accumulate possessions over time providing a sense of the past but also of the future, which is a reflection of ones' self.

Belk (2002) conducted further research examining the relationship between consumers footwear and the self, through extensive questionnaires, observations and interviews of 96 students in 1990 and 2000. The research identified that consumers' footwear choices are extensions of the self, and are used as a form of expression, which can be identified by onlookers. Furthermore, the physical object of footwear can symbolise a memory or a narrative to one's life. Not only do they change how onlookers may perceive the wearer, but also how the wearer perceives themselves, as the research found individuals would often use shoe style as the basis for applying stereotypes. It is important to note that gender differences were identified in this research, with women having a greater interest in the symbolic meaning of the shoes as opposed to men. It is clear from this research that consumers purchase products as extensions of ones' self which can be identified by onlookers, in particular luxury fashion because the items are directly contributing to ones' self. Therefore, this is an important consideration in the undertaking of this research.

Furthermore, consumers self-monitoring refers to the extent individual's monitor, observe, regulate and control the public appearance of the self to the external world. Individuals are typically high or low self-monitors. High self-monitors control how the image of ones' self is

seen in a social setting to a great extent, whereas low self-monitors have a greater concern placed upon congruence between who they are and what they do (Snyder, 1986). Snyder's (1986) work states, "choosing situations may be one of the primary vehicles by which conceptions of the self become embodied in social behaviour" (p.58). Thus, high self-monitoring consumers may have a greater likelihood of purchasing luxury goods, often choosing "form over function" (p.106). Low self-monitors may also purchase luxury goods, however they choose "function at the expense of form" (p.106). This suggests high self-monitors choose products for status which can be projected and seen by onlookers in a social environment whereas low self-monitors choose products for their own personal pleasure. This is to say, consumers self-monitor and consume products to improve the self, typically using status and symbolised products forgoing utility and functionality to improve how the individual and those around will view them. This is supported by Gil et al's (2012) research, examining 558 teenagers, identifying that participant's image of the self and participant self-monitoring, both influences social consumption motivation among teenagers with materialism being the prominent driver of attitude towards luxury brands. Their research indicates consumer purchase behaviour is likely to support their self-concept, as consumers typically purchase from stores and products that they view as in line with themselves, choosing brand extensions of the consumers' self. This is explored in greater detail throughout this research.

3.5 Consumers Congruence between Self and Brands

As shown in the research above, consumers monitor themselves often to change how they or others perceive them. However, it is important to consider to what extent consumers choose to purchase from brands which reflect the self. Models focusing on consumer self-image and congruence with brands suggest that consumers purchase products when the product qualities align with aspects of the consumers' self (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Congruence refers to compatibility and harmony between two entities.

Consumer goods, inclusive of luxury fashion products, are an important medium within our culture going beyond utilitarian benefits and commercial value - providing a template for the self, with consumers often purchasing specific products for the meaning or statement it projects within society, as the cultural meaning transitions to the product and then to the consumer (McCracken, 2005). McCracken sought to explore the movement of cultural

meanings and their translation into consumer goods as illustrated in figure 5. The research proposes that the meaning stems from three areas, the culturally constituted world, consumer goods and the individual consumer with advertising and the fashion system, providing an important consideration for this research as it seeks to understand consumer congruence between the self and luxury fashion brands.
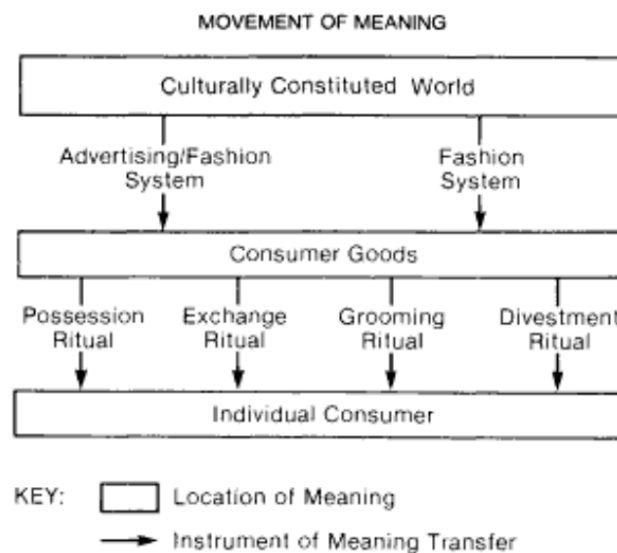
Figure 5 – The Movement of Meanings in Culture and Consumption (McCracken, 1986. P.72)

The following studies have been selected for their relevance to this research investigation. Liu, Li, Mizerski and Soh (2012) conducted an investigation to examine the effect of self-congruity using 50 Australian students as participants, specifically with regards to the brands' personality, brands' user imagery, brand usage imagery and attitudes and brand loyalty to luxury fashion brands. The researchers define self-congruity as the likeliness of comparing oneself to another object and states brand personality is the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.

- o Brand Personality Congruity (BPC) is the term used to describe the relationship between the consumers' perception of the brands personality and their personal perception of their individualistic personality.

- o Brand User Imagery Congruity is defined as the extent to which a consumer perceives a similarity between the typical consumer or the brand with themselves.

- o Brand Usage Imagery Congruity refers to consumers' perceptions of the typical use of the brand or product and how the brand/product is perceived depending on the situation it is used in.

To understand consumer attitudes towards a brand and loyalty, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire examining BPC. The research found that Brand User Imagery Congruity and Brand Usage Imagery Congruity are stronger predictors of consumer attitude and brand loyalty. This suggests only certain factors need to be congruent between the consumers' self and brand, which is further considered in this research.

Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin (2017) took a different approach to understanding consumer congruence, examining the influence of actual and ideal self-congruence on consumers' brand attachment and compulsive buying. It is specifically the area focusing on self-congruity and brand attachment, which is important for this research. Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin (2017) refer to self-congruence as a notion of self-concept, and ones' ideal self is in line with the actual self and define brand attachment as the strength of the link and emotion which connects a consumer to the brand. The research method utilised a survey of 427 individuals living in the South of the UK, involving a seven-point scale relating to actual and ideal self-congruence statements. Participants were asked to think of their favourite brand, and a typical person who would use the brand and describe them using a personal adjective e.g. stylish. The research found participant self-congruence had a direct effect on brand attachment, with actual self-congruence being the strongest predictor of brand attachment.

3.6 Summary

It is evident in literature that there is a relationship between consumers' congruence with the self and the brands they choose to purchase from and attach to. There is a great likelihood that there is a relationship between consumers with a certain self-concept and the brands they are likely to attach to. It is therefore interesting to examine to what extent consumers choose to purchase from brands which they view as being congruent with their self in a luxury market, for example identifying if consumers with a certain self-type will attach to luxury brands for a certain set of reasons. As research in this area is limited, it will be explored in this research and assist in achieving the aim through the examination of participant behaviour and the importance of unique qualities for individuals when seeking self and brand congruence within the luxury fashion market.

Section 4: Uniqueness

4.1 Introduction

The previous sections of the literature review have shown consumers have a greater likelihood of purchasing luxury fashion goods which they view as congruent with the self and that possessions are used as extensions of the self. Therefore it is important to understand what consumers perceive as the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand, as they must believe the qualities are comparable to their own for congruence to be prominent. As already discussed, consumer definitions of luxury indicate the main adjective that could be attributed to both luxury fashion brands/products and individuals is 'unique/uniqueness'.

4.2 Needs, Drives and Goals

In order to understand consumers' needs for uniqueness it is important to outline the underlying process to this theory. Consumers are often motivated to purchase a product through three main processes: - need, drives and goal. A need refers to the difference between an individual's current state and ideal state thus consumers are motivated when they are exposed to a need, which they want to satisfy, this can be separated into two types of needs, innate also known as utilitarian and acquired, also known as hedonic. Innate needs are basic human needs whereas acquired needs include social status. Consumers are then driven to seek out a source where they can purchase the product, with the ultimate goal being to purchase the product (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). However, it is worth noting that consumers can be motivated through underlying goals, as stated by Solomon and Ralbot (2009), who suggest consumers may purchase luxury goods because the product takes on a specific meaning which is vital to the consumer achieving their goal, for example the luxury good may be an indicator of style awareness. It is highly likely that consumers will consider how they will be perceived with the product they are motivated to purchase, with the majority of consumers purchasing a product with which they identify with on a psychological basis and express who they are to others around them (Jansson-Boyd, 2010).

Extensive research has been undertaken in attempt to classify individual needs, four specific areas have been identified as directly impacting consumer behaviour including the need for achievement, affiliation, power and uniqueness. Solomon and Ralbot (2009) refer to the "need for uniqueness as (to assert ones' individual identity) this need is satisfied by products

that pledge to accentuate a consumers distinctive qualities". Furthermore, Solomon (2018) argues that a product will only satisfy a consumer's need for uniqueness when the product and brand in question bring out consumers' distinctive qualities (p.125). Additionally, according to Rath (2014), consumer type may impact the extent to which one desires "need for differentiation or uniqueness" (p.143) with those who identify as fashion innovators predominately striving for uniqueness.

4.3 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory first introduced by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 work *A Theory of Human Motivation*, and in his subsequent work published in 1970, *Motivation and Personality.* The theory conceptualises the understanding of personal growth and why individuals strive to attain the ultimate goal, which refers to self-actualisation (Jansson-Boyd, 2010).

Figure 6 illustrates that humans have few basic and primary needs; these needs are also referred to as physiological needs, and are what humans need to survive. However, once these needs have been met, humans seek psychological needs, including the need for love, esteem and self-actualisation. The hierarchy of needs pyramid refers to individuals fulfilling their physiological needs prior to their psychological needs (Rath, 2014). It is difficult to distinguish what is meant at each level of the pyramid, however the ultimate goal is thought to refer to when an individual invests their abilities into meaningful activities with the goal of developing their personality, which may refer to self-realisation as opposed to self-actualisation (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1998). Maslow proposed that individuals cannot progress to achieving their psychological needs until their physiological needs are successfully fulfilled (Rath 2014). However, some contest Maslow's theory, and dismiss that individuals' behaviours are motivated by specific needs and that one has to complete each stage of the pyramid to progress (Jansson-Boyd, 2010), for example Monks focus on self-actualisation without esteem needs.
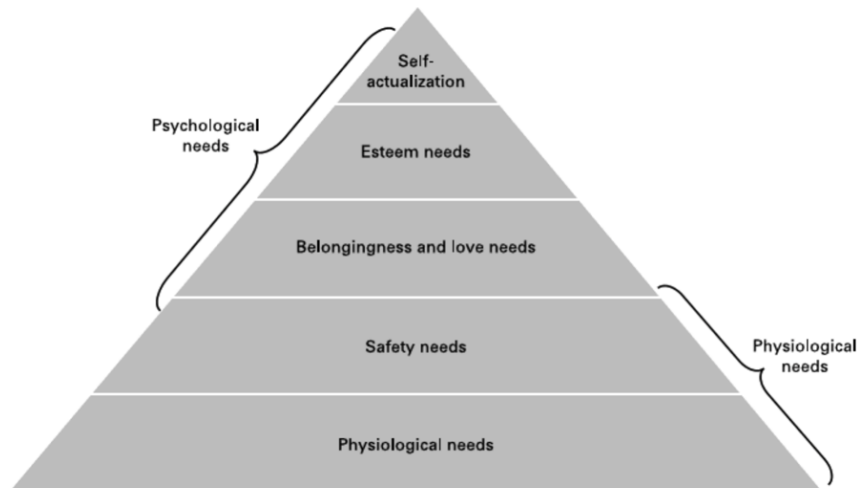
Figure 6 – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Jansson-Boyd, 2010, P.119)

However, the concept of fashion can be applied to all of the levels of the hierarchy as stated by Solomon and Rabolt (2009) for example physiological aspects relate to clothing protecting individuals from the elements, and safety would include garments passing tests to insure they are safe for the consumer. Whereas, the psychological aspects, including social, refers to when you want to share products or be seen wearing them by others, esteem refers to wearing products to improve how we feel about ourselves and the final level of self-actualisation refers to when consumers clothing choices are true reflections of themselves.

4.4 Need for Uniqueness

The theoretical origins of consumer need for uniqueness was originally acknowledged by scholars Snyder and Fromkin (1977) who took a social psychological viewpoint and proposed the theory of uniqueness "rests on the assumption that although people do at times conform, they do not value high degrees of similarity relative to others." Snyder and Fromkin (1977) developed a scale which has been widely referred to by scholars to measure an individuals *Need for Uniqueness* (NFU), it is suggested all individuals desire uniqueness, however, the extent of this varies substantially. The NFU scale has not been contested by others, however, other researchers often combine or develop the scale for the purpose of their own investigation.

4.5 Self-Uniqueness and Consumption

Lynn and Harris (1997) examined consumer pursuit of self-uniqueness through consumption. Prior to their primary research, extensive secondary research was examined to identify areas of interest in the field including, desire for scarce products, consumer innovativeness, consumer conformity, choice of shopping venue and product customisation. However, inconsistent results were found within replication of studies in the above areas. The research method included seven self-report measures, examining self-attributed need for uniqueness, need for uniqueness, desire for scarce products, desire for customised products, need for unique shopping venues, consumer innovativeness and susceptibility to influence; 142 students from Southwest Universities in the United States of America (USA) completed this. The research found a need for uniqueness is directly related to individuals' desire for scarce products, consumer innovativeness, unique shopping venues, and a desire for customised products. In this research going forward, it is important to identify the characteristics which individuals associate with uniqueness in relation to luxury fashion.

4.6 Uniqueness and Luxury Fashion Consumption

There is agreement in scholarship that clothing is an extension of one's self, but similarly, it is difficult to understand why mass proposed products, consumed across the globe, contribute towards ones 'uniqueness' and sense of the self (Barnard, 2014). Thus, it is important to explore self-identity, uniqueness and luxury fashion in relation to this research.

The following studies focus on luxury consumption and generation Y as it has the greatest relation to this research. Tian, Bearden & Hunter (2001) conducted research examining *Consumers' Need for Uniqueness* (CNFU), and found consumers use and display possessions, such as luxury fashion goods, to differentiate themselves from those around them. The research indicated consumers' need for uniqueness has three dimensions: - creative choice counter-conformity, which refers to an individual expressing their self-image through material possessions. Unpopular choice counter-conformity, refers to an individual distinguishing themselves through an unpopular consumption choice which may be disapproved and avoidance of similarity; this refers to consumers avoiding products which are commonly consumed. The research suggests that consumers' need for uniqueness is an underlying factor of consumption as an extension of the self, this was achieved through

extensive secondary research into studies previously conducted. This is exemplified in the work carried out by Belk 1988 and 2002 discussed earlier.

Following on from the concepts of NFU and CNFU, Ruvio (2008) conducted an investigation examining individuals' needs to express uniqueness through their consumption behaviour, in order to differentiate themselves without alienating or damaging how they are perceived by others. Two studies were conducted in Israel, study one had 140 participants and study two had 241 participants, overall the research identified that individuals do desire and demonstrate uniqueness, however, within the boundaries of the setting to ensure social approval. In addition, those with a high level of CNFU perceive themselves as having a greater level of uniqueness compared to their peers.

Latter, Phau and Marchegiani (2010) investigated consumer need for uniqueness in haute couture luxury brands. This was achieved through questionnaire analysis of 259 responses from generation Y Australians. The results show, choice counter conformity being the most significant predictor of purchase, one of the factors aforementioned in research undertaken by Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001). Furthermore, Butcher, Phau and Shimul (2017) focused their approach to understanding uniqueness and status consumption on generation Y consumers via an online survey of 397 individuals. This consumer group was chosen because research has found this generation to be confident and brand conscious. In addition, the parents of this generation are seen to have a high disposable income which can be spent on luxury goods. According to the research, status consumption has a positive impact on generation Y's purchase behaviour of luxury fashion goods and are motivated to purchase from luxury brands to distinguish themselves from others. The research also indicated that generation Y consumers have a strong personal style and will avoid popular mainstream brands. Thus, this research suggests all participants of the generation Y demographic seek out unique luxury goods suggesting a generational trait as opposed to being the product of ones' self.

Highsnobiety (Trunzo, Deleon, & Dressen, 2018) investigated what they distinguish as *The New Luxury* through a survey of 4,984 readers of their publication focusing on the 16-34 age demographic to provide insight into consumer mindset and how this translates into consumer behaviour. Highsnobiety is a global multi-media brand exploring news and trends in fashion and creative industries so individuals can "lead their most stylish and culturally relevant

lives" (LinkedIn Highsnobiety, N.D.). According to their research, in 2017 generation Y and Z attributed to 85% of all luxury growth, 45% of individuals who consume goods within the luxury market will be generation Y and Z and 50% of all luxury consumers will be under 30 by 2025.

1.	BALENCIAGA	OLD LUXURY (BELONGING)	NEW LUXURY (BEING)
2.	GUCCI	Price (Buying)	Knowledge (Buying Into)
3.	NIKE	Aspirational (Image)	Inspirational (Values)
4.	LV	Exclusive	Unique
5.	Off-White™	Ownership	Access
6.	CALVIN KLEIN	Artisanal	Artful
7.	PRADA	Purchase	Participate (Experience)
8.	RAF SIMONS	Customized	Personalized
9.	STONE ISLAND	Physical	Phygital (Decentralized)
10.	YEEZY		

Figure 7 (Left) - Brands That Readers Spent More Than $500 On In The Past Twelve Months (Trunzo, Deleon, & Dressen, 2018)

Figure 8 (Right) - The New Luxury Definition Mapped Against the Traditional Landscape (Trunzo, Deleon, & Dressen, 2018)

Figure 7 illustrates the brands that readers spent more than $500 on in the past twelve months, providing information on which luxury fashion brands are being driven and consumed by younger generations, however, it is problematic because the research was restricted to consumers who spent over a specific value. This is examined in this research though not defined by price but by simply identifying participants' favourite luxury fashion brands that they have purchased from. In addition, figure 8 illustrates the new luxury definition mapped against the traditional landscape. Interestingly is the emergence of the term 'unique' with Highsnobiety stating the growth in the new luxury market is "fuelled by a complex desire to achieve one's own unique identity while indulging in traditional luxuries" (p.8). Again, this is examined in this research in order to support or discourage the definition of luxury created for the purpose of this research.

According to the survey, 85% believe what their clothing represents is just as important as quality or design and 84% believe they define themselves through their style. Interestingly, 53% declared that they will no longer purchase from brands which support causes and/or operate in a style which goes against their own personal values, with 87% being willing to spend more on a brand that supports a cause which they believe. Furthermore, 89% say they can identify when people behind a brand are part of a culture they seek to represent, with 91% identifying with the designers and creatives of their favourite brands. This suggests that consumers may want to establish deeper connections with the brands they patron as it conveys shared values.

Additionally, Bain & Company (2016) reported on the *Millennial State of Mind*, which has three main traits, uneasiness, urgency and uniqueness, which highlights the importance of refocusing on consumers, ensuring their needs are anticipated and catered for. Bain & Company state uniqueness refers to consumers expecting luxury brands to align with their personal values. The report statistics corresponds with Highsnobiety in relation to "45% of individuals who consume goods within the luxury market will be generation Y and Z", yet interestingly suggest 'Millennial' is a mindset which impacts consumer behaviour across generations.

The research into consumers' needs for uniqueness has indicated this desire may be a self-trait of certain consumer groups and has a direct link to self-monitoring. Thus, for the purpose of this research, the idea is examined within the context of the luxury market, contributing to an area, which has little scholarly work.

4.7 Summary

This section has explored the psychological factors which influence consumers' attitudes towards luxury by examining the idea of perception and consumer self-concept and the theories within this notion as the foundation of this research.

The literature focused on the impact consumers' self-congruence with a brand has on consumer behaviour, indicating there is a relationship between how consumers perceive themselves and the brands they purchase from. In order to achieve the aim of this research,

providing an insight into consumer behaviour and an understanding of the importance of unique qualities for fashion brands and for individuals when seeking self and brand congruence within the luxury fashion market. This research moves to explore consumption encouragement due to the congruence consumers perceive between themselves and a brand in the luxury market; examining whether consumers do this within a luxury setting to provide a stronger sense of the self, choosing brands which they see as congruent with their ideal self. In addition, the literature reviewed suggests consumers are driven to purchase goods, which they perceive as unique.

Section 5: Methodology

5.1 Research Methods

The methodology has taken an epistemological approach and reflects an evidence-based understanding of human behaviour (Flynn & Foster, 2009). This research seeks to understand the importance of uniqueness for consumers when seeking self and luxury fashion brand congruence, for the purpose of self enhancement, which is visible for both internal and external purpose with a goal of self-actualisation. This is based upon the information gathered and explored in the literature review, which identified that consumers purchase from a brand's congruent with the self. When exploring how consumers define luxury fashion, as demonstrated in the literature review, an important factor was a products' uniqueness or unique value, which one may also use to describe the self, as all individuals are unique. Other adjectives used included quality, price and craftsmanship – words which are unlikely to be used to describe an individual.

Due to the nature of the self-concept construct and theories, as discussed in the literature review, measurement in the area is problematic with many different proposals of what defines self-concept. Furthermore, it is vulnerable to a variety of issues, as each individual's self-concept is unique and some may align with reality whereas others are idealistic. Thus consumers cannot be described as self-concept 'ABC' and will therefore have attitudes and behaviours 'XYZ'. However, it is important to research the area of self-concept in this context as consumer needs, drives and goals shape behaviour. As research suggests consumers use products and brands to shape identity, through self-concept attachment with products. It should be noted; this research is not related to consumer personality – self-concept theories, are relevant to ones' personality as they shape an individual, however they are two separate entries within research.

The research used a mixed methods approach, however, it also used an emergent design thus depending on research outcomes at each stage, the research methodology changed accordingly with a working hypothesis (Bryman & Bell, 2015) as illustrated in the following infographic (figure 9) which outlines the key steps which were taken to formulate this research and the results, this is discussed in greater detail throughout this section, section 5.3 and 5.4, exploring the quantitative and qualitative phases in depth.
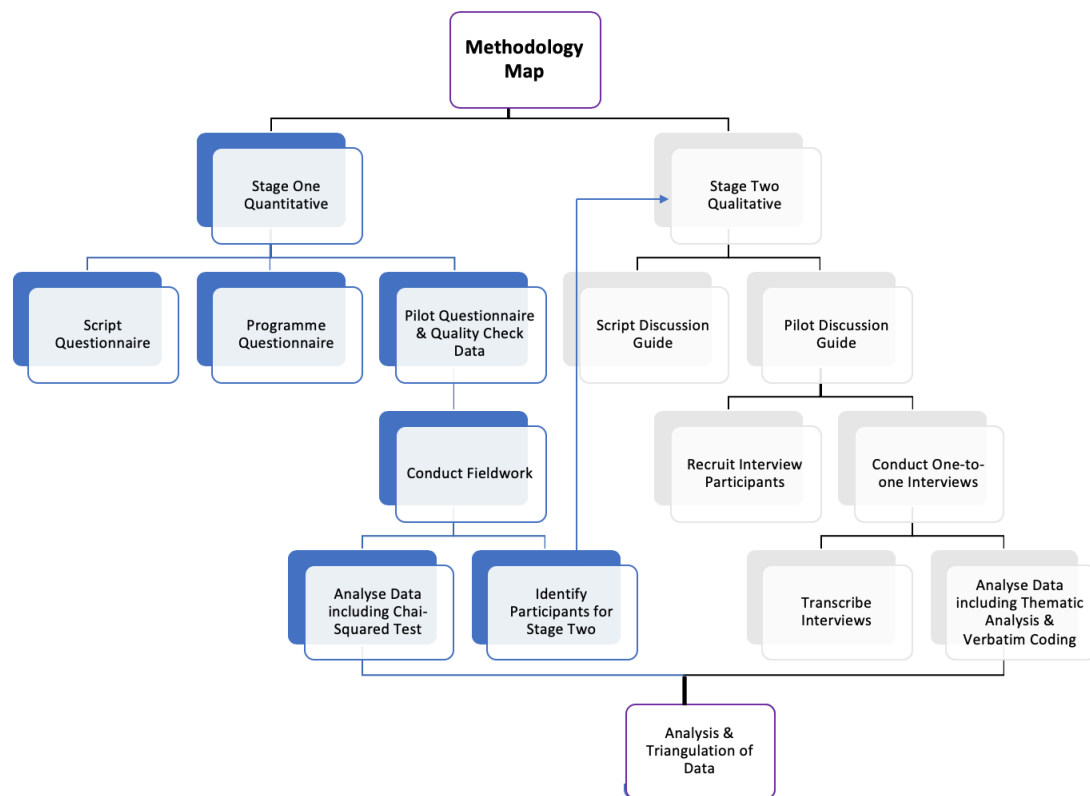
Figure 9 - Methodology Map

Quantitative data was gathered in stage one of the research via a survey. It is acknowledged that a quantitative focus is limited as it would not recognise research participants as individuals and acknowledge their social environment, which is pivotal for this research. Additionally, quantitative methods and statistical data are unlikely to be a true reflection of participants in this research area. In order to understand ones' self and their true view of themselves and luxury fashion brands they choose to purchase from, detailed and in-depth information would need to be gathered. The survey allowed participants to express themselves freely with the option to leave a written explanation for their chosen answer, providing a small amount of qualitative information.

The quantitative survey, also referred to as stage one in this research as discussed in section 5.3, was developed and informed in response to the information discussed in the literature review, this included content analysis of the information. The questionnaire comprised of twenty two questions, and included a combination of behavioural, attitudinal, and classification questions including demographic profiling questions including gender and age to ensure the data was nationally representative (Hague, Hague & Morgan (2013). The

questionnaire was developed to understand the purchasing behaviour of luxury fashion consumers exploring areas such as purchasing history, frequently and the type of product purchased. It was also important to explore participant attitudes towards luxury, including the key words and/or phrases they would use to describe or associate with luxury fashion, and importantly attitude towards the term unique/uniqueness - moving to explore self-identity, to explore the relationship between uniqueness, the self and luxury fashion. The literature examined was interpreted using content analysis (Martin & Hanington, 2012), which informed the development of the questions and multiple choice responses, for example, the responses to question four were developed through the identification and analysis of the key phrases and words which were used to describe luxury in the literature review, this can be seen in appendix 1 and 2.

The quantitative data has been analysed statistically, and a chi-squared test has been utilised, a chi-square test, also known as an $\chi 2$ test, was conducted to establish if there was a statistically significant relationship between two variables, through an analysis of observed and expected frequencies to verify if there was a real trend within the data. For the purpose of this research, statistical significance is accepted if $p < 0.05$, this level is used to indicate that the conclusions drawn are subject to a 5% error. The findings of the survey and the results of the probability test can be found in section 6.

Following the survey, the second stage of the research commenced with a series of in-depth interviews to provide qualitative data, this stage of the research, the development of questions and a discussion guide was based upon both the literature review and results of the quantitative stage as discussed in section 5.4. Interviews are necessary for this area of research as it was pivotal participants' thoughts and behaviours could be identified through an open communication between the researcher and the participants, using experiences as a framework. This allowed a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the participant to be established which is presented through an encyclopaedic analysis in relation to the research question. Qualitative research is not bound to restraints, which would be faced in complete quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Whilst it is acknowledged there are several other research methods which could have been utilised for example focus groups using generative design exercises (Martin & Hanington, 2012), as discussed in appendix 3, or alternatively observational research (Hague, Hague & Morgan (2013). The mix methodology approach combining a quantitative survey and qualitative in-depth interviews was deemed most appropriate as alternative methods would not have produced sufficient or reliable data for the research in questions. Alternative methods such as focus groups may have been vulnerable to issues, as the industry is somewhat governed by financial disposition which some participants may have found problematic discussing in a group environment. Whereas, observational research is subjective and open to interpretation, which may have been problematic when analysing and evaluating the data from each participant and observation (Hague, Hague & Morgan (2013). Furthermore, dependant on where participants choose to shop e.g. online, this in itself would cause problems, and would require internet browsing and transactional history to be analysed to mirror the observational process which would take place in person.

5.2 Working Hypothesis

A working hypothesis was devised for the purpose of this research using the information discussed in the literature review - the working hypothesis for this research was: Consumers will seek luxury fashion brand congruence from the viewpoint that both the self and brand or product in question is perceived as being unique.

5.3 Stage One

The demographic focus is on current luxury fashion consumers residing in the UK, aged 21 to 39, this age group can be classified as generation Y and Z. It is acknowledged that generation Z would include younger consumers, however, the participant age range will start from twenty-one as it is important participant luxury spending habits to be of their own accord as opposed to parents spending habits. The decision to use generation Y and Z consumers in the research is supported by IPSOS (2016) who state the main consumer of luxury goods will be millennials by 2026, this consumer group is also known as generation Y. Therefore, an understanding of this generation and those in the generation to follow, known as Z, is pivotal to understanding current consumer attitudes towards luxury goods and how it will be perceived in the future. This research is not gender focused and therefore

inclusive of all genders, as the predication regarding the future of luxury fashion consumers is not distinguished through gender.

The participant sampling method chosen is stratified random sampling, this method ensured generation Y and Z luxury fashion consumers were represented (Bryman & Bell, 2015); this was achieved through a survey of 200 individuals. The survey established if individuals are consumers of luxury goods, and fit into the chosen age demographic. However, the initial survey participants were accessed via opportunity sampling, the survey was sent to the researcher's workplace and personal contact lists, put out across social media channels and given out in public places. It is acknowledged that this method is vulnerable to researcher bias and has the possibility of leading to a non-representative sample (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, through survey snowballing, it is hoped these factors were minimised and a greater participant audience reached. This snowballing effect was achieved through the researcher's connections sending the survey onto their network. Furthermore, the reasoning for the preliminary survey sampling style was chosen so that research participants could be selected through stratified random sampling ensuring no researcher bias (Bryman & Bell, 2015) whilst ensuring the participants were luxury fashion consumers, a key element of the sampling criteria. The purpose of the quantitative survey was to capture divergent material through an assumption of objectivity and validity through repetition in participant responses which in turn highlights passages of connection leading to a convergent process of qualitative analysis which was achieved through interviews.

The survey was cross sectional, using closed ended questions (Bryman, 2012), with the option for participants to leave a brief justification for their response. This strategy allowed participants to be selected purposefully because the survey responses identified if an individual fit the criteria and assisted in answering the research question. Within the initial survey, which was used to select participants for the research, important data on demographic and psychographic elements were collected to ensure that the individuals were the correct profile for participation. The information was used in the full data analysis of the research to identify if other trends were emergent including the prevalence of demographic and psychographic components, and if these factors can determine the importance of a consumers need for uniqueness when seeking self and luxury fashion brand congruence.

Prior to the preliminary survey being circulated, a pilot survey was released to gain public

feedback. The pilot survey was given to ten individuals, they were asked to complete the survey in full, so an estimation could be made on survey completion time. Participants were asked to give feedback on language used, they wanted the language to be simplified and to ensure consistency in language between questions, changes were made to reduce participant uncertainty. Furthermore, following the pilot survey, the decision was made to add an open response option to questions where appropriate to allow participants to express their reasoning, providing a mix of quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. Additionally, the brief explanation prior to the survey had been altered, adding an incentive for participation in the research. The age brackets used in the survey were altered following some questions regarding the age breakdowns. The IPSOS (2018) definitions of the generational groups (Gen Y 1980-1995 and Gen Z 1996 +) were used. Therefore, the new age groups are as followed:

Generation Z

Under 18

18-20

21-22

Generation Y

23-28

29-34

35-39

It is acknowledged there are only two or three years in the generation Z brackets. However, for this research it is important participants purchase luxury fashion goods with their own funds, and only those from the age of twenty-one were invited to further research. However, it is acknowledged that this method is vulnerable as there is no guarantee participants purchased luxury fashion goods with their own personal funds.

During the next stage of the research, a greater analysis was conducted using the opinions of the individuals interviewed, on certain questions from the preliminary survey, to gain the opinions of several individuals and avoid bias. Furthermore, profiling down to the 21-39 demographic, and taking a greater interest in luxury brand characteristics, participant personality and the impact of generational factors as opposed to general consumption.
The top ten luxury fashion brands purchased by surveyed individuals was discussed with interview participants to gauge their opinions, including commonalities and possible anomies

within the findings from a consumer perspective to avoid researcher bias. Prior to this, in order to examine the repetition of responses, the 600 data responses were combined and checked through for spelling and grammatical issues to ensure the analysis was not compromised.

5.4 Stage Two

The next phase of the methodology focused on qualitative data collection through focus groups and in depth interviews to allow participants to express themselves freely. However, due to a varied response rate across the country, it would have been impractical to conduct focus group activities with ideal candidates ranging in location from London to Huddersfield and the surrounding areas, thus a method of one-to-one interviewing was utilised to ensure qualitative information was gathered from a varied demographic. Despite this issue, the original focus group strategy (Bryman, 2012), which can be seen in appendix 3, was translated and intergraded into an interview strategy. It was important that participants have the opportunity not only to speak but also to complete activities and use objects in the same manner of which would have been observed in a focus group. This is important as it produces natural conversation and allows the researcher to observe and take note of how one is expressing themselves and their feelings towards the topic.

Participant selection remain as previously discussed in terms of stratified random selection, with participants with a disposition to the criteria being examined for selection. The breakdown of the participant selection can be found in the statistical analysis, in section 6. There was a total of eight different breakdowns of the quantitative data set which led to the identification of suitable participants whom represented the consumers being investigated. Twenty one potential participants were approached, but only eighteen interviews took place. Each interview took a slightly different approach as the questions were altered accordingly to ensure what was being asked was in line with their preliminary survey responses. This allowed participants to feel at ease in the discussion and avoided any unnecessary time discussing topics which may have been previously raised in the participants written survey responses. However, each interview followed a semi structured approach. It was acknowledged that qualitative interviews followed less structure than quantitative interviews which had a greater validity and reliability (Bryman, 2012). However, it was important for this research that the interviewees' viewpoints were the predominant driver as opposed to that

of the researcher. An interview guide was created for each participant which allowed specific issues to be addressed and allows for flexibility. It was important for some structure to exist as eighteen interviews were conducted, therefore structure was required for cross case comparability.

Prior to the interviews, a pilot interview was conducted to ensure that the topic structure supported the flow of the interview. This ensured that the questions were not overly specific and allowed the participants' scope for discussion, that language was simple and that leading questions were not used. Furthermore, it provided an estimation of interview time and allowed the pilot participant to provide feedback on the structure and style of the interview. The interviews took place in a quiet and familiar area with minimal distractions to ensure the focus remained on the interview. Each participant was provided with a consent form and face sheet, ensuring participants acknowledge the interview was recorded, transcribed and used for the purpose of research. A total of eighteen interviews were conducted, fourteen interviews took place face to face, three interviews took place via video call, and one interview was conducted via email.

The interview questions can be seen in appendix 5, however, the main themes of conversation within the interview examined participant justification of luxury, the relationship between the self and luxury fashion brands, perception of individual and brand uniqueness and uniqueness within society. Additional popular areas of interest which came from the survey were explored in this phase of questions including the consumption of popular items and how this shows lack of identity, the type of consumer one sees themselves as and how luxury fashion has been seen as a positive alternative to fast fashion.

Following the interviews, all conversations were transcribed. Furthermore, the researcher made notes on the following areas, the interview location and information on the interviewee, including if they cooperated, were nervous or happy to talk, and how they were dressed and if they brought up any new avenues of interest.

The interviews provided high quality and valuable qualitative information. The qualitative data gathered has be described, categorised and interpreted providing a holistic viewpoint using analytical induction. The qualitative information gathered in the eighteen interviews, has been analysed, using Microsoft Excel. The analysis utilised descriptive code which led to

the identification of key categories and trends within the data gathered, with a further content analysis undertaken. A priori coding list was created using evidence from the literature review, with emergent codes being added throughout the primary research undertaken. The codes chosen are coherent and formulate a structure allowing meaningful material and reoccurring patterns to be identified (Miles & Saldaa, 2014).The findings have be presented in section 7 of this research.

Ethical frameworks and compliance were central to the research, data was recorded, stored and disposed of in compliance with The University of Huddersfield data storage policy and the Data Protection Act, and all sensitive/ confidential data is stored on a secure university system (i.e. K drive). Additionally, participant consent was attained prior to the research being conducted, both for the online survey and interviews - the completed and signed consent forms for the interviews can be location in The University of Huddersfield K drive.

5.5 Summary

The research methodology assisted in answering the research hypothesis as it aimed to highlight the importance of uniqueness within the idea of self and luxury fashion brand congruence for generation Y and Z consumers.

Section 6: Statistical Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This section presents the statistical findings of this research, focusing on the results of stage one. The statistical information is discussed in this section prior to the findings and results in the following section because the statistical findings of the survey informed the second stage of the research.

The survey, as seen in appendix 4, was conducted to identify the key characteristics which are important to consumers when purchasing from a luxury fashion brand, the prevalence of self and brand congruence and the importance of unique value in one's self and luxury fashion products. This was achieved through a survey of 225 individuals, of whom 200 identified as luxury fashion consumers (Q1) inclusive of all genders (Q17). It should be noted that 25 respondents from the survey were removed, because they did not purchase luxury fashion goods therefore due to reliability they have been removed, as it is not representative of luxury fashion consumers solely, reducing the initial 225 respondents to 200. Within the 200 luxury fashion consumers, 139 (69.5%) fit into the age bracket of 21-39 (Q18) while the remaining 61 participants fell into the younger or older age demographics. The survey was conducted online therefore it is acknowledged that it may be subject to bias as it could only be accessed digitally, via a specific website link. However, according to Bain & Company (2016) at least 70% of luxury purchases are influenced through a brand's online presence with at least one digital interaction taking place with the brand prior to purchase. In addition, digital traffic versus in-store traffic has doubled with 14% of those aged 18-24 purchasing their first luxury product online. Therefore, an online survey has been viewed as appropriate as the target group for further examination is 21-39 who are highly likely to have a strong online presence. However, as the survey was conducted online it allowed completion from across the UK (Q20) and was completed by individuals who work in a variety of different sectors (Q19). Appendix 6 contains a full breakdown of participant survey responses including location and sector of employment. This analysis was undertaken to ensure that the data is not biased to a particular demographic.

General information on shopping behaviour was gathered during the survey, to understand the extent to which participants consume luxury fashion products, with those surveyed having

purchased luxury goods from the past one to ten years (Q2). When examining the regularity of purchasing, the most frequent response was every 4-6 months with 25.5% of responses followed by 1-3 months with 20.5% (Q3). In addition, 66% of participants purchased between one and five luxury fashion products from January 2018 to January 2019 (Q4). The most popular luxury fashion item purchased by participants was footwear (74.5%), followed by ready to wear clothing (70.5%), small leather goods (63.5%) and jewellery and watches (59%) (Q6). This information was collected to provide greater detail on the consumer habits of the surveyed group, to build a profile on those surveyed and as a refence point in interviews. This analysis was based on the general 200 participants, however, interestingly the order in which answers were regulated remained the same when focusing on the generation Y and Z demographic.

6.2 Survey Analysis: Participant Definition of Luxury

In relation to what matters to consumers when purchasing luxury fashion goods (Q5) responses were in line with the results of existing scholarship with respondents noting excellent quality (83.5%), craftsmanship (50.5%), aesthetics (49.5%), brand and/or product heritage (48%) and uniqueness (40.5%).

When comparing the survey findings and information in the literature review there is no common order of luxury fashion brand characteristics which have been recognised by scholars and authors in the field. As very few scholars published the repetition or percentage which reflects the occurrence of a specific characteristic. If this information is available it can be viewed in appendix 1. The characteristic order, which was developed by other scholars, has been used as a possible indicator of popularity or repetition. The most common terms within at least three pieces of literature as aforementioned in section 2 were, aesthetics, heritage, price, quality and uniqueness. These findings were in line with this research to an extent, however craftsmanship was only listed in two pieces of the reviewed literature, Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and Nueno & Quelch (1998), yet it was important to 50.5% of those surveyed for this research. Interestingly, price, whilst appearing to be an important characteristic in the literature review, as highlighted by Vigneron and Johnson (2004), Kapferer & Bastien (2009), Godey et al (2013) and Becker et al (2018), was only considered a characteristic of luxury by 3% of surveyed luxury fashion consumers. Therefore, this will

be used to redefine the original definition of luxury created for the purpose of this research based upon the literature review examining consumer perceptions of luxury.

The previous research examined in the literature review was undertaken between 1998-2018, in comparison to this research undertaken in 2019, it is evident there is some shift in consumer perceptions, for example the characteristic of craftsmanship was visible in the 1998 works carried out by Nueno & Quelch, and then appears to have be disregarded or irrelevant in other works. Interestingly price, has consistently appeared in literature reviewed from 2000 onwards, therefore the drastic drop of the importance of price may suggest a cross demographic change in consumers. However, in terms of the other top four characteristics, it seems they have been very much relevant and associated with luxury within the timeframe of 1998-2019.
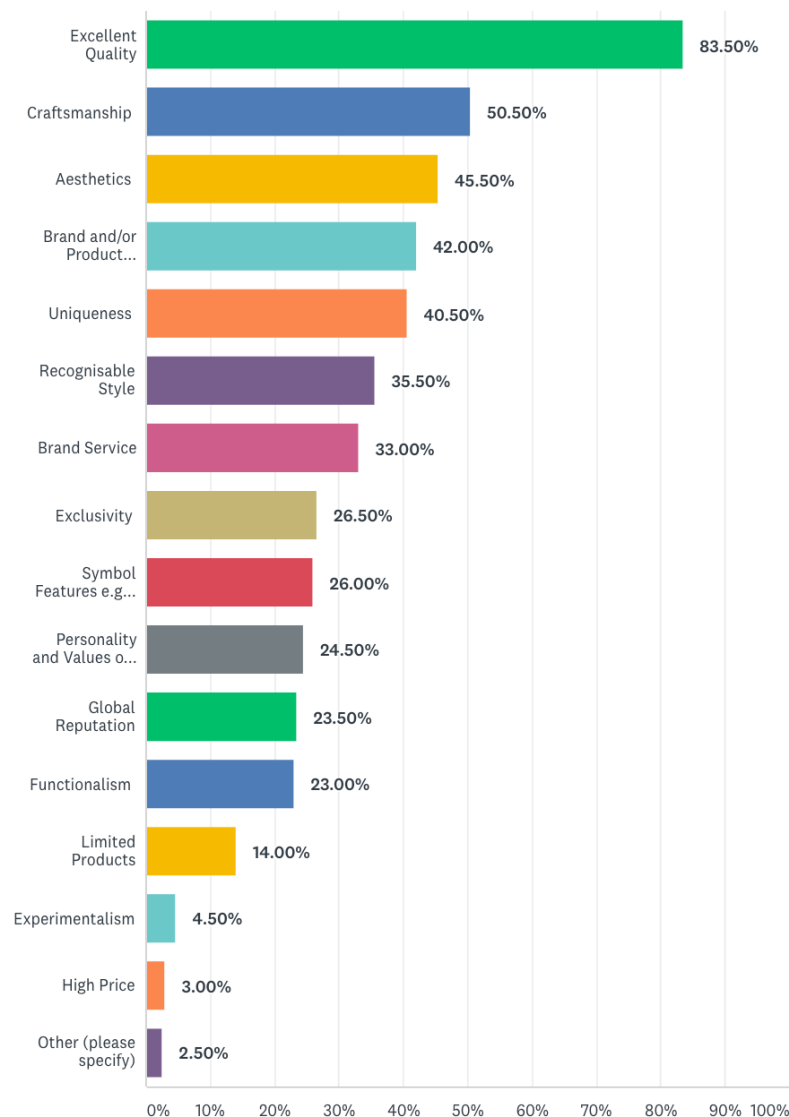

Figure 10 - Characteristics Which Participants Associate with Luxury Fashion Products

To an extent there has been a common order recognised through the survey conducted for this research, in that the top five characteristics are consistent across all ages surveyed with excellent quality, craftsmanship, aesthetics, brand and/or product heritage and uniqueness. It is worth noting that the order does change when refining through the age bracket, however, excellent quality is the top consistent characteristic, as illustrated in the chart below. It is worth noting that uniqueness appears to be of increasing importance to generation Z.

Age Bracket	All Ages 200 Participant	The Research Demographic 21-39 (Y&Z) 139 Participant	Generation Z < 22 63 Participant	Generation Y 23 < 96 Participant
Characteristics by Percentage	Excellent Quality 83.5%	Excellent Quality 86.33%	Excellent Quality 84.13%	Excellent Quality 86.46%
	Craftsmanship 50.5%	Aesthetics 51.8%	Uniqueness 50.79%	Aesthetics 54.17%
	Aesthetics 45.5%	Craftsmanship 51.08%	Aesthetics 47.62%	Craftsmanship 50%
	Brand and/or Product Heritage 42%	Brand and/or Product Heritage 45.32%	Craftsmanship 44.44%	Brand and/or Product Heritage 45.83%
	Uniqueness 40.5%	Uniqueness 43.17%	Brand and/or Product Heritage 41.27%	Uniqueness 38.54%
	Recognisable Style 35.5%	Brand Service 34.53%	Symbol Features 41.27%	Recognisable Style 31.25%
	Brand Service 33%	Recognisable Style 32.37%	Recognisable Style 41.27%	Brand Service 30.21%
	Exclusivity 26.5%	Symbol Features 28.06%	Brand Service 39.63%	Personality and Values of Designer 27.08%
	Symbol Features 26%	Personality and Values of Designer 28.06%	Global Reputation 33.33%	Global Reputation 25%
	Personality and Values of Designer 24.5%	Global Reputation 27.34%	Exclusivity 33.33%	Exclusivity 22.92%
	Global Reputation 23.5%	Exclusivity 26.62%	Personality and Values of Designer 26.63%	Symbol Features 20.83%
	Functionalism 23%	Functionalism 20.14%	Functionalism 20.63%	Functionalism 19.73%
	Limited Products 14%	Limited Products 12.95%	Limited Products 7.94%	Limited Products 14.58%
	Experimentalism 4.5%	Experimentalism 4.32%	High Price 6.35%	Experimentalism 6.25%
	High Price 3%	High Price 3.60%	Experimentalism 1.59%	High Price 2.08%

Additional Characteristics	- Value for Money	- Value for Money	- Sustainability	- Value for Money
	- Sustainability x2	- Sustainability x2		- Sustainability
	- Design – Anything unusual and forward thinking	- Design – Anything usual and forward thinking		- Design – Anything usual and forward thinking
	- Product Cut			

Figure 11 - Specific Breakdown of Luxury Fashion Characteristics Via Age Group

6.3 Survey Analysis: Perceived Levels of Luxury

The survey examined participants' favourite three luxury fashion brands (Q7) the responses highlighted the variance in opinion of what consumers perceive to be a luxury fashion brand, using brand examples as opposed to purely focusing on characteristics associated with luxury. Figure 12 represents a breakdown of the top ten brands mentioned by participants and a full breakdown can be located in appendix 6. As highlighted in the methodology, the top ten luxury fashion brands purchased by surveyed individuals will be discussed with interview participants providing a consumer perspective, and avoid researcher bias. The findings can be located in section 7.2. Moving away from the top ten luxury fashion brands as put forward by participants, there was an extensive list provided with 145 differing brands listed, ranging from those in figure 12 to Rolex, Hermes and Dior to popular high street stores Ted Baker, Karen Millen and Reiss along with one participant stating Topshop and River Island. Therefore, categorising luxury fashion brands is very difficult because of individuals' perception, and how one distinguishes a luxury brand is varied.
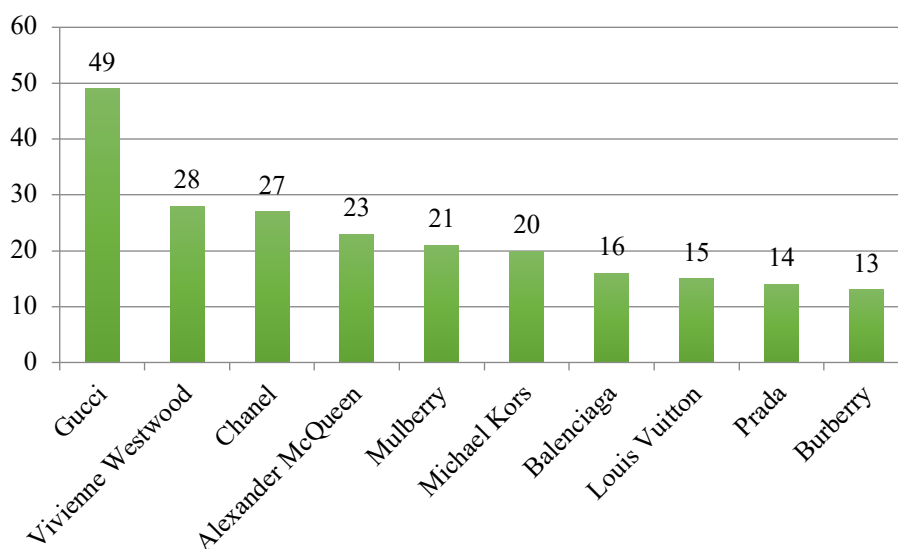

Figure 12 - Top Ten Luxury Fashion Brands Purchased by 200 Individuals

6.4 Survey Analysis: The Self and Luxury Fashion

Participants were asked why they choose to purchase from luxury brands (Q8) and the findings show that participants purchase goods for self-fulfilment and happiness which refers to the self-actualisation level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. A full breakdown can be seen in the table below. The data has shown consistency in responses among generational age brackets. However, self-identity and social status seem to have a greater prominence with generation Z indicating a slight change in attitudes and luxury fashion purchase drivers.

Age Bracket	All Ages 200 Participants	The Research Demographic 21-39 (Y&Z) 139 Participants	Generation Z < 22 63 Participant	Generation Y 23 < 96 Participant
Motivation for Purchasing Luxury Fashion Goods	Self-Fulfilment & Happiness 69% Product Attributes 63.5% Self-Image 47% Brand Attributes 24.5% Self-Identity 22% Social Status 14%	Self-Fulfilment & Happiness 71.22% Product Attributes 69.78% Self-Image 48.92% Brand Attributes 27.34% Self-Identity 24.46% Social Status 18.71%	Self-Fulfilment & Happiness 71.43% Product Attributes 63.49% Self-Image 46.03% Brand Attributes 30.16% Self-Identity 30.16% Social Status 19.05%	Self-Fulfilment & Happiness 72.92% Product Attributes 69.79% Self-Image 50% Brand Attributes 21.88% Self-Identity 19.79% Social Status 16.67%

Figure 13 - Specific Breakdown of Motivation for Purchasing Luxury Fashion Goods Via Age Group

In the context of the self and brand congruence, 51% of participants said their preferred luxury fashion brands reflect who they currently are as individuals, including beliefs, attitudes and values and 48.5% (Q9) said their luxury fashion purchasing reflected their future self, with 41.5% (Q10) stating that luxury fashion brands help communicate their current and future selves. 63.5% (Q11) of participants stated they use luxury fashion brands to communicate their self-identity, suggesting around 50% of fashion consumers have some need for congruence between the self and luxury fashion brands. However, only 41% believe that the consumption of luxury fashion makes a statement about who they are and what is important to them. This in turn suggests that there is some variance which may be down to consumer type.

A qualitative analysis of the written responses to questions nine and ten was undertaken to provide greater insight on why consumers may or may not believe their luxury fashion

consumption reflects their current and/or future self. In relation to question nine, 48% provided an explanation for their answer; when analysing the information, one overarching trend appeared to be of importance to 18.3% of participants. Participants stated they purchase from ethical brands with limited environmental impact and from those who do not use inhumane practices with animals as this is in line with their current beliefs, attitudes and values. This trend continued in question ten, with 39.5% providing a written response, with 13.9% stating they want to continue to purchase from brands in line with their ethical beliefs. Two additional trends emerged in the analysis, one of which is that participants in the future want their purchasing to reflect aspiration and achievement including employment status and salary (15.1%). Furthermore, in the future individuals want to move away from purchasing fast fashion products due to environmental impact and they believe luxury fashion goods are a better alternative (3.7%). During the interview stage of the research, the importance of ethical factors were examined, this can be found in the section 7.3.

6.5 Survey Analysis & Interview Breakdown: Group One

This section of the research is an analysis of surveyed participants by response, to identify suitable participants for the next stage of the research, focusing specifically on the element of uniqueness. At the start of each analysis, the question numbers will be noted, with a complete list of the survey questions in appendix 4. However, the questions which are in focus for this section are as followed, please note the combination does change:-

Q5. What matters to you when choosing a luxury brand/product?

Q9. Do the luxury fashion brands you buy from reflect who you currently are as an individual including beliefs, attitudes and values?

Q10. Do the luxury fashion brands you buy from reflect the person you would like to be in the future including beliefs, attitudes and values?

Q13. Do you see yourself as a unique individual?

Q14. Do you view the luxury fashion brands you buy from as unique?

Group One: Part 1

The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question five, nine, thirteen and fourteen. From the data gathered, 24 participants selected yes, however only 22 participants were in the age demographic and only 14 participants were willing to take part in further research. Interestingly, one participant of this data capture was from the 40+ age bracket whereas, 22 participants were from the 21-39 bracket and one participant was from the 18-20 bracket. Furthermore, within the 22 participants from the 21-39 age bracket, eleven were aged 21-22, which reflects generation Z. Thus, 50% can be owed to generation Z suggesting these factors are of greater importance to this demographic, suggesting some kind of change in consumer motives. This will be explored in the interviews.

Group One: Part 2

The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question, five, ten, thirteen and fourteen. From data gathered, 22 participants selected yes, however, only 20 participants were in the age demographic and with 11 participants willing to take part in further research. 0% of this data capture was from the 40+ age bracket whereas, 20 participants were from the 21-39 bracket and two participants were from the 18-20 bracket.

The difference between part one and two is whether participants said the luxury fashion brands they purchase from reflect their current (Q9) and/or future self (Q10), including beliefs, attitudes and values. However, there are some discrepancies in this method of analysis, participants are saying yes they are unique and so are the brands they purchase from, but not selecting uniqueness as characteristic of luxury fashion brands (Q5) (which could be seen as a contradiction). Therefore, the two previous brackets were re-examined removing those who did not select uniqueness as a characteristic of luxury. Furthermore, regarding discrepancies, 79/200 participants and 56/139 participants in the demographic, did not select uniqueness as a characteristic of luxury fashion brands in question five, however they did state that the luxury fashion brands they purchase from are unique. Additionally, 37/200 and 27/139 participants said uniqueness is a characteristic of luxury fashion brands, but then moved onto state the luxury fashion brands they have purchased from are not unique. Thus, are there levels of perceived uniqueness by brand, as opposed to by just the category of luxury? This will be explored through the interviews, examining what makes a brand unique, is it simply the phrase luxury or certain qualities.

Group One: Part 1.1

The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question nine, thirteen and fourteen, 39 participants selected yes. However only 34 participants were in the age demographic and only 20 participants were willing to take part in further research.

Group One: Part 2.1

The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question ten, thirteen and fourteen, 39 participants selected yes. However only 33 participants were in the age demographic and only 18 participants were willing to take part in further research.

Following the quantitative analysis of the data, a qualitative analysis was conducted examining the written responses to question thirteen and fourteen. Question thirteen examined if participants view themselves as being unique, with 33% providing written responses, from the 200 participants there were two over-riding trends in the data. The data showed 13.6% of individuals view themselves as unique and use fashion as a non-linguistic communicator to those around them, whereas 7.5% believe they are unique through internal characteristics including personality and skill set. Interestingly, one participant suggested there is an inability to be unique because of today's climate and the impact of social media. This was further examined in the interview stage of the research as a factor which may have been previously overlooked in research of uniqueness. Question fourteen moved onto examine if participants viewed the luxury fashion brands they purchase from as unique, with 38% providing written responses, unlike the previous questions there seemed to be an increase in trends with a few interesting anomalies. Respondents did not view luxury fashion brands as unique because of accessibility (3.9%) and mass production (2.6%) making them no longer exclusive (6.3%) with the risk of fast fashion companies making replicas (3.9%). Interestingly, 3.9% stated they view products as unique, however, not the luxury fashion brand suggesting it may be product and/or brand dependent. Anomalies which stood out were the impact of location, suggesting that ones' ability to be unique would depend on location, i.e. what may be seen as unique in Liverpool may not be the case in Paris. Furthermore, the impact of generational factors, with one participant suggesting younger generation purchasing habits have led to luxury fashion brands becoming common and are no longer unique. On the other hand, one participant suggested luxury fashion brands are unique and predominately unattainable to the masses, however accessible level products are used for lifestyle aspiration.

6.6 Survey Analysis & Interview Breakdown: Group Two

The data was refined further to establish if there were participants who valued uniqueness at a greater level. As with the previous breakdowns, at the start of each analysis, the question numbers will be noted, with full list of the survey questions in appendix 4. However, the questions which are in focus for this section are as followed, please note the combination does change:-

Q5. What matters to you when choosing a luxury brand/product?

Q9. Do the luxury fashion brands you buy from reflect who you currently are as an individual including beliefs, attitudes and values?

Q10. Do the luxury fashion brands you buy from reflect the person you would like to be in the future including beliefs, attitudes and values?

Q13. Do you see yourself as a unique individual?

Q14. Do you view the luxury fashion brands you buy from as unique?

Q11. Do you believe luxury fashion products help you to communicate your self-identity?

Q12. Do you believe the luxury fashion brands you buy from make a statement about what is important to you?

Q16. Do you buy luxury fashion products because it allows you to visually communicate yourself as a unique individual to the world?

Group Two: Part 1
The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question five, nine, thirteen, fourteen, eleven, twelve and sixteen. From the data gathered, 16 participants selected yes, however, only 14 participants were in the age demographic, with 1 participant under 18 and 1 participant 40 plus, with 8 participants willing to take part in further research. Again, interestingly of the 14 responses in the demographic, 7 were in the 21-22 bracket which may reflect the attitudes of 50% of generation Z consumers.

Group Two: Part 2

The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question five, ten, thirteen, fourteen, eleven, twelve and sixteen. From the data gathered, 15 participants selected yes, however only 14 participants were in the age demographic and 8 participants were willing to take part in further research. Again as with group two part one, of 14 in the demographic, 7 were in the 21-22 bracket which again may reflect the attitudes of 50% of generation Z consumers.

As previously stated with group one, there are some discrepancies for example, participants are saying yes they are unique and so are the brands they purchase from, but not selecting uniqueness as something they associate with luxury fashion (Q5). Therefore, the two previous brackets were re-examined removing those who did not select uniqueness as a characteristic of luxury, as done in the previous analysis looking at group one.

Group Two: Part 1.1

The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question nine, thirteen, fourteen, eleven, twelve and sixteen. The data has shown, 16 participants selected yes, however only 14 participants were in the age demographic and 8 participants are willing to take part in further research.

Group Two: Part 2.1

The following analysis is based on participants who answered yes to question ten, thirteen, fourteen, eleven, twelve and sixteen. From the data gathered, 15 participants selected yes, however only 14 participants were in the age demographic and 8 participants are willing to take part in further research.

6.7 Survey Analysis: Self Identity & Luxury Fashion

Again, following the quantitative analysis of the data, a qualitative analysis was conducted examining the written responses to question eleven, twelve and sixteen. Examining responses relating to luxury fashion items as a reflection of self-identity, the use of clothing as a statement, and luxury clothing as a visual communicator of uniqueness. Question eleven examined if participants used luxury fashion products to communicate self-identity with 78 participants providing written details (39%), the overall trend was that 33.3% use clothing to

portray their self-identity, with 26% of those stating they can show their self-identity through luxury and high street counterparts alike. Whereas, 3.8% of the 78 said they indicated self-identity through other measures including personality, morals and values suggesting self-identity is non reliant on fashion. One participant raised an interesting viewpoint on self-identity suggesting some individuals purchase luxury items due to popularity, but as the item has been extremely popular, it does not necessarily portray identity or personality but instead, a lack of as they are likely to be simply following trends. This idea of luxury consumption of popular items was discussed in the interviews to understand participant opinions and if it is in-line with the anomaly response. Question twelve explored if participants believe the brands they purchase from make a statement about who they are, with 67 participants providing a written response (33.5%) when analysing the information, there was one overarching trend of ethics, environmental and moral concerns and how wearing a garment from a particular brand suggests the wearer is in line with the same beliefs. This was explored through the interviews, examining to what extent consumers are aware of brand beliefs and the impact this has on their purchasing but also how they perceive someone wearing a garment from a brand which may be involved in moral controversies which is very relevant in this time. In relation to question sixteen, 49 participants (24.5%) provided a written response, there were three predominant themes which relate to luxury fashion products communicating ones' uniqueness, 18.3% of participants believed it was not a case of showing their uniqueness, but showing their appreciation for product attributes such as quality and functionality. Whereas, 12.2% believed luxury fashion products show their unique value as an individual without the use of language. However, 10.2% said they purchase luxury goods purely for self-happiness.

6.8 Survey Analysis: Self and Luxury Brand Congruity & Uniqueness

From the survey, self and luxury fashion brand congruence is important for 51% of consumers, with 16.5% of consumers valuing uniqueness, viewing both themselves and luxury brands as unique. However the exert to which uniqueness is valued varies as demonstrated in the group one and two breakdown, this led to a slight cross over in participants willing to take part in further research from the two differing viewpoints of examining uniqueness.

However, when solely looking at the 21-39 demographic, congruence is important for 54.6%

of consumers, with 21.5% of consumers valuing uniqueness. Therefore, congruence is equally important across all generations whereas the need for uniqueness is an emergent factor which needs to be examined in the viewpoint of generation Y and Z consumers. From a data perspective younger generations Y and Z have a greater likelihood of perceiving themselves as unique by around 73.38% versus those who are 40+ at 48.78% as can be seen in figure 14. Interestingly, when examining generation Y and Z separately, 77% generation Z perceives themselves as unique compared to 69% of generation Y. Therefore, suggesting younger individuals have a stronger connection to uniqueness. Furthermore, there appears to be a percentage growth difference between generation groups and how they perceive luxury fashion brands to be unique as can be seen in figure 15, with generation Z (47%), generation Y (36%) and 40+ (34%).

Age Bracket	All Ages 200 Participants	The Research Demographic 21-39 (Y&Z) 139 Participants	Generation Z < 22 63 Participant	Generation Y 23 < 96 Participant	40 + 41 Participants
Participant Numbers who Perceive Themselves as Unique	Yes 68% 136 Participant No 32% 64 Participant	Yes 73.38% 102 Participant No 26.62% 37 Participant	Yes 77.78% 49 Participant No 22.22% 14 Participant	Yes 69.79% 67 Participant No 30.21% 29 Participant	Yes 48.78% 20 Participant No 51.22% 21 Participant

Figure 14 – Question Thirteen Results Participant Numbers whom Perceive Themselves as Unique

Age Bracket	All Ages 200 Participants	The Research Demographic 21-39 (Y&Z) 139 Participants	Generation Z < 22 63 Participant	Generation Y 23 < 96 Participant	40 + 41 Participants
Participant Numbers who Perceive Luxury Fashion Brands as Unique	Yes 39.5% 79 Participant No 60.5% 121 Participant	Yes 40.29% 56 Participants No 59.71% 83 Participants	Yes 47.62% 30 Participant No 52.38% 33 Participant	Yes 36.46% 35 Participant No 63.54% 61 Participant	Yes 34.15% 14 Participants No 65.85% 27 Participants

Figure 15 – Question Fourteen Results Participant Numbers whom Perceive Luxury Fashion Brands as Unique

6.9 Survey Analysis: χ2 Test

Despite the flaws in using quantitative and statistical information in research focused on human behaviour as previously discussed in the methodology. The quantitative information has informed the second stage of the research methods, providing a breath of qualitative information. However, it was important to use statistical methods, including a chi-squared test as a tool to verify if there was a real trend within the data, which in turn validates the research and provides reasoning behind the interview strategy for the second stage of the research.

Firstly, a probability test was administered to identify if there was a relationship between generational groups and the likelihood of viewing themselves as unique individuals. The conclusion is drawn that a significant difference does exist between the two variables with a probability value of 0.007191893, as illustrated in figure 16. Therefore, generation Y and Z have a greater likelihood of perceiving themselves as unique versus those 40+.

	Observed Frequencies			
Participants who Perceive Themselves as Unique	Gen Z	Gen Y	40 +	TOTAL
YES	49	67	20	136
NO	14	29	21	64
TOTAL	63	96	41	200

	Expected Frequencies			
Participants who Perceive Themselves as Unique	Gen Z	Gen Y	40 +	TOTAL
YES	42.84	65.28	27.88	136
NO	20.16	30.72	13.12	64
TOTAL	63	96	41	200

CHI.TEST	0.0071919

Figure 16 – Chi-Squared Test Results Examining Self Uniqueness and Generational Groups

An additional probability test was administered to identity if there was a relationship between generational groups and the importance of a products unique value when making a purchase decision. The conclusion is drawn that a significant difference does exist between the two variables with a probability value of 0.02453548, as illustrated in figure 17. Therefore, generation Y and Z consumers have a more significant desire for unique luxury fashion products than those 40+. This indicates that the findings can be generalised to the population, which is reflected in the survey sample group, as the results are unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Observed Frequencies				
Is a product's unique value important when making a purchase decision?	Gen Z	Gen Y	40 +	TOTAL
Extremly Important	13	11	3	27
Very Important	16	18	4	38
Somewhat Important	22	38	14	74
Not So Important	6	22	16	44
Not At All Important	6	7	4	17
TOTAL	63	96	41	200

Expected Frequencies				
Is a product's unique value important when making a purchase decision?	Gen Z	Gen Y	40 +	TOTAL
Extremly Important	8.505	12.96	5.535	27
Very Important	11.97	18.24	7.79	38
Somewhat Important	23.31	35.52	15.17	74
Not So Important	13.86	21.12	9.02	44
Not At All Important	5.355	8.16	3.485	17
TOTAL	63	96	41	200

CHI.TEST	0.02453548

Figure 17 – Chi-Squared Test Results Examining Product Unique Value and Generational Groups

However, when examining the significance of the relationship between generational groups and perception of luxury fashion brands in relation to uniqueness. The conclusion is drawn that there is no statistical significance between generations Z, Y and those 40+ and if they perceive luxury fashion brands as unique, with a probability value of 0.27237004, as illustrated in figure 18.

Observed Frequencies				
Participants who Perceive Luxury Fashion Brands as Unique	Gen Z	Gen Y	40 +	TOTAL
YES	30	35	14	79
NO	33	61	27	121
TOTAL	63	96	41	200

Expected Frequencies				
Participants who Perceive Luxury Fashion Brands as Unique	Gen Z	Gen Y	40 +	TOTAL
YES	24.885	37.92	16.195	79
NO	38.115	58.08	24.805	121
TOTAL	63	96	41	200

CHI.TEST	0.27237004

Figure 18 – Chi-Squared Test Results Examining Brand Unique Value and Generational Groups

6.10 Summary

Overall, of the 139 participants in the demographic, twenty-one stated yes to taking part in further research and will be approached to take part in interviews, accounting for 15.1%, with eleven in stage one and ten in stage two.

From the findings, it is important to recognise that the luxury landscape is changing at an exponential pace, with evidence of perceptions of luxury changing but also a change in consumer. Is luxury becoming more unique in its offerings to consumers of a younger demographic in order to capture those who also perceive themselves as unique? This is a question which will be explored in the interview section of this research. When interviewing participants, the data was compared from group one and two participants, as there was a variance in the extent to which they value uniqueness.

Section 7: Findings and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This section offers a multifaceted understanding of self-congruity in relation to the luxury fashion market and the importance of uniqueness for generation Y and Z consumers. Firstly examining and defining luxury fashion brands, before moving to explore the evidence relating to self-congruity and luxury fashion brands. The section then moves to explore the value and importance of uniqueness and establishing unique value in luxury fashion - presenting and considering the alternative perspectives on uniqueness in the luxury fashion industry from a consumer perspective. Followed by the exploration and discussion of self uniqueness, the influence age and generational differences have on ones perception of the self as unique and the implications this may have in relation to fashion. Information gathered in the first stage of the research methods, as discussed in the previous section, has been used to inform the interview strategy, providing qualitative reasoning.

7.2 Defining Luxury Fashion Brands: A Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative information gathered in the interviews in relation to the defining of luxury fashion brands, is consistent with and supports the survey findings, as discussed in section 6.2. However, there is some movement in the key words associated with luxury yet this is to be expected as the original analysis accounted for 200 individuals as opposed to eighteen participants who went onto the interview data collection stage of the study. Additionally, it may be biased to over-analyse the statistics in relation to the key words associated with luxury as participants were selected for interviews based on their survey responses. Six descriptive codes have been used to qualitatively analyse the information gathered in relation to key characteristics of luxury: authenticity and trust, personal history and heritage, importance of sustainability, narrative, market fluidity, and reference to price. Interestingly, as previously stated in section 2, while price appeared to be an important characteristic in the literature review, it was only considered a characteristic of luxury by 3% of surveyed luxury fashion consumers, none of whom were interviewed. Yet 44.4% of participants discussed price throughout the interview, when asked participants believe luxury is not defined by a high price point yet it is a norm with luxury goods. Factors which were not apparent in the survey but were highlighted by those interviewed included the importance of brand and/or

product narrative, authenticity and/or brand trust. The aforementioned factors were not evident or discussed by scholars in the literature reviewed previously, suggesting a change in customer dynamics and what they value as important qualities. The importance of sustainability was highlighted in the survey, in general participants viewed the luxury fashion market as sustainable in comparison to fast fashion and high street brands because of quality, it is thought large corporations have the financial resources to be sustainable and contribute to improving the planet via recycled materials or higher quality products increasing product longevity in turn reducing mass production and the amount consumer's purchase. Yet the importance of sustainability was not discussed in the literature reviewed, which again suggest a change in the consumer and what they value. Furthermore, three participants stated there is no longer a definition of luxury, but that it is a perception, because there is increased difficultly labelling brands due to market fluidity. In addition to this factor, one participant stated their personal heritage and history impacts their consumption and perception of luxury goods, which again is another factor which highlights the implications when establishing a definition of luxury. Therefore, it is clear that there is some movement and disparity regarding the characteristics of luxury. However, as identified and discussed in section 6.2, the key characteristics identified in this research were, excellent quality, craftsmanship, aesthetics, brand and/or product heritage and uniqueness.

As discussed in section 6.3, the survey analysis identified the top ten luxury fashion brands from which participants have purchased. The top ten was presented to the interviewees in order to identify commonalities and possible anomies within the data from a varied consumer perspective to avoid researcher basis. Four descriptive codes have been used to qualitatively analyse the information gathered: Gucci, commonalities, anomalies and varied levels of luxury. In terms of commonalties, the participants believe the brands are common household names with strong global reputations with the majority being historical heritage brands who often have an emphasis on brand symbolisation and recognisable style. Yet some suggest the top ten is closely related to brand marketing activity including social media and brand popularity may be attributed to seasonal trends. Additionally, all participants observed and commented on the positioning of Gucci on the graph. It is apparent that participants were not shocked by the data regarding Gucci with 24.5% of those surveyed purchasing from the brand. The participants view Gucci as a current market leader following a recent resurgent through the targeting of generation Y and Z consumers. This has been achieved via Gucci's marketing strategy including social media, their relationship with music culture and

celebrities all of which provide a lifestyle and aspirational value whilst still catering to a large audience via varied product levels.

The main anomalies were that ten out of the eighteen interviewed did not perceive Michael Kors as a luxury fashion brand. The reasoning for this was their accessibility, affordability, and lack of quality, yet it is often perceived as an entry-level brand. Some participants were also surprised to see brands such as Moncler and Jimmy Choo not listed as the brands are very popular in the cities participants inhabit and are seen to be luxury. Whilst others were surprised, leading luxury fashion brands of the moment such as Off-White were not listed. Furthermore, the participants believed that there were different levels of luxury fashion brands, which could be classified as accessible, intermediate and inaccessible, which supports the findings of De Barnier, Falcy and Valette-Florence (2012). Brands may have elements of each within collections, created for and driven by different consumer groups to allow brands to establish their place despite many participants viewing the market as saturated. There are some changes in the top ten when purely analysing those of the eighteen interviewed. Seven of the brands remained consistent including Gucci as the leader, yet three brands from the original graph were no longer accounted for including Michael Kors, Balenciaga and Burberry. The three brands which replaced the aforementioned were Rick Owens, Yves Saint Laurent and Commes des Garçons, as illustrated in figure 19, which again highlights the fluidity in the market, differences in individual perception, and purchase behaviour.
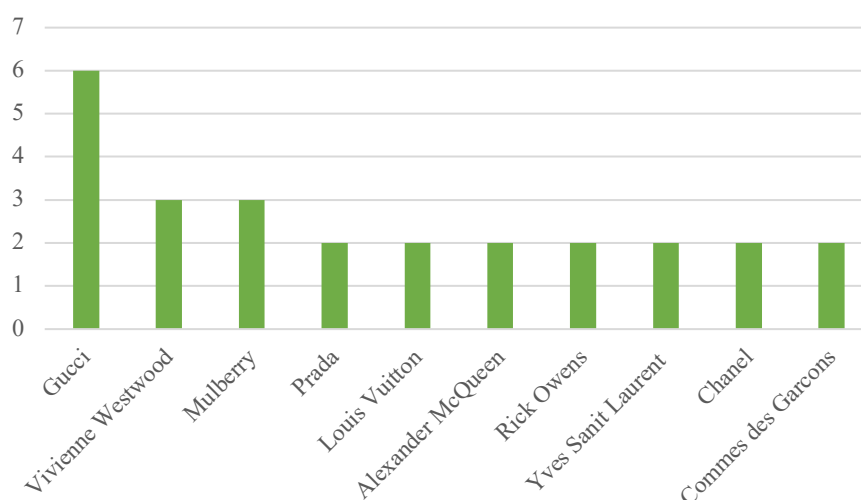

Figure 19 –Top Ten Luxury Fashion Brands Interviewed Participants Have Purchased From

As discussed in section 2 and 6, it is evident that from a consumer perspective, that individuals have difficulty distinguishing between mainstream and luxury fashion brands due

to points aforementioned including collaborations and high price points. All of which impact on how individuals define, perceive, and consume luxury fashion products.

7.3 The Importance of Self and Luxury Brand Congruence

There is clear evidence that consumers seek self and brand congruence, which impacts on consumer and shopping behaviour. Thus, it was important to examine to what extent consumers seek self-congruity specifically with luxury fashion brands, as research on this issue within the luxury market is limited. Participant self and luxury fashion brand congruence was examined though a range of interview questions which followed on from the survey, as discussed in section 6. The generic interview questions can be found in appendix 5, However, as stated in the methodology a semi structured interview style was employed so there was movement in the questions.

To understand the extent to which self-congruity is important, participants were asked to what extent they research or have an awareness of brand beliefs prior to purchase. The general consensus was that 61.1% do consciously research brand beliefs prior to purchase, whilst 27.7% have an awareness of brand beliefs but not from their own independent research, with the remaining 11.1% not taking any interest in brand beliefs. The participants' responses were qualitatively analysed to understand the impact of brand beliefs on purchase. It was apparent that participants choose to research brand beliefs to ensure they are in line with their own viewpoints, often this research is conducted through brand websites and social media channels to ensure alignment. It was clear there were differing levels of research conducted, with one individual taking interest in where designers have studied and their personal motivators whilst others examine previous campaigns, the individuals associated with the brand and the target audience to ensure they feel comfortable with the brand. Whereas other participants took a more ethical viewpoint, ensuring a brands beliefs in relation to both human and animal welfare were in alignment with their own, whilst others highlighted they would not purchase from brands who believed in the use of inhuman practices and the use of animal skins for fashion. The findings are in line with research conducted by Liu, Li, Mizerski and Soh (2012) examining Brand Personality Congruity. The research found that Brand User Imagery Congruity is a strong predictor of consumer behaviour and brand loyalty, as consumers perceive a similarity between themselves and the brand, as discussed in section 3.5.

However, those who do not research brand beliefs state the product aesthetic is the main driver for purchase. Interestingly, those who do not conduct their own research yet are influenced, believe this influence stems from social media via brand channels or press outlets. Whilst others are unlikely to research brand information prior to purchase either out of limited interest or because one does not view information publicised by the brand and/or press as the ultimate truth as they believe brands want to create an image to differentiate themselves within the market.

The importance of moral, ethical, environmental and political alignment with brands was examined and the impact and extent of this impact on consumers prior to wearing and promoting the brand. From the data analysed it is evident that 77.7% of participants are concerned with their moral, ethical and environment alignment with brands they choose to purchase from whilst political alignment was only an important factor for 50% of participants. The participant justification for desiring alignment is as aforementioned in the sense that they want to ensure they share the same values prior to projecting that brand into society. Whilst some believe individuals who wear garments from brands with poor moral beliefs, reflect not only the brands morals but also the individuals who is wearing the brand, highlighting the extent to which garments project and reflect the self. Within this area it was important to evaluate the extent to which brand criticisms impact purchase; from the data gathered 83.3% of participants do pay attention to reports with several participants using examples from all levels of the fashion industry. Yet one participant – despite reading reports on issues within the industry – states that there is often uncertainty if something is truth, criticism, or rumour which may be the reason individuals continue to purchase from brands which have received negative press. Whereas others state their change in behaviour would be dependent on the severity of the issue highlighted. From the information gathered it is apparent that luxury fashion products are extensions of the self and self-identity, and therefore consumers should have an awareness of brand beliefs and ensure they are happy with the way a brand is conducting their business prior to purchasing from them. This supports the research presented in section 3, which supported the concept that possessions are extensions of the self, as exemplified by Rath (2014), Solomon and Rabolt (2009) and Belk (1988 and 2002).

As mentioned, 94.4% of participants believe luxury fashion products are extensions of the

self and have an impact on their self-identity, whereas the remaining participant viewed the consumption of luxury goods as a representation of style not identity. The predominant theme within the data was self-accomplishment, and that the purchasing of luxury goods shows work ethic and success. This is in line with Snyder (1986) who demonstrated that individuals self-monitor and consume products to improve the self, often choosing symbolised goods, which could be compared to luxury as 26% of those surveyed believe brand symbolisation is a characteristic of luxury. The themes included, projection of self and brand alignment, self-happiness, self-confidence, a method of non-verbal representation of the self, self-expression, reflection of personality, and the ability to identify with a specific group via a brand. Additionally, one participant referred to authenticity and believes it is more authentic to purchase from a specific designer, thus using the purchasing of luxury goods as an extension of the self to highlight their feelings towards consumption within the fashion industry. It is worth noting that participants stated they would purchase luxury fashion goods if it was not for the financial implications. The participants agreed that the brands they choose to purchase from make a statement about what they value and often purchase from brands because of specific qualities which they want to associate with, supporting their self-concept. The findings are in line with Gil et al's (2012) research as discussed in section 3.4. However, it would be problematic analysing the data gathered as each participant discussed the qualities of the three brands listed in the survey therefore it is not possible to create a code for thematic analysis. Yet, it was clear, there were characteristics from each brand that participants want to affiliate with.

As exemplified in the research conducted by Highsnobiety (2018), it is clear that consumers want to establish deeper connections with the brands they purchase from as it indicates mutual and shared values as seen in section 4.6 of this research. There is consensus within the literature examined as discussed in section 3, that there is a strong relationship between self and brand congruence within the luxury fashion landscape, as participants view the brands they purchase from as extensions of themselves, reflecting their self-identity and beliefs. This supports Japutra, Ekinci, and Simkin (2017) findings that brand attachment can be predicated through alignment of the actual self and brand. However, consumers can not be identified and categorised via 'self-type' as previously proposed in section 3. Yet, it is possible to recognise the types of brands that an individual may be drawn to if comparing traits and ethos of both the brand and individual. It should be noted, Belk (2002), stated gender differences were significant when examining products as extensions of the self. However, gender differences

were not identified in this research.

7.4 The Value of Uniqueness within Luxury Fashion

During the interviews it was important to establish why participants view luxury fashion brands as unique and if they believe all luxury fashion brands are unique or just certain brands and/or products within the sector. There were several factors which participants believed to be important when identifying unique value within luxury fashion brands, the data themes identified indicate the importance of the five following factors: exclusivity, aesthetics, craftsmanship inclusive of production and quality, heritage, and brand culture. Each factor mentioned was important to 22.2% of participants with exclusivity as the overarching factor with 27.7% of participants attributing this characteristic to uniqueness, this includes limited quantity and limited release products often referred to as, drop products, this supports the findings of Lynn and Harris's (1997) as discussed in section 4.5. Other factors of importance included experimentalism and/or innovation (11.1%) as participants view creativity and the pushing of boundaries within the industry as a reflection of unique value, which is again in line with Lynn and Harris's (1997) findings. One participant offered an interesting perspective stating it is the new wave of designers who create truly unique and luxurious products, because there is not the replication as seen currently in mainstream luxury, pieces are often handmade and from the highest quality fabrics. The participant refers to this as "seeing a true artist in their purest form" because they are not constricted by brand regulations and therefore have a lot of freedom (P13). Whereas for other participants they believe recognisable style (11.1%) including brand symbolisation (for example, logos, consistent deigns, and colour themes), are defining factors of a brand's unique value as they are easily identifiable. Two additional factors were raised, yet it could not be identified as a trend as it was only important for one participant. This included the projection of a brand lifestyle and the importance of brand experience including in store environment, this is in line with Lynn and Harris's (1997) research, as actual experiences are a factor which can be unique and different to any other previously experienced. Thus, it is not just the luxury brand and their product qualities which make them unique, but also intangible factors such as the personal experience consumers have with a brand, which can enhance their experience and in turn differentiate the brand within, what participants state as being, a statured market, thus increasing their unique value.

Through the analysis, it was clear that the majority of participants do not view all luxury fashion brands as unique, nor all products. Yet within this theme there were still opposing views from participants, it is apparent that 44.4% of participants viewed only select luxury fashion brands and products as unique. The main themes identified were that luxury status does not in turn equal uniqueness; the importance of innovation; that uniqueness stems from the creation of concepts; and that it is the head designers uniqueness and individuality translated through collections which makes them unique. Whereas, 27.7% viewed all luxury fashion brands as unique but only a limited selection of their products as unique, generally this was owed to each fashion brands uniqueness stemming from their heritage and narrative yet there may only be one unique collection which draws on brand values. The remaining 16.6% viewed all luxury fashion brands and products as unique, because luxury fashion brands set trends, all of which begin as unique, and that it is their recognisable style which increases unique value. Yet within this, one participant states there are differing levels of prominence, with popular examples of unique luxury products including Balenciaga triple-s trainer. As stated previously, participants view exclusivity as a defining factor of uniqueness, in addition to the previous five participants identified, an additional two participants noted that bespoke and personalisation are qualities which define unique value. Following the interviews, participants were asked their thoughts on bespoke and personalisation in relation to luxury if it was not previously noted in the survey and there was agreement among participants that bespoke products and the option for personalisation were defining factors of uniqueness for luxury fashion.

In addition to understanding the characteristics of uniqueness in relation to luxury fashion brands, it was important to gauge the extent to which marketing impacts how a consumer perceives a brand and/or product. As there was little scholarly work discussed in the literature review in relation to luxury fashion advertisements and unique value. The overarching trend was that luxury fashion brand marketing increases unique value (72.2%) with the remaining 27.7% of participants stating luxury brand marketing removes unique value. Those who view marketing as a tool to enhance uniqueness, believe so because it highlights a brand's creativity and innovation through the creation of campaigns. Furthermore, participants believe additional activities which brands partake in increase unique value, for example, the creation of bespoke pieces for events, pop up stores and installations, all of which contribute to a brand narrative. Others believe marketing exposes a brand to the mass market which in turn removes unique value. It was apparent that participants use social media and it is often

the platform on which they will consume a brand's marketing, but this alone does not increase nor decrease unique value. Through observation of the fashion market and activates on social media, it is clear there is frequent use of celebrity and influencer endorsement. When asked, participants were divided on the use of celebrities and influencers, and the impact this has on viewing a brand and/or product as unique. It is often difficult to identity if a celebrity or influencer is associating with a brand for financial gain or out of their own intreats, despite social media regulations. Participants believe this shows a lack of integrity, authenticity and unique value, often the individual affiliated with the brand is a deciding factor for the participant, not the method of promotion itself. Therefore it is important that luxury fashion brands remain conscious of their target audience and if choosing to engage in paid promotional activities via social platforms, ambassadors should be a well-rounded representation of the brand.

Participants had mixed opinions when asked if they believe the luxury fashion market has seen an increase or decrease in unique value, with 44.4% of participants stating luxury fashion brands are becoming more unique. Whereas the opposing 44.4% believe the luxury fashion market has lost unique value, with the remaining 11.1% stating it is neither increasing nor decreasing the unique value. There were four trends which were prevalent in the data, as the driving force for the change in the market: technology including social media/music industry, change in consumer, replication of products, and accessibility. From those interviewed, 61.1% believe that technological advancements including social media and promotion via music lyrics is a driving force behind change in the industry because individuals have the capacity to access and release extensive amounts of information. Following that 44.4% of participants believe there has been a change in consumer needs, drives and goals. Participants discussed self-pressure which is a consequence of exposure often via social media which in turn increases demand for certain products, thus consumers have an increased consciousness in their purchasing behaviour. It was identified that 11.1% of participants believe products within the luxury market are unique, but once replication occurs it loses the unique value – the participant believes the speed and convenience of replication can be owed to social media, technology and consumer demand. Additionally, 11.1% of participants stated that luxury goods are becoming more accessible, decreasing exclusivity which in turn decreases unique value, which is often via the route of replication. There was no relationship between the four trends identified and the participants' opinions on the increase or decrease of uniqueness within the luxury fashion market.

7.5 Establishing Unique Value within Luxury Fashion

It was apparent that establishing a product's unique value in a purchase decision is important, as statistically proven to be significant in section 6.9, through the interviews qualitative information was gathered to understand participant reasoning. The overarching theme within the information analysed, was that due to the financial implications of purchasing luxury goods, it is important to establish a unique value to ensure it is worthy of the price point. The following theme relates to replication, and through the purchase of a unique product, it will minimise the probability of a product being replicated which in turn would lead to loss of unique value as highlighted previously. The additional themes identified, relate to how participants distinguish what a unique product is: aesthetics, bespoke/personalisation, and narrative. Participants will often look to a product's aesthetic qualities when first distinguishing if it is unique, before looking at other non-visual qualities such as possibility of limited editions, personalisation, or bespoke options. In relation to narrative, this is inclusive of research individuals undertake to gain an understanding on the brand and product, but also the story behind how an individual came to acquire or purchase a product, all of which contribute to its unique value as a product but also the intangible unique value for a specific individual. Lynn and Harris's (1997) found that consumers need for unique products relates to scarce products, innovation, unique shopping destinations and product customisation, which is referred to as personalisation in this research. However, the importance of bespoke and/or narrative which was found in this research, was not found by Lynn and Harris's.

There are several factors which make a brand or product unique for participants as aforementioned. However, this understanding was enhanced as participants used their own luxury fashion purchases, which they view as unique, as a point of reference, providing a greater understanding of exact qualities which give a product its unique value. As stated in the methodology, it was not an analysis of the products themselves but how the participant used the product to reflect the self and the idea of uniqueness. However, product categories have been identified and refined further if necessary, leading to the identification of trends. In analysis there were eleven brands which occurred more than once, six of the brands were in the original survey and interview analysis of luxury fashion brands bought by participants. However, it could be argued that the brands mentioned by only one participant have a greater unique value for example eight participants referred to Vivienne Westwood products, which in turn may reflect its accessibility and reduce exclusivity which was the main reason

participants had for not viewing luxury fashion brands as unique. There were four main product categories identified: accessories (20), footwear (15), ready to wear (19) and jewellery (8). Within each category, products were refined further by type with the popular products including handbags, trainers, outerwear and rings. Throughout this research, it has been identified that age and generational groups have a difference in opinions and behaviour. However, in relation to the products participants spoke about, there was no difference among categories in relation to age. It was evident that participants used their products to reflect one's self and uniqueness because the products assist in the formulation of an identity, including an association between an individual and a specific brand by their peers. Additionally, it is not only the physical product itself but the personal connection and experience including the narrative, story and memories one has with the object which impacts one's self often leading to self-happiness. A participant of Italian heritage notes that, personally they will only purchase for the self. However, according to the participant often within Italian culture individuals will purchase products dependant on what it will signify within their community, not for the self. This highlights cultural differences in consumption behaviour.

7.6 Alternative Perspectives on Uniqueness in Luxury Fashion

Several of the participants offered an interesting perspective on where uniqueness stems from within the luxury fashion industry, one of which was previously discussed in relation to true luxury and unique value stemming from new designers who are not bound to the constraints of established fashion brands. In addition, individuals often view a luxury fashion brand as unique from their activities as opposed to a product itself, activities include haute couture shows, and the creation of bespoke items for events, for example, The Met Gala, all of which help to differentiate within the market. As participants were undecided in their opinions on a growth or loss of uniqueness within the luxury fashion market, it would be interesting to examine ready to wear shows versus haute couture over the course of twenty plus years to identify if a loss of uniqueness has occurred. As it may be that in order to become more accessible and remain established in a saturated market, luxury fashion brands have changed their strategy ensuring ready to wear is accessible and functional whilst using their additional activities to channel their unique values as a luxury fashion brand.

Furthermore, from the information gathered, cultural differences were prevalent. Participant

fourteen is of Pakistani decent, regularly travelling to Pakistan to have bespoke handmade garments made. Therefore, for the purpose of this research it was valuable to gauge their opinion on luxury in relation to the creation of bespoke clothing items, something which is very popular in the country particularly for occasion wear. Throughout the interview the participant stated that uniqueness often stems from bespoke and/or personalised items and the participant regularly has these made – however, they did not mention this during the interview questions. Following the interview, there was a conversation regarding handmade custom garments in Pakistan, which often individuals will view as luxury and unique. The participant agreed but said they failed to mention earlier because it is "so far removed" from the Western viewpoint of what luxury is with the belief that bespoke items often forgo the label of luxury because they do not have brand symbolisation. Additionally, participant eighteen purchases regularly from boutiques which they view as unique because of exclusivity, as only a few of the pieces may exist. The participant believes boutique clothing offers the same qualities as luxury brands. However, the only differing factor is the lack of brand symbolisation, the participant believes this is why others may not view them as luxury. Nueno and Quelch (1998) and Vickers and Renand's (2003) may provide an explanation for the disparity as their research highlighted the importance of recognisable style and symbolisation for consumers when distinguishing between luxury and 'non' luxury goods. Referring back to previous data gathered, 26% of respondents from the survey stated brand symbolisation is a characteristic of luxury fashion brands which somewhat provides an explanation as to why even bespoke, handmade, and high-quality products are not viewed as a luxury. Therefore, brand symbolisation has an impact on how an individual distinguishes and recognises luxury fashion products, first and foremost to the other important qualities as highlighted in this research. Whereas participant fifteen views these qualities as the paramount of a luxury yet unique fashion product. This again highlights the disparity within the fashion industry and in particular the distinguishing qualities of luxury fashion brands.

7.7 Self-Uniqueness

Following the survey analysis, it was important to acquire an in-depth understanding of why participants view themselves as unique individuals. It was equally as important to understand other characteristics individuals attribute to the self. Furthermore, identifying if there was a relationship between consumers' need for uniqueness and the likelihood of perceiving the self with a greater level of uniqueness. It was important to examine these aspects as it was not

examined by the scholars in existing literature. Limited trends emerged from the data; 22.2% of participants view all individuals as unique, with the remaining participants often referring to their personal history (22.2%) as an influencing factor which makes them unique, in comparison to their peers. An additional factor which was clear in the data, was the impact of location (22.2%), with individuals often altering their personal style depending on the location they are in. Participant twelve stated moving to London, from Liverpool, has allowed them to feel more "comfortable expressing their own individuality and uniqueness". Participant fifteen, also from Liverpool stated "that everybody seems to look the same, and the city lacks a lot of diversity in that sense (fashion) so there is a difficulty to see uniqueness in individuals". Thus, this supports the findings that location does impact self-uniqueness, highlighting the relevance of location and environment on behaviour. The data did not verify if a trend exists between a consumer perceiving themselves as unique and their additional characteristics. During the interviews all participants struggled to talk about their other characteristics, but there was agreement that their purchasing reflects who they are as an individual. However, in future research a registered characteristic or personality test could be utilised to identify if a relationship exists.

Additionally, the reason behind participants' desire for uniqueness was identified. Previously, an analysis was conducted to identify how luxury fashion goods impact participant self-identity, on analysis of the data which references desire for uniqueness, the findings are very similar. The five predominant trends were as followed: self-happiness (22.2%), self-confidence (22.2%), differentiation from peers (16.6%), self-enhancement (16.6%) and self-expression (11.1%). Furthermore, it was found participants generally believed consumption of popular items, decreases unique value due to over consumption, which in turn shows a lack of identity (72.2%). Participants believed it to show a lack of identity, because individuals often purchase due to product popularity or trends (30.7%) but also for emulation of celebrities, influencers and peers due to social pressure (38.4%). The result of this, in the participants' options, is that individuals lack differentiation within the mass market, with these individuals often having limited knowledge of the brand or their ideals which often tarnishes the brand for loyal consumers as it becomes mundane. This is in line with Butcher, Phau and Shimul's (2017) research which found generation Y and Z consumers avoid mainstream brands in order to maintain a strong personal style. Moving back to this research, those who were undecided (16.6%) were so because they believe luxury fashion goods do not assist or restrict the projection of identity as it is not the product itself which provides identity

but what one does with it. The remaining participants believe consumption of popular luxury fashion items show identity (11.1%) because the brands individuals purchase from reflect who they are as an individual and their style regardless of the products popularity. Thus, there is some disparity however the predominant theme suggests that consumption of luxury fashion items which are popular shows a lack of identity.

The extent to which individuals believe their uniqueness can be owed to fashion was assessed, to understand if consumers use luxury fashion as a visual for uniqueness within society. During the interviews, participants were asked what percentage of their uniqueness can be attributed to fashion. The mean result was 61.47%, with the range of 40-90%. One of the generation Y participants, believes the percentage decreases with age, however as the data was limited to only interview participants, it would not be appropriate to test this idea and provide a conclusion. Furthermore, the data has shown 66.6% of participants agree that luxury fashion is a visual for uniqueness within society. The results are unsurprising as this question was previously asked in the survey and was one of the separating factors between group one and two of interviews. There was agreement that clothing is an amalgamation of experiences and allows one to present their own narrative showcasing their personality, ideologies and style. The remaining participants who did not agree with the statement, believed that the statement was to some extent true but in the scene of fashion at all levels, it is not only isolated to luxury, and it is not the sole defining factor for uniqueness. Aside from fashion, there were several other contributing factors which participants believe can account towards uniqueness as an individual. Participants believe the use of makeup, hair styles, accessories inclusive of jewellery, fragrance, and tattoos and/or piecing's are all contributing factors which allow one to highlight their uniqueness on a visual level. Furthermore, participants believe their hobbies, interests and personality reflect their unique qualities as an individual.

The findings of this research in relation to consumer need for uniqueness both self and in fashion are in line with Ruvio (2008) research which identified consumers desire uniqueness but also social approval, and those with a high CNFU view themselves as having a greater uniqueness compared to their peers.

7.8 The Generational Groups and Uniqueness Relationship

Generation Y and Z are driving the consumption of luxury fashion with Highsnobiety (2018) reporting that by 2025, 50% of luxury spending will be owed to the two generational groups, and interestingly, their report emphasises the importance of unique value and brand congruence for consumers. Additionally, the statistics provided by Bain & Company (2016) are in line with the aforementioned, with the report also noting the importance of uniqueness for the 'millennial state of mind'. As the literature has a predominant focus on generation Y, it was important to examine generation Z alongside generation Y in this research.

From the survey, it is shown there is a relationship between younger generations and the likelihood of them perceiving themselves as unique versus older generations, as discussed in section 6.8. During the interviews, participants were asked what they believe to be the contributing factors to potential change in consumer mindset and why they believe individuals aged 18-39, view themselves and luxury fashion brands as unique in comparison to those aged 40 plus. From those interviewed, 94.4% of participants believe their mindset towards fashion has changed as they have aged, with the main contributing factors being awareness, experiences and education, not only through institutions but also technology, and social media. Through education, it has led to the participants becoming more conscious consumers as they have developed their own personal beliefs including the importance of ethical and environmental factors. Often participants said when they were younger, they would associate luxury with a high price point and view the brands as inaccessible. However, through a heightened awareness of the market and a change in financial situations because of employment, the participants view luxury products as attainable. The participants believe their mindset towards luxury fashion will continue to change throughout their life and will continuously evolve. It was important to understand, in the participants' opinions, why younger consumers have a greater likelihood of viewing themselves as unique and wanting a unique product, as it is hoped the participants opinions will allow some conclusions to be drawn regarding generational groups and uniqueness. There was one predominant trend which emerged from the data, participants believe that younger individuals are more likely to experiment and express themselves freely branching out from the constraints older individuals may feel within particular groups and society, to truly find who they are, with fashion and style providing an open space for creativity and self-expression. This is in line with Butcher, Phau and Shimul (2017) research findings which stated generation Y and Z consumers are brand conscious, purchasing luxury goods to differentiate themselves with a

strong personal style. The participants believe social media and technology (77.7%) is the driving force behind the change in consumer, as individuals have the capability to research and have an awareness of the whole industry and what is available. Furthermore, participants believe social media pressures have an impact, because individuals want to portray the perfect lifestyle and emulate influencers, often purchasing products which have been promoted to them. It is not only exposure to brands, but also exposure to peers, on a global scale, with individuals often wanting to establish their own self brand online, and through the use of luxury products, unique items, or exclusive items as it allows for differentiation. This in turn leads to a greater likelihood of self-monitoring not only on a personal level but via online platforms which in turn reflects purchase behaviour. Whereas for older generations, they did not age with technology and social media thus exposure to a whole world of ideas was not possible, which may have reduced their scope for uniqueness because brands were not seen or accessible.

The findings of this research in relation to generation groups, are in line with the research conducted by Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001) which suggests individuals from the generation Y demographic seek out unique luxury goods suggesting a generational trait as opposed to being the product of ones' self. Yet this research highlights the importance and impact the self has on purchasing behaviour. The findings in relation to generation Y and Z and their need for unique luxury goods, suggest a change in consumer traits which could be attributed to generational groups. Additionally, Bain & Company (2016) suggest consumers now possess a millennial state of mind, thus their behaviour is the same as those in generation Y, however, they may be older.

7.9 The Implications of Uniqueness in Relation to Fashion and Individuals

Throughout this research, it has been apparent that there are several issues which relate to the difficulty in achieving self-uniqueness and uniqueness through clothing currently. The participants believe this is predominately due to social media and technology increasing replication of style, products and brands. In relation to fashion, those who did not view luxury fashion brands as unique often used accessibility and mass production as their reasoning as this removes the exclusivity of both the brand and products, with the additional risk of fast fashion companies making replicas (72.2%) which is viewed as an issue for both brands and consumers. Throughout the interviews, participants made reference to Kim

Kardashian as an example, stating that when she is seen wearing bespoke pieces made by Kanye West or Terry Mugler, fast fashion companies including Fashion Nova and Missguided post replicas within a matter of hours, which leads to a loss of unique value. In recent years, participants noted the difference in the way luxury fashion brands operate. Luxury fashion brands are selling directly from the catwalk which could be seen as a response to replication. However, some participants believe it shows an underestimation of their consumer and that the brand does not believe their own product is worth the several week delay from runway to store, which instantly removes unique value because of accessibility. Furthermore, now with smart phones and social media, individuals with access to the show can instantly share looks which may be why some designers ban the use of devices and social media at fashion week including Tom Ford. It is not only the speed in which luxury fashion is now accessible driving the replica market but also the relationships fast fashion companies have with manufactures which make it possible, as noted by one participant. Thus, this may explain why several participants believe exclusive and limited-edition products or those with a strong unique value, are unlikely to be replicated ensuring there value. Only one participant highlighted a need for some kind of copyright law within the industry, to ensure replication is reduced ensuring product uniqueness and a successful market for the future. However, 11.1% of participants believe in some respects replicas are not an issue because it allows all individuals to buy into a certain brands which otherwise would not be accessible due to financial implications.

The participants believe consumers who purchase replica fashion goods lose their individuality, not choosing brands for their ethos and other qualities one finds with a genuine product but purely for emulation of style or trend often leading to mindless consumption. Interestingly, participants believe it is not only brands which replicate luxury fashion products, but there is an extensive number of individuals coping style and outfits, which participants owe to social media. Participant ten stated it is becoming harder to be individualistic, they could put together the "craziest" outfit using high street, luxury, vintage, and reworked garments when creating an outfit in attempt to maintain uniqueness. However, they would still see something similar on Instagram – the participant believes this issue has stemmed from social media, technology, and ecommerce, increasing the speed and ability to share information.

Many participants raised the concern of replication in the fashion industry, indeed, the

problems of fakes and replicas is important in the context of luxury fashion, both for producers and consumers. Baudrillard's ideas around hyper-reality, simulacra, and simulation offer a useful framework within which to consider this issue. Baudrilliard defines hyper-reality as the inability of the conscious mind to distinguish between reality and the simulation of reality. Simulacrum refers to what is simulated (Baudrillard & Glaser, 1994), a copy of reality, for example a high street replica of a luxury fashion product, the existence of which could leave the authentic product without meaning. Thus, it could be argued within the framework of postmodern thought that uniqueness within the self and fashion does not exist as there are no longer originals with new products drawing on inspiration which in turn leads to continuous refashioning.

7.10 Summary

The evidence presented shows that consumers purchase luxury fashion because they view the product category as unique, and in turn view it as congruent with the self, leading to self enhancement and self-actualisation, supporting the literature discussed in section 3 and 4. Latter, Phau and Marchegiani (2010) identified that consumers express self-image and uniqueness through possessions which in turn supports Tian, Bearden & Hunter (2001) findings on choice counter conformity with consumers need for uniqueness stemming from the ability to differentiate themselves from others.

Referring to the literature in section 2, two key frameworks were identified – the *Becker Model* of consumer and luxury brand relationships (Becker et al, 2018) and the *Brand Luxury Index* (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) both of which can be applied to this research. As *The Becker Model* identified a link between luxury fashion products and consumer psychological characteristics inclusive of the self. Whilst, the *Brand Luxury Index* identified the extended self and uniqueness as vital components of the luxury framework, whilst acknowledging the importance of both personal and interpersonal perceptions. Whereas, this research proposes a framework which combines luxury fashion, the self and uniqueness, all of which are interlinked through consumer need for congruity. The framework is based up on the information gathered and discussed throughout this research, and is illustrated in figure 20 below.
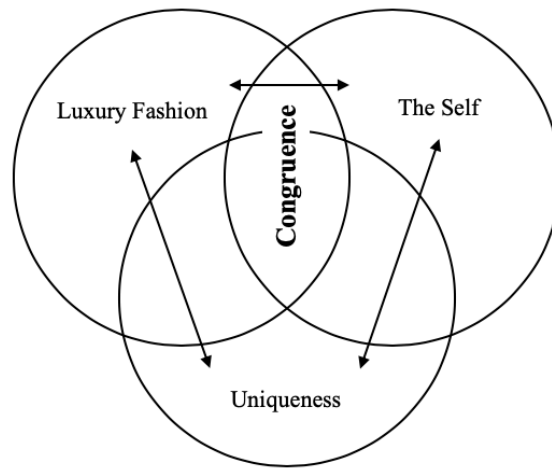
Figure 20 – Luxury Fashion, Self and Uniqueness Framework

The framework highlights the relationship between the main focus points of this research, and the direct links between different areas. The framework illustrates there is a direct relationship between uniqueness, the self and luxury fashion brand congruity. Overall the findings have demonstrated that generation Y and Z consumers view both luxury fashion brands and themselves as unique, which allows congruity between the self and brand.

Section 8: Conclusion

The findings of this research build on and contribute to the definition of luxury fashion in the context of fashion brands. It has demonstrated the key characteristics that are important for consumers when identifying and purchasing from a luxury fashion brand; these are: excellent quality, craftsmanship, aesthetics, brand and/or product heritage and uniqueness. However, as previously discussed in section 6.2 and 7.2, there was some flexibility in the terminology consumers used to identify luxury. There was also the emergence of additional characteristics which had not been previously highlighted in the literature. This suggests a change in consumer needs, drives and goals. Furthermore, it is evident that individuals have difficultly when identifying luxury fashion brands, because of the fluidity in the market as discussed in section 7.2, all of which impacts on how luxury fashion is consumed.

The research offered an examination of the self and brand congruity in an attempt to extend the body of knowledge related to this area in the context of luxury fashion. The findings highlighted luxury fashion consumers seek self and brand congruence because they view the brands and/or products as an extension of the self, which supports the literature as discussed in section 3. Once this relationship was established, it was important to understand the role uniqueness has within the self and brand congruity relationship. The research has shown that individuals who view themselves as unique have a greater disposition to purchase a unique product, which is often achievable through the luxury fashion landscape; thus demonstrating an alignment between uniqueness in the sense of self and brand congruity. The consensus was that uniqueness can be characterised by bespoke creation, option to personalise, limited edition products, and brand and/or product narrative.

Additionally, there was a clear relationship between generational groups and need for uniqueness identified from the data gathered during the survey. It was statistically shown there is a relationship between generation Y and Z and the likelihood of them perceiving themselves as unique versus older generations, which was discussed in section 6.9.

The conceptual framework developed from this research as illustrated in section 7.10 identified the main components of this research, all of which are connected through consumers' desires for congruence in relation to uniqueness, the self and luxury fashion brands. This in turn

supports the research hypothesis to be correct in relation to generation Y and Z, as participants within those groups did desire luxury fashion brand congruence from the viewpoint that both the self and brand and/or product in question is perceived as being unique.

This research has identified the direct relationship between uniqueness, the self and luxury fashion brand congruity for generation Y and Z consumers. It is evident that the luxury fashion consumer is changing, and is influenced by ever changing channels of communication. Luxury fashion brands are no longer guaranteed success because of the term luxury; generation Y and Z consumers want to be captivated and pleased through an authentic and open relationship. This research demonstrates that those consumers view luxury brands as an extension of the self. As the research presented here clearly demonstrates consumers are now proactive and make a conscious effort to understand the true ethos of a brand and its motivations to identify whether congruence is present between the self and the brand at question. In order for luxury brands to maintain their share in the market, it is pivotal that consumer needs, wants and desires are met and must be at the forefront of future campaign strategies.

8.1 Research Implications

Despite this research focusing on generation Y and Z luxury fashion consumers, the findings have important implications for the general fashion community. This research can be used to inform business decisions, marketers, and scholars in the area of luxury fashion, with a predominant focus on consumption behaviour.

8.2 Managerial Implications

This research has uncovered several implications which should be considered by luxury fashion brands. From a managerial perspective, in order to remain competitive and successful within the saturated market, it is important that businesses understand the subjective nature of the term luxury. This includes individual perceptions of luxury fashion, as this research has identified the variance in opinions in relation to luxury fashion brand characteristics, which could be viewed by brands as the key selling points of a luxury fashion product from a consumer perspective. Furthermore, this research can help brands understand how consumers

differentiate between luxury and non-luxury fashion brands, which in turn could be utilised to enhance the luxury fashion brands position.

This research suggests that luxury fashion companies should employ a strategy which satisfies consumer need for congruence. It is important that a brand is conscious of both the consumers' and brand's personality to ensure alignment, which in turn will provide deep connections with consumers. This is a pivotal step in the success of luxury fashion brands, as demonstrated in the research, as consumers will purchase from brands as an extension of the self. Therefore, brand communications should satisfy and cater to the consumer's future self, providing a stepping stone for self-actualisation which is what all individuals strive for, as discussed in section 4.3. Furthermore, if a company chooses to use celebrity and/or influencer endorsement as a means for marketing across social channels, the individual chosen will have an impact on how the brand is perceived, and the consumer type it will attract. The findings from the research show it is vital that the individuals who represent a brand carry the same ethos and vision providing an authentic relationship which is extremely important for consumers when seeking congruity. Luxury fashion brands need to examine the ethos and values which they project, including their standing on moral, ethical, environmental and political topics and compare to their current consumer and possibly their desired target consumer to ensure their brand activity including marketing strategies will be welcomed and led to success.

It was apparent that uniqueness was important for both consumers in terms of how they perceive themselves, but also a quality which they desire in luxury fashion products and/or brands. However, participants were concerned at the level of replication and mass production within the luxury fashion industry which removes a products unique value and exclusivity. Therefore, luxury fashion brands, need to acknowledge this implication, and work towards a reduction in replication and counterfeit products through the placement of procedures and laws. Alternatively, luxury fashion brands could focus their efforts on bespoke, personalised and limited-edition products which would fulfil generation Y and Z desire for uniqueness, moving away from extensive product ranges and mass production which run the risk of replication.

Product functionality and psychological satisfaction are the two predominant driving forces behind consumer desire for luxury fashion products. Luxury fashion brands should consider

how a product satisfies functional needs whilst also satisfying the consumers self. If a consumer is satisfied, there will be an increased chance of purchase as consumers desire a product which is an extension of the self, assisting in individuals' goal of self-actualisation.

8.3 Research Limitations

This research adds to knowledge within the field, through the examination of uniqueness in the context of self and luxury fashion congruity which has not been previously examined to this extent, however, it is not without its limitations. The key research limitations can be owed to the research methods employed, and the small number of participants, all of whom reside in the UK. It would be appropriate to replicate the study on a larger scale, across several countries to have an understanding of cross-cultural attitudes and if the findings can be applied to all markets, producing more conclusive evidence. Furthermore, this research focused on all consumers regardless of gender, however there was a greater number of female participants in both the survey and interview stages of the research. Therefore, it could be argued the results are dominated by a female perception and understanding of luxury fashion, but also by female needs, drives and goals in relation to purchasing behaviour. If this research is replicated or developed, a cross cultural pool of participants should be used with all genders having equal representation, with the same strategy possibly extending to age groups and employment.

8.4 Recommendations for Further Research

There are a number of recommendations following this research as follows:

1. Conduct a longitudinal study to analyse the relationship between haute couture and ready to wear to investigate how individuals perceive collections, as in the study participants had expressed a belief in uniqueness stemming from haute couture and additional brand activities.
2. Conduct an investigation examining why bespoke, personalised and scarce items often forgo the label of luxury due to lack of brand symbolisation.
3. Conduct a study examining the life cycle and changes a designer endures from graduate fashion into global brand status, examining if there is a loss of uniqueness through brand development.

Future researchers may use a sample which represents the entire consumer population, this will provide a greater understanding of how consumers define and perceive luxury, the relationship between self and brand congruity and desire for uniqueness, all of which impact consumer decision making and purchase behaviour of luxury fashion consumers. Additionally, researchers may want to consider a longitudinal study, examining if there is a change in opinions and behaviour of consumers throughout their lifetime, providing a greater insight into generational differences.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The following table provides a concise overview of the literature examined in relation to consumer perspectives on the defining characteristics of luxury fashion brands.

Researcher Name and Year (Participant Numbers if Available)	Research Paper Title	Key Words Consumers Associate with Luxury (Percentage of importance will be provided if available in literature)	Key Types of Consumers Identified from Research
De Barnier et al (2006) 30 Participant	Which luxury perceptions affect most consumer purchase behaviour? A cross cultural exploratory study in France, UK and Russia.	• Aesthetics • History • Quality • Expensive • Self-Pleasure • Aspiration • Conspicuousness • Functionality • Luxury Atmospherics • Uniqueness	Consumers identified by consumer country of origin and key characteristics of luxury (figure four).
Dubois (2001) 16 Participant	Consumer rapport to luxury.	• Excellent Quality • Very High Price • Scarcity and Uniqueness • Aesthetics and Polysensuality • Ancestral Heritage and Personal History • Superfluosness	• Mental Reservations and Excessive Conspicuousness • Personal Distance and Uneasiness • Involvement: Pleasure and Deep Interest • Involvement: Sign Value
Dubois (2005) 420 Participant	Consumer segments based on attitudes toward luxury: Empirical	Relates to Dubois (2001) research thus the key words consumers associate with luxury remain the same.	• Elitist • Democratic • Distant

	evidence from twenty countries.		
Vigneron and Johnson (2004) 37 Participant	Measuring perceptions of brand luxury.	• Conspicuous • Elitist • Extremely Expensive • For Wealthy • Very Exclusive • Precious • Rare • Unique • Crafted • Luxurious • Best Quality • Sophisticated • Superior • Exquisite • Glamorous • Stunning • Leading • Very Powerful • Rewarding • Successful	N/A
Godey et al (2013) 233 Participant	A cross-cultural exploratory content analysis of the perception of luxury from six countries.	• Expensive 36% • Quality 29% • Exclusive 24% • Desirable 22% • Dream/Unique 20% • Excess 18% • Price 13% • Immaterial 11% • Cost 9% • Elegance 7% • Democratic 2%	• Conspicuous and Status Related Luxury • Emotional Hedonistic Luxury
Becker et al (2018)	The concept of luxury brands and the relationship	• Symbolic • Heritage	• Intrinsic • Extrinsic

371 Participant	between consumer and luxury brands.	• Exclusivity • Uniqueness • Quality • Aesthetics • Price	• Cognitive
Kapferer (1998) 200 Participant	Why are we seduced by luxury brands?	• Beauty 79% • Excellence 75% • Magic 47% • Uniqueness 46% • Great Creativity 36%	N/A
Kapferer & Bastien (2009) Dubois research within publication. Year and Participant Number for Research Unknown.	The Luxury Strategy	• Expensive • Quality • Prestige • Expectation • Minority • Dream • Fashion • Pleasure • Art • Beauty • Avant Garde	Consumers identified by consumer country of origin and key characteristics of luxury (figure fifteen).
Vickers & Renard (2003) 15 Participant	The marketing of luxury goods: An exploratory study–three conceptual dimensions.	• Functionalism • Experimentalism • Symbol Features	N/A
Nueno & Quelch (1998) Based Upon Secondary Research Undertaken Therefore No Participant	The mass marketing of luxury.	• Premium Quality • Craftsmanship • Recognisable Style • Limited Products • Clear Marketing Support • Global Reputation • Strong Relationship with Brand Heritage • Uniqueness	N/A

Numbers Available.		• Personality and Values of Creator	

Appendix 2

The following table provides a concise overview of the literature examined in relation to industry perspectives on the defining characteristics of luxury fashion brands.

Industry Body	Key Words Associated With Luxury
Mintel Reports	• Superior Quality • Craftsmanship • Exclusivity • Product Uniqueness • Symbolisation • Personalization • Technical Capabilities
Walpole/ Business Luxury Summit Review	• Craftsmanship • Creativity • High Quality Materials • Strong Aesthetic •
Altagamma/ Bain & Company	Despite being the Italian Luxury body, the company fails to define luxury, providing only a yearly analysis on the sector.
WGSN Reports	• Heritage And History • Product Quality • Bespoke Goods • Rarity "To avoid commoditization, luxury will need to be unique, infrequent and exceptional."
Drapers	Report on luxury fashion issues, however no definition is offered.
Business of Fashion	The State of Fashion yearly report examines changes in the market place, including the luxury sector, however no definition is offered.
Ipsos	• Exceptional Quality • History • Know-How • Rooting In The Past • Made-In • Quality Of The Materials

Appendix 3

Previous Research Methods Strategy

From the survey, participants will be identified to take part in a variety of focus groups. The first stage of focus groups will examine the importance of congruence between the self and luxury fashion brands, this may require several focus group depending on the number of participants who fit the criteria. To identify if congruence is present between the self and luxury fashion brands, a key word trait activity will be used. The stages of this focus group can be seen below: -

Stage 1 - Participants to list the luxury fashion brands they purchase from.

Stage 2 - Participants to list qualities associated with a brand, example adjectives to be provided to reduce confusion and discussion among participants.

Stage 3 - Participants to list qualities they associate with themselves.

Stage 4 - Identity if the qualities align.

Alongside the activity, conversations regarding congruence will take place within the group, led by the researcher. The aim of this stage of the methodology is to highlight if congruence is present between the self and luxury brands, participants choose to purchase from. Furthermore, it will be used to identify the participants who identify as being unique or the use of adjectives which suggest this quality for both the self and brand.

The second set of focus groups will have a greater focus on the uniqueness element. This interactive activity will be named the 'Star Self Concept'. Participants will be asked to draw themselves and be presented with a range of cut out clothing options, which can be used to dress and style the 'Star Self', additionally participants can choose certain brand names which they would associate with 'Star Self'. Participants will be asked to explain their choices exploring if participants chose products because the product qualities are in line with the participant self and therefore congruent. The aim is to identify the importance of uniqueness in brand and clothing choice.

The third stage of the focus groups will stem from the aforementioned focus groups. Participants who have a clear focus and need for unique luxury goods will be asked to attend a third focus group. This focus group will be object focused, participants will be asked to bring a luxury fashion purchase which they view as unique. The goal is to formulate an object

focused conversation among the group, examining to what extent consumers purchase luxury products because of unique value.

Focus groups have been chosen as a vital part of this research methodology because it will allow the researcher to understand why participants feel a certain why or have a particular opinion. Additionally, as the focus groups are activity and object focused, it is hoped participants relax and are open with their opinions. There will be six participants in each focus group, it is worth noting there may be several focus groups depending on the survey responses. The number of participants have been chosen to ensure the focus group can remain focused and controlled by the researcher and to ensure participants do not feel overwhelmed which may have a direct impact on results. The researcher will observe participant behaviour and discussion yet acknowledges there may be times when the researcher needs to direct the focus group through use of questions to avoid off topic discussion.

The focus group will be followed by in-depth interviews regarding purchasing behaviour with participants explaining their latest purchases, this will be in regards to both the brand and product and the importance of congruence and uniqueness. This will take place over a set time period, allowing the researcher to reflect on the focus group and create an outline of questions. The purpose of the interviews is to gather and create profiles of participants to identify relationships and trends within the area. The hope is that participants will reveal and speak more openly in a one to one setting as there will be no social or peer pressure as one may feel in a focus group. Furthermore, the researcher will be able to question certain topics spoken about by the participant in the focus group. Qualitative interviews are vital to gather information from the interviewees' viewpoint on the research topic. A semi-structured method will be utilised, the researcher will have key questions, which will be asked, but additional questions will be added depending on the direction of interviewee responses in the hope of detailed answers, which can be analysed.
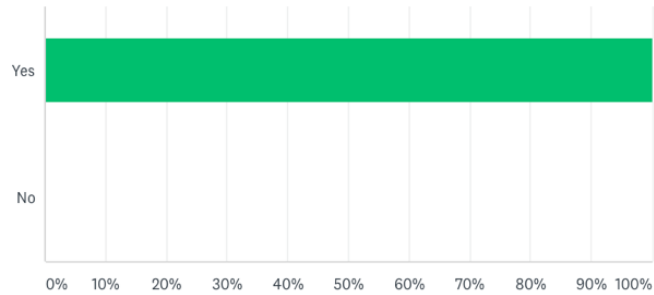
Appendix 4

Full Survey Breakdown by Question

Do you buy luxury fashion products?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

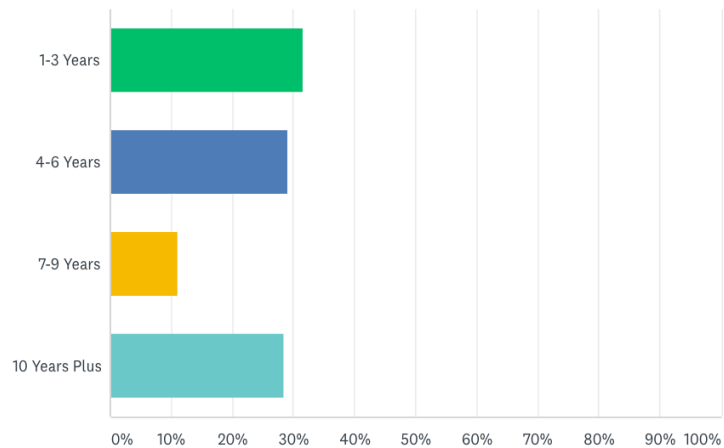| ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ Yes	100.00%	200
▼ No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		**200**

How many years have you been buying luxury fashion products?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ 1-3 Years	31.50%	63
▼ 4-6 Years	29.00%	58
▼ 7-9 Years	11.00%	22
▼ 10 Years Plus	28.50%	57
TOTAL		**200**

How often do you buy luxury fashion products?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
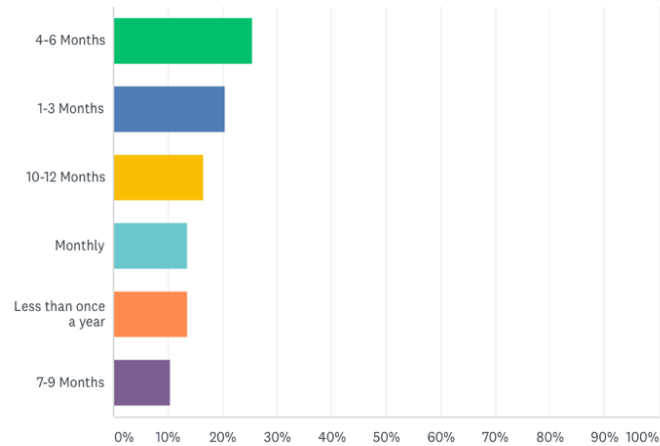
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
4-6 Months	25.50%	51
1-3 Months	20.50%	41
10-12 Months	16.50%	33
Monthly	13.50%	27
Less than once a year	13.50%	27
7-9 Months	10.50%	21
TOTAL		200

How many luxury fashion products have you bought from January 2018 to January 2019?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
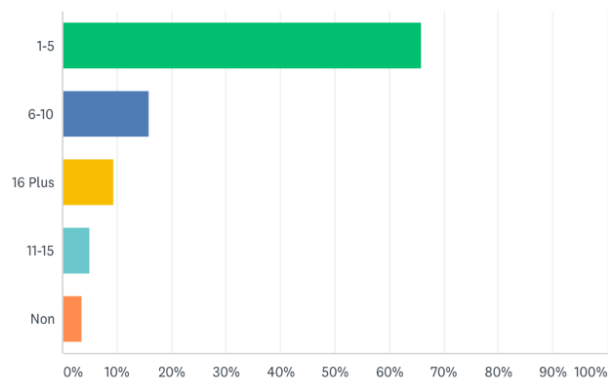
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-5	66.00%	132
6-10	16.00%	32
16 Plus	9.50%	19
11-15	5.00%	10
Non	3.50%	7
TOTAL		200

Customize   Save as▾

What matters to you when choosing a luxury fashion product/brand? Please select all those that apply.

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
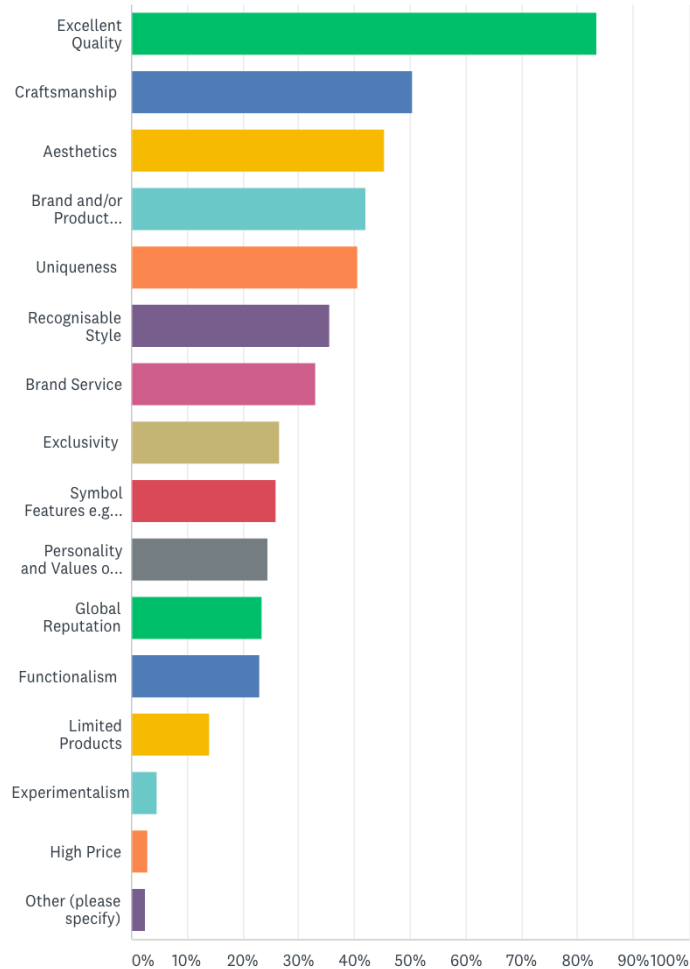
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▾ Excellent Quality	83.50%	167
▾ Craftsmanship	50.50%	101
▾ Aesthetics	45.50%	91
▾ Brand and/or Product Heritage	42.00%	84
▾ Uniqueness	40.50%	81
▾ Recognisable Style	35.50%	71
▾ Brand Service	33.00%	66
▾ Exclusivity	26.50%	53
▾ Symbol Features e.g. logos	26.00%	52
▾ Personality and Values of Designer	24.50%	49
▾ Global Reputation	23.50%	47
▾ Functionalism	23.00%	46
▾ Limited Products	14.00%	28
▾ Experimentalism	4.50%	9
▾ High Price	3.00%	6
▾ Other (please specify) Responses	2.50%	5
Total Respondents: 200		

104

☆   Customize   Save as▼

What luxury fashion products do you buy?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
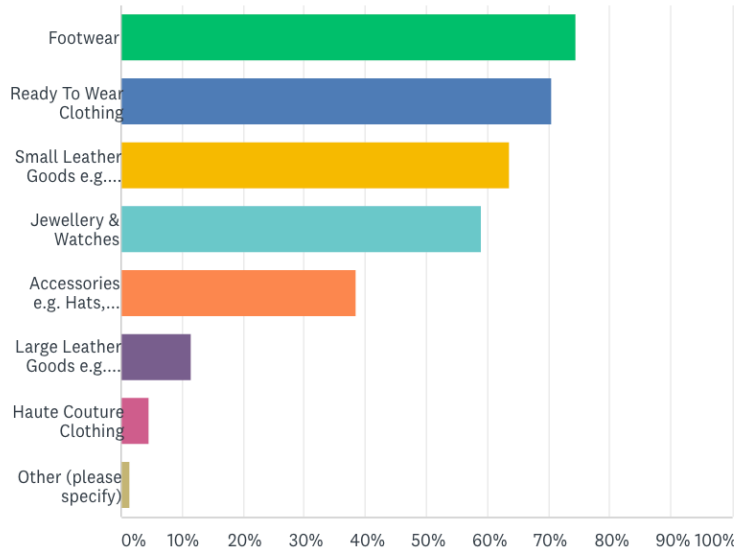
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
▾ Footwear		74.50%	149
▾ Ready To Wear Clothing		70.50%	141
▾ Small Leather Goods e.g. Purses & Handbags		63.50%	127
▾ Jewellery & Watches		59.00%	118
▾ Accessories e.g. Hats, Scarfs, Key Rings etc.		38.50%	77
▾ Large Leather Goods e.g. Luggage		11.50%	23
▾ Haute Couture Clothing		4.50%	9
▾ Other (please specify)	Responses	1.50%	3
Total Respondents: 200			

Q7

Save as▼

What are your favourite three luxury fashion brands you have bought from? Please list responses.

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
i.	Responses	100.00%	200
ii.	Responses	100.00%	200
iii.	Responses	100.00%	200

Customize   Save as▼

Why do you buy from luxury fashion brands? Please select all those that apply.

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
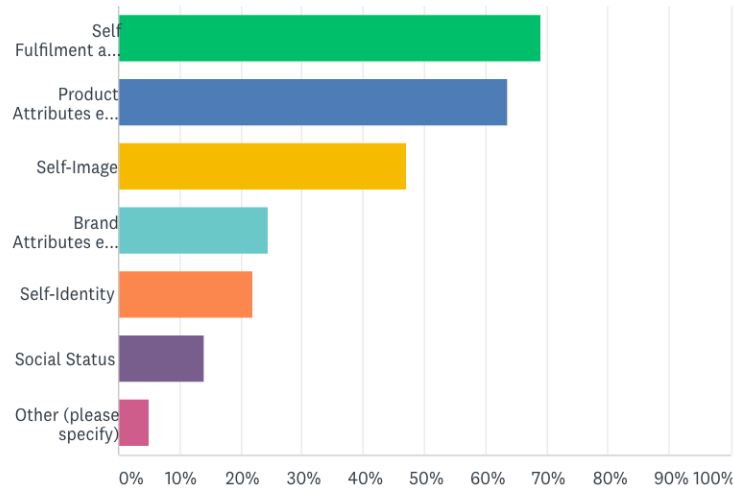
ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Self Fulfilment and Happiness		69.00%	138
Product Attributes e.g. Quality, Aesthetics, Uniqueness, Price		63.50%	127
Self-Image		47.00%	94
Brand Attributes e.g. Ethical, Moral, Reputation, Personality		24.50%	49
Self-Identity		22.00%	44
Social Status		14.00%	28
Other (please specify)	Responses	5.00%	10
Total Respondents: 200			

Do the luxury fashion brands you buy from reflect who you currently are as an individual including beliefs, attitudes and values?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
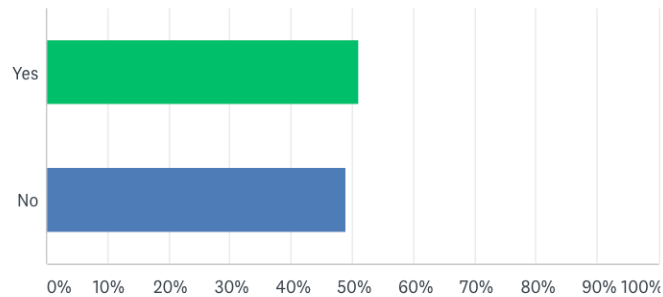
ANSWER CHOICES	▼	RESPONSES	▼
▼ Yes		51.00%	102
▼ No		49.00%	98
TOTAL			200

Comments (50)

Do the luxury fashion brands you buy from reflect the person you would like to be in the future including beliefs, attitudes and values?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
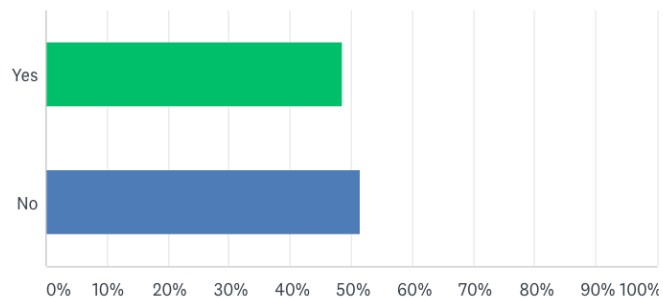
ANSWER CHOICES	▼	RESPONSES	▼
▼ Yes		48.50%	97
▼ No		51.50%	103
TOTAL			200

Comments (50)

Do you believe luxury fashion products help you to communicate your self-identity?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
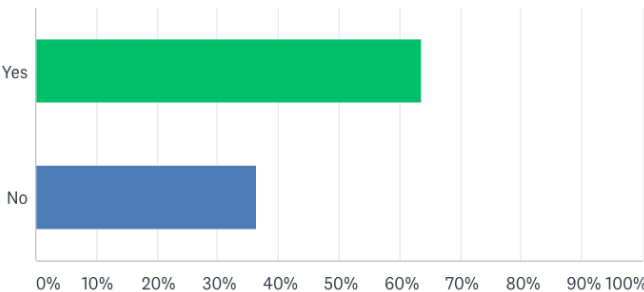
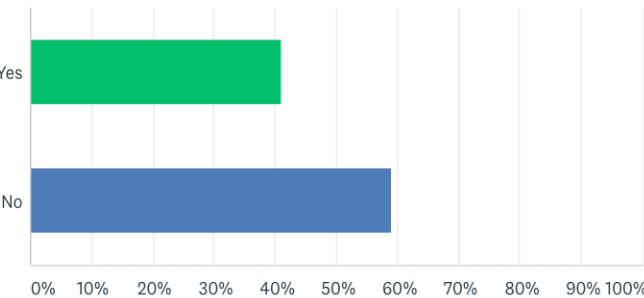| ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ Yes	63.50%	127
▼ No	36.50%	73
TOTAL		**200**

Comments (50)

Do you believe the luxury fashion brands you buy from make a statement about what is important to you?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ Yes	41.00%	82
▼ No	59.00%	118
TOTAL		**200**

Comments (50)

Do you see yourself as a unique individual?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
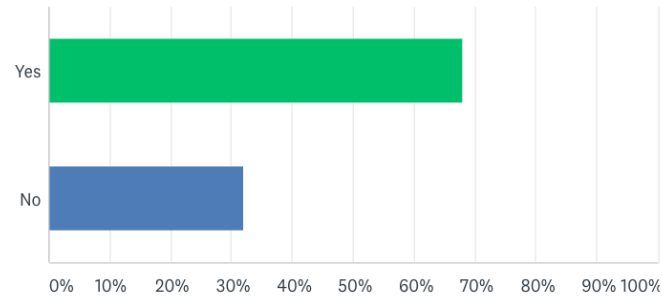
ANSWER CHOICES	▼	RESPONSES	▼
▼ Yes		68.00%	136
▼ No		32.00%	64
TOTAL			200

Comments (50)

Q14

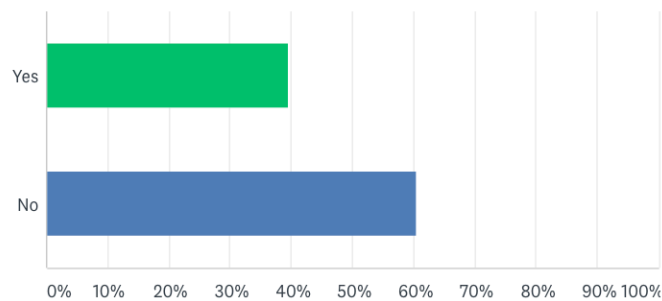## Do you view the luxury fashion brands you buy from as unique?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

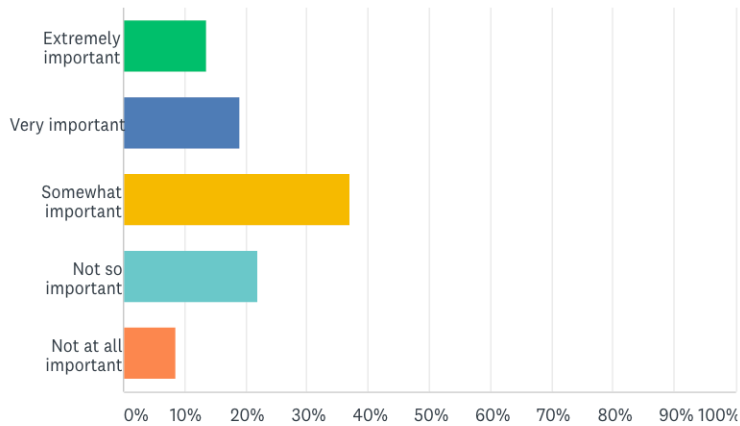| ANSWER CHOICES	▼	RESPONSES	▼
▼ Yes		39.50%	79
▼ No		60.50%	121
TOTAL			200

Comments (50)

Is a product's unique value important when making a purchase decision?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

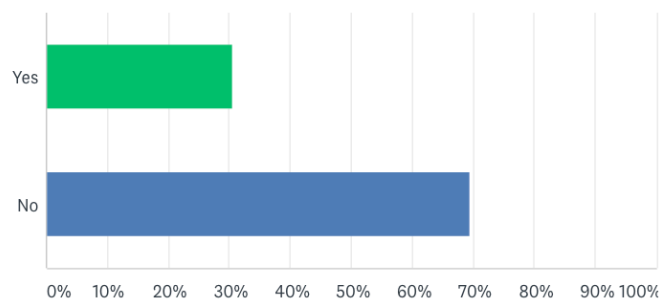| ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Extremely important	13.50%	27
▼ Very important	19.00%	38
▼ Somewhat important	37.00%	74
▼ Not so important	22.00%	44
▼ Not at all important	8.50%	17
TOTAL		200

Comments (50)

Q16

Customize   Save as ▼

Do you buy luxury fashion products because it allows you to visually communicate yourself as a unique individual to the world?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	30.50%	61
▼ No	69.50%	139
TOTAL		200

Comments (49)

Q17

What is your gender?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
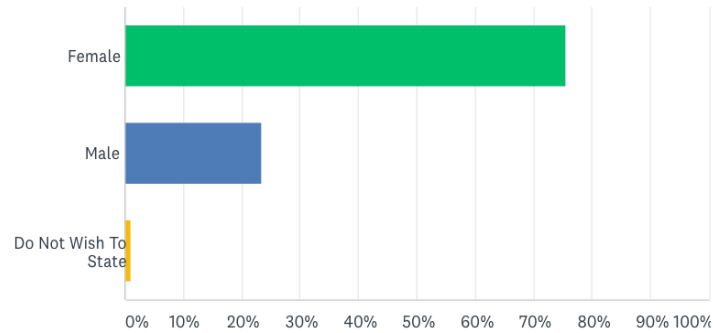
ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ Female	75.50%	151
▼ Male	23.50%	47
▼ Do Not Wish To State	1.00%	2
TOTAL		200

Q18

How old are you?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
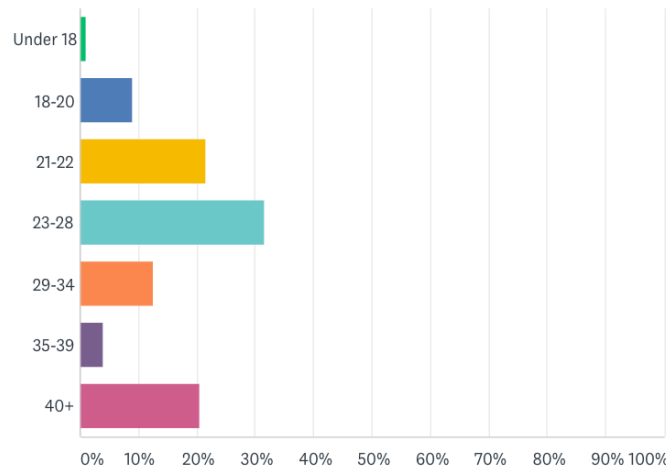
ANSWER CHOICES ▼	RESPONSES ▼	
▼ Under 18	1.00%	2
▼ 18-20	9.00%	18
▼ 21-22	21.50%	43
▼ 23-28	31.50%	63
▼ 29-34	12.50%	25
▼ 35-39	4.00%	8
▼ 40+	20.50%	41
TOTAL		200

111

What is your occupation? If you are a student please put your university in sector and course/level in role.

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Sector	Responses	100.00%	200
Role	Responses	100.00%	200

Q20

Save as▼

What City/Town Do You Currently Live In?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0
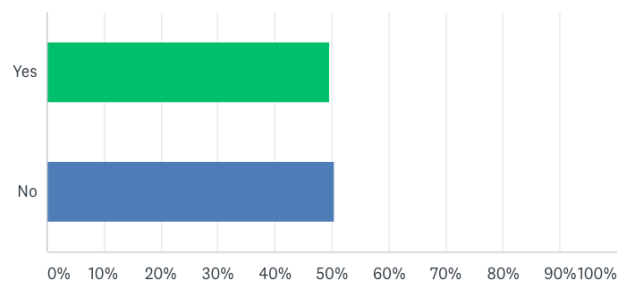
RESPONSES (200)   WORD CLOUD   TAGS (0)

Q21

Customize   Save as▼

Are you willing to take part in further research?

Answered: 200   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	49.50%	99
No	50.50%	101
TOTAL		200

Q22

Save as▼

If you answered yes to question 21 please leave your name, email and telephone number so you can be contacted at a later date.

Answered: 101   Skipped: 99

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Name	Responses	100.00%	101
Email	Responses	96.04%	97
Telephone Number	Responses	75.25%	76

112

Appendix 5

Interview Questions

1. From the survey you said the following factors (X/Y/Z) could be applied to the definition of luxury fashion brands. What is the reason behind this choice? Can you use an example in support of your choice?

2. From the survey, the figures have shown these are the top ten luxury fashion brands participants purchase from – What is your opinion on this? (Show Chart) What do you believe they all have in common? Does the top 10 surprise you? Where the brands you listed in the top 10?

The Three Brands Participant Chose

    i.   _____
    ii.   _____
    iii.   _____

3. Referring to the three luxury fashion brands you noted on the survey, how does each brand make a statement about what is important to you? What qualities do the brands have which makes you want to associate yourself with them?

4. How does consuming luxury fashion goods impact on your self-identity?

5. To what extent do you research or have an awareness of brand beliefs prior to purchasing from them?

6. Is it important that you are ethically and morally in line with a company's beliefs before showcasing and promoting their products? To what extent do ethics, environmental and political stand points impact purchase?

7. Fashion brands, luxury, high street and ecommerce alike are criticized in the press for moral controversies – do you pay attention to these reports? To what extent may this effect you purchasing from one of these brands in the future?

8. In the survey, you said you see yourself as a unique individual and left the comment (…….) can you expand on this?

8a. What would you say your other characteristics are, both personally and in fashion?

9. Why do you see the luxury fashion brands you buy from as unique?

10. Do you think all luxury fashion goods are unique or just certain brands within the sector?

11. It is important to establish unique value in a purchase decision?

12. Do you seek uniqueness in personal consumption and this is the reason behind choosing luxury fashion products or do you find and highlight you uniqueness in other ways?

13. What percentage of your uniqueness can be owed to fashion?

14. What is it that makes a brand or product unique? To what extent are brand promotions and marketing, impacting on how you perceive them as unique? E.g. adverts, social media and celebrity endorsement.

15. So you have brought along your three luxury purchases, which you view as unique, can you tell me why you view them as unique and how you believe those around you would perceive them when being used or worn?

The Three Brands Participant Chose/Products

    i.   _____

    ii. _____

    iii. _____

16. Has your mindset towards luxury fashion changed as you have got older and became a consumer?

17. Or do you think the luxury market is changing and becoming more unique in its offerings to consumers? And why? Is this because of consumer demand/social media etc.?

18. From my data collected it appears the younger the consumer, the greater likelihood of them viewing themselves as unique and wanting a unique product. Why do you think this is?

Do you think it relates back to social media? What other factors do you think contribute to this?

19. Do you use luxury fashion as a visual for uniqueness within society?

20. Do you believe achieving self-uniqueness and uniqueness through clothing is difficult in todays climate due to social media and technology - increasing likelihood of mass production of items and ability to copy style?

21. What is the reason behind your desire for uniqueness? Is it for self-enhancement and the future self?

22. Do you believe consumption of luxury fashion items which are popular shows identity or lack of?

23. Do you see yourself as a fashion innovator? Or a fashion follower, are you aware of the difference?

24. To what extent are you conscious of your fast fashion consumption, and do you purchase luxury fashion goods as an alternative?

25. When reviewing the survey, respondents didn't view luxury fashion brands as unique because of accessibility and mass production making them no longer exclusive with the risk of fast fashion companies making replicas - how much of an issue do you view this as?

Appendix 6

Methodology Information/Primary Research/Preliminary Survey/Survey Results/ Luxury Fashion Consumption Full Breakdown With Participant Personal Information Removed