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Exploring the Relationship Between Luxury Consumption and Brand Coolness

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PhD in Management, specialization in Marketing

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October, 2022

BUSINESS SCHOOL

Marketing, Operations and General Management Department

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October, 2022

To my Sunset in human form,

I Prada You

O meu profundo Obrigada,

Dr. Gustavo Jesus,

Por me trazer de volta.

"For to be Free is not merely to cast off one's chains,

but to live in a way

that respects and enhances the Freedom of others."

Nelson Mandela

Acknowledgements

"In The Name of God, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful."

I am thankful for the amazing people that I came across throughout these years. Family are the people we chose, and life has given me plenty of people to be thankful for.

I must begin by thanking my advisor Sandra Maria Correia Loureiro, who has been more than an advisor for the past 3 years. We have been in this constant relationship, day and night, dozens of calls per day and countless e-mails. One of the best decisions I made was choosing this powerful woman as an advisor, and I can proudly say she was there for every single step, especially when things were not so good. Thank you so much.

I would also want to acknowledge the scientific community from BRU/ISCTE-IUL, namely Prof. Helena Isidro, Prof. Fátima Salgueiro and Ricardo Bilro for helping me throughout these years of research and constant learning.

Vera Herédia-Colaço, my Master's advisor. My passion for the research area started with you. It has been amazing working with you, you are an inspiration since the beginning. I hope you know how thankful I am for your time, your patience, for knowledge, for introducing me to the world of conferences, and for being there for me, when I didn't even know what "desk reject" meant. Thank you very much, you are an inspiration.

To my special people at IADE: Carlos Rosa, Luís Pedro Miguel, Patrícia Silveira and Joana Ramalho. Thank you, for everything you have done for me.

My best friends Mariana Ferreira and Marta Marques, are the most special Doctors one can ever know. To my friend Michele, thank you so much for all your support.

To my Person. Celebrating this victory, as being ours. Thank you for joining my life, C.

To my dear friends, whom I am glad to share meltdowns and good news with: Ana, Afonso, Bárbara, Brenda, Carolina, Duda, Madalena, Margarida, Rafaela, and Rita. My life became much better after meeting you, so thank you for letting me in: Beatriz, Guilherme, Inês, Mariana and Rita. Last but not least, thank you Compal (Carolina).

Finally, to my students. I learnt from you, more than you from me. I am so grateful for every single student that has crossed my path. You are my dream come true, and my classroom is my favorite place in the world.

"All Praises be to God"

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between brand coolness and luxury consumption, in the context of fashion. We investigate consumers' perceptions in different environments: online and offline, so that we can confirm results in both scenarios. Our main goal is to contribute to advancing the theoretical knowledge concerning the previously mentioned topics, while providing useful insights for practitioners.

The aims of this thesis are to: (1) comprehensively review the topic of luxury consumption in the context of fashion; (2) analyse luxury brands' communication practices on Instagram; (3) explore consumers' perceptions through a focus group, as well as luxury managers, via interviews; (4) propose and validate a relationship between mass versus niche cool brands, brand loyalty, and brand love, in the context of luxury fashion consumption.

Although several studies have been conducted, as far as we know, the current thesis is the first to employ both the topic of research and the methods employed, a mixed approach. Our research starts with a systematic literature review, in which we focus on summarizing the previously conducted research.

The second study adopts a netnography approach, specifically a six-month Instagram analysis of six luxury brands (Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Gucci, Prada, Dior and Chanel). The third study adopts a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and a focus group. The last study adopts a quantitative research method based on a self-administered questionnaire. A field experiment was also conducted, to provide results as realistic as possible.

Based on our findings, we can summarize the results from the four studies: (1) research on luxury consumption in the context of fashion needs to be updated; (2) As for the Instagram analysis, Louis Vuitton and Gucci have a trend-driven approach. Dior and Chanel follow a fashion-centered communication. Prada has a product-centered communication strategy. Burberry follows a similar approach, being product centered. (3) Concerning the qualitative focus group and interviews, brand positioning was confirmed with a common approach between Dior and Chanel; Louis Vuitton and Gucci. Prada positions itself as a more rebellious brand, and this is also confirmed by prior results, while Burberry is still adapting to the market; (4) To conclude, niche cool brands are positively related to low conspicuous perceptions. This will directly impact brand love while the same happens for mass cool brands and high conspicuous perceptions. However, concerning brand loyalty, this phenomenon can only be confirmed for niche cool brands, and low conspicuous perceptions

Furthermore, this thesis can assist academics and practitioners. We argue that luxury consumption is a concept that needs constant updating. As consumers are changing, perceptions are also changing. This thesis extends knowledge on brand coolness from two perspectives: one, luxury brands were selected based on coolness perceptions, so all studies were based on them being perceived as cool brands; two, through analysing differences between mass and niche cool.

We also suggest managerial implications. For instance, this thesis provides insights in understanding the different direct and indirect connections between antecedents and outcomes of luxury fashion, helping to formulate their marketing strategies, and focusing on specific subjects (e.g., brand desire, authenticity, luxury markets, value perceptions, luxury fashion communication, luxury sustainability or status signaling).

Finally, we acknowledge the limitations and propose future research avenues.

Keywords: luxury, fashion, brand coolness, conspicuous consumption, brand love, netnography, actual behaviour.

JEL: M31 and L86

Resumo

Esta tese visa explorar a relação entre *brand coolness* e o consumo de luxo, no contexto da moda. Neste sentido, analisámos as perceções dos consumidores em dois contextos distintos: *online* e *offline*. Um dos principais objetivos, é contribuir para o avanço do conhecimento teórico e prático sobre os tópicos acima mencionados.

Esta tese tem como principais objetivos: (1) efetuar uma revisão sistemática de literatura acerca do tópico de consumo de luxo no contexto da moda; (2) analisar as estratégias de comunicação das marcas de luxo no Instagram; (3) explorar as perceções dos consumidores através de um grupo de foco e entrevistas a managers; (4) propor e confirmar uma relação entre marcas de luxo mass cool ou niche cool, lealdade à marca, e amor à marca, associados a um consumo conspícuo (em que existe um principal foco na exibição dos bens materiais).

Apesar de vários estudos terem sido conduzidos, este é, tanto quanto sabemos, o primeiro a abordar o tema de investigação e os métodos utilizados, numa abordagem mista. A nossa investigação começa por uma revisão sistemática de literatura, onde o principal foco é sumarizar a investigação conduzida até ao momento.

O segundo estudo segue uma metodologia, de nome, netnografia, especificamente uma análise durante seis meses de seis marcas de luxo no Instagram (Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Gucci, Prada, Dior e Chanel). O terceiro estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa, através de entrevistas e um grupo de foco. Por fim, o último estudo adota um método de investigação quantitativa com base num questionário autoadministrado. Adicionalmente, um estudo de campo foi realizado em Londres, Inglaterra, com o intuito de fornecer resultados o mais próximo da realidade em termos práticos.

Com base nos resultados obtidos, podemos resumir os resultados dos quatro estudos: (1) a investigação de consumo de luxo, no contexto da moda, necessita de atualização; (2) Considerando os resultados da análise do Instagram, a Louis Vuitton e a Gucci apresentam uma comunicação focada em tendências, a Dior e a Chanel uma comunicação focada em moda e a Prada e Burberry uma comunicação focada em produto. (3) Relativamente ao grupo de foco e entrevistas, podemos confirmar o posicionamento das marcas, em que conseguimos agrupá-las tendo em conta a sua semelhança em termos estratégicos. Desta forma, a Louis Vuitton e a Gucci, a Dior e a Chanel. No entanto, a Prada e a Burberry, apresentam posicionamentos diferentes. (4) Por fim, as marcas niche cool estão positivamente associadas a níveis de conspicuidade baixa, enquanto as marcas mass cool se associam a níveis de conspicuidade alta.

Esta relação terá impacto direto apenas no amor à marca, não se verificando o mesmo fenómeno na lealdade à marca.

Foi também possível destacar alguns contributos teóricos. Defendemos que o consumo de luxo é um conceito que necessita de um ritmo de atualização constante, uma vez que os consumidores estão em contínua mudança de perceções. Esta tese contribui também para o conceito de *brand coolness* ao analisar as diferenças entre marcas de massa e marcas de nicho associadas à lealdade e ao amor à marca.

Sugerimos também algumas implicações para a gestão, nomeadamente, a perceber diferentes ligações diretas ou indiretas entre os antecedentes e os resultados da moda de luxo. Desta forma, tentando auxiliar managers na formulação de estratégias de marketing com foco em tópicos específicos (e.g., desejo pela marca, autenticidade, mercados de luxo, perceções de valor, comunicação da moda de luxo, sustentabilidade do luxo ou indicações do estatuto).

Por fim, reconhecemos algumas limitações e propomos linhas de investigação para o futuro.

Palavras-chave: consumo de luxo, moda, *brand coolness*, consumo conspícuo, amor à marca, netnografia, comportamento real.

JEL: M31 & L86

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List of Abbreviations

AI – Artificial Intelligence

AR – Augmented Reality

ATB – Attitude Towards the Brand

BC – Brand Coolness

CC – Conspicuous Consumption

RQ – Research Question

VR – Virtual Reality

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1.   Relevance of the topic and gap

Consumption patterns are constantly evolving, with new trends arising (Kim & Ko, 2010). Arienti and Sheehan (2020) state the need for a constant update from the perspective of brands, which need to adapt according to changes in the market. Further studies are meaningful in order to find out the main drivers and influences so that managers can better shape their actions.

Previous studies (e.g., Tak, Parik, & Rishi, 2017; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004**;** Chaudhuri, Mazumdar & Ghoshal, 2011; Husic & Cicic, 2009; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Ko, Costello & Taylor, 2017) point out that consumers are becoming more attentive and now look for details as a way to increase satisfaction. Besides, as there are several offers for the same type of product, competition is great. Following this line of reasoning, small details matter and make the difference for each consumer when deciding whether or not to buy a specific product/brand. Decoding the luxury consumer and understanding the motives behind engaging in consumption is the first step to successfully satisfy their needs. Therefore, in the field of luxury, discovering the motives behind luxury consumption habits will have a major impact for luxury brands.

As luxury brand consumers constantly change their attitudes towards brands – they are seeking distinctive and symbolic items or experiences – luxury brands are adapting strategies to highlight their presence (Lu, Liu, & Fang, 2016). For example, new collections are trying to communicate a rebel image (e.g., Off-White Jitney bag -salary inside collection; Balenciaga traffic coat) or even co-branding between classic and rebel brands (e.g., Gucci x Balenciaga; Gucci x The North Face; Prada x Adidas; Nike x Off-White).

1.2.   Conceptual context

1.2.1. Research philosophy

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) define a philosophy paradigm as a system of thoughts in which research aggregates beliefs and assumptions, with the main goal of guiding the development of knowledge. Therefore, positioning the research is what shapes research questions, methodology, strategy, data collection, treatment, and discussion (Neuman, 2006). In the field of social sciences, we can enhance positivism, realism, interpretivism and

pragmatism. For instance, the positivism of Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill uses sense perceptions as unique sources of knowledge. In realism, researchers consider there is a reality independent of the mind (Novikov & Novikov, 2013). Interpretivism denotes that researchers interpret social roles in accordance with their own set of meanings (Myers, 2008). Pragmatics advocates different ways to interpret the world and thus, undertake research (Saunders et al., 2016).

The current research follows the pragmatism philosophy, more specifically, mixed methods, as different techniques are employed throughout the studies. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed methods as a type of research where investigators can combine qualitative and quantitative techniques, in a single study. Pragmatism enhances the importance of using different methods, believing a single methodological approach is unhelpful (e.g., Saunders et al., 2016; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Furthermore, mixed methods are considered a third methodological movement, following qualitative and quantitative (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

1.2.2. Foundational theory

Overall, luxury has been subject to a great deal of research due to the hedonic benefits it provides and its consequences on consumer spending (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Luxury has also been frequently related to status and admiration, a concept that is covered in the literature on conspicuous consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Veblen, 1899). This type of consumption leads consumers to purchase goods and services with the intention of communicating their wealth and status, going beyond the consumer's real needs (Brun & Castelli, 2013; Bilro et al., 2021). For instance, purchasing ostentatious goods, such as expensive designer bags with visible logos. Rolex, Louis Vuitton and Prada provide consumers with simple and clean, yet sophisticated environments, allowing them to become more attached to the brand simply by touching well-crafted goods, tasting champagne, and even experiencing tailor-made scents. When this type of experience is created, consumers become more engaged with the brand, leading to greater willingness to pay (Shahid et al., 2021). This sense of pleasure felt by consumers is pointed out by previous authors as being associated with hedonic consumption (Kim et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021).

As stated, decoding the luxury consumer is crucial for a brand's success. Previous research (e.g., Warren et al., 2019; Tiwari et al., 2021) indicates a possible motive behind luxury consumption, named brand coolness. According to Warren et al. (2019) to be cool, a brand

needs to embrace several features, further discussed in the literature. Therefore, understanding how luxury brands can be perceived as cool is extremely important. Brand coolness, besides being a fairly recent topic, has been associated with higher brand loyalty, and consequently, brand love (Loureiro, Jiménez-Barreto, & Romero, 2020; Jiménez-Barreto, et al., 2022; Bagozzi & Khoshnevis, 2022).

1.2.3. Research Problem

While the topic of luxury consumption has been discussed by a great number of authors (e.g., O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Chaudhuri, Mazumdar & Ghoshal, 2011; Lu et al., 2016; Bilro et al., 2021), brand coolness is a fairly recent topic (Warren & Campbell, 2014; Warren et al., 2019; Loureiro et al., 2020; Jiménez-Barreto, et al., 2022), and so there is still a gap in the literature concerning the association between luxury consumption and brand coolness, thus the importance of the present research. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the commonly used theories, characteristics (constructs and models), and methodologies explored in the literature on luxury consumption and fashion?
2. What marketing research has been conducted on luxury consumption in the fashion context?
3. How are luxury brands communicating on Instagram?
4. How are luxury brands connecting with luxury consumers (e.g., Instagram and online shopping – e-commerce), during the pandemic?
5. How are luxury brands perceived in the store?
6. Are perceptions different between the virtual and the physical scenario?
7. Can mass/niche cool brands be associated with higher loyalty and love in a real-life setting?
8. Can conspicuous consumption strengthen/weaken the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and brand loyalty? And between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and attitude towards the brand?

1.3. Research structure and originality

1.3.1. Research methods

To develop research paths to answer the previous research questions, we decided to conduct different studies at different stages. Thus, the research design of this thesis is divided into four

stages, considering one systematic literature review, one qualitative study and a mixed-method study.

First, to understand the work of previous authors, we conducted a systematic literature review. Through an automated method, this allowed us to gather information and identify key research on the topic (Moher et al., 2009), enabling us to identify research gaps and future research needs.

Second, we conducted a netnography study. Following the need for research concerning new age technologies and communication tools, we investigated the Instagram platform of six luxury brands, over six months. In this study, we were able to identify what creates more engagement, and how consumers perceive each brand online.

The third study takes a qualitative approach. Following our findings from the previous studies, our main goal was to understand consumers' perceptions in real-life settings. Therefore, we interviewed six luxury managers and a focus group of luxury consumers.

The fourth and final study follows a mixed method approach. Throughout two studies we analysed mass and niche cool brands. Study 1 analysed predicted behaviour considering one mass versus one niche cool brand. The main goal was to test hypotheses H1 – analysing the mediating role of attitude towards the brand in the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and brand loyalty – and H2, examining the moderating effect of conspicuous consumption on the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and brand loyalty. We then proceeded to analyse actual behaviour (study 2), through a field experiment, to test the moderating effect of conspicuous consumption on the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and attitude towards the brand. This study was conducted in London, United Kingdom, considering the actual population in physical environment.

1.3.2. Value and originality

This thesis presents scientific value, ethicality, and originality, considering both the topic of research and the methods employed. The studies followed ethical principles concerning recruitment, participation, confidentiality, and privacy. All participants were given information about the purpose of each study, its nature, risks, benefits, length of time to participate, and were guaranteed anonymity. Following Lavrakas (2008), participants gave their informed consent before participating in each study.

As for the research methods used, the originality and value of the thesis arise from the distinct procedures to analyse the topic. To the author's knowledge, this is the first thesis combining quantitative methods, netnography and field experiment. As for the topic of research, it is also the first study to combine luxury fashion consumption, brand coolness and its influence on loyalty and brand love, in both behaviours – predictive and actual.

1.3.3. Research ethics

This thesis follows ethical practices, respecting participants' dignity, integrity, privacy, safety, and human rights (Benatar, 2002), following the university's code of ethics. For instance, to ensure participants' confidentiality, no personal information was collected (e.g., name, ethnicity, and religious beliefs). All participants were asked for consent and could decide to participate or not, as well as withdraw from the study. Specifically, considering the focus group and interviews, the researcher informed the participants about how long the study would take and that there could be information they might not want to share. All participants were given information about the purpose of each study, its nature, risks, benefits, length of time to participate, and were guaranteed anonymity.

Data analysed will be stored for up to five years before being destroyed. It will not be shared with any organization or other person, besides the researchers involved. To ensure credibility, special attention was paid to the reliability and validity of the research. Following Saunders et al. (2007), analysis procedures and data collection were considered carefully, to maximize reliability. To improve validity, the thesis took precautionary measures to minimize any unexpected issue that could impact data collection or analysis. Even though mixed method research was employed, including qualitative and quantitative methods, data collection and analysis followed a rigorous process (Benatar, 2002; Saunders et al., 2007). This ensured the findings could be generalized in other contexts.

1.3.4. Thesis structure

The thesis is formed of six main chapters. The first section contains the introduction. We discuss the relevance of the topic, the gap, conceptual context, philosophy behind the thesis and identify the research problem. Ethical aspects are also considered, as well as value and originality. The thesis structure is presented, as well as a schematic diagram (see Figure 1.1).

The second chapter describes the theoretical background, concerning the systematic literature review. In this section, the process behind the literature review is described, as well as the strategy for categorising the best quality papers, outcomes, and conceptual findings.

The third section contains the first empirical study. We present the qualitative netnography, in which five variables were analysed: number of followers, number of posts, average comments, average likes, and engagement rate - across six luxury brands – Louis Vuitton, Prada, Gucci, Dior, Chanel and Burberry, over six months, from June 1st, 2020, to January 1st, 2021. The results and findings are discussed.

The fourth chapter presents the second empirical study. This is a qualitative study based on one focus group concerning luxury consumers and interviews with six luxury managers. The main goal was to gather information about consumers' perceptions in a real-life setting. At the end, preliminary findings are highlighted.

The fifth section aggregates two empirical studies. In this section, we conducted a main survey and a field experiment to examine consumers' perceptions of mass versus niche luxury brands. Furthermore, we analysed the association between brand coolness, conspicuous consumption, brand loyalty and brand love. For data analysis, Hayes Process was adopted, as well as structural equation modelling, based on AMOS for IBM SPSS 28.0 (Itani, Kassar, & Loureiro, 2019). The results and findings are discussed.

The sixth chapter is devoted to the discussion, theoretical implications, managerial implications, and main conclusions. Finally, we present the limitations and discuss future research avenues in this field.

Figure 1.1. Thesis structure

Introduction **1**

Relevance of the topic and gap
Conceptual context
Research structure and originality

State of the art
Theoretical background
Main findings

2 Systematic Literature Review

Netnography: Luxury Brands On Instagram **3**

Research planning
Overall results
Specific results: Christmas and New Year

In-depth interviews
Focus group
Main conclusions

4 Luxury Consumers In A Physical Environment

Predicted Versus Actual Consumption Behaviour **5**

Theoretical context
Mass versus niche cool brands
Study 1: Online survey
Study 2: Field experiment

Discussion
Theoretical contributions
Managerial contributions
Limitations and future trends

6 Conclusions

Source: Author's elaboration

Chapter 2: Systematic Literature Review

2.1. Characteristics of the Research on Luxury Consumption

This chapter aims to analyse past studies through a systematic review of the literature on the topic of luxury consumption in the fashion context. Following rigorous screening procedures, we were able to identify the main scientific articles produced in eighteen years of research (2005-2022), 2005 being the year of the first articles on the topic.

Several objectives were established to analyse the articles reviewed: (i) to observe the progress of knowledge and (ii) to identify key constructs, main authors and journals in the literature on luxury fashion consumption. Through the systematic review, several gaps were identified, contributing to the basis of the research.

This chapter is structured as follows: literature review objectives, methodology and results following the research question, conceptual findings, and future research suggestions. The review uses the TCM framework to classify the literature into theory(T), characteristics (C) and methodology (M). Specifically, what are the commonly used theories, characteristics (constructs and models), and methodologies explored in the literature on luxury consumption and fashion? What marketing research has been conducted on luxury consumption in the fashion context? We acknowledge the academic and market relevance of the topic.

2.2. Purpose of the Systematic Literature Review

According to Moher et al. (2009), the systematic review process is an extensive review of existing evidence guided by a specific research question. With this type of methodology, researchers should apply explicit, systematic procedures that enable them to identify, choose and analyse relevant research incorporated in the review (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). The main goal of systematic reviews is to eliminate bias through scientific procedures, collect insights through theoretical analysis, improve methodological rigour and create a more credible knowledge base for future research (Christofi, Leonidou, & Vrontis, 2017).

As previously stated, the systematic literature review process aims to identify specific articles on the research question and develop a framework considering the main constructs of the topic in different contexts. The study:

i)   Identifies the constructs' definitions at the current time,

ii)   Classifies the key concepts regarding luxury consumption and fashion,

iii)   Analyses and describes how the constructs have been measured in the different studies,

iv)   Identifies the different perspectives and contexts most frequently used in previous studies regarding the context and type of study.

First, the systematic literature review uses the main research articles published in the most relevant journals in the period 2005-2020, considering the main objectives, theories, methodology, findings, limitations, future research, research questions and context, among other relevant aspects of the research. Through the analysis we observed what has been done, how, where and by whom.

The main result is an extensive review of past research on the concept, in order to determine the evolution of the construct over the years and improve understanding of the subject. The current analysis is of practical relevance, especially for authors who aim to deepen knowledge of the research field, as the results identify what needs further investigation.

The value and originality of the systematic literature review lies in developing a framework identifying the main constructs used to study the research question in different contexts. Previous research still focuses on the topics from a partial perspective. Furthermore, we expect to contribute with a more up to date conceptual framework, as a way to facilitate future research and add new knowledge to the research fields, together with theoretical and managerial implications.

2.3. Systematic Literature Review Process

The systematic literature review process was conducted considering high ranking journals and studies since 2005 focusing on luxury fashion consumption. Through this process we are able to:

i)   Make exhaustive analysis of the current knowledge, for better understanding of the luxury consumption and fashion concept,

ii)   Understand, analyse, and most importantly highlight points in common and differences in the different studies, taking out the context, content, theories, and dimensions,

iii)   Identify the most important luxury consumption and fashion dimensions and constructs used in management practices.

2.4.Methodological procedures

To carry out this systematic literature review, we applied specific keywords on Web of Science and Scopus. This ensured the presence of diverse publishers, specifically, Emerald, Elsevier, Wiley, and Sage.

2.4.1.   Search strategy and specification of the search topics

The first step of the systematic literature review was to conduct an online search on the Web of Science and Scopus aggregators. First, we made a search using the following keywords "luxury AND consumption AND fashion" to start the process of selecting relevant research articles. Through these aggregators we ensured the presence of main editors, e.g., Emerald, Elsevier, Wiley, and Sage. The titles, keywords, and abstracts were analysed with the number of articles recorded. The authors did not limit the search to a specific period, including all relevant studies gathered with no attention to the publication dates.

Secondly, we expanded the search to include literature from all business disciplines. Following Keupp et al., (2012) and Ordanini et al., (2008), only peer-reviewed academic articles written in English were taken into consideration. Researchers agree this leads to representative, relevant, academic research, as peer-reviewed articles are considered validated knowledge and with the highest impact in the field.

The initial sample retrieved 361 articles from Web of Science and 690 from Scopus, giving a total of 1051 articles. Based on title and abstract screening, the initial sample was reduced to 146 articles from Web of Science and 246 from Scopus. In the end, after following quality assessment procedures and inclusion criteria, 166 articles were gathered as the final sample. To provide the best quality evidence, only articles meeting all inclusion criteria were included. This review is intended to define the incorporated literature clearly and specifying the inclusion and exclusion criteria will minimize the risk of reviewer bias. This stage resulted in the final sample of 166 articles, which were reviewed independently, considering the luxury consumption context. (see Figure 2.1 and 2.2).

As stated, the main goal of the systematic literature review is to explore the extent to which research has contributed to the topic – luxury consumption in the fashion context - being investigated. Since this is an emerging topic, new avenues of research are expected to be part of the process. Further details about how the literature review was conducted will be provided.

Overall, the result is an extensive review of luxury fashion consumption. Hopefully, this research is of relevance for whoever wishes to extend knowledge in this field. The value and originality of this systematic literature review is an attempt to develop research in this area.

Figure 2.1. Web of Science screening process

Source: Author's elaboration

Figure 2.2. Scopus screening process
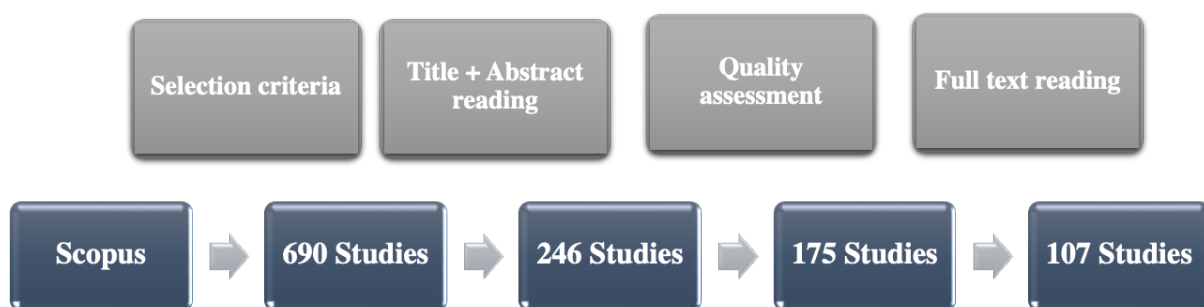
Source: Author's elaboration

As illustrated in Figure 2.3, the Web of Science and Scopus process was as follows:

i) First, the global results concerning the topic of the search were collected without any filter. Several filters were applied to identify the most relevant articles for the research,

ii) After gathering the most relevant studies, it was important to exclude several articles through reading titles. The excluded articles did not represent any relevance to the current research,

iii) The third step is of great importance as it concerns the quality and credibility of research. The selection is based on the ABS ranking and confirmed by two scholars who publish in this domain. The articles and their keywords contribute to clarifying the context of luxury consumption and then we searched for relevant literature in online databases: Web of Science and Scopus. Through analysing the abstract of the remaining articles, a new group with significant topics was identified,

iv) A global analysis of each article was conducted, restricting the previous group of articles,

v) As the final step, a consequence of cross-reference studies, several relevant and less recent studies were added to the last set of articles.

Figure 2.3. Topic search process

Source: Author's elaboration

2.4.2. Selection criteria and data extraction

Concerning data extraction (Figure 2.3), the last screening including 166 articles organized chronologically (2005-2022). All these articles were analysed through a rigorous process, and to summarize and systematize the data analysed, a comparative table was created. This table can reduce error, reflect on differences among the articles, find common points and help other researchers interested in this field of study. The comparative table is organized in the following categories: journal identification, authors, date published, main goal, theory presented, methodology, main findings, conclusions, limitations, and future research. The table contents were reviewed separately by three independent researchers, in relation to the selected article, for consistency.

2.5.Main findings from systematic literature review

The first paper on the topic appears in 1992. There was an initial interest between 1992 and 2009, with no more than three articles being published every year. From 2010 onwards there has been an increase in research, more specifically in 2015 when there is a spike in research on luxury consumption and fashion with 21 articles being published, with sustained growth until 2021. There is a tendency from 2015 towards more publications on this topic.

2.5.1. Scientific Journals

Another important insight collected from the review is the journals publishing most articles on luxury consumption and fashion. A large number were published in the Journal of Fashion and Marketing Management. Nevertheless, ABS 4 and 3 journals have been paying more attention to the topic, with the Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Business Research, Psychology & Marketing and Marketing Theory publishing more than two articles. Figure 2.4 shows the journals publishing most articles.

Figure 2.4. Journals publishing most articles
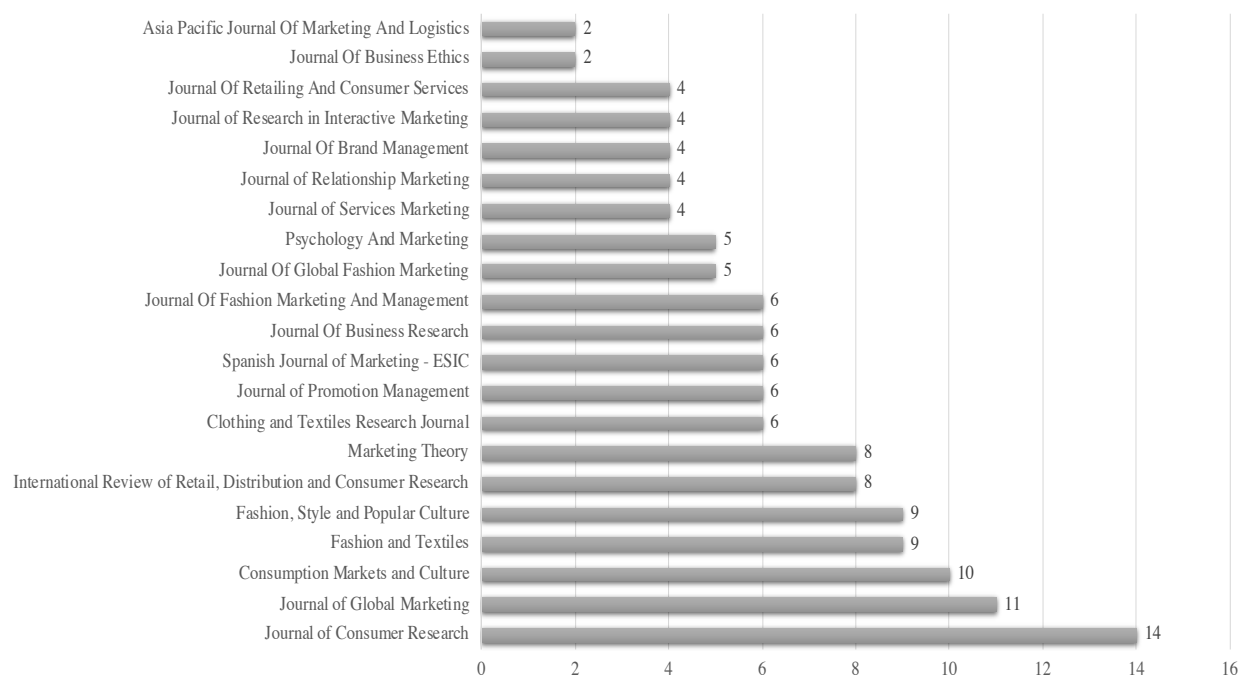
Source: Author's elaboration

2.5.2. Authors and national universities

Regarding the authors of the 166 articles, they are affiliated to different places, based on the geographical location of the first author. Most contributions come from the USA, UK and India, whereas there is a lack of research on Latin America and Africa (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5. First author's country of origin
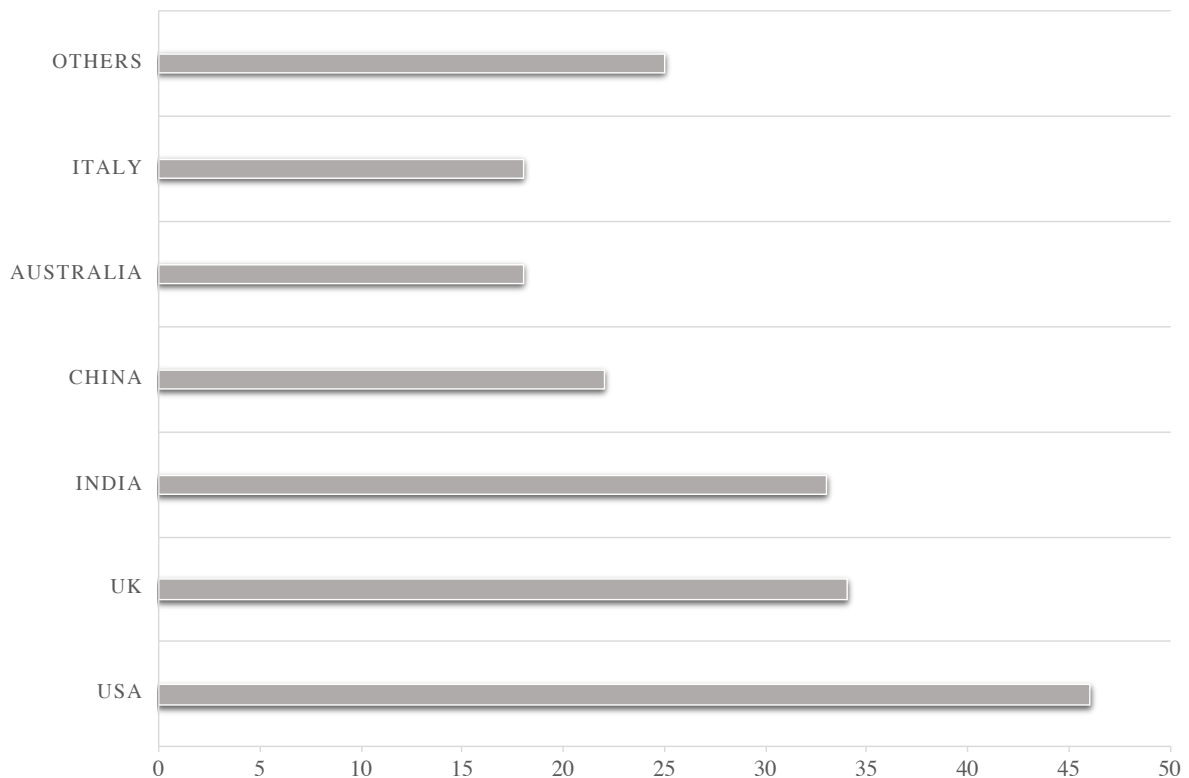
Source: Author's elaboration

2.6. TCM Approach

2.6.1. Theory

Our literature review highlights the relevance of four core theories, the theory of leisure class (e.g., Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020; Gao et al., 2016; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012), social comparison theory (e.g., Eastman et al., 2018; Makkar & Yap, 2018; Ono et al., 2020), consumer culture theory (e.g., Kim & Kwon, 2017; Ko et al., 2019; Turunen & Pöyry, 2019) and motivation need theory(e.g., Bonetti, 2014; D'Angelo et al., 2019; Kapferer & Michaut-

Denizeau, 2020). Several studies combined theories to support this type of research (Bonetti, 2014; Ko et al., 2019; Srivastava et al., 2016; Turunen & Pöyry, 2019). For instance, social comparison theory and consumer culture theory are two of the most combined, when researching about luxury and fashion.

Within the context of luxury fashion, researchers have introduced other theories, such as social-identity theory (Kessous & Valette-Florence, 2019; Strebinger & Rusetski, 2016). Social identity theory states that individuals desire to enter specific social groups, in order to increase their self-esteem. Until recently, only social comparison theory was more associated with luxury and fashion. Figure 2.6 shows the most cited theories in the articles.

Figure 2.6. Most cited theories

Social-Identity Theory
13%

Theory of Leisure Class
30%

Consumer Culture
Theory
11%

Motivation Need Theory
18%

Social Comparison
Theory
28%
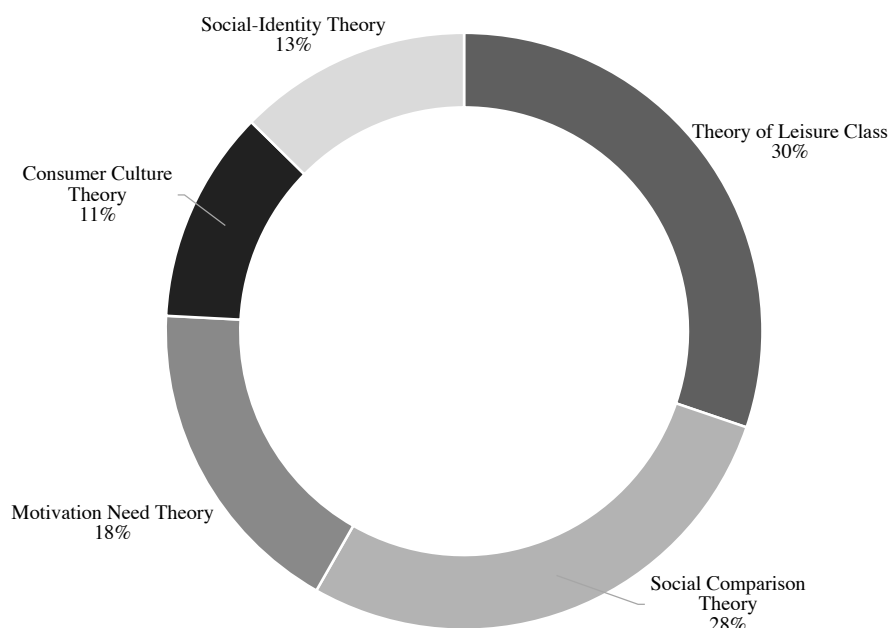
Source: Author's elaboration

2.6.2. Characteristics

As previously stated, the main goal of the systematic literature review is to gather different perspectives of constructs and concepts linked to the research topic. Therefore, before introducing the conceptual findings from this analysis, it is important to summarize the main constructs gathered.

In these studies, several constructs are most referred to by the authors, these being status consumption (Kessous & Valette-Florence, 2019; Septianto et al., 2021), word-of-mouth (Anggraeni & Rachmanita, 2015; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019), brand familiarity (Mrad et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2020; Bellezza & Berger, 2020), purchase intention (Jain & Mishra, 2020; Mostafa & Arnaout, 2020), conspicuous consumption (Brandão et al., 2019; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012) and desire (Loureiro, Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020; Phau et al., 2013).

Specifically, the authors mainly use the following constructs as independent variables, impulsive buying (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012), brand loyalty (Parrott et al., 2015), status consumption (Goldsmith et al., 2010) and brand familiarity (Rahman et al., 2020); as dependent variables, word of mouth (Kohrs, 2020), desire (Loureiro, Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020), purchase intention (Jain & Mishra, 2020) and brand love (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019) and as moderators, age (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016), gender (Jain & Mishra, 2018), country of origin (Makkar & Yap, 2018), conspicuous consumption (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012), bandwagon effect (Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016) and materialism (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Several authors also use brand familiarity as a moderator (Mrad et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2017).

In our final pool of papers, several authors explored different constructs regarding luxury. Luxury being the central construct, several constructs are associated throughout the set of articles (see Figure 2.7), for instance, conspicuous consumption, hedonic consumption, brand familiarity, brand coolness, status, and materialism. However, it is important to state that several concepts emerged from the set of articles.

Figure 2.7. Most cited constructs
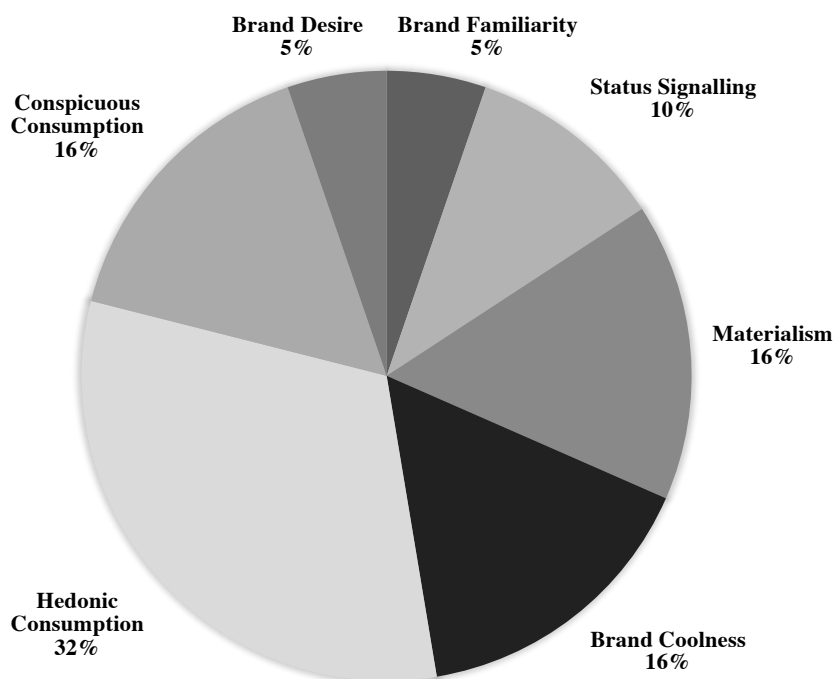
Source: Author's elaboration

2.6.3. Methodology

This stage is of major importance, as it analyses the most used research methodologies in the set of articles (see Figure 2.8). Besides identifying the most common research methodologies, it also provides understanding for researchers who wish to extend knowledge in this field. Researchers are able to use prior methodological practices as a guide to their own research and implement a new methodological approach to complement their studies.

The most common methodology is quantitative, through a survey. Most authors used a sample of between 150 and 400 participants (Chang et al., 2016; Loureiro, de Plaza, et al., 2020; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012; Rahman et al., 2020; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Structural equation modelling is the most commonly used analytical method in the literature (e.g., Amatulli et al., 2020; Brandão et al., 2019; Gao et al., 2016; Septianto et al., 2021). Empirical methodology is also frequently used (Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016), with experiments (Barnes et al., 2013; H. Y. Kim & Kwon, 2017; Mrad et al., 2020; Phau et al., 2013) also being

found. Also noted is the use of MANOVA/ANOVA (Davis & Barbara Dyer, 2012) and regression analysis (Wang & Song, 2013).

The qualitative approach emerged in exploratory studies using in-depth interviews in most studies (Barnes et al., 2013). Focus groups can also be found (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Parrott et al., 2015). New approaches, such as netnography, are also of interest (Alexander, 2019; Loureiro, Jiménez-Barreto, et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2017) and studies using observation of participants (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Hietanen et al., 2020; Ko et al., 2019; Kohrs, 2020). Conceptual papers are also common (Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016), while the mixed approach usually considers surveys and interviews (Amatulli et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2016; Jebarajakirthy et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2017).

Figure 2.8. Most used research methodologies
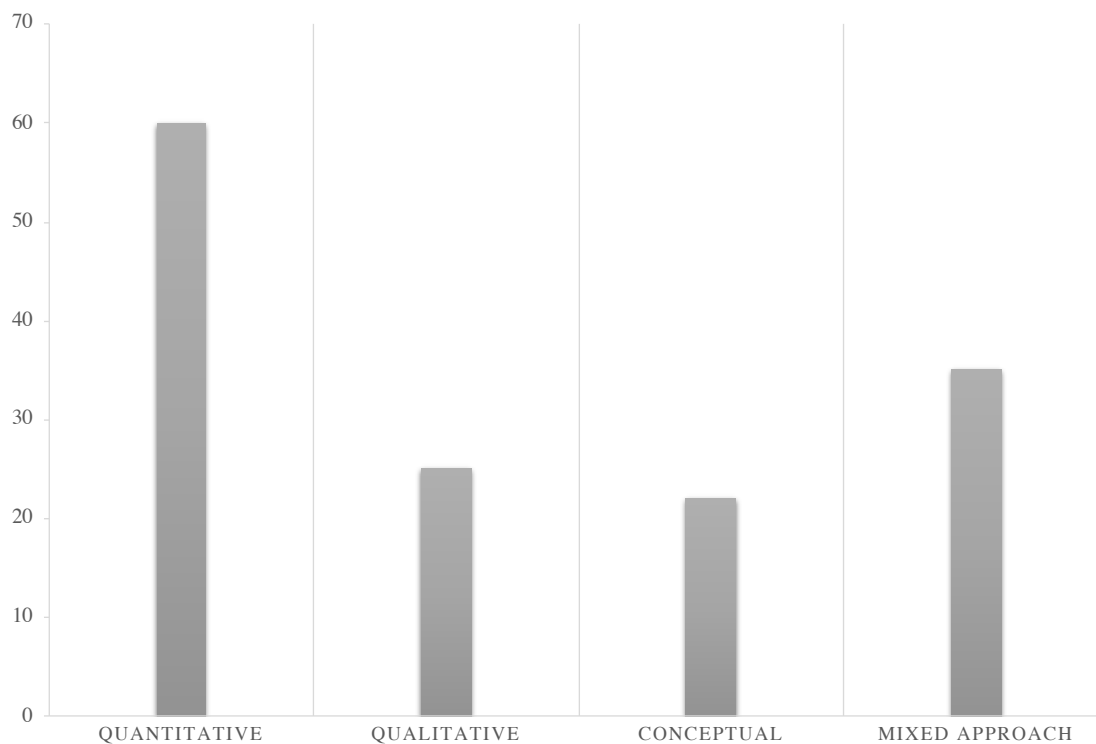
Source: Author's elaboration

2.7. Conceptual findings from systematic literature review

2.7.1.   Main findings

A systematic literature review provides us with several perspectives of the same central construct. Besides revealing gaps in the literature, it guides our study, enabling us to summarize, identify and discuss findings related to our field of research.

2.7.2.   Luxury consumption

As stated by Ko, Costello, and Taylor (2017, p. 2), luxury brands are largely based on consumer perceptions about product attributes such as price or quality. According to the authors, "a luxury brand is a branded product or service that consumers perceive to be high quality, offer authentic value, have prestigious image, be worthy of a premium price and be capable of inspiring a deep connection with the consumer". The consumption of these brands allows consumers to reveal their identity, their values and is a way to reflect how they feel. Ko, Costello, and Taylor (2017) pointed out various motives for buying luxury brands, such as authenticity (Beverland, 2006) and hedonic pleasure (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009), as pleasure is predominant in hedonic consumption. Luxury brands are related to conspicuous consumption and hedonic consumption; pride (McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy, 2014); country of origin (Godey et al., 2012) and culture, and status is of major importance for consumers during these consumption episodes.

Uniqueness, self-confidence, and pride play a very important role in luxury consumption (Makkar & Yap, 2018). Luxury shopping is more hedonic than functional, thus hedonic pleasure is very important, suggesting once again the importance of emotions during hedonic and luxury consumption. Pride and feeling important (status) are two of the most important emotions felt during luxury consumption (Kim, Park, Lee & Choi, 2016).

In the literature on hedonic, conspicuous and luxury consumption, authors suggest emotions play a very important role as these are a crucial component of consumers' self-image, which is directly linked to status and what consumers aspire to (Janssen, Vanhamme, & Leblanc, 2017). Pleasure and enjoyment are examples of important emotions during consumption episodes. Emotive arousal is a major motivation for this type of consumption (Makkar & Yap, 2018). Several authors (e.g., Berger & Ward 2010; Makkar & Yap, 2018) agree that status-oriented consumers are willing to pay a premium price for luxury items, as these items are used to show how they feel about themselves. The authors suggest that feeling

important and unique influences consumers during consumption, leading them to buy and repeat these kinds of behaviours.

According to Tynan, McKechnie and Chhuon (2010), luxury brands are high quality, expensive and non-essential goods, perceived to be exclusive, prestigious, and authentic. In addition, they seem to offer high levels of symbolic and hedonic values through consumers' experiences. It is important to note that luxury brands, as stated in the definition, are perceived to be authentic (a dimension measured by brand coolness, which will be dealt with later on). Vigneron and Johnson (2004) also say that luxury brands are associated with conspicuousness, uniqueness, and quality, as well as being part of an extended self.

2.7.3. Hedonic consumption

According to Hirschman and Holbrook (1982, p. 92) hedonic consumption concerns "the facets of buying behaviour that relate to multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products" and it is a way in which consumers seek pleasure and enjoyment. As Alba and Williams (2012) point out, pleasure is an important component of hedonic consumption. Moreover, a vital component of hedonic consumption is whether the experience of consuming the product or event is pleasurable or not (Alba & Williams, 2012). Hedonic reactions to aesthetic features can overwhelm the utilitarian aspect, independent of the type of product, as consumers develop a preference for a more aesthetically pleasing product when they have the choice.

Businesses strive to achieve consumer satisfaction, as stated by Alba and Williams (2012), and satisfaction is reached when the product meets or exceeds utilitarian criteria and loyalty increases when the product exceeds hedonic criteria. However, the authors also point out that expectations influence pleasure during the consumption episode. Pleasure is diminished through repeated experience, which is why consumers seek variety. The literature suggests that a hedonic approach may take research further, comprehending the facets of consumption experience (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).

2.7.4. Conspicuous consumption

The concept of conspicuous consumption was introduced in 1899 by Veblen (Memushi, 2013). Veblen (1899) claimed that conspicuous consumption had existed since the earliest civilizations, where a culture of power being associated with material display (e.g., large quantities of food, women decorated in jewellery) was already established. Therefore, this type

of consumption behaviour is not a recent phenomenon. Veblen (1899) defined conspicuous consumption as the act of purchasing luxury goods and services for the purpose of displaying one's economic power. Veblen argued that higher classes consumed conspicuously to form a differentiation between themselves and lower classes, so they could match the consumption patterns of individuals above them in the social hierarchy (Truong et al., 2011). Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, and Ghoshal (2011) add to the argument by reinforcing that individuals who engage in conspicuous consumption desire to communicate a unique self-image. Consequently, conspicuous consumers adopt certain types of behaviours in order to express their uniqueness, through products and services. For instance, some consumers, whatever their level of income, are willing to pay a premium for luxury products to enhance their status.

As already mentioned, wealth, culture and taste are important drivers of luxury consumption. Conspicuous consumers aim to demonstrate their wealth, uniqueness, power, and status through extravagant spending (Husic & Cicic, 2009; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Moreover, there is an association between conspicuous consumption and status consumption. It is important to clarify that status and conspicuous consumption are different concepts, as status consumption is defined as "the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize status both for the individual and surrounding others" (Eastman, Goldsmith & Flynn, 1999, p.43), and status consumption may be affected by interpersonal relationships. In the next point, social comparison theory will be addressed to develop this topic further.

2.7.5. Social comparison theory

It is already known that human beings are individuals with social needs. This means they need social interaction in their lives to feel complete. Social comparison theory states that people often compare themselves with others in order to improve, motivate and enhance a positive image for themselves (Tak, Parik, & Rishi, 2017). For instance, individuals usually determine their social and personal worth based on how others look at them and perceive them. According to Festinger (1954), individuals often compare themselves to others for self-improvement, self-evaluation, self-enhancement, and self-verification. Individuals may engage in comparison to enhance their self-esteem (with people inferior to them) or as a way to show similarities with a superior group (elite members).

According to Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, and Ghoshal (2011), people use luxury goods to enhance their image in the eyes of others. The literature refers to this concept as self-identity.

2.7.6.   Emotions and self-identity

As already mentioned, emotionally charged episodes recall memories, making luxury consumption unique. As suggested by Damasio (2004, p. 50), emotions are "bioregulatory reactions that aim at promoting directly or indirectly the sort of psychological states that secure not just survival, but survival regulated into the range that we, conscious and thinking creatures identify with well-being. Feelings are the mental representation of physiologic changes that occur during an emotion." In other words, emotions represent the fundamental foundation for feelings. Emotions are more observable, whereas feelings are more private.

Emotionally charged episodes tend to be memorable (Dasu & Chase, 2010, p. 5817), reinforcing the uniqueness of the luxury shopping experience. Through better interpretation of the role of emotion during luxury decision-making, brands can better target their audience using emotional appeal. According to Kim, Park, Lee, and Choi (2016, p. 5818), it is possible for consumers to feel opposite feelings simultaneously. Throughout luxury consumption, diversified emotions may arise, happiness and anger being the most common couple of feelings acting together (Kim, Park, Lee, & Choi, 2016, p. 5814). It is valuable to discover factors that trigger negative emotions and attempt to eliminate that influence.

Therefore, it is important to reveal and interpret the complex emotions relating to the consumption experience including their role in self-identity. Individual mentalities are shifting, consumers prioritize socially responsible firms; they prefer to purchase goods locally or produce them themselves; quality over quantity. Accordingly, the tendency is not to purchase things but non-visible goods that promote self-growth, for instance healthcare or education (Husic & Cicic, 2009). Taking this into account, emotions have a notable role considering self-identity is associated with inconspicuous consumption. Self-identity can be defined as the understanding people have of themselves, formed of personality attributes, occupation, skills, and hobbies (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi 2012; Tracy & Robins 2007). It reveals the type of person that engages in conspicuous consumption or prefers to choose a brand perceived as being cool (Kim, Park, Lee, & Choi, 2016).

Decoding the luxury consumer and understanding the motives behind engaging in consumption is the first step to successfully satisfy their needs. As new trends arise, it is crucial

to gather as many details as possible, for better understanding of consumers and to provide an offer that satisfies them. For the purpose of this study, one important concept to take into account is brand coolness. Through identifying a luxury brand's level of coolness, one can better understand if coolness is a motive behind consumption or if it is associated with a specific type of consumer.

2.7.7. Brand coolness

According to Warren et al (2019), the definition of coolness embraces four features of the cool concept: coolness is subjective, has a positive valence, is autonomous and is dynamic. Consumers use the same concept to define firstly, brands that their small in-group considers cool but are not yet popular, and secondly, brands that the general population is aware of and considers cool. For Warren (2010), there a distinction between niche cool and mass cool. Niche cool brands are perceived to be cool by a particular subculture, but not adopted by the masses, while mass cool are brands perceived to be cool by the general population.

The coolness of a brand is increased when the brand is associated with being desirable, autonomous, rebellious, high status and popular. Brand coolness is subdivided in dimensions, which increase or not the perception of a brand being cool. Why is this important? Because brand coolness influences the extent to which consumers have a more favourable attitude towards the brand, their willingness to pay and willingness to discuss the brand with others.

Therefore, how luxury brands can be perceived as cool is very important for research. For brands to be considered luxury, they must have several luxury features such as: prestige, high quality, exclusivity, uniqueness, high price, etc. Furthermore, they must incorporate emotional values and conspicuous hedonic features (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Finally, the main goal of the research is to understand the relationship between brand coolness and luxury brands.

2.7.8. Future research suggestions

Overall, the systematic literature review process gives better understanding of the topic of luxury consumption and fashion. Taking into consideration the academic and market relevance of the topic, our goal is to bring together previous studies in the context of luxury fashion consumption to consolidate that research, establish connections and identify gaps.

The systematic literature review enabled us to analyse the emerging concepts in the topic, explore the topic in different countries and contexts, gather different methodologies used to measure it and find gaps to be addressed. This research is concerned with updating and

developing innovative studies in the field of luxury consumption and fashion. In this context, a fairly recent construct named brand coolness is emerging. A first gap refers to exploring luxury consumption further in the fashion context, and a second gap to exploring the association between luxury fashion consumption and brand coolness. Therefore, our aim is to explore how brand coolness dimensions can be associated with luxury fashion goods, if brand coolness is a motive behind luxury fashion consumption and more importantly to contribute to the literature, as this topic is recent with a lack of detailed research. Hence, there is a call for more research on how the ten dimensions of brand coolness work in different contexts and what the antecedents and outcomes could be (Warren et al., 2019). To bridge these gaps, we will adopt a mixed methodology, following netnography, experimentation and structural equation modelling.

Chapter 3: A Netnographic Approach To Luxury Brands On Instagram.

3.1. Purpose of netnography

Consumers treat themselves to luxury goods/services to celebrate positive life changes. With Millennials and Gen Z being the largest and fastest-growing consumer segments for luxury, this presents an immense opportunity for luxury brands to connect and engage with their customers (Abdullah et al., 2020). In particular, the digital transformation of luxury is essential today, when workforces and consumers alike are in confinement (Nicola et al., 2020). Even though luxury brands were resistant to the internet, the luxury consumer is connected in the digital world. In order to create a meaningful relationship between luxury brand and consumer, being online is crucial to the brands' success. However, it is important to enhance that social media, websites, and e-commerce, are digitals tools, which need to be adapted to a global online and offline strategy (Chevalier & Gutsatz, 2020).

Prior literature and most recent research (Arienti & Sheehan, 2020) argue that the luxury consumer is changing, and so it is very important for luxury brands to serve them as uniquely as possible. Furthermore, the luxury consumer is influenced by social media, as they tend to search for the latest trends, collections and engage with their favourite luxury brand. Taking this into account, netnography research is very important for better understanding of luxury brands, how they can meet their consumers' expectations and enhance engagement. A netnography study concerning Instagram will be conducted with six luxury fashion brands, so we can understand the different online communication approaches of each one.

The goal is to aggregate consumer reviews, comments, interactions, and associations on Instagram (of high-end luxury brands). First, the top fifteen fashion luxury brands were identified. According to the Brand Finance - Brand Directory (2021), those brands are: Porsche, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Chanel, Hermès, Ferrari, Rolex, Dior, COACH, Estée Lauder, Tiffany & Co., Guerlain, Burberry and Prada. Within this group, according to the focus of the research, six fashion luxury brands were selected: Prada, Christian Dior, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Burberry and Gucci.

3.2. Research planning

Netnography is an online research method with its origin in ethnography. The main objective of this tool is to understand social interaction in the digital communications context. According to Kozinet (2010), netnography is based on observing participants' online behaviour, using computer communications as a data source. The main goal is to gather ethnographic representation and understand behavioural patterns. The netnography technique is a marketing research tool, which uses publicly available information on online forums, social media and other online platforms (Kozinet, 2002) for better understanding of the needs of relevant online consumers groups and what influences their decision-making.

Kozinet (2015) suggests twelve phases to conduct netnography. However, for this research, the twelve phases will be adapted from Kozinet (2010) to a six-phase process:

1. Research planning,
2. Community identification and selection,
3. Participant-observation and data collection,
4. Data interpretation,
5. Ensuring ethical standards,
6. Research representation.

For this thesis, netnography is believed to be a tool which will provide important information about consumers. The goal is to aggregate consumer reviews, comments, interactions, and associations in social media (Instagram of high-end luxury brands), blogs, websites (Farfetch, MyTheresa and Net-a-Porter) and online platforms to understand consumers better. It will focus specifically on high-end luxury brands.

Considering the main objectives of the research, we started by identifying the top ten luxury brands. The main purpose of the netnography is to gather consumer thoughts about these brands. We also aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How are luxury brands communicating on Instagram?
2. How are luxury brands connecting with luxury consumers (e.g., Instagram and online shopping – e-commerce), during the pandemic?

According to Moore (2019), the top ten luxury brands are: Balenciaga, Prada, Armani, Christian Dior, Tiffany & Co., Rolex, Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Gucci. As for digital

platforms, according to the literature, the most important are Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and own websites. We will focus on Instagram.

Instagram is a type of social media, classified as a visual platform, in which a picture gets five times higher engagement compared to other social media platforms. Fashion and Instagram is a match made in heaven, as fashion is completely related to creating trends and Instagram explores and makes trends public and viral (Russman & Svensson, 2016). Today, luxury is undergoing a digital transformation, and Instagram is one of the tools used to help in this transformation (e.g., Smith, 2014; Russman & Svensson, 2016). Instagram enables messaging, sharing posts, visual images, community, celebrity and consumption, all in the same digital place. It has been enhanced over time by improved analytics, targeted advertising, and the explosion of influencer marketing. This social media allows sharing a photo, a video, a reel (similar to TikTok feature, a video of 60 seconds), IGTV (similar to YouTube and allowing videos of more than 1 hour), Instagram Stories (similar to snapchat, a feature which allows sharing several photos or a video of 10 seconds, and is available for 24 hours), Instagram Shop (allowing direct purchase of an item from the page, connected directly to the website) and Magazine (in which the brand can organize several posts in a category-styled digital magazine). Instagram is used by more than 700 million users, as it is more appealing than Facebook and YouTube, due to the digital tools offered by the social media app (Smith, 2014).

3.3. Community identification and selection: brand coolness and luxury

Warren (2010) claims there a distinction between niche cool and mass cool. Niche cool brands are perceived to be cool by a particular subculture, but not adopted by the masses, while mass cool brands are perceived to be cool by the general population.

The coolness of a brand is increased when the brand is associated with being desirable, autonomous, rebellious, high status and popular. Brand coolness is subdivided in dimensions, which increase or not the perception of a brand being cool. Why is this important? Because brand coolness influences the extent to which consumers have a more favourable attitude towards the brand, their willingness to pay and willingness to discuss the brand with others.

Therefore, how luxury brands can be perceived as cool is very important for netnography, as it will act as a guide and first step. For brands to be considered luxury, they must have several luxury features such as: prestige, high quality, exclusivity, uniqueness, high price, etc.

According to Ko, Costello, and Taylor (2017, p. 406), "a luxury brand is a branded product or service that consumers perceive to be high quality, offer authentic value, have prestigious image, be worthy of a premium price and be capable of inspiring a deep connection with the consumer". Considering this definition, luxury brands can be associated with the following dimensions of brand coolness: desirability, high status, popular and authenticity. Therefore, for the present netnography, the stated brands' coolness will be taken into consideration and will orient the whole analysis.

Fox Business (2019) identifies the top 10 luxury brands as Balenciaga, Prada, Armani, Christian Dior, Tiffany & Co., Rolex, Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Gucci. For the purpose of our research, six brands were selected: Prada, Christian Dior, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Burberry and Gucci.

3.3.1 Louis Vuitton

Louis Vuitton was a French designer. At only 16 years old, in 1837 he opened his own workshop at 4 Rue Neuve-des-Capucines near the Place Vendome. His originality quickly brought him success, meaning he had to expand operations. In 1859, the Asnières atelier was opened with 20 employees (in 1900 there were nearly 100 and by 1914 there were 225). The original atelier was expanded, with the addition of the Vuitton family residence, where products are still crafted today. The family home is part of a private museum and the Asnières workshop is where 170 craftsmen create leather goods and orders for clients around the world.

In memory of the first place, Louis Vuitton has a collection of handbags named "Capucines".

Maison Louis Vuitton has a large range of luxury products for men and women: fashion, ready-to-wear, accessories, shoes, exclusive fragrances, travel items and handbags. The luxury brand also presents a range of home products, such as candles, decorations, and furniture.

Louis Vuitton's best-selling product is the Speedy Bandouliere 25 handbag. The brand is popular for its three patterns of Monogram Canvas, Damier Ebene and Damier Azur.

According to the Garrison group, the Louis Vuitton segment is named Actualizers, and are people aged 30-50. Actualizers are determined to get whatever they want, they are perfectionists, know what they want to achieve and are successful in what they do. Besides, actualizers like premium brands and keep up to date, being typically the first people to purchase a new product.

3.3.2. Prada

Prada originates in Italy. It was in 1913 that Mario Prada opened an exclusive store in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, selling luxury items in several categories (from handbags to jewellery). Prada quickly became a favourite of the aristocracy and most stylish members of the haute bourgeoisie in Europe. In 1919, Prada became the official supplier of the Italian Royal Family. The House of Prada became one of the most coveted brands in the fashion world by 1990.

More than a luxury brand, Prada stands out as a family brand. Miuccia Prada (daughter of Luisa Prada) and Patrizio Bertelli married in 1987 and are at the helm of the family business. Besides the Prada brand, Miu Miu (founded by Miuccia Prada), Car Shoe and Pasticceria Marchesi are other luxury brands belonging to the House of Prada.

The House of Prada offers exclusive fragrances, ready-to-wear, accessories, handbags, shoes and fashion items for both men and women.

Prada's best seller is the Re-Edition handbag and its exclusive travel bag.

The House of Prada group belongs to the Peacock segment. These people are extremely focused on themselves, very often noticeable in the crowd. They want to be perceived as confident and love to be the centre of attention. Furthermore, they usually have a high level of education, and will do anything to reach a successful career. They are loyal to their brands, being trendy and stylish.

3.3.3. Gucci

It was in Florence, Italy, in 1921 that Guccio Gucci founded the luxury brand Gucci. Primarily, Gicco focused on selling travel items, and branched into equestrian equipment which was of major importance for British aristocrats. The brand started to grow with Gucci's sons, Aldo, Vasco and Rodolfo. It was Aldo who introduced pigskin as the signature house material in 1947, after World War II. As the years passed, Gucci gained more and more fame, until Tom Ford decided to become the fashion house's Creative Director in 1994, being known for "revitalizing Gucci".

Besides expensive handbags, exclusive fragrances, ready-to-wear and shoes, Gucci offers a novel range of beauty products, including make-up and skincare.

Gucci's best-selling product is the Marmont handbag and the GG belt. Gucci was the first brand to introduce the wafer leather pattern, another reason for its popularity.

As for the target group, Gucci's segment is called Hedonists, aged 18-30. Specifically, they are people who are outgoing, love to change and are very concerned about how they look. Hedonists think labels are important to improve their image and they are impulsive purchasers.

3.3.4. Dior

Founded by Christian Dior, this fashion house was established in December 1946 at 30 Avenue Montaigne, Paris. By the mid-1950s Maison Dior was a highly respected fashion empire. After Christian Dior's death in 1957, Yves Saint Laurent kept his legacy alive until he was asked to join the French army.

The brand continued to grow, until in 1995 the famous Chouchou bag was created and offered to Lady Diana, with the bag being described as "iconic and legendary".

Dior sells accessories, fashion items such as handbags, shoes and ready-to-wear, exclusive fragrances, make-up, and skincare.

The best-selling product is the Lady Dior handbag.

Dior's target segment is called Chardonnay. These people are very active internet users, love to share their life on Instagram and Facebook, and frequently use dating apps. Very open-minded and energetic, aware of fashion and trends, they prefer quality to quantity. They are mainly attracted by aspirational advertising and not attracted by flashy, large logos, preferring a simplistic approach.

3.3.5. Chanel

Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel founded the House of Chanel in 1909, at 160 Boulevard Malesherbes.

In 1915-1917, according to Harper's Bazaar, the garments of Le Maison Chanel, were on every buyer's list. After World War I and following the fashion trends of the 1920s, the company produced beaded dresses – known as the Chanel Suit. After that, the brand continued its journey following World War II, until Coco Chanel died at age 87, in 1971. Thereafter, in 1983 Karl Lagerfeld took over as chief designer, and during the 80s, more than 40 Chanel boutiques opened worldwide.

In February 2019, Karl Lagerfeld died at age 85, and Virginie Viard became the new Creative Director.

Nowadays House of Chanel is owned by Alain Wertheimer and Gérard Wertheimer.

Chanel offers a range of accessories, fashion items such as handbags, shoes and ready-to-wear, exclusive fragrances, make-up, and skincare.

One of the most iconic and best-selling Chanel products is the Boy Bag. Chanel's target group is called Balancers. Ambitious, yet balanced, balancers are very intellectual people, who aim to reach the top of their careers. Smart shoppers, and with high incomes, balancers do not mind paying extra for something they want.

3.3.6. Burberry

Thomas Burberry is the designer behind the luxury brand. As a 21-year-old in Basingstoke, his main goal was to protect people from the British weather. In 1888 the first Gabardine was patented, being breathable and waterproof. Since then, Burberry has become associated with the British family and become known internationally as well. Her Majesty the Queen, Queen Elizabeth II grants Burberry a royal warrant as a weatherproofed material and it has a warrant from His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as an outfitter. In 2000 Burberry opened its first store on Bond Street and Christopher Bailey was appointed Design Director.

The luxury house has faced many challenges, and undergone restructuring. Due to the external market, customer behaviour and a transition period, the brand presented low profits in 2015. After that, Burberry embraced digital platforms, and started blurring the line between its physical and digital presence. In 2018 it was the first luxury brand to make its fashion show products available for purchase and the results were quite promising. Burberry was able to turn itself around and even double its profits in the past five years.

Burberry supplies accessories, fashion items such as handbags, shoes and ready-to-wear, exclusive fragrances, make-up, and skincare.

Burberry's best-seller is the gabardine (trench coat).

Burberry focuses on customers who search for classic styles in a modern perspective. They are lifestyle-oriented consumers, who like old British classics in a modern perspective. Burberry is an example of a luxury brand which joins luxury and functionality. The Burberry

target segment loves to stand out, prefers to display the brand patterns and are very loyal. They like routines and feel more confident when wearing a luxury accessory.

3.4. Data Interpretation and Results

All data were gathered and observed during the Covid-19 pandemic between June 1st 2020 and January 1st 2021. The results of each brand will be described in three stages:

1- **Overall**: where data collection is represented by six months of online communication for every brand,

2- **Specific**: analysing each brand communication between Christmas and New Year's Eve, in December 2020,

3- **Comparison**: where brands' communication is compared.

We follow Russmann and Svensson (2016) to analyse Instagram communication, in which the authors group perception, image management, integration and interactivity to be measured. Perception measures image and video posting, and includes perspective, broadcasting, and mobilization. Perspective concerns professional or selfie-like photos, in which the authors coded the photos as official photos of the organization, snapshot or selfie context, or not applicable. Broadcasting concerns informative, factual or performance posts. We coded posting as broadcasting, not broadcasting or balanced/ambivalent if not evident. Mobilization refers to the brand being focused on mobilizing its audience. The posts are coded as mobilizing (more than 50% mobilized a character), not mobilizing (less than 50% mobilized a character) and balanced/ambivalent if not clear.

As for image management, personalization, privatization, and celebrities will be analysed. Images influence how individuals see products and services. Personalization is coded as primarily carried by one or more single individual – personalized, and primarily carried by many people or those that do not show any people – not personalized. Privatization is coded as professional context or privatized/personal context. Celebrities is coded as celebrity visible and not visible. If any of the variables is not clear, it is coded as balanced/ambivalent.

Integration measures whether Instagram is integrated in a communication mix using hybridity, shared content, and campaign reference. For hybridity, posts are coded as explicit offline media reference or explicit new media reference (hashtag). If there is no explicit reference, the coding will be no explicit reference. For shared content, coding is not shared or

shared if posts are posted offline or in any other social media. Campaign reference can be explicit campaign references (hashtags) or no explicit campaign reference.

Interactivity is measured by content of captions and comments, negative vs positive tonality and reciprocity. Captions and comments refer to comments with intrinsic and without intrinsic value. Russmann and Svensson (2016) state that emojis are used to display the mood, where comments with intrinsic value have relevant information, and without intrinsic value if the comment is without any information. Negative and positive tonality are distinguished as negative if this displays pessimism, conflicts and criticism, while comments showing approval, pleasantness and success are evaluated as positive. If posts are neither negative nor positive, the coding is neutral/ambivalent. Reciprocity refers to the brand or users reacting to people's comments or not, with coding being related to a comment or not related to a comment.

3.4.1. Louis Vuitton

In its communication strategy, Louis Vuitton commonly uses photos and videos, and has a good presence online. Regarding the brand's engagement, Louis Vuitton has an engagement rate of 0.18%, an average of 73,480.000 likes and 257.95 comments.

Louis Vuitton Instagram communication has multiple types of posts, including photos, instastories, videos, IGTV and Reels. It includes not only fashion items, but handbags, ready-to-wear, fragrances and includes not only product-related posts but also some associated iconic people. Its posts enhance several sensations, as Instagram is very visual. Its feed involves the consumer in several senses, being engaging, original and inspirational. Therefore, the luxury brand is stable in its engagement. One important feature of the Instagram algorithm is to keep posting to create more engagement, as perceived, with Louis Vuitton sharing several posts on the same day.

On October 5th Louis Vuitton was part of the Paris Fashion Week, showing on October 6th + 47,925 followers and + 15 posts.

3.4.2. Gucci

Regarding the brand's engagement, Gucci has an engagement rate of 0.15%, an average of 61,321.90 likes and 193.35 comments.

Analysis of Gucci's Instagram reveals that Gucci shares the brand values exactly. For instance, the posts are all very colourful, and the feed has completely different patterns, colours, people

and styles. It is a funny Instagram, but with elegance, and all the posts have a hint of fashion. Gucci usually shares two posts per day, more photos than other Instagram features.

On July 17th Gucci was part of the Milan Fashion Week, showing on July 18th + 36,087 followers and + 17 posts.

3.4.3. Burberry

Burberry has an engagement rate of 0.19%, an average of 33,023.70 likes and 115.70 comments.

Burberry's communication is very simple and practical. Completely focused on the Burberry pattern and product-centred. The brand does not explore Instagram features and usually shares 3 to 4 photos per day.

On September 17th Burberry was part of the London Fashion Week, showing on September 17th + 11,489 followers and + 9 posts. On 18th September + 8496 followers and + 8 posts.

3.4.4. Prada

Prada has an engagement rate of 0.30%, an average of 74,851.000 likes and 515 comments.

Prada is a very simple brand, following season after season, simple colours, iconic items, and communication corresponds to the brand's beliefs. Prada's Instagram feed is monochromatic, elegant, and fashion-centred, in the sense that it is completely product-centred, with posts being the same colour. Very specific and simple, exploring the product with the visible logo, Prada communication is very straightforward.

On July 14th Prada was part of the Milan Fashion Week, showing on July 16th + 33,773 followers and + 17 posts. On September 24th Milan Fashion Week, showing on 24th September + 31,605 followers and + 5 posts. 25th September + 5,383 followers and +1 post. 26th September + 18,552 followers and + 8 posts.

3.4.5. Dior

Dior has an engagement rate of 0.29%, an average of 96,750.60 likes and 393.25 comments.

Dior's communication is very elegant, with a multi-product approach. It explores the different universes of the luxury brand, using multiple colours that can be explored in the visual feed, multiple videos, photos, reels and IGTV. The luxury brand creates a group of posts, similar

to a magazine, with different chapters. Also, the brand explores the different stories of the products and the brand itself, with iconic products, sentences, and an inspirational note. Dior also shares several aspirational quotes throughout the Instagram feed, which are more women related.

On July 6th Dior was part of the Paris Haute Couture, showing on July 7th + 51,613 followers and + 10 posts. On 29th September it was part of Paris Fashion Week. On 2nd October + 79,429 followers and + 72 posts.

3.4.6. Chanel

Chanel has an engagement rate of 0.14%, an average of 58,884.30 likes and 246.45 comments.

Chanel's approach is very similar to Dior's, in the sense of being similar to a magazine with different chapters. For instance, the "Chanel Dreaming" group of posts, creating a story throughout the Instagram. It is clearly a classy, elegant and fashion-related communication approach, exploring all the brand's universes. Chanel's Instagram is very inspirational in the sense that it focuses a lot on pursuing one's dreams and inspiring people.

On July 7th Chanel was part of the Paris Haute Couture, showing on July 7th + 25,916 followers and + 20 posts, and on July 11th + 38,969 followers and + 27 posts.

Table 3.1. Brands' Instagram communication

GROUPS	VARIABLES	BURBERRY	DIOR	PRADA
PERCEPTION	**Perspective**	Official brand photo	Official brand photo	Official brand photo
	Broadcasting	Not broadcasting	Not broadcasting	Not broadcasting
	Mobilization	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent
IMAGE MANAGEMENT	**Personalization**	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent
	Privatization	Professional	Professional	Professional
	Celebrities	Celebrities visible	Celebrities visible	Celebrities visible
INTEGRATION	**Hybridity**	Explicit hashtag references, new media.	Explicit hashtags references, new media.	Explicit hashtags references, new media.
	Shared Content	No. Originally from Instagram.	No. Originally from Instagram.	No. Originally from Instagram.
	Campaign Reference	Explicit references	Explicit references	Explicit references
INTERACTIVITY	**Content of caption and comments**	Emojis, intrinsic and not intrinsic values	Emojis, intrinsic and not intrinsic values	Emojis, intrinsic and not intrinsic values
	Negative vs Positive tonality	Positive	Positive	Positive
	Reciprocity	Other followers' reactions can be found.	Other followers' reactions can be found.	Other followers' reactions can be found.

Source: Author's elaboration (Russmann & Svenssson, 2016)

Table 3. 2. Brands' Instagram communication

GROUPS	VARIABLES	GUCCI	CHANEL	LOUIS VUITTON
PERCEPTION	**Perspective**	Official brand photo	Official brand photo	Official brand photo
	Broadcasting	Not broadcasting	Not broadcasting	Not broadcasting
	Mobilization	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent
IMAGE MANAGEMENT	**Personalization**	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent	Balanced/ambivalent
	Privatization	Professional	Professional	Professional
	Celebrities	Celebrities visible	Celebrities visible	Celebrities visible
INTEGRATION	**Hybridity**	Explicit hashtag references, new media.	Explicit hashtag references, new media.	Explicit hashtag references, new media.
	Shared Content	No. Originally from Instagram.	No. Originally from Instagram.	No. Originally from Instagram.
	Campaign Reference	Explicit references	Explicit references	Explicit references
INTERACTIVITY	**Content of caption and comments**	Emojis, intrinsic and not intrinsic values	Emojis, intrinsic and not intrinsic values	Emojis, intrinsic and not intrinsic values
	Negative vs Positive tonality	Positive	Positive	Positive
	Reciprocity	Other followers' reactions can be found.	Other followers' reactions can be found.	Other followers' reactions can be found.

Source: Author's elaboration (Russmann & Svensson, 2016)

3.5. Specific results: Christmas and New Year Communication – December 2020

All the luxury brands enhanced their communication during the month of December, and it seemed appropriate to study this in detail.

3.5.1. Louis Vuitton

Louis Vuitton follows a trend-driven approach in its Instagram communication. In December 2020, the brand embarked on very engaging communication, with appealing posts. During the whole month it posted different products from different collections, which seemed to be a way of showing consumers what the brand has to offer and give gift ideas. The feed colours were warm, hot tones, and the feed had a festive mood with gift wraps and products being unwrapped. Louis Vuitton was very focused on a gift giving mood until December 26. After Christmas, the communication started to change, and on January 1st 2021, the feed colours were in white tones, which seemed to be a way of communicating a fresh start for the brand and its users. After the difficult year of 2020, the brand was trying to communicate an image of hope. The hashtag regarding festivities was: #LVGifts.

Figure 3.1. Louis Vuitton Instagram

Source: Instagram Platform (2020)

3.5.2. Prada

Prada has a product-centred communication strategy. At Christmas, visually the brand is not communicating Christmas or festivities, except for the days of Christmas and New Year. Prada's efforts to communicate festivities is only perceived in their hashtags – #PradaGifts and #PradaHolidays20.

Figure 3.2. Prada Instagram
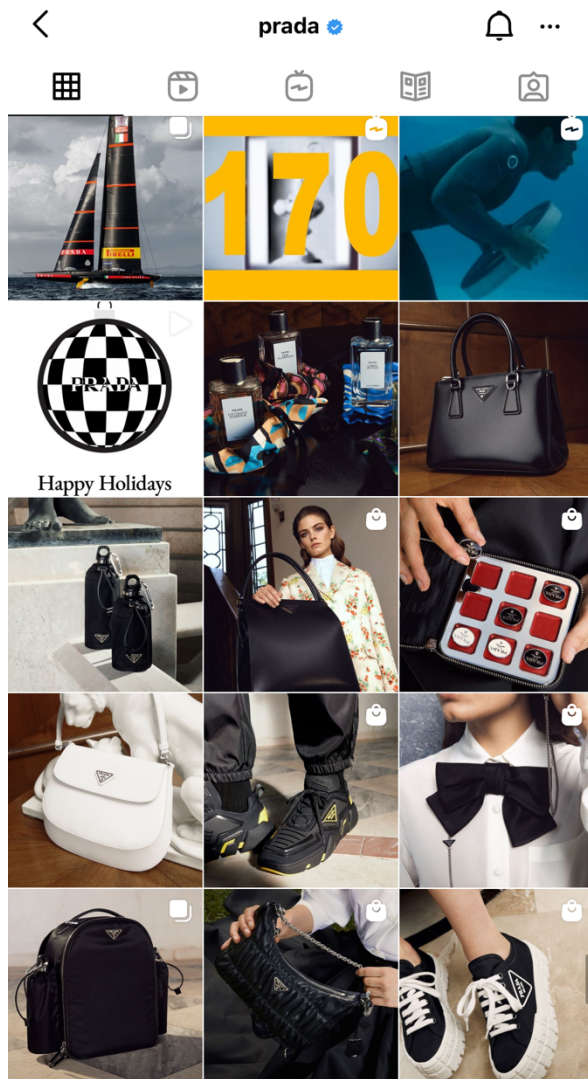
Source: Instagram Platform (2020)

3.5.3. Gucci

Gucci's Instagram feed during December 2020 was invaded with glitter posts, a festive mood and very colourful posts. From using common people in a happy mood, to product posts, Gucci's efforts were easily perceived. The main idea when analysing Gucci communication was parties, family, friends, happiness, and gift giving. The hashtag regarding festivities was: #GucciGift.

Figure 3.3. Gucci Instagram
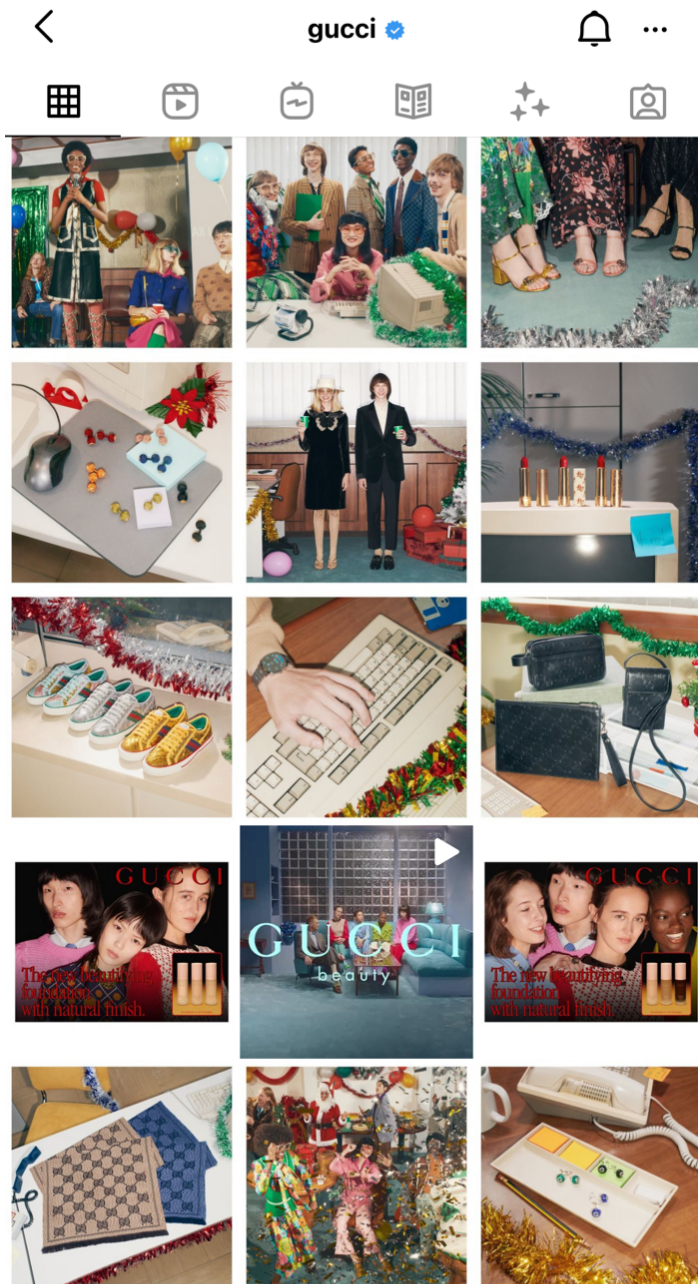
Source: Instagram Platform (2020)

3.5.4. Dior

Dior's communication was simple but very focused on holidays. Their colours changed and the feed is perceived to have a gift-giving mood, presenting several categories of products, from skincare and make-up to shoes and bags. It is visually perceived as a holiday mood feed, different from the rest of the year. The hashtags regarding festivities were: #DiorHoliday.

Figure 3.4. Louis Vuitton Instagram
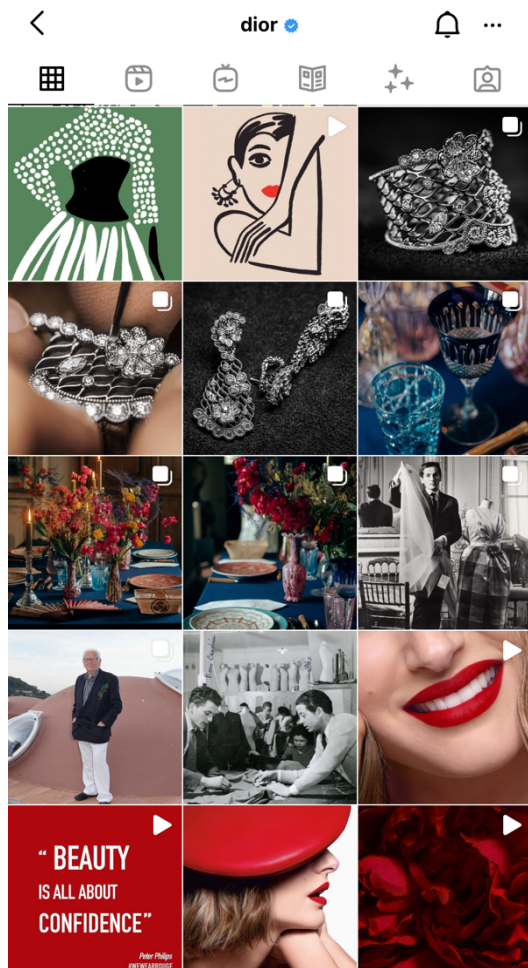
Source: Instagram Platform (2020)

3.5.5. Chanel

To celebrate Christmas, Chanel created "Chanel Dreaming", in which they communicate several gift ideas. Visually speaking it is well perceived that the brand is celebrating holidays in their feed. The hashtag regarding festivities was: #ChanelHoliday.

Figure 3.5. Chanel Instagram
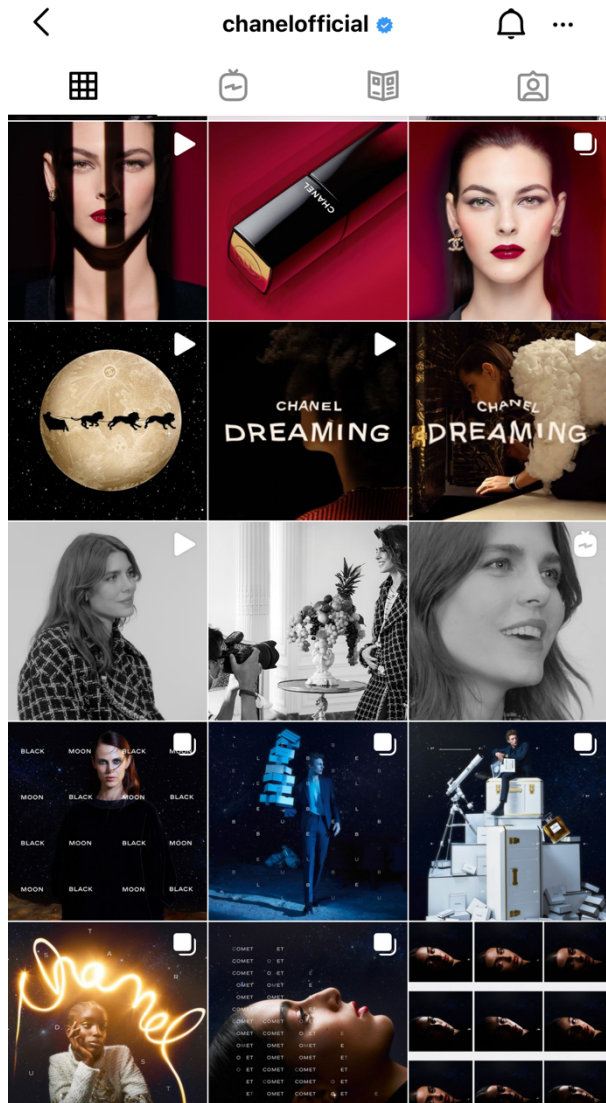
Source: Instagram Platform (2020)

3.5.6. Burberry

Burberry's communication is focused on their original pattern during festivities, following a similar strategy during the year. Visually speaking, the colours of the feed are warmer. Burberry follows a more product and brand-centred approach in their communication strategy. The hashtag regarding festivities was: #BurberryFestive.

Figure 3.6. Burberry Instagram
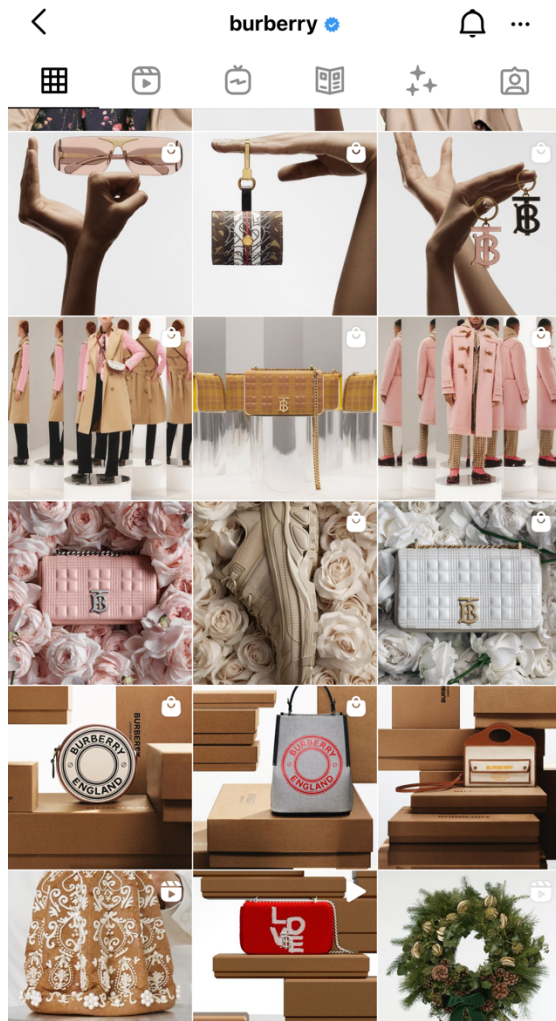
Source: Instagram Platform (2020)

3.3. Summary of the netnography results

The main goal of our netnography was to analyse five variables - number of followers, number of posts, average comments, average likes and engagement rate - across six luxury brands – Louis Vuitton, Prada, Gucci, Dior, Chanel and Burberry, over six months, from June 1st, 2020, to January 1st, 2021. Concerning our results, Chanel is the most followed brand (n = 42008659 followers), Prada is the brand with the highest average comments (n = 515 comments), Gucci is the brand with the most posts (n = 7352 posts) and Dior has the majority of likes (n = 96750.60 likes) and the highest engagement rate (n = 0.29%). Burberry has the lowest values for every variable analysed. Therefore, answering our first RQ.

We also analysed the online presence of each brand on its own website and on the luxury websites most referred to when buying luxury items. The most cited websites were

Farfetch, MyTheresa and Pret-a-Porter. All the analysed brands can be purchased online on their website and Farfetch, except for Louis Vuitton. MyTheresa and Pret-a-Porter have Gucci, Prada, and Burberry available for purchase. Our results demonstrate that consumers are aware of the luxury market, not only searching for brands, but also for e-commerce websites, where they can compare luxury brands. Thus, successfully answering our second RQ.

As for Instagram tools, all six brands explore Instagram TV (IGTV). The Instagram Shop tool is only used by Dior, Prada, and Burberry, while the Magazine tool is only used by Prada and Gucci. Reels and Instagram Filters are available for every brand except Chanel and Instagram Stories Highlights are available for every brand except for Chanel and Louis Vuitton.

3.4. Main conclusions

All the brands studied react positively to celebrations, Fashion Weeks, and other events. During Fashion Weeks, wherever they are held, all the brands gain followers and increase the engagement rate. As for other fashion-related events, all the brands also have positive reactions. Despite having different strategies, the six brands adapt their communication during holidays and national festivities – Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Eve. When launching new products or new collections, brands also increase their engagement, number of followers and number of likes. Creating partnerships with celebrities or influencers also increases followers and engagement, as well as organic influencer posts using designer products.

Secondly, this analysis reveals several similarities between the brands. For instance, Dior and Chanel are very similar in their communication, with a classic brand image; Louis Vuitton and Gucci have an identical communication strategy, creating a more party-related and happy brand image; Burberry and Prada are also similar in the way they communicate with their consumers, with a colder image, even in the colours chosen for their feed most of the time.

Thirdly, this six-month study identified each brand's communication focus (see Appendices 1 to 10). Louis Vuitton has a trend-driven approach, in which its communication is focused on what is trending in the season. Its brand posts are very focused on creating and following trends, with and without celebrities. Gucci is also trend-driven, in the sense that the brand is concerned about communication being trendy and fashionable. Both brands' communication reveals classic models, with seasonal adaptations. For example, for Louis Vuitton's speedy bag model in seasonal patterns, and the limited edition of the multi-pochette. For Gucci, the marmount model in glitter.

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Dior and Chanel follow a fashion-centred communication. The brands' posts include fashion show photos and brand icons. Not concerned about seasons, but more a classic communication approach. For example, Chanel has several posts regarding the Number 5 perfume, and Dior, the iconic Lady Dior bag.

Prada has a product-centred communication strategy. The majority of Prada posts include their logos, the most iconic products and fragrances. Burberry follows a similar approach, being product-centred. Burberry's focus is on its pattern, fashion products and models wearing Burberry.

3.5. Future research suggestions

Besides the relevant insights of our study, we identify several limitations and propose future studies to strengthen our results. Considering our results, it would be interesting to understand more fully the impact of culture on the digital communication approach. For instance, Prada and Gucci are Italian luxury brands, but their communication approach is different. On the other hand, Dior and Chanel are French brands and their communication is very similar. While Louis Vuitton is also a French brand, we can identify differences in communicating with their consumers, compared to Dior and Chanel. Burberry is a British brand, so does that impact communication? Does brand origin impact brands' communication and their digital results in terms of followers and engagement?

The netnography methodology is of great importance, given the number of online users. Following prior studies, the Instagram methodology could be used for more than one year, comparing the results in different years. Collecting data in different periods could lead to more credible insights. It would be interesting to repeat the study in 2021 and 2022.

The impact of digital influencers should also be studied in greater detail. For instance, measuring the impact of Chiara Ferragni (the most followed digital influencer/blogger), and Kim Kardashain wearing Louis Vuitton products on the luxury brand page.

Finally, it would also be important to study the same brands in different digital environments, for example, on Twitter, and compare the results on both social medias.

Chapter 4: Luxury Consumers in a Physical Environment

4.1. Purpose of the study

Taking into consideration the data collected in the netnography, we decided to conduct a study in a real-life setting. Following the same brands, we held six interviews with luxury managers and one focus group, at Avenida da Liberdade in Lisbon and El Corte Ingles, Lisbon, during the first week of January 2021.

Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Burberry, and Prada are located at Avenida da Liberdade in Lisbon. These luxury brands have their own stores, not being associated with any other brand in-store. However, Burberry can also be found at El Corte Ingles. Dior can be found inside the Fashion Clinic, and Chanel inside Stivali. Both chains can also be found at Avenida da Liberdade. The following research questions are considered:

1. How are luxury brands perceived in the store?

2. Are perceptions different between the virtual and the physical scenario?

4.2. Qualitative research: interview

In order to gather the most credible information, we were in contact with several luxury managers and professional staff after Christmas, on December 29th 2020 (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Sample demographic characteristics: interview

Characteristics	**Sample %**
N=6	
Age	
M (Range: 35–54 years old)	85.0
Gender	
Male	33.0
Female	67.0
Level of Education	
Bachelor's degree	45.5
Master Degree	10.5
Doctoral Degree	5.0

Source: Author's elaboration

According to Prada Men's Department Manager, the luxury brands at Avenida da Liberdade were greatly impacted by the pandemic, registering a 40% to 50% loss in profit. December was the first month Prada did not feel any difference. The shoe expert from Louis Vuitton confirms that the pandemic hit the business, but Louis Vuitton was one of the first luxury brands to bounce back afterwards. During December, the Lisbon store had queues of

several hours, and even appointments with client advisors were full most days. Most products were out of stock, not only because the demand was high but because production in Europe was very slow during 2020. Focusing on the international market, Prada Men's Department Manager and the shoe expert from Louis Vuitton both confirm that profits in China and the Middle East boomed after the pandemic, due to high demand, reaching the point of having to close the store before closing time, not having enough stock to meet customer demand. Prada Men's Department Manager adds that people had a great desire to travel, with luggage being the most sold product in December.

Prada Men's Department Manager refers to Prada as a family business, saying that even today the colours of the collection are chosen by Miuccia Prada. He also says that Prada is not expected to change greatly from season to season. The products remain the same as decades ago, and Prada follows the same line, with frequent specific re-editions. For instance, the most desired product in 2020 was the Re-Edition handbag. Now, out of stock around the world, the Re-Edition became a trend, as did the boots. The manager also says that their strategy is to focus on locals rather than tourists, and that their target differs from Louis Vuitton, finding that Dior and Chanel are their main competitors in Lisbon.

The shoe expert from Louis Vuitton states that one of its main competitors is Gucci, regarding the trendiness of the brands and digital force. The high demand for Louis Vuitton is seen in it being one of the most desired brands in the past five years, given the whole experience felt inside the store, the high-quality, yet attainable products. However, the brand is only attainable for the most classic models: Alma, Neverfull MM and Speedy – which are the main competitors of Ophidia GG and Marmont Gucci bags.

Both the Prada Men's Department Manager and the shoe expert from Louis Vuitton express the brands' concerns about counterfeit goods. To that end, Louis Vuitton has only allowed purchases in single names, rather than in a company name from December 2020, so that people cannot buy several of the same product. As for Prada, the Prada Men's Department Manager says that several products have a limit, for instance, each consumer can only buy two Re-Edition handbags.

Gucci manager shared his concerns about the Lisbon market. The Lisbon store works as a showroom, with very low stock and most of the products need to be ordered for the customer. However, Gucci was greatly affected during 2020, even in December. The manager

also states that the Italian brand is priced considering the time an artisan spends on the accessories.

Regarding Fashion Clinic, now in inventory, the women's manager was surprised about the demand in Lisbon this Christmas. Besides most of Dior handbags and shoes being out of stock, there are waiting lists for other items too. The same demand was found for Balenciaga. As for Stivali – Chanel, handbags need to be ordered and the waiting time is 4 to 6 weeks. The demand was not affected in Lisbon, during the whole of 2020.

Louis Vuitton and Chanel were two of the brands that decided to increase their prices during 2020, and this proved to increase desirability and demand.

Burberry, on the other hand, is the only brand present inside El Corte Ingles, which impacted sales positively. According to the Burberry manager of Avenida da Liberdade, sales in the store were higher than at El Corte Ingles. Inside the shopping mall, several products are out of stock, being a popular brand to give as Christmas presents.

4.3. Qualitative research: focus group

In this study, we employ the focus group technique, with two goals: (1) to confirm or refute the findings from the systematic literature review and netnography, and (2) to refine knowledge on the research topic, gaining new insights to be used in further studies.

The focus group can be defined as a group interview in which researchers seek to understand consumers' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

Krueger and Casey (2015) suggest focus groups should be homogeneous, but with sufficient diversity for contrasting opinions. Thus, we selected participants reflecting consumption behaviours concerning luxury brands, with different academic backgrounds, and aged between 18 and 45 years old, although all participants had made at least one luxury purchase in their life. The study used a convenience sample, a non-probability sample technique (Henry, 2009). The researchers obtained the group of participants through proximity to them. The study was conducted in Lisbon. No type of gratification was given to participants. In line with Malhotra (2010), we considered a group of 12 members, with the session lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The discussion was semi-structured, as recommended in the literature for exploratory purposes, even though we prepared specific guidelines for the discussion. The researchers

recorded the discussion so that it could be fully transcribed, allowing participants and comments to be linked (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Sample demographic characteristics: focus group

Characteristics N=8	Sample %
Age	
M (Range: 18–45 years old)	40.1
Gender	
Male	50.0
Female	50.0
Level of Education	
Bachelor's degree	53.5
Master's degree	12.5
Doctoral degree	0.0
Internet usage	
Low	12.5
Moderate	45.0
High	42.5
Luxury purchase frequency	
1 item per year	59.5
1 to 3 items per year	35.0
More than 3 items per year	5.5

Source: Author's elaboration

Each participant was tagged with a letter, so that we were able to identify their sentences while respecting their privacy. We also provide a summary of each participant's luxury purchase frequency and internet usage, in order have a description of their experience and exposure to luxury brands in the digital environment:

- 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F, 1G purchase one item per year: only purchasing one item per year, on a special occasion (e.g., birthday, Christmas) and from the physical luxury store,

- 1H, 1I, 1J, 1K purchase one to three items per year: moderate luxury buyer, purchases for special occasions or limited editions, but only for themselves, and preferring to buy from the physical store, even though they can buy from luxury websites if the item is sold out in store,

- 1L purchases more than three items per year: frequent luxury buyer, likes to give luxury gifts to friends and family, and purchases mainly from luxury websites.

The focus group session took place in Lisbon, at El Corte Inglés, on January 15th, 2021. The session lasted around one hour and a half and 12 participants took part. The moderator was

chosen from another research team from social sciences, to avoid any bias (Morgan et al., 1998). However, the researcher was in the room, taking notes.

All participants are daily internet users and had purchased at least one luxury item in their life. The moderator asked key questions (appendix 11). Most participants mentioned love, pleasure, high self-esteem, and extension of self-identity when buying a luxury item. Following this dialogue, participant 1J underlined the importance of limited editions to keep consumers interested. Participant 1L enhanced the importance of collaborations and co-branding such as Gucci x Balenciaga, in feeling uniqueness.

When the moderator asked the second key question, regarding buying online or in a physical store, the group agreed that buying in a physical store enhances the experience, but through the internet one has more time to think and is less likely to be influenced by the sales assistant. Most participants like to have a sales assistant.

In the end, participants discussed satisfaction with luxury brands, what enhances brand loyalty and brand love in their perception, and what their favourite luxury brands are. Participant 1L was the only one to choose Prada as the favourite brand, while the rest of the group chose either Louis Vuitton or Gucci. As for brand loyalty, the group all preferred to have a sales assistant keeping them updated. For brand love, participants state that online communication is very important for them to keep engaged and create the desire to purchase.

4.4. Main conclusions

Our findings from qualitative methods are interesting, as we were able to confirm several associations previously tested in the study of netnography. First, through the interviews with the luxury managers we were able to understand the perception of those who sell, which is very important. It is important for us, as researchers, to understand both sides – the consumer and the manager. We can find several similarities between the brand managers' dialogues, as in the netnography. In particular, Dior and Chanel; Louis Vuitton and Gucci. Prada positions itself as a more rebellious brand, and this is also confirmed by prior results, while Burberry is still adapting.

Second, the focus group method was selected due to the group effect, where consumers are stimulated by ideas and experiences (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). During focus group interviews, participants can reveal information and understandings that would not be easy to communicate during single interviews, without creating the interactive group setting. It is also

an exploratory method used to obtain preliminary results for future research. We were able to identify several constructs, which enabled us to proceed to our next studies, and analyse not only predictive behaviour, but also actual behaviour. Namely, brand loyalty and brand love.

4.5. Future research suggestions

Even though the pandemic had tremendous consequences for luxury brands, it also helped managers to adapt to the youngest generation and find new sources of revenue. The brands studied were available in Lisbon, which contributed positively to our collection of insights.

Despite the relevant insights of our study, we identify several limitations and suggest future studies to strengthen our results. Considering our results, it would be interesting to understand consumers and managers' insights in other cities, for example, Madrid and London. Other methods should be included to analyse the differences in perceptions of luxury purchases. For instance, a study on consumers' perceptions, in a realistic setting, to understand consumer preferences better and confirm our results.

Chapter 5: Predicted Versus Actual Consumption Behaviour

5.1. Purpose of the study

D'Arpizio et al. (2019) estimate the growth in personal luxury items to be 3%-5% per year until 2025. Luxury fashion products perceived as having positive traits attributed to the identity of the luxury brand, but at the same time subjective and dynamic pointing out the trends in fashion, can be considered as cool by consumers (Tiwari, Chakraborty, & Maitys, 2021). For instance, Louis Vuitton allowing for custom-made bags, Chanel increasing prices to reach a high level of exclusivity and Prada offering unique custom-made fragrances (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). The halo effect of cool things or brands can be the differentiating key factor, as it can create a buzz in such a competitive market (Warren, et al., 2019; Swaminathan et al., 2020).

Despite its clear advantages in predicting word-of-mouth (Bagozzi & Khoshnevis, 2022), brand loyalty, or willingness to pay for the brand (Loureiro, Jiménez-Barreto, & Romero, 2020; Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2022), research on brand coolness is still scarce, particularly concerning niche versus mass cool brands. Cool and designer brands overlap, as cool is greatly involved with commodities and the aesthetics of designer labels or even niche brands (Nancarrow et al., 2003). Luxury consumers are aware of the symbolic motive when purchasing luxury goods, associated with logo display, price signalling and so on (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010), showing the relevance of further studies exploring the differences between niche and mass markets.

Existing research on this construct demonstrates the importance of investigating further this type of consumption in different consumer groups and following fashion trends (Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009; Zheng, Baskin, & Peng, 2018). Conspicuous consumption represents a relevant part of our research, as we intend to understand the moderating effect of this concept on the relationships among brand coolness, loyalty, and brand love.

The purpose of this study is to explore brand coolness, specifically, mass versus niche cool brands, in the context of luxury fashion, building on and going beyond the existing literature.

We aim (1) to investigate the mediating effect of attitude towards the brand between niche versus mass brand coolness and brand loyalty and/or brand love, through different studies

and (ii) to analyse the moderating power of conspicuous consumption on the relationships between niche versus mass brand coolness and brand loyalty, and attitude towards the brand when mediating brand love. Following previous authors, we start by exploring predictive (or intentional) behaviour. However, we intend to analyse the constructs in a physical store, by conducting a field experiment and analysing actual consumer behaviour. Furthermore, we intend to answer the following research questions:

1. Can mass/niche cool brands be associated with higher loyalty and love in a physical environment?

2. Can conspicuous consumption strengthen/weaken the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool) and brand loyalty? And between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and attitude towards the brand?

5.2. Theoretical context

5.2.1. Brand coolness: Mass cool versus Niche cool

Besides being of a positive valence, the coolness concept can be divided in two categories, mass and niche cool (Warren et al., 2019; Loureiro et al., 2020). We can define a niche market as a segment focused on a small, concentrated market, with less competition (Shahid et al., 2021). The main goal of a niche strategy is to satisfy a differentiated need, by offering a high-quality product at a higher price (Schaefers, 2014). However, we should acknowledge that a niche market cannot exist on its own, as it needs a mass market (Dar-Nimrod et al. 2012; Kumagai & Nagasawa, 2021).

A mass market can be defined as a relatively large market in which consumers' needs are more homogeneous (Paul, 2015; Yang & Mattila, 2014). Thus, brands are less specific in their products, and can offer lower prices. Concerning the luxury context, brands are still able to deliver uniqueness and symbolism in their products.

Concerning niche and mass strategies, the concepts of niche and mass cool are defined as follows. A niche cool brand is perceived as being cool by a subcultural group and has not yet been associated with the general masses (Schaefers, 2014). These consumers are greatly affected by strong, passion-driven emotions (Loureiro et al., 2021). A mass cool brand is perceived as being cool by the general population. According to Warren et al. (2019), niche cool brands are more associated with being rebellious, original, authentic subcultural, extraordinary, aesthetically appealing, energetic, and high status. Mass cool brands are

associated with being energetic, high-status, popular and iconic. As a result, consumers will have greater familiarity, receive more exposure, generate more word of mouth and pay a premium price (Alba & Williams, 2013; Bettiga et al., 2020).

5.2.2. Attitude Towards the Brand

Attitudes are the basis of consumer behaviour, as they are a mirror of consumers' thoughts about a product or brand (Wang & Song, 2013). According to Keller (1993), an attitude can have social functions in terms of self-presentation and self-expression. Attitudes can comprise three different components: behavioural, affective (emotional) and cognitive (knowledge) (e.g., Mithcell & Olson, 1981; Bilro et al., 2021). The behavioural component means the intention to purchase, such as willingness or likelihood to buy a specific product (Mithcell & Olson, 1981), which can also be represented by brand loyalty. In this research brand loyalty is the extent to which consumers will suggest, recommend, and buy the brand in the future (Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito, & Singh, 2016).

As for the affective dimension, this is defined as positive or negative evaluations, representing feelings towards visual imagery (Mithcell & Olson, 1981). Finally, the cognitive dimension is represented by consumers' beliefs, purpose and meanings related to the item (Carnevale et al., 2018). Attitude towards the brand – employed in this research – represents the more affective component of attitude as a 'whole', since it measures the extent to which each consumer regards the brand as favourable, positive or good when exposed to its characteristics (Sela et al., 2012).

In the context of luxury consumption, consumers tend to purchase several items to create a social image of themselves (Chen and Kim, 2013; Okonkwo, 2016). For Warren et al. (2019), considering niche cool brands, consumers feel strong self-brand connections, increase their perception of brand love, demonstrate a more favourable brand attitude and are willing to pay more for the brand.

The association between attitude towards the brand and brand coolness has been previously identified (e.g., Warren et al., 2019; Loureiro et al., 2020). Further studies, however, are needed to explore this association in detail. Considering that attitudes towards brands are formed by exposure to brand characteristics (Mithcell & Olson, 1981; Wang & Song, 2013), such as niche/mass cool brands, and subsequently associated with brand loyalty (Jiménez-

Barreto et al., 2022), we expect attitude to act as a mediator in the relationship between niche vs mass cool and brand loyalty. Therefore:

H1: Attitude towards the brand mediates the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and brand loyalty.

5.2.3. Conspicuous Consumption

Consumers' purchases represent not only their wealth, but also their individual traits, social status, and self-perceptions (Belk, 1988). Conspicuous consumption (CC) is an inherent element of luxury products, defined as the tendency to purchase and use expensive items with the intention to display one's wealth and status (Schaefers, 2014; Veblen, 1899). Conspicuous Consumption refers to the individual quality behind consumers' preferences for consumption habits to express wealth, status, and sophistication, through material goods and services (Lee & Shrum, 2012; Huang & Wang, 2018).

The positive correlation between different individual traits and types of consumption experiences (Watson & Clark, 1997) suggests that high conspicuous-oriented consumers are more associated with ostentation and a preference for louder, extravagant experiences to demonstrate wealth and status (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Husic & Cicic, 2009). Alternatively, low conspicuous-oriented consumers are more associated with a preference for more unique brands, which are less recognizable and simpler, but still luxurious products (Eckhardt et al., 2015). Due to the latter individuals' tendency to appreciate more unique brands, they are also more likely to be associated with niche cool brands. Moreover, high-conspicuous consumers, regardless of their income or social status, are often willing to pay a price premium in order to enhance their social standing (Husic & Cicic, 2009). Besides the uniqueness trait, niche brands are also frequently associated with greater willingness to pay, as truly wealthy consumers are now looking for higher-end niche brands that carry high prestige value but are less known to the mass market (Schaefers, 2014; Yang & Mattila, 2014).

On the basis of this prior literature, we expect consumers' tendency for conspicuous consumption to moderate the relationship between luxury brands and consumers' evaluation, such as attitude towards the brand (Kumar et al., 2021). We hypothesize that low conspicuous-oriented consumers are more likely to prefer and evaluate more positively niche cool brands.

Alternatively, we expect high conspicuous-oriented consumers to prefer and evaluate more positively mass cool brands. Thereby:

H2: Conspicuous consumption moderates the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and brand loyalty, so that: low conspicuous consumption is more likely to lead to higher brand loyalty for niche cool brands, while high conspicuous consumption is more likely to lead to higher brand loyalty for mass cool brands.

H3: Conspicuous consumption moderates the mediating effect of attitude towards the brand on the association between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and brand love, so that: the mediating effect of attitude towards the brand will be high at high levels of conspicuous consumption than at low levels of conspicuous consumption.

5.3. Methodological procedures

5.3.1. Study 1: Survey - predicted behaviour

A pre-test was conducted in August 2021, in which 100 luxury fashion brands were considered to select the mass and niche cool brand to test in the following studies. The fashion brands were chosen from the Brand Finance ranking (2021), and only fashion brands were selected. As for the niche brands, we investigated several fashion websites (e.g., Jing Daily) and social media comments (e.g., Little Red Book).

Data were from the U.K. and collected through Amazon Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2016) in return for £1.00 per person. Participants were asked to evaluate their perceptions of mass versus niche coolness of each brand, on a seven-point scale (1 = niche to 7 = mass cool) (n = 136). The higher the mean, the more mass cool. We selected the brands with the highest (mass) and the lowest (niche) mean. In the end, a mass cool brand - Louis Vuitton (Mean $_{(Mass\ Cool)}$ = 5.53) and a niche cool brand - Vanina (Mean $_{(Niche\ Cool)}$ = 2.60) were selected for the main study (Appendix 12).

5.3.1.1. Design and procedure

The main study 1 was conducted from September to October 2021 and aimed to analyse the relationship of mass versus niche cool brand with consumers' brand loyalty, mediated by attitude towards the brand and moderated by conspicuous consumption. The study followed a (brand coolness: mass cool vs. niche cool) randomized between-within subject design with conspicuous consumption (CC) and attitude towards the brand (ATB) as moderator and

mediator variables, respectively. Participants were randomly assigned to a particular condition which identified a luxury brand that was either positioned as being mass or niche cool (Louis Vuitton versus Vanina).

Participants were asked to answer a set of questions concerning their perceptions of both brands' level of luxury, our manipulation measures, and the measures to evaluate attitude towards the brand and brand loyalty. Towards the end of the questionnaire, brand coolness and the conspicuous consumption variable were assessed by asking participants to provide their self-report measures. Finally, a set of sociodemographic questions were asked, namely: gender, age, and level of education.

To compute the minimum sample size required for the analysis a priori, power analysis was conducted using G∗Power (version 3.1.9.6) (Faul et al., 2009). The analysis was based on a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), $\alpha = 0.05$, and pre-set power ($1 - \beta = 0.95$), with three predictors (i.e., type of cool brand, attitude towards the brand, and conspicuous consumption). The calculations yielded a minimum sample size of 74 participants for an expected power of 0.95. The main survey was conducted in the U.K. using the MTurk online crowdsourcing platform (Buhrmester et al. 2018). Similarly to the pre-test, participants were compensated with £1.00 for their time. A total of 246 respondents participated in the study ($n_{(Niche\ Cool)} = 113$, 50%; $n_{(Mass\ Cool)} = 113$. 50%).

5.3.1.2. Measures

The 37 items for the brand coolness scale were adapted from Warren et al. (2019) (see Appendix 13). Three items were used to measure attitude towards the brand following Sela et al. (2012). As for conspicuous consumption (CC), four items were used based on Huang and Wang (2018) and Lee and Shrum (2012). Brand loyalty was assessed through six items according to Godey et al. (2016). All the variables were assessed on seven-point scales (1-Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree). Demographic variables such as age and gender may influence consumer attitude and behaviour (e.g., Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). Therefore, age and gender are considered as control variables. Attitude towards the colour blue with four items was used to analyse common method variance (CMV), based on Simmering et al. (2015).

5.3.1.3. Participants

In total, 246 datapoints were analysed. The sample was balanced (50.8% male, n = 125). Concerning the sample age groups 45.5% (n = 112) were 25-34 years old and 26.4% (n = 65)

35-44 years old. The majority of participants were employed, 81.3% (n = 200) and with a bachelor's degree, 60.2% (n = 148).

5.3.1.4.Data treatment

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 28.0. Data management was conducted as follows: (1) missing and unusual values and (2) univariate normality. First, missing values were eliminated (n = 12; 5.5%) (Goodman et al. 2013). As for the univariate normality, skewness and kurtosis were calculated for each of the measured items. Following our results, no absolute values above 8 (for kurtosis) and above 3 (for skewness) (Kline, 2011) showed no evidence of univariate non-normality (see Appendix 13). Thus, we proceeded with our analysis, with a final sample of 246 participants. Respondents were evenly presented in the two conditions: $n_{\text{Niche Cool}}$ = 113 (50%) and $n_{\text{Mass Cool}}$ = 113 (50%).

The statistical analyses were conducted following the steps: (1) sample description, (2) Pearson-correlation across the BC dimensions, (3) mediation and moderation analysis using PROCESS macro for IBM SPSS 28.0 (model 5; Hayes, 2018). In social sciences, PROCESS is still the most recommended and used macro for moderation and mediation analysis when using univariate data (Field, 2017; Hayes 2018) (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. Mediation and Moderation (Model 5; Hayes, 2018)
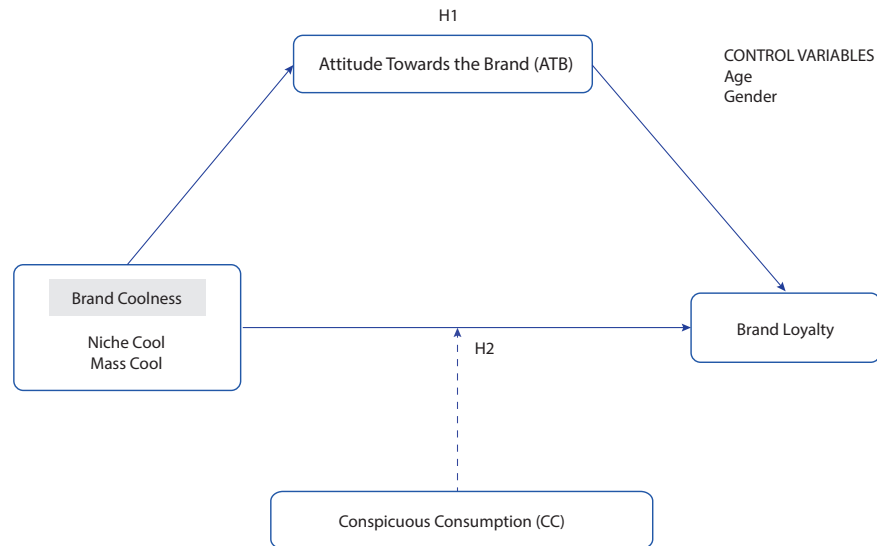
Source: Author's elaboration

5.3.1.5.Findings

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using model 5 (mediation and moderation), using Hayes PROCESS macro (Model 5; Hayes 2013) to test the conceptual model and hypotheses. The Pearson correlation (r) was used to assess the correlates of brand loyalty with all the variables. For the statistical calculations, we computed the aggregated mean scores for each variable. Brand loyalty was positively associated with CC ($r = 0.78$; $p < 0.001$), and attitude towards the brand ($r = 0.76$; $p < 0.001$). The direction and significance of the correlations corroborate the literature and previous empirical findings (Deb & Lomo-David, 2020). Table 5.1 presents the correlation matrix and descriptive statistics for the variables.

Table 5.1. Correlations matrix: study 1

	A	CR	M	SD	AVE	1	2	3
1. Brand Loyalty	0.937	0.951	4.826	1.50549	0.765	-	-	-
2. CC	0.930	0.926	4.861	1.44151	0.758	0.784***	-	-
3. ATB	0.912	0.945	5.421	1.26309	0.852	0.764***	0.661***	-
Gender	-	-	-	-	-	0.201*	-0.198*	-0.258***
Age	-	-	3.58	1.077	-	-0.099	-0.120	0.009

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. a: Cronbach Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; AVE: Average Variance Extracted*

Source: Author's elaboration

Assuming a continuous dependent variable, a continuous moderator (CC), a continuous mediator (attitude) and a dichotomous independent variable (niche versus mass cool), the mediation and moderation analysis is tested by estimating a linear regression model (Hayes 2013, 2015). Attitude towards the brand mediates the relationship between brand coolness and brand loyalty while CC linearly moderates the effect of brand coolness type on the dependent variable if the regression coefficient for the interaction is different from zero between lower and upper levels of confidence intervals (Hayes 2013, 2015) (see Table 5.2. for detailed results).

The results reveal a significant interaction for brand coolness x CC ($\beta = 0.169$, SE = 0.0653, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.0374; 0.2945]). A significant effect was also obtained for the mediator: attitude towards the brand, ($\beta = 0.2916$, SE = 0.0990 $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.1143; 0.5007]). Considering niche cool brands, ($\beta = -0.4331$, SE = 0.1408, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [-0.7105; -1.1556]), there is a significant effect for the CC moderator (see Figure 2). However, the moderator loses its impact at high levels of coolness, revealing no statistically significant results for mass cool brands $\beta = 0.0711$, SE = 0.1433, $p > 0.05$, 95% CI = [-0.2112; 0.3534]). In addition, gender ($\beta = 0.0507$, $p > 0.05$), and age ($\beta = -0.0662$, $p > 0.05$) were used as control variables, and were not statistically significant. This fully validates H1 and partially validates H2.

Table 5.2. Structural results: study 1

	R	R²	B	BootSE	*p-value*	t
Direct Effect Brand Coolness --> Brand Loyalty	0.094	0.009	0.289	0.196	0.142	1.474

*p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 SE: Standard Error; Boot: Bootstrap.*

Dependent variable	Independent variable		B	BootSE	Lower CI	Upper CI	*p-value*	t
Brand Loyalty	**Brand Coolness x CC**	R² = 0.7462	0.1690	0.0653	0.0374	0.2945	0.0116	2.5428
	Low Levels (-1SD)		-0.4331	0.1408	-0.7105	-0.1556	0.0023	-3.0751
	Middle		-0.1810	0.1018	-0.3814	0.0195	0.0766	-1.7785
	High Levels (+1SD)		0.0711	0.1433	-0.2112	0.3534	0.6201	0.4964
ATB	**Mediator (Brand Coolness→ ATB → brand Loyalty)**	R²= 0.1111	0.2916	.0990	.1143	.5007		
Control variables	**Gender**		0.0507	0.1022	-0.1506	0.2520	0.6204	0.4959
	Age		-0.0662	0.0461	-0.1571	0.0247	0.1527	-1.4347
Brand Loyalty			2.0278	0.3725	1.2939	2.7617	0.0000	5.4432
Brand Coolness			0.5364	.1545	0.2321	0.8407	0.0006	3.4722

*p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 SE: Standard Error; Boot: Bootstrap; LL: Lower Limit; UL: Upper Limit; CI: Confidence Interval Bootstrap sample size: 20,000; M: Mean Centred ± SD*

Source: Author's elaboration

5.3.2. Study 2: Field – Actual Behaviour

5.3.2.1. Design and procedure

Study 2 was conducted in April 2022, in the city of London, U.K. and the main goal was to assess actual behaviour, considering the previous study focused on predicted behaviour. Participants were approached near luxury stores in streets in London. Namely: Brook Street, New Bond Street and Old Bond Street. Similarly, it followed a (brand coolness: mass cool vs. niche cool) randomized between-within subject design with conspicuous consumption (CC) and attitude towards the brand (ATB). The brands to test were previously selected in the pre-test. Participants were randomly selected outside stores to answer a survey considering four luxury brands (two niche cool brands – Vanina (Mean $_{(Niche\ Cool\ -\ VANINA)}$ = 2.60) and

P.A.R.O.S.H. (Mean $_{(Niche\ Cool\ –\ P.A.R.O.S.H.)}$ = 2.63); and two mass cool brands– Louis Vuitton (Mean $_{(Mass\ Cool\ –\ Louis\ Vuitton)}$ = 5.53) and Gucci (Mean $_{(Mass\ Cool\ -\ Gucci)}$ = 5.39).

Following Shahid et al. (2021), we explored brand love as an outcome variable, instead of brand loyalty (see Figure 5.2). At the end of the study, brand coolness and the conspicuous consumption variable were measured by asking participants to provide their self-report measures concerning this measure. Finally, a set of demographic questions were presented, and participants were thanked for their participation.

Figure 5.2. Moderated Mediation (Model 7; Hayes, 2018)
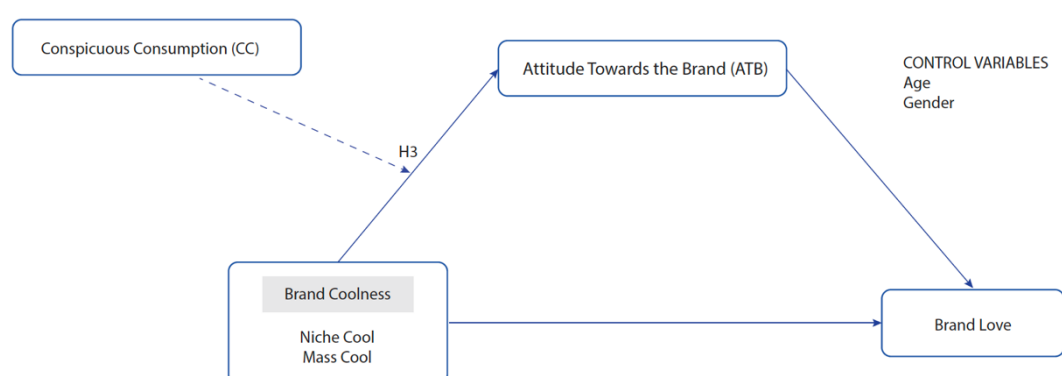
Source: Author's elaboration

To compute the minimum sample size required for the analysis a priori, power analysis was conducted using G∗Power (version 3.1.9.6) (Faul et al., 2009). The analysis was based on a medium effect size (f^2 = 0.15), α = 0.05, and pre-set power (1 – β = 0.95), with three predictors (i.e., type of cool brand, attitude towards the brand and conspicuous consumption). The calculations yielded a minimum sample size of 74 participants for an expected power of 0.95.

5.3.2.2.Measures

In this study we used the same items to measure brand coolness, attitude towards the brand and conspicuous consumption (CC) as in study 1. The brand love construct was measured adapting the reduced six-item scale based on Bagozzi, Batra, and Ahuvia (2017) (see Appendix 12). All the variables were measured and assessed on seven-point scales (1- Strongly Disagree to 7 – Strongly Agree), similar to the first study. As in study 1, age and gender were used as control variables and the marker was also the attitude towards the colour blue.

5.3.2.3. Participants

From a total of 250 respondents taking part in the field study, a total of 209 datapoints were further analysed, after screening the returned questionnaire to eliminate incomplete and inconsistent questionnaires. The sample was balanced (57.4% male, n = 120). Concerning the sample age groups, 46.4% (n = 97) were 25-34 years old and 23.9% (n = 50) 35-44 years old. The majority of the sample were employed, 82.7% (n = 275) and with a Bachelor Degree, 59.3% (n = 124). Considering purchase frequency, 82.9% (n = 174) of the sample have bought at least one luxury item in the past six months.

The respondents, who answered the questionnaires with complete anonymity, were asked to identify a brand they believed was "really cool" and to use criteria that was meaningful to them personally. They were allowed to consider a brand they purchased before.

5.3.2.4. Data treatment

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 28.0 and followed the same steps as described before. Thus, our analysis was of a final sample of 209 participants. Respondents answered the same set of questions for the four luxury brands. The statistical analyses were conducted following the steps: (1) sample description, (2) Pearson-correlation across, (3) moderated mediation analysis using AMOS for IBM SPSS 28.0 (Itani, Kassar & Loureiro, 2019).

5.4. Findings

We applied Hayes' (2018) model 7 macro in AMOS to the data to test the hypotheses shown in Figure 3. The Pearson correlation (r) was used to assess the correlates of all the variables. For the statistical calculations, we computed the aggregated mean scores for each variable. Brand love was positively associated with CC (r = 0.65; p < 0.001), and ATB (r = 0.46; p < 0.001). High-status negatively correlated with gender ($r_{\text{FEMALE:1}}$ = -0.05; p < 0.05), age (r = 0.13; p < 0.01). The direction and significance of the correlations corroborate the literature and previous empirical findings (Deb and Lomo-David 2020). Table 5.3 reports the correlation matrix and descriptive statistics for the variables.

Table 5.4. Correlation matrix: study 2

	a	CR	M	SD	AVE	1	2	3
1. Brand Love	0.900	0.879	5.0862	1.4458	0.475	-	0.651***	0.457***
2. CC	0.930	0.930	5.3424	0.927	0.769	-	-	0.745***
3. ATB	0.950	0.867	5.8577	1.2839	0.686	-	-	-
Gender	-	-	-	-	-	-0.046	-0.011	0.042
Age	-	-	3.75	0.496	-	0.131	0.201*	0.184*

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$ a: Cronbach Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; AVE: Average Variance Extracted*

Source: Author's elaboration

Table 5.4 presents the findings for the model with CC as the moderator, between brand coolness and ATB, and brand love as the outcome variable. Analysis demonstrates brand coolness has no statistically significant direct effect on brand love (β = -0.056, SE = 0.117, p > 0.05, 95%). As hypothesized, CC and brand coolness significantly interact to influence attitude towards the brand (β = -0.556, SE = 0.004, p < 0.01). The conditional indirect effects of brand coolness on brand love, shown near the bottom of Table 5.4, indicate that at all levels of CC there is a positive effect on brand love through attitude towards the brand (Low CC: β = 1.123, SE = 0.484 p < 0.05, 95% CI = [0.148; 2.047]; Medium CC: β = 1.104, SE = 0.466, p < 0.05, 95% CI = [0.176; 2.002]; High CC: β = 1.084, SE = 0.449, p < 0.05, 95% CI = [0.199; 2.001]). However, these conditional indirect effects are not statistically significant. The index of moderated mediation: (IMM= -.015, SE = 0,018 p < 0.05, 95% CI = [-0.039; 0.029]). Thus, it is not confirmed that the attitude towards the brand mediates the effects of brand coolness on brand love, when moderated by CC. However, results demonstrate a significant moderation effect of CC on the relationship between brand coolness and ATB, at all levels of CC. (see Table 5.4). In addition, gender (β = -0.063, p > 0.05), and age (β = -0.076, p > 0.05) were used as control variables, and were not statistically significant. Following the analysis, H3 cannot be fully validated.

Table 5.4. Structural results: study 2

	R	R^2	B	BootSE	*p-value*	t
Direct Effect						
Brand Coolness -->	0.231	0.053	0.411	0.231	<0.001	3.417
Brand Love						

*p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 SE: Standard Error; Boot: Bootstrap.

Dependent variable	Independent variable	B	BootSE	Lower CI	Upper CI	*p-value*
	Brand Coolness x CC	-0.551	-	-	-	0.0000
Brand Love	**Low Levels (-1SD)**	1.123	0.484	0.148	2.047	0.026
	Middle	1.104	0.466	0.176	2.002	0.021
	High Levels (+1SD)	1.084	0.449	0.199	2.001	0.018
ATB	**Mediator (Brand Coolness→ ATB → Brand Love)** R^2= 0.0913	0.2916				0.0000
Control variables	**Gender**	-0.063				>0.05
	Age	-0.076				0.1527
Brand Love	R^2=0.560	0.559				0.0000
Index Moderation Mediation		-0.015	0.018	-0.039	0.029	0.559

*p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 SE: Standard Error; Boot: Bootstrap; LL: Lower Limit; UL: Upper Limit; CI: Confidence Interval Bootstrap sample size: 10,000; M: Mean Centred ± SD

Source: Author's elaboration

5.5.   Main conclusions

In this chapter, we examined predicted and actual behaviour concerning mass versus niche cool brands. Across two studies, we provided evidence that similar behaviours can be found when comparing niche versus mass cool brands, in both predictive and actual behaviour. We started by demonstrating the mediation effect of ATB between brand coolness and brand loyalty valuations. Furthermore, we introduced CC as a moderator. A statistically significant effect was only found for niche cool brands, losing impact on mass cool brands.

Considering the physical environment, we conducted studies with the main goal of exploring consumers' actual behaviour. A field experiment, which was as realistic as possible, confirmed the mediator impact of ATB, on brand love, and the moderator effect of CC between brand coolness and ATB. However, the moderated mediation effect could not be confirmed.

These overall perceptions have a significant impact on consumer behaviour, as we provide evidence of the power of both constructs – ATB and CC. For instance, niche cool brands are highly associated with low conspicuous consumers, may influence a positive ATB

and, further, brand love, while the same happens for mass cool brands and high conspicuous consumers. However, concerning brand loyalty, this phenomenon can only be confirmed for niche cool brands, and low conspicuous consumers. Our findings highlight important implications for both theory and practice.

5.6. Suggestions for future research

This study has some limitations that should be addressed. First, the samples for all studies are mainly homogeneous, which will have an impact on results. Second, our results cannot be generalized as our brands are limited to a specific segment of luxury consumption. Third, data were gathered in a physical setting, but were limited to a specific city in the United Kingdom.

Future research could address involvement in the category, which can trigger consumers' positive feelings and increase their preferences for either type of brand. It would also be interesting to analyse negative emotions, such as guilt or pride. Moreover, examining sensory marketing cues in physical stores could be meaningful. When consumers form a strong emotional connection with brands, this usually indicates loyalty, which is a positive outcome. This emotional underpinning of loyalty and love is strongly aligned with higher profits.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Research on luxury consumption (associated with brand coolness), similar to any innovative field, is still in its development stage as scholars continue to propose diverse relationships and divergent perspectives. This final chapter offers our overview and the contributions of the present thesis to this research field, discussing theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and future research avenues.

6.1. Discussion

This thesis explores a new and exciting field of research, representing an innovative opportunity for scholars to develop new studies and insights. Several questions are still unanswered, which reinforces the need for further developments in the context. However, from our studies, we were able to answer the research questions discussed below.

From study one, the systematic literature review, we answered the first two research questions: What are the commonly used theories, characteristics (constructs and models), and methodologies explored in the literature on luxury consumption and fashion? What marketing research has been conducted on luxury consumption in the fashion context? The systematic study allowed us to address these RQs in a broader way than empirical studies. Therefore, we were able to summarise and discuss the findings within our field of research. In the field of luxury consumption, research on fashion and brand coolness is still scarce.

First, the literature review highlights four core theories, the theory of leisure class (e.g., (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020; Gao et al., 2016; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012), social comparison theory (e.g., Eastman et al., 2018; Makkar & Yap, 2018; Ono et al., 2020), consumer culture theory (e.g., Kim & Kwon, 2017; Ko et al., 2019; Turunen & Pöyry, 2019) and motivation need theory(e.g., Bonetti, 2014; D'Angelo et al., 2019; Kapferer & Michaut-Denizeau, 2020). The most used methodology is the quantitative approach, through a survey. Most authors used a sample of between 150 and 400 participants (Chang et al., 2016; Loureiro, de Plaza, et al., 2020; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012; Rahman et al., 2020; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Structural equation modelling is the most common analysis technique (e.g., Amatulli et al., 2020; Brandão et al., 2019; Gao et al., 2016; Septianto et al., 2021). Empirical methodology is also used in a large number of articles (Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016), including experiments (Barnes et al., 2013; H. Y. Kim & Kwon, 2017; Mrad et al., 2020; Phau et al., 2013), MANOVA/ANOVA (Davis & Barbara Dyer, 2012) and regression analysis (Wang &

Song, 2013). Emerging in exploratory studies of a qualitative nature, authors highlight in-depth interviews (Barnes et al., 2013) and focus groups (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Parrott et al., 2015).

With luxury being the core construct, several concepts were associated throughout the systematic analysis. For instance, conspicuous consumption, hedonic consumption, brand familiarity, brand coolness, status, and materialism.

In an attempt to answer RQ 3 (how are luxury brands communicating on Instagram?) and RQ 4 (how are luxury brands connecting with luxury consumers (e.g., Instagram and online shopping – e-commerce), during the pandemic?), a netnography was conducted (Kozinet, 2010). With this qualitative study we were not only able to understand how luxury brands are communicating with their audience, but also find similarities between luxury brands' strategies. Our findings demonstrate that consumers' perceptions, attitudes and engagement are not stable (Schaefers, 2014; Yang & Mattila, 2014; Abdullah et al., 2020;). For instance, fashion events spike users' engagement. As for the main goal of each luxury brand, we were able to highlight that: Louis Vuitton and Gucci have a trend-driven approach, in which their communication is focused on what is trending in the season. Dior and Chanel follow a fashion-centered communication. The brands' posts include fashion show photos and brand icons. They are not concerned about seasons, but adopt a more classic-related communication approach. Prada has a product-centered communication strategy. The majority of Prada posts involve its logos, most iconic products and fragrances. Burberry follows a similar approach, being product-centered.

From the third study, involving a focus group and interviews, we answered RQ 5 and RQ 6: How are luxury brands perceived in the store? Are perceptions different between the virtual and physical scenario? Valuable insights were collected as we were able to confirm previous results (consumers' online perceptions, and studies analysed in the systematic literature review), together with new information for further analysis. Following interviews with luxury managers, the findings demonstrate the seller's perception, which is very important. Scholars need to understand both sides – the consumer and the manager. As in the netnography, we found several similarities in the brand managers' dialogue (Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009; Zheng, Baskin, & Peng, 2018). In particular, a common approach between Dior and Chanel; Louis Vuitton and Gucci. Prada positions itself as a more rebellious brand, and this is also confirmed by prior results, while Burberry is still adapting.

Finally, the fourth study, using an online survey and field experiment, answered the last two research questions: Can mass/niche cool brands be associated with higher loyalty and love in a real-life setting? Can conspicuous consumption strengthen/weaken the relationship between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and brand loyalty? And between brand coolness (mass/niche cool brands) and attitude towards the brand? With this last study, we were able to confirm prior results analysed throughout the thesis, explore possible relationships between constructs and open new avenues of research for scholars. With our field experiment, we aimed to produce new insights into actual behaviour, which is much more exciting and reliable than studying only predictive behaviour. Findings demonstrate that both ATB and CC are of major relevance for the topic of luxury consumption and brand coolness (e.g., O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Chaudhuri, Mazumdar & Ghoshal, 2011). For instance, niche cool brands are positively related to low CC which will influence a positive attitude (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). On another hand, results confirm a positive association on brand loyalty, between niche cool brands and low CC.

Overall, we were able to answer all the proposed research questions. Therefore, an important conclusion and insight from our thesis is that consumers' attitudes were similar throughout the four studies (Warren, Batra, Loureiro, & Bagozzi, 2019; Swaminathan, Sorescu, Steenkamp, O'Guinn, & Schmitt, 2020). We employed different methods, to maximize relevance and credibility, and to confirm participants' answers. Consumers' perceptions were similar for different luxury brands, for instance, cool brands were perceived as cool throughout the whole thesis, and uncool brands were also perceived as uncool. Furthermore, online perceptions analysed concerning the netnography were confirmed in the focus group study, so that consumer perceptions were stable in both methods. Finally, in the survey and field experiment we were also able to confirm mass versus niche cool perceptions, as well as the impact of conspicuous consumption. The results were similar, enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

6.2. Theoretical contributions

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore luxury consumption behaviour, involving brand coolness perceptions. This includes understanding the main theories and methodologies explored in the literature, luxury brand communication on Instagram, and if mass versus niche cool brands can be associated with different characteristics. Furthermore, we explore the effect of conspicuous consumption on brand loyalty and brand love. The topics analysed throughout

the thesis are of great relevance as consumer perceptions are constantly changing, and brands need to adapt their strategies to enhance their presence. We add to the literature on the topics discussed below.

First, our descriptive analysis gives an overview of the literature, which will help future researchers to navigate the topic (e.g., potential journals open to publishing about the topic). The topics investigated reveal the current trend in luxury fashion consumption, allowing researchers and practitioners to capture the state-of-the-art.

Second, the thesis adds to the topic of consumer behaviour, as we analysed the constructs in several scenarios and through several studies considering both predicted and actual behaviour. Consumers are becoming more attentive, and so it is important to create a stable, long-term relationship between brands and consumers.

Third, brand coolness is a fairly recent topic, but has been the subject of research in recent years. This thesis extends knowledge on brand coolness from two perspectives: firstly, luxury brands were selected based on coolness perceptions, so all studies were based on being perceived as cool brands; secondly, through analysing differences between mass and niche cool. Therefore, researchers can take our insights into consideration for future investigations.

Fourth, our thesis used a mixed approach with different methods: focus groups, interviews, netnography, survey and field experiment. To our knowledge, this is the first thesis to use these tools in this context.

Fifth, our insights are relevant for marketing communication strategy. Concerning the netnography findings, the brands studied react positively to celebrations. For instance, Fashion Weeks, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Eve. When launching new products or new collections, brands increase their engagement, with a consequent increase in the number of followers and likes. Creating partnerships with celebrities and collaborations with influencers also increase followers and engagement, as well as organic influencer posts using designer products.

6.3. Managerial contributions

Considering our main topics, we will analyse the main implications for luxury managers. To be cool is subjective, but managers can implement actions to enhance coolness perceptions. This thesis can assist academics and practitioners in understanding the different direct and indirect connections between antecedents and outcomes of luxury fashion helping to formulate

their marketing strategies, and focusing on specific subjects (e.g., brand desire, authenticity, luxury markets, value perceptions, luxury fashion communication, luxury sustainability or status signalling).

1. *Brand Desire.* To create desire is a challenge, especially today, where consumers are moving in a fast-paced society. Thus, brand managers need to capture attention, which can be created at first through suspense and a more secret environment. Limited editions are becoming more common with luxury brands trying to provide items with new colours, logos and patterns, more appealing – and 'more cool' - to their publics. For instance, before launching a new collection, Louis Vuitton uses Instagram to connect with users, asking if they are ready for the new collection, uploads sneak-peak posts, creating suspense. Usually, engagement rates are high before launches, as consumers are attentive to these posts. Gucci presents the whole collection on its website and Instagram feed but uses celebrities to communicate their new items, instead of creating a suspense environment. Chanel and Dior are the least accessible online, leading consumers to visit the physical store to discover the most recent collection.

2. *Authenticity.* To avoid counterfeit items, luxury brands are providing consumers with new techniques to ensure originality. For instance, through originality chips (Chanel), originality cards (Dior), or not allowing invoicing to a company/organization (Louis Vuitton, Hermès).

3. *Luxury Markets.* One usual action within the luxury market is the 'price increase', at the beginning of every year are. Through the practice of 'price increase', brands try to become more exclusive and less accessible to the whole market. This enhances competition as brands compete to be more exclusive and less mainstream. For example, Chanel and Louis Vuitton opted to only increase the price of their best-selling items, while Dior and Hermès decided to raise the price of the whole collection.

4. *Value perceptions.* The concept of value creation is related to desire, as one leads to the other. Creating trends is a means to enhance exclusivity and develop coolness enabling luxury brands to be associated with high/low value perceptions, and thus to be perceived as more or less cool. The multi-pochette crossbody bag from Louis Vuitton is a perfect example of how Gen Z creates new trends, being one of the most wanted and perceived to be cool item. Also, this bag is perceived to be 'Instagrammable', enhancing its online value. A post with the multi-pochette, is a cool post; Balenciaga's

speedy shoes are in the topmost luxury items, as they are "Insta-famous"; the same happens with the Dior book bag, Off-white crossbody bag and Gucci waist-bag. Besides these luxury brands being widely known, these specific items are the most wanted and are perceived as the coolest items at the moment and thus, having a higher value.

5. *Luxury retail experience.* As consumers are more attentive, the whole luxury experience needs to become more customized. Age, gender, lifestyle, internet usage and other variables need to be taken into consideration, as the experience needs to be adapted to each target. Consumers will associate more or less quality, depending on their whole experience. Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality are becoming more common, and the impact of the pandemic led luxury brands to adapt their strategy. These techniques enabled brands to create a luxury experience, in digital platforms. For instance, for Louis Vuitton consumers, each store created an online event through Zoom to present the new collection; Fashion weeks in Milan, London, New York and Paris were available online for several luxury brands, so that consumers could also participate.

6. *Luxury brand communication.* Using social media in a more effective way, through appropriate targeting. Gen Z and millennials are different, so communication should be adapted for each group. Decisions such as choosing the correct platform, the items to communicate and the time/place are very important in order to obtain the expected positive results. For example, Louis Vuitton created several limited editions with Instagram influencers (e.g., Chiara Ferragni); WeChat is mainly used in China while WhatsApp is used in Western countries.

7. *Sustainability.* Through using digital channels and techniques such as AR, VR and AI, luxury brands are becoming more sustainable. Past research emphasized the fact that luxury was not a sustainable business. However, nowadays there is an effort to change this association. Louis Vuitton is changing their policy in terms of printed invoices and orders; Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Gucci are now pricing their boxes and bags; Communication on digital platforms is also concerned about showing the whole value chain behind the luxury items.

8. *Status signalling.* The most important factor in status signalling is that consumers want to be noticed. Luxury brands are following this trend by creating items with more logos, different patterns and prints, colours never seen before, so that consumers can stand out in the crowd. For instance, Louis Vuitton is changing the patterns on their best-selling

bags (e.g., Neverfull, Speedy, Petite Malle), Gucci created new trainers with printed logos all-over, and Balenciaga launched a new collection of all-over logo jumpers with new colours (e.g., pink, blue).

6.4. Limitations

This research has limitations, and the findings need to be interpreted with caution. The search for papers published in English and available in WOS and Scopus databases may limit the outcome. The choice of keywords may also limit the search, even if based on top reference articles. Finally, the screening process may have omitted relevant research. However, the researchers believe that the rigorous procedure of the systematic review has reduced the likelihood of missing research containing relevant information that could critically alter our conclusions.

Concerning the focus group, the group's composition may bias the results as the sample may not be representative of the general population. Furthermore, the main limitation of the quantitative study based on self-administered questionnaires concerns participants' attention, which is not under our control.

Another limitation is due to time constraints, and consumers' constantly changing behaviour patterns. For instance, what is trending today may change tomorrow due to the gigantic impact of social media. Therefore, our netnography findings may not be relatable in a short time span.

6.5. Future Research – Future Trends

The luxury industry is continuously evolving, and considering consumer behaviour, brands should adapt as fast as possible. In recent years, the use of Augmented Reality, Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality has become more common, specifically in the fashion market. Researchers should be aware of these techniques and carry out experiments to reveal theoretically and practically how consumers are changing their approach to the fashion industry.

Past research has pointed out the need for more studies contributing to knowledge and strategies. Taking into consideration the relevance of these trends, we decided to explore further several research questions for future directions, (see Table 6.1). For instance, when consumers have a favourable VR/AR experience, they can feel positive emotions, happiness, and well-being, which can increment what could be felt in a physical-store experience. These

techniques can mimic pleasure, excitement, pleasure, and other feelings. In other applications, one very interesting example is in involving individuals with disabilities in luxury experiences.

We recommend researchers to analyse adaptations to VR/AR that can be more effective depending on age, gender and sociopsychological variables. The managers interviewed agree that the fashion market was able to find a new source of revenue during the pandemic, for instance, through introducing immersive technologies. Louis Vuitton and Prada are testing a new feature named virtual mirror, in which consumers can try on clothes, shoes and sunglasses. Gucci is now implementing AR use through apps such as Roblox and VRChat.

Table 6.1. Future trends

Future Trends	Future Avenues of Research
Virtual Reality	How will the engagement process evolve between consumer and brands when using immersive technologies? How will consumers try out luxury items (e.g., jewellery)? How can brands provide a luxury experience through digital channels?
Artificial Intelligence	Can chatbots answer detailed luxury questions? Are online assistants able to meet luxury consumers expectations?
Augmented Reality	Examine gender and age differences in AR acceptance. Provide a whole shopping experience through virtual closets. How can augmented reality lenses influence willingness to buy? Do augmented reality filters impact credibility? Is revenge shopping a trend? Could AR provide ecological value in the luxury context? How does culture affect perceptions of coolness? How does culture affect the acceptance of immersive technologies? Measuring coolness perceptions on different digital platforms, using the same stimulus. S-O-R framework analysis in the luxury fashion context: testing for mass and niche coolness with different stimulus. TAM model could be extended and implemented in the luxury fashion context.
Legal and ethical issues	Augmented reality showrooms, are they safe? To what extent can we affirm that using vegan leather is ethical (e.g., Stella McCartney)? Analysing coolness perceptions of e-commerce luxury websites: should I buy at Farfetch or at the brands' website?

Source: Author's elaboration

Chapter 7: References

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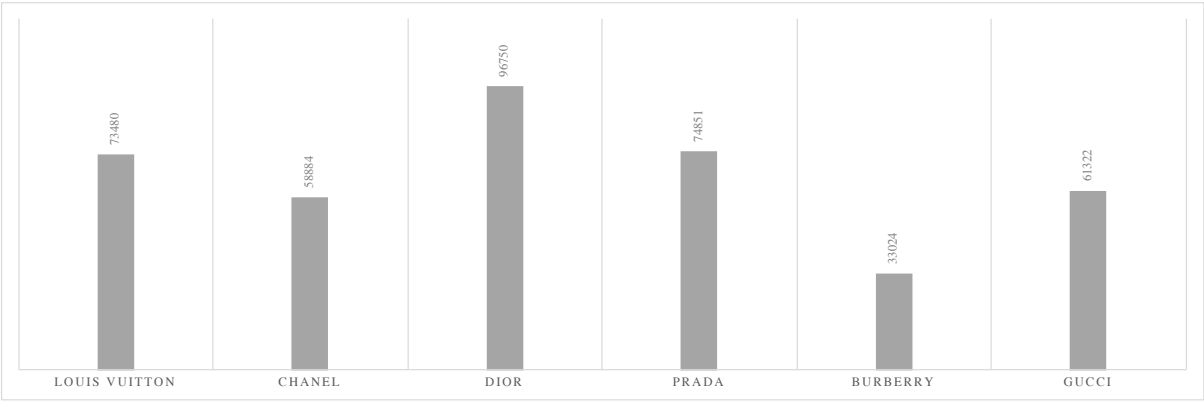
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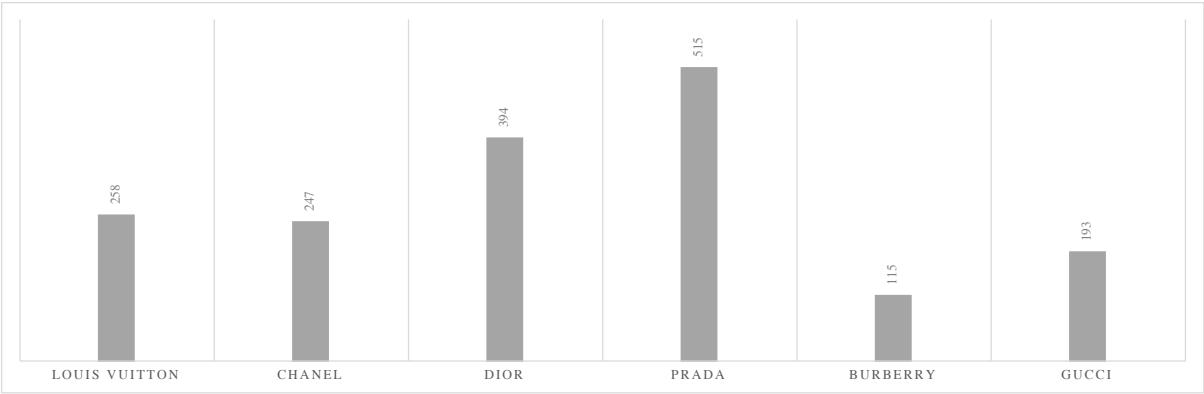
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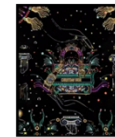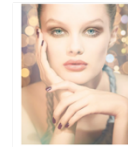
Appendices

Appendix A: Average Likes

Brand	Average Likes
LOUIS VUITTON	73480
CHANEL	58884
DIOR	96750
PRADA	74851
BURBERRY	33024
GUCCI	61322

Appendix B: Average Comments

Brand	Average Comments
LOUIS VUITTON	258
CHANEL	247
DIOR	394
PRADA	515
BURBERRY	115
GUCCI	193

Appendix C: DIOR Instagram analysis

	Photo	Photo	Reels	Reels	Video	Photo	Photo	Reels	Photo	Reels
LIKES	23658 likes + 139624 views	71376	69000	47100	262704	59633	45291	119764 views + 24766 likes	112524	155564 views + 30407 likes
# HASHTAGS	#DiorBookTote #StephenJones #MariaGraziaChiuri	#DiorMaison #Dior #MariaGraziaChiuri #InesManai	#Dior #DiorbyKimJones #MrKimJones #KimJones #DiorB23 #DiorB27	#Dior #DiorbyKimJones #MrKimJones #KimJones #DiorOblique	#Dior #DiorbyKimJones #MrKimJones #KimJones #RobertPattinson #DiorModernTailoring #DiorB27	#DiorHoliday #DreamInDior #DiorMakeup	#DiorHoliday #DreamInDior #DiorMakeup	#DiorCruise #Dior #MariaGraziaChiuri	#DiorParfums #DiorHistories #DreamInDior	#Dior #DiorHoliday #DiorSkincare #DiorMakeup #DiorParfums
FAMOUS PEOPLE	Maria Grazia Chiuri	Maria Grazia Chiuri	Not	Not	Robert Pattison	Kris Grikaite	Kris Grikaite	Not	Not	Not
COMMENTS	187	222	1061	195	1157	251	216	153	220	172
CONCEPTS	Green heart emoji, love, beautiful, spectacular	Dream, heart emoji, love	Dream, heart emoji, like emoji, fire emoji	Well done, heart emoji, love, beautiful, elegance	Handsome, black heart emoji, love, fire emoji	Fire emoji, queen, beautiful, elegant, fabulous	Fire emoji, queen, beautiful, magnific, fabulous	fire emoji, love emoji, blessing emoji, beautiful, amazing	Magic, dream, wonderful, heart emoji, christmas,	Happy, stars emoji, wonderful, heart emoji, 2021, new year
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	Positive	Positive, classy, love	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
DATE	25-Nov	26-Nov	27-Nov	27-Nov	28-Nov	29-Nov	30-Nov	14-Dec	24-Dec	01-Jan
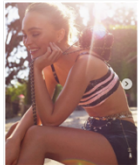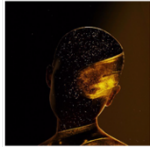
Appendix D: BURBERRY Instagram analysis

	Photo	Photo	Photo	Video	Video	Photo	Photo	Photo	Reels	Photo
LIKES	56049	32415	62352	24096	23543	38088	37013	41486	2018311 views + 92916 likes	26506
# HASHTAGS	#ThePocketBag #BurberryFestive	#BurberryFestive	#BurberryFestive	#BurberryFestive	#BurberryFestive	#BurberryFestive	#TheLolaBag	#TheLolaBag	#BurberryFestive	#Burberry
FAMOUS PEOPLE	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not
COMMENTS	135	149	145	93	44	56	81	97	568	62
CONCEPTS	Fire emoji, heart emoji	Love, heart emoji, wonderful	Heart emojis, wonderful, luxury	Black heart emoji, fire emoji, love, obsessed	Love, stars emoji	Iconic, in love, heart emoji	Love, amazing, fashion, heart emoji	Love, amazing, trench coat, cute, heart emoji	Christmas, clapping hands emoji, hungry, beautiful	Love, fashion, heart emoji
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
DATE	24-Nov	25-Nov	27-Nov	27-Nov	28-Nov	29-Nov	30-Nov	14-Dec	25-Dec	01-Jan
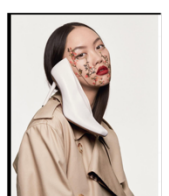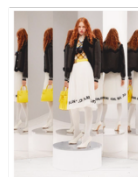
Appendix E: CHANEL Instagram analysis

	Photo	Photo	Photo	Video	Video	Photo	Photo	Photo	Video	Video
LIKES	167745	155473	136121	38671 likes + 250451 views	33876 likes + 226123 views	64372	65113	58752	536323 views + 61373 likes	165322 views + 25932 likes
# HASHTAGS	#ChanelCruise #Chanel #Le19M #Desrues #LilyRoseDepp	#ChanelCruise #Chanel #LilyRoseDepp	#ChanelCruise #Chanel #Le19M #Desrues #LilyRoseDepp	11 posts regarding Chanel Dreaming until 22 November. #ChanelDreaming ChanelFineJewelry #ChanelWatches #COCOCRUSH #CODECOCO	#ChanelSkincare #Sublimage	#ChanelSkincare #Sublimage	#BleuDeChanel #ChanelFragrance	#ChanelHoliday	Not	Not
FAMOUS PEOPLE	Lily-Rose Depp, actress	Lily-Rose Depp, actress	Lily-Rose Depp, actress	Imari Karanja	Not	Not	Gaspard Ulliel	Nora Attal, Mata, Aymeline Valade	Not	Not
COMMENTS	569 comments	511 comments	379	179	134	142	247	238	426	164
CONCEPTS	Icon, heart emojis, sublime, beautiful	Heart emoji, perfect, iconic, queen	Heart emojis, glowing, pretty, queen	Heart emojis, perfection, love, elegant, beautiful	Amazing, fire emojis, in love, heart emoji	Amazing, fire emojis, in love, heart emoji	Divine, in love emoji, hot, sexy	Stars, heart emoji, diamonds emoji.	Christmas, tree, gift, heart emojis, holidays	New year, fire emoji, heart emoji
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	Positive	Positive, classy, love	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
DATE	16-Nov	16-Nov	17-Nov	19-Nov	28-Nov	28-Nov	29-Nov	15-Dec	25-Dec	01-Jan

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Appendix F: LOUIS VUITTON Instagram analysis

	Photo	Video	Photo	Video	Video	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo	Video	Photo
LIKES	118636	41868 likes + 245999 views	58085	47761	46364 likes + 346333 views	85355	102424	264689	85019	287310 views + 50789 likes	268819 views + 55225 likes
# HASHTAGS	#LouisVuitton #LVFW2020	#LouisVuitton #LVFW2020	#LouisVuitton #LVFW2020 #MalgosiaBela	#LouisVuitton #LVFW2020 #MaryelUchida	#LouisVuitton	#LouisVuitton #LVFW2020	#LouisVuitton #LVPreColl	#LouisVuitton #LVGifts	#LouisVuitton #LVGifts	#LouisVuitton #LVGifts	#LouisVuitton
FAMOUS PEOPLE	Nicolas Ghesquiere	Nicolas Ghesquiere	Malgosia Bela	Maryel Uchida	Olympia Greece	Not	Virgil Abloh	Not	Not	Not	Not
COMMENTS	437 comments	160 comments	194	134	306	271	241	1124 comments	318 comments	169 comments	221
CONCEPTS	Classy, Love, Wonderful, Heart emoji	Heart emoji	Lovely, dream, Heart emojis	Marmont, Dream, Heart emojis	Perfect, Classic, Heart emojis, Love	Stunning, Love, wow, beautiful, heart emojis	Clapping hands emoji, love, wonderful, best brand	Clapping hands emoji, love, best brand	Unreall, heart emoji, love emojis, christmas	Christmas, love, stars emoji, love emoji, amazing	New year, 2021, happy, amazing, love, heart emojis
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	Positive	Positive, classy, love	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
DATE	25-Nov	25-Nov	26-Nov	26-Nov	27-Nov	30-Nov	01-Dec	16-Dec	23-Dec	25-Dec	01-Jan
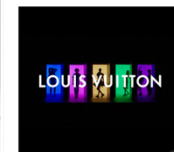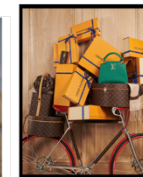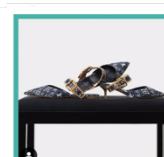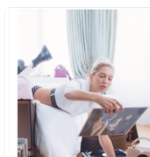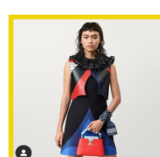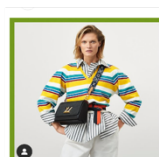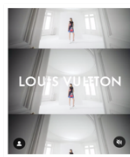
Appendix G: GUCCI Instagram analysis

	Video	Photo	Photo	Video	Photo	Photo	Photo	Reels	Photo	Photo	Photo
LIKES	53505 likes + 391058 views	94903	94960	61376 likes + 351113 views	89496	45640 likes + 250868 views	84279	67281	74725	54886	43913
# HASHTAGS	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #GGMarmont	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #GGMarmont	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #GGMarmont	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #GucciHorsebit1955	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #GGMarmont	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift	#TheAlchemistGarden #AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #GucciBeauty	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #GGMarmont	#AlessandroMichele #GucciGift #Gucci
FAMOUS PEOPLE	Alessandro Michele	Alessandro Michele	Alessandro Michele	Alessandro Michele	Alessandro Michele	Models	Models	Not	Not	Not	Not
COMMENTS	206 comments	420 comments	397 comments	285 comments	229 comments	224 comments	219 comments	283 comments	145 comments	147 comments	97 comments
CONCEPTS	Marmont, Dream, Heart emojis, Love	Marmont, Dream, Heart emojis	Marmont, Dream, Heart emojis	Marmont, Dream, Heart emojis	Elegant, Dream, Heart emojis, Love	Marmont, Dream, Heart emojis, Cute, Love,	Love, nice, cute Heart emojis	Dreaming, love, heart emojis.	Happy holidays, peace, heart emojis.	New year, 2020, heart emoji, fire emoji	Happy new year, multiple emojis.
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
DATE	27-Nov	25-Nov	26-Nov	27-Nov	28-Nov	30-Nov	01-Dec	21-Dec	25-Dec	31-Dec	01-Jan

Appendix H: PRADA Instagram analysis

	Reels	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo	Reels	Photo	Photo	Reels	Photo	Photo
LIKES	30467	34280	52568	56186	78594	25192	75937	70125	184374 views + 25623 likes	118232	33611
# HASHTAGS	#PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts	#PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts #Prada	#PradaLineaRossa #Prada #GusKenworthy	#PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts #Prada	#PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts #Prada	#PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts #Prada	#PradaEnchanted #Prada	#PradaReEdition #PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts #Prada	#PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts	#PradaHoliday20 #PradaGifts #Prada	#PradaGroupRemix #PradaGroup #PradaArchives
FAMOUS PEOPLE	Villa Ferrari Gnutti	Not	Gus Kenworthy	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not	Not
COMMENTS	146	125	199	111	166	108	243	169	106	192	153
CONCEPTS	Heart emoji, perfection, love	Fantastic, in love, stars emoji	Excellent, fire emoji, hot, ski emoji	Love, black heart emojis, in love, classy	Love, black heart emojis, in love, classy	Top, Queens Gambit, fire emoji	Black heart emoji, Dubai, exclusive, great,	Black heart emoji, love , fire emoji, elegant	Christmas, elegant, fashion, clapping hands, black heart emoji	Love it, elegant, fashion, black heart emoji, new year, 2021	Clapping hands, 2021, heart emoji, fire emoji
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
DATE	18-Nov	19-Nov	20-Nov	25-Nov	26-Nov	26-Nov	29-Nov	19-Dec	25-Dec	31-Dec	01-Jan
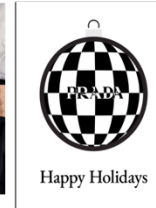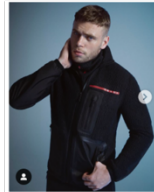
Appendix I: Total of Instagram Posts
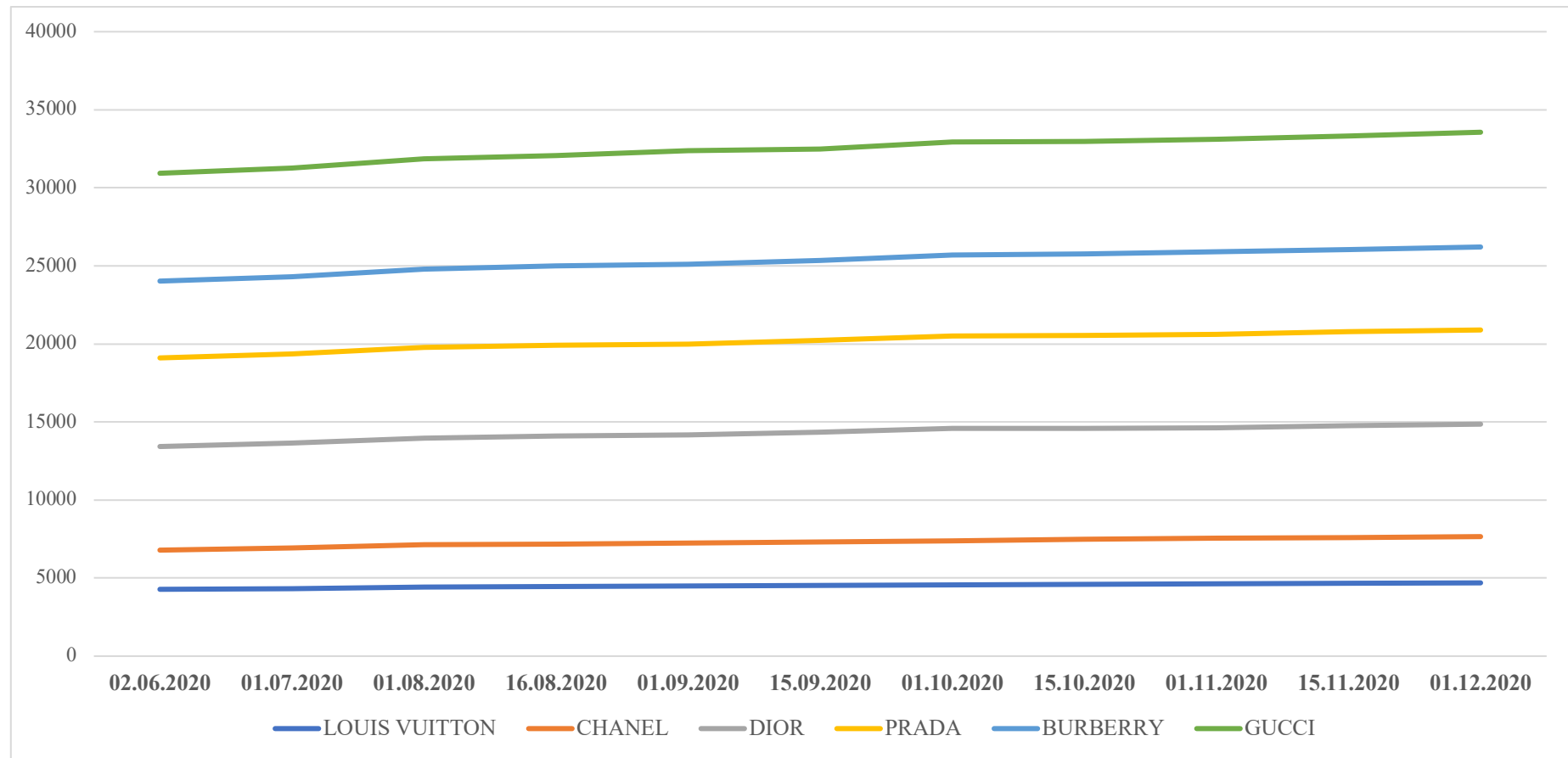
Appendix J: Total of Instagram Followers
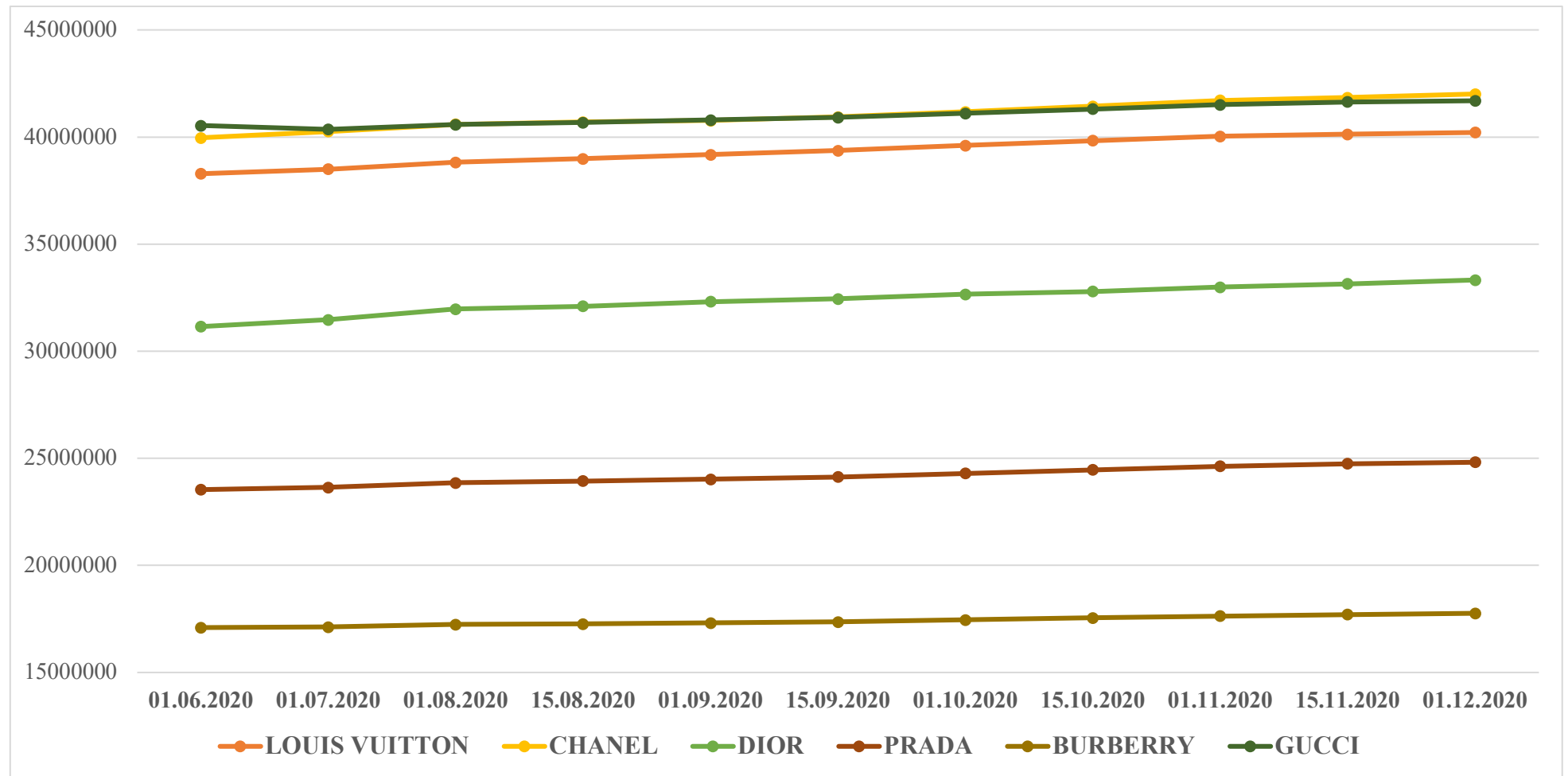
Appendix K: Focus Group

Introduction	Description of a focus group
	Introduction to the topic in investigation
Opening	Brief presentation of member of the focus group
	Please tell us your name, age, degree, academic background and level of internet use.
Transition	Are you a frequent luxury buyer?
	Are you a frequent internet user?
Key-question 1	Which characteristics of a brand do you consider most important when deciding to buy a luxury item?
	What do you feel when buying luxury items?
Key-question 2	Where do you prefer to buy? Online or offline?
Key-question 3	Which are the aspects that make you want to repurchase and be loyal to a luxury brand?
Group Discussion	Can you reach a group consensus regarding the discussed topics?
Conclusion	We are researching for coolness and luxury brands. Do you consider adding anything that could help us?

Appendix L: Pre-test brands tested

TESTED BRANDS	MEANS	TESTED BRANDS	MEANS
Louis Vuitton	5.53	VEJA	3.89
Gucci	5.39	Hollister	4.71
Versace	5.19	Forever 21	4.29
Michael Kors	5.13	GAP	4.29
Carolina Herrera	4.83	Manolo Blahnik	4.75
Tory Burch	4.86	Ralph Lauren	4.92
Burberry	5.06	Balmain	4.63
Dior	5.31	Amina Muaddi	4.10
Chanel	5.12	Polène Paris	4.24
Hermès	5.05	Chiara Ferragni	4.33
Balenciaga	4.83	Birkenstock	4.49
Givenchy	4.84	Elisabetta Franchi	4.24
Yves Saint Laurent	4.67	Ermengildo Zelda	4.18
Tommy Hilfiger	4.97	Oscar De La Renta	4.53
Carhartt	4.56	Max Mara	4.33
Bvlgari	4.94	Furla	4.43
Valentino	5.11	Stella McCartney	4.88
Christian Loubotin	4.73	All Saints	4.92
Alexander McQueen	4.91	Superdry	4.71
Cartier	5.06	Chloe	4.78
Sandro	4.86	Coach	4.62
Prada	5.31	Salvator Ferragamo	4.91
Zara	5.17	Kate Spade	4.94
Mango	4.72	Marc Jacobs	4.68
Uterque	4.58	H&M	4.69
Intimissimi	4.86	Miu Mil	5.17
Guess	4.86	Monique Lhuiller	4.98
DSQUARED2	4.67	Kurt Geiger	4.32
Emporio Armani	5.27	Karl Lagerfeld	4.66
Kenzo	4.92	Cèline	4.80
Ray Ban	5.34	DKNY	4.55
Dolce & Gabbana	5.03	Calvin Klein	4.71
Tous	4.75	Golden Goose	5.14
Tods	4.69	Brownie	4.85
Longchamp	4.78	Bimba Y Lola	4.74
Ralph Lauren	4.66	Loewe	5.05
Jimmy Choo	5.06	Vanina	2.60
Havaianas	5.02	AVAVAV	4.52
Fred Perry	4.89	Maison Margiela	4.52
Moschino	4.50	Moi Mimi	4.82

Fendi	4.84	**P.A.R.O.S.H.**	2.63
Olivia Ballard	5.05	**Manoush**	2.72
Bottega Veneta	5.00	**Zimmermann**	3.04
Off White	4.61	**Khaite**	2.74
Jacquemus	4.33	**Orothon**	2.68
Supreme	4.55	**Smythe**	2.77
Dr Martens	4.53	**J. Kim**	3.89
Patagonia	4.80	**Sentaler**	2.67
The North Face	5.04	**Vicolo**	2.92
Abercrombie & Fitch	4.57	**Moncler**	3.99
Victoria Secret	4.75	**By Far**	2.65

Appendix M: Measures

Scales and items	STUDY 1		STUDY 2	
	Skewness	**Kurtosis**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
Extraordinary				
It is exceptional	-0.889	0.200	-1.450	1.946
It is superb	-0.506	-0.180	-1.214	.957
It is fantastic	-0.968	0.749	-1.400	2.509
It is extraordinary	-0.729	0.429	-1.300	1.993
Exciting				
It is energetic	-0.592	0.308	-1.342	1.761
It is outgoing	-0.634	0.165	-.952	1.431
It is lively	-0.629	0.391	-1.166	1.666
It is vigorous	-0.410	-0.301	-1.299	1.739
Aesthetically appealing				
It looks good	-0.806	0.430	-1.382	2.650
It is aesthetically appealing	-0.862	0.901	-1.299	2.131
It is attractive	-0.779	0.633	-1.516	3.474
It has a really nice appearance	-0.813	0.460	-1.510	2.891
Original				
It is innovative	-0.688	0.097	-1.197	1.643
It is original	-0.655	-0.188	-.853	0.341
It does its own thing	-0.676	0.171	-1.041	1.018
Authentic				
It is authentic	-0.626	0.181	-1.315	2.385
It is true to its roots	-0.520	0.042	-1.129	1.769
It does not seem artificial	-0.650	0.332	-1.129	0.856
It doesn't try to be something it's not	-0.637	0.514	-0.898	0.520
Rebellious				
It is rebellious	-0.412	-0.391	-0.785	-0.097
It is defiant	-0.518	-0.317	-0.918	0.450
It is not afraid to break rules	-0.444	-0.166	-0.861	0.220
It is non-conformist	-0.414	-0.208	-0.820	-0.007
High status				
It is chic	-0.502	-0.204	-0.970	1.261

It is glamorous	-0.728	0.428	-1.418	2.731
It is sophisticated	-0.654	0.306	-1.265	1.741
It is ritzy	-0.560	-0.134	-1.011	.955
Popular				
It is liked by most people	-0.649	0.085	-1.191	1.298
It is in-style	-0.843	0.805	-1.238	2.590
It is popular	-0.707	-0.039	-0.860	.430
It is widely accepted	-0.599	-0.182	-0.862	.563
Subculture				
It makes people who use it different from other people	-0.724	0.005	-1.409	2.024
If I were to use it, it would make me stand apart from others	-0.714	0.178	-1.184	1.391
It helps people who use it stand apart from the crowd	-0.751	0.301	-1.189	1.115
People who use it are unique	-0.804	0.374	-1.199	1.120
Iconic				
It is a cultural symbol	-0.624	-0.025	-1.222	2.083
It is iconic	-1.095	1.002	-1.177	2.162

Scales and items	STUDY 1		STUDY 2	
	Skewness	**Kurtosis**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
Conspicuous Consumption				
Choosing a luxury brand, I show my friends and family that I am different.	-0.793	-0.247	-1.223	0.987
I choose hotels and brands to create my own style that everyone admires.	-0.808	-0.077	-1.142	1.293
I always buy top-of-line products and services.	-0.450	-0.870	-1.221	1.484
I like to show others that I am sophisticated.	-0.779	-0.198	-1.333	1.348
Overall Attitude				
My overall attitude toward [Chosen Brand Here] is bad/good.	-0.898	0.599	-1.300	1.653
My overall attitude toward [Chosen Brand Here] is unfavorable/favorable.	-0.957	0.905	-1.177	1.586
My overall attitude toward [Chosen Brand Here] is negative/positive.	-0.923	0.702	-1.430	3.246
Brand Loyalty (Only for Study 1)				
I will suggest [Chosen Brand Here] to other consumers.	-0.786	-0.097	-	-
I would love to recommend [Chosen Brand Here] to my friends.	-0.891	0.313	-	-
I regularly visit [Chosen Brand Here] brand.	-0.525	-0.871	-	-

I intend to visit [Chosen Brand Here] again.	-0.706	-0.326	-	-
I am satisfied with [Chosen Brand Here] with every visit.	-0.766	0.231	-	-
[Chosen Brand Here] would be my first choice.	-0.613	-0.601	-	-

Overall Mass versus Niche Cool perception

Which of the brands do you consider to be more Niche-Cool?	-	-	-0.938	0.841
Which of the brands do you consider to be more Mass-Cool?	-	-	-0.853	0.528

Brand Love (Only for Study 2)

To what extent to you feel that wearing [Chosen Brand Here] says something true and deep about whom you are as a person?	-	-	0.314	-1.537
Using the products: to what extent do you feel yourself desiring to wear [Chosen Brand Here]?	-	-	0.211	-1.589
Please express the extent to which you feel emotionally connected to [Chosen Brand Here].	-	-	0.156	-1.631
Please express the extent to which you believe that you will be wearing [Chosen Brand Here] for a long time.	-	-	0.081	-1.569
Please express your overall feelings and evaluations towards [Chosen Brand Here].	-	-	-0.094	-1.605
Suppose [Chosen Brand Here] were to go out of existence, to what extent would you feel anxiety?	-	-	-0.498	-1.097
Suppose [Chosen Brand Here] were to go out of existence, to what extent would you feel anguish?	-	-	-0.489	-1.081
Suppose [Chosen Brand Here] were to go out of existence, to what extent would you feel discomfort?	-	-	-0.447	-1.215