

Luxury for oneself or luxury for others?
Exploring the underlying emotions behind inconspicuous luxury consumption

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

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ETHICS APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

The field of luxury has been widely examined due to the financial advancement the industry has experienced over the last 10 years. Scholars have studied its antecedents by utilising attitude-behavioural models to discover consumers' motivations to purchase luxury goods. However, research is scarce in understanding the different kinds of luxury brand signals and consumption involved, specifically the inconspicuous and conspicuous kind. This research focuses on inconspicuous luxury consumption with the aim of deepening insights around *what* related emotions are involved in this consumption preference, *why* do they experience them and *how* do they deal with them. Additionally, this study explores non-financial assets such as cultural capital and social capital and how these may emotionally drive inconspicuous consumers to purchase certain levels of luxury brand signals. Utilising an exploratory and qualitative approach, in-depth interviews with 10 luxury consumers in Dubai with inconspicuous preferences were undergone and thematic analysis was used for analysis and interpretation.

Themes uncovered revealed that consumers go through a process of planning their luxury journey by pre-evaluating their choices of luxury conspicuousness. They exercise their active roles in the process and experience the choices they make and finally post-evaluate these choices. Emotions were revealed to have an important role in every part of this process, which dictates their behaviours, moving them on to the next stage of their journey. They experience these emotions because of the non-financial resources (social and/or cultural capital) they deem important to them. As they exercise their consumer choice, they experience positive, negative or mixed experiential emotions depending on whether it met their expectations. If it has, they are then able to enjoy their luxuries because it offers them symbolic schemas that complete their internal and external needs and extensions of themselves. After evaluating their experienced emotions throughout the journey, they begin the cycle once again by choosing inconspicuous luxury brands that positively elevates their emotions.

It is interesting to note that inconspicuous luxury consumers demonstrate several characteristics based on their social and cultural capital, which have not been identified before in past literature. This research uncovers six groupings yielding a typology of inconspicuous luxury consumers: fashion influencers, trendsetters, fashion followers, fashion indifferent, cultural conservatives and habitual buyers. They not only desire inconspicuous luxury brands for its aesthetic beauty, functionality and quality but because it asserts their different roles in society. The usefulness of the typology is demonstrated through links to emotions and levels of social and/or cultural capital and its applications to consumption levels of inconspicuous luxury goods (i.e. highly inconspicuous versus lower inconspicuous levels).

Findings offer theoretical implications in terms of luxury consumption and brand signalling and a deeper understanding into what can only be described as exploratory insights into the lives of inconspicuous luxury consumers. Further research in this line of work is needed to better uncover how emotions have a powerful role in luxury consumers' decision-making process. Managerial implications for luxury retail management and communications of the brand are also explained to assist in the conception and development process of future luxury brands and designs to better segment and target different desired markets.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different.”

- *Coco Chanel*-

Coco Chanel, founder of Chanel women’s fashion brand, once said “luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends” (Husic & Cicic, 2009). Along with her previous quote, it can be implied that luxury is a source of individuality and exclusivity that if taken away, may imply commonness and lack of uniqueness. Further, luxury is a means towards tangible (i.e. quality) and intangible (i.e. social) benefits that are a necessity to have in order to feel ‘special’ and be ‘noticed’. With desires for luxury by groups with diverse social and financial backgrounds, it has become clear that individuals have different motives for patronising luxury brands and unique approaches to consuming them.

It has been clear that the luxury goods industry has shown steady growth in market share and profits, despite the recent economic crisis. In 2008, The Economist unveiled a 34% decline in luxury goods consumption and found that there were feelings of guilt to ‘show off’ their extravagances at times of recession where individuals felt luxury ‘deprived’ (Riad, 2011). Yet of late, studies on the European apparel, accessories and luxury market revealed an annual growth rate of 1.5% of luxury sales between 2008 and 2012 with total revenues of \$610.6 billion in 2012. It is also forecasted to increase by 14.7% by 2017 (Marketline Advantage, 2013). Due to these promising numbers, it comes to no surprise that the luxury industry has caught the attention of economists, scholars and marketers alike where they are attempting to understand and possibly replicate the successes of profitable brands and learn from the failures of others.

Studies in the area of luxury research have attempted to understand the antecedents of luxury brand consumption to assist in strategic luxury marketing plans by looking at consumers’ meanings for luxury (Granot, Russell, & Brashear-Alejandro, 2013), luxury perceptions (Godey et al., 2013; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004), values of luxury (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009), attitudes towards luxury (Dubois & Laurent, 1994), motivations to obtain luxury goods (Han, Nunes, & Dreze, 2010; Truong & McColl, 2011) where the observed behaviour leads to luxury purchase intentions. Recently, emerging research has attempted to understand the role of self-identity (for limited studies in this area see Perez, Castano, & Quintanilla, 2010; Wiedmann et al., 2009) and moral norms (i.e. for moral issues related to counterfeiting see Kim, Jeong Cho, & Johnson, 2009) in luxury consumption research.

Additional investigations have led scholars to relate luxury consumption to established theories to explain and predict luxury purchasing behaviours such as the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour (Bian & Forsythe, 2012;

Phau, Sequeira, & Dix, 2009), theories of self-monitoring and interpersonal influence (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004), theory of motivations (Truong & McColl, 2011), theory of moral reasoning (Phau et al., 2009), theory of self-identity (Perez et al., 2010) in addition to theories on conspicuous luxury consumption to name a few. While these past studies have produced noteworthy insights, several important theoretical issues remain unanswered. The next section discusses these issues setting a case to why further researched is needed.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Since its inception, conspicuous consumption has been deemed a critical construct in luxury goods consumption from an economic viewpoint (Veblen, 1899) and social standpoint (Berger, Ho, & Joshi, 2011; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004) with empirical evidence that expands our understanding of this phenomenon. However, inconspicuous luxury consumption has received less attention (Economist, 2005) aside from limited research on the use of subtle signals and its relevance to identity communication (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010). A deeper insight into the theoretical mechanisms responsible for inconspicuous (privately consumed) luxury consumption as opposed to conspicuous (publicly consumed) luxury consumption deserves concerted attention and investigation.

Additionally, pursuing luxury brands, regardless of its reputation, has been perceived as the goal. Yet knowledge pertaining to the core belief that luxury itself is an emotionally-driven behaviour with underlying motivations that goes beyond a simple desire to own luxury for its perceived attributes is limited in literature. An understanding of their experienced emotions, why do they experience these emotions driving them to purchase inconspicuous products and how do they deal with these emotions may expand existing knowledge on conspicuousness and on this consumer segment.

Moreover, cultural capital and social capital, two powerful concepts in social class literature, have not been empirically researched in relation to luxury consumption, let alone inconspicuous consumers. Very few scholars (Berger & Ward, 2010; McQuarrie, Miller, & Philips, 2013) have identified cultural capital's importance in luxury consumption while social capital has not been undertaken as a crucial factor driving conspicuous versus inconspicuous consumption behaviours (except for Berger et al., 2011). With the universal agreement that emotions are a powerful force in consumer behaviour, there has not been research to date considering the experienced emotions of individuals with cultural or social capital. The importance of emotions in research might beg the question of how might emotions differ based on these two distinct resources and the different coping mechanisms involved.

1.2 Research objectives

After identifying several limitations in extant literature, it is my objective to investigate these issues with an outlook of exploration and discovery. The purpose of this study is to understand the emotional processes inconspicuous luxury consumers experience in relation to their luxury consumption choices. In retrospect, I would like to examine *what* emotions do inconspicuous consumers experience before, during and after their luxury consumption as well as understand *why* do they experience these emotions. Another layer to be examined in this context is *how* do they cope with these emotions, which may dictate their choice to purchase inconspicuous luxury as opposed to conspicuous ones.

Furthermore, evidence in literature that consumers with different kinds of non-financial capital may influence decisions towards different consumption preferences (Berger et al., 2011; Holt, 1998) makes these constructs of high importance in the luxury context. Considering the scarce amount of literature on cultural and social capital related to inconspicuous luxury consumption and the relevance of cultural and social capital may have on experienced emotions, I am prompted to take an exploratory approach to understand these theories' relevance in the inconspicuous luxury consumption context.

The findings of this study will present an initial step towards understanding the phenomenon of inconspicuous luxury consumption possibly uncovering a typology of inconspicuous consumer segments unknown to marketers and academics alike.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study has the potential to be applied to other fields of academic research. Firstly, whilst the focus of this study is on luxury, inconspicuous consumption can still have implications in other industries as behaviours and emotions can be transmitted to other goods that might not be of economic value. For instance, inconspicuous behaviours are apparent in consumption of education (Sullivan, 2001), charity (Glazer & Konrad, 1996) and personal relationships (Wang & Giskevicius, 2013).

Secondly, findings from the study can add to the existing knowledge of emotions in fields such as psychology, sociology and marketing. Emotions have also had no role in research on social and cultural capital therefore there is a possibility that this study may open further research avenues for those interested in studies on capital or expanding on the definition of emotion. The theoretical insights developed in this research will also provide the initial foundation toward a solid framework, which is needed to guide future research in the luxury and inconspicuous consumption domains.

Thirdly, one area of significance that this study may benefit is in the methodological area. The majority of empirical studies on emotions have focused on quantitative research especially in the field of consumer behaviour (Gaur, Herjanto, & Makkar,

2014). Interviewing methods as part of an exploratory study have also been used scarcely in emotions research and hence why the knowledge gained from this study can provide a different perspective on consumers' emotions before, during and after consumption and in this case of inconspicuous luxury goods. Adapting to new methodologies and research designs may uncover new and unique findings that have not emerged in past studies.

From a managerial perspective, I foresee that findings from the study on inconspicuous luxury consumption may have implications to marketers, luxury retailers and governing bodies. Marketers may be able to plan more robust advertising and communication strategies focusing on this tier of luxury consumers and enhancing tactics for targeting such a niche market. Luxury retailers may plan their stores to heighten luxury inconspicuous consumers' positive emotions, train retail staff to be sensitive to their inconspicuous consumers' needs and use findings on emotions to position their brand accordingly. Information on hierarchies of social classes provides governing bodies with ways to implement laws that the public believe is fair. Social capital and cultural capital are elements of social class thus understanding the associated emotions experienced may enable governments to plan and publicise their campaigns to their advantage.

1.4 Organisation of the thesis

The remainder of the research will attempt to present a comprehensive review of literature discussing the two types of luxury consumption and the attached motivations for owning such goods. An examination of research that centres on the role of emotions in consumer behaviour and specifically its association to luxury are also presented. Subsequently, a review of studies on signalling and non-financial capital (cultural and social) theories is discussed. An explanation of the methodology used and data analysis techniques follow along with findings from the interviews and a thorough discussion. Limitations and future research are proposed and finally, conclusions and marketing and academic implications are presented to complete this research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to better understand the nature of inconspicuous luxury consumers, which has previously received some theoretical attention but lacks in empirical evidence. This chapter begins with a review of research in the field of luxury offering a background into this study. The chapter moves on to studies on the popular consumption behaviour in luxury, the conspicuous kind whilst comparing it to what is already known in literature on inconspicuous luxury behaviours. It is also of importance to differentiate between inconspicuous consumption behaviours and inconspicuous brand designs that offer less signalling which is not often distinguished in previous studies. Subsequently, a discussion on motivations of luxury consumption as well as a brief summary on the wide existing literature on emotions and specifically existing emotions research in the field of luxury (that is surprisingly minimal) will follow.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion on literature dedicated to signalling and non-financial capital (social and capital) that dictates different consumption behaviours. This ties in well with the present study and will add to the understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumers. In summary, four areas in literature were researched to offer clarity and direction for this study to move forward. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical background research, the problem at hand, the behaviour and context in which this study is based on. A continuous review of the literature was conducted from August 2013 to September 2014 to stay up to date with new studies in this field that may add value to the research.

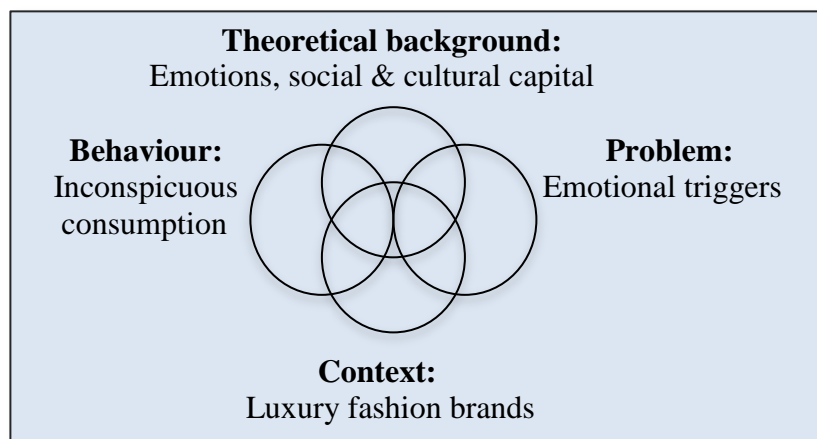


Figure 1 - Areas of literature studied

2.2 The many faces of luxury

The term, 'luxury,' originated from the old French, 'luxurie' which means "lasciviousness, sinful, self-indulgence," as well as the Latin 'luxus' defined as "excess, extravagance" (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009, p. 46). Nevertheless, it has been proven to be a challenge amongst luxury and economic scholars in coming to a consensus on the definition of luxury goods consumption. It is also imperative that researchers distinguish between luxury and premium brands that many have not made evident in their studies (Hieke, 2010; Jiang & Cova, 2012) which has caused misconstrued findings. Vigneron and Johnson (1999) have presented these differences in their analysis of previous luxury literature. Prestige brands encompass "up-market, premium and luxury brands" in this ascending order of prestige. They identified studies that have not clarified this unique difference where scholars simply interpreted luxury as the opposite of necessity. Further, this order of prestige may be based on social class, which can influence the meaning of luxury. Alleres (1990) identified luxury goods as a hierarchy based on its consumer accessibility. Inaccessible luxury of product distinctiveness and high price falls in the top level which belongs to the elite socio-economic class offering the pinnacle of social prestige. Next comes the intermediate luxury level that can be accessed by professional socio-economic class. Last enters the accessible luxury level, which can be obtained by the middle socio-economic class who fall under the category of those that desire to belong to a higher social class by making these luxury purchases. However, it can be understandable that consumers have different perceptions of luxury for the very same brand (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) as luxury is subjective and based on an individual's personal judgment.

Nueno and Quelch (1998) identified luxury brands as "those whose ratio of functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high" (p. 62) and yet it maintains its symbolic features: timeless, superfluous and aspirational (Hines & Bruce, 2007). With luxury being synonymous to tangible attributes such as price, craftsmanship and physical qualities (Han, Suk, & Chung, 2008; Hieke, 2010; Nia & Zaichkowsky, 2000), it is crucial to understand that consumers may perceive luxury for its symbolic features of uniqueness and authenticity (Turunem & Laaksonen, 2011, p. 473), which can be instigated by their emotions, values and goals. These are qualities that only genuine luxury can offer thus it cannot be imitated, making it one of a kind. Kapferer (1997) concurs with this ideology when he described the nature of luxury: "Luxury defines beauty; it is art applied to functional items. Like light, luxury is enlightening. [...] They offer more than mere objects: they provide reference of good taste. [...]. Luxury items provide extra pleasure and flatter all senses at once" (p. 253).

The more involved an individual is with the pursuit of luxury, the more rewarding they may perceive the consequences of attaining luxury. Thus, luxury brands that insinuate additional symbols such as accomplishments and attention to the self from peers (Bloch, Commuri, & Arnold, 2009) may be perceived as more rewarding and involving. Additionally, scarce products, luxury pieces and exotic items that successfully fulfil needs for uniqueness (NFU) will further involve them as it satisfies their interpersonal needs (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Even social needs that occur during shopping may develop a deeper

involvement in a product where individuals that desire to belong to certain reference groups and avoid others may use products to achieve the rewards of social belonging (Tauber, 1972). Thus, the more consumers comprehend the rewards they may receive from luxury goods, the more involved they become with the pursuit of luxury which may result in brand loyalty to specific brands that successfully offers them such rewards.

Towards a better understanding of luxury, other academics have defined it from a branding perspective. They imply that brand awareness, brand relationship and use, and self-congruency and communication of the self-concept are vital for luxury brands (Biel, 1992; Seringhaus, 2005). Phau and Prendergast (2000) postulate four crucial elements for a product to be luxurious; (1) exude exclusivity, (2) a recognised brand identity, (3) perceived quality and high brand awareness, and (4) preserve high sales levels and customer loyalty. Other researchers find it easier to comprehend luxury based on consumers' perceptions of values that drives consumption, which includes financial, functional, social and individual dimensions (Wiedmann et al., 2009). It has been identified in recent luxury research that the consumption of luxury is now open to consumers from different social classes as well as different age groups compared to previous perceptions of luxury (Godey et al., 2013).

Overall, there seems to be an agreement that luxury consumers may gain internal and more private values (Vickers & Renand, 2003) in addition to external social values (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004) by patronising luxury goods which includes a mix of components of functionalism, experientialism and symbolic interactionism (emotional) from a consumer's perception (Vickers & Renand, 2003). Traditionally, the conceptual meaning of 'luxury' in academic research has often been defined by researchers based upon the scholar's own understanding and how a luxury brand portrays its image (Barnier, Falcy, & Valette-Florence, 2012), rather than on how consumers comprehend the meaning of luxury and how they consume it. It is argued that a conceptualisation of the luxury phenomenon that builds upon the consumers' perspective (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013) would be more meaningful if the aim is to obtain a deeper understanding of consumers' inconspicuous consumption behaviours. Thus, to sum up and for the purpose of this study I adopt the following notion and definition of luxury that encapsulates the main elements from previous academic work: "luxury entails the hedonic emotional and cognitive desires of an individual to possess items with symbolic features of exclusivity and rarity as well as tangible attributes of beauty and quality. Its main functions act internally with a satisfaction of owning a unique and exquisite item as well as externally as an extension of oneself, signalling to others the desired identity of class and fine taste" (Makkar, Gaur, & Yap, 2014, pp. 479-480).

2.3 Conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption behaviours

Consumption is another mode of self identification (Belk, 1988) where consumers choose to show more devotion and attachment to brands similar to themselves and shares aspects of their identity (Fournier, 1998). It is a method of communication with others such as using the product's image, visibility and prominence (Berger & Ward, 2010). Thus, consumption is not only driven by a product's functionality but also its symbolic value (Levy, 1959). This thought leads to

economist Thorstein Veblen (1899) who coined the term conspicuous consumption in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, which he defines as the consumption of goods predominantly for the display of social class and wealth (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2008; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Prior to his work, John Rae also heavily discussed ideas of conspicuousness and non-financial capital where he mentioned he was inspired by Roman poet Horace who originated the term “keeping up with the Joneses” (Leibenstein, 1950). Those that have higher levels of status desires and prestige conspicuously consume to display their wealth with internal desires for esteem and envy from their peers (Veblen, 1899).

However, several scholars have since challenged Veblen’s theory claiming that it is misleading (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) and is purely restrained to the “trickle down” of consumption patterns from the social elite to the bottom of the hierarchy (Trigg, 2001). It is at times misconstrued to mean status consumption which refers to desires to gain prestige (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Other academics consider luxury consumption as a means to gain envy, respect, and acceptance into social circles using obvious displays of product use (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999) which is another restrictive view of luxury. For example, there are instances where luxury consumption is practiced inconspicuously such as drinking a valuable bottle of wine at home or wearing Victoria’s Secret lingerie, therefore desires for status are not necessarily of concern.

In addition to motives of displaying wealth and gaining status, conspicuous consumption has a fundamental role in relationships where men have been found to consume luxury goods conspicuously to signal wealth and attract prospective mates (Griskevicius et al., 2007). In a similar vein, women also conspicuously consume luxury products to deter others of the same sex that pose a threat to their relationships with their romantic partners (Wang & Griskevicius, 2013). Activating social competition goals or a competitive group environment has also been found to induce conspicuous consumption amongst lower tier consumers who have faced equality in material possessions or income when they focus on position gains (Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011).

Conspicuous behaviours seem to be instigated with those that perceive themselves to have higher resources or the chance of receiving greater resources and future success than those that do not (Mandel, Petrova, & Cialdini, 2006) as well as increases in their income (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993) thus making them more prone to purchasing luxury brands. Furthermore, materialists that can afford luxuries also seem to display signs of conspicuous consumption behaviours where success motivates individuals to flaunt their newfound possessions. They are also motivated out of envy for others’ belongings that are better than their own (Wong, 1997). Even those that are least well-off increase their conspicuous consumption and decrease their savings because they are “trying to keep up with the Joneses” and reduce the gap between them and those on top thus reducing dissatisfaction with their own possessions (Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011). Further theorising lead to the development of five meanings of conspicuous consumption which includes interpersonal mediation that refers to influences of social relationships; materialistic hedonism that relates to pleasures of consumption; communication of belonging to others in

society; status demonstration that signals wealth and social success and prestige; and ostentation that refers to purchasing expensive products easily identified by others (Marcoux, Filiatrault, & Cheron, 1997).

Nevertheless, despite the interest the area of conspicuous consumption has received in empirical studies (e.g. Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011; Wang & Griskevicius, 2013), inconspicuous luxury consumption have been kept in the dark with little knowledge of consumers' conscious and unconscious triggers that lead them to such behaviours. Status can now be expressed in more subtle and sophisticated ways (Canterbery, 1998) yet researchers would be tempted to believe that qualities of inconspicuous consumers would convey opposing characteristics of conspicuous consumers from values to the perceptions of luxury and emotions but this cannot be confirmed without empirical evidence to support that.

Utilising the limited empirical evidence available on inconspicuous luxury consumption, Han et al. (2010) argued that this type refers to “quiet luxury” which they termed those that patronise such brands as “patricians” inspired by the Roman ‘elite’. Consumers purchase brands with lower prominence (logo and other brand markers) to distance themselves from the mainstream (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Berger and Ward (2010) studied preferences for inconspicuous luxury brands where they discovered consumers joining one social circle to dissociate themselves from another circle they do not want to associate with, therefore they choose subtle brands that only those ‘in the know’ can recognise (to be further discussed in a later section on signalling).

Inconspicuous behaviours may not always be related to purchasing inconspicuous luxury brands with low brand prominence but might also involve the rejection of luxury brands completely and choosing to patronise normal brands. Geiger-Oneto et al. (2013) found that consumers may signal status by rejecting authentic and counterfeit luxuries showing that they can claim status without the desire to patronise status luxuries. This is consistent with Holt's (1998) theorising that due to luxury's availability to the masses, a valid distinction would be made using consumption experiences such as lifestyles rather than materialistic objects. However, there are several limitations identified in Geiger-Oneto et al.'s study. The study only considers conspicuous luxury brands or counterfeits as points of status, which limited respondents' answers to choosing to reject them altogether. A third dimension such as inconspicuous luxury goods may prove to be a way of signalling status to desirable social circles if they were given the choice. The study also considers consumers' perceptions of prestige, status and value through close-ended survey methods yet they do not delve into respondents' emotions related to their consumption, which may reveal deeper meanings as to why they reject conspicuous brands. Thus, the focus of this current study is on consumers that choose luxury brands with low prominence where emotions will be examined to better understand their deeper connection to their consumption choices.

Further, Ledbury Research identified connoisseurship and early adoption of luxuries as key motivators for inconspicuous luxuries that only a few can relate to (Economist, 2005) yet they have not discussed whether there are deep-seated intrinsic and extrinsic needs that could lead them to such desires. Postrel (2008) theoretically argued that consumers stereotype others' purchasing powers by race and thus choose conspicuous luxury goods to fend off perceptions that they belong to a 'poorer' group while those that belong to richer racial societies find visible luxuries less important. However, she offered no empirical evidence and support to clarify this theory. Despite the lack of empirical evidence on the consumption of luxury brands with low signalling, researchers agree that the experiential element of luxury consumption demonstrates that luxury is purchased for one's self which reveals hedonic needs of self-indulgence that it is mainly to achieve self-gratification and self-reward and reflect a personal image and intrinsic goals (Hume & Mills, 2013; Miller & Mills, 2012).

2.3.1 (In)conspicuous luxury brands versus (in)conspicuous luxury consumption

A distinction must be made at this point between (in)conspicuous luxury consumption and (in)conspicuous luxury branded goods which seems to be lacking in past literature. (In)conspicuous consumption refers to preferences of brand signalling (subtle or blatant) to others where consumers may choose to consume their luxuries in public (more conspicuous to others) or in the privacy of their own homes (less conspicuous to others) (Berger & Ward, 2010). Thus, it refers to their consumption behaviours and not specifically their choice of products. However, (in)conspicuous luxury brands is related to the prominence of the logo or brand markers' signalling level irrelevant of where the product is consumed.

Logically, publically consumed products have higher conspicuous value than privately consumed products (Childers & Rao, 1992). Products consumed publically have been identified as products others are aware you possess and can be easily identified by others if required yet privately consumed products are products consumed at home or unseen and only direct family may be aware of its possession (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). More conspicuous luxury brands have been identified to have higher brand prominence meaning its brand mark or logo is bigger and more visible and identifiable thus louder than less conspicuous brands (Han et al., 2010) (i.e. Louis Vuitton handbag with LV logos and another without one discreet logo). Further investigations on conspicuous products against brand dilution led observers of conspicuous consumers with low self-brand connection to have less favourable attitudes towards these consumer as well as the brand and believe they have ulterior motives of impression management and needs for social approval (Ferraro, Kirmani, & Matherly, 2013). Further, it was evident in an empirical study that consumer values towards conspicuousness and conformity led them to purchase brands that are logo exposed compared to ones that are logo-hidden (Han et al., 2008). Thus, interpersonal influences were found to affect conspicuous brand consumption making luxury products easily identified by others (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Also, the less brand prominent (inconspicuous) products will serve less of a social function of self-expression and self-presentation thus the likelihood of them buying it for counterfeit reasons are reduced compared to conspicuous brands (Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009).

However, what remains unclear when discussed in research studies whether the reference of inconspicuous fashion brands is to such goods as intimate apparel or undergarments, which are also considered inconspicuous products that are of course privately consumed. The few studies that discuss this type of product category do also call for further research on clarity of the definition of inconspicuous luxury brands with a need to identify consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviours (Hume & Mills, 2013). Another unclear element found in past luxury literature has been the use of conspicuous and inconspicuous brands interchangeably without distinguishing the intended meanings, which may cause confusion in the findings' interpretation and reporting. In some sense, consumers may consume conspicuous luxury brands but not necessarily in public while inconspicuous luxury brands may be consumed in public and conspicuously by verbally signalling the brand name and qualities to reference groups. For example, a Mont Blanc pen (conspicuous with bigger logo and easily identifiable) may be used in the privacy of one's home but a Cartier ring (inconspicuous with no logo and less identifiable) may be worn daily and flaunted to others in public. Generally, previous research shows that the brand in luxury plays a crucial role in consumers' decision-making process (Kapferer, 1997; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004) and thus its level of conspicuousness should also have a role in that strategy.

2.4 Signalling theory and status

Signalling literature in economics has been centred around the wealth facet where status goods are believed to have no functional value to the consumer and the aim of purchasing it is purely for its status symbol (Bernheim, 1994; Bourdieu, 1984). Since Veblen's theorising of conspicuous behaviours, it has been proposed that luxury consumers select certain brands with levels of conspicuousness to reflect their identities and extended self (Belk, 1988). Consumer's self-identity or perceived self-concept such as the "ideal self-image, social self-image, expected self-image, situational self-image" will be heightened when there is congruence between the desired self-concept and product image (Sirgy, 1982, p. 294). Thus, possessions have a significant role in consumers' lives (Belk, 1988) as it confirms and establishes their status through evidence of their wealth rather than simply accumulating wealth (Han et al., 2010; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Consumer research theorists have further suggested that cultural meanings are projected off of consumer goods (McCracken, 1986), which marries well with consumers' intentions to signal through their luxury goods consumption. Evolutionary researchers agree that preferences for luxury is triggered because of human nature's desires to increase status (Cummins, 2005) which is similar in other primates (de Waal, 1982).

Status signalling is not only apparent with accumulation of wealth but also in education, social ties, charity giving, product quality and purchasing of environmentally-friendly products (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Glazer & Konrad, 1996; Lin, 1999; Lin & Dumin, 1996; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010; Sullivan, 2001). These signals will eventually indicate wealth or income to other individuals of the same or higher social class. By definition, these forms of status indicators are in line with costly signalling theory (Zahavi, 1975), which states that consumers partake in costly behaviours so they can signal certain

unobservable traits (part of their identity) that they have accumulated using noticeable tactics. For conspicuous consumption to apply as a costly signal, it not only must be observable but it must also be hard to imitate (due to its costly nature), be associated with desirable yet not necessarily achievable traits such as attractiveness and it also must offer the signaller social circle “fitness benefits” (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011, p. 344).

As an alternative to the economic notion of costly signalling, researchers have found that some individuals are intrinsically motivated to consume status goods in order to diffuse self-threats and restore self-integrity and self-worth by using affirmation status goods (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010). Altruism is another motive for consumers thus partaking in pro-environmental conspicuous consumption behaviours that also eventually signal status as these products are more expensive than non-green products (Griskevicius & Tybur, 2010).

Visibility of consumption is very important to attaining the sought after recognition as the more conspicuous the consumption is, the more effective the communication (Berger & Ward, 2010). According to Veblen, acquiring wealth is not enough to portray status but displaying it is the defining factor (Han et al., 2010). Moreover, the consumption must be carried out in public to receive such acknowledgments (Berger & Heath, 2007) where an explanation for this might be the desire for association with a similar class or dissociation from lower social groups using these possessions. Han et al. (2010) found that the ‘Haves’ patronised higher signals of luxury goods symbolising their status in order to associate with other ‘Haves’ and dissociate from the ‘Have-nots’. This reflects a “tendency to purchase goods and services for the status or social prestige value that they confer on their owners” (Eastman et al., 1999, p. 41). Studies have also shown that conspicuous consumers signalling their brand labelled fashion goods also may offer social benefits to the signaller such as preferential treatment with financial benefits (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Price is another tactic marketers have realised consumers employ to signal status (Goldsmith, Flynn, & Kim, 2010; O’Cass & McEwen, 2004), which is an alternative sign of wealth that cannot be afforded by many (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005; Garfrein, 1989). However, price alone cannot be the sole determinant of status as there are other aspects that come into play such as the chosen brand’s image, others opinions of this brand and others consuming it (Sirgy, 1982). If visibility is essential for recognition of status and wealth, brands’ noticeable logos or brand markers would clearly be able to facilitate the process of identification where prominent branding with larger logos or bright colours will present more explicit signalling (Berger & Ward, 2010; Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). For instance, a large Louis Vuitton handbag with colourful LV monogram may be more recognisable in the public eye than a subtle Bottega Venetta handbag where brand identification is more prominent on the inside and is identifiable to very few (see Appendix A for contrast examples).

Moreover, signalling status comes in many other different forms and not necessarily through the acquisition and consumption of materialistic purchases. It may also be linked to skills and knowledge especially when competing for prestige and leadership (Plourde, 2009). A study has shown that experiential purchases (such as holidays) are closely related to the self yet are less conspicuous and less obvious than possessions (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). They may be used for identity signalling (Berger & Heath, 2007) and may also be utilised to differentiate oneself from others (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001). Yet discreet signals are still signals directed to individuals they care to 'impress' and proves to be of importance to the signaller. Connoisseurs and consumers with knowledge that have maintained their power for long tend to patronise 'quieter' luxury goods to signal to desirable others (Han et al., 2010). They are motivated to avoid others with new wealth, otherwise known as nouveau riche that are perceived to consume outrageously conspicuous luxury goods.

Generally, previous literature explains that these inconspicuous consumers favour discreet brands because they dislike pretentious ones (Davis, 1992) but are there other drivers that motivate consumers to avoid more conspicuous brands? Harder resources to obtain such as rare luxury items, intellectual capital and higher education are more sought after by true status earners in order to alienate undesirables (Berger & Ward, 2010; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). The educated elite consumers were found to reject high status brands to avoid appearing materialistic (Brooks, 2001) to distinguish themselves from mainstream (Berger & Ward, 2010). Unravelling luxury consumers' inner motivations for patronising inconspicuous luxury brands may shed further light on their distinct preferences.

2.5 Motivations for luxury consumption

Consumer motivations have been extensively researched in consumer behaviour literature and have a strong stance in luxury consumption. Since Veblen's theorising of conspicuous consumption, two motives, which stand in today's luxury research, have been identified. This first being a pecuniary emulation, which refers to individuals attempting to portray an image to others (and themselves) that they belong to a social circle above them (Phau & Prendergast, 2000). The second motivation is invidious comparison, where individuals endeavour to distinguish themselves from others in lower classes (Veblen, 1899). Rae, another avid believer of conspicuousness, however, argued that this behaviour is guided by self-indulgence regardless of social and economic influences where self-expression and vanity are perceived as the main motivations (Alcott, 2004; Rae, 1834a).

From more recent studies, evidence suggests that consumers place personal goals that are consistent with their essential needs as a priority (Truong & McColl, 2011). Penz and Stottinger (2012) identified two classes of motivations; intrinsic and extrinsic and associated them to one's needs and desires. Intrinsic (personal) motivations are an extension of one's self that may encompass 'self-esteem' and 'hedonic aspirations' whereas extrinsic (interpersonal) motivations are an indication of one's external social surroundings that drives the yearning for recognition and admiration by peers (p. 583). The former motivation

could explain consumers' intentions to acquire inconspicuous luxury brands that may provide them with the previously mentioned advantages without having to flaunt them socially as most luxury research has found. These intrinsic desires comprise of "self-acceptance (self-identity), affiliation (relatedness), community feeling (helpfulness), physical fitness (health)" while extrinsic ones have been related to conspicuous luxury consumption where aspirations may consist of "financial success (money and luxury), social recognition (fame), appealing appearance (image)" (Truong & McColl, 2011, p. 556).

Other perspectives of luxury brand motivations reflect the existence of two main groups of fashion consumers: fashion change agents that aspire to become innovators and influencers with a desire for status brands (Lee & Workman, 2011) and fashion followers that are motivated to belong to peer groups thus they follow each others trends for acceptance and recognition (Scitovsky, 1992). Thus, these two identified fashion groups may be motivated by their need for status by purchasing conspicuous luxury brands to fulfil their intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Yet another take on motivations to purchase luxury brands may be viewed through the lens of Vigneron and Johnson's (1999, 2004) Luxury Brand Index. As leaders in measurement of luxury brand perceptions, they have designed scales of motivations and values that drive consumers to such extravagant purchases, which explain the luxury phenomenon:

The Veblen Effect: Need for status inferences and power. These are individuals with the perception that acquiring luxuries will present them with social status, which reflects Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuousness that indicates power, status and wealth to others. Empirical findings imply that price determines luxury to Veblenians (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993). 'Nouveaux riches' or newly rich consumers and those with lower disposable income may demonstrate materialism and needs for status. They may take radical measures (such as purchasing counterfeit or parallel imported goods) to attain luxury symbols and consume it conspicuously (Wilcox et al., 2009).

The Snob Effect: Need for uniqueness. Utilising the Need for Uniqueness (NFU) theory, it has been evident that snob consumers are highly driven to differentiate themselves from the mainstream by acquiring limited editions and rare and exclusive luxury items (Husic & Cicic, 2009; Leibenstein, 1950). Price is not an issue to these consumers but on the contrary, the higher the price and the lower the brand's signalling, the more desirable it is for them (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). It has been apparent that the less conspicuous a brand is, the lower the probability it will appeal to consumers with status needs as they are solely interested in higher brand prominence to signal their identity (Han et al., 2010; Wilcox et al., 2009). The difference between the Snob Effect and the Veblen Effect is that the former relates to the consumption of others while the latter is associated with price (Leibenstein, 1950).

The Bandwagon Effect: Need for social acceptance. Self-identity theories complement this effect. Ones that aspire for acknowledgment and social acceptance choose to acquire luxury brands to conform to perceived norms. With conspicuous luxury consumption, they can gain prestige while placing less importance on the product's value and more significance on the image it conveys of them. Materialistic consumers that may lack financial resources will look to luxury alternatives such as imitation or fast fashion as a means to reaching their desires of acquiring luxury goods for social recognition (Trinh & Phau, 2012).

The Hedonic Effect: Need for self-fulfilment. Aside from luxury goods' interpersonal attributes, there exists individuals that seek luxury's symbolic qualities for their personal satisfaction and are not swayed by pressures from their social surroundings (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Hedonists are motivated by their emotions and loathe 'snobs' (Dubois & Laurent, 1994). These consumers are led by their desire for self-actualisation and will reject anything that is not genuine luxury as it contradicts their intrinsic desires for pleasure and aesthetic beauty (Truong & McColl, 2011; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004).

The Perfectionism Effect: Need for exceptional quality. Consumers expect highest quality from luxury especially with price as a deciphering factor of its level of stature as well as indications of its authenticity and craftsmanship (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Thus, symbolic attributes of luxury are seen as the distinguishing features of brand hierarchies (Turunem & Laaksonen, 2011).

The Bandwagon and Snob Effects are on the extreme sides of the luxury spectrum where the former signifies demand increases when others consume a sought after product while the latter reflects demand decreases when others consume the same product due to dissociative motivations. Thus, they may resort to brands with low brand prominence such as inconspicuous luxury brands. Another close contender that may impact consumption habits and perceptions of true luxury is the Veblen Effect. Consuming luxury is a way to convey their status and power and with conspicuous luxury brands they believe they can successfully signal to their peers their desired status. Lastly, Perfectionists and Hedonists will select either conspicuous or inconspicuous luxury brands based on intrinsic benefits, perceived aesthetic values and superb quality, which may be found in either kind. However, what remains a mystery in this field of research is the individual's underlying driving force that strongly influences motivations to act (i.e. purchase level of luxury conspicuousness). These underlying forces may include emotions thus it would seem logical to reveal antecedents that may involve shaping consumers' luxury consumption, specifically the inconspicuous kind. Empirical evidence suggests that emotional experiences may present unexpected information and richer insight into consumer choices that will ultimately explain consumers' behaviours (Allen, Machleit, & Kleine, 1992), therefore this study will aim to answer questions around emotional experiences related to signalling with luxury brands, which is scarce in luxury literature.

2.6 Emotions

Emotions are mental states formed by cognitive appraisals or thoughts (Bagozzi et al., 1999), which will determine consumption preferences and behaviours. Cognitive appraisals are formed based on the knowledge of a product or service's hedonic and emotional values (Chaudhuri, 2001). However, research on emotions has been a highly debated topic and this is apparent from the cluttered definition of the phenomenon and lack of agreement from scholars. Analysis of the extant definitions of emotions prove there is lack of consensus amongst researchers, causing confusion amongst researchers on the long run (Izard, 2010). Additionally, the loose use of feelings, thoughts, moods, affect, preferences and attitudes being referred to as emotions has aided in this confusion (for a detailed discussion please see Ekman, 1992; Gross, 1999; Scherer, 2005). For instance, the emotion of regret may involve different experiential categories such as feelings that an individual should have known better, while thoughts are about the mistake one has made as well as feeling the urge to get mad at oneself, intending to behave and act differently and finally wanting to get another chance (Zeelenberg, Dijk, Manstead, & der Pligt, 1998).

Gross (1999) believes there are three critical features that encapsulate emotions differentiating them from other types of affective phenomena and making them universal: 1) emotions arise when individuals believe that a situation is of importance to them and that may include goals, needs, standards or wishes that have a temporal perspective that capture its importance to them; 2) emotions are subjectively expressed as feelings which as previously mentioned are sometimes used interchangeably and involve both experiential and behavioural responses; and 3) emotions are described as categories or dimensions that may explain changes in the emotions such as positive and negative affect, intensity and pleasantness, and approach and avoidance. Yet with the adaptation qualities of emotions, a response synchronisation is also expected to arise with certain events as well as the high intensity, rapid readjustment to change, behavioural consequences on social interactions and shorter effective durations to avoid taking a severe impact on behaviours (Scherer, 2005; Scherer & Ceschi, 2000). Emotions may deal with different adaptive issues (Ekman, 1992) and enable decisions to be made (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987), as well as facilitate social functions such as offering clues to positive and negative situations (Walden, 1991) and direct our behaviours socially (Averill, 1980).

Emotions' importance in fields other than sociology and psychology has been widely recognised. For instance, the role of appraisals of emotions is well established in marketing (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Robert A. Westbrook, 1987) in addition to its experiential content (Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2003). Emotions have also appeared in retail research utilising related models such as Stimulus-Organism-Response in a store environment linked to customers' emotions towards sales associates (Kim, Ju, & Johnson, 2009); product design and related cognitive emotions appraisals of pleasantness and harmony (Kumar & Garg, 2010); the role of mixed emotions (ambivalence) in approach-avoidance conflicts at different retail settings (Penz & Hogg, 2011); the importance of emotions and sensual delight in dining experiences (Arora, 2012); and sensory pleasures experienced at luxury retail stores (Godey, Lagier, & Pederzoli, 2009). However, there has been limited

research utilising the construct of emotions in luxury marketing and consumer behaviour (Penz & Stottinger, 2012), which is quite shocking since luxury goods employ symbolic meanings to consumers and is at times driven by consumers' emotional whims. Thus, it is a primary goal of this study to uncover the emotions consumers experience related to the acquisition of inconspicuous luxury goods.

2.6.1 Antecedents and responses of emotions

There are both objective and subjective approaches to evaluate the antecedents of emotions. It depends on the view that emotion-eliciting stimuli go through cognitive processing prior to their appearance especially when it concerns categories such as success and self-esteem or situations and events are subjectively evaluated (Gross, 1999). By referring to elements from the appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), emotions are triggered by events or situations that are appraised and evaluated as real and their intensity depends on how meaningful they are seen to be (Frijda, 1988). Basically, to arouse an emotion, the appraised situation must be affecting the individual in a way where similar appraised situations result in the emotions (Bougie et al., 2003).

Antecedents of emotions were found to involve expectations (hope or belief that an action or event will occur), sanction states (rewards or punishments for going against the norm) and transactional needs (ultimate desired condition) that trigger emotional arousal (Turner, 2007). The majority of research in this field pertains to expectation states that are motivated by power or authority and status or prestige. Turner (2007) found that the majority of the time individuals enter situations where they have knowledge of what to expect and any uncertainty will result in negative emotions of hesitation, nervousness and anxiety which should stabilise and possibly reach positive emotions (such as pride) once expectation states are realised (to be further discussed in section 2.4.3). In a similar vein, when individuals receive positive sanctions (such as reinforcements from others) they will experience positive emotions whereas negative sanctions (such as condemnation for actions) will result in negative emotions and ultimately defensiveness.

As for transactional needs, Turner (2007) theorised that they fall under five fundamental categories: (1) need for self-verification (recognition from others) 2) need for profitable exchange payoffs (desire for profits to exceed costs), (3) need for group inclusion (mild positive emotions experienced with group membership acknowledgment and less aggressive negative emotions such as anxiety, alienation and exclusion) (4) need for trust (confidence in self and others' actions), and (5) need for facticity (worldly facts that are understood by all). Once these needs are fulfilled, positive emotions are aroused and experienced. Additionally, individuals are more likely to experience these positive emotions when expectation states produced by transactional needs are met, especially the need for self-verification and profitable exchange payoffs, which will cause self-attribution effects.

Today researchers realise that emotional responses are not biologically evolved but they are flexible, situation dependent, improve performance, accomplish desired goals and adapt quickly to different conditions (Thompson, 1994). They may differ from discreet reactions that can be overlooked to outbursts of intensely articulated emotions and it may appear as specific emotions and dimensions of emotional experiences, expressed verbally and non verbally as well as physiological responses such as fast heart beats or sweating (Gross, 1999). Their intensity differs based on an individual's involvement and attention that may vary depending on the experience's proximity, focus on future appraisals or the present, and level of engagement with ones social surrounding or the self (Frijda, 2005). To add to the complexity of its response phenomenon, emotional responses have been found to have two dimensions, positive or negative, but also mixed emotions (Penz & Hogg, 2011; Williams & Aaker, 2002). These reflect similarities to cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), which is the contradiction between two thoughts or thoughts and actions that may create internal tension and negative emotions (Williams & Aaker, 2002).

2.6.2 Types of emotions: - basic versus non-basic

It is agreed upon amongst emotion academics that there is a difference between expressions of feelings and emotions. Emotions are believed to be unconscious automatic reactions that are influenced by information stored in the memory and can be difficult for an individual to tap into, while feelings are mostly conscious and can express very primitive cognitive emotional appraisals and can be expressed using verbal simple terms such as feelings of happiness and sadness (Hansen, 2005). However, *basic* or *discrete emotions* may be derived from these expressions of feelings (Ekman, 1992). Basic emotions may offer high-level information than some researchers do not expect to find as emotions are firstly learned by individuals during childhood and can be easily accessed and revealed with a relevant stimulus (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987).

Scholars such as Ekman (1992) and Izard (1999) found that basic emotions are quite distinct from non basic emotions and may establish the groundwork for non-basic emotions to occur. Basic emotions are engraved and inborn distinctive reactions that are universally experienced by all individuals and similarly expressed by human beings across different cultures. Inspired by Darwin, basic emotions to Ekman and Izard are innate, hard wired, exist in other animals and are bodily identifiable such as anger, fear, disgust, sadness, happiness and surprise that are frequently experienced. These emotions occur very quickly and only last seconds thus the individual may not realise the emotion being aroused (1992). Due to individual's low involvement and its automatic response to certain situations, basic emotions are cognitively independent (Izard et al., 1999).

Another hotly debated topic is defining and confirming the existence of *non-basic emotions* also known as *self-conscious emotions* or *social emotions*. As another perspective to emotions, it focuses on appraisals of the self as opposed to basic emotions' unconscious automatic reactions (Tracy & Robins, 2004). These are highly complex cognitive dependent emotions (Izard et al., 1999). However, there is not necessarily a causal relationship between cognition and holding certain beliefs with emotions as a crime can be committed but the person may not feel guilt. Firstly introduced by Tracy & Robins (2004), the

authors offer several features to distinguish self-conscious emotions (i.e. shame and pride) from basic ones (i.e. sadness and fear) such as a high level awareness and representation of the self during the appraisal process of situations or events (Lagattuta & Thompson, 2007). Also, unlike basic emotions, self-conscious emotions do not have a universal facial expression but require bodily observations (Lewis, 2008), these emotions are realised later rather than learnt from childhood and serve social needs (Bagozzi, 2006). Even after realising Tracy & Robins' (2004) four self-conscious emotions – shame, pride, embarrassment and guilt – emotions may have other meanings and layers such as pride in ones achievements are different from pride in ones self-evaluation (Parrott, 2004).

Bagozzi (2006) finds that social emotions that may also include envy, jealousy and social anxiety can offer positive consequences by encouraging goal attainment, relationship-building through managing and coping with emotions and maintaining social status, or adapting to new environments. Generally, they help individuals fit into their social surroundings comfortably. If these are achieved successfully, positive emotions will be experienced which will support positive social behaviours in individuals on the long run (Parrott, 2004) and if they are unsuccessful, then it will lead to negative emotions that can eventually damage relationships (Bagozzi, 2006).

2.6.3 Future-directed emotions

Research on emotions have generally focused on emotions experienced during or after the consumption of goods where feelings of high or low perceived risk may emerge (Chaudhuri, 1996). However, another outlook on emotions places more importance on “affective reactions to future events”, otherwise known as future-oriented emotions (Baumgartner, Pieters, & Bagozzi, 2008, p. 685) or predicted consumption-related emotions. Any discrepancies between those predicted and actual experiences (Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002) may also have a strong influence on their reactions which may offer additional knowledge on consumers' behaviours towards luxury brands. Understanding consumers' future-oriented emotions may have relevance to the pre and post purchase stages of consumption as they influence decision-making by stimulating predictions of pleasures of consumption (Lett, Hoelzl, & Possas, 2010).

Similar to the theory of cognitive appraisal (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), a person appraising a situation as likely to assist in reaching a personal goal will experience positive emotions and the opposite is bound to occur (Roseman, 1991). Hedonic consumption decisions are also made based on judgements of ultimate future pleasures that will be long lasting, regulating their expectations to their beliefs which act as predictors of future enjoyment (Alba & Williams, 2013). Similarly, failed projections due to a mismatch between expectations and actual realities may lead to negative emotions, consumer dissatisfaction, reduced brand loyalty and negative word of mouth (Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002).

Additionally, future-oriented emotions have been realised to have an important role in understanding an individual's state of mind and may dictate their consumption preferences in order to reach an end goal (Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). An important finding relates to how consumers generally go through approach and avoidance in future goal orientation (i.e. desirable or hoped for versus undesirable or feared selves) when deciding between products and that avoidance and fearful end states is of higher urgency than approach end states, thus will require a search for perceived effectiveness of avoidance strategies (Carver, 2001; Sobh, 2011).

The anticipated likelihood that individuals at present imagine emotions (i.e. anticipated joy or regret) they would experience if a desirable or undesirable event occurs will dictate whether the individual will act or not (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998; Baumgartner et al., 2008). Empirical evidence implies that anticipated emotions may be of significance to understanding behaviours acted on (for examples see Bagozzi, Baumgartner, & Pieters, 1998; Richard, van der Pligt, & de Vries, 1995). These emotions reflect basic emotions that are individualistic such as joy, disappointment or fear resulting from mentally simulating an outcome being attained or not attained (Bagozzi, 2006). Furthermore, anticipatory emotions should be differentiated from anticipated emotions as it leads consumers to different purchasing decisions based on the emotions experienced. This notion implies that individuals at present experience emotions (i.e. hope or fear) due to the chance that a desirable or undesirable event may take place in the future (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998; Baumgartner et al., 2008). Studies have shown that future-oriented feelings and emotions that are intuitive have better predictability rates of behaviours, a concept called the "emotional oracle effect" (Pham, Lee, & Stephen, 2012). As these feelings and emotions are, to the most part, socially shared more than reason and logic (Pham, Cohen, Pracejus, & Hughes, 2001), it may be easier to generalise predicted behaviours to the larger population.

2.6.4 Emotional regulation

To better understand emotions especially when it comes to a consumption situation, investigators need to understand how consumers deal with their emotions to be able to get a complete picture. There is a vast number of studies focused on emotion regulation where individuals may (un)consciously control which emotions they experience, when they can experience them and how they are experienced and expressed (Gross, 1998) which have been adapted from human and social evolutionary processes. These may also dictate the consumption patterns they display. One that may be relevant to this study on luxury consumption is the emotions response system, specifically the self-conscious or social emotions. As part of the adaptive system for individual and social behaviour regulation, emotions may include positive emotions such as pride, empathy and attachment as well as negative emotions which may comprise of jealousy, guilt, shame, social anxiety, embarrassment and envy and are directly related to interpersonal relationships (Bagozzi, 2006).

Regulation or management of emotions may be in the form of situation modification, attention placement, cognition changes and response variations (Gross, 1998). Traditional views of emotion regulations include a conscious or unconscious ego defence that regulates experienced anxieties that overwhelm the ego and may cause severe expressions of anxiety as well as stress and coping mechanisms with appraised difficult situations (Freud, 1959). However, today it is believed that there is more of a controlled management of emotions and how dynamic these may occur (Gross, 1998). With the belief that emotions arise due to the social interactions with other individuals and within ones environment, emotion regulation is found to have a role in social signalling, portraying needs, strengthening social ties and self defence amongst other social goals (Thompson, 1994). These can be identified from earlier in life with parents' positive reinforcement of certain emotional responses to social norms and what emotional responses are acceptable for portrayal in society. Coping and self-regulative responses support individuals in managing their feelings and actions to their advantage and assisting in their flexible and self-control features (Bagozzi, 2006).

2.6.5 Emotions in consumption

As several facets of brand consumption are experiential in nature (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), consumer behaviour is considered in this case as the need for “subjective, emotional, and symbolic consumption experiences” which are fundamentally typical of luxury products that have symbolic and intangible benefits (Chaudhuri, 1996, p. 159). Even though cognitive processing and gratification with a product's functional attributes are considered crucial to the brand experience, other factors that take place during the consumption process which include the experienced emotions are acknowledged as being of important in consumer behaviour (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Zajonc, 1980). Its power and importance can be best understood when emotions are described as “intentional” phenomena where it involves a subject's motivation to cope with their emotional state or surroundings by liking or disliking, that will eventually predict their behaviours to approach or avoid the object (Arora, 2012). Emotions are also highly influential on information processing and memory retrieval for future evaluations and judgment (Kuhl, 1986). They have been found to mediate cognitions and behavioural responses in advertising (Holbrook & Batra, 1987). Not only that, information is presumably continuously encoded and stored consciously and unconsciously about the surrounding environment from which feelings and emotions are meta-summarised, which may offer a portal into predictable future behaviours (Greifeneder, Bless, & Pham, 2011; Hogarth, 2005; Pham et al., 2012). Thus, understanding the role of emotions in inconspicuous luxury consumption is crucial especially if experiences with highly priced luxury brands will motivate them to rely on their future-oriented emotions prior to purchase, as well as their current feelings when making decisions. They will also tap into their memory of past evaluations once again for future purchases.

For instance, in consumer behaviour studies, emotions have been quantitatively measured in past empirical studies using scales such as Izard's (1977) Differential Emotion Scale (consists of surprise, interest, joy, anger, sadness, disgust, contempt, shame, fear, and guilt) where researchers utilised basic emotions in consumption-related situations (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). They

found that pleasant surprise, interest and aspects of hostility, to be significantly related to several satisfaction measures. Emotions have also been found to have a vital role in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) where it used to have a minor part in the peripheral cues of the persuasion process rather than a direct route. Cognitive information processing has been found to have an emotional base where a study demonstrated that the primed cognitive group of elaborators showed higher pleasure reactions than the less cognitive group resulting in higher purchase intentions (Morris, Woo, & Singh, 2005).

Additionally, emotions that occur during experiential context are found to be highly related to behavioural responses than cognitive appraisals (Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1991). Moreover, following Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) renowned article on hedonic consumption, hedonic scholars such as Alba and Williams (2013) have found that experiential consumption derive more happiness than consuming products. Lastly, they find that experiences are more socially enjoyed and are highly likely to be enjoyed more when discussed and shared. Thus, current researchers have argued that the effect of emotions on evaluations and decision-making depends on the emotional valence as well as other cognitive aspects to form an emotional experience (Zeelenberg, Nelissen, Breugelmans, & Pieters, 2008).

As for retail, the majority of store atmospherics research have employed the Mehrabian and Russell (M-R) model from environmental psychology which was extended by Donovan and Rossiter (1982). The model is based on a Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm that explains how a consumer's emotional state mediates the relationship between the atmosphere in the store and their behaviour towards this stimulus (Turley & Milliman, 2000). The emotional state that Mehrabian and Russell proposed relates to an individual's sense of pleasure (or displeasure) which describes feelings of joy and happiness; arousal (or non-arousal) that explain excitement and stimulation; and lastly dominance (or submissiveness), also known as PAD dimensions. The responses are usually either of approach or avoidance behaviours (Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoolyn, & Nesdale, 1994). Generally, motivations to minimise arousals such as mixed emotions, tension and unexplained arousal states are usually expected in individuals because they are perceived as unpleasant and may lead to fear or apprehension (Vaughan & Hogg, 2005).

Research has also shown that hedonic shopping relates to positive affect (Babin & Attaway, 2000; Chebat, Chebat, & Vaillant, 2001), which is befitting to the case on luxury consumption. It has been found that emotions heavily motivate shopping behaviours (Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980), and ultimately instigate hedonic shopping values (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). Consistent with the theoretical nature of emotion, positive affect, operationalized here as up-beat affect (cheerful, lively, etc.), may mediate, if not partially, relationships between appropriateness and all other constructs with the exception of utilitarian shopping value. Thus, perceived appropriateness increases affect, which in turn, helps create greater hedonic value and more approach behaviours (Babin, Chebat, & Michon, 2004).

2.6.6 Emotions in luxury consumption

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, luxury brands offer non-tangible benefits (in addition to tangible ones) when viewed from an experiential angle, thus luxury consumers pursue emotional, subjective and symbolic experiences (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). This accordingly will produce positive as well as negative emotions depending on the experienced desirable and undesirable consequences. Consumers are also directed by their “noncognitive and unconscious motives” when making luxury purchasing decisions of its intangible qualities such as self-enrichment, self-fulfilment and joy (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, p. 8; 2004). Luxury brands construct and offer a dream value (Dubois & Paternault, 1995) as well as sensory pleasures (Kapferer, 1997).

Despite this realisation, there is limited research in luxury that utilise the emotional construct in this field with only a few exceptions (i.e. Bian & Forsythe, 2012; Penz & Stottinger, 2012) to explain individuals’ assessment of external and internal emotional cues reflecting an interpretation of their situation prior to performing certain acts (Arnold, 1960). Fionda and Moore (2009) have recently stressed the importance of emotional and aspirational appeal that luxury brands clearly encompass with their symbolic and intangible features. Others believe that luxury store environments and luxury products elicit emotional responses (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Wiedmann, Hennigs, Klarmann, & Behrens, 2013) and emotional values (Wiedmann et al., 2009). However, researchers have not delved into the specifics of experienced emotions.

To add to the dilemma the luxury research field is in, researchers seem to use the construct of emotions interchangeably with affect, moods and feelings and do not clearly distinguish between these concepts (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Goldsmith, Flynn, & Clark, 2011; Hudders & Pandelaere, 2012). It is imperative that the actual emotions associated with luxuries are uncovered and understood in relation to behaviours and choices, specifically between conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury brands to be able to predict future consumption behaviours and utilise these findings in luxury brand strategy building. Furthermore consumer choice in luxury research should not only be centred around the individual decision maker’s personal emotions but emotions directed towards others and where they see themselves in a social and cultural context (Elliott, 1998) which may dictate their consumption patterns. This perspective is quite crucial in studies on luxury consumption as past research demonstrates that consumers consider their surroundings when making decisions (Bagozzi, 2006).

From the limited research on luxury that relate to emotions, these suggest that luxury is “fun and worth the price” (Nia & Zaichkowsky, 2000, p. 490) which mirrors emotions of arousal (PAD model, Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). A recent study (Penz & Stottinger, 2012) categorised emotions in luxury as positive or negative with ego-focused emotions that were related to individuals’ internal emotional state (i.e. happiness, anger). Moreover, the research identified external emotions (i.e. shame, empathy) that are linked to one’s surrounding and others in their environment. Evidence from this study found that luxury brands offer consumers positive feelings such as a sense of pride and accomplishment (internal) as well as love and recognition

from others (external). However, that study does not delve into how consumers develop coping strategies nor does it look into brand attachment and knowledge and how these may influence the occurrence of emotions.

Emotions were also found to be associated with attitudes where consumers tend to favour brands that are consistent with their values and goals thus influencing their purchase intentions (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). The closer a consumer perceives there is a connection between their self concept and the luxury brand the more they build emotional attachments with the brand which results in higher brand loyalty (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). It is usually based on the brand's hedonic value and aesthetic pleasures to the consumer rather than reason and cognitive decision-making such as trust and credibility (Park, MacInnis, & Priester, 2006). Emotional responses that would be linked to these semiotics included aesthetic beauty, sensory gratification or excitement (Alleres, 1990). Luxury consumption is centred around the experience and consumers seek such pleasant feelings and aspire to receive internal and external positive consequences from its acquisition (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). However, if consumers experience 'status anxiety' from trying to compete socially and belong to desired reference groups, their consumption may prove to be conspicuous by signalling expensive luxury possessions. Genuine luxury consumers may experience negative emotions if they share consumption with highly conspicuous consumers therefore they will try and dissociate themselves from the masses by patronising inconspicuous luxury goods. Future research should look at the impact this may have on inconspicuous or genuine consumers and their perceptions of brands that offer both luxury extremes and the chances for future loyalty and patronisation.

Hedonism is another crucial construct acknowledged in luxury research. It is a construct very much related but not equivalent to emotions and is usually defined as the opposite of utilitarianism. It explains the pleasures experienced during consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Utilising cognitive, sensory and affective factors to investigate the consequences of hedonism on fashion shoppers (Fiore, 2002), hedonism was found to be an element of emotional arousal associated with intrinsic enjoyment that relates to olfactory, aural, tactile, visual or taste senses (Parsons, 2011). Others have found hedonism to include adventure, experiences, inspiration, curiosity and stimulation to illustrate what hedonic fashion shoppers are after (McCormick & Livett, 2012; Park, Kim, & Forney, 2006). Hedonic pleasure has also been experienced from the product itself and its aesthetic design (Norman, 2004), which may fulfil socio-pleasures (involving personal and interpersonal motivations), physio-pleasures (derived from the senses), psycho-pleasures (resulting from emotional and cognitive reactions to the product use) and ideo-pleasures (caused by personal values and product meanings) (Alba & Williams, 2013; Jordan, 2000). Pleasures that are instigated from luxuries' aesthetics, artwork and design may instigate consumers to experience affective-based processing (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009). Thus hedonism is found to be a vital element in the drive for (luxury) fashion shopping.

Emotions have been studied in the context of materialism. Richins (2013) examined emotions induced by luxury goods before and after purchase and found that high materialist consumers experienced hedonic elevations before purchase due to high expectations from a product which was followed by hedonic decline right after the purchase which is partially linked to satisfaction compared to low materialist consumers. For high materialists, the anticipation of acquiring a product offers high levels of pleasure and arousal than actually owning it because they place great importance on goods and are characterised as possessive, non-generous and envious (Belk, 1984) while being more likely to engage in impulsive purchasing (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Those envious materialists would be motivated to purchase conspicuous products for comparative reasons with those they compete with and would be more likely to experience anxiety about making the right purchasing decision and feel guilt after the purchase (Richins, 2013). Materialists were also found to be love-smitten with their possessions yet also linked to feelings of loneliness and social affiliation insufficiencies that suggests that they compensate using material possessions (Lastovicka & Sirianni, 2011). Generally, individuals that believe there is a consumption risk perceive it as ‘traumatic’ especially for high priced luxury goods (Bauer, 1960). Through knowledge by acquaintance, consumers may experience negative emotions related to products evaluated as high risk yet products that make consumers ‘feel good’ during consumption are perceived to have low risk especially when they are evaluated using reason and acknowledgement of potential emotional advantages or disadvantages (Chaudhuri, 2001).

Intrinsically speaking, experiencing self-directed pleasure is crucial to the luxury experience which comprises of feelings of contentment, bliss, and self-ecstasy which is essential for hedonic experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Those who have stronger personal orientation have higher desires for self-directed pleasures from luxury brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) which are essentially positive emotions such as self-satisfaction. Other types of self-directed pleasures may include such emotions as pride, which is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “a high or overweening opinion of one’s own qualities, attainments, or estate, which gives rise to a feeling and attitude of superiority over and contempt for others” (McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy, 2014). The previous definition of pride is more ‘authentic’. However, individuals with ‘hubristic’ pride are also known for being excessively proud which leads to negative consequences such as aggression and prejudice to name a few (Tracy, Cheng, Robins, & Trzesniewski, 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007). It is experienced after hard work or gained success, which enjoys positive consequences such as perseverance, long term self-esteem and empathy towards those outside ones social circle and enjoy higher confidence in their abilities to signal to others their competence (Ashton-James & Tracy, 2012; Tracy & Robins, 2007). Thus, consumers with authentic pride may desire less conspicuous luxury brands, as they may not need to signal their own accomplishments using products. However, believing they deserve some extravagance in spending may drive their purchases in a different direction (Tracy et al., 2009). McFerran et al.’s (2014) findings suggest that through the dual effect of consuming luxury goods, authentic pride that is usually associated with indulgence may lead consumers to experience hubristic pride, which is an emotion associated with socially undesirable traits such as arrogance and snobbery. They do however, call for more research on the role of the emotion of pride and how that may dictate preferences to high

versus low brand signals and suggest that authentic pride may direct individuals to seek low signals as well as genuine luxury brands as opposed to counterfeits.

Luxury brands are expensive items and require high involvement, thus consumers may utilise further cognitive pre-factual thinking as well as emotional appraisal prior to any purchase. I question and would like to explore the kinds of appraised emotions experienced before purchase. This may pave the path to other researchers and brand managers interested in understanding the antecedents that lead luxury consumers to choose inconspicuous over conspicuous luxury brands. Discovering their desired emotions during consumption may also add to the understanding of the whole process consumers go through to reach their desired emotions after acquisition. This therefore reveals their coping mechanisms and how they evaluate these purchases (such as approach or avoidance, word of mouth). Nevertheless, once consumers determine emotional consequences from making such purchases, they may signal their possessions to others as reaffirmation of how they wish to feel. They may also choose to communicate other resources they possess such as non-financial capital, which will aid in achieving desirable emotions depending on the level or type of capital and its importance to them.

2.7 Non-financial capital

As previously mentioned, signalling with brands of high prominence or obvious markers are used to convey to others status or desired image. To these individuals, an asset they wish to display is financial wealth (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996). They use products as their way of communication to signify such economic capital which may be inherited from family or gained from financial collaborations (Reay, 2004). However, further exploration by researchers (Berger & Ward, 2010; Y. J. Han et al., 2010) suggested that in addition to status origin and economic background, consumers possess non-financial intangible assets that they choose to signal to others while dissociating themselves from the masses and others dissimilar to them. These consumers may patronise luxury goods with low brand prominence that only insiders can recognise. They also draw on certain resources that complement their social lives such as economic, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984). The financial factor has been heavily studied in economics literature therefore the focus of this research is purely on cultural and social capitals. Although they are related, social and cultural capital have distinct qualities that distinguish them (Wells, 2008).

Consumers are actors within cultural contexts that compete for social ranks based on the combinations of capital available to them where similar actors may relate to similar habits, dispositions and interests (Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995). Bourdieu's forms of capital have been quite useful in studies on social stratification (Savage, Warde, & Devine, 2005) and have been shown to establish more distinction and exclusion than Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption which Bourdieu finds to be 'naïve' (Trigg, 2001). He believes that connoisseurs search for symbols to distinguish themselves from the rest that have incompatible capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Consumers who have gained and maintained money for longer

periods and enjoy capital resources use horizontal status signals to differentiate themselves from the newly rich ‘nouveau riche’ who prefer predictable status brands by dedicating their purchases to luxury destinations or experiences (Frank, 2007).

2.7.1 Cultural capital

Pierre Bourdieu (Calhoun, LiPuma, & Postone, 1993) has been known for his thoughts and theories of social divisions which structure the space of individuals’ social positions and lifestyles. He believed that individuals familiar with and belong to highbrow culture show signs of cultural consumption habits and taste patterns that are different from those that come from families with the same economic and social background but different cultural history. Cultural capital is manifest in the level of taste and particular preferences for cultural representations (Holt, 1998; McQuarrie et al., 2013). It includes accumulation of valued cultural pieces that are tangible such as paintings and locations with cultural significance and ones that are intangible such as qualifications, education, ideas and beliefs (Throsby, 1999). They may exist in two forms: incorporated cultural capital that appears in the form of knowledge and educational level; and symbolic cultural capital which involves legitimising values of moral, cultural and artistic forms and styles (Anheier et al., 1995; Lamont & Lareau, 1988) for those that demand prestige, respect and authority through formally and informally agreed on status games (Ustuner & Thompson, 2012). Bourdieu also discussed three states of cultural capital: embodied which signifies knowledge, styles and manners; objectified and based on goods understood to be cultural such as museums, paintings and literature; and institutionalised which refers to academic backgrounds and education (Monkman, Ronald, & Theramene, 2005).

Furthermore, Bourdieu explained how cultural factors are pronounced in individuals’ skills, general knowledge, practices and qualifications that signal their cultural capital to important others. Critics challenged his theory of culture arguing that he only based it on the elite such as Parisian cultured society of that era yet cultural knowledge is not vital in different societies such as American and British (Holt, 1998; Silva & Warde, 2010). Cultural capital may not necessarily be related to high culture and art (Holt, 1998). Consumers with taste and artistic judgment, without being endowed with a cultured family, can be perceived at a similar cultural level as those with a cultural upbringing (McQuarrie et al., 2013). For example, researchers found individuals are motivated to reach the highest levels of cultural capital (otherwise known as restricted cultural production) for recognition, legitimacy and reputation compared to others (known as large-scale cultural production) that purely compete for financial gains (Anheier et al., 1995). Also, in Bourdieu’s (1984) seminal work, *Distinction*, he found that cultural capital is an indicator of social position that is classified as tastes and in his later work he extended the meaning of cultural capital as a power resource that designates one to a specific social class (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Yet perceptions and beliefs of cultural capital are very subjective and not universal where one country may disagree on certain fashion trends while taste thought as being refined today may be seen as déclassé tomorrow (Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008).

With regards to levels of luxury brand conspicuousness, individuals with cultural capital have the ability to recognise its subtle signals as they have the knowledge and connoisseurship to decode their meanings (Berger & Ward, 2010). Cultured individuals (within a certain domain) choose to consume inconspicuous brands because they value its subtlety, aesthetic appeal and because they desire distinction from others that consume ostentatious brands with high signalling (Berger & Heath, 2007). By acquiring these inconspicuous brands, they are fulfilling their extrinsic motivations (i.e. Snob Effect), as well as intrinsic motivations (i.e. Perfectionist Effect and Hedonic Effect) which they have valued as important qualities to obtain (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Those 'in the know' may even prefer subtle luxuries to avoid outsiders imitating the 'in-group' (Hebdige, 1979) especially the nouveau riche that have high economic capital yet low cultural capital.

Materialism has also been associated with consumer-related knowledge where knowledge sharing by opinion leaders has offered them great satisfaction and pleasure (Firm Maurice & Comegys, 2006). Holt (1998) found individuals with high cultural capital and those with low cultural capital vary in their tastes and consumption habits between material and formal aesthetics, materialism and idealism, referential and critical appraisals, local versus international tastes, following norms or individuality and self-actualisation and autotelic sociality. Both of these groups may differ in consumption patterns yet share needs to signal prestige. Otherwise known as "influentials", they are able to "shape attitudes and behaviours in the broader society" (Keller & Berry, 2003, p. 31) by using high status cultural signals as status markers. This entail sharing certain attitudes and preferences with a large group of peers, knowing how to use this knowledge, having confidence in their choices, the knowledge of how to tastefully use it and actually possessing the goods itself (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Materialism along with opinion leadership were found to better predict time spent shopping, increased spending, judge others' possessions and see themselves as social influencers (Firm Maurice & Comegys, 2006).

Referring back to Veblen's theory on conspicuous consumption which requires individuals to consciously show off, Bourdieu believed that ones with cultural capital unconsciously send signals because they are learned dispositions and acquired taste, or habitus, from family and society (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Thus they may use such inconspicuous brands to do so. He found that habitus may be transformed through 'socio-analysis' which is the conscious awareness of your 'self' and desire to manage your own dispositions (Laberge, 1995). Despite criticisms of Veblen's theory, he does briefly mention that not all consumers consciously consume in conspicuous ways, but they only "desire to live up to the conventional standard of decency in the amount of grade of goods consumed" (Veblen, 1899, p. 103 as cited in Trigg, 2001). This means that consumers may simply be motivated to buy expensive pieces for "physical comfort" and out of desires for decency and fitting in due to societal pressures. However, the more cultured consumers are, the higher the chances they will choose to consume inconspicuous luxury goods. These chances are heightened if counterfeits of these conspicuous luxury brands exist to satisfy consumers with financial constraints and status needs and are recognisable by others (Jiang & Cova, 2012; Turunem & Laaksonen, 2011). Hence, it can be inferred that individuals with cultural capital consume brands with subtle signals to distance themselves from

counterfeiting consumers as well as the masses. It is evident from existing literature that cultured consumers are motivated to purchase subtle brands but what has not been researched are the antecedents of these motivations whether they are cognitive or emotional.

2.7.2 Social capital

Another dimension of Bourdieu's sources of capital is social capital which is defined as personal relationships, organisational associations, connections and networks that individuals deem as beneficial to their interpersonal enhancement (Holt, 1998). Few scholars suggest that this asset may have a significant marker of distinction than cultural capital (Erickson, 1996). Bourdieu established that it involves the actual and potential resources that an individual may accumulate and utilise through social networks (Anheier et al., 1995). Conversely, Robert D. Putnam found that social capital not only includes networks (specifically voluntary associations) but also social values, moral duties and norms that is built on trust amongst the members of the group (Martti, 2000) and obligations and collaborations with others (Portes, 1988). Putnam's view related to shared values, integration and consensus while Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 76) found forms of capital and the social being amongst them, to be involved in a "field of struggles for power among the holders of different forms of power" (p. 76). Social capital is understood to be an attribute that an individual may acquire only with the knowledge of the society they are in (Sobel, 2002). It may exist in two dimensions: strength of ties and its relationship direction which may be horizontal amongst social equals strengthening their ties or vertical by connecting individuals from different classes, thus weakening ties (Monkman et al., 2005).

With the importance of social capital as a resource used for personal gains, consumer behaviour researchers have not acknowledged that its unique features are different from cultural capital and noted its importance in luxury consumption. Recently, McQuarrie et al. (2013) discovered that fashion bloggers who may have not had a cultured background have gained a large audience with their ability to appeal to a crowd using their interpretation and opinions on fashion based on its aesthetic value. They were able to acquire cultural capital through their public display of taste. However, I debate that social capital has a very meaningful role in this study. In this situation, fashion bloggers were able to gain acceptance and recognition from a large audience of followers as they developed a unique persona for themselves whilst expanding on the quality of their blog communication and number of followers, which supported their transformation from amateurs to professionals. It is this network system that bloggers have created that fostered their sense of taste expression further and enriched their cultural capital. In this instance, bloggers' network system is the most valuable asset for their growth and popularity. Without this audience, they would not have a voice to share, or motivation to improve on their communication of cultural capital and that is the power of social capital (i.e. gaining strong connections).

Social capital consists of certain components that may validate this existence in an individual: 1) objective ties amongst individuals in the social space, 2) subjective ties which involves reciprocation of trust and positive shared emotions (Paxton, 1999). These connections may be formed through informal ties such as friendships or formal memberships into groups such as voluntary associations, which creates the individual's social network (Breiger, 1974).

Another view of social capital exists in social organisations where one may gain from relationships with their internal networks and possibly profiting from them such as feelings of safety within their social circles and the ability to conduct certain activities and transactions where trust is expected due to strong ties built (Coleman, 1988). These strong social networks also lead the path to the social influence of others through opinions of consumed brands, or affiliations between aspirational persons and the brands they consume (Berger et al., 2011). This leads to theories on conformity where individuals follow others' consumption paths because they aspire to be similar to them or are afraid of risks that arise by trying something new (Asch, 1956). Voluntary membership into these groups and networks is based on cognition and recognition that is agreed on which creates its symbolic capital that is legitimised amongst others and only exists based on the subjectivity of others (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). On the other hand, divergence theories reveal how consumers distinguish themselves from other social groups they find dissimilar to their cultural tastes (Berger & Heath, 2007). Thus, it is assumed that the identity of the owner is critical to creating trends in social groups and would eventually drive consumption (Berger et al., 2011). Desired information can also be acquired from social relations with key individuals to avoid its otherwise costly nature and the need for attention (Coleman, 1988).

Social capital has been found difficult to convert to economic and cultural capital yet cultural capital can be converted to more social networks (Anheier et al., 1995). Anheier et al. (1995) proposed that increasing social capital for individuals with cultural capital may improve on their subconscious desires to gain status while others think it contradicts the true values of cultured individuals on status. However, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's work on cultural capital argued that one's social and family position offers them more cultural and social resources to yield social profits (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Thus, it can be assumed that individuals with social capital may use their power to gain cultural capital and elevate their existing social networks and this can be communicated to desirable others using brands. The salient motivations here reflect some elements from the Bandwagon Effect, which is the need for self-acceptance into a social group. These are usually obvious where conformity is crucial and contacts are essential yet there is also the need for uniqueness, which is reflective of the Snob Effect, when trying to distinguish themselves from other undesirable social groups.

2.7.3 Last words on cultural capital and social capital

As mentioned, cultural capital was found to be dominant in differentiating social position when it relates to artistic categories such as writers and once they reach a threshold, they are able to take advantage and gain social and economic capital (Anheier

et al., 1995). However, Bourdieu discusses how these forms of capital are ‘interlinked’ and may be mediated by an individual’s strategies to use their position for personal gain (Erel, 2010). Basically, individuals must demonstrate their group membership by actively using their cultural resources to gain access (Monkman et al., 2005). Most importantly, to have value in social settings, individuals must activate their social or cultural resources (known as moments of inclusion or reproduction versus exclusion or contestation), thus it is not enough to only possess them and the amount activated will vary depending on different situations (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This study will look at which capital inconspicuous luxury consumers prioritise and choose to activate more as well as the influence their emotions have on their choice.

Finally, to comprehend the impacts social and cultural capitals have on individuals, one must delve into the role these forms of capital take based on this study’s context (luxury fashion) that has predominantly focused on innovation and consumer opinion leadership. Fashion opinion leaders are known as fashion change agents, fashion innovators and innovative communicators that encourage fashion change and innovation (Workman, 2010). Fashion followers are those that wait on acquiring and publicly consuming fashion brands until they are accepted and worn by others revealing that they have a lower need for uniqueness than fashion change agents (Workman & Kidd, 2000). Fashion change agents were found to portray needs for status through their concepts of materialism and narcissism than fashion followers (Workman & Lee, 2011). In addition to fashion leadership, there is work in the social sciences that combines research on interpersonal contagion and research on networks within social capital also known as opinion leaders or opinion brokers as well as network entrepreneurs. They monitor and influence others acting as brokers between rather than within groups and their power triggers information dispersion between these status groups where they have competitive advantages (Burt, 1999). Opinion leaders have a critical role in influencing ideas, others decisions and sharing information and are considered by others as having knowledge and expertise in their specific fields of interest and sought advice from (Clark, 2008).

Opinion leaders may be considered as influencers or belong to a reference group where both entities’ opinions are valued. Their influence may appear as informational and is offered to others or it may be normative which fulfils others’ expectations of how to act to gain rewards and avoid sanctions (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). It may also appear as value-expressive which is the adoption of a desired group’s norms and values as a standard for one’s own values of self-identity (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). The power that opinion leaders have with their social and/or cultural capital provides them access to unique experiences and preferential treatment. This effect works to their benefit especially when leaders are able to experience it in front of their guests which has been recently termed “the entourage effect” (McFerran & Argo, 2014). Similar to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), felt status may increase when an elite or VIP experiences certain benefits that are visible to others (their entourage) in their social networks (McFerran & Argo, 2014). This is especially true when exclusivity in consumption has been compromised (Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011) which is at most times essential for ones with cultural capital, therefore utilising social capital (the entourage) may offer them feelings of status and attention (McFerran & Argo, 2014). As a result of these

findings, researchers should comprehend that individuals may prioritise and activate the form of capital they wish to utilise for their benefit, which is context dependent. Despite the similarities between these forms of capital, there are clear differences where an individual may have one type or both depending on their background, experiences, priorities and motivations as well as how legitimated they are within societies.

2.7.4 Emotions and non-financial capital

Emotions researchers have not yet delved into the association emotions may have with forms of non-financial capital. Bourdieu himself does not discuss emotional capital per se but he described practical and symbolic resources that may generate “devotion, generosity and solidarity” which he relates to women whom manage relationships within the family (Reay, 2004) that feminist scholars may argue with. Emotions appear indirectly in his work where individuals with cultural capital enjoy their power to shape others lives through domination, exclusion and symbolic enforcement (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Bourdieu believed their power produces “dehumanisation, frustration, disruption, anguish, revolt, humiliation, resentment, disgust, despair, alienation, apathy, fatalist resignation, dependency, and aggressiveness” (Bourdieu, 1961 [1958]) which seemingly imposes negative emotions on outsiders or followers.

As mentioned, Bourdieu also touched on the role of emotions in generating capital where he found that it goes back to the mother’s position in the family as one that manages the emotional states of their relationships and alleviates any distress while their role in Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination* were to regulate men’s emotions and calm their anger (Reay, 2004). It is believed to be another alternative to social capital but is more private rather than having public importance (Nowotny, 1981). In addition to a woman’s role in the family, other research looked at role verification and how emotions may be involved. Because configuring a role is very crucial to an individual and stakes are high, emotions are heightened with positive emotions experienced such as happiness and pride during the process of role creation and verification while it might be more sensitive when a desired role is not verified and expectations are not met with emotions of shame and guilt as consequences (Turner, 2007). Thus, individuals that endeavour to ascertain their cultural and social capital and associated roles within their environment might experience such emotions and signal luxury goods to verify these resources to others. The level of brand prominence will assist them in such signals to insiders and will create mutually verified and legitimised roles, which will set off positive emotional arousal in individuals. This has a higher occurrence when individuals have strong ties within their networks and are highly invested in building their social capital and connections and are aware of status differences (Turner, 2007). In general, the level of emotional arousal experienced depends on consumers’ priorities between emotional wellbeing and/or gaining and signal non-financial capital to others (Reay, 2004). Are consumers invested in their ‘self’ and emotion management or are they motivated to signal to others their resources and ascertain their social status, which eventually manages their emotions extrinsically?

2.8 Chapter summary

The previous review of literature revealed a few critical elements in the field of luxury: luxury research is cluttered with no consensus of its meanings; inconspicuous luxury consumption is largely under-researched; the construct of emotions and its classifications (basic versus self-conscious emotions) associated with luxury consumption is also scarce when luxury is ultimately symbolic with emotional characteristics; distinguishing between social and cultural capital within luxury consumers as well as emotions related to these two non-financial forms of capital have not been explored yet. Further academic insights are needed to form an understanding of what traits do inconspicuous luxury consumers exhibit and with the importance of emotions in consumption research, what influential role emotions play when making luxury choices based on its level of conspicuousness.

As mentioned in chapter one, this study examines *what* emotions do inconspicuous consumers experience in association with their luxury consumption as well as understand *why* do they experience these emotions. Another layer to be examined in this context is *how* do they cope with these emotions, which may dictate their choice to purchase inconspicuous luxury as opposed to conspicuous ones. It would be interesting to discover whether different emotions may arise depending on the kind of invested capital consumers prioritise and choose to signal to others. These forms of capital, amongst others that are not the focus of this study (i.e. human capital, economic capital and symbolic capital) can furnish the path for leadership but only if the followers voluntarily (and sometimes involuntarily if actors enter with predetermined valuation of capital) legitimise and value their importance in their environments (Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond, 2003). Leadership is recognised as a relationship between influencers or leaders and followers (Cartwright, 1965; Stodgill, 1950). Being socially constructed (Grint, 2005) it is not solely based on ones position or title as it is assumed that they already possess certain capital but the legitimisation that followers offer leaders in their environments (Martti, 2000; Spillane et al., 2003).

Once again, emotions related to such desires to either conform or diverge due to social stature have been limited in empirical evidence. Therefore, this study looks into these related emotions associated with the desire to conform to those in their social group (i.e. to avoid negative emotions) or become leaders (i.e. to attain positive emotions). Do social surroundings and strong networks emotionally drive these consumers to purchase certain levels of luxury brand signals as opposed to being driven by cultural knowledge and aesthetic values? These questions will hopefully be answered following the analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the methodology, methods and procedures for data collection and analysis of this study so other researchers may use this information for possible duplication of this study. The following sections will describe the research design and methodology, informants' selection process, the researcher's role, interviewing techniques and methods for gathering evidence, issues with trustworthiness and credibility, interrater reliability and data analysis procedures. Seeing as there is a lack of research in the area of inconspicuous consumption and considering that the role of emotions in relation to luxury brands is critical to the overall understanding of these purchasing behaviours, an exploratory study was undergone that is qualitative in nature with a post-positivist theoretical perspective (Philips & Burbules, 2000). Britt (1950) calls for more qualitative research to examine why and how individual's behave the way they do by 'getting under their skin'. Also, based on the previously mentioned limitations in past studies, an exploratory approach was selected to further investigate the unique phenomenon of emotions in the luxury context, specifically uncovering inconspicuous behaviours. A qualitative study will offer rich information that can enhance the current knowledge of emotions associated with luxury brand consumption by exposing consumers' "unconscious motivation" that is dormant in most individuals (Britt, 1950, p. 672). Furthermore, qualitative methods have been used quite modestly in luxury studies, which is surprising considering how luxury is synonymous with perceptions of artistry, elegance and creativity where consumers' rich descriptive verbatim would add and clarify the true meaning of luxury.

This study seeks to understand the characteristics of inconspicuous consumers and identify their meanings of luxury. Also, by investigating how their emotions direct them to certain consumption behaviours uncovers emotions experienced intrinsically and in relation to their peers, their luxury purchasing habits, why do they experience these emotions and their emotional coping mechanisms. This study aims to set the path for further exploration of this other type of luxury consumption behaviour that will ultimately unveil the process of interactions between consumers with non-financial assets to consume inconspicuously by managing their own emotions simultaneously.

3.2 Methodology

A qualitative approach to research assumes that information gathered is sometimes latent, complex, intertwined with other data, and difficult to measure (Glesne, 2006). As opposed to quantitative methods that have been used extensively in luxury research where objective facts and findings are measured, qualitative inquiry uses emergent designs to discover how and what individuals socially construct in their own realities based on certain social settings and highlights how they feel and deal with these certain conditions (Cresswell, 2013). It unravels what researchers may not know or understand about social phenomena,

which complements the unknown truths about inconspicuous luxury consumption. The purpose of assessing the role of emotions in this context using a qualitative approach is also to complement existing conventional quantitative work that tends to quantify informants' experiences (Kazdin, 1998) which has previously limited the ability to capture their emotional processes during their luxury consumption cycle.

Prior to conceptualising the methods for this study, past methodologies used in luxury research were reviewed. After an initial analysis, it was evident that basic exploration was necessary to understand inconspicuous consumption and uncover the associated emotions related with such consumption behaviours. Moreover, with an inductive approach to answering the study's research questions, a post-positivist philosophical perspective was taken suitable to this context (see Figure 2.0 for a breakdown of this paradigm's framework used in this study). With this choice, it is understood that the nature of consumer behaviour is unpredictable, complex and somewhat irrational where students of this philosophy give importance to the buying process as well as the experiential and meanings behind consumption (Goulding, 1999).

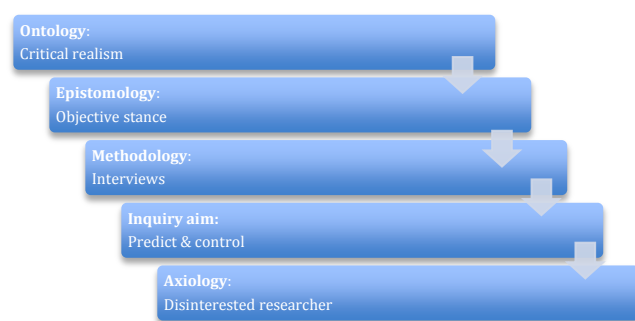


Figure 2 - Post-positivist philosophical paradigm

Source: adapted from Guba & Lincoln (1994)

3.2.1 Research design

The method employed for this study is a semi-structured narrative in-depth interview where questions are not fully scripted. This choice of interviewing procedure entails preparation of questions beforehand but it also allows for flexibility and improvisation during the interview depending on the informants' responses (Myers & Newman, 2007). For emergent research designs such as this study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) found that methodological sequences may develop, adapt and change throughout the progress of a study depending on the researcher's continuous iterative interaction and interpretation of the data, therefore that was kept in mind and was allowed to take place as long as it improved the study.

Furthermore, with the purpose of the study to explore luxury consumers' emotions that may lead them to subconsciously select goods with low brand prominence, deep probing techniques were utilised to uncover their latent emotional reactions. However,

sensitivity to any resistance from informants in revealing their emotions was taken into consideration. They may unintentionally offer socially acceptable desirable answers thus during the interviewing process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), time was spent using triangulation questions aimed at verifying answers (Denzin, 1970) and also probing into hidden emotions. As recalling or reporting on emotions is not usually an easy feat, the interviews varied in length from an hour to an hour and a half depending on the informants' communication needs and their willingness and ability to share information easily (Brennan & Binney, 2010). The interview questions revolved around the context and meanings of consumers' relationships with luxury goods (Fournier, 1998), their social and cultural resources and accountability towards others that evokes negative or positive emotions.

Prior to the actual interview process, informants received a written introduction to the interviews (without giving away the sole purpose of this study) three days prior to the scheduled interview. This introductory set of questions allowed them to recall past luxury purchases and reminded them of how they felt by getting their luxury consumption mindset ready prior to the actual face-to-face interview. These preliminary questions by no means would prime certain responses during interviews and were not linked to the core set of questions. Informants were asked basic questions about their luxury consumption choices, recent luxury purchases and basic knowledge of luxury fashion with such questions as "What product categories do you prefer to be luxury?" "Describe what fashionable and non-fashionable consumers are like". Questions were also aimed at identifying their social and/or cultural capital with questions such as "Are you actively part of any associations or social group?" "How do you keep up with the latest fashion trends/ luxury choices yourself?" Informants returned these questions in writing prior to their scheduled interviews.

3.2.2 Data collection

The interviews were conducted in English, as the targeted informants were fluent. The interviews ranged from an hour to an hour and a half in length and all interviews were audio recorded after consent has been given. The interview guide took a more progressive approach, where it began with ice breaker questions about themselves to get informants comfortable with the interviewer, through to general questions about their recent luxury purchases, social groups and meanings of fashion and luxury and then segued to more specific questions on their thoughts on brand conspicuousness, meanings of their non-financial resources and their emotions during their luxury shopping experiences without leading them into the study's research questions. To reconfirm the informants' credibility as inconspicuous consumers, they were asked questions about their opinions and preferences between conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury products throughout the interview to validate their identities as appropriate interviewees. Initial questions on their luxury purchases included, "What does it mean to you?" "What was the shopping situation you bought it in?" "Anyone influenced your decision?" "Is there a luxury item you regret buying?" and so forth. Informants were also requested to indicate whether they recognised ten different international luxury brand logos (from automotive, leather goods, apparel and watches categories) that offer products with different levels of conspicuousness

and brand prominence and then were asked to imagine if that brand was a human being what would be his/ her characteristics and their personal attitudes towards them. It is worth mentioning that luxury brands chosen were based on Interbrand's 14th annual best global brands report for 2013, Euromonitor 2014 as well as brands that fall under the three top major luxury conglomerates which are Gucci, LVMH and Richemont (Euromonitor, 2014a; Husic & Cicic, 2009; Interbrand, 2013). They were also based on consumers' perceptions of accessible luxury, intermediate luxury and inaccessible luxury (De Barnier & Falcy, 2012).

In an attempt to capture the thoughts and feelings of consumers, a number of projective techniques were used. Informants were invited to give their opinions on images of highly conspicuous consumers as well as offer their thoughts on two luxury handbags (high versus low brand prominence) and offer a description (physical and character) of consumers that would patronise each. Informants were also requested to describe their views on images of highly conspicuous consumers and were probed about how they felt towards them. Informants were then asked to use their imagination to answer questions after listening to different proposed situations of other consumers and how these hypothetical individuals would feel in a future oriented social consumption context. This gave informants a chance to project their own feelings rather than being directly asked to convey their emotions, which avoids socially acceptable answers and offers a rich variety of information (Arthur, 2001).

When it came to probing the informants' values of cultural capital and social capital, it was useful to use the emergent design of qualitative inquiry as scholars that study non-financial capital find that using quantitative studies such as survey-based research may miss contextual situations that occur subtly in social surroundings that may convert social and cultural capital to gains of social stature (Kingston, 2001). Therefore, opting to avoid statistical models that find causal relationships was imperative as in this case, understanding different contexts, social encounters and how consumers choose to activate certain resources in different situations is essential for understanding inconspicuous consumers' different experiences. Thus, following previous research studies' guidelines (Vryonides, 2007), cultural capital was identified by informants' knowledge of various prospects of luxury and what it may offer and symbolise to others. Also, the knowledge of how mobilising social networks may improve on their cultural capital was considered. Another aspect considered is the family as it has been found by Bourdieu as a central primary element for generating cultural capital which then transforms into social value and class status (Reay, 2004) depending on how followers value it. Therefore, I questioned the informants' on their parents' influence on their passion for luxury as well as their cultural education. I focused on hints of social inclusion and exclusion to understand how cultural and social capital are activated (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Social capital was analysed based on their degree of involvement in different social networks and the types of networks that may be deemed beneficial to them and ones that can add to their aspirations and their willingness to make use of their social networks.

The interviews were transcribed by an external transcribing agency for objectivity. Later, I, the interviewer as well as the researcher heard all interviews once more to cross reference and validate that the interviews were transcribed accurately and also for re-acquaintance and familiarity with the data as part of the study's iterative approach. For a review of the semi-structured interview questions, please see Appendix B with the basic interview guide.

3.2.3 Dubai, United Arab Emirates

The interviews were carried out in the comfort of the informants' homes in Dubai. It is the most populous Emirate in the United Arab Emirates with a population of 2.267 million in 2014 (DubaiStatistics, 2013). It is well known for being a cosmopolitan city steadily growing in wealth, becoming a business and cultural hub of the Middle East as well as being known as one of the most expensive cities in the world (Barnard, 2012). Interviews were carried out with various expatriates and not UAE nationals as the population of expatriates in Dubai is larger than the national citizens due to its cosmopolitan nature (10-15% Emiratis and approximately 85% expatriates in Dubai: UAEinteract, 2013). It is called a dream world of "supreme lifestyles" (Davis, 2005) where the Dubai ruler has pitched it as an all-year round extravagant luxury destination for the very wealthy public figures like Donald Trump and Victoria and David Beckham as well as luxury for the masses where a trip to Dubai is also affordable to the middle class (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2005).

A majority of multinational luxury fashion brands have targeted Dubai for its lucrative and growing economy (Behravan, Jamalzadeh, & Masoudi, 2012). Consumers in the UAE are found to be "image driven, fashion-wise, playful and unrelenting in pursuit of the best" (Furey, 2007) and enjoy living in Dubai as the destination of exquisite luxury (Vel, Captain, Al-Abbas, & Al Hashemi, 2011). The annual disposable income in the UAE is 250,094 in 2014 (Euromonitor, 2014b) which Credit Suisse's Global Report found to be even higher than that of the Netherlands (Bolter, 2011), being ranked one of the top five countries for consumer purchasing power of luxury brands (Balakrishnan, 2008).

As part of the study's exploration to understand inconspicuous luxury consumption and with the knowledge of Dubai as the hub of luxury, fashion and shopping where there lies conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury brands, it was logical that interviews would be held in Dubai with expatriate luxury consumers. Expatriates living in Dubai have witnessed and experienced the luxurious life in Dubai in addition to life in their own countries and can cognitively and emotionally make luxury choices depending on their priorities in life and the resources of importance to them.

3.3 The researcher's role

The researcher is also the interviewer in this case, which creates a more robust approach to the study. Firstly, during the interviewing process, to evaluate informants' cultural and social capital, it was crucial that I study the surrounding environment the informants exist in to understand the value and weight of each capital type (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Based on Bourdieu's

identification techniques (1984), the cultural preferences and behaviours (purchases, education, line of work and position, interests and activities) needs to be understood which were discussed with the informants prior to the commencement of the interviews. Also, the researcher is familiar with the culture in Dubai and aware of this society having lived there and professionally worked in the luxury field for eight years.

However, due to the difficulty of unravelling such tied concepts, which is a similar issue to other studies (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Wells, 2008), I observed both capital forms and interviewing probes were not necessarily directed to one type or another. Informants' capital was defined by their cultural and social resources and how these are valued in their specific environments under investigation where cultural capital includes knowledge of fashion trends or appreciating rare luxury pieces and social capital includes social networks with key figures they identify useful to them or others they believe follow their fashion opinions (see Lareau & Horvat, 1999 for a similar outlook).

During the semi-structured interviews, as the role of the interviewer required that I ask descriptive open-ended questions, and probe for further elaboration into what informants found as meaningful experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) yet still relate to the study's research questions. More importantly, the interviewer should minimise social dissonance, avoid being judgmental and be as flexible as possible with the direction of the questions as new and surprising answers may open new avenues that should be explored (Myers & Newman, 2007). Also, it is vital to allow informants to talk and share their stories yet endeavour to sensitively get them back on track and pay attention to what they are saying without getting side tracked during long interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Throughout the interviews, writing notes on the topics discussed as well observational field notes such as gestures, facial and physical expressions and certain repetitive themes occurring were part of the interview process. This was useful in noting emotions that are not only expressed verbally but physically and subconsciously.

When it comes to analysing the transcripts, data reduction was processed inductively where a set theory to test was not premeditated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) but the transcripts were read with an open mind searching for themes emerging from all interviews. Nevertheless, no researcher can enter the examination of an interview without some preconceived ideas (Rowan, 1981). Thus, after stating the research goals, a re-examination of the research goals was carried out against the occurring themes avoid any preconceived ideas or social bias. As the interviewer and researcher I endeavoured to allow the data from the interview to speak for itself and use my own judgment about what is significant from the transcripts whilst making meaning out of it (Siedman, 1988).

3.4 Selecting informants

Due to the status and wealth of informants as well as their intent to inconspicuously consume luxury, with subtle and discreet consumption behaviours, it may not be easy to locate them through a random sample. Thus the sample is purposive in nature

(Patton, 2002) to reach a credible group of informants that have personal experiences with this phenomenon. It is based on their professions and perceived social status (i.e. socialites in the community) which were purposely chosen to be varied to gain a broad perspective (McCracken, 1988) and not based on their income. As it has been recently found, individuals with cultural capital are not necessarily the wealthiest but still considered fashion opinion leaders and consumers of luxury brands (McQuarrie et al., 2013). By no means is this sample suggested to be a representative one of the population but it is considered credible where information rich data will be gathered from informants chosen. Therefore, these consumers are approached and recruited through the researcher's personal and professional networks.

Twelve luxury brand consumers were selected for interviews which were cut down to 10 based on an evaluation of their latest purchases of inconspicuous luxury brands during the six months prior to the interviews and have shown luxury brand loyalty. Loyal customers must meet the criterion of either shopping at the same luxury retailer and/ or have been avid luxury consumers for 10 years or more. Informants were 20 years and above which deemed them mature with time to gain cultural and social capital. Also, because inconspicuous brand designs are available for female and male luxury products, the sample included a mixture of both genders but effects will not be documented, as this is not the purpose of the study. The interviews were carried out at their own home to allow them to feel comfortable and be able to answer questions freely without time or social pressures. Interviews continued until data gathering reached a point of saturation (Patton, 2002; Sandelowski, 1995). This is consistent with the emergent nature of qualitative inquiry.

Table 1 - Profile of informant inconspicuous luxury consumers

Informant Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Background information about informants
Cheryl	39	Recruitment Manager – FMCG	Married expatriate and mother of two. She has worked in the UAE for more than 10 years.
Raymond	31	Commercial Director – luxury watches	Married and has worked in luxury in the UAE for approximately 10 years.
Sandy	24	Regional Graphic Designer – luxury group conglomerate	Single expatriate raised in the UAE. Lives with her parents.
Yasser	38	Regional Brand Manager – luxury watches	Married expatriate with a newborn son. He has worked in the UAE for more than 10 years.
Randa	31	Luxury PR Freelancer	Recently married expatriate and was raised in the UAE.
Mohamed	31	Sales Manager – luxury fragrance and cosmetics	Single expatriate who has worked in the UAE for more than 10 years.
Sharon	30	Stay-at-home mum	Mother of a young girl. Husband travels a lot and is the sole breadwinner.
Arthur	35	Financial advisor – financial district	Recently married expatriate. He has worked in the UAE for over 15 years.
Martha	29	Marketing Manager - IT	Single expatriate. She was raised in the UAE.
Alexander	35	Regional Head of Sales –luxury brands	Engaged, expatriate that was raised in the UAE.

3.5 Issues with trustworthiness & credibility

To allow informants to feel comfortable answering questions openly without the fear of risk or judgement, they were guaranteed anonymity and privacy by granting them pseudonyms and keeping any identifying information confidential (Table 1). This adhered to the research's ethics of conduct. This offered them a sense of trustworthiness with the interviewer, which minimised any experienced discomfort especially when being asked to express their emotions. The motives and intentions of the study were also explained clearly at the beginning to avoid the sense of interview hidden agendas (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Allowing informants the chance to decline answering questions they found uncomfortable also ensures trust. Lastly, trust can be gained by ensuring informants a final say in transcript approval which gave them a sense of veto power and feeling of control (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Trust ultimately strengthened the interviewer's relationship with the informants and improved the quality and depth of their answers.

To improve the probability that the findings are found credible, firstly, I used a form of triangulation of data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by requesting the informants to display their most valued luxury items (see Appendix C for some examples) and talk about that purchasing experience. Secondly, another triangulation technique is verifying informants' stories throughout the course of the interview whenever possible. Thirdly, the use of member checks where data gathered and interpreted was shared with the informants for them to confirm that these are adequate representations of their realities, not only offered them an opportunity to correct any errors and add further information but increased trustworthiness (Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1988).

For further support of the credibility of the findings, the coding process included an external coder (not involved in the study) that verified the plausibility and logic of the main coder's interpretations and emergent themes. The purpose was not to gain identical insights but rather to debate the analyses and supplement insights (Malterud, 2001). This method was purely adopted for solidification and validation of the findings to raise its level of believability and generalizability of the conclusions. As the researcher is the main research tool for collection and analysis therefore it is essential to minimise bias that may not be apparent in other study methods. It is a means to substantiate the study's coherence in understanding, as well as strengthening the findings and its applicability. It is understood and expected that no two coders would be able to have the same insights, thus it cannot represent the informant's social construction of the world (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997).

Overall, to address concerns previous scholars have had with this analytical tool being more of an evaluation of findings rather than living and breathing the data during the process (Armstrong et al., 1997; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002), verification by the second coder was performed right after the development of the themes to create conclusive theoretical findings (Marques & McCall, 2005).

3.6 Data analytical process

Interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached which is a case when no new findings arise from the data and the interviewer begins to hear the same information (Eisenhardt, 1989). Once the interviews were completed, transcription proceeded and an examination of the collective responses followed whilst continuously crosschecking with the original taped interviews. With the current exploratory nature of this research, thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, as it does not require predetermined theoretical perspectives of methodologies. Due to its accessibility, theoretical freedom and flexibility in analysis, it is also compatible with different paradigms such as essentialists and constructionists (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analytic method suits the nature of this study as it utilised the gathered data, while organising and describing it, by providing the ability to identify, analyse and report on patterns found (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This method provides an ally for “thoughtful inquiry” (Boyatzis, 1998) by identifying new themes not noted in research, offering a better understanding and direction for future research (Joffe & Yardley, 2003). Thematic analysis also allows for an easier and quicker method of finding meaningful themes from large amounts of texts where themes emerged and were interwoven from the data rather than influenced by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis was based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step method to guide data analysis and codification where themes emerged. Phase one included getting familiar with the data by reading through the transcripts whilst noting initial thoughts and insights by hand. Phase two comprised of preliminary code generation using appealing elements from the data (see Table 2 for preliminary open codes). At this point, one of the goals was to find threads or patterns amongst the codes as well as thematic connections (Siedman, 1988). An attempt to code the data sentence by sentence was made where some of the data were deemed valuable with one or more ideas, while others were not used. Some of the attained codes merged into one, split into two codes or were renamed as the codes evolved throughout analysis and comparison of the data. Codes were then transferred to a qualitative data analysis computer-generated programme, NVivo, which allowed for organisation and analysis of a large amount of data through data classification, arrangement and examination of relationships (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, the researcher, not NVivo, handled the coding and categorising as it requires human interaction when choosing text segments, assigning code labels, categorising and coming up with themes (Cresswell, 2013).

Table 2 - Example of preliminary coding

Open code	Description
Research prior to purchase	Online media, on the ground store search, word of mouth Product knowledge, product technicality, bargains, brand experience, impulsive behaviours dictate level of research More research means more commitment to buying; higher brand involvement

Phase three included identifying and categorising similar codes that formed an idea with common information; the initial themes (Cresswell, 2013). It is recommended that researchers use visual aids to reorganise themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, each code was written on a piece of paper and compiled into similar themes. Following this step, an initial thematic map was designed to enable an overview of the relationships between codes, between themes and between different levels of themes (see Table 3 for lower level categories). Phase four involved a review and scrutinisation of initial themes against the data and codes and finally, the relationship between the categories was reviewed and refined with great mental effort, to create higher-level categories or overarching themes (see Table 4 for major categories). Phase five comprised of on-going analysis of the themes, redefining and reducing them to generate a clear definition of the final themes. Subsequently, phase six involved analysis of the relationships between the hierarchical levels of codes and themes into a final report relating them to the research questions. Once complete, the newfound phenomenon was viewed by relating it to existing theories to add further insights into the field of luxury consumption. It is important to note that a record of the hierarchical coding from phase one to phase six was retained to provide a continuum and chain of evidence (see Appendix B for the hierarchy of codes to themes).

Table 3 - Example of lower level categories

Lower level category	Open codes
Planning the luxury journey	Research prior to purchase Cognitive appraisal Awareness of luxury drawbacks Hedonic & utilitarian needs Meanings of luxury Idolising brands Societal influences & family history Brand connection & shopping experience

Table 4 - Example of major categories

Major category	Lower level category	Open codes
Why are they experiencing these emotions?	Planning the luxury journey	Research prior to purchase Cognitive appraisal Awareness of luxury drawbacks Hedonic & utilitarian needs Meanings of luxury Idolising brands Societal influences & family history Brand connection & shopping experience

Coding was an on-going process in this study as it strengthened the credibility of themes in relation to existing scripts (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The coding process was leaning towards analytical insights from the data rather than descriptives. Furthermore, data associated with chosen codes were reviewed but not counted as an indicator of code importance because counting has relevance to quantitative processes which does not align with the purpose of this study (Cresswell, 2013). A priori codes were also not used in this study, as themes emerging from the data were relied on rather than forcing existing theories (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). Bourdieu himself avoided setting a priori definitions or limitations for capital in any field and argued that it should only be based only on empirical evidence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 100), to offer conceptual freedom and flexibility.

Accordingly, an inductive, “bottom up” and theory building approach was used that was data-driven rather than theory-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Hence, the research topic and data were viewed with no predetermined ideas. Researchers recommend using comparative analysis as it required continuous referral to the data, which added robustness to coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This process involves “constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86) and allows the researcher to live and breathe the scripts.

3.6.1 Detecting emotions

After reviewing research on emotions and understanding the two types (basic and self-conscious emotions), this study is not be constricted to one or another. On the contrary, any emotions discovered after analysis was undergone are reported simply because this research is purely of exploratory nature and will not offer definitive information on experienced emotions of inconspicuous luxury consumers. The goal of this study is to unveil the types of emotions experienced in the luxury context, specifically the inconspicuous kind. It would be interesting to discover whether consumers are motivated to act based on their basic emotions (intrinsically focused) or self-conscious (extrinsically focused).

Detecting emotions using qualitative research has been proven to be quite limited in past empirical studies (Gaur et al., 2014). Thus, uncovering emotions in this study depended mostly on self-reporting of emotions. However, it must be mentioned that because self-conscious emotions are usually known to be unconscious or harder to express than basic emotions, this might have caused bias due to social norms. Damasio (2003) believed that there may be cognitive bias with this measurement technique as what is being measured is the feelings of respondents’ emotions rather than the actual unconscious emotion which is an indication of an experienced emotion. Other issues that may be faced in this type of research include respondents’ refusal to express specific emotions because of social restraints, an inability to report on emotions or an unawareness that they are experiencing certain emotions (Poels & DeWitte, 2006).

However, researchers have used self-report in their studies by utilising certain scenarios to generate basic emotional responses (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Roseman, 1991). It is also understood that findings may result in feelings of emotions rather than the actual emotions, however due to the exploratory nature of this study, the feelings of emotions that arise will act as a stepping stone for future researchers to build on in designing new studies to capture actual emotions of inconspicuous luxury consumers. Another benefit of using this exploratory step of interviews is that it allows us to understand the vocabulary that

inconspicuous luxury consumers use and are familiar with to describe their emotional experiences as well as the emotions that partake during the consumption situation.

Not only are emotional themes tracked based on what the informants say during interviews, but also universal facial (muscle) expressions may offer a more robust understanding and evidence of emotions especially for basic emotions of “anger, fear, enjoyment, sadness and disgust” where their expression may be purposeful or unprompted (Ekman, 1992, pp. 175-176). Additionally, an effort has been made to monitor tones and vocal expressions which should offer distinct facial expressions (Tomkins, 1962). However, it is understood that some informants may signal neither in order to conceal its appearance to the interviewer but basic emotions may still occur from digging into the latent meanings of their verbal expressions. Thus, the interviewer noted down any non-verbal expressions made during the interview for later analysis and interpretation. However caution must be placed when distinguishing between cultures as well as education and social class differences as these expressions may differ. In this case, as the interviewer, I have an advantage, as I am familiar with this culture having lived there for eight years and already know these informants prior to the interviews where rapport has been created earlier on. Moreover, a limitation that might be worth mentioning is that I am the only one observing these expressions and the interpretation is left to my discretion. Nevertheless, a great effort has been made to note down all expressions made for later analysis.

Additionally, similar to Richins (1997) identification of ‘consumption’, the loose term for anticipatory consumption, current purchases, post purchase acquisitions and actual usage of luxury fashion goods were used to identify and capture emotions of informants in this study. I expected that there would be a lot of different and unexpected emotions as a result of the dynamics of their interpersonal and personal needs of inconspicuous behaviours. Thus, this study adopted Richins’ (1997) set of consumption emotion descriptors (the CES) to capture the emotions from the verbalised feelings that informants’ revealed during the interviews. Physically, Ekman (1992) also found techniques to distinguish between positive emotions that seem to have the same signal of smiling lips and skin pulled inwards around the eyes worldwide. Distinguishing between a genuine smile of enjoyment and a social one can only be differentiated by analysing what is said and the context it is said in. However, it must be noted that there might be differences in emotional states depending on product involvement, level of experience with the product or brand and planned or impulsive purchases (Richins, 1997). Situations or antecedent states might come into effect as well as overall picture of where these emotions lie and the consequences of experiencing these emotions and its long-term influences on the consumer (such as brand loyalty).

3.7 Summary

In conclusion, a detailed explanation of the methodology chosen and the research design and analysis being of iterative nature were discussed offering a comprehensive representation of this study. Being one of the few studies that focuses on inconspicuous consumers, exploratory research was found necessary to set the path for others to follow. Thus, a qualitative study was deemed vital at the start where the use of semi-structured interviews aided in uncovering what we do not know, questioning what we do know, rejuvenating research in this field and redirecting towards new emerging research lines (Fournier & Mick, 1999). Utilising interviewing techniques such as probing and projecting were found to be highly important to uncovering unconscious emotions that informants may be aware of as well as understanding their values and motivations to consuming inconspicuous luxury goods. Other factors that were found crucial to uncovering their experienced emotions were observations of their facial and physical expressions and vocal tone. Thematic analysis that was used to analyse the data was explained in detail presenting its step-by-step process for replication by future researchers. Addressing issues with trustworthiness and credibility were discussed as well as the use of interrater reliability process to create more solidified themes before creating conclusive theoretical findings. By considering each component in the research design and explaining the qualitative process in detail, the findings can now be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate emotions experienced by inconspicuous luxury consumers in relation to their luxury consumption, discover reasons why they have these emotions as well as understand their emotional coping mechanisms. That was achieved by conducting interviews with 10 luxury consumers that have shown preferences to inconspicuous luxury brands from their past purchases. In addition, this study addresses consumers' cultural and social capital priorities and how these may influence their emotions, driving them to purchase certain levels of inconspicuous luxury brands to eventually signal the capital they find essential to them.

This chapter presents the results in four main sections. The first discusses characteristics of 'inconspicuous luxury consumers' where they are distinguished based on their level of involvement with luxury fashion brands as well as their differing preferences towards inconspicuous luxury brands (i.e. highly inconspicuous/ extremely subtle and unidentifiable and lower levels of inconspicuous luxury brands/ less subtle and more identifiable than the former example). The second section discusses meanings inconspicuous luxury consumers have for inconspicuous luxury goods, which has not been examined in past literature. The third section moves on to discussing the overarching theoretical insights gathered from interviews with informants. Finally, the last section reveals the discovered themes whilst offering selected excerpts from the interviews that will add to the meanings and validate the themes interpreted. Associations were made from the initial coding stages to the final emergence of themes.

Through analysis and interpretation of the data, aspects associated with my research questions of the emotions consumers experience, why they experience them and how do they cope with them were revealed. Consumers place great importance on four facets in their decision-making process. They are aware they have choice through planning their luxury journey. They exercise these choices through the roles they play, which is when they begin to experience these choices through the emotions that arise before, during and after consumption. The process of emotional experiences complements findings from other studies that confirm that emotions may motivate certain consumption behaviours (Penz & Stottinger, 2012) and is also a consequence of consumption (Bagozzi et al., 1999; McFerran et al., 2014). Lastly, they enjoy the choices they make by adapting to their self-concept and by regulating their emotions.

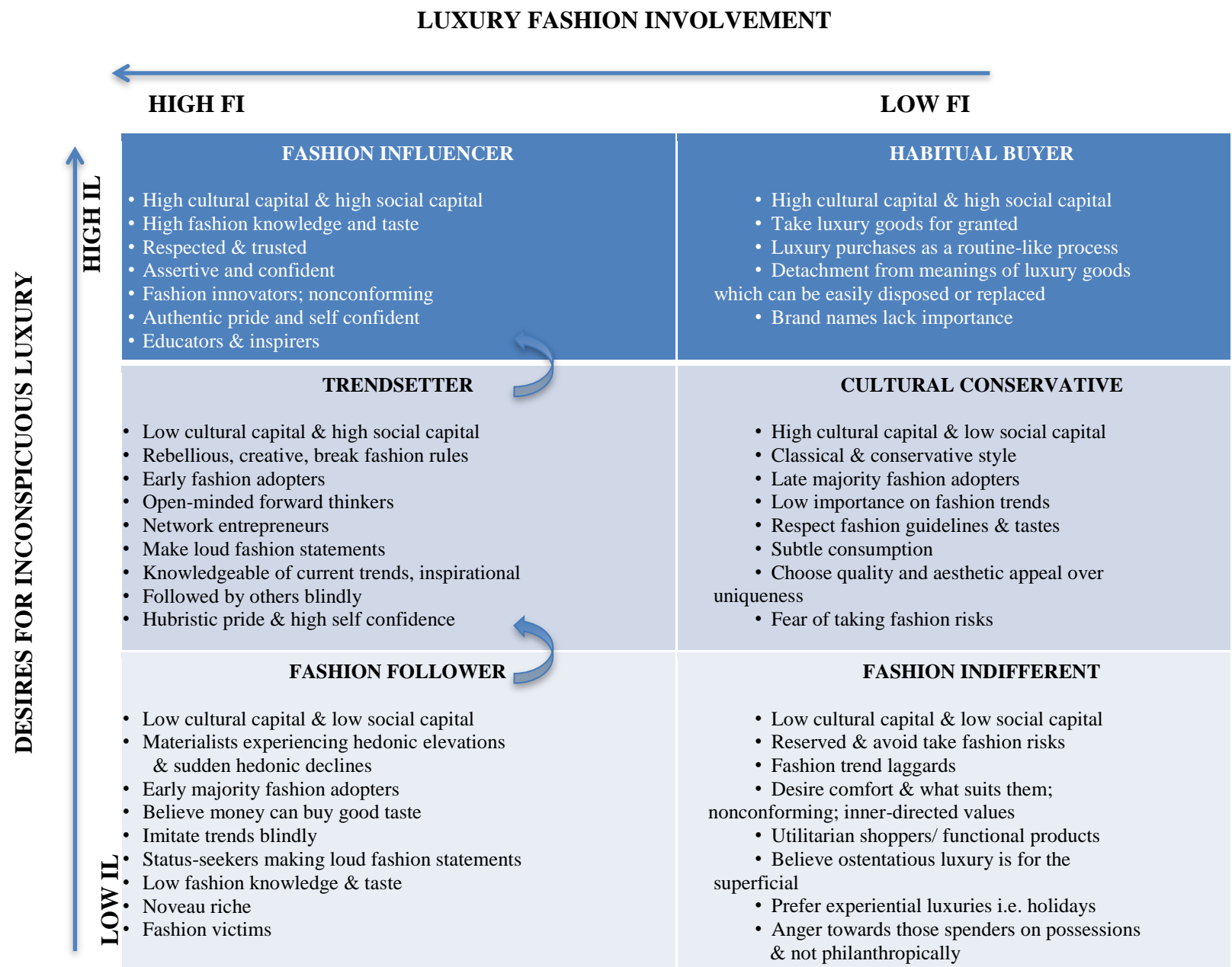
4.2 Typology of inconspicuous luxury consumers

Inconspicuous luxury consumers have not received the deserved attention from luxury researchers as conspicuous luxury consumers. To fully comprehend their motivations for purchasing inconspicuous luxury brands, we must understand their different characteristics and personality traits. Figure 3 describes differences between inconspicuous luxury consumers, which is based on their level of luxury fashion involvement from high to low, and their level of inconspicuous luxury desires from highly inconspicuous with no brand signalling visible to lower inconspicuous levels where there is some evidence of signalling (i.e. a small logo or obvious brand pattern). The framework evident in the diagram also describes key characteristics of these inconspicuous luxury consumers that distinguish them. However, it should be noted that consumers might shift from one position to another depending on the context and situation they are in such as changing their social circle from old friends to work colleagues. Nevertheless, reasons for this possible change in roles are beyond the scope of this study and could be an opportunity for future studies.

4.2.1 Fashion Influencers

As the name denotes, these consumers are influencers and opinion leaders in the field of fashion. They believe they have the knowledge and taste to back up their position and others concur with that by seeking their advice when needed. They are respected and trusted in their communities as they are seen as educators and inspirational figures. They show assertiveness and high self-confidence in their abilities as luxury experts and can predict where trends are headed based on their cultural education, knowledge and personal experiences with luxury brands. They also have the ability to distinguish between genuine luxury items and counterfeits even if they are perfect replicas.

They are also innovative and creative fashion figures and because of their strong confidence, they do not care if they are always dressed uniquely as long as they are convinced it is tasteful and elegant. Thus, they do not need to parade in loud fashion pieces and prefer highly inconspicuous luxury brands that signify quality and craftsmanship with very discreet signalling. They are very selective with their luxury purchases as these represent their persona thus they demonstrate high involvement with their possessions. More importantly, they equally prioritise their social and cultural capitals because of their symbolic roles in society. They unconsciously activate these resources by discreetly signalling horizontally to their social ties. Examples of fashion influencers could be managers working in the luxury field, brand spokespersons, designers and some respected celebrity connoisseurs.



**IL: inconspicuous luxury; FI: fashion involvement*

Figure 3 - Typology of inconspicuous luxury consumers

4.2.2 Trendsetters

The second category involves trendsetters that are socially active in the fashion world. They are seen as rebellious fashion icons, breaking fashion rules and endeavouring to set trends for others to follow. They take the role of creative forward-thinking fashion gurus and tend to be the first to adopt new innovations in fashion. They must be the first to know of the next season's fashion trends, attend all fashion store openings, launches, events and the first to provide their opinions on products. They are usually inspired by existing trends or prefer mixing and matching to create new and improved forms of fashion while

inspiring others. They signal high fashion knowledge yet that does not always represent tastefulness as they sometimes make loud fashion statement to stand out as unique social figures.

Despite being highly involved in fashion, their number one priority is their social capital, which is represented in their horizontal and vertical ties with other. Their network of friends, followers and general association with others has been gained through their cultural capital prowess and expression of knowledge. However, they place greater importance on their vertical ties as they experience greater self-confidence when lower social classes acknowledge their significance with slight envy of others in their same class or higher. Their network of social ties offers them other benefits such as financial and preferential treatment. They aspire to be Fashion Influencers if not already believing they belong to that category. Examples of Trendsetters include fashion bloggers, celebrities and reality TV stars, fashion editors, stylists and up-and-coming fashion designers.

4.2.3 Fashion Followers

The third category of inconspicuous consumers belongs to Fashion Followers. Trendsetters inspire their fashion choices where they follow them blindly without considering suitability to their body types or personalities. They are most likely unaware of the existence of Fashion Influencers due to their limited knowledge and taste. They are seen as fashion victims selecting ostentatious luxuries that scream the brand's name. They believe money can buy taste, status and the right network so they patronise brands with lower inconspicuous levels to imitate higher inconspicuous classes but more importantly, it must have an element of brand identification to have meaning to them and signal to others their status.

This group of consumers would have recently entered the fashion scene aiming to become early majority fashion adopters purely out of imitation of others. They may have also gained new money and fall into the 'nouveau riche' category that are envious of others with cultural family background and 'old money'. Generally, these consumers are materialists that impulsively buy luxury goods with high brand prominence based on hopefulness that these brands can help them gain acceptance into higher groups. They do not possess cultural or social capital but they believe that inconspicuous luxury goods can help them gain these assets because Trendsetters are patronising them. These individuals may be new business entrepreneurs that have made successful financial investments and are trying to assert their status amongst their peers.

4.2.4 Habitual Buyers

To the best of my knowledge, the behaviour of habitual luxury buying has not been examined before in past literature. Habitual Buyers of inconspicuous luxury brands have been accustomed to owning luxury goods from childhood. This is a learned behaviour from parents and has become a routine-like act. To them, luxury goods are taken for granted and its physical loss has no importance to them. They have no attachment, sentimental values, emotional connection or cultural meanings for luxury brands thus they are detached from their possessions. Brand names have no meaning to them and so they do not notice the

difference between brands in their possession. What they do care about is the product's aesthetic, its high level of inconspicuousness and its monetary value as the most expensive piece making it rare and unique.

They possess high cultural capital, which they have inherited from their parents, immediate social circle and education. They also possess high social capital that they have automatically gained and find of importance in their personal resources. They are as equally interested in purchasing highly inconspicuous luxury brands as Fashion Influencers but in contrast, they are not as highly involved in luxury fashion choices. Examples of Habitual Buyers are socialites that have been born and raised in the luxury environment (i.e. Paris Hilton, daughter of Conrad Hilton, founder of Hilton Hotels) or billionaires that are heirs to their parents' wealth and non-financial capital (i.e. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad Al Maktoum, due to inherit his father, the UAE Prime Minister's wealth).

4.2.5 Cultural Conservatives

These Conservatives enjoy the classic styles in luxury fashion believing that it is tasteful, refined and elegant. They are highly cultured and educated where respect of fashion guidelines and matching to external factors such as culture as well as one's personality is crucial for them. They also fear new or edgy trends and believe classics are safe and will never go out of fashion. They would be in the late fashion adopters' division, as they prefer waiting until they evaluate the goods as tasteful.

Luxury brands must be inconspicuous for it to please their senses and they would likely consume it privately to avoid being discomfited if others commented or noticed it. Quality and aesthetic appeal are of more importance to them than the luxury piece's uniqueness or brand name. Thus, they are not highly involved in luxury fashion choices as long as it is subtle and pleasant to the eyes. These are consumers that value their cultural capital but because they are socially inhibitive, they value less their social capital and do not necessarily activate and use it to their benefit. Examples of consumers in this category are mature luxury brand managers (i.e. high-end luxury watches), luxury consumers from an older age group or younger luxury consumers that have been raised conservatively by their parents.

4.2.6 Fashion Indifferents

Luxury consumers that fit this category convey the lowest desires for luxury fashion in the framework. Similar to Cultural Conservatives, they are reserved, dislike taking fashion risks and portray less importance on their social capital. Nevertheless, the difference is that they do not have the Conservatives' knowledge and background of luxury fashion, thus they also convey less importance on cultural capital. They are labelled as fashion trend laggards. To them, comfort and suitability are more important than brand names and worldly possessions and they do not really care to conform and follow others. This does not mean they do not possess high financial capital but they believe happiness is from within. They display inner-directed values and are not guided by external pressures. They are described as utilitarian shoppers interested in functional products that are

inconspicuous and are long-term investments.

Fashion Indifferents find that consumers buying ostentatious and flashy luxury brands are superficial hence why they prefer inconspicuous luxury brands if they plan on purchasing any. From a moral perspective, they believe individuals should spend money on humanitarian causes rather than flashy luxuries. They express feelings of anger towards those that choose to waste their money on highly brand prominent luxury goods. In their case, they would feel less guilty if they spent their own money on experiential luxury such as holidays or excursions where the joy gained from the experience rests in their memory and not publicly displayed for everyone to see. Examples of individuals that suit this category are mature senior managers in any field or philanthropists that have the disposable income to afford luxuries but prefer to spend it practically and wisely.

4.3 Meanings of inconspicuous luxury from the consumer's perspective

Researchers discussing the meanings of luxury have not come to a consensus on the actual definition. They have also traditionally conceptualised what they thought the meanings are from their points of view. In this study, I have examined these meanings from the consumer's perspective and more specifically, the focus was on inconspicuous luxury consumers. Meanings of luxury from an inconspicuous versus conspicuous consumer's point of view have never been distinguished therefore this paper contributes to taking the first step in examining the inconspicuous angle.

Three themes were discovered from interviews with luxury informants: 1) inconspicuous luxury consumers find that inconspicuous luxury goods represent a combination of aesthetic and utilitarian qualities that make the luxury item more attractive and worthwhile. This comprises the first step for consumers to create personal connections with luxury brands, which leads to the next theme; 2) luxury's playfulness and emotional values make consumers more passionately involved with the brand. They enjoy the journey they take with their inconspicuous luxury goods and the symbolic meanings they have created which resonates with them. At this stage, luxury goods are more than just possessions but a part of their existence and who they are. The next theme is the final stage of meanings that luxury consumers have with inconspicuous luxuries; 3) luxury is for the few, specifically the inconspicuous kind which completes its magnetism. They believe that only inconspicuous luxury goods can offer them this unique quality. Not everyone can own and understand luxury, let alone subtle brands, which makes it even more appealing to them. Money is not the sole prerequisite to owning luxury but a personal appreciation to luxury and its symbolic value is. They are able to be one of the lucky few to own and enjoy inconspicuous luxury brands. The first two themes are focused more on consumers' personal connections with their luxuries and the last theme is based on that relationship in relation to their reference groups. Table 5 also provides a more detailed retrospect to these meanings.

Table 5 - Meanings of luxury goods to inconspicuous luxury consumers

Main Theme	Description
Luxury comprises of aesthetic & utilitarian qualities	Appreciation of intricate attention to details Craftsmanship dictate durable quality Innovation in design Custom & tailor-made unique pieces Functional, practical, useful Simple, classy & comfortable Iconic pieces with history & a legacy Aesthetic beauty, suitability & style before brand name & price tag Long-term & long-lasting investment with value for money Country of origin
Luxury is playful & emotional	Discovery of new luxuries with depth and character; aspirational Spices up life; seductive & passionate Emotional brand attachment; handed down to generations; sentimental; raises your spirits Supports emotionally & assists in self confidence Desirable more than needful Must excite, entice & intrigue self & others for education Never settling for second best; owning the finer things in life Symbols of love, appreciation, pride, achievement & belonging Understated elegance & sophistication Exclusivity, selectivity & aspirational Pleasurable to the eyes & senses Consumers feel passionate & excited about luxuries Transports you into the brand’s story & personality Attached childhood memories; luxury passion is inherited True happiness & joy to life A blessing to be thankful for; deserving
Luxury is for the few	Class, elegance & refinement are earned & experienced not bought Self treat for deserving hard workers, educated and tasteful Pride in career achievements; the first to own new luxuries

4.4 Luxury consumption cycle

An important choice luxury consumers tend to make is choosing between inconspicuous luxury brands and conspicuous ones. From analysis of the study’s findings, it is clear that consumers go through a cycle of trial and error discovering which brands fulfil their personal and interpersonal needs. During this cycle, their emotions tend to dictate the direction of their choice process allowing them to experience the positive emotions and cope with negative ones. Figure 4 provides a representation of the cycle of choice luxury consumers go through to reach ultimate satisfaction.

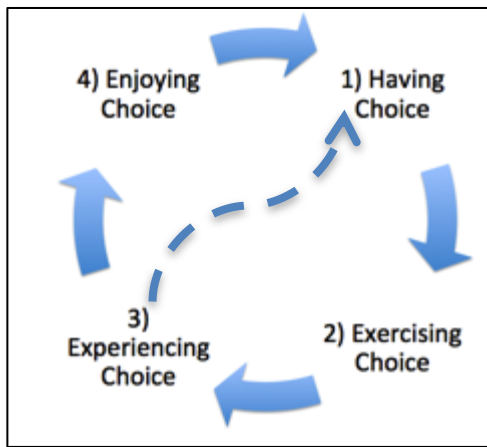


Figure 4 - Cycle of inconspicuous luxury choices

The first step luxury consumers take is their awareness of choices between brands that are conspicuous in nature versus inconspicuous. Even when they decide on inconspicuous luxury brands, they have an added choice of highly inconspicuous brands that are extremely discreet with no visible signalling, versus low inconspicuous brands that have subtle signalling using small logos or discerning patterns. In this instance, their social and cultural capitals dictate which route they will take in relation to their appraised emotions at the time.

Next, they begin to exercise these choices in the roles they play in society whether it is based on their age, gender or dimensional level they belong to in the realm of inconspicuous luxury consumption. They begin by exercising this choice before they actually make the purchase. They do that by being heavily involved and committed to the purchase through research and planning and cognitively appraising the luxury item. They are also influenced by their society, family upbringing as well as their shopping experience, overall connection with the luxury brand and lastly by choosing brands that fulfil their aesthetic and utilitarian needs. These elements interact to increase their involvement in their choices thus their likelihood to begin experiencing what their choice actually means to them.

This brings forth the third step of experiencing the pleasures (or pains) of their choices. They begin to evaluate their choice against their experienced emotions during purchase and right after purchase. They also evaluate the emotions they expected to experience through consumption against their actual experience. If they experience positive emotions, satisfaction will occur and they can move on to the next stage of complete enjoyment that their inconspicuous luxury choices adapts well to their self-concept and fulfils their intrinsic and extrinsic needs. However, should they experience negative emotions, they may either cope with these emotions with dissatisfaction and avoidance or through emotional self-regulation by personal justification of their choice, social affirmation or denial of wrong choices made. Enjoyment, the fourth step of the process symbolises satisfaction which is an affirmation of choices well made and will encourage future purchases. At the third stage, should the

consumer experience an emotional mismatch and disappointment, they will not move on to the fourth stage and will re-evaluate their decisions and their entire process of consumption (represented by the dotted line in Figure 4).

4.5 Main findings

As mentioned, themes were compiled and grouped based on their similarities and whether they sufficiently answered the study’s three research questions: 1) What are the consumers’ experienced emotions in relation to their inconspicuous luxury consumption? 2) Why are they experiencing these emotions? and, 3) How do they cope with these emotions? Further, social capital and cultural capital are found to emotionally drive inconspicuous luxury consumers to purchase lower levels of brand prominence. Because of the symbolic roles these consumers play in society, they prioritise these resources differently thus triggering certain emotions during their consumption process to achieve or continue maintaining these assets. These are embedded within the discussion of the following emergent themes.

4.5.1 Experienced emotions surrounding inconspicuous luxury consumption

Consumers are driven towards certain purchases based on their experienced emotions prior to purchase, their emotions experienced during purchase and right after purchase. They evaluate their appraised emotions and decide on which route they should take towards their future-directed negative emotions. They also evaluate their actual experienced emotions against what was expected which reflects their purchasing satisfaction or disappointment.

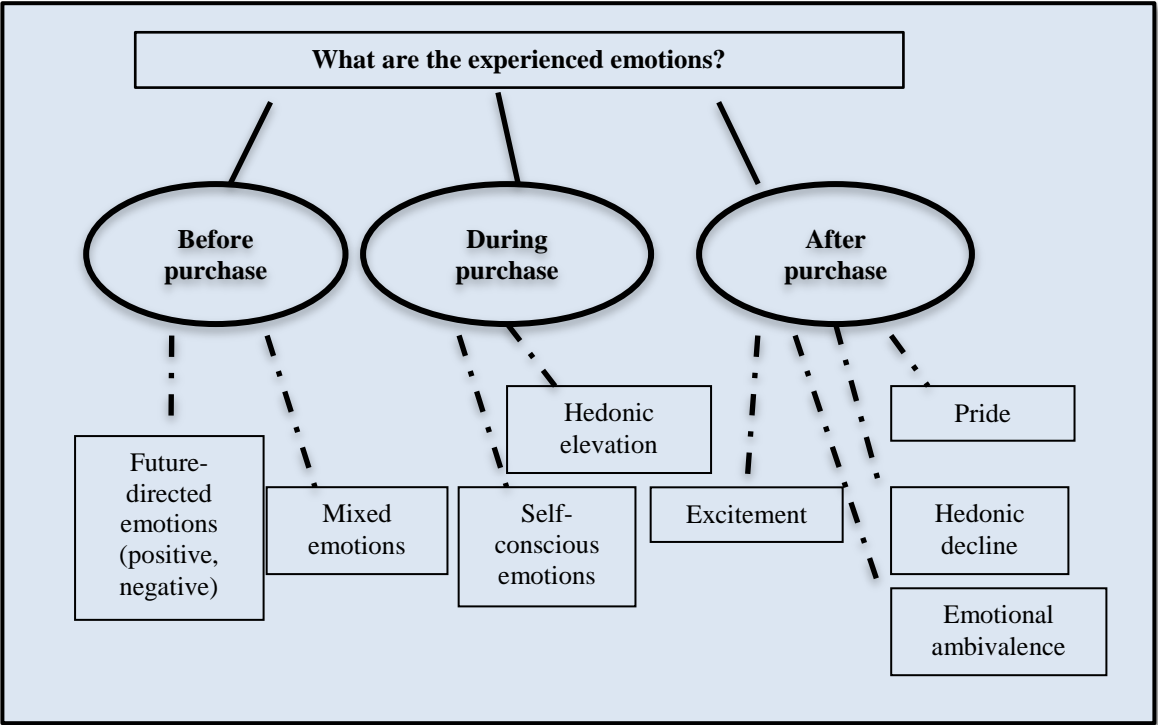


Figure 5 - Thematic map A

Emotions experienced before purchase. Inconspicuous luxury brands are a lot more expensive than conspicuous ones. Thus, informants expressed how their need for cognitive thought and more importantly emotional appraisals in making decisions to purchase such expensive items. These emotional appraisals consist of future-oriented positive or negative emotions that they anticipate to experience with their luxury consumption. Positively, they feel excited and eager to potentially acquire a luxury piece that is rare and unique and something they have always dreamed of owning. They talk about luxury goods of the inconspicuous kind with such passion that they are truly optimistic of how they would feel about buying their desired luxury product:

It's a form of happiness. But happiness not from the sense of wanting to own something, it's not a materialistic kind of happiness, it's a passionate kind...it's like meeting someone you really love and you haven't seen them for such a long time. Longing. (Martha, Marketing Manager)

Those genuine inconspicuous luxury fanatics also have concerns that others may judge them for their possessions and not for who they are therefore they evaluate the luxury brands they purchase and opt for highly inconspicuous types:

To be very honest, I don't really like carrying it, because automatically people just around, like stare because it's a big bag, I have a big one and a small one. I'm talking about the big one. Automatically people look and it just makes me uncomfortable. I just don't like people staring at my stuff. Again it goes back to-oh you're spoilt. Oh, you can buy anything. Oh, your dad's this. I try my best to avoid these things. So if I wear luxury it's subtle. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

Others express their anger and frustration from consumers that purely use their luxury possessions to fake an image and assume status, which demonstrates how invested and highly involved those angry consumers are with their luxury goods and how much they care about personal image. Additionally, some find excessive conspicuousness of expensive luxuries absurd, useless and a waste of money:

To be above everyone else in the mobile world [shaking head]! I mean, seriously that's the only explanation.. I just don't understand why people spend that much money on phones (Vertu). Even if I had a whole lot of money, I would never buy that [louder voice]! (Arthur, Financial Advisor)

On the other hand, some anticipate differing negative emotions from not being able to acquire the right luxury product and fear they might be disappointed that these products will not fulfil their social needs. They also worry about humiliation or embarrassment from buying a luxury brand that might be common in their peers' opinions. Thus, they experience mixed emotions prior to purchase and hesitate. They also hesitate due to their previous bad purchasing decisions and impulsiveness. They worry about experienced guilt after purchase should they choose an item they do not like or others may not approve of. The higher the value of the item the more hesitant they become in consumption.

Emotions experienced during purchase. During the actual purchasing process, consumers tend to experience hedonic elevations from the anticipation of owning a sought after item. Such emotional elevations include feelings of excitement during their shopping trip and how the luxury products entice and intrigue them. This arousing experience can go on for awhile even after purchase as informants express how entranced they are with their luxury goods:

When you wear the clothes you will feel there's something.. the feel on your skin is different. If it's a watch you would feel that every detail; the design is beautiful, it's a pleasure for the eyes, for the senses (Yasser, Regional Brand Manager)

Informants communicate these positive emotions physiologically as their eyes widen, voices heighten and their muscles seem relaxed. Verbally, they explain the joys and happiness of their acquisition experience when discussing how 'the finer things in life' is like spending quality time with an old friend. In addition to these personal emotions, they also describe how acquiring such luxury goods raises their morale when they feel sad and it acts as an emotional crutch that helps them with their self-confidence and esteem:

I'm a very young professional and a senior in my role...compared to my peers. So if I walk in with a Rolex I really feel like my dad's walked in the room along with me kind of thing. I have to make bold statements, I have to fit in, and sometimes even at work a Rolex would be sort of my emotional comfort that I belong. (Martha, Marketing Manager)

It makes me complete because I believe fashion is the trend and so that's why I feel you are-I don't know, when I'm wearing branded clothes I just-even if it's not showing, it's just you know when you walk head up, its confidence, yeah so I complete it with satisfaction. (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

While informants enjoy the spoils of self-confidence from owning luxury goods, others experience authentic pride whilst making these purchases as it symbolises their personal and career achievements and good taste:

Yes, they might follow me with specific things, yes. [...] I'll share with you a small example. I wear lots of Tod's shoes on the weekend, like I'm wearing today, and have many colours. So yeah, a couple of times I was asked --- your shoes, its really nice, and later on I saw these people wearing Tod's. So yes, it could be, but I don't know if they are following me or they just got introduced to the brand through me. They're not basically following me, they're just discovering Tod's. For me they went, they tried it and they saw that it fits them so they just bought it. So I don't think that they're following me, they got the chance to know the brand through me. If you want to call this as following then yes, if this is what you mean by follower, then yes. But I don't consider it following me, just that the chance and the circumstances helped them to get introduced to the brand through me. (Raymond, Commercial Director)

It's something (BMW SUV) I wanted really hard for the past years. [...] It does complete my lifestyle. So it's just like a puzzle. When you put the puzzle (pieces) together – if the colours are right, the shapes are correct, you end up with a perfect picture. So for me, that kind of puzzle piece was missing in my life. [...] So I feel like when I jump into that car I'm blended, like we're one. I'm really happy with it, it makes me feel satisfied, because I really worked hard for it and I was rewarded by this, because it just works perfectly for me (Mohamed, Regional Sales Manager)

While the previous emotions are related to individuals' intrinsic emotions, there are others that experience self-conscious ones. Informants have expressed their contentment and amusement with others' admiration of their personal belongings. Yet, this emotion can be owed to informants' experienced social anxiety from pressures of being centres of attention with high expectations from followers and peers:

He's (the socialite) always exploring, only because a lot of people are watching him. A lot of people are reading about him, follow him. So he's got to keep in-he's got to set something (a trend). (Arthur, Financial Advisor)

On the flip side, informants mentioned that their followers felt jealousy and envy of their cultural, social and economic capital and that they came from 'old money'. Thus, followers try and imitate them using higher signalling luxury brands to show they are on par with them. These emotions are elevated especially whilst their luxury consumption is being observed:

I got a few comments (on a Chanel vintage bag) from that same girl (work colleague) who left. She used to tell me that I was spoilt and no matter what she doesn't believe it actually came out of my own money. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

Emotions experienced after purchase. Several emotions arise after purchase. After purchase, they re-evaluate and compare against their expected emotions prior to purchase. Those that believe they made the right purchasing choices experience continued self pride in their achievements. Additionally, others experience social pride affirming their belonging and being needed and appreciated. The 'high' that some consumers experience after finally achieving what they have forever longed for, similar to a drug, continues on even after purchase as they experience excitement and pleasure of ownership. Social approval and their personal satisfaction with the luxury goods are triggers to the positive emotions experienced in the aftermath of purchase.

However, there are those that experience emotional ambivalence about their purchasing choices. Some doubt their own decision-making abilities because of their past purchasing mistakes, fear of wasting money and buying unsuitable items. Amateur younger consumers are ones that convey this indecisiveness. Other informants reveal their doubt that the luxury goods they have purchased may not be unique enough to maintain their status as Trendsetters. The hedonic decline they experience activates their regretful feelings of making the purchase in the first instance. They feel utmost guilt for not using it as often to justify its price and anger for not initially trusting their gut feeling:

I love it but I think-I don't wear it that often, because I feel it's too flashy for me. I swear, I go back and forth and I think to myself-I should have got a smaller size because it would be more discreet, it would be more suitable for me. (Randa, PR Luxury Freelancer)

I regret buying a few stupid bags [Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors] because I look at them now and they're just sitting there. I don't wear – they're brand new. [...] I bought them because I saw that they were on sale and they were at a good price so I said – why not? if I don't wear it, someone else would. I would've definitely taken this money and given it to charity instead. The fact that I have to look at it, and I'm not wearing it [sigh]. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

Randa's guilt is directed towards herself for making an incorrect choice but also towards her husband that pushed her towards that choice. She expressed her fear of hurting his feelings if she ever reveals her regret for the purchase. While these informants realise this ambivalence themselves, other informants needed members from their social circle to inflict this negative emotion on them. They experience feelings of embarrassment that they cannot control their luxury addiction:

They [friends] make me feel bad about myself because sometimes it's not controlled, what I do, and they are more in control of their cravings for luxury (Cheryl, Recruitment Manager)

Even those Followers that attempted to make luxury purchases have experienced shame with the ostentatious purchases they have made. They come to a realisation that these luxury goods have failed to give them knowledge, status and acceptance into the desirable group they initially envied:

I feel sorry for them that they don't really – they have all this money and they don't have the equity or knowledge to utilise that money properly. [...] they spend a large amount of money and yet they still come out not looking the way they want to. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

Deep inside me I feel these people-I feel sorry for them, really [...] because they're not satisfied and I think no matter what they buy, they won't be satisfied. (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

4.5.2 Reasons for experiencing these emotions

While it is useful to unveil the emotions experienced by inconspicuous luxury consumers around their purchases, it is fundamental to understand the reasons why they experience them. The roles consumers play in society might shed some light on reasons for experiencing certain emotions and how they go about expressing them during their consumption cycle. It is also conveyed by the ways in which they plan their journey to acquiring their desired luxury pieces.

Consumption role-play. Consumers have socially acceptable roles or roles taken upon themselves. The dimensions explained in section 4.2 of this paper convey these roles. Firstly, Fashion Influencers demonstrate authentic pride because of their role as respected and trusted opinion leaders. Their feelings of high self-esteem are represented by their confidence in their knowledge and taste of fashion and their ability to influence ideas and set fashion rules. Their impressive abilities aid in gaining others' trust by being cultured fashion educators:

It feels nice in the first place, because you're being asked to give advice on something they don't really know, and it's to do with your taste. (Mohamed, Sales Manager)

Trendsetters, on the other hand, experience emotions of excitement due to their roles as fashion rebels with unique outlooks to life. Their high following and belief in their ability to be fashion gods makes them experience hubristic pride that can sometimes be viewed as socially unacceptable. However, because they are always in the spotlight, they experience social anxiety, which they respond to by making distinct loud fashion statements to stand out. This anxiety is amplified by their fear of humiliation should they choose to consume luxury that others might identify as tasteless or common. They are continuously afraid of the risk of losing their status and image.

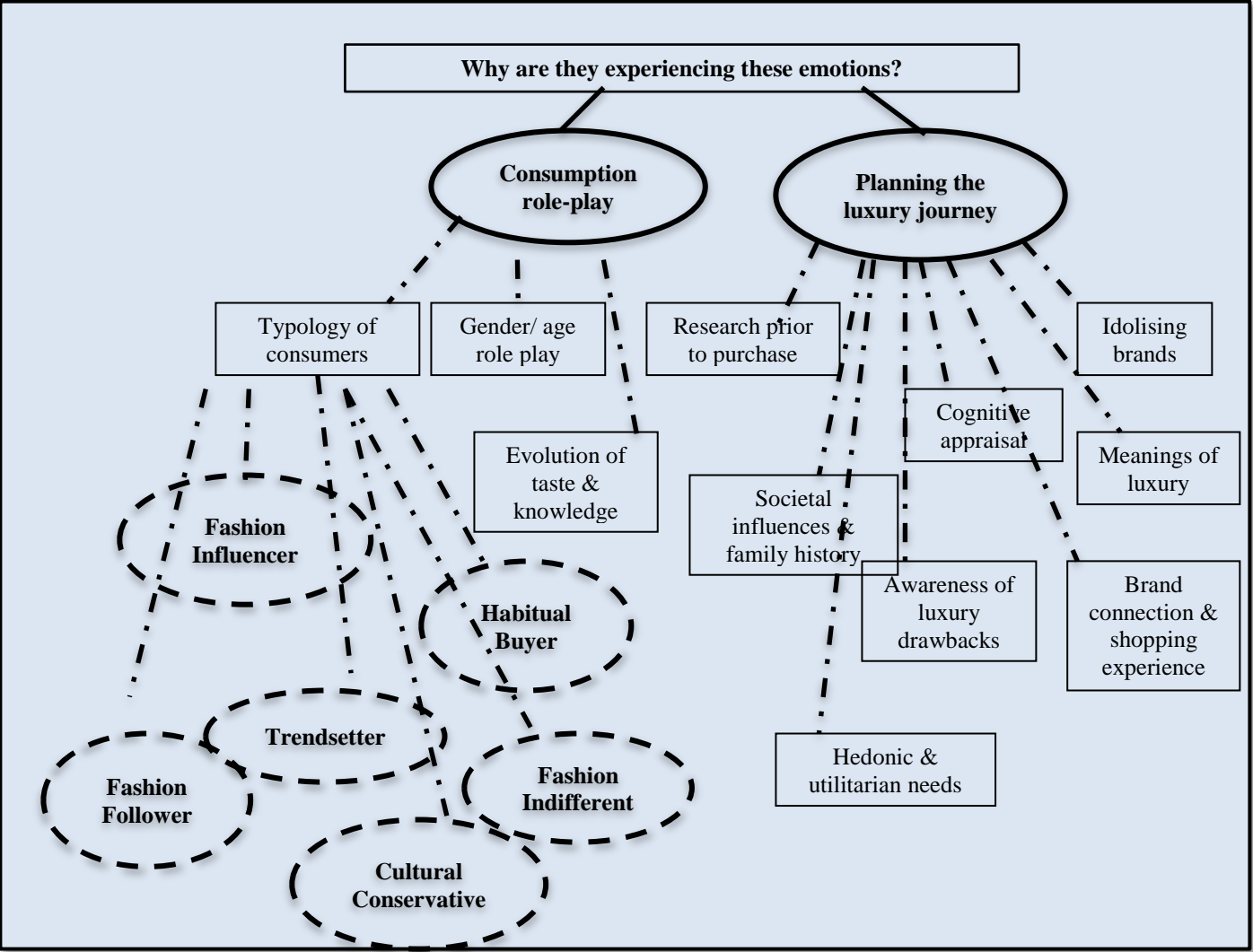


Figure 6 - Thematic map B

Fashion Followers express their envy towards Trendsetters and Influencers' fashion prowess, family, cultured background and daring lifestyle:

She's wild [...] adventurous. She would be courageous to take risks and do things that are not the norm. [...] I envy her [...] because I'm not that risk taker. She gives me the impression that she [...] does not fear a lot of things and she likes to take challenges and experience new things, which is opposite to my character. (Cheryl, Recruitment Manager)

Informants also shared their opinions of Followers as nouveau riche, with jealousy and signs of hatred to those that come from 'old money'. Because of their lack of cultured education and understanding of luxury, nouveau riche are materialistic, experiencing hedonic elevations of hopeful happiness with flashy luxuries followed by sudden declines as they realise their personal disappointment and inability to impress their peers:

I feel that this person is not elegant, is very materialistic. Is somebody who needs to acquire a status symbol and then I think that people are more than just status symbols. We have other things more important to do than acquiring a status symbol. (Yasser, Regional Brand Manager)

He earned a lot of money, he could afford anything in luxury. He came up one day to me and said-listen Mohamed, I could buy anything in the market. I've got these expensive cars, clothes. I just shop from the best brands but I don't feel it. I don't enjoy life the way you do. You have less money than myself but you still enjoy it more than I do. I don't really taste life in this- I could buy any lifestyle I need-anyone could dream of-but I don't really enjoy it. So yes, money could buy luxury, but does not buy pleasure or happiness. (Mohamed, Luxury Sales Manager)

On the contrary, their peers feel empathy towards their ill choices of luxury goods that are distasteful and a waste of money. They believe they are seeking status without earning the title.

Cultural Conservatives are content with classical and reserved luxury fashion choices. It conveys their risk-averse personalities, which may be evident in other areas of their lives. They express more worry and concern that others may judge their possessions and wealth and not their personal character. They are afraid of judgment and thus they prefer inconspicuous subtle luxury brands that will help them avoid this:

So if I wear luxury, it's subtle. And it definitely doesn't have LV logos everywhere. I'm very specific about even my rings. You won't even notice it's anything. I just don't like people staring...pointing. I don't like people accusing of things. It's just- you want to go out and enjoy the buy for itself. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

Fashion Indifferents also share similar risk-averse qualities as Cultural Conservatives but not because they are reserved and classical in trends but because they prefer comfort and what is risky and new may not be well suited. They do not often try new things but what is functional and simple is pleasant for them. They also express how some luxury brands are too flashy for their liking. If it were not useful and needed they would not even think of buying it and are annoyed by those that patronise such wasteful products.

Lastly, Habitual Buyers seem to express the least emotions during their inconspicuous luxury consumption. They are unfulfilled by their existing luxury possessions, taking them for granted as they have been buying luxury goods as a routine exercise. Because of their lack of luxury fashion involvement, they have no emotional expectations from acquiring new luxury brands:

I don't think people who are well off (feel anything when using their things) and when you get in to this a lot and you have a lot of jackets with other brands you don't feel much. You start losing the thing that – oh I'm wearing a Carolina jacket – no they start feeling –I'm wearing a nice jacket, a different jacket! (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

While consumers play roles socially, roles are also formed based on gender and age. From a gender viewpoint, women, especially spouses, are perceived by their partners as more knowledgeable and highly involved in fashion luxury. As women are viewed as more passionate beings, their role as care takers involves making luxury fashion choices for their male partners thus males act as dependents in this instance. From men's perspective and as part of the male dominance cliché, they spend less time shopping than women, as they are content with their simple luxury goods and only shop if they have to. However, their actions beg to differ. Men enjoy luxury shopping and making such decisions but they feel they must get their partners' approval first:

You don't want to be dressed badly in front of your wife or buy something [...] without your wife's consent. Although sometimes I have gone rogue and bought things that have worked out well. She's agreed with me. (Arthur, Financial Advisor)

In this instance, women dominate the decision making process in the case of luxury fashion shopping. Additionally, men feel the need to impress women with their luxury acquisitions, thus they are optimistic and hopeful that their high-end inconspicuous luxury products will attract and impress women. While men show their insecurities here, women do the same by pursuing luxury goods to feel empowered and confident:

I think if she bought the right dress she will feel empowered because she'll try to loosen up-the reason why she's in this meeting which is probably stressful, and she'll rely on that dress to make her feel empowered and in the right position to talk when she needs to talk, feeling smart. It's the kind of thing that women feel, really when they buy something. (Martha, Marketing Manager)

Age also signals certain attributes that are distinct compared to other demographic aspects. Younger more amateur consumers make different purchasing decisions compared to older more mature consumers. Younger consumers experience social anxiety because of external pressures from their peers and what the media portrays as trendy and fashionable. Because of their age, they lack the knowledge, experience and often enough taste because of their limited history with luxury fashion. They envy Fashion Influencers and Trendsetters and wish to imitate them. However, those that cannot afford to imitate them choose entry-level luxury brands that are often conspicuous luxuries or they settle for counterfeit luxury brands:

You get the other crowd that wear a Rolex [...] -the youngsters, the fakes [...] there's such a demand for it (luxury) there's such a desire for it from people, because I feel that it's driven a lot from celebrities, Internet, TV. A lot of youngsters, a lot of kids are growing up now with their idols [...]. They would do anything. If someone's idol's wearing a Rolex -the

child would want a Rolex, or a fake Rolex. [...] It's a trend. People follow. (Arthur, Financial Advisor)

Mature consumers also admit to their impulsive behaviours at a younger age. They reveal their embarrassment that they made many bad purchases in the past and wasted a lot of money. However, they feel proud that they have changed their ways and that age and time have helped in their maturity and nurtured education. They now invest in products and take time to make appropriate decisions unlike their old selves:

I think when I was younger I used to like these flashy things – yay I just purchased a Gucci bag and it says Gucci all over it. But I think as you grow older you say – no I don't want everyone knowing what I'm wearing. It's none of anyone's business. It's my concern. It's what I like. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

When I was younger yes, I was much more impulsive in my purchases. I used to buy things and maybe get disappointed later on. I wouldn't wear or use it. But to be honest, with age you learn to buy less, buy more expensive things, take more time to decide what to buy. You buy things that you really use and like. (Raymond, Commercial Sales Director)

In addition to their age maturity and their changing purchasing behaviours, they have also evolved in their knowledge and taste. Informants expressed how happy they are that their taste have improved tremendously through hard work and learning from influential peers. While these informants have nurtured their knowledge and understanding of luxury fashion which drove them to purchase inconspicuous luxury brands, others have expressed that the process is ingrown and based on nature.

Understanding fashion and having good taste are inherited from parents:

(She got her fashion sense) from her mother. Her mother has the most impeccable sense of style. It's mostly she wears designer, but she understands what looks good on her. (Randa, PR Luxury Freelancer)

My dad and my brother [...]. I would say for the same reasons. It's just something we were born with, to accept the nicest and finest things in life, which complete our lifestyle. (Mohamed, Luxury Sales Manager)

Those that believe they are knowledgeable in luxury fashion show pride in their savvy choices where they make smart investments and still enjoy their purchases inconspicuously:

I like it (Rolex watch) because the resale – I heard a lot about it, like the resale value is very good [...] I didn't want to put money on nothing [...] if you have a daughter, you're going to give it to her, it's never out. (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

They're (Berlutti shoes) very comfortable. I like the idea of the long life lasting shoes meaning that you can wear them for five years. Scratches can be removed [...]. It's basically a product that can live with you. (Raymond, Commercial Sales Director)

Confidence in their taste allows them to be selective and believe they can recognise brands despite its subtlety. They also believe their cultural and social capital allows them to understand and respect their society's taste and values thus they prefer subtle luxuries. Others feel pity for those that lack this knowledge and spend valuable money on conspicuous luxury products that are tasteless.

Planning the luxury journey. Aside from the roles played during consumption of inconspicuous luxury goods, the planning process is very critical to consumers and dictates how involved they are and how they feel towards their purchases. The level of research prior to purchase in addition to their existing knowledge and experience depicts how committed they become to the purchasing decision. They cognitively appraise their purchases depending on larger more expensive purchases. The more committed they are, the more emotionally and cognitively involved they become:

For me, because I go through this phase a lot. I look at many things online and when I get to a phase where I look everyday at something online, I know deep inside that I'm going to buy it, that's it. [...] The decisive moment for me is when I save the picture on my desktop. That means the purchase is going to happen very soon. (Raymond, Commercial Luxury Director)

Raymond goes on:

It took me lots of time to decide on which watch was it and when I decided I wanted to buy an expensive watch on a budget of \$10,300, but the more I looked online and researched and I found things I liked more, I finished buying something at \$40,000!

However, there are those that do not carry out any research or planning such as 'on-the-ground,' online searches or word of mouth. They continuously fall into the trap of impulsive buying. They admit to regretting several purchases but unfortunately, due to their habitual behaviour of spontaneity, high disposable income and possible lack of cultural capital, their behaviours do not change:

As I told you, I'm a very spontaneous buyer, so I go buy whatever I like on the first - whatever I see and I like I get without thinking and sometimes after I go home I regret it [...] because this was not what I was intending to buy. (Cheryl, Recruitment Manager)

Planning also involves being aware of the necessary qualities of inconspicuous luxury goods. An awareness of the positive returns as well as negative drawbacks of luxury dictates their decisions. Consumers enjoy the desirable meanings they have for inconspicuous luxury brands as explained in section 4.3 of this chapter. Consumers have subjective meanings of luxury based on their background, cultural society and family history. Some believe luxury is playful, symbolic, memorable and rewarding:

It's (diamond wedding ring) a bond. It's fulfilment. And it's just pleasure. It's honour and it's just happiness. [...]. It's pure happiness [smile and rested facial muscles].. [...] Made me feel really good about our future. (Arthur, Financial Advisor)

To own a Vacheron Constantin watch is really something big but to own one that was limited to the number of employees and you have your number of employee on the back, engraved [...]. It's something that money can't buy. (Yasser, Regional Brand Manager)

I've worked hard, I deserve it (Porsche Carrera) now. So it's my little gift to me. I worked hard and I get to play hard now [smile and shoulders relaxed]. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

Other factors that determine luxury include hedonic and utilitarian needs seem to be subject to their social and cultural capital priorities. Those with hedonic needs express their excitement in possessing rare luxuries and appreciate its intricacy and craftsmanship which they can hand down to their children. Informants have also expressed more importance on the

functionality and practicality of inconspicuous luxury items and its country of origin. Some consumers have shown greater importance on the brand and shopping experience as vital triggers to actual purchase. Those that idolise certain brands and have an attachment become loyal and trusting that they firstly seek the brand and then decide on what luxury piece they are interested in. They are very passionate and attracted to a brand's history and image where they express desires to embody its creator:

I want to be Coco Chanel. [...] I like the way she dresses up, I like the way she puts (herself together). I mentioned earlier that I wake up in the morning, even if I'm just going to drop my daughter off to school, I have to put on makeup, this is exactly the same way she's led her life. (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

It feels like a reaffirmation of myself – this is the kind of man I like to be a part of (Alfred Dunhill brand image). It connects with me, it understands my needs, and the values that this brand has, no matter how they position it, it aligns with what I have in mind. I feel like this brand is an extension of me. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

This connection is extended to the brand store's image and how the brand is portrayed in the media. Consumers' experiences in luxury stores dictate how they feel towards their luxury goods, justifies expensive purchases and affirms they are making the right choices. Informants mentioned the need to be excited by the store's environment, which includes the layout, design and aftersales service. Sandy also mentioned she preferred stores to be crowded because it assured her of the store's offering and increased her curiosity and eagerness to be a part of that brand. More importantly, the role sales associates play in store by engaging with customers and portraying the brand's values was vital. Other informants have expressed their fury and anger (verbally and physically) as they discussed negative experiences in-store with salespeople that discriminate or convey a bad attitude. For instance, Martha talked about her experience at Louis Vuitton several times during her interview:

They (salespeople) have terrible, terrible attitude. They sort of select their customers before they walk in. I don't think it's a very smart strategy because your brand pulls people, not your people in the store, and I think if you have someone who can't even afford one item of what you're wearing, judging you and giving you looks from the minute you enter the door of the store, then yeah, I'm sorry I'm not interested [shrill voice]! I just wanted to see it (a Louis Vuitton bag). She said the price and she wouldn't pull it down! I found that extremely rude. She completely was evaluating what my purchasing power was like, and I think that was offensive and that's one of the triggers that made me not want to go back into the store again! (Martha, Marketing Manager)

Martha not only verbally mentioned the negative impression she had of the brand and that she would not return again, but her tone was heightened as she explained her anguish and disappointment in Louis Vuitton while her facial muscles contracted. Randa, Alexander, Sandy and Cheryl also shared negative impressions of customer service at Louis Vuitton in Dubai exclaiming they would not revisit the store after that experience. On the other hand, consumers also express their satisfaction and positive experiences with salespeople that offer exceptional VIP treatment. Consumers that receive this special treatment experience higher self-esteem and felt status, which they appreciate.

Additionally, the luxury company's reputation is another element of influence. Consumers believe salespeople that are respectable and professional are a result of the company's influence. They appreciate the attention to detail these companies

offer customers and believe companies show their pride in their designs and controlled niche markets which are well appreciated by inconspicuous consumers:

I like the fact that they (Louis Vuitton company) don't have any outlets, they don't go on sales. They keep the luxury in it, they keep the name. I don't like the fact that a brand can be super expensive in a country and super cheap in another. [...] I think it's not fair. I know Louis Vuitton respects all their customers around the world (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

Other influencing factors are society and direct family that have an effect on experienced emotions. Because individuals are born and raised amongst these two influential entities, they have been taught to feel and react in certain ways that are socially acceptable. For instance, consumers' feel they must abide by a culture's dress code as well as pressures to live luxuriously. This way, they feel accepted and have a sense of belonging. For instance, Martha explained how she had to purchase a Rolex to fit in with her family members who all own Rolex. Below are views on the impact society and parents have on consumption choices and how these luxuries are enjoyed:

Well it's a new thing (Porsche Carrera). In our city over here, new is cool. So I was one of the first people who got the cars out of the showroom. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

Back home, it wasn't all that about the luxury brands and it wasn't the normal thing, so maybe we were not exposed a lot, but when we came and lived in Dubai we became more exposed to fashion and brands and we became more open to all brands coming from all over the world, whether from the States or Europe, so that maybe influenced it (passion for luxury). (Cheryl, Recruitment Manager)

It's just society doesn't allow her again-I don't blame individuals. I blame a lot of times their families. Because if you don't teach your daughter or son that it's wrong, and living for a luxurious life when you actually don't have the money, then there's a problem initially to start off. A lot of times we have to say that society does define us, unfortunately it does. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

While others shape their luxury choices, informants also fear being judged for their possessions and family history and not for their character and personality. If they are not judged, others are monitoring how individuals consume luxury goods which signals their family background and education:

I think the other people are people who just all of a sudden became rich and don't know where to start and they don't have this background. You'll always feel it even if they're wearing branded shoes, clothes, jewellery and even the way they put on their jewellery you'll always notice it. It's (taste is) not there from the beginning (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

Yet the drawbacks of luxury keep inconspicuous consumers alert and weary of buying just any luxury brands. They are very selective as it influences their wellbeing and how their social circle perceives them. Informants revealed their awareness that money cannot buy happiness and satisfaction especially if they lack knowledge and understanding of the true meanings behind inconspicuous luxury. They believe consumers become materialists and seek joy from possessions but unfortunately end with dissatisfaction and frustration. They continue purchasing luxury brands in search of true happiness. To materialists, luxury is simply acquiring worldly possessions yet to others the prospect of spending quality time with family and friends is true luxury.

Therefore, consumers experience positive and negative emotions as they evaluate the drawbacks of luxury goods to their personal welfare.

Additional drawbacks to owning luxury goods are that inconspicuous luxury consumers whom dislike any signal of brand prominence believe that their purchases sometimes cannot be controlled. Brand designers that change their products’ designs by increasing its prominence, globalisation and media publicising the latest luxury fashion products and lastly the existence of counterfeit luxury brands all impact their perception of luxury. Inconspicuous consumers fear the image of their luxury possessions would be perceived differently because of these factors:

It’s very annoying because you can only imagine people who are out there purchasing real, putting in the full value of something they really like to purchase and they want, but when they look around they feel people are looking at them in this way that your bag might be fake. Its heart-breaking, it’s annoying! Why would you put the effort of buying a real one when you could just say - you know what let me just go buy a fake one. I’m paying quarter of the price and people anyways either or would think that it’s fake. Or, if I know what family you’re from [..] I’m automatically going to assume it’s real! (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

Sandy’s disgust and disrespect to those that patronise counterfeit luxury goods makes her second guess whether her genuine luxury purchases are worth buying and whether the true value vanishes.

4.5.3 Coping mechanisms

While informants have expressed how they felt during their inconspicuous luxury consumption, they have also revealed how they dealt with their emotions. They described how they regulated their emotions to avoid self-destructive behaviours and complement their pre-existing and desirable self-concepts to fulfil their intrinsic and extrinsic desires.

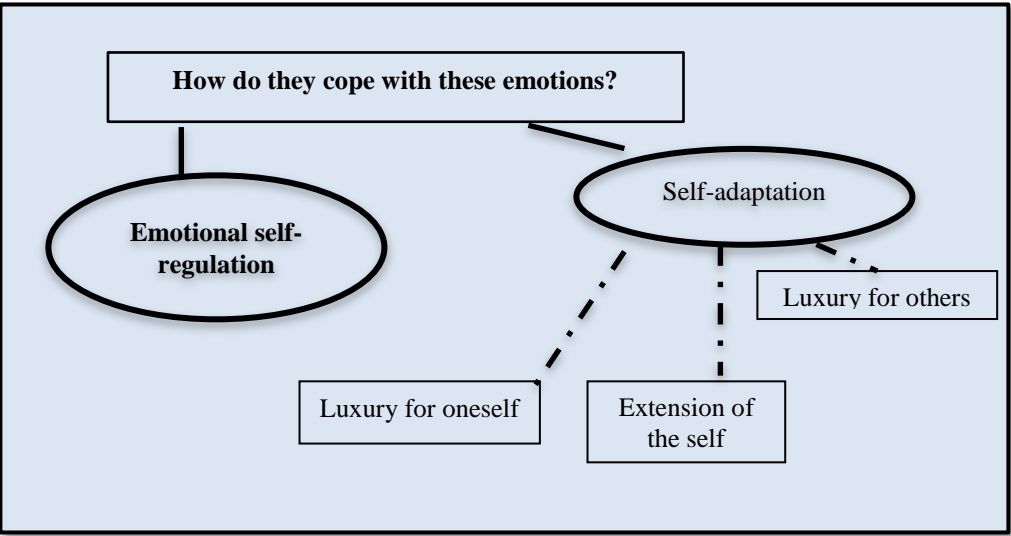


Figure 7 - Thematic map C

Emotional self-regulation. As consumers experience emotions around their consumption habits of inconspicuous luxury goods, they begin to evaluate what causes positive and negative emotions. They evaluate whether they need to regulate or eliminate certain behaviours or purchases to reach their ultimate goals. For instance, emotional self-regulation is required when Followers envy others for their cultural and social capital. They regulated their actions by purchasing inconspicuous luxury goods similar to their reference groups but with some signalling to eventually gain a sense of belonging. As envy is a socially unacceptable emotion, there is a high need for regulation. From a personal perspective, they need to feel at peace with themselves thus cognitive dissonance such as guilt or worry about making unnecessary expensive purchases keep them unsettled. Some informants chose to regulate these emotions by denying their feelings through verbal justifications to avoid the inevitable regret. Others chose to continue buying highly brand prominent luxuries believing it justifies the price by offering them social acceptance:

No I don't try to get in to that regret phase, because regret means you got a little bit of guilt, no. I never go in that [shaking head quickly]. (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

Another route taken is receiving purchase affirmation such as social recognition, continuous usage of the luxury product or positive store and aftersales experiences. They believe these reduce negative feelings and make better investments.

Trendsetters that experience anxiety because of social pressures or fear of losing their status regulated these emotions by selecting unique yet often loud fashion statement pieces (using colour, subtle yet prominent logo or discerning brand patterns). Others who feared being perceived as common chose subtle inconspicuous luxury brands, custom made luxury goods or unknown brands to avoid this risk:

It would kill him I assume! [...] it would hit him because he doesn't feel unique anymore. The idea of why he bought this for it to be different, to stand out and be unique. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

I think somebody like this, especially for a jacket would go and make one. It's completely different. It's so natural. (Yasser, Regional Brand Manager)

Despite pride being a positive and desirable emotion, consumers feel the need to regulate it. Influencers, for example, that experienced authentic pride revealed their need to regulate this emotion to avoid it transforming into a hubristic one. To stay humble and simultaneously avoid others' envy, they turned to inconspicuous luxury brands to avoid socially unacceptable behaviours. However, Influencers did at times express their pride by educating others of tasteful luxury goods and refined fashion pieces:

This is exactly what I like about it, because when I pick something which is very nice, when people see me wearing it they always want to know about it. They look at it, they like it, what is this, explain to us. So it's a product that will intrigue people's eyes. (Raymond, Commercial Sales Director)

On the other hand, Trendsetters that experienced hubristic pride do so outwardly through social media such as bloggers, which might be seen as egoistic or conceited. They need to stand out and flaunt their social and cultural capital:

She's quite confident knowing that she's worn something very fashionable and that would turn heads. She's a socialite; she wants to stand out in the crowd. That's just what she does. [...] Others would probably look up to her especially if she's someone influential, very elegant. They would say 'oh wow that's probably a brand that everyone should look out for'. The media would be all over it! (Randa, PR Luxury Freelancer)

Self-adaptation. Consumers also chose to cope with their emotions by subconsciously evaluating them against their pre-existing or desired self-concepts and adapt to them. These included coping with emotions surrounding their consumption as an extension of their selves or their socially desired image. Once they chose luxuries that resemble who they are which suited their lifestyle, they felt balanced and emotionally stable. Furthermore, their experienced emotions seem to dictate the personality types they take on. For instance, they chose to consume inconspicuous luxury brands at the pre-purchase stage as it married well with their intrinsic needs of affirmation of status to increase their self-confidence. They believed patronising such brands would improve and strengthen their personality. Yet others have a need for uniqueness (NFU) and desired brands that match their individualist traits. They do not mind consuming brands that are risky and may not be socially and culturally acceptable:

A very good friend of mine - actually she's one of the top bloggers in the Middle East – and every time I look at her, I just have a smile on my face because she's done so well. That I've seen her get up there, and she's very different. A lot of people might think it's a bad thing that she's Syrian and it's not acceptable in her culture, but you know what, she's doing really well! (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

I was never a follower myself. Now I don't know if someone follows me or not, but I was never a follower. I have a very strong opinion about things. I don't impose that opinion on anyone, but yes I definitely am not someone who will do things like others. (Raymond, Commercial Sales Director)

On the other hand, informants found that personal satisfaction and comfort are ultimately what they are after. They have also expressed that this satisfaction comes after feeling of self-gratitude thus deserve rewards for the hard work of educating themselves in the field and building their careers and persona. The intrinsic needs extends to their genuine passion and love of beautiful objects and how it makes them feel:

It (Porsche Carrera) is currently my most prized possession, usually because I have spent quite a large amount of money on it. And it's something I bought for myself and for my enjoyment. It wasn't because I wanted to let people see it was a fancy car. It's because I enjoy sports cars and I take it quite aggressively on the track, I actually enjoy such a well-built machine. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

I watch people at social gatherings – not to envy them, but if I see that something is repeating itself more than twice, then I already figure out that it's a trend, and you're immediately finding me not wanting from a materialistic point of view, to have it, but from a passion point of view. It's a passion like people like certain sports, like people like certain cars. So it's a rewarding feeling. (Martha, Marketing Manager)

Even by flaunting their luxuries or imitating others, which is usually misconstrued to meaning status seeking, informants revealed this may happen out of genuine happiness with possessions without ulterior motives:

There are some people who do not buy luxury goods often, so they're happy with their purchase and this is fine, it's just human nature to be happy and to show things we bought [...] share your purchase with friends you know. There is nothing wrong about it. (Raymond, Commercial Sales Director)

An uncommon but interesting factor noted in informants' discussions were their inner-directed personality trait that they look back to when coping with their emotions around consumption. Some revealed their indifference to interpersonal relations and what others think because of their confidence in their choices as self-reliant individuals. They dislike imitating the trends and because of their non-conformist traits, they buy what they like, consume it when they like and dispose of it however they like:

I'm telling you I'm working with a lot of people like this who are very high-end luxury consumers, but you just tend to forget about it. Because if you're going to have to hear everyone every single day throw out a comment like that, you're really not going to be enjoying that luxury that you're actually purchasing. You're just going to be one of these people who goes and just buys a bag just to fit society. Not actually going because you genuinely want it, you like it. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

I have to like it myself so even if something is very much in fashion and everybody is looking for it, if I don't like it or I don't feel I'm attracted to it, I will not buy it. I have to feel that it's fitting me and my personality and it's making me special for me not for people to see. (Raymond, Commercial Sales Director)

Some informants revealed that luxury choices they make are sometimes to please others and to fulfil their own extrinsic needs. They found emotional satisfaction by signalling their capital whether economic, cultural or social to separate them from commoners and avoid negative social emotions such as anxiety. They believed that signalling status through subtle yet distinct brands to peers may also help improve their social networks and their careers:

The other one walked in to the party thinking "I'm just going to have a really good time here, get to know as many people as I can, increase my social fashion network and gain as many contacts as possible". (Randa, Luxury PR Freelance)

I think sometimes it (flaunting) might be – I wouldn't say necessarily – positive in a way that if you have some products and you do showcase them, it puts you in a better position. For example, a man walking into a meeting. If you have a certain watch brand on your hand, it will put you in a certain position in the eyes of whoever you're meeting with. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

Informants also disclosed a deep desire to be loved by others and gain respect and equality they deserved. Thus, they placed great importance on their fashion choices to gain acceptance and blend in with their social circles:

It (brand identification) has to show one way or another. [...] She's into this because of the brand. She wants to impress herself and the people around. She wants to say –okay look, where I've reached, what I can afford. (Sharon, stay-at-home mum)

Anybody who buys these, buys them because he wants other people to know that he can afford a certain amount of luxury and quality, but does not necessarily need to be a standoff. [...] I think there could be multiple people with Armani jackets or Boss jackets or suits, and they'd feel okay within the circle. It's just a matter of being part of that.

[..] Accepted - I've made it, I can afford, I can have an Armani suit, a Boss suit. I've made it. I know my brands and I invest in them properly. So when I sit with my colleagues, I'm on par and I'm equal with everybody else. (Alexander, Regional Head of Sales)

Others constantly look for ways to seek attention by only patronising popular brands and the latest trends to avoid feelings of shame or humiliation that they are falling behind the fashion wagon. Some hide behind high-end luxury brands out of embarrassment from their lower standard backgrounds and family histories. These consumers go to utmost levels to conceal their true identities and believe lower levels of inconspicuousness that only their peers can identify with may facilitate that:

It came out that she was so embarrassed to introduce her friends to come to her house, because of the level or standard she's in. Now that's definitely not luxury, because even if she can be luxurious to herself, enjoy the things that are least important, but to others it might mean a lot - for her, luxury's purely money. Just putting out an image. In fact, that you just do this because you're embarrassed [..] then you're definitely not who you are. It's who you want to be. (Sandy, Regional Graphic Designer)

Lastly, genuine inconspicuous luxury consumers that feel pity towards 'fake' others admitted to finding themselves patronising highly inconspicuous luxury brands and customised luxury goods to signal their true identities and intimidate others that do not belong to their social groups.

4.6 Summary

In many ways, findings from this study offer novel insights that enhance theories on emotions and social class. The relationship between cultural and/or social capital as the driving factors towards experienced emotions during consumption has not been established in past studies. Furthermore, this study focuses on inconspicuous luxury consumption that distinguishes it from other luxury research that focuses on conspicuous luxury. Also, qualitative methods were used to explore this area further, analysing and interpreting certain common themes that arose from conducting interviews with relevant informants. The findings answered the three research questions posed earlier on in the study, which revealed the importance and strong influence emotions have on inconspicuous luxury consumers. It not only uncovered how and why emotions drive consumers to make certain purchases but it was discovered that it guides consumers through their cyclic consumption process and drives each step forward from having choice, exercising choice, experiencing choice and finally enjoying choice. Also, unique to this study is the detection of levels of inconspicuous consumers, which denounces past literature's one-sided view of this segment. Lastly, meanings of luxury were revealed from these consumers' perspectives, which disclosed interesting insights into what luxury goods mean to them.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This study on inconspicuous luxury consumption is novel in itself as there has been limited research in this area. The exploration and journey taken with inconspicuous consumers on their preferences, emotions and opinions of inconspicuous luxury as described in the findings has offered some insight into this field of research. The novelty is in its ability to reveal one extra layer of luxury consumption needs that has not been studied in depth in the past. Firstly, by understanding why some luxury consumers choose inconspicuous luxury brands instead of conspicuous ones and the relation emotions have in this choice, I was able to identify deeper insights into their emotions experienced, as well as their strategies to cope with such emotions. Secondly, social and cultural capital have not been both studied empirically in inconspicuous luxury consumption research, which suggests that researchers may believe there are more similarities amongst the two, or one is less important to study than the other. Exploring the importance of capital in dictating emotions experienced reveals unique characteristics of inconspicuous luxury consumers that should be considered in target segmentation.

This chapter offers a threefold explanation of the findings:

- 1) Insights into meanings inconspicuous luxury consumers have of their luxury consumption choices from personal and interpersonal views.
- 2) The importance of emotions and possession of non-financial capital in understanding consumers' attitudes and behaviours towards their consumption choices.
- 3) A re-examination and addressing possible theoretical extensions of existing academic work in light of the study's findings.

5.2 A new outlook to luxury

This study reveals more information about luxury that has not been deeply analysed in literature before. While inconspicuous luxury consumption is not a novice concept and academic researchers as well as managers are aware of its existence, research has not delved deeper into this segment to better understand their needs, what drives them to consume more valuable products that allows them to barely signal, if not any signs to others. Researchers have previously generalised the meanings of luxury (Eastman et al., 1999; Kapferer, 1997; Nueno & Quelch, 1998) without distinguishing different types of consumption behaviours related to it. Other studies heavily focus on conspicuous luxury consumption while lightly touching on inconspicuous luxury desires that offer no supporting empirical evidence (Hume & Mills, 2013; Veblen, 1899; Wilcox et al., 2009). While few academics found the worth in researching inconspicuous luxury behaviours (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010), they have only touched the surface with their findings on perception and preferences for inconspicuous luxury

brands. This study is only the beginning where the aim was to delve deep into the abyss of inconspicuous luxury consumption by interviewing targeted informants to find out the role emotions play in their consumption choices. Figure 8 depicts a proposed model of inconspicuous luxury consumption schemas as described by informants.

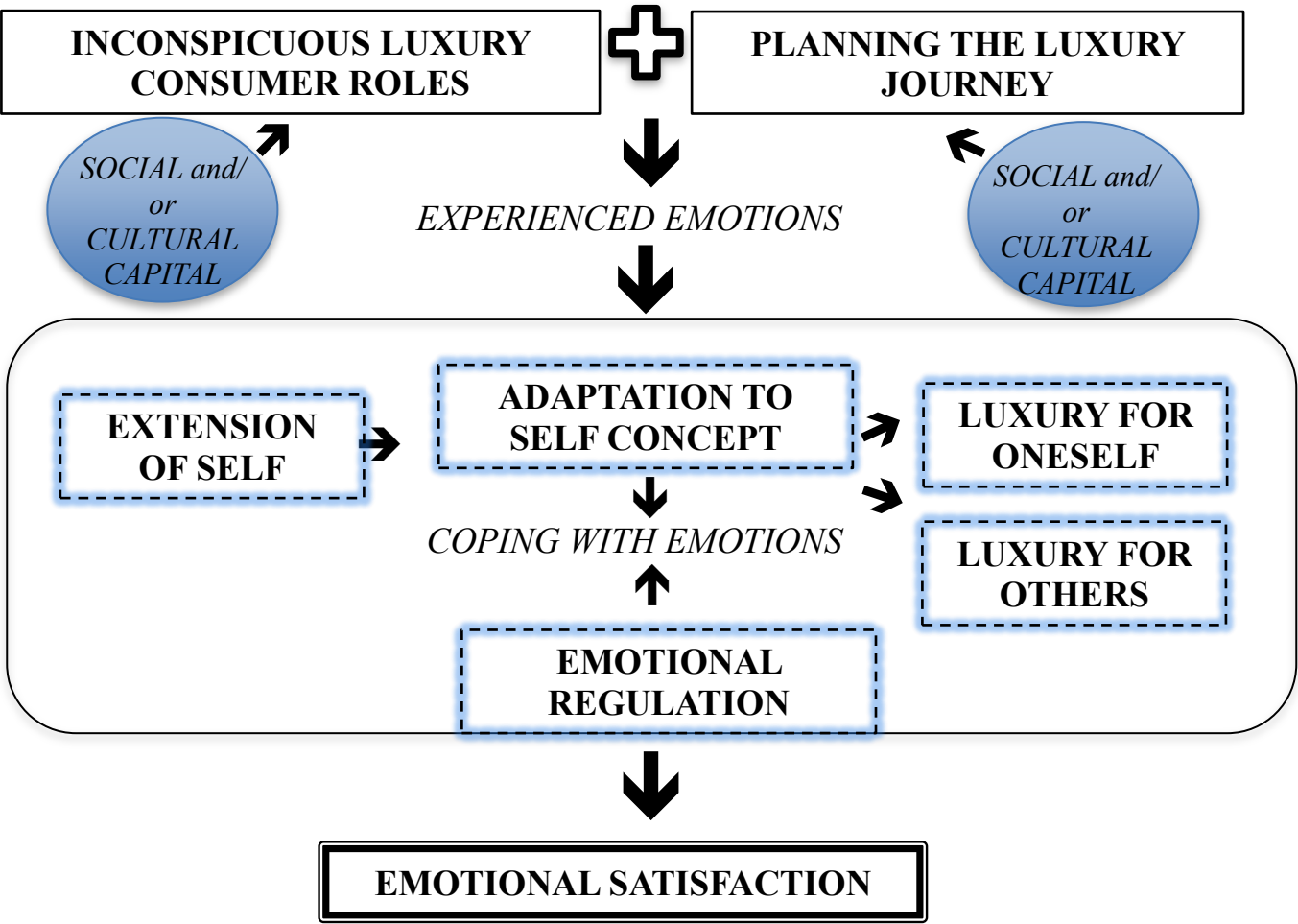


Figure 8 - A proposed model of evaluation of inconspicuous luxury consumption schemas based on emotions and its influence on emotional satisfaction

Inconspicuous luxury consumers combine the key roles they play (or wish to play) in society along with different ways of planning these luxury purchases, both based on the importance social and/ or cultural resources play in their lives. Thus, they experience emotions at different levels of their consumption cycle. These emotions dictate four themes that arise as they evaluate their inconspicuous luxury choices: emotional self-regulation as well as the need to adapt to their existing or desired self concept driven by their intrinsic motivations (luxury for oneself), extrinsic motivations (luxury for others) and extensions of themselves. With the collaboration of these coping mechanisms and should consumers maintain at least one of these elements, they would be able to reach emotional satisfaction which to inconspicuous luxury consumers is of high importance. Based on empirical evidence of emotional satisfaction, loyalty should thus follow (Lee, Lee, Lee, & Babin, 2008; Wong, 2004; Yu & Dean, 2001).

Meanings of inconspicuous luxury. Due to the nuance of inconspicuous luxury consumption, a clear definition of inconspicuous luxury goods from the consumer's perspective should be the initial step taken to understand and divulge into what luxury means to inconspicuous luxury consumers. In addition to inconspicuous luxury goods as subtle and identifiable to those with requisite knowledge that distances them from mainstream (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999), luxury to inconspicuous consumers offers ever-lasting hedonic and practical values. It is a symbolic journey of playful discovery and emotional meanings that only the select few can experience and enjoy. This supports Vickers and Renand's (2003) findings that luxury goods generally must exhibit three dimensions: functionalism, experientialism and symbolic interactionism.

Inconspicuous luxury consumers' emotional journey. The findings reveal that experienced emotions have a dominating power on luxury consumers' evaluations of their symbolic personal schemas, which dictate their consumption decisions to patronise inconspicuous luxury goods. Because individuals have a conscious awareness of their 'self' and desire to control their dispositions due to their habitus (Laberge, 1995), they cope with their emotions for stability and to signal their capital and habitus to others using their purchases (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Consumers experience certain emotions before they make their purchases and they also make emotional appraisals of how they would feel once they acquire these products (Baumgartner et al., 2008). They are excited about making these purchases and optimism towards their satisfaction after acquiring these goods because they idolise these brands and know the true meaning of luxury. The closer the brand is to their self concept, the more peaceful, content and assured they become with their future purchases in reaching that final stage of emotional satisfaction. They experience these emotions during their planning process and as they evaluate the connections they make with brands and during their shopping experiences. Without making any claims based on gender, men are optimistic that acquiring luxury goods could impress other women which is similar to findings on gender specific luxury consumption (Griskevicius et al., 2007).

However, other consumers express concerns that others may judge them for their possessions and family backgrounds thus they choose inconspicuous luxury goods that conceal its true price to others. However, they also experience anger at the thought that mainstream consumers patronise conspicuous luxury brands to portray a fake image, which drives them further away from such loud brands. This is in line with evidence from previous studies (Berger & Ward, 2010; Han et al., 2010). Brands are extensions of their identities (Belk, 1988) and so consumers that patronise luxury dissimilar to their identities are avoided. They have no problem in allowing these angry emotions to surface, as they believe it is their role in society as Influencers to change such behaviours. Envy is also experienced prior to purchase, which is directed towards those with social and cultural capital. Fashion Followers usually experience these emotions (Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011; Wong, 1997) and choose to cope with their socially unacceptable emotion by patronising less inconspicuous brands with some form of signalling

to stabilise their emotional unrest and reach their extrinsic goals of equality with the 'in-group'. Lastly, apprehensive fear has been shown during their plans for luxury purchases. They evaluate the drawbacks of patronising certain luxury goods which include the changing meanings and attachment they may have for it; it might not bring them happiness; and most importantly, the existence of counterfeits and expectations from others that its fake or cheap. They cope with their negative emotions by seeking on-going self-affirmation and recognition from others for their fears to diminish and they can reach ultimate emotional satisfaction with their purchases. There are two topics that have not received much attention in research, which are the different perceptions of luxury and how consumers evaluate these. Related emotions are the first steps in understanding these but there are many antecedents that can be researched such as cultural diversities that change these perceptions.

While these previous emotions are experienced as they simulate an outcome in their minds, consumers also anticipate how they would feel once they have acquired the goods. Consumers anticipate humiliation if they make the wrong purchasing decisions of acquiring common luxury goods. This could be due to their lack of cultural knowledge, limited research performed prior to purchase or impulsive behaviours. In this case, they evaluate whether their purchases would help them reach their goals of adaptation to their desired self-concept for belonging and acceptance. Guilt is also anticipated if they make the wrong purchase because of the large investment put into these purchases. They have mixed emotions and begin to hesitate prior to making these regretful purchases. They try and regulate these emotions through denial and suppression thus continuing with their purchases. Cultural Conservatives experience such mixed emotions out of fear of taking risks with fashion pieces thus making conservative inconspicuous choices that suit their self-concept of classic taste.

During the first stages of consumption, inconspicuous luxury consumers experience hedonic elevations, which supports Richins' (2013) findings. This high arousal and excitement persists as they plan their purchases and anticipate how acquiring that product would make them feel over time. For Fashion Influencers, that feeling persists due to their genuine luxury appreciation and social network that recognises its true value. Trendsetters and Fashion Followers with lower cultural capital may experience arousal dips (or hedonic declines) shortly after purchase because they come to a realisation that these possessions does not offer them what they are looking for. In this case it pertains to social attention, belonging or self-confidence. However, during consumption and when they experience these 'moments of happiness', their feelings are linked to their inner selves but also how they feel amongst others and within their social circles. These different elevated emotions are heightened should they have exceptional shopping experiences in store. Findings from this study confirm consumers expect to receive preferential treatment in luxury stores and especially if they are planning to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods that usually retail at higher prices than conspicuous ones. This treatment includes VIP service from sales associates, store atmospherics that may tailor to hedonic consumers and an overall attention to detail. This preferential treatment for the few that can own such inconspicuous luxury goods is very important as it leads to long-term relationships, customer satisfaction, increased sales volume (Homburg, Droll, & Totzek, 2008; Lacey, Suh, & Morgan, 2007), and felt status (Dreze & Nunes,

2009). Contrary to these studies and unique to luxury consumption studies, two findings arise: firstly inconspicuous luxury consumers expect to receive preferential treatment whilst at luxury stores (regardless of their purchase intentions) and luxury companies should always maintain a niche customer segment; secondly, consumers disapprove of in-store discrimination by bad treatment or visible negative emotions from sales associates.

Reason might be that inconspicuous luxury consumers are already dressed inconspicuously and if sales associates are not knowledgeable in luxury fashion, they would not know their capital status and if they are prospective buyers. This provides a serious managerial implication as retail managers must invest in educating their sales associates on the luxury fashion industry and enrich their cultural capital so they might find some common ground with their customers. More importantly, it is a serious yet common mistake customer-facing employees fall into. They might not verbally discriminate against customers but their body language and negative emotional contagion are enough to transfer similar negative emotions to the customers themselves (Lin & Lin, 2011). Consumers that evaluate experienced emotions in-store and compare to their self-concept (Darden & Babin, 1994) may create negative evaluations (should there be a mismatch) towards not only the retail store but it extends to the luxury company itself as they consider negative store treatment as a representation of the company's values which does not mirror their own. However, those driven by interpersonal desires reveal that they would continue patronising the store in the future, as they believe the brand offers them additional benefits aside from functionality such as social affiliations. It is important that retailers understand that the actual luxury experience is shared with others than actual possessions (Alba & Williams, 2013) thus luxury retailers must focus on the in-store experience and not just profits, product design and development. In this sense, experiential store moments and creating a brand connection may create long-lasting positive emotions that they will want to experience again and again.

Further elevations experienced during consumption include pride that may be authentic or hubristic. Following McFerran et al.'s (2014) call for further research on the role of the emotion of pride in brand signalling preferences, findings from this study suggest that individuals with authentic pride such as Fashion Influencers tend to patronise highly inconspicuous luxury goods than individuals such as Trendsetters that experience hubristic pride. Reasons to explain this outcome is that Fashion Influencers have higher social and cultural capital with taste and knowledge being their defining factors. Similar to past studies from the business to business discipline (Bagozzi, Belschak, Verbeke, & Gavino, 2006; Verbeke, Belschak, & Bagozzi, 2004), this study reveals that individuals with authentic pride try to avoid anticipated envy from others and shame that excessive or hubristic pride might lead to unacceptable social behaviours. The best and most appropriate way for them to outwardly express pride is by educating others and internally feeling pride by consuming luxury for their own enjoyment. Individuals that envy them seem to be age-related or role specific. Younger individuals use consumption for fitting in with society and gaining a sense of individuality (Miles, Cliff, & Burr, 2012) thus they are more vulnerable to such emotions. They regulate their emotions and manage their behaviours by looking for luxury goods that pleases others, or imitating Trendsetters. By

patronising conspicuous luxury brands that usually offer entry level product categories (Hines & Bruce, 2007), they believe they belong to that social group. Thus, they look for luxury that pleases others, but as they mature in age and understanding of luxury, those feelings as well as their conspicuous behaviours erode. They invest in building their cultural capital and experience pride in their constant efforts to develop their taste and knowledge of luxury fashion.

Consumers that express their amusement of others admiring their possessions seem to also experience social anxiety due to the roles they have undertaken in society such as Trendsetters. Because they fear condemnation from others in addition to having transactional needs (Turner, 2007) such as maintaining their place in the spotlight, they try and regulate their social anxieties by patronising lower levels of inconspicuous luxury goods with some form of signalling that may help them stand out. Another concerning element for such groups is their social capital which they feel obligated to live up to where they have built trust amongst members of their group (Martti, 2000; Portes, 1988). They also feel the need to highlight their trendsetting status through verbal expressions (i.e. exclaiming to others their future or latest purchases) and actions (i.e. showing others what they have bought or plan to buy). By partaking in these behaviours, they experience positive emotions which correlate with Turner's (2007) theorising on the antecedents and responses of emotions.

After purchase, consumers make evaluations against their original expectations of how their purchases made them feel. Consumers that find a match between expectations and consequences experience heightened pleasure and emotional satisfaction. For instance, Fashion Influencers feel joy from acquiring inconspicuous luxury goods that fulfil their aesthetic and inner-directed needs. Trendsetters also display excitement toward purchases that reflect their rebelliousness, unique character and open-mindedness while Cultural Conservatives are content with their conservative yet mature and planned luxury choices. Fashion Indifferents enjoy functional and practical luxury items that deliver comfort and fit their body and personal character and lastly Habitual Buyers are pleased with their possessions that mirror their routine-like behaviour and their lifestyle. These positive emotions will encourage them to plan similar purchases in the future as it offers pleasurable consequences. Delving further into this insight, women have shown a great need for luxury goods as it comforts them, empowers them in the workforce and offers them more confidence in society. Because of higher involvement with luxury brands, they often choose less inconspicuous luxury goods that will still attract attention of others whilst emotionally pleasing them. However, men portray more neutral emotions regarding their inconspicuous luxury goods when they compare themselves with female consumers but their emotions are heightened when their intention for purchasing luxury is to please their female partners or impress women. Reason for such differences in emotions might be linked to the gender differences in motives to regulate their emotions (Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 1998), gender stereotyping (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000) and personal and interpersonal goal. Constructing and maintaining their roles is essential to inconspicuous luxury consumers, which heightens their emotional involvement. Their experience of positive or negative emotions depends on their prioritisation of their personal or social wellbeing and their roles define this importance.

Inner pride in their personal achievements and social pride in being appreciated by others are both experienced after purchase but the differentiating factor is that a more socially conscious individual such as a Trendsetter might experience social pride more than a culturally conscious individual such as a Cultural Conservative who would experience inner pride more often. This reinforces their desire to continue purchasing inconspicuous luxury goods that offer them such fruitful emotions. The learnt emotion experienced will be stored in their memory for future retrieval and will act as a reinforcing tool (Izard, 1977) for chances of feeling that same positive emotion or averting from any past negative emotion. Unique to this study is the identification of the causes of inner (self) pride and social pride, especially in the luxury context. Although this finding is only based on 10 interviewed informants and in no way should be generalised, this offers some interesting initial findings worthy of further investigation.

Similarly, differences in self-focused and interpersonal guilt are also experienced after consumers come to a realisation that there is a mismatch between their expectations pre-purchase and their experience. Consumers feel guilty when they make large purchases due to their impulsive behaviours and regret not using it as often. They also look at their past purchases and regret the bad choices they have made in the past believing they could have used this money for more noble uses such as charity. In addition to the personal guilt, they also feel guilty towards others where they feel their actions might damage their relationships. Compared to Bagozzi and Parrott's (2006; 2004) theorising, that guilt emotion leads some towards positive consequences of individuals putting more effort into making more appropriate future purchases. This study highlights that denial of guilt feelings and verbal justification are used to avoid regret and feelings of social humiliation. In this scenario, consumers are covering up their true guilt feelings without actually trying to remedy the situation. This is similar to Richins' (2013) speculative theorising for reasons why materialists do not show emotions of guilt due to mental justification for making these purchases. Consumers' ambivalent state of guilt but continued pursuit of such purchases may explain the 'guilty pleasures' of hedonic consumption where experienced guilt may activate cognitions linked to pleasure (Goldsmith, Cho, & Dhar, 2012). One might question why consumers continue purchasing inconspicuous luxury goods over and over if they are going to experience guilt feelings. They simply suppress their guilty emotions and choose consumption behaviours that will continue offering them short-lived sprouts of pleasure to satisfy their intrinsic and extrinsic desires.

In addition to the previous negative emotions, discontentment is also experienced when there is a mismatch between expectations and reality. Fashion Followers feel unfulfilled with their ostentatious luxury purchases. Their reference groups feel pity for them because they lack taste and knowledge and only utilise their newly found wealth to gain happiness. Followers continue imitating their idols, the Trendsetters, to avoid falling behind the trends whilst still trying to belong. They reflect that materialists continue making the same purchases to experience that short-lived hedonic elevation (Kashdan & Breen, 2007) they had of excitement and optimism in anticipation of acquiring luxury goods, which temporarily manages their

emotional state. This finding may offer a response to Richins' (2013) call for future research of the 'hedonic treadmill' in cases other than food products or personal care where in the case of inconspicuous luxury goods it is more relevant to materialism.

It is possible for some consumers to have no emotional connections to their purchases such as Habitual Buyers. While consumers have been found to have public (aspirational meanings based on public knowledge) and private (based on personal experience with goods) meanings of possessions (Richins, 1994) which acts as a representation of their selves (Belk, 1988), Habitual Buyers have taken their possessions for granted and do not carry such meanings to their possessions. Thus it makes it even easier to dispose of them.

Theoretical extensions to existing work. The three major empirical studies that look at inconspicuous luxury consumption should be extended based on findings from this study. Firstly, Han et al.'s (2010) study on the role of brand prominence found group preferences for conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury brands based on their desires to associate or disassociate with members similar to them or ones in other groups. Evidence from the current study reveals that inconspicuous choices are not simply for associative or dissociative motivations. Consumers base their decisions not only on this associative or disassociation motivations but there are many factors involved: several symbolic consumption schemas that come into play such as their social and cultural capital that depicts their roles in society and how they plan their purchases. Based on these, they experience certain emotions that take them to the four themes discovered in this study. Thus, the taxonomy they designed should be extended to include social and cultural capital preferences as well as emotions experienced by such consumers. Furthermore, they base this taxonomy on wealth levels and need for status yet it was discovered that groups which they call Patricians or 'Haves' enjoy subtle signalling brands but findings from my study signify that consumers with cultural and social capital enjoy subtle luxury brands where they may not necessarily have the wealth they are referring to. Lastly, emotional antecedents and emotional responses should also be detected as an extension to their study as it has been proven that cognitive motivations are not only involved in luxury choices but also conscious and subconscious intentions that cope with emotional states.

Secondly, Berger and Ward (2010) came close to offering a clear description of inconspicuous luxury consumption with empirical evidence to support it. However, from a theoretical perspective, their sole use of cultural capital limits their findings as there appears to be an added factor of luxury consumers with social capital that also desire subtle luxury due to their acquired beneficial social networks. Of importance is the added value of including social capital to their empirical study to discover any distinguishing or overlapping effects. Moreover, Berger and Ward's study confirmed Han et al.'s (2010) study that consumers with cultural capital prefer subtle signals as a way to distinguish themselves from the mainstream but findings from this current study reveal there are other reasons such as emotion-driven (i.e. self-regulation of hubristic pride or guilt), personality-adaptive (consumers' attention-seeking needs or inner-directed needs) or role-driven (consumer dimensions or gender roles). From a methodological perspective, their study lacked the right participant pool as they used fashion students

that certainly may have the right cultural capital but are not actual consumers of inconspicuous luxury goods. The experience inconspicuous luxury consumers have may be completely different than simply having the knowledge of brands but never actually owned them. This study contributes to using informants that have several past experiences with inconspicuous luxury brands in addition to revealing their utilisation of their own social and cultural capital.

Thirdly, this study provides slight contradictions to McQuarrie et al.'s (2013) study on the influence of fashion bloggers' taste and audience in instilling cultural capital. While their theory constitutes that cultural capital, once established and agreed on by large audiences, may be transformed into financial capital and social capital, this current study finds that social capital may be a pre-requisite to attaining cultural capital. Informants have mentioned that they have used their social networks to educate themselves on luxury fashion, which has benefitted their wealth of knowledge and taste. McQuarrie et al.'s study may benefit from utilising both forms of capital as a form of reinforcement where one may impact the other thus causing the same effects of recognition and establishment. This present study looked at Bourdieu's later work on non-financial capital where he identified the prioritisation and conscious activation of specific resources depending on the context and situation. Thus, this present study looks at capital mostly valued by consumers', which McQuarrie and his colleagues have not entered this construct into their conception of "the megaphone effect". The role of social capital as a valued resource for bloggers may surpass that of cultural capital during their blogging lifecycle. Lastly, marrying the emotional aspect that bloggers experience as they go through their blogging lifecycle may provide an all-rounded view of the motivations for "grabbing hold of the megaphone" by accumulating cultural capital (McQuarrie et al., 2013, p. 136). As this present study suggests, emotions have a powerful role in influencing consumers such as these bloggers to post information about their consumption on the web. It may be worth understanding how their emotions might travel using the 'type-written' word and whether emotional contagion exists in this instance influencing how others feel towards their consumed product thus generating more web followers of the blogger.

5.3 Summary

This research examines a unique view of luxury consumption, which has not received enough attention in literature. Discussing some aspects of the phenomenon reveals interesting insights related to their luxury consumption behaviours: their decisions, how they use it and how they evaluate their purchases. By documenting emotions experienced before, during, and after consumption as well as insights related to why they experience such emotions, this study justifies that emotions are strongly related to consumption decisions and specifically in the context of inconspicuous luxury. Not only does this study link emotions literature with inconspicuous consumption, but it also utilises the growing body of work on non-financial capital in social class and how these influence emotions experienced during the purchasing cycle. While identity signalling and dissociative and associative motivations are one side of the inconspicuous luxury consumption coin, it is necessary to

understand its other side such as their need to regulate experienced emotions around consumption while maintaining their self-concept and non-financial assets. This study marks a starting point for further investigation on the influence of emotions in luxury consumption and also calls for a more refined understanding of the concept of inconspicuous consumption within luxury.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the fairly under-researched phenomenon of inconspicuous luxury consumption. Further goals were to identify key gaps in luxury signalling literature and integrate the roles of emotions and non-financial capital research to this phenomenon to better understand its depth. It has been quite disconcerting to find a lack of interest from researchers to study this area of consumer behaviour in luxury compared to conspicuous behaviours. Inconspicuous luxury brands have already been identified as higher priced products than conspicuous luxury (Han et al., 2010) thus it seems logical that researchers as well as marketers should investigate further why consumers opt for less identifiable luxury goods. Findings from this study demonstrate that emotions are factors dictating consumers' purchase intentions of inconspicuous luxury brands. Aspects that trigger such emotions include consumers' social and/ or cultural capital or their desires to develop these. This chapter discusses the contributions this study offers theoretically, methodologically and managerially. It also offers future research opportunities that can expand the knowledge of inconspicuous luxury consumption, research on emotions and the importance of capital resources to consumers.

6.2 Theoretical and methodological contributions

Through exemplary quotes from informants and with interpretive efforts, the findings reveal the types of emotions experienced during different stages of the consumption cycle and the power these emotions have on inconspicuous luxury consumers. The findings signify that current theories on luxury consumption should be extended to fit the typology of inconspicuous luxury consumers found in this study. Previous theories on 'old' luxury, conspicuous consumption and segmentation of social classes that profess that high end exclusive luxury goods are for the rich and elite snobs is not an accurate take on those that patronise such luxuries. There is a need for further extensions of such theoretical models to adapt to the complexities of inconspicuous luxury consumers, which are grounded in the roles they take on in society and how they plan their luxury journey which are strongly linked to their social and cultural resources.

Findings from this study on the significance of emotions do not stop at inconspicuous luxury goods but could be extended to all levels of luxury product categories. It is evident that consumers' emotions and prioritisation of non-financial capital that are context-dependent complicate previous luxury perceptions of value (such as Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Such models take into consideration consumers value perceptions and motivations but not emotions linked to different stages of luxury consumption that drive them to cope with these emotions in order to adapt to their self-concept and self-regulate in response to personal and social pressures. Values alone do not depict luxury goods perceptions of consumers but the addition of emotions in context might be the next step to understanding the complexity of luxury consumers' behaviours in

order to create more directed marketing strategies. Revealing luxury consumers different emotional coping mechanisms may also be the distinguishing factors in managing their actions to their advantage (Bagozzi, 2006) towards choices of conspicuous or inconspicuous luxury goods.

The inconspicuous luxury consumer typology (Figure) developed from findings of this study contributes to knowledge of luxury customer segmentation. It further expands understanding of consumer behaviour and retailing domains as it evolves existing information on inconspicuous luxury consumers that have been titled as “Patricians” that only desire to signal to each other using quiet brands (Han et al., 2010). This study expands on this singular view by revealing six unique groupings that have not been identified in past research on inconspicuous luxury consumers. They not only desire inconspicuous luxury brands for its aesthetic beauty, functionality and quality but because it asserts their different roles in society. The usefulness of the typology is demonstrated through its novel links to emotions and levels of social and/or cultural capital and its applications to conspicuous levels of luxury consumption.

The proposed model (Figure 8) available in chapter five of this thesis also shows emotional satisfaction as the final frontier for these consumers. Findings from this study suggest that reasons customers cope with their emotions are to regulate any negatively perceived emotions and adapt to their self-concept as an extension of their (desired) selves by purchasing luxury for themselves or for others (indirectly). These findings support social psychologists theorising that individuals need to cope with threats to their self-regard and integrity by self-rationalising (Gross, 1998; Steele, 1988). By achieving these, they finally reach the last step towards emotional satisfaction where they are at peace with their purchasing decisions. That satisfaction explains why they become loyal to certain luxury goods as it ascertains that they will be able to cope with internal or external emotional threats. Not surprisingly, unravelling the complexities of emotions during stages of consumption is critical to analysing their behaviours (Richins, 1997) but more importantly, it is crucial to understand why and how consumers reach emotional satisfaction which would ultimately lead to loyalty, in this case to inconspicuous luxury brands.

Methodologically, this study contributes to qualitative research adding to its viability in modern research. The combination of qualitative methodologies, in-depth interviewing techniques, purposeful data collection and thematic data analysis are not often used in empirical luxury studies. Despite the strong support that some scholars have offered this methodology and evidence of robust procedures involved (Morse et al., 2002; Tobin, 2004), it is still faced with doubts and concerns from some quantitative researchers. However, the quality of the findings and depth of the output from the interviews may inspire future researchers to adopt such methodologies. The findings furthered the understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumers and offered novel characteristics about this segment that may have not been possible through the use of quantitative methods. By recruiting genuine inconspicuous luxury consumers (unlike some academic predecessors that utilised convenience samples of university students), reliability of the responses was gained as they had direct experience with luxury brands, were able to relate to the

consumption experience in question and had the chance to express themselves and reveal interesting insights on emotions related to consumption through personal stories and meanings of their possessions. Interpretive methodologies have aided in discovering these outcomes whilst also dealing with complex phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

6.3 Managerial implications

Conspicuous consumption has for long been the centre of academic interest in the luxury context since Veblen (1899). Similarly, luxury companies have been creating brand designs to suit the conspicuous consumer using visible logos and obvious design patterns (Han et al., 2010). The purpose is to attract consumers that want to signal their identity, make inferences of others and belong to desirable social groups (Berger et al., 2011; Holt, 1998). Luxury fashion designers such as Versace, Armani and John Galliano are engraving their names into product designs by making their names or logos more prominent. However, there is a growing margin of luxury consumers moving towards inconspicuously consuming their possessions or buying inconspicuous luxury brands as they have realised luxury's dilution in the market and accessibility to others (Bruce & Kratz, 2007), concerns for socially responsible consumption (Klein, 2000), the latest trend of 'conspicuous non-consumption' or the rejection of luxury brands showing they can claim status without brand prominence (Economist, 2005; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). With new market dynamics and the changing consumer, luxury brand managers should also aim to understand their intricacies, which include their complex emotions.

Firstly, luxury brands need to analyse the markets they are in before implementing inconspicuous brand designs to their range. They must examine the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of growth and threats to their brand. They should evaluate if it would be congruent with their brand image whilst also monitoring their direct competitors' success to rationalise whether these inconspicuous designs are a right fit for their brands. Secondly, to offer luxury designs that appeal to inconspicuous luxury consumers, they must abide by the meanings of luxury goods from the customer's perspective mentioned as explained in this study. It must be subtle, identifiable only to the few, offers hedonic and utilitarian values and displays a symbolic story that inconspicuous luxury consumers can relate to and enjoy experiencing it. Should the luxury company not offer all these qualities of an aspirational inconspicuous luxury product, the brand may be deemed as unfit and a mismatch to their self-concept. They experience negative emotions that they cannot possibly cope with and thus they would choose to avoid it completely.

Thirdly, and most importantly, luxury brand managers must realise that inconspicuous luxury goods are not solely sold as luxury items but as a complete experiential package. Consumers' meanings of inconspicuous luxury should be embodied in the experience of the retail store. All communication between the brand and the consumer should continue on after purchases are made. Luxury brands must commit to long-term relationships with their customers that, if successful, can last a lifetime as

luxury of this sort may be handed down to the next generations. That experiential journey is heavily driven by emotions, which is the essence of luxury's symbolic meanings and arises during different stages of consumption. By recognising emotions experienced before purchasing decisions are made, luxury brand managers can influence choices where possible. For instance, advertising campaigns can be used to instil desirable scenarios that create positive emotional appraisals in anticipation of luxury purchases. Emotions experienced during consumption can also be managed and influenced according to previous studies on the effects of sales associates and the store atmosphere (Donovan et al., 1994; Kim & Kim, 2012). By creating pleasant retail experiences and instilling positive emotions such as those found in this study (hedonic elevations and desirable self-conscious emotions), consumers would decrease perceived risk and rationalise their purchases. Consumers that anticipate negative emotions towards conformity may cope with such emotions if they have a personalised experience in-store that relates to customised service, imagery displaying product craftsmanship and story, design, and rarity. Lastly, emotions experienced after consumption can also be managed when consumers evaluate their purchases where some experience emotional ambivalence, which leads them to hedonic decline. Findings from this study suggest that emotions such as regret, guilt or shame after purchases are usually related to interpersonal needs. Therefore, luxury brands can endorse their choices by ensuring that others accept their purchases and they belong to desirable social groups using advertisement creative and storylines that instil such meanings. Luxury retailers can offer consumers guarantees of purchase, purchase exchange as well as entry into exclusive brand communities that enable them to gain a sense of belonging and insurance from the brand.

All these emotional experiences can also be manipulated in conjunction with this study's findings on reasons consumers experience such emotions and how they are regulated. By understanding mechanisms for coping with emotions, luxury brands can also use this information to their benefit by dissolving cognitive dissonance that consumers may experience. For instance, if sales associates are well trained in identifying inconspicuous luxury consumers' unique dimensions, they can tailor their messages accordingly. For instance, Trendsetters that experience social anxiety before and during purchase in fear of making common purchases or fashion blunders need to be reminded of their adaptive needs to their self-concepts. Retailers could tactically confirm that their purchases represent extensions of their unique and creative selves through praise of their cultural capital and encouragement by offering Trendsetters ambassadorial positions to the brand, which also instils their social capital power. This may give them a sense that they are not only Trendsetters but perceived as a part of their desirable group, the Influencers. Understanding emotions mostly experienced by the different dimensions of inconspicuous consumers would add value to the effectiveness of marketing strategies and communication with these key players.

6.4 Limitations & future research opportunities

Researching inconspicuous luxury consumption offers interesting insights that have not been studied before in the luxury context and the consumer behaviour discipline. What was once assumed of this segment of the luxury market as the elite

endeavouring to distinguish themselves from others through signalling of wealth is no longer their only motive. This study proposes that the behaviour of inconspicuously consuming luxury is driven by emotions that are instigated by an individual's social and cultural capital, and result in needs to adapt to existing or desirable self-concepts and emotional self-regulation to co-exist in society and sustain self-regard. However, like any study, this research is not without limitations that can be improved in the future.

This investigation was conducted with a different outlook to luxury brand research where the majority of empirical literature utilised quantitative methods. Due to the necessity of exploring this unique segment and consumption behaviour, qualitative interpretive methodologies added rich information to existing knowledge of luxury consumption. This was especially important when aiming to understand emotions informants experience during consumption and their personal meanings for luxury consumption. If inconspicuous luxury is about aesthetic beauty, appreciation and a symbolic playful journey of discovery, how can SPSS and ANOVA models explain that? However, because this study is limited to ten informants, it may be logical for future researchers to expand this number and perform more quantitative studies for practical purposes of increasing the quantity of respondents, thus increasing the findings' generalisability.

Further issues with sampling may be in question. Firstly, this study used purposive sampling of 12 inconspicuous luxury consumers that were handpicked by the researcher where two were disqualified due to irregularities in loyalty towards luxury purchases. Even though some scholars still question purposive sampling methods, it still proved to be suitable in this context. Previous researchers have utilised convenience sampling of university students that may not be representative of the luxury market segment while purposive sampling offers a more direct approach reaching the right target customer group. Secondly, the informants are all residents in Dubai which despite its lucrative multi-cultural society, availability of luxury brands from around the world, and highly educated expatriate community, which fits well with the research parameters, the generalizability of the findings might be doubted. Dubai is also seen as a temporary luxurious utopia and stepping stone for middle class to make some money and move back to their home countries (Davis, 2005). This may limit the reliability of the findings as the sample might reflect short-lived luxury. Regardless of these rationalisations, Dubai is still the hub of tourism, luxury consumption and a good example of cosmopolitan life. Cities are now transforming their malls and retail mix to assimilate Dubai's accomplishments and neighbouring countries are also competing with Dubai leaders to reach that level of wealth and business success. However, for generalizability purposes, researchers may duplicate this study by conducting cross-cultural research in individualist and collectivist societies to compare and contrast finding against those from Dubai. Based on Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) view of capital which is contextual, researchers must be cautioned when comparing this study's findings to other consumers from different societies as views on taste, cultural and social capital can be dissimilar. Nevertheless, the themes found from this study may offer guidance and work as a backbone to empirically investigate inconspicuous luxury consumption behaviours in other societies while reflecting on Bourdieu's forms of capital. Insights found

from a study on changes of luxury perspectives from home country to host country could also open doors to further research into unique consumption behaviours in Dubai as it is a city that represents change, innovation, adaptation and cultural diversity found only in cosmopolitan life.

Emotion, the main focus of this study and just one ingredient found in the recipe of purchasing choices, proved to be a forceful construct in purchasing decisions in the luxury context. It has been found to influence attitudes that lead to purchasing intentions (Chaudhuri, 1996; Holbrook & Batra, 1987). However, through further analysis and interpretation of the interviews with luxury consumers, it is evident that consumers' decisions are based on intertwined and complicated factors. This calls for a more holistic approach to studying inconspicuous luxury consumers to explain their attitudes and behaviours. For instance, findings from this study reflect consumers' changing perspectives of luxury based on increasing cultural knowledge and the changes in social capital composition as they age. This reflects views that these two constructed capitals transform over time (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986), therefore it would be useful to conduct a longitudinal study that captures inconspicuous consumers' existing capital reflecting their changes in emotions. Longitudinal observations of inconspicuous luxury consumers may also prove beneficial when studying changes in Richins' (2013) 'hedonic treadmill' where consumers continue purchasing the same product for that short-lived hedonic elevation. Monitoring this behaviour over time may warrant its validity in the luxury context as well as product categories.

Furthermore, the present study utilised knowledge of individuals' cultural and social resources as assets that they prioritise which directs their emotions. A development to this study might look at how changes in financial resources might influence consumers' cultural capital or social capital, which Bourdieu also questioned (1984). It would be of interest to behavioural researchers and luxury marketers to see how the loss of economic capital impacts consumers' emotions and thus changes their brand prominence desires to adapt to their self-concepts. Moreover, the focus of this study is on luxury goods but would findings on emotions be mirrored if this study looked at other contexts such as food, wine or music where cultural and social capital would be deemed important? Therefore, a look into the role of emotions in other luxury categories might find different relationships between capital and associated emotions.

Lastly, findings from this study revealed that some luxury consumers such as Fashion Indifferents, believe that conspicuousness is a wasteful consumption. Flaunting possessions or envy of others' belongings' are found to be socially unacceptable behaviours and negative emotions (Wong, 1997). Also, Habitual Buyers that lack any emotional connection with their possessions also demonstrate such negative consumption behaviours. What could be of interest for future work is to understand how consumers reach this level of emotional detachment and how that may influence their future purchasing choices. This is especially interesting when it involves high value luxury items. If individuals consume products for its public or private meanings, can these be lost over time, specifically in relation to high-ticket items and what might influence that to

occur? Future researchers might find it worth understanding what makes luxury consumers habituated to purchasing luxury brands and lose all meanings thus making it meaningless to them on the long run and easily disposed. Is this behaviour only unique to inconspicuous luxury consumers? On the other hand, Fashion Indifferents choose quieter luxury brands with long-term investments that are less ostentatious to avoid over-consumption, wasteful spending and unsustainable disposal of goods. This is a topic I plan on exploring further as I delve deeper into this phenomenon in the future. It may reveal values that are vital for reinforcement of positive socially acceptable and sustainable consumption behaviours, which could be of fundamental importance to academics, social marketers, governing bodies, businesses and consumers.

6.5 Concluding remarks

This present study chronicles the emotions of luxury consumers that have experienced inconspicuous consumption and have at some point in their life developed a deep connection and loyalty with certain luxury brands. They have adopted this consumption behaviour that they believe resembles who they are, where they are at in their cultural knowledge and the breadth of their social networks. Inconspicuous luxury goods are no longer perceived as products affordable and understood only by 'old luxury' wealthy elite. Their consumption behaviour is not simply for associative and dissociative motives but there are deeper reasons to the luxury choices they make which are largely built on their emotions in connection to their capital worth.

This research advances luxury knowledge in the consumer behaviour discipline by unveiling another dimension to how decision-making is formed and why consumers choose inconspicuous luxury goods that are harder to identify yet cost more than their conspicuous adversary. This research proposes extensions to empirical studies, improvements to current marketing practices in luxury and opportunities for future research. Inconspicuous luxury consumption is a phenomenon that has not seen much interest from researchers but it has been proven here that there is a lot more to learn about this area of research with potential to further understanding consumption behaviours of luxury consumers. However, understanding this consumption behaviour also explains how and why consumers 'accumulate' capital (Alcott, 2004) such as financial wealth, knowledge and social networks. John Rae (1834b) believed that "all that the possessor of the luxury desires, is, to have a means of showing that he has acquired the command of a certain amount of the exertions of other men" (p. 47). While distinguishing themselves from others is a prime reason for acquiring luxury goods, what was missing from Rae's theorising is that consumers' non-financial capital worth is essentially their means of differentiation, and because of its high value it emotionally drives them to certain purchasing levels in conspicuousness.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Example of highly inconspicuous luxury product (left: Bottega Venetta) versus highly conspicuous luxury product (right: Louis Vuitton)



Appendix B: Interview guide

General

1. Have you purchased a luxury brand in the last six months? If yes, which brand was it?
2. What is your current occupation?
3. Do you partake in any activities or have a favourite pastime? If yes, what is it?
4. Are you part of any associations/ social groups that you are active in? If yes, which?
5. Describe to me what a fashionable consumer is like in a few words?
6. Describe to me what a non-fashionable consumer is like in a few words?
7. How do you keep up with the latest fashion trends/ luxury choices yourself?
8. Can you describe what is your style in fashion in a few words?
9. What product categories do you prefer to be luxury?
10. What do you think of brand logos on luxury items?

Meanings of luxury brands

11. Describe your level of effort when you are planning to purchase a luxury product?
 - What do you do prior to purchasing a luxury item? (research, word of mouth, advice from family and friends, ads)
 - What or who do you consult with when making these purchasing decisions? Why?
12. Can you complete this sentence. Luxury makes me feel..Why?
13. "Anyone with money can own luxury" – What do you think of this statement? Can you elaborate on that?
14. Can you share with me your most treasured piece of luxury item? (take photo)
 - What does it mean to you?
 - Can you describe to me how you came to buy it?
 - Anyone influenced this decision?
 - What was the shopping situation you bought it in?
 - Why did you choose this product over others?
 - In what occasion do you usually like wearing/ driving this item?
 - Did anyone notice you wearing/driving it?
 - What were people's comments on the product?
 - How did that make you feel?
15. Is there a luxury item you purchased that you regret buying?
 - Why's that?
 - Can you please share with me that purchasing experience?

Meanings of luxury brand conspicuous levels (inconspicuous versus conspicuous)

16. Now imagine the following brands coming to life as a person. What would his/ her characteristics be like?

○ What do you feel towards these brands?

▪ Ralph Lauren, Maserati, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Alfred Dunhill, Ferrari, Rolex, Burberry, Bottega Veneta, Vertu

17. Do you like these brands? Which luxury brands do you least like? Why?

18. What is your most favourite luxury fashion brand - clothing? Why?

○ Do you own any of their products? If not, what would be your ultimate item from their collection that you would like to own?

○ How would you feel if there was an opportunity for you to buy this product now? Can you elaborate on that?

19. What do you think of the term “if you’ve got it – flaunt it”? How do you feel towards people that do?

20. Show two images – high signaling and low signaling Gucci bag.

○ Do you see a difference?

○ Which one would you prefer? Why?

○ Describe to me a person that may buy the other bag.

-- female option



-- male option



Emotions involved in luxury consumption

21. Can you recall the most memorable luxury shopping trip? Take a moment to think about it. This would include the full experience from the store atmosphere, other customers, salespeople, product range.

○ What were your impressions about this brand/ store prior to visiting the store?

○ What impressed you most during your shopping trip?

○ Could you please share with me your experience?

○ Can you compare the feelings you had before and after this shopping experience?

22. Can you describe one of your least memorable luxury shopping trips.

○ What were your impressions about this brand/ store prior to visiting the store?

○ What impressed you the least during your shopping trip?

○ Could you please share with me your experience?

23. Scenario 1:- Image of a nouveau riche woman (or man) conspicuously consuming luxury. This is a woman/ man in her mid 30s.

○ What are your thoughts on this person?

○ What’s her personality like?

○ Can you use a few words to describe your feelings towards her?

○ Could this person be in your social group?

-- female option



-- male option



Meanings of non-financial capital

24. What does fashion knowledge and taste mean to you? How do people gain that?

25. Who would you say has a role in inspiring your luxury fashion sense?

○ Why do you turn to them and not others?

26. Do any of your family members share your passion for luxury fashion?

27. Who in the public eye would you consider is a leader in setting fashion choices?

○ Why is he/ she influential in your opinion?

28. Can you describe to me what your social circle is like? What kind of people are they?

○ How do you feel towards them?

○ How do you see yourself amongst that social circle? Can you elaborate?

○ Do you feel anyone from this social circle has an influence in setting fashion choices, yourself included? Why?

○ How do you think they got this influence?

○ So if this person were to choose between this product and that, which would they pick? Why?



29.Scenario 3: A woman (man) is looking for a new jacket to buy for the coming winter months. Money is no object for her (him) because she (he) comes from a very wealthy family. Not only that, but she (he) has a popular fashion blog where she (he) posts photos of her (his) latest purchases to her (his) many followers. You can say she (he) has become a socialite. She (he) checks online for the latest jackets available. She (he) spent hours searching online and finally decided on the perfect jacket.

- What brand do you think she (he) chose? What would it look like? Why did she (he) choose this one and not others?
- How would she (he) feel when wearing this jacket?
- What would others feel towards her (him) when they see her (him) wearing this jacket?
- How would she feel if she see a person she's met a few times before, doesn't belong to her social circle and was wearing the same fashion item as her at a social event she attends?
- How would she feel if her social group observed this?

30.Scenario 4: A man (woman) is looking for a new outerwear blazer (or dress) to wear for an evening event with his (her) clients. This person graduated with a business degree but entered the world of fashion right after university. He (she) knew nothing about fashion as his (her) family and friends never cared about this before. But now he's (she's) been working in this industry for nearly eight years. He's (she's) grown to understand the meaning of design, quality, fabrics, marketing and communications of luxury fashion, what to wear and what not to wear etc. You can say he (she) now possesses a great knowledge of fashion and luxury.

- What brand do you think he (she) chose? What would it look like? Why did she (he) choose this one and not others?
- How would he (she) feel when wearing this blazer/ dress at the event?
- How important is this blazer/ dress going to be for him (her)? Why?
- What would others feel towards him (her) when they see him (her) wearing this blazer/ dress at the event?

31.What do you think are the differences between the feeling states of these two people?

Appendix C: Few treasured luxury items provided by informants



Appendix D: Hierarchy of codes to themes

Research questions	Lower level category	Open codes	Description
What are the experienced emotions?	Before purchase	Future-directed emotions (positive or negative) Mixed emotions	Eagerness & excitement to make desired purchases Disrespect & frustration with those that fake an image using luxuries Anger & disgust at useless yet expensive luxuries Passionate and seduced by luxury Optimism from love at first sight Sad/ concerned that others judge possessions & not personality Hesitation due to bad purchasing decisions in the past & impulsiveness; anticipated guilt if not used Fear of disappointment, embarrassment, humiliation from buying common luxuries
	During purchase	Hedonic elevation Self-conscious emotions	Excited, enticed & intrigued during the purchasing process Eyes and senses are pleased; Arousing emotions that are limitless Complete joy & happiness of owning finer things in life; like spending quality time with a friend Raises the morale; emotionally supported, self confident & increased self esteem Pride at luxury store symbolising career achievement luxuries & early adoption Content/ amused with others' admiration to their luxuries Envious of others' wealth, fashion prowess, status & risk-taking personalities; Fashion Followers display jealousy & hatred to those with old money during comparisons Social anxiety from pressures in the spotlight; Trendsetters portray hubristic pride
	After purchase	Pride Excitement Emotional ambivalence Hedonic decline	Social pride in belonging, being needed and appreciated Self pride in personal achievements and ownership Butterflies in stomach from achieving what they longed for; Enjoy luxuries by not caring what others think Doubt & hesitation in self choices; making unsuitable expensive purchases; money wasted Amateur consumers don't know what they want Fear of losing their unique status Followers feel shame after re-evaluation of ostentatious purchases Embarrassment from lack of self-control & luxury addiction Regret leads to guilt for not using the luxury good often to justify price; Not following gut feeling
Why are they experiencing these emotions?	Consumption role-play	Typology of consumers	<i>Fashion influencers:-</i> Proud because they are respected and trusted opinion leaders Self esteem and confidence because they can change minds High fashion knowledge & taste Impressive, trusted, cultured fashion educators Innovators not imitators; not brand focused Different outlook to life & fashion <i>Trendsetters:-</i> Excitement through their rebelliousness, creativity, uniqueness, open-minded forward thinking Social anxiety to make loud fashion statements & stand out Fashion gods and followed religiously; enjoy hubristic pride and take their fame for granted Fear disappointment, humiliation of buying common luxuries and being seen as cheap; risk losing their trendsetting status & image <i>Fashion followers:-</i> Envious from others due to a lack of luxury background & family culture, elegance, refinement; fashion prowess, status & risk-taking

			<p>personality; Fashion Followers display jealousy & hatred to those with old money</p> <p>Noveau riche materialists experiencing hedonic elevations by imitating flashy trends blindly; experiencing sudden hedonic decline with ostentatious luxuries that do not impress peers</p> <p>Desired social circles feel empathetic for those spending money wrongly & on distasteful fashion choices</p> <p><i>Cultural conservative:-</i></p> <p>Worried/concerned others may judge their wealth</p> <p>Content with classical & conservative style</p> <p>Fear of taking any risk with trends</p> <p><i>Fashion Indifferent:-</i></p> <p>Pleased with functional items, simple style and comfort</p> <p>Annoyed by flashy luxuries as its ostentatious, useless & ways of brand promotion</p> <p><i>Habitual buyers:-</i></p> <p>Unfulfilled by all luxuries as they take it for granted out of routine purchases/ loses its spark</p> <p>Socialites lack emotion/ attachment to luxuries & can dispose of them easily</p>
		Gender/ age role play	<p>Women are involved in luxuries, notice brands & are more knowledgeable than men</p> <p>Spouse influences decisions out of passion for luxury</p> <p>Men are content with what they have, with simpler luxury needs, thus spend less shopping time than women</p> <p>Women need luxuries to feel empowered, proud, confident</p> <p>Men feel hopeful that luxuries will impress women</p> <p>Younger consumers are envious of celebrity idols so they imitate them using counterfeits or flashy brands; lack knowledge & taste; impulsive buyers</p> <p>Amateur consumers are emotionally threatened by societal pressures to own luxuries</p>
		Evolution of taste & knowledge	<p>Authentic pride experienced as taste evolves by nurturing it with knowledge, hard work & maintenance; learned from others in social circle; inheritance from parents through nature</p> <p>Happy that they are mature savvy consumers; buy less but more expensive investments; enjoy private consumption</p> <p>Self-confidence in recognising subtle & obvious brands; selective in choice of quality brands</p> <p>Content with their conservative yet trendy taste; respect of cultures & values</p> <p>Feel sad for others that believe money can buy knowledge</p>
	Planning the journey	<p>Research prior to purchase</p> <p>Cognitive appraisal</p> <p>Awareness of luxury drawbacks</p>	<p>Online media, on the ground store search, word of mouth</p> <p>Product knowledge, product technicality, bargains, brand experience, impulsive behaviours dictate level of research</p> <p>More research means more commitment to buying; higher brand involvement</p> <p>Calculated plans for expensive future purchases; at times require more cognitive than emotional appraisal; long term investment; depends on disposable income</p> <p>Luxury goods can be replaced if it has no sentimental value; Not every product category needs to be luxurious</p> <p>Money can't buy joy of luxury without understanding & experiencing it; people become materialists; dissatisfied with life</p> <p>Definition of luxury is subjective; to some its time with family & others its possessions</p> <p>Signalling brand prominence can't be controlled</p> <p>Fear of common luxury brands seen as fake; disgust & disrespect those</p>

		<p>Hedonic & utilitarian needs</p> <p>Meanings of luxury</p> <p>Idolising brands</p> <p>Societal influences & family history</p> <p>Brand connection & shopping experience</p>	<p>that buy fakes; others justify counterfeits as perfect copies, expected to be fake regardless of its originality, and cheaper</p> <p>Appreciation of the intricate attention to details</p> <p>Excited about possessing rare raw materials with excellent craftsmanship dictate quality</p> <p>Proud of custom & tailor-made unique pieces; Iconic pieces with history & legacy</p> <p>Functional, practical and useful</p> <p>Long-term & long-lasting investment with value for money</p> <p>Importance of country of origin</p> <p>Playfulness of luxury</p> <p>Subjective meanings depending on individual's background, culture, family</p> <p>Emotional and cognitive attachment to brands; driven by intrinsic and social motivations</p> <p>Loyalty & trust of respected brands; Passionate about brand's image more than products</p> <p>Brands too common lose their uniqueness & luxuriousness</p> <p>Culture's dress code dictates desires for conspicuousness</p> <p>Society pressures to live luxuriously & be an early adopter; imitate others for acceptance & belonging; culture influences personality, values & style</p> <p>Judged on individuals' past & family background</p> <p>Parents (not education) teach values, self respect & true joy in what you have & not what you don't</p> <p>Signalled possessions are ways to differentiate between those with & without fashion history</p> <p>Roles of luxury salespeople; customer care; disappointment when salespeople don't share brand's values; Anger & disgust with bad attitudes & in-store discrimination</p> <p>Excited by store environment: store crowdedness, layout & design, store service, VIP treatment, aftersales care that justify price; furious by negative experiences that translate to low expectations in the future</p> <p>Appreciation of brands that care for customers, are fair, limit customer segment, proud of their identity</p>
How do they cope with these emotions?	Evaluating Symbolic Schemas	Emotional self-regulation	<p>Regulation of envy leads to buying more conspicuous luxury brands to gain belonging and equality</p> <p>Social anxiety of being a trendsetter & in the spotlight is regulated by choosing loud fashion statements; Regulating fear of losing status/uniqueness by keeping up to date with trends, buying subtle luxuries</p> <p>Denial of guilt feelings of buying expensive luxuries or not using them; regulation by verbally justification to avoid feelings of regret, guilt; purchase high brand prominent luxuries to justify price</p> <p>Regulation of worried emotions by seeking on-going affirmation: positive store experience, social recognition & approval, quality, value for money, continued usage; regret not following gut feeling</p> <p>Regulation of excessive hubristic pride to allow for humility and avoid envy from others-socially acceptable by buying inconspicuous luxuries</p> <p>Expression of authentic pride to their advantage; educate others, refine tastes, signal taste & knowledge</p>
		Adaptation to personality traits	<p>Extension of the self:-</p> <p>Choosing brands that mirror socially desired image for acceptance</p> <p>Selectivity of luxuries to suit & fit personality, body type & lifestyle</p> <p>Consumers patronising counterfeits are fake themselves</p>

			<p>Luxury for oneself:-</p> <p><i>Intrinsic needs</i></p> <p>Personal satisfaction from owning subtle brands; Reward for hard work</p> <p>Social affirmation of status to increase self confidence</p> <p>Luxuries offer confidence, elegance, determination, assertiveness & a peace of mind</p> <p>Buy luxuries for aesthetic pleasantness, design & colour, comfort & not brand name</p> <p>Follow trends blindly for the love & passion of luxury</p> <p>Flaunt luxuries to share their genuine happiness with possessions</p> <p><i>NFU</i></p> <p>Choose luxuries that aren't always culturally & socially acceptable; choose to be risky and live on the edge</p> <p>Dislike others following them at times; individualist</p> <p><i>Inner-directed</i></p> <p>Self confidence leads to indifference about what others think</p> <p>Non-conformist; indifferent to interpersonal relations; self-reliant</p>
			<p>Luxury for others:-</p> <p><i>Extrinsic needs</i></p> <p>Higher prominent brands to please others; social group acceptance; increase social network to help their careers</p> <p>Signal wealth to separate from commoners & impress others</p> <p>Desire conservative pieces to blend in with social circle & avoid risks</p> <p>Place high effort into their looks & fashion choices out of social pressures & avoiding social anxiety</p> <p>Consume luxuries for a desire to be loved by others; acceptance; gain respect & equality with peers</p> <p>Choosing unique rare or custom luxuries to signal unique creative personalities; to intimidate others</p> <p><i>Attention seekers:</i></p> <p>Avoid feelings of humiliation & shame by signalling status & wealth using latest in fashion & popular brands</p> <p>Fear of losing fame as trendsetters thus they make loud fashion statements, need constant social recognition to validate their style</p> <p>Embarrassed from family background & hide behind luxuries</p> <p>Feelings of pity towards attention-seekers for their lack of understanding & dissatisfaction with luxuries</p>