

IN VIEW OF PSYCHOLOGY, WHAT ARE THE PRECIPITATING FACTORS FOR
PURCHASING LUXURY BRAND COMMODITIES IN BAKU AND SEOUL?
PRIMARY CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH STUDY

by

Fatima Gasimzade, B.A. Psychology, M.B.A., M.S. Psychiatry

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva

In Partial Fulfilment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SWISS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT GENEVA

APRIL 2024

IN VIEW OF PSYCHOLOGY, WHAT ARE THE PRECIPITATING FACTORS FOR
PURCHASING LUXURY BRAND COMMODITIES IN BAKU AND SEOUL?
PRIMARY CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH STUDY

by

Fatima Gasimzade

APPROVED BY

Minja Bolesnikov

<Chair's Name, Degree>, Chair

RECEIVED/APPROVED BY:

SSBM Representative

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation project to my dearest and beloved mama, Nargiz Kelbaliyeva, for her endless love.

Without your endless love and encouragement, I would never have been able to complete my doctoral studies. You made this work possible. I love you and appreciate everything you have done for me, Mama.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor, Dr Mario Silic. Your guidance, advice, and honest feedback carried me through all the stages of writing my dissertation project. It was an excellent experience for me to work with you.

Please accept my sincere gratitude for your support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

IN VIEW OF PSYCHOLOGY, WHAT ARE THE PRECIPITATING FACTORS FOR PURCHASING LUXURY BRAND COMMODITIES IN BAKU AND SEOUL? PRIMARY CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH STUDY

Fatima Gasimzade
2024

Dissertation Chair: <Chair's Name>
Co-Chair: <If applicable. Co-Chair's Name>

Background: The Asian luxury goods market is one of the largest luxury goods consumers, and the number of people seeking to acquire luxury goods from reputable brands is growing predominantly in Asian countries. Many people tend to appreciate and admire luxury fashion since it is considered the embodiment of beauty that is all about sophistication and serenity. Nevertheless, when and why did humans start wearing clothes? Was it because they felt cold, or they wanted to cover up their naked bodies? A cross-cultural research study was carried out in Azerbaijan and South Korea to find answers to these questions since there was no prior research study on this topic.

Aim: Today, the reason for wearing clothes has gone far beyond the basics, especially with regard to luxury fashion, since it is a form of self-expression that exemplifies

people's discrete tastes. However, what are the precipitating factors for purchasing luxury brand commodities in terms of psychology?

Methods: A cross-cultural research study was conducted in Baku and Seoul to examine this topic more profoundly with regard to psychology. Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. There were 24 participants in total. The ages of the participants ranged from 24 to 78. In each city, there were two groups of participants: 7 participants in the client group and 5 participants in the non-client group of luxury brands. To collect data, a semi-structured interview was conducted. To analyse gathered data thematic analysis was used.

Results: According to the results, factors influencing people's purchasing behaviour of luxury fashion goods in Baku and Seoul are the fulfilment of needs and contentment, hedonism, psychological well-being, and culture. It was also found that people do not buy luxury predominantly because of their socio-economic background, negative attitudes towards luxury, and cultural impact.

Conclusion: Thus, further research should be conducted in order to provide some insights into the contradictory topic of luxury and its influence on people.

Keywords: Luxury fashion brands, luxury consumption factors, Baku, Seoul

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Research Problem	4
1.3 Purpose of Research.....	6
1.4 Significance of the Study	8
1.5 Research Purpose and Questions	8
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	11
2.1 A Brief Overview of Fashion.....	11
2.2 Luxury Consumption Factors	16
2.3 The Concept of Marketing	19
2.4 Ambassador Marketing.....	28
2.5 Summary	36
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	39
3.1 Overview of the Research Problem	39
3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs	40
3.3 Research Purpose and Questions	41
3.4 Research Design.....	42
3.5 Population and Sample	44
3.6 Participant Selection	46
3.7 Instrumentation	47
3.8 Data Collection Procedures.....	52
3.9 Data Analysis	54
3.10 Research Design Limitations	61
3.11 Conclusion	62
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	64
4.1 Results from Baku.....	65
4.2 Results from Seoul.....	74
4.3 Outline of the Key Findings.....	81
4.4 Conclusion	83
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	84
5.1 Discussion of Aims and Major Findings	84

5.2 Summary of the Prominent Factors	86
5.3 Strengths and Limitations	90
CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	93
6.1 Recommendations for Future Research	93
6.2 Conclusion	94
REFERENCES	95
APPENDICES APPENDIX A: SURVEY COVER LETTER.....	103
APPENDIX B INFORMED CONSENT.....	104
APPENDIX C QUESTIONNAIRE.....	108
APPENDIX D LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH.....	111
APPENDIX E DEBRIEF SHEET	112
APPENDIX F	113
APPENDIX G.....	114
APPENDIX H.....	115
APPENDIX I	116
APPENDIX J	117
APPENDIX K.....	118
APPENDIX L	119

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 — The four Ps of Marketing.....	21
Table 2 — Eligibility Criteria.....	45
Table 3 — The Interview Questions.....	49
Table 4 — Inductive Reasoning	55
Table 5 — Steps Taken for the Thematic Analysis	60
Table 6 — Disadvantages of Qualitative Research	62
Table 7 — Themes.....	65

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: “Koreans’ per capita spending on luxury goods highest in world.” (Kim 2023)	2
Figure 2: “The new Dolce&Gabbana Spring Summer 2024 Campaign starring Mun KaYoung and Doyoung.” (World Dolce&Gabbana 2024).....	3
Figure 3: “JIMIN’s surprise-filled Dior Men show day.” (Christian Dior 2023).....	4
Figure 4: “About Love.” (Tiffany & Co. 2024).....	24
Figure 5: “Horizons Never End.” (Louis Vuitton 2024).....	32
Figure 6: “Passion ❤️ Decode 520.” (Wang, J., 2021)	33
Figure 7: “Qualitative Vs Quantitative Research Methods & Data Analysis.” (Mcleod, S., 2017).....	61

CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The international luxury goods market has drawn the close attention of researchers recently due to its unprecedented pace of growth rate, as claimed by Fionda and Moore (2009). As stated by Ganbold (2022), the Asian market is considered one of the largest luxury goods consumers since the number of people seeking to acquire luxury goods from reputable brands is growing predominantly in Asian countries. Ganbold (2022) notes that according to the latest statistical reports, there is a particular emphasis on countries such as China and Japan since more than half of the luxury goods market value of the Asia-Pacific region is mainly accounted for by these two countries. Nevertheless, as reported by Lee (2023) and Kim (2023) recently, according to Morgan Stanley estimates, South Koreans are the world's biggest consumers of luxury goods. As shown in Figure 1, Koreans' per capita spending on upscale goods and products in 2022 was the highest (Kim 2023). Lee (2023) also reported that Moncler S.p.A. said that their revenue in South Korea more than doubled, while Cartier-owner Richemont Group stated that South Korea was among the countries where sales increased by double digits in 2022 as well. Additionally, as mentioned by Lee (2023), although the retail performance of Prada decreased by 7 percent in 2022 due to the lockdowns in China, this decline was mitigated by the significant performance in South Korea and East Asia.

Per capita spending on luxury goods in 2022

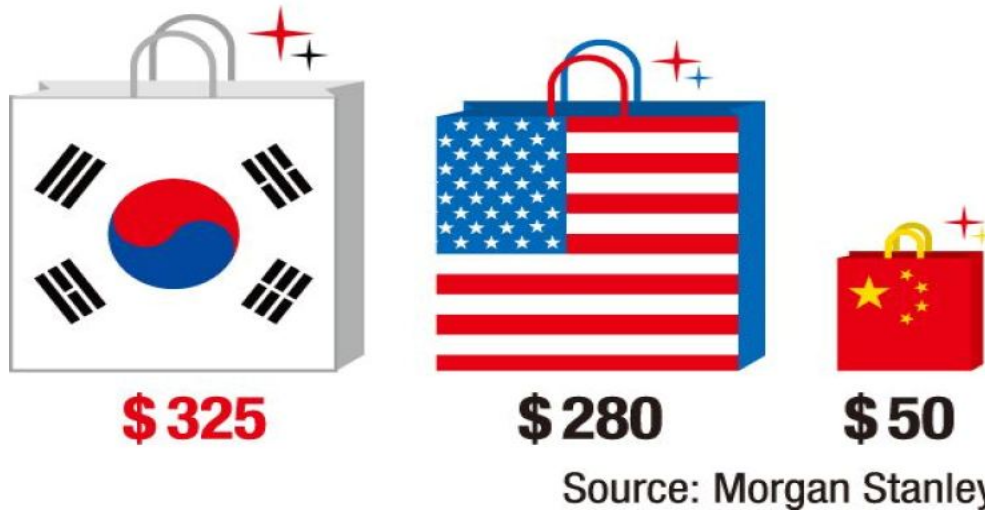


Figure 1: “Koreans’ per capita spending on luxury goods highest in world.” (Kim 2023)

Furthermore, as explained by Husić-Mehmedović et al. (2011), more than half of today’s revenue from luxury goods sales or service fees comes not from the traditional centres of Europe and the United States of America but from farther east countries, including China and India. According to Husić-Mehmedović et al. (2011), China has been considered a place of increasing affluence since there is a great number of people interested in luxury. Moreover, as Husić-Mehmedović and colleagues (2011) also note, China has become luxury’s “Great Wall” of revenue. As reported by Kim (2023), the number of people interested in luxury fashion in South Korea is increasing as well since many Korean celebrities and famous personalities are involved in the luxury fashion

business, and some of them also work as brand ambassadors of the notable luxury fashion houses. A nice example in this case would be Mun Ka Young and Kim Doyoung, who are the faces of Dolce&Gabbana's latest Spring Summer 2024 campaign, as well as a South Korean singer, Park Ji-min of BTS, who is the ambassador of Dior, as demonstrated below in Figure 2 and Figure 3. As a consequence, considering reports by Kim (2023), it is possible to claim that Asian countries, especially China, Japan, and South Korea, are presented as favourable places for luxury brands.



Figure 2: “The new Dolce&Gabbana Spring Summer 2024 Campaign starring Mun KaYoung and Doyoung.” (World Dolce&Gabbana 2024)



Figure 3: “JIMIN’s surprise-filled Dior Men show day.” (Christian Dior 2023)

1.2 Research Problem

Considering past research studies, there is an evident controversy regarding the consumption of luxury goods. Although consumers from different parts of the world can purchase or desire to possess upscale goods for seemingly varied reasons, Wiedmann and colleagues (2007) believe that consumers’ values and fundamental incentives are the same regardless of their place of origin. Two other studies by Husic and Cicic (2009) and Husić-Mehmedović et al. (2011) also suggest that luxury consumers behave and act the same way worldwide, regardless of economic or social surroundings. It can be assumed that the perception of upscale goods and their purchase is somehow linked to the fact that

goods belonging to the luxury category, in contrast to the mass market, are considered as something rare and, therefore, scarce. As a consequence, rare things are perceived differently and gain additional value for their rarity. Following Dubois and Paternault (1995), this kind of perception of luxury creates a serious dilemma for business owners because, in the case of high-volume manufacturing, more markets would be covered, which means earning more profits but sacrificing the rarity of their products.

Accordingly, with this approach, as noted by Dubois and Paternault (1995), the concept of uniqueness and exclusivity would be lost, and traditionally loyal customers might turn away from such brands due to the availability of such products or services. Dubois and Paternault (1995) also claim that such problems can be experienced by some brands quite often due to the appearance of the diffusion effect leading to unpleasant consequences such as loss of the brand's luxury character. As Dubois and Paternault (1995) suggest, the concept of "luxury marketing" is a paradox and can be absurd or self-contradictory.

Therefore, if people are sufficiently aware of the brand through various advertising messages or various promotional marketing techniques, then the brand loses its position in the world of luxury and becomes an element of mass consumerism culture. Thus, in the luxury market, there is a certain contradiction between the concept of "rarity" and the concept of "production expansion". Today, luxury business owners are faced with challenging questions: whether to expand into new markets and generate additional profits or to avoid dilution of the brand identity and its position in the world of luxury by all means. Catry (2003) also touches upon this paradox and invites luxury manufacturers to maintain at least the illusion that their products are rare when conquering new market

segments. This technique can help luxury brands to stay in demand and maintain their stability.

The most intriguing fact is that the perception of luxury as a synonym for rarity is a characteristic of American markets only, as maintained by Phau and Prendergast (2000). Moreover, as Dubois and Laurent (1996) highlight, there is an apparent geographical and cultural difference in how customers in European countries like France, in contrast to other countries, perceive the concept of luxury. Additionally, Phau and Prendergast (2000) also note that there is a visible difference in customers' perception of luxury goods and their value as well as purchasing behaviour among various geographical regions of Asia. As a result, the concept of rarity does not force or motivate people in Asia to purchase something from luxury brands. Thereby, following Phau and Prendergast (2000), it would be appropriate to claim that Asian countries are not congruent but diverse.

1.3 Purpose of Research

In economics, luxury refers to the consumption of goods and services that exceed the basic needs of an individual. This concept is not only about covering basic needs but also about quality, design, and satisfaction. Luxury is characterised by high price, high quality, and exclusivity. According to Dubois and Duquesne (1993), given the high price of luxury services and goods, many business owners tend to believe that most of their clients are representatives of the upper socio-economic class. As Dubois and Duquesne (1993) also suggest, there is also an assumption that consumers tend to intentionally purchase expensive items to display their wealth in an ostentatious way. For example,

dinner at a Michelin-starred restaurant or a pair of Hermes shoes goes beyond what is needed to satisfy one's hunger and to protect and comfort the human foot; it is a pleasure, a search for something extraordinary for the sake of inner satisfaction. According to Dolfsma (2000), luxury is in some way a reflection of the wealth that is created in a country and can have a positive impact on the economy because it encourages the development of innovations, art, and new designs. It also stimulates creativity and ingenuity to develop products that can capture the attention of customers with high expectations. Nevertheless, it can also have a number of negative consequences for the economy. Therefore, as mentioned by Dolfsma (2000), there is an assumption that luxury leads to waste and wastage of resources, and it also highlights the socio-economic status of people, creating a sense of social injustice. Thus, it also creates unnecessary needs that only lead to unnecessary consumption. Nonetheless, according to Bahm (1993), luxury can be perceived as the standard of durability and serenity. Consequently, it has nothing to do with compulsive, frenetic consumerism. In addition, as mentioned by Hudders and Pandelaere (2012), luxury is a distinct kind of pleasure creating a hedonistic experience. According to Bahm (1993), the term itself refers to axiology, which is a branch of practical philosophy. As explained by Bahm (1993) the essence of hedonism is the need to dissociate from the abnormally active and busy lifestyle. So, it can be assumed that hedonism is about the pursuit of enjoyment of the present moment, here and now, mainly through calm and serene luxury.

In summary, consumption of upscale goods can be represented in a variety of ways. As it was mentioned before, according to some studies, luxury consumption can be

perceived as a tool of personal self-expression in a constant connection with the community as well as self-indulgence and pleasure-seeking. In contrast, some studies introduce it as a waste of resources associated with frantic behaviour and accentuation of socioeconomic status. Thus, in order to gain a profound insight into luxury consumption, it is imperative to thoroughly examine this concept from a psychological standpoint to elucidate the genuine driving forces that propel individuals towards it.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The outcome of the present research study would be advantageous for luxury fashion enterprises in order to recognise the importance of culture and its impact on customers' perception of luxury clothes. Moreover, owners of already existing businesses would be able to make use of new marketing strategies to strengthen their position in the market and stay in demand. On the contrary, new enterprises would benefit from practical recommendations derived from this study to build and give the impression of a solid and inimitable brand in order to become internationally recognisable.

1.5 Research Purpose and Questions

According to Kapferer (1997), it might be arduous to please all customers and meet their requirements at once, but this is what luxury fashion brands need to strive for and achieve in order to survive in such a competitive environment and stand out from the rest. A significant number of research studies, including Amatulli and Guido (2012) and a relatively recent study by Liu (2022), address the importance of the dynamics of marketing strategies and tools implemented in business for high-end luxury commodities and intangible services for the prosperity of a company. In addition, according to a

different study by Xu (2020), companies should also be ready to adapt to changes and follow trends of the present times, bridging brand culture and business philosophy to serve affluent clientele. However, it is necessary to pay attention to not only marketing strategies and various methods to increase consumption rates, as it was done in previous research, but also examine customers' purchasing behaviour towards upscale goods and perception of clothes in terms of lifestyle and psychology as recommended by Husic and Cacic (2009), since this kind of approach is strongly associated with gained profits as well.

The primary objective of the present research study was the identification of precipitating factors playing an important role in purchasing upscale items and people's attitudes towards high-end fashion in Asian countries. As it was mentioned earlier, the topic of luxury is highly paradoxical and dichotomous. Furthermore, taking into consideration the diversity and originality of geographically distinctive markets of Asia, it is of paramount importance to examine factors associated with purchasing upscale fashion items in terms of psychology in countries, except for those where this question has not been considered yet and make a detailed cross-cultural comparison between them as it was suggested in previous research studies. As a result, it is imperative to study new topics and examine them from a completely different angle in order to contribute to the academic as well as business fields.

Hence, to address exciting and, at the same time, conflicting aspects of luxury consumption, the following research question was put forward and analysed in detail:

In view of psychology and culture, what are the precipitating factors for purchasing luxury brand commodities in Baku and Seoul?

In addition to that, the present research study intended to examine and explain whether the purchase of luxury products was specific to a particular type of lifestyle of people in Baku and Seoul. It also intended to find out whether consumption of upscale items was strongly associated with psychological factors such as a desire to seek pleasure and get inner satisfaction. Lastly, this study intended to look at whether the purchase of upscale goods was related to the acquisition and maintenance of widespread respect and admiration from the side by emphasising people's superiority and advantages in Baku and Seoul in accordance with their cultural values.

CHAPTER II:
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 A Brief Overview of Fashion

Taking into account past studies and historical essays, it is evident that fashion itself was described and associated with concepts such as art and creativity. As Breward (1994) highlights, based on many historical writings, it is visible that the context and meaning of clothes were often disdained and treated with neglect since fashion appeared only as a complementary and insignificant branch of art history. Nonetheless, taking into account assumptions pointed out by Breward (1994), fashion can be described as a vital enough element and a constituent of social transformations along with art and culture. Fashion is always contemporaneous; therefore, it reflects actual particles of substantiality, events and processes as an objective factor. At the same time, the concept of fashion can be described as a factor that predetermines many changes in various spheres of society and affects nature as well as individual features of human activity. The history and the appearance of the idea of fashion clearly illustrate the peculiarity of clothing as a phenomenon that is simultaneously a factor and driving force in the development of society. This abstraction has been a complex and multifaceted phenomenon which always has its own route and derivations. In order to understand the phenomenon of fashion, as claimed by Dubois and Duquesne (1993), it is necessary to comprehend what social conditions caused its emergence and what place it occupies in modern culture.

The need to adorn the naked body is universal and something crucial for almost all members of the human race, as maintained by Polhemus and Procter (1978).

Considering the assumptions of Polhemus and Procter (1978), it is possible to find a number of references to evidence provided by anthropology that all cultures, without exception, dress the human body in one way or another, and none of them allow the body to remain unadorned. It is also important to note that over the past decades, many studies have shown that the practice of physical enhancement of the body through fashion is taken as an obligation. Therefore, as stated by Entwistle (2015), there has been a certain desire to understand the actually existing practices and meanings of things adorning and enhancing the naked body that was invented by humans. In particular, many studies in recent years have been aimed at understanding the meaning of pieces of clothing for people and their perception of this phenomenon. Following Polhemus and Procter (1978), it is possible to notice that there is a problem caused by the lack of an accurately established and comprehensive term capable of describing everything that people do and put on their bodies in order to make them look more attractive. However, as claimed by Entwistle (2015), it is essential to take into account that concern for attractiveness is only one of the reasons behind the many methods of the modification of the human body generated by different cultures. Considering Braudel (1981), clothing can also be presented as a tool for drawing symbolic boundaries between people since it is a direct indication of people's socioeconomic status. Although the emergence of class affiliations was not the direct result of fashion, clothing serves as a reliable marker of class belonging, as mentioned in previous studies, including publications by Braudel (1981) and Polhemus and Procter (1978). According to the observations of Polhemus and Procter (1978), it is possible to claim that the members of the upper-class dress in such a

way as to emphasise their own identity. Therefore, as mentioned by Entwistle (2015), representatives of the upper class usually choose traditional pieces of clothing, the symbolic meaning of which is determined by the timeless quality, austerity, and aggressive opposition towards the usual fashion tendency. As Entwistle (2015) also notes in her writings, it should be considered that socioeconomic status significantly affects the choice of garments people desire to possess. Thus, to a certain extent, social status determines the level of income, which is one of the factors influencing the choice of purchased goods. Hence, as stated by Entwistle (2015), class affiliation also manifests itself in the taste preferences of people, which also plays an essential role in forming clothing choices and styles. So, the taste for things of the highest quality is proportional to the amount of money spent to buy these garments. Moreover, as Entwistle (2015) suggests, apart from the quality of garments, people's choices are also formed based on the materials from which these things are made. In this case, representatives of the upper class usually prefer clothes made from cashmere, organic cotton, silk, wool, linen, and bamboo.

The term fashion can be perceived in different ways. According to Entwistle (2015), the word "adornment" emphasises the aesthetic aspects of the artificial transformation of the body; on the contrary, as suggested by Polhemus and Procter (1978), the word "clothing" indicates an act or process of transformation by covering the body. So, it is possible to assume that the fashion system not only provides people with different pieces of clothing so that people can cover their nakedness, but it also tries to make sure that those pieces of clothing are beautiful and look seductive in order to make

direct contact with aesthetics, in particular with the philosophy of art. As a result, in line with findings pointed out by Entwistle (2015), it seems plausible to say that fashion combines different sciences, including philosophy, psychology, and sociology, together in one and makes them an integral part of everyday dressing practices. Following Polhemus and Procter (1978), fashion is a system encompassing numerous aspects of the production and consumption of clothing items, historically and geographically associated only with Western modernity. However, Barnes and Eicher (1992) consider fashion to be something that remains unchanged over time, and for this reason, they do not examine fashion as a distinct or multi-faceted system. According to Wilson (2009), fashion is a system that implies a particular industry, a unique system supporting the production and consumption of clothing items that have emerged as a result of historical processes and technological progress across Europe. So, fashion is a unique system that can be described in different ways; therefore, it can be outlined as a relationship between production, marketing, and the organisation of the supply of clothing items to retail outlets. Leopold considers the term fashion as a hybrid subject requiring the study of the interconnectedness between production and consumption (Leopold, 1992, as cited in Entwistle, 2015). As Leopold also highlights, the fashion system encompasses not only production and supply but also marketing, retailing and related cultural processes, facilitating the spread of certain styles of clothing (Leopold, 1992, as cited in Entwistle, 2015). Wilson (2009) suggests that the fashion system is not simply the raw material from which most everyday clothing is created since it also generates debates and aesthetic ideas that revolve around garments. Consequently, as maintained by Leopold,

fashion should be evaluated as a complex system; that is, researchers should consider it not only as a cultural phenomenon but also delve into its production and technological aspects, features of marketing and retail trade (Leopold, 1992, as cited in Entwistle, 2015). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that fashion might be seen both as a unique supply system that regulates and satisfies the need for clothing and also as an addition to the various topics of research where it is presented as a strong implication of a special relationship between production and consumption.

The debates surrounding fashion present items designed to cover the human body as something meaningful, truly beautiful, and seductive since fashion is more than just a product, as stated by Wilson (2009). Thus, it is possible to claim that fashion cares not only about producing styles and dividing them into popular and elite ones, as suggests Leopold (Leopold, 1992, as cited in Entwistle, 2015), but also about producing aesthetic ideas that are designed to structure the perception of these styles and their consumption. Additionally, according to the findings of Entwistle (2015), it is apparent that nearly all the arguments considering fashion as a unique system of production and consumption of clothing are tied to different historical and geographical regions of Europe. These arguments are impressive and persuasive; however, at the same time, they can be pretty controversial. Consequently, it is clear that fashion has been owned and built into European culture for centuries; this feature of European modernity may seem trivial to a certain extent, but it leaves its mark on almost all important aspects of human life and history. As a consequence, it is essential not only to study the particular social conditions that contributed to the emergence of fashion but also to find out what has been said and

written about fashion in countries other than Europe and America since then. Thereby, it would be interesting to gain a deeper awareness and to find out how people of different cultures are now paying attention to and perceiving this abstraction from a psychological perspective. Moreover, as claimed by Entwistle (2015), fashion on its own should be regarded as a strong abstract concept, the peculiarity of which is that it can subordinate regular and systematic changes according to its own logic and contradictory rationalisation.

2.2 Luxury Consumption Factors

According to Entwistle (2015), fashion is subject to change over time. Therefore, today, puffy dresses and cloche hats that were relevant in past centuries have been replaced by things that may not reveal their price but are as unique as those in the past. Hence, over time, the perception of clothes has changed as well. Clothes have ceased to be just objects that cover the naked body or adorn a person; they have turned into something exceeding basic human needs. Considering Braudel (1981), it is possible to assume that incessantly undergoing change, clothes, and upscale possessions are persistent reminders of a person's social position. Nevertheless, it is believed that fashion, in particular garments, was designed to identify and emphasise not only people's socio-economic status but also their gender, as maintained by Entwistle (2015). From time immemorial, the status of a person has been determined not only by their descent and achievements but also by the clothes they wear and the services and products they use. As stated by Braudel (1981), fashion, as a result, was given importance as a factor involved in the development of the class hierarchy. So, as mentioned by Entwistle (2015)

and in line with findings from previous studies, it is possible to claim that the logical arguments and premises eloquently revolving around the issue of good taste and expensive clothes indicate that the concept of fashion influenced society and contributed to social changes. Therefore, the idea of fashion turned into a philosophy in accordance with which people can highlight their beauty and physical appearance and, at the same time, demonstrate their taste and character. As noted earlier, this philosophy turned into a phenomenon that has become a model for reflecting the established rules of high-end products and services that people perceive as luxurious, conspicuous and, at the same time, daring. It is also essential to note that the idea of fashion has become strongly associated with femininity and the inherent beauty of women. This might partly explain the reason why the concept of fashion has been so often shackled and accused of all sorts of reckless actions and remained a marginal object that has not really been explored until now, as highlighted by Breward (1994). Following Entwistle (2015), this tendency contributed to the emergence of rules and the formation of specific lifestyle standards and representations of beauty and elegance that many try to follow. Therefore, designers create various products that are usually referred to as masterpieces, which people in many countries around the world often try to purchase, such as a bag from Gucci or a jacket from Loro Piana. Consequently, this kind of attitude toward fashion and clothes gave rise to and contributed to the development of luxury fashion.

The concept of luxury fashion is a set of objects that are not necessarily essential and required for life but go far beyond even a very comfortable life, beyond abundance. The purchase of luxury goods is often equated with long-term investments, as highlighted

by Fragassi (2022). Nevertheless, according to Kapferer (1998), the concept of luxury can be presented as a nonpareil and elusive thing. Following Becker and colleagues (2018), it is possible to conclude that consumers buy upscale goods in order to emphasise their high social status and associate with people of a particular consumer group by creating a deeper self-connection. So, consumers enjoy the fact that they belong to an elite social class and are part of a selective group of people who possess upscale items.

In contrast to Becker et al. (2018) and their interpretation of externalised luxury, Amatulli and Guido (2012) suggest that luxury can have not only a “public aim” but a “private aim” and be more personal. So, the point of externalised luxury is to demonstrate luxury possessions, whereas internalised luxury is predominantly associated with discrete and individual lifestyles, as outlined by Tsai (2005). Internalised luxury can be characterised as people’s willingness to spend money on themselves for their own sake but not for public approval. Therefore, as claimed by Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009), internalised luxury is also associated with hedonism and also related to culture, as explained by Fionda and Moore (2009).

In summary, although people often choose their clothes themselves, it is apparent that outfits can easily change and influence an individual on a psychological level. It can also be assumed that the outfit forms the image of a person and how others welcome them. According to Joanne Entwistle (2015), because clothes are on the surface, they can be interpreted immediately at first glance, and no words are needed. As Entwistle (2015) also points out, an outfit might tell several things about an individual, including their culture and nationality, and provide additional information about the character of a

person. Luxury possessions are a factor that affects not only how an individual will be treated by others but also how they are associated with interpersonal relationships. Taking note of the assumptions of Bahm (1993), it is apparent that these items can also affect the human psyche, including the self-esteem and emotional state of a person. Luxury items affect the self-perception of people and can also help them leave an unforgettable impression on those around them. It follows that there is a relationship between the luxury items people have and their psychological state. It is important to note that the concept of luxury brand products and services is associated with a different type of joy and confidence, as maintained by Bahm (1993). In contrast, ordinary things often mean nothing or can be related to people's insecurities and worries. So, it is understandable why people, in this case, tend to wear and purchase garments they like and feel comfortable in, as well as things that also bring them fond memories.

2.3 The Concept of Marketing

What is the essence of marketing? Why is it necessary to implement marketing in business? As stated by Silk (2006), marketing can be characterised as a set of processes aimed at creating, promoting and delivering a product or a service to customers, as well as managing relationships with clients, as mentioned by Moorman and Rust (1999). As Silk (2006) explains, marketing is the activity implemented by a company in order to meet the market needs. Following Kotler et al. (2002), one of the principal tasks of marketing is to make a profit. According to Baines and Rosengren (2017), the idea of marketing consists of a wide range of activities aimed at improving the position of a company in the market. As outlined by Kotler and colleagues (2002), marketing

integrates different procedures, strategies, and interventions ranging from competitive analysis to increasing the competitiveness of a product using various tactics. Thus, in line with the aims and intentions of a company, particular marketing techniques are determined and implemented in practice in order to achieve the desired results.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that marketing is an immensely adaptable science with no predetermined boundary. This means that marketing can have both positive as well as negative impacts on society, including consumers. Therefore, as maintained by Huntley and Stephen (1995), it is recommended to follow ethical principles and be cautious about deceptive information since it might lead to severe consequences such as reputational damage. Considering the meaning of marketing, it is abundantly clear that the main objective of marketing is to consolidate the market position of the company by making a good profit (Baines and Rosengren 2017). As suggested by Moorman and Rust (1999), it is quite understandable that there are even more tasks that marketing can resolve since it is a multifaceted discipline that combines a wide range of topics and questions.

Consequently, these topics are somehow associated and interrelated with the escalation of the profits and competitiveness of the company. Almost every company determines its aims and goals separately, one by one, in order to make sure that they correspond to the financial and production capabilities of the business. In other respects, it would be extremely challenging to accomplish the assigned goals and tasks if the company departs from the primarily established objectives. Although it is feasible to establish both single-level and multi-level tasks, Silk (2006) emphasises that the goal is not just to assign tasks accurately but also to perform them appropriately.

In order to build a strong position in the market, it is significant for the company to have a marketing strategy. As noted by Silk (2006), a marketing strategy is one of the leading and fundamental elements that helps companies and organisations reach and connect with the target audience in order to grow business in the long run. A marketing strategy consists of “the four Ps” (Park and Johnston 2005), often referred to as a marketing mix (Silk 2006), including product, price, place, and promotion, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 — The four Ps of Marketing

<u>THE FOUR Ps OF MARKETING</u>	
<p style="text-align: center;">1. <u>Product:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Customer needs</i> • <i>Innovative design</i> • <i>Quality assurance</i> • <i>Branding</i> • <i>Production lifecycle</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">2. <u>Price</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cost Analysis</i> • <i>Competitor Pricing</i> • <i>Perceived Value</i> • <i>Pricing Strategy</i> • <i>Price Adjustments</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">3. <u>Place</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Distribution Channels</i> • <i>Market Coverage</i> • <i>Inventory Management</i> • <i>Strategic Partnerships</i> • <i>Online Presence</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">4. <u>Promotion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advertising Campaigns</i> • <i>Public Relations</i> • <i>Digital Marketing</i> • <i>Sales Promotions</i> • <i>Targeted Messaging</i>

Marketing strategy is a vitally important component in order to market the product since it is the chosen strategy that determines the further work, the methods used, and the tools implemented in practice, as claimed by Silk (2006). Therefore, for the efficient choice of a strategy, it is crucial to know and examine the current state of the market and the position of the company in that particular market and objectively assess the available resources. It is also necessary to have a marketing plan (an official paper) to represent strategies adopted, actions and steps taken by the employees of the company since a marketing plan of the company implies not only the theoretical but also the practical part, as Piercy and Morgan (1994) note. Additionally, when constructing a plan, employees must be guided by the specific marketing principles considering the rules of the company and follow the ethics, especially in regard to internet marketing (IM), which is in great demand, especially nowadays, as claimed by Bergemann and Bonatti (2011). Considering assumptions by Bergemann and Bonatti (2011), internet marketing might be presented as a separate science since the online activities of employees are different from the activities of employees in the offline space. Moreover, in contrast to traditional offline marketing, IM has its own distinctive methods and instruments for the promotion and selling of products, including social media marketing, which is widely used today.

Nowadays, as mentioned by Kotler (2012), one of the critical elements of marketing for business is market positioning. According to Urde and Koch (2014) and Stone (2007), market positioning is the image of a company or product that marketers build in the minds of the target audience using different techniques. It also helps to create a strong image for the company and make it distinct from others. As pointed out by Stone

(2007), the main goal of positioning is to create value for the company. Therefore, the principal strategy of positioning is building up from competitors by justifying value against their background. These techniques are mainly used by famous companies in order to show the uniqueness of their brand by creating a certain rate scale in which the company would be able to take the lead, in contrast to their competitors in the market. For example, Tiffany & Co., an American luxury jewellery and specialty design house, spends a little time talking about designs, production, distribution, and sales of its jewellery. On the contrary, nearly in all its commercials, including the commercial video called “ABOUT LOVE” (Tiffany & Co. 2021) with JAY-Z and Beyoncé, the brand emphasises the importance of profound love and beauty, as well as the incomparability and magnificence of its jewellery by evoking tenderness, sensuality, and tranquillity, as shown below in Figure 4. The value of Tiffany & Co. lies in the fact that its products are beautiful and considered the symbol of love. It goes beyond ordinary limits by surpassing everybody else in the market. Consequently, the point of positioning is to “think differently and detach from competitors”, which allows the company to gain audience loyalty and increase audience retention by building a clear brand image in the minds of consumers and taking a solid position in the market (Kotler 2012). Consequently, customers are motivated to purchase the products of the company incautiously without much thought.



Figure 4: "About Love." (Tiffany & Co. 2024)

Following Urde and Koch (2014) and Jackson (2007), the main advantages of developing a brand positioning strategy are that it helps to convey to customers the benefits and values of the company, increases the level of user confidence in the brand, increases customer loyalty; strengthens a positive brand image. Developing a company's positioning strategy requires careful preparation. First of all, marketing managers need to conduct market research, analyse demand and determine the target audience. The second point is to create a portrait of a customer and think about why customers should choose their product and company, think about what consumers might be interested in, and analyse the existing offerings in the market and identify their own strengths to stand out from the competition as suggested by Domzal and Unger (1987). Therefore, when trying to maximise the effectiveness of brand positioning, marketers have to assess their intended customer base and discover the product attributes that are most essential to customers. The next stage is to select channels of interaction for advertising and audience

engagement. This could include platforms such as social media, instant messengers, or newsletters sent through email. Each of the stages of establishing a positioning strategy encompasses an analysis of the leading competitors and their offers; an assessment of the companies' weaknesses as well as strengths; an analysis of the audience to be targeted and its segmentation; a review of consumer attitudes toward the company's competitors; and the evaluation of distinctive features of the brand that will help a company stand out in the market and capture the attention of consumers. Market positioning additionally includes the development of a scheme for positioning, the establishment of advertising campaigns, designs, brand attributes, and other aspects that will help raise awareness and impact the creation of the right image for the company. As Domzal and Unger (1987) point out, many global brands take the actions outlined above in order to succeed and cope with this kind of competitive environment. It is imperative to emphasise that a well-structured and efficiently executed market positioning enables marketing managers to develop a strong emotional connection with customers while demonstrating the company's ideology and values. The essence of market positioning is to elicit desirable emotions and associations. So, as Urde and Koch (2014) emphasise, the crucial component of market positioning is the advertisements and marketing of both a brand and a product in the market that directly or indirectly includes additional advertising elements of marketing.

Nowadays, residents of megalopolises almost breathe in advertising along with the air. Every few seconds, megalopolis residents are enticed by advertisements, virtually "littered" with them, and entranced by visually appealing commercials. However, not

every company can succeed in marketing, particularly advertising, because, as David Ogilvy (1971) pointed out in his works, it takes boldness, ideas and passion, a rich imagination, a positive outlook, and perseverance. As a result, for some businesses, marketing remains an impossible-to-attain goal. Marketing encompasses both commitment and strategy. As stated by Ogilvy (1971), in order to captivate clients, one must first comprehend the essence of the product. As a result, marketing managers must thoroughly evaluate the product and fully understand all of its qualities. It is critical to examine every element and pay close attention to everything that distinguishes the product by demonstrating the particular aspect that sets it apart from competitors. So, it is possible to claim that creativity is at the core of marketing in companies. As previously explained, one of the primary objectives of marketing managers is to grab the attention of consumers by attracting and encouraging them to purchase the product or service.

Typically, suppose a company employs the same strategies as others, including duplicating names and using standard designs. In that case, it is pretty imminent that the company is going to fail at some point in the future. It is critical to remember that every brand needs a line of distinction, a set of attributes that separates it from competitors, as stated by Ogilvy (1971). Furthermore, in order for a product to stand out from the rest, it is necessary to combine a simple idea with a luxurious design to make customers experience the power of advertising art. Customers might be compared to mountains covered with snow that are likely to melt only when they are positively influenced by information presented in commercials. Some organisations fail in this attempt due to the approach they have selected and a lack of information concerning the potential customer

base. As a result, there is a disparity between the company's offerings and what is expected by the target audience. Although marketing helps sell a product, it is critical first to understand and then consider what customers are looking for and expecting from the brand.

Any company can be defined as a living entity that operates in a structured manner in alignment with its guiding principles. As a result, if one division of the company experiences a difficulty, the other division takes prompt action to avoid or address that problem. Every step taken inside the organisation should be aimed at preserving harmony within the company and its departments. It is imperative to keep in mind that, in addition to its own tasks, the marketing department is in charge of ensuring that everything is being handled properly, without any interference, and that the company reaches its long-term goals. In the case of luxury business management, marketing could possibly be viewed as one of the key elements in establishing balance and harmony inside the company in terms of successful product or service promotion. Hence, marketing could be characterised as part of a comprehensive management process that incorporates a broad range of measures focused on strengthening customer relationships, product sales, promotion of goods by increasing brand awareness, and the formation of a strong brand identity. To summarise, marketing is an essential facet of any business because it expresses the values and ideology of a company. Marketing serves as a crucial element for the maintenance of stability in the market and also helps the company to flourish. Successful implementation of marketing strategies enables companies to expand, surpass competitors, and boost their revenues. Nonetheless, in accordance with previous research

findings, in order to increase consumption rates of luxury brand products, it is critical to study not only marketing and its strategies but also purchasing behaviour towards luxury goods, as there is a significant correlation between consumption behaviour and profit.

2.4 Ambassador Marketing

What is ambassador marketing? Why is it necessary to implement ambassador marketing techniques in business today, especially in regard to luxury brands? According to Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008), the term “brand ambassador” started to emerge more frequently in marketing literature as well as in business practices. There is a broad spectrum of interpretations that are related to it. As Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008) also suggest, while there is consensus that the term “brand ambassador” is intended to encompass an even broader definition of a person who works in support as well as on behalf of a specific brand, there is discord concerning the particular purpose, the nature of the ambassador’s relationship with the represented company, and the intended impact. Taking note of that, it would be more appropriate to shed some light on the concept of ambassador marketing and brand ambassador.

Ambassador marketing is a practical approach for brands to promote their products to their most loyal and valuable customers by converting them into long-term authority figures or brand ambassadors. Brand ambassadors are often ardent supporters of a particular brand. A brand ambassador in marketing is a person who becomes a leading official representative of the brand and represents its interests among the target audience. In most cases, a brand ambassador is a well-known, popular, and authoritative person among the target group. The ambassador’s task is to represent and protect the interests of

the brand they represent among members of the group to which the ambassador belongs in order to popularise the name of the brand and its ideas. The ambassador, in relation to the brand, has a number of rights and obligations stipulated by the contract. So, the main task of an ambassador is to speak on behalf of the brand and enjoy the privileges specified in the contract. Among the primary responsibilities of a brand ambassador are participation in promotion programs and public activities, as well as participation in numerous events organised on behalf of the brand. This kind of phenomenon as a brand ambassador is widespread among the premium and luxury segments of the market. So, one of the main tasks of ambassadors is to independently talk about the brand and actively promote the brand. It is essential to differentiate the term brand ambassador from other concepts, such as the face of the brand, since there are a number of significant differences between them. The main difference between a brand ambassador and the face of the brand is determined by the set of rights received from the brand. While the face of the brand is an advertising image associated by the audience with a short or long-term advertising campaign of the brand, an ambassador is a leader for the audience who believes in the brand and considers it worthy of recommending to their friends and acquaintances and even to a large target group for which they are a reference point and become a part of the brand they advocate for and promote. The job of a brand ambassador is to create a positive impression through social media or advertising. As a rule, this is usually a famous person, blogger, musician, actor or athlete who has gained the trust of the audience and can attract new clients using their popularity and attraction. An ambassador must wear clothes produced by the brand and share photos of the brand's

products on social networks without calling for a purchase. According to Vinerean and Opreana (2019), the use of social networking sites offers marketing professionals multiple ways to connect with consumers to establish stronger connections with them. Social media platforms allow marketers to develop and share advertising content with particular target groups, as well as reuse content generated by users to demonstrate customers' connections with a specific brand.

What are the responsibilities and tasks of a brand ambassador? The primary responsibility of a brand ambassador is to use the products that the company produces and share them with the public and target audience. Although it is vital to have many subscribers on social media, supporters and followers, it is also crucial to correspond to the needs of the brand, show respect for its values as well as support its missions. The brand ambassadors' work format is determined individually in order to get the desired results. Brand ambassadors can do different things for the promotion of the brand they work for, including the following:

- Record short or long videos using an embedded marketing strategy (in which a product or service is showcased in some form of media, such as music videos and social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter).
- Write posts mentioning this product.
- Participate in photo shoots organised by the brand or the ambassadors themselves.
- Organise special events or parties where brand products are raffled off.

- Participate in various events organised by the company.

Therefore, the role of the brand ambassador is to spread information about the company and its products and recommend it to other people. Ambassadors use their media presence and influence to attract new customers and boost sales. They also help in building a positive reputation by creating a certain image for the brand they work for. It is crucial that the values of the ambassador and the brand coincide since this affects the trust and loyalty of the audience. An excellent example in this case would be Jackson Wang, a Chinese rapper, singer, songwriter, dancer and fashion designer who works as a brand ambassador for luxury brands like Cartier and Louis Vuitton, as presented below in Figure 5 and Figure 6. Thanks to Jackson Wang's collaboration with these two brands and his fans and supporters across the world, there was a sale boost in China Louis Vuitton and other countries as well.



Figure 5: "Horizons Never End." (Louis Vuitton 2024)



Figure 6: “Passion ❤️ Decode 520.” (Wang, J., 2021)

It is essential for luxury brands to know how to choose an exemplary ambassador in order to benefit from their partnership in the future. Brands usually choose ambassadors from celebrities and ordinary people who are regular customers of their company or brand. Before searching for a potential brand ambassador, it is essential to determine the values and requirements for ambassadors. Among the main criteria are:

- Sharing the values and philosophy of the brand or company.
- Work in accordance with the principles of a brand or company.
- The ability to attract new customers.
- Personality traits (creative, charismatic, attractive, confident).
- Good reputation.

- Knowledge in the field of luxury.
- Ability and willingness to learn.
- Knowledge of social media (Vinerean and Opreana 2019).

Therefore, companies need people who can attract attention and intrigue people in a positive way. Moreover, it is of paramount importance for a potential ambassador to know how to manage criticism and handle negative feedback because the reaction of the audience is hard to predict. Brands do not necessarily choose individuals with a vast audience since the essential part here is to have a loyal audience and be able to receive their help and support constantly. Following Nisa and Pramesti (2020), it is essential to highlight that without a positive attitude towards the company and its brand, as well as its advertising and commercial videos, people would not support their favourite celebrities and show interest in the brand they work for. This means that luxury brands should think about not only the person they are going to work with but also the people who are planning to take the role of brand ambassadors since it has a significant impact on their reputations. Additionally, the outcome of the research study conducted by Nisa and Pramesti (2020) demonstrated that online marketing and brand ambassadors have a substantial impact on an individual's purchasing intention; these factors (online marketing and brand ambassadors) have no direct effect on the purchase intentions of people. In addition, results show that, even in the age of digital technology, brand identification still has a more significant impact on the purchasing behaviour of people in comparison to digital marketing or brand ambassadors. Although there was an indirect impact of brand ambassadors on the purchase intention of people according to the study

conducted by Nisa and Pramesti (2020), the results of the study carried out by Usman and Aryani (2019) showed that brand ambassadors have an insignificant impact on the purchase intention of people.

In summary, respected personalities who act as brand ambassadors are usually famous people who have a significant influence on public opinion and purchasing behaviour of people. As mentioned earlier, brand ambassadors are generally celebrities, athletes, musicians, actors, models, entrepreneurs, performers or any other individuals who are successful in their field. Success and achievements in their career, combined with desired personal attributes that align with the brand's values, create an image of a strong brand representative. This combination can turn into a powerful tool for promoting the brand, presenting its values and image of the company, establishing loyalty and trust among the target audience, as well as increasing brand awareness, as mentioned by Vinerean and Opreana (2019). As a consequence, many popular brands choose famous personalities as ambassadors who are able to form a strong bond between the audience and the brand without forcing or encouraging people to purchase its products.

Additionally, as part of their job, ambassadors tend to wear accessories, clothes, shoes, and other things they own from the brand they work for in their everyday lives or when attending social events and parties. For instance, significant Asian events like the MAMA AWARDS in South Korea or the Weibo Star Award in China give an excellent opportunity for brand ambassadors to wear accessories or any fashion item from the brand they collaborate with by capturing the attention of people and captivating them. In conclusion, brand ambassador is an excellent marketing strategy for promoting goods and

services, even though some studies claim that there is almost no significant impact of brand ambassadors on the target audience. Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand the target audience and people in general (considering current trends) and find out what might interest and attract them. Brand ambassadors should be people who believe in the company they collaborate with and its brand, love and respect its philosophy and are ready to advocate on behalf of it. This means that sincerity is highly valued in such cooperation because it is the component that helps interest and capture potential buyers. Collaboration with ambassadors is extremely important for luxury brands since this partnership allows them to convey the values of a brand in a more effective and faster manner.

2.5 Summary

From ancient times to the present day, clothing has played a considerable role in the life of a human being. It can serve as a tool to protect humans from cold, and at the same time, it is a tool that can help people with the expression of their individuality and social status. As mentioned earlier, clothing can beautify a person, highlight their personality, and serve as an essential means of self-expression. First of all, clothing performs an aesthetic function. It can highlight attractive features of a person's figure, hide imperfections, and highlight individuality. Manipulating with a variety of colours, styles and fabrics, a person can create their own unique style, which in turn can become a reflection of their character and inner world. In addition, clothing is a powerful means of self-expression. Each person is unique, and clothing allows people to emphasise this uniqueness. People's choice of clothing can represent information about their interests,

beliefs, professional field of activity and even their state of mind and mood. It is a specific image that people form for everybody who surrounds them in order to convey a certain message about themselves. Across different cultures and societies, certain types of clothing may represent the status, age, gender, or role of a person in society. For example, a fancy dress worn at formal events or ceremonies often serves as a symbol of respect for the event as well as its members. Nevertheless, it is essential to remember that clothes should not be reduced to just an empty appearance. Clothes may have deep meaning and significance. For example, many clothing brands today actively support sustainable fashion and ethical production, making the selection of clothing an act of supporting certain values. Thus, clothing is more than just a material covering the body. It is correlated with aesthetics as well as psychological and social factors. Clothes help people to express themselves and convey information concerning their beliefs and status. Clothes can also influence how individuals feel themselves and impact the way they interact with others around them.

Based on the current literature review, there is an apparent lack of evidence regarding cultural and psychological factors determining the purchase of luxury brand commodities in terms of psychology and people's genuine perception of clothes in Asia. It would be significant to find out why people are willing to buy luxury fashion goods, their attitudes towards luxury brand items, and, most importantly, the factors that lead to purchasing these goods in Asian countries. Thus, the present research study aimed to demonstrate that people's purchasing behaviour of luxury commodities in Asia significantly differs from other countries and is strongly associated with cultural and

psychological factors. Since this question has not been raised and examined in countries like Azerbaijan and South Korea before, taking note of psychology and culture, it would be suitable to choose these countries with the actual potential of luxury market as a relevant alternative. In this research, the primary objective was the identification of factors playing a fundamental role in shaping people's attitudes towards purchasing behaviour of upscale goods in Baku and Seoul in terms of psychology. The aim of this study was to make a comparison between the two groups of people, clients and non-clients of luxury brands, in each city and then compare the results obtained from both cities considering a cross-cultural approach. It was crucial to look at this issue from the side of people who were customers of these luxury fashion brands and identify the driving force influencing their purchasing behaviour and intention to buy and desire to possess a luxury brand item.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

In this research, the primary objective was the identification of factors playing a fundamental role in shaping people's attitudes towards purchasing behaviour of upscale goods in Baku and Seoul in terms of psychology. The outcome of this study helped make a comparison between the two groups of people, clients and non-clients of luxury brands, in each city. Moreover, it was possible to compare the results obtained from both cities, Baku and Seoul, using a cross-cultural approach. It was crucial to look at this issue from the side of people who are customers of famous and notable luxury fashion brands in order to identify the driving force influencing their purchasing behaviour and intention to buy and desire to possess an item from a luxury brand.

In order to obtain primary data for the present study, a qualitative research method was implemented and used. In particular, semi-structured interviews were applied since they gave an opportunity to carry out an in-depth analysis of people's experiences as well as perspectives on luxury fashion items. Additionally, since semi-structured interviews were flexible, they allowed the researcher to concentrate on the views of participants as well as their attitudes. Moreover, they gave participants an opportunity to freely express their points of view. This was extremely important because the primary objective of this study was to understand the perception of luxury items (or genuine opinion about luxury items) of Asian people in order to explain their purchasing behaviour from a psychological point of view. This research was carried out based on the review and

approval by the Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva University Research Ethics Board.

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

Today, one of the evident methods of categorising information is by defining whether it is quantitative or qualitative, as mentioned by Gray et al. (2007). There are some sources of information that consist of either quantitative statistics or qualitative data. Nevertheless, as stated by Morgan (2013), it should be noted that sometimes information can contain both quantitative and qualitative sources of evidence.

The main point of qualitative studies is to obtain an idiographic comprehension of the investigated phenomenon being studied, as highlighted by Hennink et al. (2020). Thus, since the main goal of the present study was to understand factors associated with the purchase of luxury brand commodities in relation to psychology, the present research study was carried out with the use of qualitative research methods. As in the case of the present study, when it comes to the questions related to human behaviour, a qualitative research study is the best option to choose from as it helps understand the multitude of reasons why people exhibit and manifest or deliberately display quality or a certain type of behaviour as it was suggested by Hennink et al. (2020) and Gray et al. (2007).

According to Gray et al. (2007), in most cases, a qualitative research project often begins with the formulation of a research question, a question that is proposed by a researcher. Thus, considering explanations by Morgan (2013), it is plausible to claim that the essence of a qualitative study is to help a researcher seek and acquire an idiographic understanding of the plethora of reasons and causes that are related to the behaviour

being examined. Additionally, this clarifies the reason why the current research study was categorised as a qualitative one.

3.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The primary focus of this comprehensive study was to gain deep insight into the diverse psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence consumers' decisions to purchase luxury fashion items in the unique contexts of Azerbaijan and South Korea. The study aimed to delve into the intricate motivations, aspirations and influences that shape consumers' purchasing behaviours in these two distinct regions. Consequently, the following research question was put forward:

Primary Research Question:

“In consideration of the complex interplay between psychology and culture, what are the nuanced and multifaceted factors influencing the propensity to purchase luxury brand commodities in the distinct contexts of Baku and Seoul?”

Additionally, there were specific objectives related to the culture and lifestyle of people in these two countries. It means that except for the primary aim, this study had additional secondary objectives. It was essential to try to find answers to the extra questions in order to get insight into how people's attitudes towards luxury fashion items are formed. As a consequence, this study also considered this question in relation to cultural aspects as well as the lifestyle of people in order to provide answers to the additional questions mentioned below:

Secondary Objectives:

“Why are some people indifferent to luxury brand commodities in Baku and Seoul?”

“Are there any specific cultural features associated with the purchase of luxury brand products in Baku and Seoul?”

“Is there any specific lifestyle associated with the purchase of luxury brand products in Baku and Seoul?”

3.4 Research Design

To adequately tackle the research question in this study, the researcher deliberately opted for a qualitative research approach. This method was chosen and implemented to facilitate a thorough and in-depth exploration of the subject matter. In addition, in order to gather information regarding luxury consumption in two Asian countries (Azerbaijan and South Korea) and also to compare luxury consumption behaviours across these two cultures, a descriptive research design was implemented, and semi-structured interviews were carried out. In particular, a cross-cultural subtype of the descriptive research design was used for the current research project.

Firstly, it is important to provide information about the cross-cultural research design selected for the present research project. Cross-cultural research is a systematic study method of human behaviour and psychological processes that is applied across different cultures and societies in order to examine the connection between characteristics of human behaviour and culture, as mentioned by Brislin (1976). Cross-cultural studies involve the assessment and comparison of data collected from the groups of people representing the communities being studied with the use of a psychological approach.

The reason for a significant divergence between the assessed attributes in cross-cultural studies is associated with cultural factors, including behaviour, personality traits, characteristics of perception, thinking, communication, education, and the environment of a person (Brislin 1976). However, there is also a likelihood that the psychological characteristics of people in a specific society may have influenced and formed the essence and nature of their cultures. It is also important to note that cross-cultural research is often used to study psychological differences between ethnic groups and religious communities, as well as between urban and rural, civilised and primitive, and Western and Eastern societies. At the same time, it is essential to note that it might be challenging to make generalised conclusions about culture since there are many variations within cultures. In addition, as highlighted by Taylor (2005), interviews can only capture reconstructions of events rather than how people might behave in reality. Nevertheless, following Brislin (1976), it is crucial to note that the explanatory capabilities of cross-cultural research help scholars understand and cognise important factors highly correlated with the cultures that are examined during the research process.

Secondly, it is crucial to give a brief overview of the concept of interviews and explain why this method was suitable for this research. As stated by Alshenqeti (2014), interviews are one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative research. Ethnographic research has made some contributions to the increased use of interviews in qualitative research. In addition, interviews provide a certain freedom in conducting research, which makes them very common and widely applicable. Research studies that are based, to a greater or lesser extent, on interviews are a highly attractive alternative for

collecting a qualitative database. Although interviewing, creation of interview transcripts, and analysis of transcripts are always time-consuming, they are more readily applicable to research studies concerning and examining the individual life of a group of people. As Adhabi and Anozie (2017) pointed out, there are three common types of interviews: structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and semi-structured interviews. A structured interview is a type of interview in which the interviewer asks questions that are planned and prepared in advance. Unstructured interviews are a type of interview in which the interviewer asks questions as they arise spontaneously during the conversation. Semi-structured interviews are a type of interview in which some questions are predetermined, and other questions arise spontaneously during the conversation.

As a result, after a thorough examination of past research studies, journal publications, and books concerning luxury consumption behaviour, it became clear that semi-structured types of interviews were an appropriate option for the data collection process of the present research study.

3.5 Population and Sample

Taking into account the cross-cultural nature of the present research project, participants were recruited from two countries, Azerbaijan and South Korea. It was a pivotal and essential step that helped the researcher collect and analyse data, compare results obtained from the two countries, make a detailed evaluation of the results, and interpret the outcome of the research in a professionally academic manner. Participants were selected from the two companies/firms located in Seoul and Baku.

There were a few specific restrictions concerning participation, including the age and nationality of the individuals, which are presented below in Table 2. All the participants had to correspond to the predetermined criteria in order to take part in the research study.

Table 2 — Eligibility Criteria

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>EXCLUSION CRITERIA</u>
1. People from Azerbaijan and South Korea (only native Azerbaijanis and Koreans). People with dual citizenship.	1. Representatives from other nationalities (people who are not native Koreans or Azerbaijanis).
2. People aged 18 and over/adults.	2. People under the age of 18.
3. People who are customers of luxury fashion brands.	—
4. People who are not customers (non-customers) of luxury fashion brands.	—
5. Participants who are representatives of different sociodemographic backgrounds.	—

In both cities, every individual within the selected company received an email containing information about the present research study and instructions on how to take part in the research. After careful evaluation of each participation request, every selected participant received an email containing information about the research and instructions to follow in order to take part in the study. Selected participants were informed via email and also

received a consent form after the conformation of their participation. All the selected participants from both countries were mostly adults (individuals aged 18 and over); the ages of the participants who took part in the study from both countries ranged from 24 to 78. In Azerbaijan, there were two males and three females in the non-client group, whereas in the client group, there were three males and four females. In South Korea, there were two female and three male participants in the non-client group and two male and five female participants in the client group. After the interview, every participant received a copy of the interview consent form and a debrief sheet.

3.6 Participant Selection

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants for the study. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is frequently used in order to identify and choose samples that can provide in-depth information on the topic of interest (Palinkas et al. 2015). It was an effective method for studying differences between the two Asian cultures with the help of selected individuals who matched the primary objective of the research. One of the advantages of purposeful sampling is that it is efficient and easy to implement; however, this type of sample might lack generalisability. Therefore, to reduce the occurrence of selection bias, participants were carefully assessed with the help of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions.

Despite the relatively small sample size in the present research study, it is essential to note that the attainment of data saturation helped to mitigate this limitation. Following an extensive series of interviews, the researcher successfully achieved data saturation, indicating that a comprehensive range of information was amassed. According

to Grady (1998) and Legard et al. (2003), it is appropriate to stop collecting data once the researcher starts to hear the same comments repeatedly during the interview sessions since data saturation is reached. The interviews were documented by pen and paper (since audio recording was not allowed) and were analysed using thematic analysis. The distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as the rationale for the selection of the qualitative approach, were already covered in the previous subsection of the current chapter. To provide a perspective on the topics covered in the interviews, thematic analysis was implemented. The concept and importance of thematic analysis were discussed in the following subsections of the current chapter as well.

3.7 Instrumentation

Information about people and their attitudes towards luxury fashion brands was collected with the help of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions. A semi-structured interview was based on the use of two types of questions: mandatory and clarifying ones. Mandatory questions were asked to each interviewee, whereas clarifying ones, as suggested by Conrad and Schober (2021), were used in the conversation or excluded from it by the interviewer (researcher) depending on the answers to the main questions. Thus, a certain variability of the survey was achieved (a certain level of variability helps reduce potential bias), taking into account the individual characteristics of respondents and changes in the communication situation. The information obtained remained highly comparable. The researcher actively managed the dialogue, if necessary, focusing the attention of the interviewees on any additional aspects of the problems being

discussed. However, it did not go beyond the pre-compiled list of questions. Regardless of the type of interviewing (digital platforms or in person), there was a specific sequence of actions that the researcher strictly followed. The structured plan, as stated by Roberts (2020), and a well-defined sequence of interview procedures and questions ensured the proper effectiveness of the implementation of this method.

The questionnaires that were used during the research consisted of two parts: the first part was about demographic information, and the second part was mainly concentrated on luxury fashion and consisted of questions related to the research topic. Following recommendations for conducting qualitative interviews by Roberts (2020), the questions in each section were carefully worded and competently arranged in order to obtain information about factors affecting people and their purchasing behaviour in Azerbaijan and South Korea. The whole set of questions included in the survey is shown in Table 3 below. In order to justify the choice of questions for the interview, a detailed explanation was provided for each question included in the survey. Each interview consisted of approximately 15 questions and lasted for about 34 to 60 minutes (including connection time, brief information and introduction, and note-taking).

Table 3 — The Interview Questions

<u>SURVEY QUESTIONS</u>
<p><u>Part 1: Demographic Information</u></p> <p>1. What is your gender? 2. What is your age? 3. What is your ethnicity? 4. What is your level of education? 5. What is your current employment status? 6. What is your monthly income? 7. Do you have income from sources other than salary?</p>
<p><u>Part 2: Luxury Fashion</u></p> <p>8. Would you describe yourself as a client of luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Hermes, Fendi, etc.? Do you own luxury fashion items? How often do you attend and buy anything from luxury boutiques?</p> <p>If your answer is <i>NO</i>, what do you think of luxury fashion brands?</p> <p><i>And why don't you buy luxury brand products?</i></p> <p>9. Are you more likely to buy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An expensive luxury fashion product from the brand? Why?• An affordable luxury fashion product from a second-hand source? Why?• A counterfeit (fake) product? Why?• An affordable fashion product from the ordinary shop? Why? <p>10. Do you conduct research on a luxury fashion brand before shopping there?</p> <p>Is the brand image important for you? Why?</p> <p><i>Questions 11 – 14 will be asked if you define yourself as a customer of luxury brands.</i></p> <p><i>11. What do you think of high-end fashion and luxury brands?</i></p> <p><i>12. Do you agree that products with a high price indicate higher quality?</i></p> <p><i>13. What are your main motivations in purchasing luxury fashion items?</i></p> <p><i>14. Do you think that your culture has an influence on your purchasing behaviour?</i></p> <p>15. How would you describe your lifestyle?</p>

The first set of questions included in the survey allowed the researcher to gain background information on study participants. Thanks to these questions, the researcher was able to provide a description of the study participants in order to analyse data more effectively. The second set of questions allowed the researcher to understand the following:

1. To clarify whether the participants belonged to the client (customer) group or non-client (not customer) of luxury fashion brands.
2. To understand what the participants were likely to buy: luxury products, luxury products from a second-hand source, counterfeit (fake) products, or affordable fashion products from the ordinary shops.
3. The participant's attitudes towards high-end fashion and luxury brands.
4. To find out the participants' opinions about paying high prices for higher quality products.
5. To identify factors that motivated the participants to purchase garments from luxury brands.
6. To understand whether culture had an influence on the purchasing behaviour of the participants.
7. To learn about the participants' lifestyles and preferences in regard to purchasing behaviour.

Before the data collection procedure and interview sessions, the topic and primary goal of the study were determined, the research design was selected, and a particular type of interview was chosen as well. The researcher prepared and selected tools for the

proposed research study, including the composition of the interview plan and formulation of the appropriate list of questions for participants. Furthermore, instructions, as well as a consent form were developed along with the necessary tools for notetaking and data processing. In order to plan further actions and make some changes if required, the pilot interview was conducted. According to Kallio et al. (2016), a pilot interview contributes to the objectivity and validity of studies and makes the results more credible. This step gave an opportunity to check if there was a need to edit the questions, make changes to the instructions, analyse errors and inconsistencies that could arise during the trial interviews, and check the instructions prepared for participants. After a careful review of the documents and tools, the data collection stage started. There was a direct conversation between the interviewer (researcher) and the participants. The structure of communication and interview with the participants consisted of the following stages:

1. Firstly, the researcher provided an introduction to the conversation by establishing contact with the participant, informing the participant about the purposes of the research project and the conditions for its conduct, developing an attitude of cooperation as well as answering questions the participant could come up with during this stage.
2. Secondly, during the main phase of the interview, detailed research was carried out in accordance with the pre-developed plan prepared by the researcher.
3. Thirdly, by the end of the interview, the researcher expressed gratitude and appreciation to all the participants for their participation in the study.

According to the writings of Conrad and Schober (2021), it is evident that the success of the interview largely depends on the researcher, as well as on how friendly and interested the researcher is. The opening statement of the interview session should be short, reasonable, and confident. The message about the purpose of the study should be presented in a form that encourages the participant to take part in the survey. The interviewer's communication style should be generally neutral. Although during some interview sessions, the researcher was faced with the respondent's reluctance to answer a particular question, every participant was treated with respect. In such cases, the researcher returned to a previously raised topic at a later stage of the interview using a reformulated question. In order to maintain the naturalness of the interview conditions, the researcher strived to ask most questions from memory without resorting to her notes. There was no need to waste time studying the plan or remembering the following questions. This kind of interview structure helped the researcher maintain a professional setting so that the participants could not try to seize the initiative and turn the interview into a regular conversation.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

A nondisclosure agreement was signed between the researcher and the organisations (two private companies) located in Azerbaijan and South Korea. The consequences of violating the Non-Disclosure Agreement regulations would be severe, such as a monetary fine and legal proceedings. In accordance with the signed agreement, the identities and personal information of participants, as well as the names of the companies, were kept confidential. Results were analysed based on the data collected

during the interviews and interpreted with the use of descriptive context. This study was carried out between October 2023 and February 2024.

Before the actual data collection stage, every participant was given an interview consent form that had to be signed in order to take part in the study. The interview consent form ensures that the interviewees explicitly agree to be interviewed and understand how the information contained in their interview will be used. This document also ensures that the participant clearly understands the purpose of their involvement and that they agree to the conditions of the participation. After the researcher received the signed consent form testifying to the agreement for the participation, the data collection stage (interview session) would start. In addition, all the participants were allowed to keep a copy of the signed consent form.

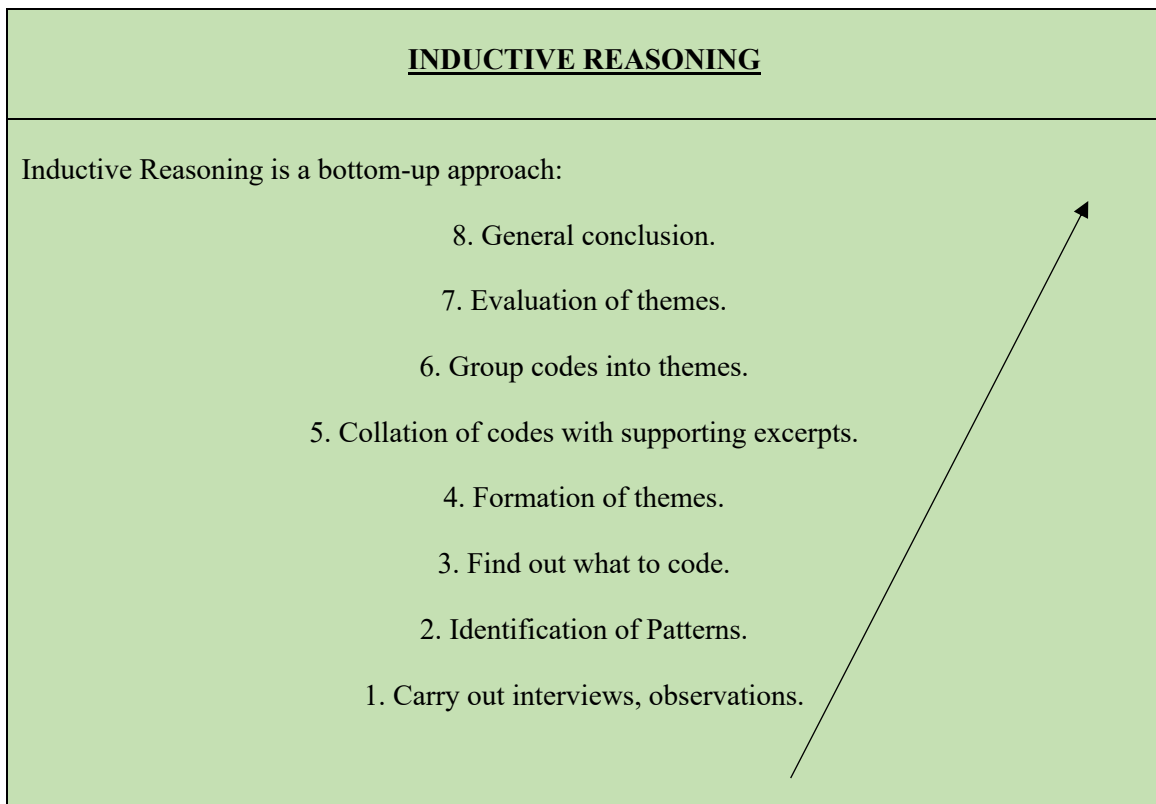
Since the present research study was cross-cultural, the data collection process consisted of two stages. At first, interviews were held with participants from the capital of Azerbaijan, Baku. After the completion of the first set of interviews, participants from the capital of South Korea, Seoul, were interviewed. The interviews from both cities were conducted in accordance with the scheduled sessions by video calls using FaceTime and KakaoTalk. KakaoTalk and FaceTime were selected as they were both free and readily available. During the interview, the researcher took notes with pen and paper since the audio recording was not allowed. After the interview sessions, all the participants received the interview informed consent form and debrief sheet by email. In accordance with regulations stated in the Non-Disclosure Agreement and for the purposes of

anonymity, interview notes, as well as any other information regarding participants, were terminated after the analysis of gathered data and its evaluation.

3.9 Data Analysis

To analyse and interpret data of the present research study, thematic analysis was used along with the inductive approach since it is a valuable and flexible method for qualitative research studies, as maintained by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Riger and Sigurvinsdottir (2016). The inductive approach can be characterised as a very straightforward process that starts with the data gathering that is required to conduct the study. The essence of the inductive approach is that gathered data should be analysed extensively so that the researcher can find patterns to provide a foundation that, in turn, could explain the themes derived from those patterns. There is a nice depiction of inductive reasoning shown below in Table 4.

Table 4 — Inductive Reasoning



According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a systematic method of dividing and organising rich data from qualitative research that involves assigning specific codes to individual observations and quotes to make it easier to find essential themes. As the name suggests, thematic analysis consists of finding themes. A theme is a description of the idea, practice, experience, or any other phenomena that are found in the data. It appears when findings related to it are repeated several times among the participants' responses or in the analysed sources, as mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis can be carried out in different ways. Choosing the best tool or method for this process depends on the following:

- Data.

- Context and limitations of the transition phase from data to analysis.
- Preferences of the researcher.

There are three common methods for conducting thematic analysis including:

- Use of special programs.
- Note-taking.
- Using affinity diagram techniques.

Now, it is crucial to describe the methods mentioned above in more detail. It is also important to provide an explanation for the method selected for conducting the thematic analysis that was used, in particular for the evaluation of the gathered data of this research project. So, starting with the use of special software programs method, it is important to mention that CAQDAS (Computer-Aided Qualitative-Data–Analysis software) is often used by researchers to analyse large volumes of qualitative data, as suggested by Frost (2008). Researchers upload transcripts and field notes and then systematically examine the text through a coding process. The program helps discover themes using various visualisation tools, such as word trees or word clouds, which allow the organisation of identified and coded data in a variety of ways. Following Frost (2008), the advantage of using special programs is that the analysis of data is carried out quite thoroughly. It is also possible to share the raw data and files containing the final results for cross-analysis. This method is popular among research projects in academic institutions. The disadvantages of special software programs include the fact that the process of using special programmes takes a lot of time since there is a large number of codes that need to be reduced into a smaller list. Also, this process can be rather

expensive and may not be suitable for all situations. In addition, it is pretty challenging to carry out analysis simultaneously with other people since sometimes special training is required on how to use the program before conducting the actual study.

The following method is an application of the affinity diagram technique. As stated by Plain (2007), data is segregated, divided physically or virtually, and reassembled into meaningful groups. This process continues until topics emerge on the physical or virtual board. Affinity diagram techniques have a number of advantages. Thanks to affinity diagrams, it is possible to work in a team as well as create themes in a more efficient and faster way (Plain 2007). This low-cost and flexible process also enables visualisation and continuous analysis of data. Nevertheless, it is a bit hard to consider the affinity diagram technique as a thorough process of data coding. Also, it is difficult to use this tool when the data is quite scattered or big.

Finally, it is essential to discuss the last note-taking method for conducting thematic analysis, which was used in this research. As stated by Muswazi and Nhamo (2013), it is quite common for researchers who conduct qualitative research to gather data through interviews by note-taking. Notes can be taken by the researcher during the data collection process. Note-taking is a form of thematic analysis that is based on manual annotation and highlighting of data (Muswazi and Nhamo 2013). As the interview process progresses, the researcher writes down emerging ideas, crucial information, and everything related to the experiences of participants. The only disadvantage of the note-taking method is that it is a laborious process, and it might be hard to document everything in detail. As a result, the note-taking method might not be considered as an

appropriate option for group interview sessions since it is pretty challenging to take notes during the interview when there is more than one person.

So, based on the explanation mentioned above, it is possible to present qualitative research studies as a constructive and interpretive examination of the topic of interest.

The next thing to discuss is how this study was analysed. The first step of the thematic analysis was to familiarise with the gathered data. The researcher read through the notes documented during the interview and actively observed meanings and patterns that appeared in the data. The second step was to create initial codes. Since the researcher had already familiarised herself with the data, she started to develop a set of initial codes that represented the meanings and patterns in the data. During the third step, the researcher decided what exactly to code by reading through her data again and identifying interesting excerpts. Finally, the researcher applied appropriate codes to the identified excerpts. The researcher applied the same codes to the excerpts with the same meaning and added new codes as they emerged. During step four, the researcher collated codes with supporting data and excerpts. All the excerpts associated with a particular code were brought together. This enabled the researcher to go through all the excerpts organised by codes and gain a deeper comprehension of every individual code that was created. This also helped the researcher to adjust and revise resembling codes. During the fifth step, the researcher grouped together all the excerpts associated with a particular code into a theme. Formed themes were nuanced and complex and gave meaningful details that were essential for the research study. During the sixth step, the researchers evaluated and revised the themes. Each theme had enough data and was distinct. The

boundaries of every single theme were articulated, and excerpts were carefully differentiated and placed in these themes. When several themes were similar to each other, the researcher merged them together. If a theme did not contribute to the overall analysis of the research study, it was removed because it was not relevant enough. As soon as all the themes were confidently determined, the researcher moved to the seventh step to write the final narrative. Writing the narrative was the final step during which the researcher reported the findings of the research study based on the gathered and already analysed data. At this stage, the researcher had a chance to communicate to her readers about the validity of the analysis by writing a coherent story based on the data collected and carefully scrutinised. It is also vitally important to note that throughout the paper, every claim made by the researcher was backed up with corresponding references and explanations. This narrative is more than just a simple description of the data since it includes the interpretive analysis of the researcher and arguments for the presented claims. During the thematic analysis, the researcher used pen and paper. In addition, below in Table 5 is a brief overview of the whole thematic analysis. All the steps taken during the thematic analysis were based on the recommendations proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), as shown in Figure 7 below.

Table 5 — Steps Taken for the Thematic Analysis

<u>STEPS TAKEN FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS</u>	
Step 1	Understand the gathered data.
Step 2	Creation of initial codes.
Step 3	Find out what to code.
Step 4	Collation of codes with supporting excerpts.
Step 5	Group codes into themes.
Step 6	Evaluate and revise themes.
Step 7	Write the narrative.

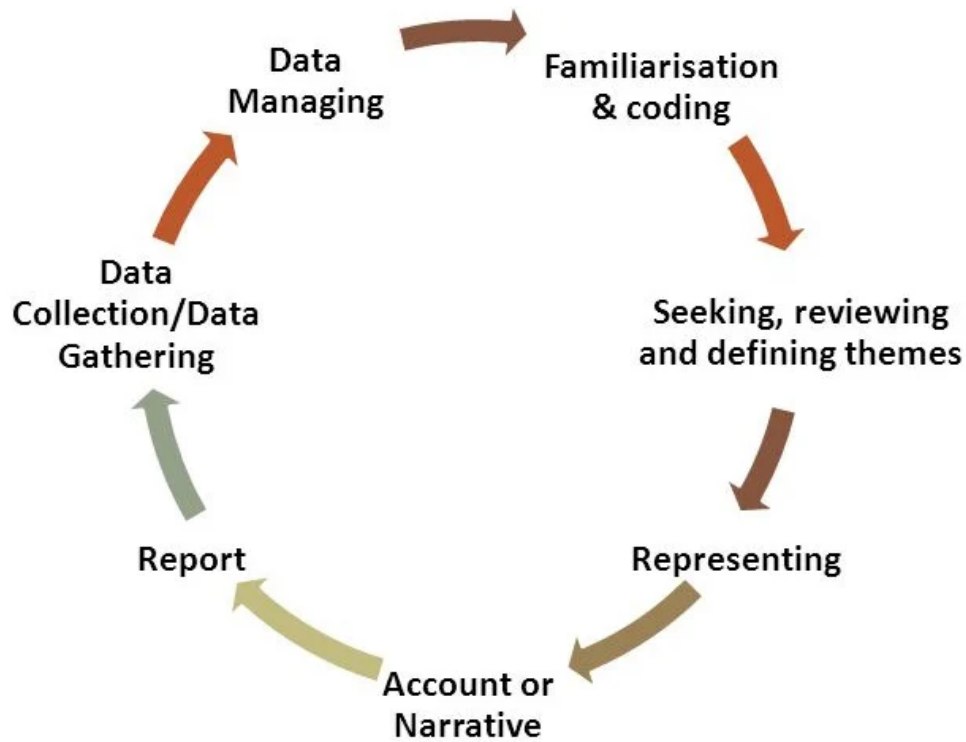


Figure 7: “Qualitative Vs Quantitative Research Methods & Data Analysis.”

(McLeod, S., 2017)

3.10 Research Design Limitations

Following McLeod (2017), there are several limitations of qualitative research that can be outlined. There is a brief overview of the disadvantages of qualitative research that is presented in Table 6 below. One of the downsides of this type of research design is that researchers usually select a small sample size because of the time and potential expenses. Another problem is the reliability and validity of this type of study. Since the researcher plays a vital role in the data collection process, it is hard and nearly beyond the bounds of possibility to replicate any events or conditions of qualitative research studies.

Also, it might be hard to generalise the outcome of qualitative research to a broader context.

Table 6 — Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

<u>DISADVANTAGES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</u>	
<u>Time and Resource constraints</u>	Time and Resource constraints are related to the comprehensive and prolonged data gathering and data evaluation.
<u>Risk of Bias</u>	Risk of Bias can lead to subjective or inaccurate interpretation of findings.
<u>Small Sample size</u>	Small Sample size can decrease validity and generalisability of study findings.
<u>Lack of Clarity</u>	Lack of Clarity can lead to unclear and confusing evaluation of research findings.

In summary, qualitative research studies require careful consideration and approach to the case since it is a challenging and time-consuming process that includes the collection, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative data.

3.11 Conclusion

In some cases, when the research study is conducted with the help of standardised surveys, quite often, people taking part in the survey (participants) would struggle and would not be able to clearly express their thoughts and explain their viewpoints. That is why, in this research project, qualitative research methods were preferred over

quantitative research methods. With qualitative research methods, it was possible to collect data with the help of semi-structured interview questions and open-ended questions and conduct a thematic analysis for the interpretation of the collected data. It was important to interview people in a more natural setting and friendly manner so that they could feel comfortable and give honest answers. The nature of the present research study is explanatory since the primary aim was to gain an understanding of people's attitudes towards luxury brand commodities from two different cultures.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the current study are presented in a descriptive manner based on the thematic analysis of the gathered data. Since the primary objective of the current research study was on the identification of factors associated with purchasing luxury brand commodities, a cross-cultural research study was carried out with the help of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions in Baku and Seoul. Taking note of the distance, the interviews were mainly conducted through digital platforms (in particular, Apple's FaceTime and South Korean KakaoTalk (카카오톡) applications were used for interviews via video calls).

However, eight of them were conducted in person as face-to-face interviews. A total of 24 participants were recruited for the study, with careful consideration given to ensure diversity and representation, and grouped into two categories: clients (consumers) and non-clients (those who were not customers) of luxury fashion brands. The client group consisted of seven participants, while the non-client group comprised five participants from each city involved in the study. Every interview conducted was documented by the researcher using pen and paper.

During the thematic analysis, gathered data were coded, and then the identified codes were put into the formed themes. Below, in Table 7, are represented the most frequent themes that were found by the end of the data evaluation.

Table 7 — Themes

<u>THEMES</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socioeconomic position• Negative associations• Culture• Fulfilment of needs and contentment• Hedonism• Psychological wellbeing

4.1 Results from Baku

In this section, the results of the non-client and client groups from Baku were discussed separately in accordance with the formed themes. It would be appropriate to mention that the results were in line with each other.

In the non-client group, there were two male and three female participants. All participants included in this group were ethnic Azerbaijanis. According to the interview results, it is possible to claim that people from Baku do not buy luxury fashion brand products because of socioeconomic factors, negative associations related to luxury, and their cultural background. Socioeconomic factors such as rivalry, labour intensity, differentiation, or discrimination of society according to social, religious, and national affiliations often contribute to changes in nearly all spheres of human life. These factors have a substantial impact on the life of a person since they cause and induce social

inequality, which, in turn, might be accompanied by physical and mental health problems.

When the researcher asked the participants in the non-client group about their attitudes towards luxury fashion brands, three of them reported that for them, luxury fashion is something beautiful; however, at the same time, it is unattainable and not necessary. These participants, who were university graduates (who had a bachelor's degree) and worked as full-time employees (with monthly salaries between \$1,500 and \$2500 with no extra source of income other than their salary), had a low-quality life. The other two participants who were university graduates (had a master's degree) and worked full-time (with monthly salaries between \$10,500 and \$20,000, with no extra source of income other than their salary) reported that that they perceived luxury brand products as a waste of money since they are impractical and useless. They also highlighted that regardless of their socioeconomic background, they believe that luxury products are incredibly overpriced. In addition, they stated that luxury fashion creates social inequality by raising injustice. Apart from social status and negative associations, it was found that culture has a significant impact on the overall life of people and their lifestyles. It was also found that people's attitudes towards luxury garments are also affected and formed by culture. So, representatives in the non-client group described their lifestyle as simple and modest. Consequently, they prefer to shop from ordinary shops and sometimes do not even pay attention to the brands from which they buy clothes.

Below are presented interesting perspectives in the form of relatively brief quotes of the five participants from the non-client group about their views on the consumption of

luxury brand commodities. All the participants in the non-client group gave their permission to be quoted directly in the informed consent form.

Quotes derived from the interview sessions:

1. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I believe that despite the fact that there are people in Azerbaijan who can easily buy expensive clothes, the majority of the population cannot afford them. People in our city are deeply immersed in their personal problems, and everyone thinks about how to support and feed their families. For example, as an engineer with many years of professional experience, I receive a salary lower than what is expected. In addition to this, due to some inconstancy and changes occurring at the state level, highly qualified specialists like me do not know at what point they will be laid off. So, economic instability affects every single person within the country. I buy my clothes from unknown shops during discount seasons. I would be happy to have a chance and buy expensive clothes for myself and my family, but I cannot because my salary is not enough. I must pay for my kids’ education and their expenses.”*

2. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I respect people who prefer and buy expensive clothes, but I belong to the category of people who prefer an ordinary lifestyle. I don’t*

particularly appreciate spending money on expensive clothes even though I have enough money and can afford them. I like to dress beautifully, and I like it when people take care of themselves and wear clothes that decorate them. It's important to me to feel comfortable in what I wear, and I try to choose clothes that are both beautiful and practical. I prefer to buy my clothes from British local shops. You can find many simple and convenient things there. As you probably understand, I'm not particularly eager to spend a lot of money on clothes, because I believe that there are more important things in life that are worth spending money on, for example, purchasing real estate, travelling, limited edition books, gifts for the family, and kitchen utensils. The latter is extremely important because I really love cooking for my children and husband. Taking care of your family is very important and one of the principles of our culture."

3. The interviewer (researcher): *"Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?"*

The interviewee (participant): *"Of course, I would be happy if I could wear clothes from expensive brands; however, for me, it is something unattainable. I am a recent university graduate and work as a full-time clerk now. It was extremely hard for me to find a job. Considering the average salary level in Baku, one can clearly see that most of the people living here belong to the lower class and working class. So, I think that it is pretty clear that representatives of these classes do not care about their clothes and do not even dare to think about something other than their problems and debts and families. I consider myself middle class, but I feel that it is extremely difficult for me to*

save money and live a normal life. My salary does not cover my expenses, and I cannot enjoy my work. I even had to give up on my hobbies. I can't play tennis and swim anymore because it's so expensive! That is why I would really like to move from this country. I want to enjoy my work and get the salary I deserve. At the moment, I am trying to earn as much money as possible to provide for my parents and help them. When it comes to clothes, I try to buy everything at a good price and only at a discount. I prefer clothes from Turkish manufacturers in the mid-price category."

4. The interviewer (researcher): *"Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?"*

The interviewee (participant): *"Honestly, I do not understand the concept of high-end fashion. I have never bought any expensive clothes. I prefer to buy clothes at a medium price or sometimes even below the average price. I have to save money before I buy something. Maybe you have heard that Azerbaijanian people are struggling because of the high cost of living. Maybe it is easier for people who belong to the upper class. Nevertheless, for many people, it is tough because they do not live but try to survive day to day."*

5. The interviewer (researcher): *"Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?"*

The interviewee (participant): *"I do not like to spend money on expensive stuff. At the beginning of our interview, I told you that I buy clothes from the local shops in*

Turkey. My extended family lives there, and I can buy everything I need whenever I visit Turkey to see them. Turkish brands produce high-quality leather goods and clothes and sell their products at reasonable prices. I come from a well-off family, but my parents and I never spend money on expensive clothes, shoes, or accessories. Maybe it is something cultural... I think that we... I mean, native Azerbaijanis are very conservative and come from traditional families. And, in this case, representatives of these families have normal lives and do not waste money on useless things.”

Next, the researcher discussed the results obtained from the client group. In the client group, there were three male and four female participants. All participants included in this group were ethnic Azerbaijanis. Based on the interview results, it is possible to say that people purchase luxury fashion brand products because of a number of factors associated with the fulfilment of personal needs and contentment, hedonism (self-indulgence and pleasure-seeking, self-satisfaction) and the accentuation of socioeconomic status and class affiliation. Consequently, the accentuation of socioeconomic status and class affiliation were among the factors that were closely related to conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous consumption is the need to consume goods and display one's possessions in order to show one's class superiority. It is almost impossible to eradicate conspicuous consumption since it is closely related to economic and social factors and fundamental human values. Moreover, eradication of conspicuous consumption should not be expected since it would not be economically beneficial for many corporations. On the other hand, it was revealed that fulfilment of personal needs

and satisfaction, as well as self-indulgence and pleasure-seeking, which are closely related to psychology, have a strong correlation with the consumption of luxury goods.

During the interview, three out of seven participants reported that they perceive luxury brand products as an instrument that helps them demonstrate their wealth and social status. These individuals were university graduates (who had a bachelor's degree) and were employed full-time (with monthly salaries between \$2,500 and \$3500, with no extra source of income other than their salary). The other four participants who were university graduates (and had a master's and doctorate degree) and were directors and high-ranking executives (with monthly salaries and incomes between \$5,000 and \$7000 and \$10,000 - \$20,000; some had no extra source of income other than their salary, and some had extra sources of income) reported that they tend to buy high-end products in order to fulfil their needs and expectations such as to possess high-quality products from brands they love and to get pleasure. According to the results, most of the participants attended luxury boutiques or bought something online nearly every three to four months, and some of them only a few times a year. Considering culture, there was not any strong cultural impact on people's purchasing behaviour of luxury goods in Baku.

Below are presented interesting perspectives in the form of relatively brief quotes of the seven participants from the client group about their views on the consumption of luxury brand commodities. All the participants in the client group gave their permission to be quoted directly in the interview consent form.

Quotes derived from the interview sessions:

1. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I think it’s quite normal when people spend a lot of money on expensive clothes from famous fashion brands. I love saving up money on expensive things, even though it is hard. It is important for me that people pay attention to me and admire me. When I see that people pay attention to me, I feel better, and I feel some satisfaction because people around me would classify me as a rich person.”*

2. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“Buying expensive clothes is very important. Every person wants to be beautiful and to be admired. Well, at least that’s what I think. It seems to me that when I buy expensive things, I become more confident in myself. In addition, I like to receive compliments from the people around me, especially from my husband.”*

3. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“Purchasing expensive couture things is my weakness. I can’t resist buying expensive clothes from luxury boutiques, although I have*

some financial problems. Maybe it can sound strange, but the fact that I can possess something from a famous luxury fashion brand makes me happy.”

4. The interviewer (researcher): *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“Well, I believe that if a person has enough money, then it is quite normal to buy clothes from famous fashion brands. My favourite luxury fashion brand is Burberry. I can find everything I need there. Plus, it is a great option for men who prefer clothes in muted colours.”*

5. The interviewer (researcher): *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“Each person has their views on this topic. Since I earn enough, I can afford to buy expensive things and clothes. I love to buy clothes from luxury brands because they are unique and help me highlight my individuality.”*

6. The interviewer (researcher): *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I think that if a person wants and can buy expensive clothes, then this is perfectly fine. I prefer luxury brands because, for me, high*

fashion is an art. Another thing is that I prefer high-quality fabrics and materials that will not negatively affect my health.”

7. The interviewer (researcher): *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I think that there is nothing wrong if you are a customer of a luxury fashion brand. As a man, one of my responsibilities is to make my wife happy. More than for myself, I tend to buy clothes and gifts from luxury fashion brands for my wife. I love making my sweetheart happy.”*

4.2 Results from Seoul

In this section, the results of the non-client and client groups from Seoul were discussed separately based on the formed themes. Based on the gathered and analysed data, the results obtained were in line with each other.

There were two female and three male participants in the non-client group. All participants included in this group were ethnic Koreans. According to the interview results, it is possible to claim that people from Seoul do not buy luxury fashion brand products because of the same reasons as people in Baku, including socioeconomic factors, negative associations related to luxury, and their cultural environment. As mentioned previously, socioeconomic components such as rivalry, labour intensity, sociocultural divergence, or discrimination based on cultural, religious, and national connections frequently lead to transformations in almost every aspect of people’s lives.

These components have a significant influence on an individual's life since they contribute to and precipitate inequality within society, which can lead to mental and physical health problems.

When the researcher asked the participants in the non-client group about their attitudes towards luxury fashion brands, three of them reported that luxury fashion is beautiful, however, unattainable, and the other two participants said that luxury goods are a waste of money since they are highly expensive. The three participants in this group were university graduates (who had a bachelor's and master's degree) and worked as full-time employees (with monthly salaries between \$2,500 and \$3500, with no extra source of income other than their salary) and had financial problems and low salaries. The other two participants who were university graduates (had a master's and doctoral degree) and worked full-time (with monthly salaries between \$5,500 and \$7000; had extra sources of income other than their salary) stated that they consider expensive designer products as an unnecessary expense since they are impractical and overpriced. They also commented that despite their socioeconomic status, they believe that luxury goods are highly expensive. Furthermore, in contrast to the findings obtained from Baku, participants from South Korea did not perceive luxury as something that might lead to social inequality. They reported that the problem is deeply rooted in hierarchy and that it is a hierarchy that raises injustice in Korean society today. Aside from social status, socio-economic problems, and negative connections, culture has been shown to have a substantial influence on people's general lives and habits, as well as their perception of luxury consumption. Based on the interview reports, it was also discovered that only

representatives of the upper class can buy something from luxury fashion brands since they have enough money. As a result, people from the non-client group preferred to shop at local and online shops that offered reasonable prices.

Below are presented interesting perspectives in the form of relatively brief quotes of the five participants from the non-client group about their views on the consumption of luxury brand commodities. All the participants in the non-client group gave their permission to be quoted directly in the interview consent form.

Quotes derived from the interview sessions:

1. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I like beautiful clothes from fashion brands but can’t afford to buy them. You may have heard that life in Seoul is very expensive. Almost half of my salary goes toward paying bills and rent. Since I’m getting married soon and buying an apartment, I need to be extremely careful and not spend money on unnecessary things, at least for now.”*

2. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“Luxury goods are charming and lovely. I have friends who buy expensive bags and clothes from such brands as Celine and Max Mara, and they suit them very well. Nevertheless, I can’t afford it because of my income.”*

3. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“Although I live alone, I barely have enough money for my expenses. For this reason, I don’t even think about luxury goods. I usually buy clothes from Dongdaemun.”*

4. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I am a minimalist and live with a limited number of clothes. I have been practising minimalism for more than ten years now. I am satisfied and happy because I have learned how to survive with only essential things, and it is easier for me to live in Seoul since I have reduced unnecessary purchases of things I don’t even use. I prefer clothes from local Korean shops.”*

5. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“It depends on the person. I believe that it is possible to buy something from mid-priced designer brands and look good. This is what I actually do.”*

Next, the researcher discussed the results obtained from the client group. In the client group, there were two male and five female participants. All participants included

in this group were ethnic Koreans (one of them had dual citizenship, Korean and British). Based on the interview results, it is possible to say that people purchase luxury fashion brand products because of a number of factors associated with the fulfilment of personal needs and contentment, pleasure-seeking, the accentuation of socioeconomic status (class affiliation), culture, and psychological well-being. Consequently, the accentuation of socioeconomic status and class affiliation were among the factors that had a significant effect on the luxury consumption behaviour of people not only in Baku but in Seoul as well. However, according to the results, culture has a greater impact on the buying behaviour of people living in Seoul than in Baku. Moreover, it was revealed that fulfilment of personal needs and satisfaction, self-indulgence as well as pleasure-seeking, which are closely related to psychology, have a strong correlation with the consumption of luxury goods.

Two participants in this group reported that they perceive luxury brand products as an instrument that helps them demonstrate their wealth and social status. These individuals were university graduates (who had master's and doctoral degrees) and were employed full-time (with monthly salaries between \$5,500 and \$7,000, with no extra source of income other than their salary). The other four participants who were university graduates (and had master's and doctorate degrees) and were directors and high-ranking executives (with monthly salaries and incomes between \$10,000 and \$20,000; some had no extra source of income other than their salary, and some had extra sources of income) reported that they tend to buy high-end products in order to fulfil their needs and satisfaction (such as to possess high-quality products from brands they love), to get

pleasure (prioritising of pleasure over other values), and to maintain psychological wellbeing. According to the results, most of the participants attended luxury boutiques or bought something online nearly every two to three months, and some of them a few times a year when they needed to buy something. Considering culture, there was a cultural influence on people's purchasing behaviour of luxury goods.

Below are presented interesting perspectives in the form of relatively brief quotes of the seven participants from the client group about their views on the consumption of luxury brand commodities. All the participants in the client group gave their permission to be quoted directly in the interview consent form.

Quotes derived from the interview sessions:

1. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I am a director and owner of this company, so I have to look good. I spend money on many things from luxury fashion brands, and I also spend money on watches. Every year when I visit Italy with my wife, I buy watches. It is some sort of investment for me. I also have watches that were made specifically for me. Also, I have a big collection of shoes. I bought some of them here in Korea, and the rest of my collection is from Italy.”*

2. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I can confidently define myself as a client of many luxury fashion boutiques. Also, shopping helps me feel better. A beautiful Hermès or Chanel handbag always lifts my spirit.”*

3. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I am a very creative person, and I love fashion. For me, high-end fashion is the epitome of elegance and sophistication. Also, I don’t like to wear ordinary and unremarkable clothes like most people. This is why I prefer expensive clothes; they help me stand out from the rest.”*

4. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I think that luxury fashion brands are worth the money. I buy a lot of puffer jackets from Dior and Louis Vuitton because these brands produce high-quality and durable clothes. I also love investing in bags, especially the ones from Gucci.”*

5. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“Since I was young, I love wearing silk scarves and ruffle shirts. I buy only expensive clothes from foreign luxury brands because I prefer high-quality and stylish clothes.”*

6. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I prefer wearing designer clothes because they make me feel happy and look wealthy.”*

7. **The interviewer (researcher):** *“Could you please briefly, once again, before we end our interview, express your opinion regarding the purchase of high-end fashion items?”*

The interviewee (participant): *“I buy clothes from famous fashion brands because they help me look more handsome. I also like it when people look at me and admire me and my status.”*

4.3 Outline of the Key Findings

According to the findings received with the help of the detailed analysis of gathered data, it was found that people in Baku purchase luxury brand goods in order to fulfil their needs and expectations, such as a desire to possess high-quality clothes and for

the sake of pleasure-seeking. In addition, it was also found that people who are not customers of luxury brands do not buy expensive clothes mainly because of their socioeconomic position, negative attitudes towards luxury fashion, and their cultural background.

Based on the outcome obtained after the second detailed analysis of gathered data from Seoul, it was determined that people in Seoul, like in Baku, buy luxury brand products to fulfil their expectations, such as a desire to possess high-quality clothes and because of indulgent experiences. In addition to that, based on the results, it is possible to claim that people also buy luxury goods in order to maintain their mental health. Moreover, culture was among the factors affecting people's relationship towards luxury consumption. Taking note of their hierarchical principles of life in Seoul, which were relevant in the past as well as now, representatives of the upper class and upper-middle class believe that it is perfectly acceptable to possess luxury things (or a must to have), including clothes, and there is nothing extraordinary or surprising.

The results of the present cross-cultural study were in line with each other. However, there were slight differences between the attitudes of people from Baku and Seoul towards purchasing luxury brand commodities as well as their perception of this concept. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that this study has several limitations. The sample size of the present research study was small. As a result, it is hard to generalise present research findings and apply them to other contexts even though data saturation was achieved. Another disadvantage of the present study was the research design. Since qualitative studies require time and resources, it was hard to include more participants,

considering the timeframe of the current research project. Since the leading role in this research played the researcher, there is also a potential risk of bias related to inaccurate interpretation and evaluation of study findings.

4.4 Conclusion

The goals set within the framework of this project were achieved as the researcher provided answers to the primary research question as well as to the complementary set of questions. In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the current research study, the researcher clearly defined the problem and provided enough evidence to conduct this research. It was also crucial to break down the objectives of the research into smaller chunks to make it easier to achieve them and prepare a detailed plan of the steps that should be taken to accomplish the project. The objectives helped the researcher choose the methodology and also served as a map showing how to gather and analyse data. Thanks to this approach, the researcher managed to attain the aim of her project and successfully complete the research study.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of Aims and Major Findings

The primary aim of the present research study was the identification of factors that play a decisive role in forming attitudes towards luxury brand commodities and consumption of luxury in Baku and Seoul. The researcher conducted a cross-cultural research study with the help of qualitative research methodology and, semi-structured interviews, and open-ended questions. After the data collection process, the researcher examined and analysed the obtained data using thematic analysis. After the evaluation of the outcome, the researcher presented the study findings in a descriptive form.

Considering the outcome of the present research study, people in Baku and Seoul purchase garments from luxury brands in order to display their wealth and social status in a pretentious manner, satisfy their needs and requirements, search for pleasure (hedonistic experience), and maintain a positive state of mind. Also, based on the results, people who purchase luxury brand items are not only representatives of the upper and upper-middle class but also the working and middle class. Additionally, the most critical factors that affect people's purchasing behaviour are the fulfilment of needs and expectations, maintenance of a positive state of mind, and a search for extraordinary pleasure. In accordance with the outcome of the present research study, culture has a substantial impact on people and their lifestyles as well as other aspects of their lives, including their consumption behaviour of luxury fashion goods in Baku and Seoul. Since there were two groups of people who were customers and non-customers of luxury

fashion boutiques, the researcher also identified factors that influenced the non-customer group of people. So, according to the results of the present research study, people in Seoul and Baku do not buy luxury fashion goods because of their socioeconomic background, negative attitudes towards luxury, and cultural beliefs. Moreover, one of the factors that had the most impact on the non-customer group affecting their relationship and attitudes towards consumption of luxury was economic and social conditions since participants frequently brought up arguments related to their social status.

It is important to note that the outcome of the current study was in line with previous research studies. The researcher found that, as suggested by Dubois and Duquesne (1993) and Dolfsma (2000), people tend to buy luxury products to display their wealth and to associate with people of a particular consumer group by creating a deeper self-connection. Thus, people enjoy the fact that they belong to an elite social class and are part of a selective group of people who possess luxury items. Also, the results of the present study supported the claims made by Hudderd and Pandelaere (2012) concerning luxury consumption since most people buy luxury for the sake of an indulgent experience. In addition, taking into account the present study findings, Phau and Prendergast (2000) were correct in their assumptions concerning Asian countries and their diversity. This can also be explained by people's relationship towards luxury consumption in Asia, which is different from that of Western countries. As mentioned by Dubois and Laurent (1996), one of the main factors playing an important role in purchasing luxury products in European and American countries is rarity. Furthermore, in accordance with the results of the current study and report by Fragassi (2022),

representatives of Asian countries always equate the purchase of luxury goods with long-term investments. Consequently, this means that the results of the present study were in line with the findings of the study conducted by Amatulli and Guido (2012), who suggested that people's purchasing behaviour towards luxury is ambivalent and were in contrast to the study findings of Becker et al. (2018). So, luxury consumption has a "public aim" and "private aim", and it turned out that it can be more personal. Based on the current study findings, the majority of people prefer to buy luxury fashion garments because of their discrete and individual lifestyle and their willingness to spend money on themselves for their own sake, but not for public approval, as outlined by Tsai (2005). Lastly, the present study results showed that one of the factors influencing purchasing behaviour towards luxury, which is the fulfilment of needs, is also connected to hedonism since people who buy luxury goods expect to experience pleasure and enjoyment. Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) also suggested that there is a link between internalised luxury and hedonism. Another study carried out by Fionda and Moore (2009) noted that there is also an impact of culture on the consumption behaviour of luxury goods.

In summary, it is possible to conclude that the identified factors influencing the purchasing behaviour of people in regard to upscale products are also interrelated with one another.

5.2 Summary of the Prominent Factors

Among the most prominent factors that have an effect on the purchasing of luxury brand commodities are the socioeconomic background of people, their desire to fulfil their needs and expectations, and their search for pleasure. In order to provide a more

detailed clarification and explain the influence of the factors mentioned above on the consumer behaviour of humans towards luxury brand products as well as their overall state, the researcher discussed these factors from a psychological point of view.

The drastic change in socioeconomic conditions of any country leads to a wide range of negative consequences, such as a breakdown of the adaptive capabilities of a person, and instigates a stage of emotional exhaustion. As a result, an individual is at high risk of developing a mental illness. As maintained by Santiago and colleagues (2011), factors that have a negative impact on the human psyche might lead to the disruption of the activity of people's nervous system and manifest the development of physical as well as mental problems such as emotional instability in economically disadvantaged families (limited opportunities and low standards of living). Therefore, as suggested by Ackerman et al. (1999), it is possible to conclude that there is a strong correlation between the psychological well-being of a person and socioeconomic factors such as low income. Although it might be hard to approach and find a solution to this problem because of its complexity, it should be noted that it is pretty manageable. One of the possible solutions might be the development of national programmes aimed at reducing stress-causing elements such as unemployment and low wages. The solution to these issues will definitely stabilise the present situation. It will, in turn, also improve the overall quality of mental health of the population.

The following important factor is people's willingness to fulfil their needs and expectations (or fulfilment of needs). People need to understand their needs and take note of them. Unfulfilled needs are one of the most common causes of internal and external

conflicts, insecurities and worries, and lack of happiness and harmony in the lives of people. To live a full life, it is necessary to feel, understand, and fulfil personal needs. According to Staub (2004), Abraham Maslow proposed that human behaviour is based on a hierarchy of needs or, as it is often referred to, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. As stated by Staub (2004), in his writings, Maslow formulated and put forward the basic principles of his theory. Maslow believed that human needs, in particular the state of their partial as well as complete unfulfillment, serve as the driving force for motivation. In order to fulfil a need, an individual should always stay motivated. Moreover, as noted by Staub (2004), Maslow also suggested that all needs are positioned in a strict hierarchy, and satisfaction of needs from each new level is possible only if the previous need is satisfied, albeit not entirely. Maslow identified five essential needs: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Staub 2004). A calm and orderly life, a stable existence, permanent employment, and the absence of worries and problems related to the most essential needs of a person. According to Maslow, if people constantly live in anticipation of danger, although their physiological needs are fulfilled, it means that they need to take action in order to get rid of their feelings of anxiety because these negative feelings and emotions might have an adverse effect on their mental state (Staub 2004). Nevertheless, it is essential to note that according to the study conducted by Gambrel and Cianci (2003), something that is regarded as relevant in one culture might not be as necessary in another culture. This study shows that there can be numerous differences between Western and Asian nations, including people's attitudes regarding different topics, including even the concept of luxury.

The third crucial factor that has an impact on people's buying behaviour towards upscale goods is hedonism. After the evaluation of the current study findings, the researcher came to the conclusion that hedonism was one of the underlying reasons that played an essential role in people's attitudes towards luxury consumption. So, what is hedonism? As mentioned earlier, hedonism is an ancient concept (Bolles 2014). This concept means contentment and pleasure in the ethics of the ancient Greek philosophy of the Cyrenaics (O'Keefe 2002). Hedonism was the basis of the teachings that recognised pleasure as the meaning of life - not only on the physical but also on the spiritual level. According to Sigmund Freud (2015), the pleasure principle is a fundamental concept of classical psychoanalysis. This principle is based on the idea that the purpose of any mental activity is the search for pleasure and the avoidance of displeasure. This idea is based on the fact that there is a certain amount of energy in the psyche and that an increase in the level of energy (or tension) created by drives causes unpleasure, and the removal of tension causes pleasure. Excess energy felt as displeasure usually motivates the individual to take action, which, in essence, means to take action in order to live. The pleasure principle regulates the need to recreate, through action or fantasy, any situation that would bring satisfaction through the removal of tension. In the psychological aspect, it is also assumed that people strive to satisfy various needs, which is tantamount to receiving pleasure and to elimination of excessive tension, usually accompanied by displeasure. At the same time, considering assumptions by Freud (2015), in certain situations, the tension created by any type of desire increases the feeling of pleasure. Freud (2015) came to the conclusion that the relationship between tension from drives

and pleasure-unpleasure is not as simple as he initially believed and that the rhythm and speed of accumulation and discharge can determine the subjective experience of pleasure or displeasure. Consequently, getting pleasure from buying upscale items entirely depends on the degree of desire an individual experiences when planning to get what they strive for and hope to receive.

To conclude, happiness might be considered a universal goal for each individual and all people regardless of their cultural background and ethnicity. However, based on the person's cultural background, their standards of happiness and goals can be different from one another. Nevertheless, in order to achieve these goals and discover the state of joy and experience pleasure, people take action to achieve these goals with the help of opportunities and motivations they have. As a result, something that is pleasurable for one person might not be so depending on the individual and their goals. However, although people are different, they have something in common. What brings people together is their desire to experience happiness and pleasure. In this case, a nice testimony might be the findings of the current study that show that even though factors affecting people's purchasing behaviour of luxury fashion items are different, in the end, luxury products make people experience pleasure and contentment.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations

The present research study had some advantages as well as several limitations. One of the strengths of the study was that it was the first cross-cultural study conducted in Baku and Seoul. As was mentioned and explained earlier in the methodology chapter, qualitative interviews were an excellent way to collect comprehensive information. The

researcher decided to employ this method, in contrast to other research methods, because it helped her to examine the current topic of the research in much more depth. It was very important for the researcher to get information from the participants in their own words based on their experiences and perspectives. So, there was no need for the participants to try to fit into any other perspectives given (such as fixed choice or selected response items) because the main focus was on their personal views. Furthermore, qualitative interviews were an ideal choice for this research project since interviews are designed to obtain accurate information about participants. In particular, because the objective of the present research topic was related to psychological phenomena, semi-structured interviews served as a great data collection instrument. Although the sample size of the present research study was relatively small, it is crucial to highlight the importance of reaching data saturation to address this limitation. Through a rigorous series of interviews, the researcher was able to achieve data saturation, signifying the collection of a wide-ranging and comprehensive set of data.

Apart from the numerous advantages, it is essential to acknowledge that this study had a few limitations. One of the primary limitations was the relatively small sample size, which could potentially impact the generalisability and reliability of the study's findings. Additionally, it is known that the result of the current research mainly depended on the participants' potential to share their experiences and thoughts correctly and ethically regarding luxury consumption. Moreover, since the researcher played the main role in this study, there is a risk of subjective evaluation of the outcome of the present research study. Also, carrying out interviews was a very work-intensive and emotionally

challenging process for the researcher. Thus, all these potential drawbacks could affect the overall validity of the current study. So, it might be hard to generalise the outcome of the present qualitative research study to a broader context.

In closing, it is crucial to note that the present cross-cultural approach definitely gave a piece of valuable and in-depth information concerning the factors playing an important role in purchasing luxury brand commodities in Baku and Seoul. Also, based on the findings of the present research study, the researcher pointed out possible directions for further research investigations.

CHAPTER VI:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of the present cross-cultural research study, there are two possible recommendations for future studies. First of all, in order to bring something new to the academic world, researchers should continue examining this topic. It would be great to conduct new cross-cultural research to compare the attitudes of representatives of the upper class and upper-middle class towards luxury using a cross-cultural approach. Since many studies have been conducted in countries other than Asia, it is essential to concentrate on Asian countries. For example, it would be interesting to compare an Asian country such as Japan with a European country such as Scotland to find differences between them in regard to the concept of luxury. The rationale for exclusively selecting individuals from the upper class and upper-middle class is rooted in the understanding and underpinned by the evidence that people, particularly those from the middle class and lower middle class, often pursue luxury with the intention and desire to showcase and attract the attention of people around them. Meanwhile, people from the upper class and upper-middle class perceive fashion in a completely different way; they usually buy things for their own personal sake and prefer a quiet luxury lifestyle. This study will give an opportunity to investigate what a serene luxury lifestyle is and the importance of old-money aesthetics.

The second recommendation concerns the effects of luxury on the human body and mind. It would be interesting to find out if there are any effects of luxury on the

mental state of a person as well as the body. It will be beneficial to know if luxury has an impact on brain activity as well as on the self-esteem of a person. In addition, it would be great to understand if there is an impact of luxury on the body in terms of posture and breathing. Moreover, it is necessary to understand if luxury can improve the mental well-being of a person and if there are any gender differences. Researchers can conduct several statistical tests, such as the Chi-square test and independent t-test, to test this. In the case of a cross-cultural study, researchers can use One-way ANOVAs and post hoc Bonferroni tests to find out any ethnic or cultural differences.

6.2 Conclusion

Luxury is a multidimensional term often associated with wealth, authority, and exclusivity, but it also attracts criticism for its seeming wastefulness and non-essentiality. This contrast is especially visible in the context of luxury consumerism among Asian countries. The rapid economic expansion in these Asian countries has resulted in the emergence of a new class of affluent customers eager to show off their wealth through luxury items. However, this sudden increase in luxury consumption has provoked intense discussions about its cultural and social implications, complicating the debate and turning the term luxury into a complex concept. Thus, further research should be conducted in order to provide some insights into the contradictory topic of luxury and its influence on people.

REFERENCES

- Ackerman, B.P., Kogos, J., Youngstrom, E., Schoff, K. and Izard, C., 1999. Family instability and the problem behaviors of children from economically disadvantaged families. *Developmental psychology*, 35(1), p.258.
- Adhabi, E. and Anozie, C.B., 2017. Literature review for the type of interview in qualitative research. *International Journal of Education*, 9(3), pp.86-97.
- Alshenqeeti, H., 2014. Interviewing as a data collection method: A critical review. *English linguistics research*, 3(1), pp.39-45.
- Amatulli, C. and Guido, G., 2012. Externalised vs. internalised consumption of luxury goods: Propositions and implications for luxury retail marketing. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 22(2), pp.189-207.
- Bahm, A.J., 1993. *Axiology: The science of values* (Vol. 2). Rodopi.
- Baines, P., Fill, C. and Rosengren, S., 2017. *Marketing*. Oxford University Press.
- Barnes, R. and Eicher, J.B., 1992. *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts*. New York: St.
- Bastos, W. and Levy, S.J., 2012. A history of the concept of branding: practice and theory. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 4(3), pp.347-368.
- Becker, K., Lee, J.W. and Nobre, H.M., 2018. The concept of luxury brands and the relationship between consumer and luxury brands. *Kip Becker, Jung Wan Lee, Helena M. Nobre/Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 5(3), pp.51-63.
- Bergemann, D. and Bonatti, A., 2011. Targeting in advertising markets: implications for offline versus online media. *The RAND Journal of Economics*, 42(3), pp.417-443.
- Bolles, R.C., 2014. Hedonism. In *Hedonics of Taste* (pp. 1-13). Psychology Press.

- Braudel, F., 1981. *The structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*. London: Fontana.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101.
- Breward, C., 1994. Femininity and Consumption: The Problem of the Late Nineteenth-Century Fashion Journal. *Journal of Design History*, 7(2), pp.71-89.
- Brislin, R.W., 1976. Comparative research methodology: Cross-cultural studies. *International journal of psychology*, 11(3), pp.215-229.
- Catry, B., 2003. The great pretenders: the magic of luxury goods. *Business strategy review*, 14(3), pp.10-17.
- Christian Dior (2023) “JIMIN's surprise-filled Dior Men show day.” Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F48kxpHZMOw> (Accessed 2 March 2024)
- Conrad, F.G. and Schober, M.F., 2021. Clarifying question meaning in standardized interviews can improve data quality even though wording may change: a review of the evidence. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24(2), pp.203-226.
- Dolfsma, W., 2000. Life and times of the Veblen effect. *History of Economic Ideas*, 8(3), pp.61-82.
- Domzal, T. and Unger, L., 1987. Emerging positioning strategies in global marketing. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 4(4), pp.23-37.
- Dubois, B. and Duquesne, P., 1993. The market for luxury goods: Income versus culture. *European Journal of marketing*, 27(1), pp.35-44.
- Dubois, B. and Paternault, C., 1995. Observations: Understanding the world of international luxury brands: The “dream formula.”. *Journal of Advertising research*, 35(4), pp. 69–76.

- Dubois, B. and Laurent, G., 1996. Le luxe par-delà les frontières: une étude exploratoire dans douze pays. *Décisions Marketing*, 9, pp.35-43.
- Entwistle, J., 2015. *The fashioned body: Fashion, dress and modern social theory*, 2nd edn., Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Fionda, A.M. and Moore, C.M., 2009. The anatomy of the luxury fashion brand. *Journal of brand Management*, 16, pp.347-363.
- Fisher-Buttinger, C. and Vallaster, C., 2008. Brand ambassadors: Strategic diplomats or tactical promoters?. In *Marketing metaphors and metamorphosis* (pp. 132-145). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Fragassi, S. (2022) *When Can Luxury Goods Be a Wise Investment?* Available at: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/luxury-goods-wise-investment-165919206.html> (Accessed: 6 October 2022)
- Freud, S., 2015. Beyond the pleasure principle. *Psychoanalysis and History*, 17(2), pp.151-204.
- Frost, J., 2008. Combining approaches to qualitative data analysis: synthesising the mechanical (CAQDAS) with the thematic (a voice-centred relational approach). *Methodological Innovations Online*, 3(1), pp.25-37.
- Gambrel, P.A. and Cianci, R., 2003. Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Does it apply in a collectivist culture. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 8(2), p.143.
- Ganbold, S. (2022) *Luxury goods market in the Asia-Pacific region - statistics & facts*, Available at: <https://www.statista.com/topics/8454/luxury-goods-market-in-the-asia-pacific-region/> (Accessed: 6th October 2022)
- Grady, M.P., 1998. *Qualitative and action research: A practitioner handbook*. Phi Delta Kappa International.

- Gray, P.S., Williamson, J.B., Karp, D.A. and Dalphin, J.R., 2007. *The research imagination: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative methods*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hagtvedt, H. and Patrick, V.M., 2009. The broad embrace of luxury: Hedonic potential as a driver of brand extendibility. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19(4), pp.608-618.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I. and Bailey, A., 2020. *Qualitative research methods*. Sage.
- Hudders, L. and Pandelaere, M., 2012. Indulging the self positive consequences of luxury consumption. In *Luxury marketing: A challenge for theory and practice* (pp. 119-137). Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag.
- Huntley, J.A. and Stephen, F.H., 1995. Unfair competition, consumer deception, and brand copying: an economic perspective. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 15(4), pp.443-462.
- Husic, M. and Cacic, M., 2009. Luxury consumption factors. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: an international journal*, 13(2), pp.231-245.
- Husić-Mehmedović, M., Ostapenko, N. and Cacic, M., 2011. Luxury consumption in emerging markets. In *The changing nature of doing business in transition economies* (pp. 68-86). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Jackson, S., 2007. Market share is not enough: why strategic market positioning works. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 28(1), pp.18-25.
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.M., Johnson, M. and Kangasniemi, M., 2016. Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 72(12), pp.2954-2965.
- Kapferer, J.N., 1997. Managing luxury brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 4(4), pp.251–259.

- Kapferer, J. N., 1998. Why are we seduced by luxury brands? *Journal of Brand Management*, 6(1), pp.44–49.
- Kim, J. 2023. *Koreans' per capita spending on luxury goods highest in world* [The Korea Times] 15 January. Available at:
https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/tech/2024/02/129_343625.html [Accessed: 3 March 2024].
- Kotler, P., 2012. *Kotler on marketing*. Simon and Schuster.
- Kotler, P., Jain, D. and Maesincee, S., 2002. *Marketing moves: a new approach to profits, growth, and renewal*. Harvard Business Press.
- Lee, Y. S. (2023) *South Koreans are the world's biggest spenders on luxury goods*, Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/01/13/south-koreans-are-the-worlds-biggest-spenders-on-luxury-goods.html> (Accessed: 25th January 2023).
- Legard, R., Keegan, J. and Ward, K., 2003. In-depth interviews. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*, 6(1), pp.138-169.
- Liu, Y. (2022). Marketing Strategy of Chanel Advertisement in Chinese Market. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 664, pp.1286–1290.
- Louis Vuitton (2024) “Horizons Never End.” Available at:
<https://eu.louisvuitton.com/eng-e1/stories/horizon-campaign-jackson-wang>
(Accessed 12 March 2024)
- McLeod, S. (2017). *Qualitative Vs Quantitative Research Methods & Data Analysis*. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html>
(Accessed: 6 October 2024)
- Moorman, C. and Rust, R.T., 1999. The role of marketing. *Journal of marketing*, 63(4_suppl1), pp.180-197.

- Morgan, D.L., 2013. *Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: A pragmatic approach*. Sage publications.
- Muswazi, M. and Nhamo, E., 2013. Note taking: A lesson for novice qualitative researchers. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 2(3), pp.13-17.
- Nisa, C. and Pramesti, D.A., 2020, May. How Do Effective Digital Marketing and Brand Ambassador Stimulate Purchase Intention Today?. In *1st Borobudur International Symposium on Humanities, Economics and Social Sciences (BIS-HESS 2019)* (pp. 365-367). Atlantis Press.
- Ogilvy, D., 1971. How to create advertising that sells. *Persuasion in marketing*, p.53.
- O’Keefe, T., 2002. The cyrenaics on pleasure, happiness, and future-concern. *Phronesis*, 47(4), pp.395-416.
- Palinkas, L.A., Horwitz, S.M., Green, C.A., Wisdom, J.P., Duan, N. and Hoagwood, K., 2015. Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and policy in mental health and mental health services research*, 42, pp.533-544.
- Park, M.H.J. and Johnston, T.C., 2005. The Essence of Marketing Strategy. In *Allied Academies International Conference. Academy of Marketing Studies. Proceedings* (Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 35). Jordan Whitney Enterprises, Inc.
- Phau, I. and Prendergast, G., 2000. Consuming luxury brands: the relevance of the ‘rarity principle’. *Journal of brand Management*, 8, pp.122-138.
- Piercy, N.F. and Morgan, N.A., 1994. The marketing planning process: behavioral problems compared to analytical techniques in explaining marketing plan credibility. *Journal of Business Research*, 29(3), pp.167-178.
- Plain, C., 2007. Build an affinity for KJ method. *Quality Progress*, 40(3), p.88.

- Polhemus, T. and Procter, L., 1978. Fashion & anti-fashion: anthropology of clothing and adornment. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Riger, S. and Sigurvinsdottir, R., 2016. Thematic analysis. *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*, pp.33-41.
- Roberts, R.E., 2020. Qualitative Interview Questions: Guidance for Novice Researchers. *Qualitative Report*, 25(9).
- Rooney, J.A., 1995. Branding: a trend for today and tomorrow. *Journal of product & brand management*, 4(4), pp.48-55.
- Santiago, C.D., Wadsworth, M.E. and Stump, J., 2011. Socioeconomic status, neighborhood disadvantage, and poverty-related stress: Prospective effects on psychological syndromes among diverse low-income families. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 32(2), pp.218-230.
- Silk, A.J., 2006. *What is marketing?*. Harvard Business Press.
- Staub, E., 2004. BASIC HUMAN NEEDS. *The social psychology of good and evil*, p.51.
- Stone, M., 2007. *Fundamentals of marketing*. Routledge.
- Taylor, M.C., 2005. Interviewing. *Qualitative research in health care*, pp.39-55.
- Tiffany & Co. (2021) “*ABOUT LOVE*” Available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kG9-gWZUIEo> (Accessed 2 March 2024)
- Tiffany & Co. (2024) “*About Love.*” Available at:
<https://www.tiffany.com/stories/guide/beyonce-and-jay-z-about-love/> (Accessed 2 March 2024)
- Tsai, S.P., 2005. Impact of personal orientation on luxury-brand purchase value: An international investigation. *International Journal of Market Research*, 47(4), pp.427-452.

- Urde, M. and Koch, C., 2014. Market and brand-oriented schools of positioning. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 23(7), pp.478-490.
- Usman, O. and Aryani, Y., 2019. The effect of brand ambassador, brand image, product quality, and price on purchase intention. *Brand Image, Product Quality, and Price on Purchase Intention (December 31, 2019)*.
- Vinerean, S. and Opreana, A., 2019. Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands on Instagram. *Expert Journal of Marketing*, 7(2), pp.144-152.
- Wang, J. (2021) 7 May 2021. Available at:
<https://twitter.com/JacksonWang852/status/1390655008278863877> (Accessed 12 March 2024)
- Wiedmann, K.P., Hennigs, N. and Siebels, A., 2007. Measuring consumers' luxury value perception: a cross-cultural framework. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 2007, p.1-23.
- Wilson, E., 2003. *Adorned in dreams: Fashion and modernity*. Rutgers University Press.
- World Dolce&Gabbana (2024) “*The new Dolce&Gabbana Spring Summer 2024 Campaign starring Mun KaYoung and Doyoung.*” Available at:
<https://world.dolcegabbana.com/news/dolce-gabbana-spring-summer-2024-collection-adv-campaign-mun-kayoung-doyoung> (Accessed 2 March 2024)
- Xu, Q., 2020, November. A study of the marketing strategies of high-end luxury brands: The case of Hermes. In *2020 2nd International Conference on Economic Management and Cultural Industry (ICEMCI 2020)* (pp. 462-467). Atlantis Press.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SURVEY COVER LETTER

Hello!

You are holding a questionnaire containing a set of questions you should answer in order to take part in this research study. It will take you about 30 minutes to complete. In the first part, put a check or simply circle the option that best suits you. In the second part of the questionnaire, you will see questions that the researcher will ask you during the interview. Hope you will enjoy it.

Once again, thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT



Interview Consent Form

Research project title: *In view of psychology, what are the precipitating factors FOR purchasing luxury brand commodities in Baku and Seoul?*

Research investigator: *Fatima Gasimzade*

The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research require that interviewees explicitly agree to be interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you, therefore, read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will not be recorded; notes will be taken during the session to jot down the key points.
- The researcher will review the notes taken during the interview in order to correct any factual errors.

- The notes taken during the interview will be analysed by Fatima Gasimzade as research investigator.
- Access to the interview notes will be limited to Fatima Gasimzade.
- Any summary, interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed.
- The actual notes retrieved from the interview will be destroyed by the end of the analysis of data.
- Any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval.

Quotation Agreement

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

	I wish to review the notes, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly.
	I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.
	I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.

All or part of the content of your interview may be used:

- In academic papers, policy papers or news articles.
- At academic events, spoken presentations.

By signing this form, I agree that:

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time.
2. The interview notes or extracts from it may be used as described above.
3. I have read the Information sheet.
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation.
5. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

PARTICIPANT'S NAME

Participant's Signature

Date

RESEARCHERS SIGNATURE

DATE

Contact Information:

This research will be carried out based on the review and approval by the Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva University Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Name of researcher: Miss Fatima Gasimzade

Tel: +90 541 901 94 75

E-mail: fatimagasimzade@mail.ru

What if I have concerns about this research?

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how, it is being conducted, you can contact SSBM by email at contact@ssbm.ch.

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other, please specify:

2. What is your age?

3. What is your ethnicity? Please specify below.

4. What is your level of education?

Less than a high school diploma

High school degree or equivalent

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate

5. What is your current employment status?

Employed full-time

Employed part-time

Self-Employed

Entrepreneur

C- Level managers

Director

Student

Other

6. What is your monthly income?

\$500 - \$1,000	\$5,500 - \$7,000
\$1,500 - \$2500	\$7,500 - \$10,000
\$2,500 - \$3,500	\$10,500 - \$20,000
\$3,500 - \$5,000	\$20,500 and more

Prefer not to say

7. Do you have income from sources other than salary?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Part 2: Luxury Fashion

8. Would you describe yourself as a client of luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Hermes, Fendi, etc.? Do you own luxury fashion items? How often do you attend and buy anything from luxury boutiques?

If your answer is **NO**,

What do you think of luxury fashion brands? And why don't you buy luxury stuff?

9. Are you more likely to buy:

An expensive luxury fashion product from the brand? Why?

An affordable luxury fashion product from a second-hand source? Why?

A counterfeit (fake) product? Why?

An affordable fashion product from an ordinary shop? Why?

Questions 10 – 14 will be asked if you define yourself as a customer of luxury brands.

10. Do you conduct research on a luxury fashion brand before shopping there? Is the brand image important to you? Why?

11. What do you think of high-end fashion and luxury brands?

12. Do you agree that products with a high price indicate higher quality?

13. What are your main motivations for purchasing luxury fashion items?

14. Do you think that your culture has an influence on your purchasing behaviour?

15. How would you describe your lifestyle? Is there any impact of your culture on the way you live and your lifestyle?

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Participant, hello!

I am a student researcher studying at the Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva University.

I am interested in luxury fashion and people's attitude toward purchasing upscale goods.

Would you like to participate in my research project?

If you are interested, please answer the following question by simply typing YES or NO, depending on your answer and reply to this email for further information.

Question:

Would you identify yourself as a customer of luxury fashion brands?

Thank you.

I appreciate your time.

Regards, Fatima Gasimzade

APPENDIX E
DEBRIEF SHEET

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for your voluntary participation in this research project. You gave me a great chance to investigate factors related to the purchase of luxury brand commodities in Baku/Seoul. Additionally, I had an opportunity to examine how luxury fashion goods make you feel and your attitudes toward high-end fashion products.

The main goal of this research was to investigate factors related to the purchase of luxury fashion brand commodities. All the information gathered was retained confidential during the analysis of data, and successfully terminated after the results were obtained. In case you want to get the results, you will be given access to or a copy of the research as soon as I successfully defend my thesis.

I would like to thank you once again for your participation.

Thank you.

Regards, Fatima Gasimzade

APPENDIX F

Table 1 — The four Ps of Marketing

<u>THE FOUR Ps OF MARKETING</u>	
<p>5. <u>Product:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Customer needs</i>• <i>Innovative design</i>• <i>Quality assurance</i>• <i>Branding</i>• <i>Production lifecycle</i>	<p>6. <u>Price</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Cost Analysis</i>• <i>Competitor Pricing</i>• <i>Perceived Value</i>• <i>Pricing Strategy</i>• <i>Price Adjustments</i>
<p>7. <u>Place</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Distribution Channels</i>• <i>Market Coverage</i>• <i>Inventory Management</i>• <i>Strategic Partnerships</i>• <i>Online Presence</i>	<p>8. <u>Promotion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Advertising Campaigns</i>• <i>Public Relations</i>• <i>Digital Marketing</i>• <i>Sales Promotions</i>• <i>Targeted Messaging</i>

APPENDIX G

Table 2 — Eligibility Criteria

<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>EXCLUSION CRITERIA</u>
1. People from Azerbaijan and South Korea (only native Azerbaijanis and Koreans). People with dual citizenship.	1. Representatives from other nationalities (people who are not native Koreans or Azerbaijanis).
2. People aged 18 and over/adults.	2. People under the age of 18.
3. People who are customers of luxury fashion brands.	—
4. People who are not customers (non-customers) of luxury fashion brands.	—
5. Participants who are representatives of different sociodemographic backgrounds.	—

APPENDIX H

Table 3 — The Interview Questions

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Part 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your gender? 2. What is your age? 3. What is your ethnicity? 4. What is your level of education? 5. What is your current employment status? 6. What is your monthly income? 7. Do you have income from sources other than salary?

Part 2: Luxury Fashion

8. Would you describe yourself as a client of luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Hermes, Fendi, etc.? Do you own luxury fashion items? How often do you attend and buy anything from luxury boutiques?

If your answer is *NO*, what do you think of luxury fashion brands?

And why don't you buy luxury brand products?

9. Are you more likely to buy:

- An expensive luxury fashion product from the brand? Why?
- An affordable luxury fashion product from a second-hand source? Why?
- A counterfeit (fake) product? Why?
- An affordable fashion product from the ordinary shop? Why?

10. Do you conduct research on a luxury fashion brand before shopping there?

Is the brand image important for you? Why?

Questions 11 – 14 will be asked if you define yourself as a customer of luxury brands.

11. What do you think of high-end fashion and luxury brands?

12. Do you agree that products with a high price indicate higher quality?

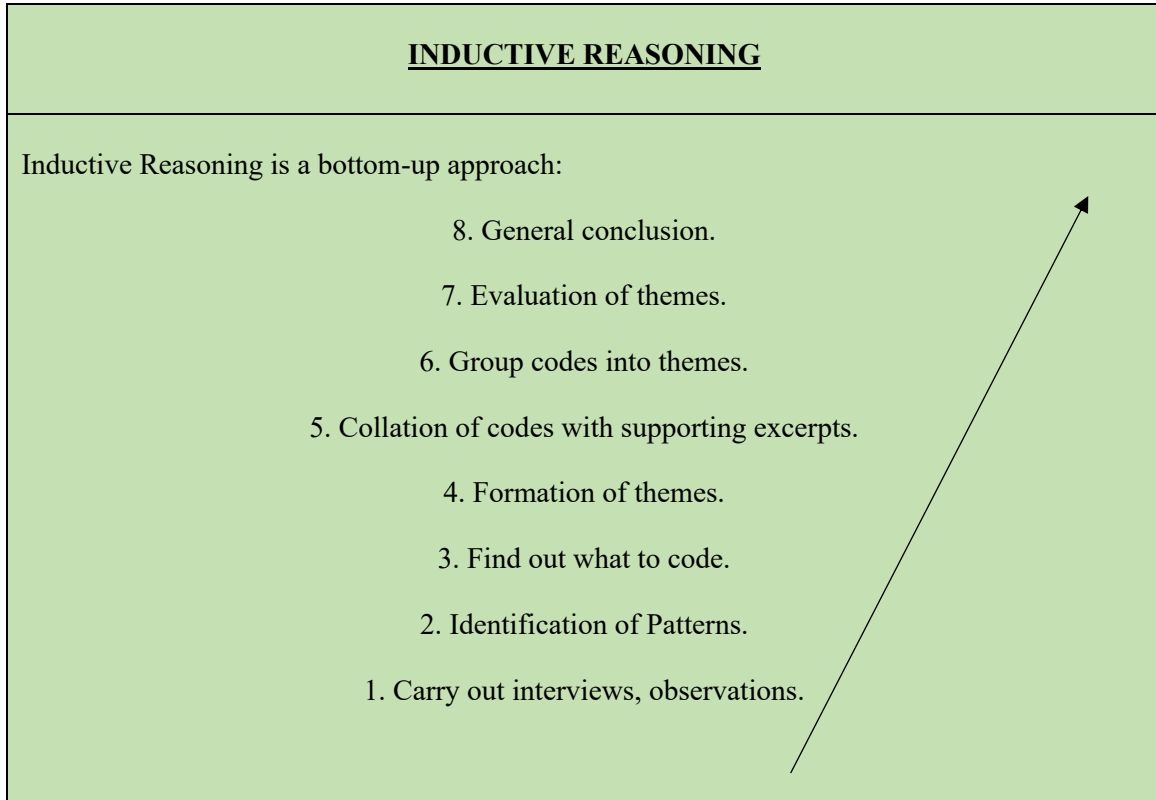
13. What are your main motivations in purchasing luxury fashion items?

14. Do you think that your culture has an influence on your purchasing behaviour?

15. How would you describe your lifestyle?

APPENDIX I

Table 4 — Inductive Reasoning



APPENDIX J

Table 5 — Steps Taken for the Thematic Analysis

<u>STEPS TAKEN FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS</u>	
Step 1	Understand the gathered data.
Step 2	Creation of initial codes.
Step 3	Find out what to code.
Step 4	Collation of codes with supporting excerpts.
Step 5	Group codes into themes.
Step 6	Evaluate and revise themes.
Step 7	Write the narrative.

APPENDIX K

Table 6 — Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

<u>DISADVANTAGES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</u>	
<u>Time and Resource constraints</u>	Time and Resource constraints are related to the comprehensive and prolonged data gathering and data evaluation.
<u>Risk of Bias</u>	Risk of Bias can lead to subjective or inaccurate interpretation of findings.
<u>Small Sample size</u>	Small Sample size can decrease validity and generalisability of study findings.
<u>Lack of Clarity</u>	Lack of Clarity can lead to unclear and confusing evaluation of research findings.

APPENDIX L

Table 7 — Themes

<u>THEMES</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socioeconomic position• Negative associations• Culture• Fulfilment of needs and contentment• Hedonism• Psychological wellbeing