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Luxury fashion purchase intention differences across cultural dimensions

Department of International Business

Bachelor's thesis

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Abstract

Luxuries have been present since the antiquity and since then certain consumers have been willing to pay a premium price on items that may not be viewed as necessities for survival. As globalization and digitalization have expanded the accessibility of luxury brands, consumers now engage with luxury fashion for increasingly diverse reasons that go beyond simple notions of wealth and exclusivity. Understanding the psychological and cultural factors that drive luxury purchase intentions is therefore essential for explaining how and why individuals want to purchase expensive luxury fashion items.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate luxury purchase intention and the differences found across cultural dimensions. To help approach the aim, two subquestions were formed: *What makes a consumer buy luxury fashion?* and *How does culture influence luxury fashion purchase intention?* To address these subquestions, the thesis first examines general consumer behaviour model by Kotler and Armstrong (2017), followed by luxury-specific models by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and Wiedmann et al. (2007). These models together with supporting articles were used in order to create an understanding on the determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention. The second subquestion was investigated through Hofstede's cultural dimensions model, which enabled the categorization of cultural differences in luxury purchase intention across cultures found in the literature.

The findings indicate that luxury fashion purchase intention is driven by three categories of determinants: (1) financial and functional values, (2) the expressive role of luxury, i.e. personality antecedents and (3) the instrumental role of luxury, i.e. the socio-psychological antecedents. Cultural comparisons did not reveal many generalisable differences between high and low scores on the cultural dimensions. The most influential cultural dimension seems to be power distance, which influenced the status consumption and normative influence. Other findings from literature were mixed or suggested the antecedents of luxury fashion purchase intention to be universal and thus be important across cultures.

Overall, the findings in this thesis highlight that luxury fashion purchase intention formation is multidimensional and complex construct and that there are potential variations in the motivations and values linked to luxury fashion purchase intention across cultures. The findings can be beneficial for luxury brands when deciding on whether to standardise or localise marketing materials in culturally different nations.

Keywords: luxury fashion, consumer behaviour, purchase intention, cultural dimensions, psychological drivers, status consumption.

Kandidaatintutkielma

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Tiivistelmä

Luksustuotteita on kulutettu jo antiikin ajoista lähtien, ja siitä lähtien tietyt kuluttajat ovat olleet valmiita maksamaan korkeampaa hintaa tuotteista, joita ei voida pitää eloonjäämisen kannalta välttämättöminä. Globalisaation ja digitalisaation myötä luksusbrendien saatavuus on kasvanut ja kuluttajat hankkivat luksustuotteita yhä monipuolisemmista syistä, jotka ylittävät perinteiset käsitykset varakkuudesta tai eksklusiivisuudesta. Psykologisten ja kulttuuristen taustatekijöiden ymmärtäminen on olennaista, jotta voidaan ymmärtää, miten ja miksi yksilöt haluavat ostaa kalliita luksusmuotituotteita.

Tämän kandidaatintutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella luksusmuodin ostoaietta ja kulttuuristen ulottuvuuksien välisiä eroja. Tämän saavuttamiseksi muodostettiin kaksi osaongelmaa: *Mikä saa kuluttajan haluamaan ostaa luksusmuotia?* sekä *Miten kulttuuri vaikuttaa luksusmuodin ostoaikeisiin?* Ensimmäistä osaongelmaa lähestyttiin Kotlerin ja Armstrongin (2017) yleisen kuluttajakäyttäytymisen mallin avulla, jonka jälkeen tarkasteltiin kahta luksuskulutukseen keskittynyttä mallia (Vigneron & Johnson 2004; Wiedmann et al. 2007). Näitä malleja sekä kirjallisuutta hyödyntämällä muodostettiin kokonaiskuva luksusmuodin ostoaikeen taustatekijöistä. Toista osaongelmaa tarkasteltiin Hofsteden kulttuurin dimensioiden mallin avulla, mikä mahdollisti kirjallisuudessa esiin tulleiden luksusmuodin ostoaikeeseen liittyvien kulttuuristen erojen kategorisoinnin ja vertailun.

Löydökset osoittavat, että luksusmuodin ostoaietta ohjaavat tekijät voidaan jakaa kolmeen ryhmään: (1) taloudelliset ja funktionaaliset arvot, (2) luksuksen ilmaisuvoimainen rooli eli persoonallisuuteen liittyvät tekijät sekä (3) luksuksen välineellinen rooli eli sosiaalipsykologiset tekijät. Kulttuurien väliset vertailut eivät paljastaneet monia yleistettävissä olevia eroja kulttuuristen ulottuvuuksien korkeiden ja matalien pistemäärien välillä. Vaikuttavimmaksi kulttuuriseksi ulottuvuudeksi osoittautui valtaetäisyys, joka vaikutti erityisesti statukseen perustuvaan kuluttamiseen sekä normatiiviseen vaikutukseen. Muut kirjallisuudesta löytyneet havainnot olivat pitkälti ristiriitaisia tai viittasivat siihen, että luksusmuodin ostoaikeen taustatekijät ovat suurelta osin universaaleja ja siten merkityksellisiä eri kulttuureissa.

Yhteenvetona löydökset korostavat, että luksusmuodin ostoaikeen muodostuminen on moniulotteinen ja monimutkainen ilmiö. Eri kulttuureissa saattaa kuitenkin esiintyä vaihtelua motivaatiotekijöissä sekä arvoissa, jotka ohjaavat luksusmuodin ostoaietta. Löydökset voivat tarjota hyödyllistä tietoa luksusbrendeille, kun he tekevät päätöksiä, tulisiko markkinointiviestintää yhtenäistää vai mukauttaa eri kulttuurien mukaisesti.

Avainsanat: luksusmuoti, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, ostoaiheet, kulttuuridimensiot, psykologiset tekijät, statuksen tavoittelu.

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1 Introduction

“Luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends.” – Coco Chanel

As captured by Coco Chanel, luxuries are not necessities in the sense that they do not exist to meet basic needs. Luxuries fulfil more complex psychological needs, like expressing oneself or differentiating oneself from others. The English word “luxury” derives from the Latin term “luxus”, meaning “soft or extravagant living, (over-)indulgence” and “sumptuousness, luxuriousness and opulence” (Oxford Latin Dictionary 2012, 1160). The concept of luxury has been present since antiquity (Dubois et al. 2005, 115) and historically, luxury has been associated with the ruling and aristocratic class, old money and royalty (Wong & Ahuvia 1998, 424), making it an exclusive status symbol that only a few could afford.

Even nowadays, luxury goods are usually significantly pricier than non-luxury alternatives (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 486). Yet, price alone does not make an item luxury. Literature defines a product as luxury based on the product attributes, perceived benefits from the purchase and perceptions of significant reference groups, culture or society (Bharti et al. 2022, 270). The extent to which the product exhibits functional and symbolic values to the consumer is what differentiates luxury products from other products (Bharti et al. 2022, 270). Luxury goods differ from ordinary goods through the symbolic meanings and psychological value they offer to consumers.

Luxuries can be found in many different product categories, including fashion products, perfumes and cosmetics, wines and spirits and watches and jewels (Fionda & Moore 2009, 348). This thesis focuses on luxury fashion category, including couture, ready-to-wear and accessories. Many foundational studies in luxury research use fashion items as the primary product category for investigation (Park et al. 2008, 252; Yim et al. 2011, 371; Choo et al. 2012, 86; Wu et al. 2015, 161), making luxury fashion an internal part of luxury research due to its inherent visibility and deep connection to identity (Park et al. 2008, 245).

While luxury fashion is consumed worldwide, its popularity varies across cultures. In 2024, the largest consumer groups were American (28%), Chinese (21%) and European (20%) (Statista Market Insights 2025). These consumer groups represent varying cultural profiles according to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model (Hofstede 2010), which can influence consumer purchasing behaviour, since culture has been proven to influence consumer behaviour and purchase intention (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 140). As luxury fashion brands operate in global markets, it is essential

to understand cultural differences for effective marketing, positioning and product development (Naumova et al. 2019, 1).

Before cultural differences in luxury fashion purchase intention can be compared, it is essential to understand *why* consumers want to purchase luxury fashion items and what factors drive these purchases. To explain consumer behaviour, this thesis applies Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 139) buyer behaviour model, emphasizing the factors influencing purchase intention formation. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of personal and socio-psychological antecedents in shaping luxury purchase intention (i.e. Vigneron & Johnson 2004; Shukla 2011; Bharti et al. 2022). Studies suggest that luxury products can satisfy consumers' psychological needs on top of functional needs, and it seems that these psychological benefits are the main factor distinguishing luxury products from non-luxury products (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 486; Hennigs et al. 2012, 1019; Aw et al. 2021, 1). This being, the focus in this thesis is more on the psychological factors driving luxury fashion purchase intention.

This thesis investigates the antecedents of luxury fashion purchase intention by addressing the following two subquestions:

- (1) What makes a consumer want to purchase luxury fashion items?
- (2) How does culture influence luxury fashion purchase intention?

In this thesis we first introduce the general consumer behaviour model by Kotler and Armstrong (2017, 139) and go through the general factors affecting consumer behaviour and thus purchase intention. Then we investigate what is included in the luxury *buyer's black box*, i.e. the *why* behind the luxury fashion purchase. We combine findings in the literature about the personality and socio-psychological antecedents affecting luxury fashion purchase intention. After gaining an understanding on what makes a consumer want to purchase luxury fashion items, we investigate what cultural differences the literature has found in the antecedents of luxury fashion purchase intention. We use Hofstede's cultural dimension model to categorize cultures and thus making it possible to compare them.

2 What makes a consumer want to purchase luxury fashion?

Before we can compare luxury fashion purchase intention in different cultures, we need to first understand what makes a consumer want to purchase luxury fashion. In this chapter, we first introduce general and luxury-specific consumer behaviour models. After that, the findings from literature on what drives luxury fashion consumption is discussed through three perspectives: the financial and functional value of luxury, the expressive role of luxury and the instrumental role of luxury. These perspectives try to combine varying findings from literature into somewhat simple categories. What should be noted is that as the factors behind luxury fashion purchase intention are not usually fully conscious and can vary greatly between individuals, these categories are conceptual and not fully comprehensive.

2.1 Consumer behaviour models

2.1.1 General model of consumer behaviour

The investigation to *What makes a consumer want to purchase luxury fashion?* starts from the general consumer behaviour model and how purchase intention (PI) is formed. As a general consumer behaviour model, we use Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 139) model of consumer behaviour (Figure 1), since it is a simple enough model suiting the scope of the thesis.

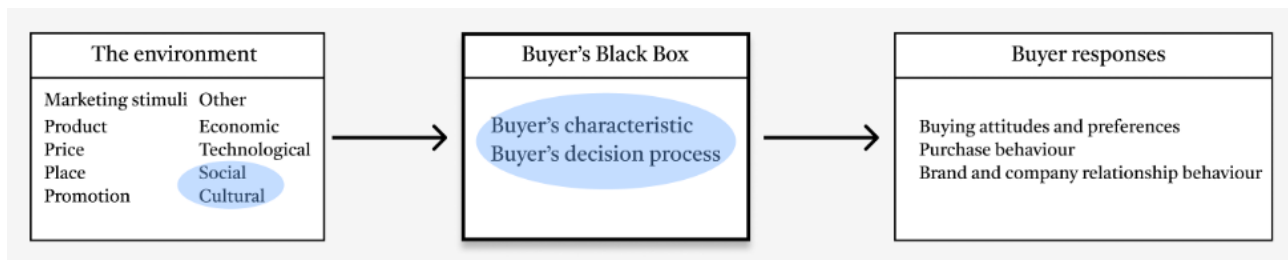


Figure 1. The model of buyer behaviour. Adapted from Kotler & Armstrong (2017, 139).

Consumer behaviour can be defined as “the behaviour that consumers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs” (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 139). *Purchase intention* (PI) then again is a dimension of consumer behaviour formed along decision-making process where consumers recognize a need, find information about it, evaluate alternatives and make a purchase decision (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 155). A key question in successful marketing and business is to understand the *why* behind consumer behaviour and *how* the consumers respond to different environmental stimuli. Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 139) model of buyer behaviour (Figure 1) tries to capture the complexity of

consumer behaviour, where environmental stimuli meet *buyer's black box* and are turned into buyer responses. The buyer's characteristics influence how they perceive and react to the stimuli and buyer's decision process then again affects their behaviour (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 139). Marketers can alter the marketing stimuli, but they have no control over the buyer's black box. This is why it is important to understand what are the buyer's characteristics that affect their buying decisions and how the buyers respond to different environmental stimuli, so that the marketers can alter marketing stimuli accordingly.

To understand the *why* behind luxury fashion purchase intention, we need to shed light into the *buyer's black box*, i.e. buyer's characteristics and decision process (Figure 1). The buyer's black box is an individual mixture of personal and psychological characteristics of the consumer that are further influenced by the social and cultural environment. When forming purchase intention consumers are affected by these different internal and external factors (Figure 2).

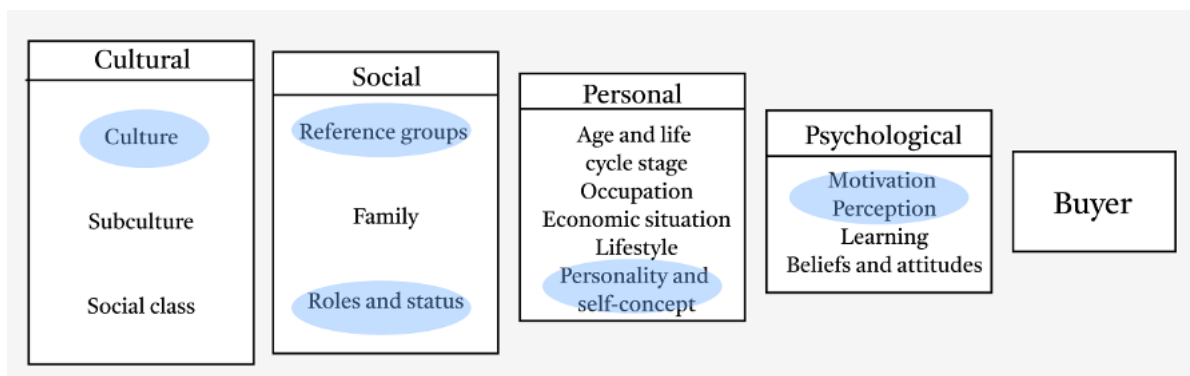


Figure 2. Factors influencing consumer behaviour. Adapted from Kotler & Armstrong (2017, 140).

Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 140) model is formed with general consumer in mind. In this thesis, the focus is on luxury consumers, and since studies have found that especially personal and socio-psychological factors to shape luxury purchase intention (Vigneron & Johnson 2004; Shukla 2011; Bharti et al. 2022), these factors are highlighted in Figure 2. Chapter 2.2 goes through findings from literature about the factors influencing luxury consumer purchase intention. Also, culture has been found to affect luxury purchase intention (i.e. Bharti et al. 2022), and these effects are investigated later in Chapter 3.

Even though Kotler and Armstrong's (2017) model is useful to understanding basic consumer behaviour and how purchase intention is formed, it is not specific enough to understand the unique symbolic and psychological dimensions that make consumers want to buy expensive luxury products. Thus, literature has created multiple luxury consumer behaviour models and frameworks that try to capture the different factors that what make consumers want to buy luxury. These models

often extend traditional consumer behaviour theories by incorporating psychological and social factors that are unique to the luxury context. Next, we briefly introduce some of these models and frameworks.

2.1.2 Luxury-specific consumer behaviour models

Luxury consumption differs from non-luxury consumption in that it satisfies not only material needs but also socio-psychological needs to a greater degree than non-luxury (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 286; Wiedmann et al. 2007, 2). To better capture these complex motives, several frameworks have been developed that focus specifically on the drivers of luxury purchase intention. Among the most influential are the models proposed by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and Wiedmann et al. (2007).

One key research topic when trying to understand what makes consumers buy luxury fashion and what happens inside the buyer's black box is the values and motives linked to luxury consumption. One of the frameworks that try to capture the values linked to luxury purchases is the Brand Luxury Index (BLI) developed by **Vigneron and Johnson** (2004, 488). The BLI (Figure 3) identifies five key dimensions that shape consumers' perceptions of luxury brands: conspicuous, unique, social, emotional and quality value.

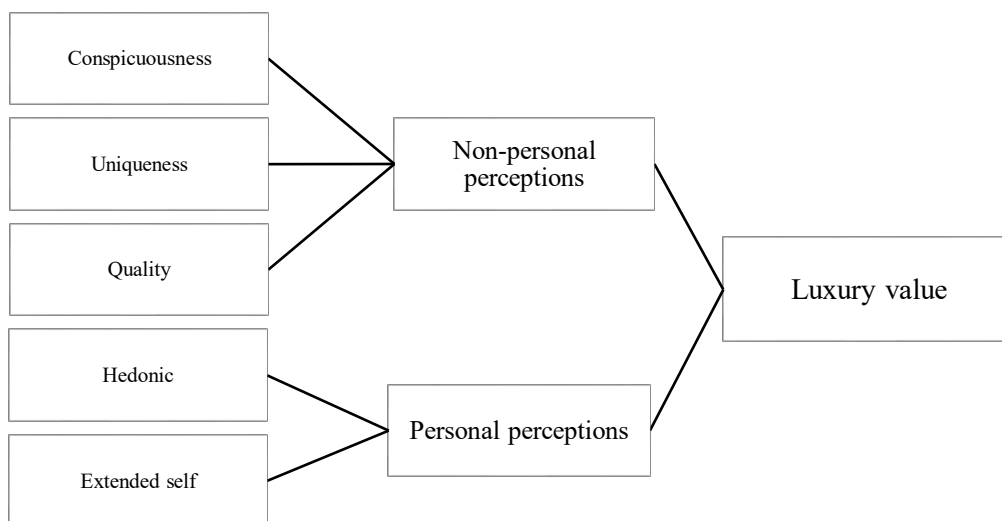


Figure 3. Framework for brand luxury index. Adapted from Vigneron and Johnson (2004, 488).

This framework, presented in Figure 3, differentiates between non-personal (externally driven) and personal (internally driven) motives for consuming luxury goods. Non-personal perceptions include conspicuous value (purchasing luxury goods to signal wealth or status), uniqueness value (purchasing to distinguish oneself from others) and quality value (perception of superior

craftmanship). The personal perceptions then again include hedonic value (pleasure and emotional satisfaction) and extended self (internal sense of achievement or self-esteem). The model suggests that consumers' luxury purchase intentions are driven by the interplay between personal motives and social motives. This framework provides a foundation for understanding the expressive and instrumental roles of luxury consumption explored later in this chapter.

Wiedmann et al. (2007, 5) expanded on earlier frameworks by proposing a comprehensive value-based model of luxury consumption. Their model (Figure 4) identifies four major dimensions of luxury value perception that influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions: financial, functional, individual and social.

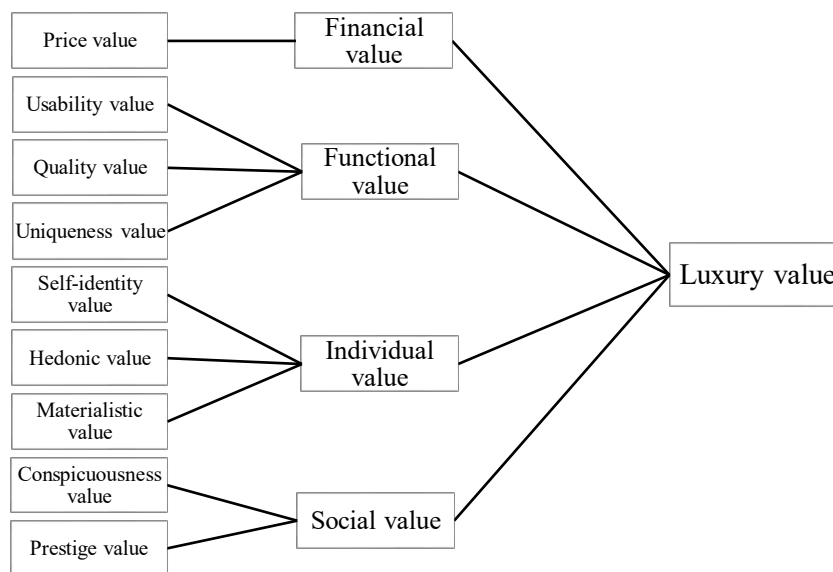


Figure 4. The conceptual model for measuring consumers' luxury value perception. Adapted from Wiedmann et al. (2007, 5).

In Wiedmann et al.'s (2007, 5) model the financial value refers to price and investment considerations with owning luxury goods. The functional value encompasses usability, quality and durability. The individual value captures personal and hedonic benefits, such as self-expression and emotional satisfaction. The social value reflects the prestige and recognition associated with luxury ownership.

Wiedmann et al.'s (2007, 5) model provides a holistic understanding of luxury consumption by linking both tangible (financial and functional) and intangible (individual and social) dimensions. These correspond closely to the three broad categories analysed in this thesis: the financial and functional values, the expressive role and the instrumental role of luxury fashion.

Together, these models provide a theoretical foundation for examining luxury purchase intention. Vigneron and Johnson (2004) emphasize prestige motives and value dimensions and Wiedmann et al. (2007) integrate tangible and intangible values. These models demonstrate that luxury consumption arises from a multidimensional interplay between functional, psychological and social drivers. Next, we go through these three types of drivers in more detail.

2.2 Determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention

Luxury fashion purchase intention is influenced by both product-related and psychological factors. Based on the literature, three major dimensions can be identified: (1) financial and functional values, which form the tangible foundation of luxury consumption, (2) the expressive role of luxury, which reflects self-oriented motives and (3) the instrumental role of luxury, which captures socially driven motives. These determinants are discussed in the following sections.

2.2.1 Financial and functional value of luxury fashion

The financial and functional values of luxury fashion represent the tangible, product-related dimensions of luxury consumption. These values are more concrete than the psychological or symbolic drivers and are closely linked to the product attributes and perceived quality. While they alone do not explain why consumers want to purchase luxury fashion, they form the foundation to which personal and socio-psychological values are built.

The **financial value** of luxury goods concerns the monetary aspects of consumption, including price, investment potential and perceived worth (Hennigs et al. 2012, 1020). Price serves not only as a measure of economic sacrifice but also as an indicator of product quality and exclusivity. Research has shown that consumers often perceive a positive relationship between high price and high quality and that for status-conscious consumers, high price functions as a signal of prestige (Lichtenstein et al. 1993, 241). The perceived price, which may differ from objective price, is positively related to the financial luxury value perception and can be viewed as an indicator of quality or exclusivity (Wiedmann & Hennigs 2014, 6). This would indicate that the high price is not necessarily viewed as a sacrifice, but as an integral characteristic of luxury fashion.

The **functional value** refers to basic product benefits including usability, quality and uniqueness (Sheth et al. 1991, 160; Hennigs et al. 2012, 1020; Wiedmann & Hennigs 2014, 6). *Usability value* relates to how well the product satisfies the consumer's practical needs and expectations (Wiedmann et al. 2009, 630). In luxury fashion, however, usability is often secondary to aesthetic appeal. One example of this is the recent popularity of micro-bags that offer limited functionality

but were highly desired for their style and symbolism. *Quality value* is seen as one of the most important indicators of luxury, referring to superior materials, design and craftsmanship (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 486). Luxury items are expected to be higher-than-average quality (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 486), and perceived high quality is positively related to the functional luxury value perception (Wiedmann & Hennigs 2014, 6). *Uniqueness value* arises from the perception of exclusivity and rarity (Wiedmann & Hennigs 2014, 6). Consumers value products that are not widely available, as scarcity enhances desirability and reinforces luxury's symbolic function (Wiedmann et al. 2009, 630). The desire for uniqueness links this functional attribute to psychological antecedents such as the need for uniqueness (Tian & McKenzie 2001, 172) and can significantly influence attitudes toward luxury brands (Jain 2019, 419).

While financial and functional values are part of why an item is perceived as luxury, they only partially explain why consumers choose luxury fashion over non-luxury alternatives. Beyond considerations of price, quality or usability, luxury consumption is highly affected by psychological and symbolic meanings. The *theory of impression management* (Goffman 1959, 24) provides an important framework for understanding these motives. It proposes that consumers are internally driven to craft and project a favourable image of themselves through their consumption behaviour (Shukla 2012, 575). Within this framework, luxury purchases can serve two distinct but interrelated roles: expressive and instrumental. The instrumental role refers to consumption aimed at influencing others and gaining social approval, while the expressive role concerns the construction of an image that reflects one's inner self and personal identity (Tsai 2005, 432; Shukla 2012, 575).

2.2.2 The expressive role of luxury: Personality antecedents

Personality antecedents are the internal psychological factors that explain how luxury consumption reflects an individual's personality, values and self-concept (Bharti et al. 2022, 274). They correspond to the expressive role of luxury, in which consumption serves as a means of self-expression and emotional fulfilment. The personality antecedents introduced in this thesis include materialism, need for uniqueness, self-identity and the extended self and hedonism. Within Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 139) model of consumer behaviour, these antecedents can be placed in the buyer's black box, representing the internal psychological processes that shape the consumer's purchase intentions. The personality antecedents are not universal across luxury literature. For example, some researchers place uniqueness in the functional value -category (e.g., Wiedmann et al. 2009). In this thesis we follow more recent literatures' choices (e.g., Bharti et al. 2022) and thus need for uniqueness is included into the personality antecedents of luxury purchase intention.

Materialism

Materialism refers to the importance individuals attach to possessions and their belief that material goods can bring happiness, success and meaning to life (Belk 1985, 291). It has been widely examined as a key personality trait influencing luxury consumption (Wiedmann & Hennigs 2014, 7). Materialistic consumers view possessions as symbols of personal achievement and social standing and often rely on external cues, such as price or visibility, to evaluate status (Richins & Dawson 1992, 310; O’Cass & McEwen 2004, 35).

Materialism is positively associated with luxury purchase intention, as materialistic individuals believe that owning luxury goods communicates their self-image and status (Belk 1985; Park et al. 2008, 255). Luxury goods thus serve both functional and symbolic purposes as they satisfy the consumer’s desire for quality while also fulfilling deeper psychological needs related to self-esteem and social identity. Research suggests that higher levels of materialism correspond with stronger luxury value perceptions and purchase intentions (Wiedmann & Hennigs 2014, 8).

Need for uniqueness

Another personality antecedent relevant to luxury consumption is the **need for uniqueness**, which reflects the individual’s desire to differentiate themselves from others through distinctive possessions (Snyder & Fromkin 1980). Uniqueness-seeking consumers are motivated to purchase products that are rare, exclusive and personalised, as these characteristics enhance their sense of individuality and self-expression (Park et al. 2008, 248; Bharti et al. 2022, 274). This antecedent can thus be seen in product choices, as consumers high on need for uniqueness are more likely to choose products that are rarer and more personalisable. Empirical studies confirm that the need for uniqueness significantly predicts luxury purchase intention (Tian & McKenzie 2001, 188; Bian & Forsythe 2012, 1445; Shukla 2012, 589–590).

The need for uniqueness is closely linked to the **snob effect**, which is defined as the tendency for demand to decrease when a product becomes widely owned (Leibenstein 1950, 189). Snob consumers are motivated by their desire to dissociate from the mainstream and to maintain a sense of exclusivity (Vigneron & Johnson 1999, 7–8). For these consumers, scarcity enhances value, and high price signals rarity rather than costliness (Vigneron & Johnson 1999, 8). A good example of how luxury brands appeal to uniqueness-seeking consumers by showcasing exclusivity is the Hermès’ Birkin bag, that is available only to long-term loyal customers in limited quantities.

Self-identity and the extended self

Luxury consumption is deeply connected to **self-identity**, as individuals often use brands and products to define and communicate who they are (Belk 1988, 139). According to *self-congruity theory*, consumers prefer brands whose images align with their actual or ideal self-concept (Bharti et al. 2022, 275). Because luxury fashion products are highly visible and symbolically charged, they play a significant role in this identity-building process (Park et al. 2008, 248; Bian & Forsythe 2012, 1443; Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 161).

This relationship is further explained by *extended self theory*, according to which possessions become part of the self and are used to construct and maintain identity (Belk 1988, 140). Through the acquisition and display of luxury goods, consumers integrate the symbolic meanings of brands into their self-concept (Holt 1995, 1; Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 490). Luxury fashion allows individuals to communicate affiliation with certain lifestyles or values while distinguishing themselves from non-affluent groups (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 490). In this sense, luxury fashion function as identity markers, helping consumers express who they are, how they wish to be perceived and to which groups they belong.

Hedonism

Hedonic value captures the emotional and sensory enjoyment derived from luxury consumption, such as pleasure, excitement and aesthetic appreciation (Sheth et al. 1991, 161). Luxury products are especially associated with such experiential and emotional benefits, offering consumers intrinsic enjoyment and self-directed pleasure (Vigneron & Johnson 1999, 4; Wiedmann et al. 2007, 7). Hedonic value covers also the sensory beauty that a consumer feels when looking at a product (Vigneron & Johnson 1999, 4).

Hedonically motivated consumers tend to purchase luxury goods for the experience itself, rather than for status or social validation (Jin et al. 2021, 2). Luxury fashion provides multisensory and symbolic experiences, through design, craftsmanship and brand heritage, that satisfy both emotional and aesthetic desires (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982, 96). Empirical studies have shown that hedonic value is strong predictor of luxury purchase intention (Shukla 2012, 591; Jain & Mishra 2018, 426).

In summary, the expressive role of luxury captures the personal, emotional and self-expressive motives of luxury fashion purchase intention. As the expressive role of luxury includes the personal antecedents of luxury fashion purchase intention, it does not provide the whole variety of antecedents behind luxury fashion purchase intention. Next section introduced the findings from literature on the instrumental role of luxury.

2.2.3 The instrumental role of luxury: Socio-psychological antecedents

While the expressive role of luxury highlights self-oriented motives and the personal meanings attached to consumption, the instrumental role reflects a more outward-focused dimension of luxury behaviour. Within the framework of impression management (Goffman 1959, 24), the instrumental role involves the use of luxury products as tools for social positioning, i.e. to influence others' perceptions, gain prestige and signal membership or aspiration to a particular social group. Consumers engaging in this form of consumption are motivated by the social value derived from luxury ownership, which arises from comparison, recognition and acceptance within a reference group (Vigneron & Johnson 1999, 10; Han et al. 2010, 16). In this sense, luxury fashion functions as kind of a social language, enabling consumers to communicate wealth, taste or cultural capital. The socio-psychological antecedents underlying this instrumental role of luxury include normative influence and status and conspicuous consumption. Together, these antecedents try to explain how social context and interpersonal dynamics shape luxury fashion purchase intention.

Normative influence

Luxury fashion products are typically consumed in socially visible contexts, where interpersonal evaluation and group belonging play a central role (Park et al. 2008, 246). Consequently, **normative influence**, the impact of social norms and expectations on individual consumption behaviour, has been found to be a significant driver of luxury purchase intention (Shukla 2011, 246; Yang et al. 2018, 539; Bharti et al. 2022, 285). Consumers are often influenced by the opinions and behaviours of their reference groups (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 139–140). These reference groups may include aspirational groups (e.g., celebrities), which consumers wish to associate with, on top of current social groups (e.g, friends and family).

The degree to which individuals are affected by social pressures varies depending on their susceptibility to normative influence, defined as the tendency to conform to the expectations of others in a consumption context (Bearden et al. 1989, 474; Jain 2019, 419). Consumers with a higher level of susceptibility to normative influence often seek to enhance their interdependent self-concept through the consumption of products that are popular within their reference or aspirational groups (Kastanakis & Balabanis 2012, 1402). As luxury fashion is generally consumed in public and highly visible settings, such consumers are particularly responsive to social signals and collective consumption trends (Kastanakis & Balabanis 2012, 1402).

Normative influence is closely linked to the **bandwagon effect**, a phenomenon where the demand for a product increases as more people adopt it (Leibenstein 1950, 189). In luxury fashion, this effect is often driven by the perception that popular or widely recognized items convey prestige and taste, thus motivating others to purchase similar products (Vigneron & Johnson 1999, 9–10). Consumers who engage in social comparison are more likely to be influenced by such trends (Mandel et al. 2006, 57–58). The bandwagon effect is nowadays even more noticeable when trends can be spotted all over social media.

Status and conspicuous consumption

Status and conspicuous consumption are two prominent dimensions of symbolic luxury consumption (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 488). Sometimes these two terms are used in the literature to refer to the same phenomenon, even though they are separate constructs. Status consumption refers to an individual's internal or external motivation to acquire and consume luxury goods to achieve or express social standing (Eastman et al. 1999, 41; O'Cass & Frost 2002, 67; O'Cass & McEwen 2004, 35; Eastman & Eastman 2015, 1). Then again, conspicuous consumption focuses more specifically on the public display of wealth through the consumption of expensive and visible goods (Veblen 1899, 48; O'Cass & Frost 2002, 69; O'Cass & McEwen 2004, 27).

In status consumption, motivations can be both internal and external. Internal motivations may stem from self-directed goals such as self-esteem, self-respect or self-reward (Truong et al. 2008, 198; Bharti et al. 2022, 273). External motivations, on the other hand, arise from interpersonal influences and social comparison, where luxury products are used to signal wealth, gain approval or enhance one's social position (Eastman et al. 1999, 42; O'Cass & Frost 2002, 69; Amatulli & Guido 2012, 191; Shukla 2011, 242; Eastman & Eastman 2015, 1). To be considered a form of status consumption, a product must represent prestige not only for the consumer personally but also for others who observe the consumption (Nelissen & Meijers 2011, 343; Eastman & Eastman 2015, 3).

In Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 140) model, social roles and status are recognized as factors shaping purchasing decisions. Consumers often select products that reflect their social position or desired identity (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 141–144). Within luxury fashion, status-oriented consumers are drawn to visible brand symbols such as logos, monograms or signature colours, that serve as recognizable indicators of prestige within their reference groups. Their perception of what represents social status directly influences their brand preferences and purchase intentions.

Conspicuous consumption then again refers to the purchasing of expensive goods to publicly display wealth and status (Veblen 1899; O’Cass & Frost 2002, 69; O’Cass & McEwen 2004, 27). Conspicuous consumption has been found to be a stronger driver for LPI for fashion luxury products than other luxury products (Bharti et al. 2022, 287). This can be due to visible brands logos in the luxury fashion items that can be viewed as recognisable symbols of status as luxury fashion products, being highly visible and appearance driven, are especially suited for such status signalling (Park et al. 2008, 245).

Conspicuous consumption is closely related to the **Veblen effect**, a phenomenon where demand for a product increases as its price rises (Leibenstein 1950, 189). Veblenian consumers are motivated to demonstrate social status by consuming expensive products (Loureiro et al. 2020, 9; Aleem et al. 2024, 149). By purchasing these high-priced items, consumers not only communicate wealth but also can gain symbolic rewards such as admiration, envy or social recognition.

Luxury brands strategically use this symbolic value by designing products with easily identifiable visual markers (logos, symbols or signature colours) that facilitate consumers’ social self-expression and impression management (Wilcox et al. 2009, 250). Through such visible displays, conspicuous consumers use luxury goods to signal their social influence and groups belonging (Han et al. 2010, 3–4).

2.2.4 Summary of the determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention

In summary, the motivations driving consumers to want to purchase luxury fashion emerge from the interplay of expressive and instrumental roles of luxury. The expressive role reflects consumers’ pursuit of self-expression, emotional gratification, and personal meaning through luxury products. In contrast, the instrumental role highlights the social and symbolic functions of luxury, where consumption acts as a tool for managing impressions, signalling prestige and achieving social distinction. These together provide a general understanding on the antecedents of luxury purchase intention. Figure 5 summarizes the determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention mentioned in this chapter.

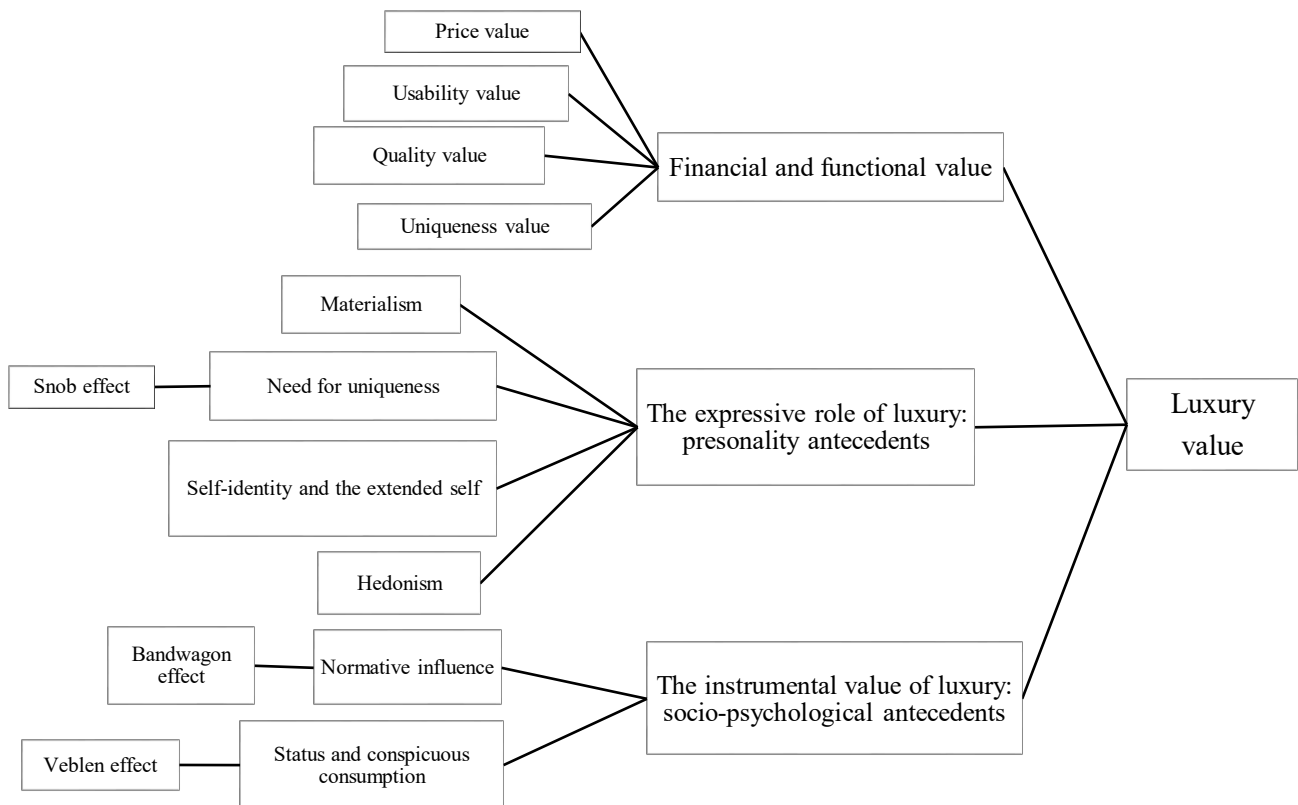


Figure 5. Determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention.

These antecedents of luxury fashion purchase intention are however not portrayed similarly all around the world since the consumer purchase intention process is influenced by the cultural factors (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 140) and luxury purchases are no exception. This poses difficulties for international luxury fashion companies when making decisions on positioning and marketing. Next, we go through findings from the literature about cultural similarities and differences in the antecedents of luxury purchase intention.

3 Cultural influences on luxury fashion purchase intention

Cultural values have been confirmed to influence consumers' perception of luxury value (Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 158; Aksoy & Abdulfatai 2019, 778) and thus consumers can evaluate the same luxury product differently due to cultural dissimilarities (Rehman 2022, 1).

3.1 Culture as a moderator of luxury purchase intention

Culture is one of the factors influencing purchase intention in the Kotler & Armstrong's (2017, 140) model as well as one of the moderators of luxury purchase intention in the Bharti et al.'s (2022, 272) model. First, we need to define what we refer to when talking about culture in this thesis, as culture has varying definitions depending on the context. Culture has been defined in the literature as "the configuration of learned behaviour and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society" (Linton 1945, 21). Other way to describe culture is "the attitudes, behaviour, opinion, etc. of a particular group of people within a society" (Cambridge Dictionary 2025). In this thesis, culture refers to national culture, even though we understand that this view offers only a limited view of culture as inside one nation there usually are regional differences. National culture has been argued to mold individuals' perceptions and behaviours through the influence of social institutions inside the nation (Triandis 1989, 506). The influence of national culture has been shown to influence consumer behaviour (Hofstede 2010) and thus purchase intention. Even though national culture has been shown to influence consumer behaviour, literature lack a consensus on whether and to what extent cultural factors matter in the context of luxury consumption. According to Hofstede et al. (2010) individual's consumption decisions are systematically affected by cultural and social values and norms. This view is supported by Aksoy and Abdulfatai (2019), who state that consumers' cultural identities and ethical backgrounds affect their perception of luxury. Aliyev and Wagner (2018) then again found that some (but not all) luxury values vary between cultures.

In this thesis we use *Hofstede's cultural dimensions model* as a framework to measure and categorise culture and to make it possible to compare cultures with each other. Hofstede's model has been widely cited since its publication and it has been used in the literature to explain cultural differences at a national level (e.g., De Mooij 2011; Bian & Forsythe 2012; Shukla 2012; Aliyev & Wagner 2018; Eastman et al. 2018; Lee et al. 2018). Hofstede's cultural dimensions include individualism versus collectivism, power distance, masculinity, long-term orientation, indulgence and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et al. 2010, 40–43). Next, we briefly introduce each cultural

dimension before looking into cultural differences found in the luxury literature categorized by these cultural dimensions.

Individualism versus collectivism refers to the strength of bonds between individuals in societies (Hofstede et al. 2010, 93). In individualist societies these bonds are loose compared to collectivistic societies. Consumers in individualistic cultures are also described as independent, motivated by their personal preferences and prioritizing their personal goals, pleasure and self-expression (Hofstede 2010, 93–96; Wong & Park 2023, 1812). Collectivist cultures' consumers then again are group-oriented, focusing on group goals and co-operation (Bharti et al. 2022, 275).

Power distance measures the extent to which people “accept and expect that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede 2001, 79) in a society. In higher power distance societies people are more aware and more acceptant of the unequal power distribution and social hierarchy.

Masculinity measures the extent to which masculine values prevail over feminine values in a society. High masculinity is linked to competitiveness, the desire to stand out and functional orientation (Hofstede et al. 2010, 136–137). Consumers in these high masculinity cultures are more likely to consume to assert, stand out or express uniqueness (Eng & Bogaert 2010, 59). Low masculinity (i.e. femininity) is then again linked to co-operation, kindness and communal orientation (Hofstede et al. 2010, 137). Consumers in these low masculinity cultures are more likely to rely to their reference groups and subjective norms (Hofstede et al. 2010, 138).

Long-term orientation is a cultural dimension that measures how the culture views time holistically, i.e. if they have a long-term or a short-term view. High long-term orientation cultures usually value planning, saving for the future and hard work (Hofstede et al. 2010, 218). Cultures low on long-term orientation then again seek instant gratification and benefits (Hofstede et al. 2010, 221).

Indulgence refers to the extent to which the individuals of the culture try to consume their impulses or desires. High indulgence cultures have weaker control and are more likely to be willing to act on their impulses or desires compared to individuals in low indulgence cultures. (Hofstede et al. 2010, 259.)

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which a culture feels threatened by uncertainty or ambiguity (Hofstede et al. 2010, 179). High uncertainty avoidance is related to anxiety, security needs, deference to experts (Lee et al. 2007, 331) and respect for rules and compliance with social norms (Bharti et al. 2022, 276). In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, consumers are relaxed and have high tolerance to norm deviance (Hofstede et al. 2010, 179–182).

3.2 Cultural dimensions and luxury fashion purchase intention

When comparing Hofstede's cultural dimension scores in the countries that currently consume the most luxury fashion, there seems to be a lot of variation between cultural dimensions' scores (Figure 6). This could indicate that even though these nations all consume luxury fashion, their motivations and preferences could differ from each other.

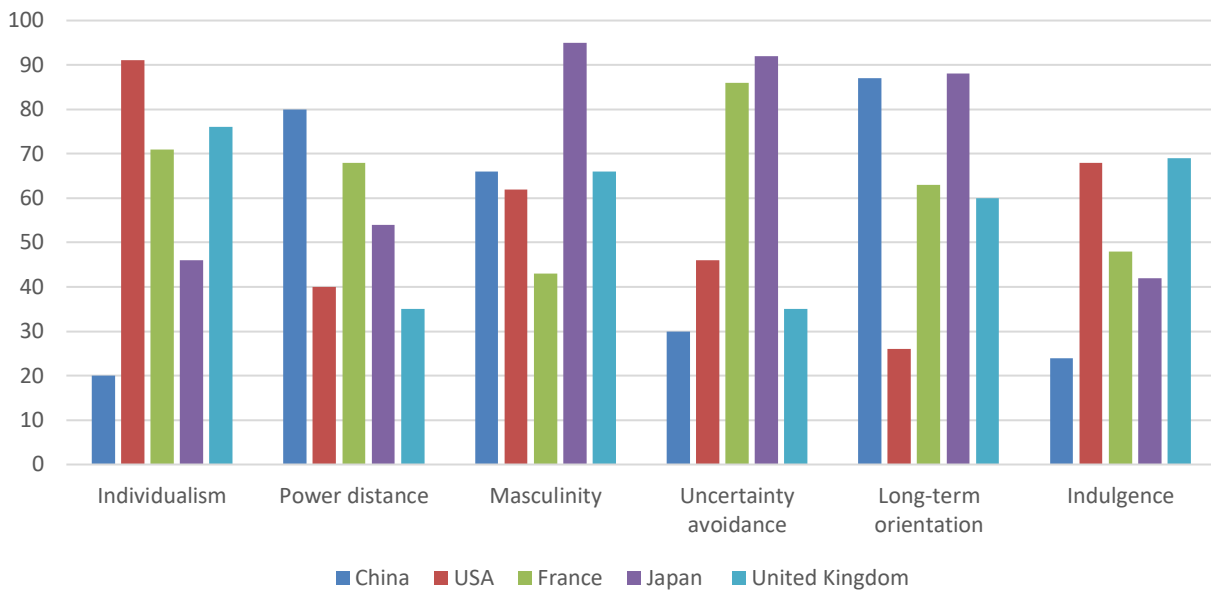


Figure 6. Hofstede's cultural dimensions' scores by country.

In this chapter we go through findings from literature on how Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been found to influence luxury purchase intention, focusing on the category of luxury fashion. Understanding these potential effects on luxury fashion purchase intention helps marketers in creating successful campaigns as well as luxury fashion brands to prepare when entering a new market.

3.2.1 Individualism versus collectivism

The individualism versus collectivism dimension reflects the extent to which people in a society view themselves as independent individuals or as part of cohesive social groups (Hofstede et al. 2010, 93–96). This cultural dimension is one of the most influential (and most widely studied dimension) in shaping how consumers perceive and engage with luxury goods, as it determines whether luxury is consumed primarily for self-expression or social alignment.

Consumers in individualistic cultures are described as independent, motivated by their personal preferences and prioritizing their personal goals, pleasure and self-expression (Hofstede 2010, 93–

96; Wong & Park 2023, 1812). Based on this description one could assume that in highly individualistic cultures luxury purchase intention would be influenced by perceived *personal values*. This assumption is supported by various studies (i.e., Shukla 2012, 591; Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 159; Wong & Park 2023, 1812). One example of a highly individualistic culture is the USA, where consumer's attitudes toward luxury purchases are associated more with personal needs and self-directed pleasure, rather than status concerns (Kim & Lee 2011, 33).

Along these lines, consumers in individualistic countries acquire luxury products to extend and strengthen their independent selves (Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 166; Al-Issa 2024, 1619) and luxury brands are chosen to reflect their individual personality and tastes (Bian & Forsythe 2012, 1446; Shukla 2012, 590). This would indicate that *extended-self* would be an important luxury purchase intention driver in individualistic cultures. Surprisingly, extended-self was an "universal" luxury value and seen in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures and not only in individualistic one's as theory would suggest (Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 158). One possible explanation to this would be that while consumers from individualist cultures express their identity through possessions, consumers from collectivistic cultures may instead follow or imitate the consumption patterns of more affluent groups (Vigneron & Johnson 2004, 490).

Hedonism has been proposed to play an important role in individualistic cultures (Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 6), where consumers focus on self-directed pleasure, emotional fulfilment and gratification (Shukla 2012, 588; Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 161). On the contrary, some studies have had varying results. Shukla and Purani (2012, 588) and Stepien et al. (2016, 86) did not find a positive correlation between the level of country's individualism and the hedonic value perception. Rather hedonism was present in both cultures. The matter seems to need more research, but as for now hedonism seems likely to be a universal luxury purchase intention antecedent.

As consumers in individualistic cultures prioritize their self-expression and often have a greater need for uniqueness (Bian & Forsythe 2012, 1446), this would indicate that their luxury purchase intention would be motivated by *seeking uniqueness*. Seeking uniqueness was found to play a stronger role in LPI among individualistic consumers and less effective in collectivists cultures in the study of Shukla (2012, 591). On the contrary, Bharti et al. (2022, 285) did not find a stronger influence on seeking uniqueness in individualistic cultures. As a possible explanation to this Bharti et al. (2022, 285) speculate that this finding may be explained by differences in how people construe their sense of self (as interdependent or independent) within their cultural context.

In contrast to individualistic consumers, as consumers in collectivist cultures are group-oriented, focusing on group goals and co-operation (Hofstede et al. 2010, 93; Bharti et al. 2022, 275), one could assume that these consumers' luxury purchase intentions are more influenced by *social luxury values* (Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 162, Wong & Park 2023, 1810), especially *normative influence*. Along these lines, Murali et al. (2005, 169) found consumers in collectivist cultures to be more susceptible to normative influence than those in individualistic cultures. Also, Shukla (2011, 249) found consumers in collectivist cultures to be more susceptible to normative interpersonal influences, seeking "fitting-in" (bandwagon) behaviour and social cues. Lee et al. (2018, 117) found that collectivist consumers emphasise subjective norms in LPI. Then again in Aliyev & Wagner's (2018, 158) study subjective norms had a significant positive impact on luxury purchase intentions among both individualist and collectivist groups and the effect was actually stronger among individualists. Along these lines, Bharti et al. (2022, 285) did not find a difference on the level of influence of normative influence between collectivist and individualistic cultures. Bharti et al. (2022, 285) propose that reference groups may be important in both cultures, but the consumers may use luxury products for different reasons: individualist may use them to display individual status or identity and collectivists to increase social alliance.

Another social value perception, *conspicuousness* value has been found to negatively affect luxury purchase intentions among consumers in individualist cultures (Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 158). Collectivism has then again been found to mediate the relationship between *status consumption* and luxury purchase intention (Eastman et al. 2018, 220). In some studies (Shukla 2012, 588; Al-Issa 2024, 1619), status signalling had a similar impact on LPI in both individualistic and collectivistic groups. So, then again, the findings are mixed, and a clear consensus cannot be made.

Functionality is highly valued in collectivist cultures (Hofstede et al. 2010, 93). Along these lines, high *quality* was found to have a more positive effect on luxury purchase intention among collectivists (Aliyev & Wagner 2018, 158). Then again in a survey by Statista (2025), 52% of consumers from United Kingdom (high individualism) listed high quality as the top purchase criteria for luxury fashion goods. This would indicate that high quality is also valued in (at least some) individualistic cultures.

Even though the impact of the level of individualism on luxury purchase intention has been studied widely, and Hofstede's descriptions would indicate stronger influences on some antecedents, the findings seem to be mixed. There seems to be more universal values than high variation in cultural

preferences among individualists and collectivists, even though these values might be preferred for different reasons.

3.2.2 Power distance

Power distance belief (PDB) reflects how consumers in the society view and interact with social hierarchy and inequality (Hofstede et al. 2010, 67). The higher the PDB score of a country is, the more the individuals accept and expect that power and wealth are distributed unequally (Hofstede et al. 2010, 67–71). From this, one could derive that status would be an internal part of luxury fashion purchase intention in high PDB countries. This assumption is supported by the literature. Power distance was found to mediate the relationship between *status consumption* and luxury purchase intention in Eastman et al.'s (2018, 220) study, as well as Bharti et al.'s (2022, 286) meta-analysis, where status consumption was found to be more salient in high power distance cultures. As an example of a high PDB country, in China (high PDB) consumers' luxury purchases are motivated by it emphasizing their social status and positioning themselves within social hierarchy (Naumova et al. 2019, 7).

According to Park et al. (2023, 7), high PDB consumers are more likely to prefer *conspicuous consumption*, and this is mediated by their need for status. Conspicuous consumption then again was not found to have a stronger influence in high power distance cultures in Bharti et al.'s (2022, 285) meta-analysis. Bharti et al. (2022, 285) suggest conspicuous consumption to be important in both high and low power distance cultures but for different motivations: low power distance cultures could use conspicuous consumption to achieve socio-psychological benefits and in high power distance cultures to gain respect among those high on social hierarchy.

Additionally, literature has found a stronger influence of *normative influence* on luxury purchase intention in high power distance cultures than in low power distance cultures (Hassan et al. 2016, 83; Bharti et al. 2022, 285). High PDB individuals have been found to rely highly on reference groups and to be more likely to engage in word-of-mouth with their in-group (Liam et al. 2009, 62). This could indicate that in high PDB cultures consumers would be more likely to participate in bandwagon consumption.

In summary, literature has agreed more on the effects of PDB on luxury fashion purchase intention than individualism versus collectivism. Status consumption and normative influence have been proven to be more salient in high power distance cultures. Conspicuous consumption then again could be important universally.

3.2.3 Masculinity versus femininity

Masculinity as a cultural dimension relates to a society's emphasis on competitiveness, the desire to stand out and functional orientation (Hofstede et al. 2010, 136–137). These characteristics would indicate that consumers in high masculinity cultures would consume luxury fashion items for their status value. Along these lines, according to Hofstede (2010, 155–156) *status consumption* purchases are more typical in high masculinity countries. The role of masculinity index has been less investigated in the context of luxury consumption compared to some other cultural dimensions (e.g., individualism versus collectivism or power distance), and there seems to be a lack of consensus on its exact role in forming luxury purchase intention.

Some studies support the link between masculinity and luxury purchase intention. Masculinity was found to mediate the relationship between *status consumption* and luxury fashion purchase intention in Eastman et al.'s (2018, 220) study, focusing on young adults in the USA (high masculinity). Eng and Bogaert's (2010, 59) findings on consumers being able to convey masculine traits through luxury consumption are along the same lines. Masculinity was also one of the cultural dimensions indicating luxury purchase intention in Ahmad et al.'s (2012, 912) proposed luxury brand purchase intention model.

While theory suggests a link between masculinity and luxury *status consumption*, some empirical studies have offered mixed or contradictory results. Masculinity was not found to be an effective segmentation tool in the meta-analysis of Bharti et al. (2022, 287), where they investigated the socio-psychological and personality antecedents of luxury purchase intention. Masculinity was also not found to relate to *conspicuous consumption* or luxury purchase intention in Zakaria et al.'s (2021, 540) study on Malaysian consumers (medium to high masculinity).

As consumers in masculine cultures are relatively more likely to consume to express their uniqueness (Eng & Bogaert 2010, 66), this would indicate that their luxury purchase intention would be influenced by the need of *seeking uniqueness*. However, this assumption was rejected in the study of Bharti et al. (2022, 285), where they did not find the influence of seeking uniqueness on LPI to be stronger in masculine cultures.

Consumers in low masculinity (i.e. feminine) cultures are relatively more likely to rely on their reference groups or subjective norms (Hofstede et al. 2010, 136–137). This would indicate that consumers in low masculinity cultures would be highly influenced by *normative influence*. This assumption was rejected in Bharti et al.'s (2022, 285) meta-analysis, where they did not find the

influence of normative influence on LPI to be stronger in feminine cultures. Bharti et al. (2022, 285) propose that reference groups could also be important for masculine cultures, where they like to display their achievements or competitiveness.

In summary, even though theory suggests that consumers in high masculinity cultures would consume luxury for status and seek uniqueness or that low masculinity consumers would be more influenced by normative influence, there are conflicting results in the literature. Thus, it could be said that according to current knowledge, masculinity dimension is not a reliable segmentation tool when it comes to luxury fashion purchase intention.

3.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance

The cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance (UAI) measures the extent to which members of a society feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and attempt to avoid them through rules, norms or structured behaviour (Hofstede et al. 2010, 179). As luxury fashion items are usually expensive, they could be considered a risky purchase and uncertainty avoidance would, in theory, be likely to influence these purchase intentions. To reduce the risk associated with purchasing expensive luxury items, consumers in high uncertainty avoidance cultures seek *quality* (Teimourpour & Hanzee 2011, 318). In the context of luxury fashion, this could mean that brands associated with high quality could success in high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

To reduce uncertainty, consumers in high uncertainty avoidance cultures could opt for iconic, established luxury fashion brands, that have maintained their position in the market for a long time (Eastman et al. 2018, 230). These established luxury fashion brands' items have usually increased their value over time and thus these items could be considered somewhat "safe" purchases. Then again, high uncertainty avoidance consumers could be less likely to purchase newer brands, since their *financial value* is not yet validated by the public. Brand strategies that reduce perceived uncertainty are expected to positively influence overall evaluations and purchase intentions (Lee et al. 2007, 344).

Uncertainty avoidance was found to mediate the relationship between *status consumption* and luxury fashion purchase intention in the study by Eastman et al. (2018, 220). On the contrary, in the meta-analysis of Bharti et al. (2022, 286) they did not find uncertainty avoidance to be instrumental in impacting consumers' LPI. Eastman et al.'s (2018) study was conducted with a sample of young American undergraduate students (Eastman et al. 2018, 227). The UAI score of the USA is 46 (out of 100), which is not significantly high. Bharti et al.'s (2022) meta-analysis then again included

studies originating from 15 countries (USA, UK, Germany, Australia, Russia, China, Hongkong, Malaysia, India, Tunisia, Korea, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Indonesia and Brazil) (Bharti et al. 2022, 280). There is a great variation in the UAI scores across these countries. Naumova et al. (2019, 10) stated that high UAI can manifest as a negative attitude toward changes in social status. They used the example of Russian consumers (high UAI), who tend to buy luxury items even when their income decreases, using luxury consumption as a social stabilizer against change (Naumova et al. 2019, 10). These results from existing literature would indicate that the mediating role of uncertainty avoidance between status consumption and luxury fashion can be significant in some countries but the matter needs more investigation, and general assumptions cannot be made based on the existing literature.

The bandwagon effect was found to moderate the relationship between status consumption and luxury fashion purchase intention for the cultural variable of uncertainty avoidance (Eastman et al. 2018, 230). Following other's purchase choices could be used for minimizing risks when it comes to expensive luxury fashion purchases (Eastman et al. 2018, 230).

The compliance with social norms in high uncertainty avoidance cultures could indicate higher sensibility to *normative influence*. High uncertainty avoidance consumers tend to follow acceptable norms and reference groups, which can explain the popularity of well-established luxury brands (Eng & Bogaert 2010, 59–60). This could explain the popularity of iconic luxury brands in cultures such as France and Japan, both of which score high on uncertainty avoidance. However, the effect of normative influence was found to be non-significant in the meta-analysis of Bharti et al. (2022, 286).

In contrast, consumers in low uncertainty avoidance cultures are generally more tolerant of ambiguity, risk and novelty (Hofstede et al. 2010, 179). They are more open to newer brands and are motivated by innovation and uniqueness (Lee et al. 2007, 343). For example, in the USA (UAI score 46) and the UK (UAI score 35) luxury consumers often demonstrate a relaxed attitude toward uncertainty, exhibiting higher openness to newer trends and smaller, niche labels (Bharti et al. 2022, 276–277). Likewise, in China (UAI score 30), relatively low uncertainty avoidance may explain consumers' willingness to adopt less conventional or emerging luxury brands despite limited market validation (Lee et al. 2007, 343).

In summary, the findings from literature considering uncertainty avoidance and luxury fashion purchase intention are mixed. There seems to be some correlation when it comes to managing risk

and luxury purchase intention. Also, the bandwagon effect seems to be more present for luxury purchase intention in high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

3.2.5 Long-term versus short-term orientation

The long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO) dimension reflects the extent to which a culture maintains a pragmatic, future-oriented perspective rather than focusing on short-term outcomes and traditions (Hofstede et al. 2010, 223). Long-term oriented cultures value perseverance, thrift and planning for the future, while short-term oriented cultures are more focused on immediate gratification, social stability and the pursuit of present happiness (Bharti et al. 2022, 276). Long-term orientation (LTO) as a cultural moderator has been relatively unexplored in the context of luxury consumption motivations (Bharti et al. 2022, 287), but it can offer some insights into how consumers perceive luxury goods.

As consumers in high LTO cultures usually value saving for the future, one might assume that they are not willing to pay the premium price on luxury fashion items. Then again, if these consumers consider these items to keep or increase their monetary value over time, they might view luxury fashion items as a good investment piece. Along these lines, Bharti et al. (2022, 287) state that consumers in long-term oriented cultures would be more likely to focus on *functional and quality value* of luxury products, and they would likely invest in luxury products that have the potential to offer long-term benefits. South Korea is characterized as a high LTO country and South Korean consumers focus heavily on quality (Naumova et al. 2019, 8). Another example of a high LTO country is Italy, where high quality is highly valued when purchasing luxury items (Naumova et al. 2019, 10).

Eastman et al. (2018, 220) found that LTO negatively mediated the relationship between *status consumption* and luxury fashion purchase intention, indicating that consumers in short-term oriented cultures were more prone to status-driven luxury purchases. This relationship indicates that the lower the LTO in a society, the more likely the individuals are to consumer luxury fashion products. In contrast, Bharti et al. (2022, 286) did not find significant support for this moderating effect of LTO in their meta-analysis. They suggest that status and conspicuous consumption may also be prevalent in long-term oriented cultures, but for different reasons. In high-LTO cultures, luxury consumption may serve strategic and future-oriented goals, such as maintaining social reputation, demonstrating success or acquiring timeless items that preserve financial and symbolic value.

As consumers in short-term oriented cultures tend to seek instant gratification and benefits (Hofstede et al. 2010, 223), they could be more likely to indulge in luxury fashion as it can provide them instant personal or socio-psychological benefits. Along these lines, the influence on *seeking uniqueness* was found to be stronger in cultures low on LTO (Bharti et al. 2022, 286). This reflects the desire for differentiation and visibility through luxury ownership and aligns with the expressive role of luxury.

In summary, findings from literature suggest that functionality and quality could be valued more in long-term oriented cultures. Then again seeking uniqueness could have a stronger effect on luxury fashion purchase intentions in short-term oriented cultures. Both cultural orientations are likely to value status and conspicuous consumption, but the findings are mixed on this.

3.2.6 Indulgence versus restraint

Hofstede et al. (2010, 268) describe high indulgence cultures to have weaker control over their impulses or desires, to be more likely to realize these desires and spend money as they wish. This would indicate that consumers in high indulgence cultures would be more likely to indulge in luxury than those in low indulgence cultures (Bharti et al. 2022, 276). Indulgence as a cultural dimension aligns with the concept that luxury consumption provides *hedonic* benefits and self-directed pleasure (Shukla 2012, 580; Naumova et al. 2019, 1). Naumova et al. (2019, 1) state that consumers in high indulgence cultures display to perceive *individual and functional values* and are sensitive to emotional hedonistic luxury.

For example, consumers in Saudi Arabia (high indulgence) highly value the hedonic component of luxury (Stepien et al. 2016, 86). They have strong preference for luxury goods as a means of self-gratification and status display as well as higher levels of conspicuous consumption and bandwagon effect (Rehman 2022, 8). Similarly, high indulgence in the United Kingdom and the USA reflects consumers' willingness to realise personal desires and follow internal motivations (Naumova et al. 2019, 9). In these societies, luxury fashion is often purchased for aesthetic refinement, comfort and quality, without the pressure to conform to social expectations (Shukla 2012, 591). In highly indulgent markets, hedonistic motives and self-reward are dominant drivers of luxury purchase intention, and the public display of wealth or luxury consumption is socially acceptable (Bharti et al. 2022, 276).

Naumova et al. (2019, 1) state that in low indulgence countries, consumers primarily perceive *social values* in consuming luxury goods and are sensitive to conspicuous luxury-status. For

example, South Korean (low indulgence) consumers feel that indulging themselves in luxury is somewhat wrong (Naumova et al. 2019, 6). Along the same lines, Chinese consumers (low indulgence) often experience guilt when purchasing luxury items, as they believe they should control their desires (Wang et al. 2021, 341). Despite China's position as one of the largest luxury markets globally and 21% of luxury fashion consumers being Chinese, social expectations seem to continue to moderate luxury consumption (Naumova et al. 2019, 7–8). Likewise, Indian consumers (low indulgence) show restraint and are less influenced by the bandwagon or snob effects, which reflects a more socially regulated approach to luxury consumption (Rehman 2022, 8).

Even though theory and some literature findings suggest that indulgence could be linked to various luxury fashion purchase intention antecedents, a meta-analysis of Bharti et al. (2022, 280) including studies originating from 15 countries did not support their hypotheses about the influences on normative influence, status consumption, conspicuous consumption, seeking uniqueness and materialism on LPI to be stronger for cultures high on indulgence. These socio-psychological and personality antecedents are suggested to be significant drivers of luxury purchase intention in both indulgent and restraint cultures. It can also be hypothesised that as luxury products are considered “luxuries” (i.e. not necessities), the consumers engaging in luxury consumption obtain some luxury purchase intention antecedents no matter if they are located in indulgent or restrained culture.

Overall, while the theoretical framework links high indulgence to a greater likelihood to indulge in luxury consumption, literature has not found the level of indulgence to be a significant indicator of various values linked to luxury purchase intention. Even though indulgence may not be a relevant indicator of luxury purchase intention, it can help understand emotional barriers (such as guilt) experienced in more restrained cultures.

3.2.7 Summary of cultural dimensions and luxury fashion purchase intention

The six cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2010) provide a valuable lens for understanding cultural variation in luxury fashion purchase intention. It makes it possible to categorise the complex construct of culture to a somewhat simplified and theoretically proven model. In this thesis we investigated findings from luxury literature. The findings are mostly from studies that have primarily studied the selected cultural dimension's effects on luxury purchase intention, since co-existing cultural dimensions' effects could be difficult to predict without the primary data from these studies. Also, this approach suited better the scope of the thesis.

Table 1 summarizes the findings from literature regarding cultural dimensions' scores influence on the determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention (LPI) discussed in this thesis.

Table 1. Summary table of cultural dimensions' scores influence on the determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention (LPI). Plus (+) implies positive influence between high scores and the LPI determinants. Minus (-) then again implies negative influence.

LPI determinant		Individualism	Power distance	Masculinity	Uncertainty avoidance	Long-term orientation	Indulgence
Financial and functional values	Quality	universal			+	+	
Personality antecedents	Materialism						universal
	Need for uniqueness	+ / universal		universal		-	universal
	Self-identity and extended self	+					
	Hedonism	+ / universal					+
Socio-psychological antecedents	Normative influence	- / universal	+	universal	+		universal
	Status consumption	-	+	+ / no effect	+ / no effect	- / universal	universal
	Conspicuous consumption	-	+ / universal	no effect		universal	- / universal

As Table 1 shows, many luxury fashion purchase intention determinants can be viewed as universal determinants. Luxury fashion marketing could potentially be standardised when targeting these determinants, as it can be hypothesised that consumers are likely to react to these stimuli similarly across cultures, even though the motivations behind these purchase intentions may vary.

4 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to investigate luxury fashion purchase intention and the differences found across cultural dimensions. Two subquestions were formed to help approach the aim of the thesis: (1) What makes a consumer want to purchase luxury fashion items and (2) How does culture influence luxury fashion purchase intention? The first subquestion was approached through both generic consumer behaviour model and luxury-specific models and frameworks as well as various supporting articles in order to create an understanding on the determinants of luxury fashion purchase intention. The second subquestion was investigated through Hofstede's cultural dimensions model to better categorize the cultural differences in luxury fashion purchase intention found in literature.

Chapter 2 was divided into two sections where first we investigated Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 139) model of consumer behaviour to understand how purchase intention is formed. Kotler and Armstrong (2017, 140) also provided a model that captured factors influencing the buyer's decision process and thus provided a foundation to answering the question *What makes a consumer want to purchase luxury fashion items?* After that we briefly introduced two luxury-specific models by Vigneron and Johnson (2004, 488) and Wiedmann et al. (2007, 5) to better understand the values linked to luxury purchase intention and that could be placed inside Kotler and Armstrong's (2017, 139) model's consumer's black box. These luxury specific models together with other luxury literature provided us background on how to categorize luxury fashion purchase intention antecedents.

In this thesis, we categorised the determinant of luxury fashion purchase intention into three categories: (1) financial and functional value of luxury fashion, (2) the expressive role of luxury: personality antecedents and (3) the instrumental role of luxury: socio-psychological antecedents. The financial and functional values include i.e. the perceived price of the item, usability and quality and are linked to product attributes that are the easiest to control by the brands. The expressive role of luxury then again covers the personality antecedents of the luxury fashion purchase intention. In this thesis these personality antecedents include materialism, need for uniqueness, self-identity and the extended self and hedonism. Lastly, the third determinant, the instrumental role of luxury introduces the findings from literature about the socio-psychological antecedents driving luxury fashion purchase intention. These include normative influence and status and conspicuous consumption. Together these three categories of determinants try to capture the complexity and multi-dimensionality of luxury fashion purchase intention.

Chapter 3 focused on answering the second subquestion *How does culture influence luxury fashion purchase intention?* This question was approached by categorizing findings from literature via Hofstede's cultural dimension model. Hofstede's (2010) model made it possible to categorize and compare cultures in somewhat simplified form. The findings in this chapter were for the most part mixed.

The dimension of individualism versus collectivism has been studied widely across luxury literature. Findings regarding the influence of the level of individualism in a society on luxury fashion purchase intention were mixed. Some studies supported the theoretical assumptions derived from Hofstede's descriptions of the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism, but there seemed constantly also be those studies with contradicting results making proper generalisations difficult. Status and conspicuous consumption were among the few antecedents that based on the current knowledge seems to be negatively influenced by the level of individualism in a society. It seems that the other antecedents of luxury purchase intention are more or less universal but the motivations behind these antecedents may have some variation between individualists and collectivists. Also, it can be hypothesized that the younger generations in traditionally collectivistic cultures are becoming more individualistic due to globalization and social media.

Power distance belief has also received considerable scholarly attention. Status consumption and normative influence have a stronger influence on luxury fashion purchase intention in high power distance cultures than on low power distance cultures. Then again mixed results on conspicuous consumption then again suggest that it could be a universal luxury fashion purchase intention antecedent.

Masculinity versus femininity in the context of luxury fashion purchase intention is less investigated, and there seems to be a lack of consensus on its exact role in forming luxury purchase intention. While Hofstede's descriptions on the cultural dimension of masculinity versus femininity suggests that i.e. status consumption would be more prominent in masculine cultures and that feminine cultures would rely on subjective norms, findings from literature do not support these assumptions.

The cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance could have an impact on the way consumers manage risk linked to luxury purchases. Also, bandwagon effect seems to be more present in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Findings regarding the luxury purchase antecedents listed in Chapter 2 then again are mixed, and thus no generalisations could be made.

Long-term versus short-term orientation had some agreement in the literature about how it influences the luxury fashion purchase intention. Functionality and quality are more likely valued in long-term oriented cultures. Then again, seeking uniqueness has potentially a stronger effect on luxury fashion purchase intention in short-term oriented cultures. There were mixed findings regarding status and conspicuous consumption, and it is likely that these are valued in both long-term and short-term oriented cultures.

Lastly, indulgence versus restraint has not been found to be a significant indicator of luxury consumption in the literature, even though Hofstede's description of the cultural dimension of indulgence would indicate that consumers in high indulgence societies would be more likely to indulge in luxury. Then again, it can be hypothesised that consumers who indulge in luxuries are inherently more hedonistic and prone to indulge in luxuries, and thus variations between cultures would be small.

In conclusion, luxury fashion purchase intention reflects a complex interplay between universal personal and socio-psychological motives and culturally specific expressions of value. While the findings from literature were somewhat mixed and vast generalizations could not be made on all of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, some dimensions stood out in the level of agreement in the literature of their impact on luxury fashion purchase intention. The cultural dimension of power distance could be a potential indicator of the level of impact of status consumption and normative influence on luxury fashion purchase intention. This could be used when planning marketing strategies, positioning and product choices in new markets, especially if the power distance belief scores of the countries vary significantly. Other cultural dimensions' effects could require more country-specific investigation, since generalizations cannot be made based on the current knowledge and mixed results in the literature.

The findings on universal luxury drivers could suggest that brands can use more standardized marketing materials regarding targeting these universal values across nations, which is more cost effective. Then again, a more localized and culture-specific approaches might be more effective regarding luxury fashion purchase determinants that are more influenced by cultural dimensions in the target markets. Localized marketing is more expensive and thus even though the findings in this thesis were not as groundbreaking when it comes to cultural variations that can be generalised, it may be a somewhat positive finding that many luxury purchase antecedents can be viewed as universal and thus marketing tactics targeting these motivations can potentially be effective across cultures.

Revisiting the famous quote by Coco Chanel, “Luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends.” to summarise the findings of this thesis. Luxuries are not necessary in the sense of the most basic human needs, but they do serve socio-psychological needs of belonging and distinction. Luxury fashion purchase intention is a highly symbolic act, driven by a complex combination of personal and socio-psychological values and motivations that are further influenced by culture. Luxury fashion can enable consumers to reflect who they are, who they aspire to be and how they wish to be seen in the world.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Explanation of the use of AI

Generative AI was used in this thesis for checking grammar mistakes to provide a more pleasant reading experience, since English is not my first language. No copyrighted texts were given to GenAI, and all the checked texts were my own and did not contain any confidential information.