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# **The Personality of Luxury Brands: Scale Development and Consequences**



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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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London

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## Declaration

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## **Abstract**

This research approaches the personalities of luxury brands as understood and voiced by consumers. In an attempt to address the criticisms on the appropriateness and applicability of the generic brand personality typology to luxury brands, this work pursues a new examination of the concept. Drawing on the experience of human personality trait framework development methodology, an “a posteriori” approach is grounded in consumers’ natural language to examine luxury brands’ personality distinctness from other brands. A combined methodology using online text mining and in-depth interviews was used to capture consumer vernacular for luxury brands. After separating brand personality traits from other brand descriptors, analysis of semantic similarity was performed. Based on the semantic distances of the cropped up traits, a new typology of luxury brand personality was developed. The new measure was purified and calibrated using two separate luxury consumer samples. This process led to the identification of six salient dimensions of luxury brand personality specific to the luxury domain and distinct from the existing frameworks. In addition, the new scale was employed to show that: a) member group fit positively influences self-congruence; b) self-congruence positively affects a number of consumer outcomes directly (purchase loyalty) as well as indirectly (purchase loyalty, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth communication outcomes) through emotional brand attachment, brand attitude, and brand personality appeal (purchase intention outcome only).

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

It has been predicted that the retail value of the global luxury goods market would reach €1.08 trillion in 2016 (Bain, 2016) and there has been an ever increasing research interest towards the luxury industry. Purchasing and displaying luxury brands for status and prestige purposes has become an important part of consumers' lifestyles all over the world (Han, Nunes, and Dreze 2010). Increasingly, consumers also recognise the personal value of luxury and the important self-directed benefits that it provides (Tsai, 2005; Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels, 2009; Truong and McColl, 2011). Inevitably, luxury brands are being constantly faced with a challenge of positioning their offerings in ways that would elicit favourable consumer outcomes. One particularly significant aspect of consumption is that, among other possessions, brands make up the extended self by being seen as central to the consumer's individual or aggregate senses of self (Belk, 1988). Brands' symbolic features are what enable these acts of self-expression and identity enhancement as consumers dynamically construct themselves through the use of brands that carry associations relevant to one's current or possible self (Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

The relevance of the construct of brand personality to consumer's personal expression has expanded its appeal to academics and practitioners alike (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). Prior research shows that brand personality acts as an important differentiator of brands highlighting their emotionality and self-expressiveness most evidently in those categories, where products have already attained their functional equivalence, and symbolic consumption is a primary motivating market force (Aaker, 1996a). In a recent meta-analytical study (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013a) it has been demonstrated that brand personality plays a crucial role in a brand's success, as measured by a number of indicators such as brand attitude, image, commitment and purchase intentions. It is also positively linked to trust, attachment, commitment to a brand (Louis and Lombart, 2010), and brand equity (Valette-Florence, Guizani, and Merunka, 2011; Miller and Mills, 2012). Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013a) determined that brands derive their personalities mainly from communications, branding activities, brand's country-of-origin, and brand's users. This suggests that brand personality perceptions can

be galvanised to a certain extent by marketers through the manipulation of a number of the above factors. Hence, the accuracy, reliability and granularity of brand personality measures become critical to the success of a brand (Plummer, 2000).

The focus of this research is on developing a new measure of brand personality exclusively tailored to luxury brands and based on a rigorous methodology with the aim to tackle the conceptual and methodological criticisms of prior brand personality frameworks. Going to the roots of human personality scale development research that formed the foundation material for the current elaborations and conceptualisations of personality frameworks, the current work uses a similar approach to provide solid foundations of the luxury brand personality traits (Cattell, 1943; Goldberg, 1982; John, Angleitner, and Ostendorf, 1988). The lexical approach to personality is complemented with the analysis of semantic similarity to ensure the scope and relevance of the identified traits to the structure of luxury brand personality dimensions. As part of the comprehensive validation procedures, conceptual model development allows making an important step towards identifying and better understanding the antecedents, mediators, and consequences of brand personality in the luxury context.

### **1.1 Current State of Luxury Research**

Currently, research in the area of luxury consumption is gaining momentum as new journals in this field are being introduced (e.g. “Luxury” or “Luxury Research Journal”) and increasing numbers of special journal issues are being published on the topic (e.g. 2014/2016 JBR special issues on luxury). The phenomenon of luxury was profusely foreign to the theory of consumption until the late 1800s when it eventually began to gain more prominent attention among economists and socio-economic researchers of that era. The work of Thorstein Veblen (1899), who developed the first non-utilitarian approach towards the consumption of luxury goods, is often seen as foundational in research on luxury. According to him, with the expansion and penetration of wealth across the population, the behaviour of consumers is primarily compelled by the desire for status and psychological gains as they strive to acquire esteem and envy of relevant others, over and beyond the

inherent qualities of the product aimed at satisfying consumer primary needs. However, most research focused on studying luxuries in management literature has been performed since the beginning of the 2000s (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016) and, at present, academic works in this field are rapidly evolving as the luxury industry keeps facing unprecedented challenges.

According to the content analysis of the key publications in the luxury domain by Gurzki and Woisetschläger (2016) identified through the complete bibliometric overview of research on luxury, over time the field has been seeing a higher number of empirical studies with exploratory-descriptive or confirmatory aims and, increasingly, experimental research focused on examining causal relationships as opposed to more theoretical research. Some of the plausible explanations include the general reduction of the conceptual research in the marketing area and observance of a similar trend in the luxury domain as one of its symptoms as well as a possible maturation of luxury research field given its concrete theoretical foundation (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016). However, in reality whilst a few studies have attempted to conceptually explain a number of important phenomena on the matter of luxury consumption (e.g. Dubois, Czellar and Laurent, 2005; Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels, 2007; Han, Nunes and Dreze, 2010; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012; 2014), the majority of others appear to address relatively limited topics and lack solid explanatory properties when it comes to gaining a better understanding of the issue of luxury consumption and factors that influence it.

## **1.2 The Gap and Present Research**

Brand personality is generally defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p.347). It was Aaker’s (1997) seminal work that laid the foundation for a whole new stream of research in this area, and her conceptualisation typecasted almost all subsequent work (see Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013a, 2013b meta-analytical studies). Theoretically, this stream of research is deductively (a priori) constructed and framed on human personality measurement and, especially, on the Big Five taxonomy of human personality traits (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013b). Some

questions have arisen as to whether brand personality traits can be just deducted from human personality trait taxonomies and whether they can be structured in the same manner (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Recent evidence (Bouchard and Loehlin, 2001) shows that human personality trait origins can be attributed to genetic factors and heritability. Such processes are irrelevant and nonsensical to the way brand personalities emerge, casting doubts on the “a priori” use or imposition of human personality taxonomies to brands. Furthermore, brand personality research is blighted by a lack of agreement on the definition of the conceptual domain as well as its content (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). Additionally, human personality research suggests that personality traits vary according to social class and social status of individuals, with some traits being irrelevant to certain classes and social status (Anderson et al., 2001; Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich, 2010). For example, Anderson et al. (2001) found that Extraversion is associated with high social status, whereas other dimensions such as Conscientiousness or Openness to Experience are irrelevant to higher status groups.

As luxury brands occupy the higher end of a brand continuum based on prestige, quality, and price aesthetics (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) and are associated with the wealthy and higher social status and class strata (Atwal and Williams, 2009), they should be related to the personality traits characteristic of that group of consumers. However, since many personality traits used in human personality research are extraneous for luxury brands given their dissociation with high social status, some dimensions of the measures deductively framed on such research are likely to be irrelevant and inapplicable for luxury brands. The need for a separate brand personality typology of luxury brands was only recently recognised with attempts to develop distinct and particularised traits for luxuries (Heine, 2009). The rationale offered is that luxury brands are atypical brands occupying the extreme end of the prestige brand spectrum (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999) and are richer in symbolic attributes compared to standard brands (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Dubois, Czellar, and Laurent, 2005). As luxury brands are purchased for their symbolic values embodying status and prestige, Aaker’s (1997) measure is too broad to accurately capture these qualities.

Given the above concerns on the theoretical grounding of the existing brand personality

scales that extensively rely on human personality research as well as other important issues related to the measurement development and outlined in the next chapters, the key objective of this research is to develop an “a posteriori” typology of luxury brand personality afresh. The new typology will be grounded on consumer vernacular based on the fundamental principles of the personality trait development process. Addressing the issues of scale purity and content validity through embracement of a rigorous conceptualisation and a new methodology, it is expected that such typology will better express the particularities of luxuries in comparison with more general brand personality frameworks, and will present a useful tool for practitioners and academics interested in brand personality research in the context of luxuries. The emerging typology will be validated using two separate samples and compared with existing brand personality typologies for similitude checks.

### **1.3 Research Contribution**

The present work makes important theoretical, methodological as well as managerial contributions. As mentioned above, the current research on brand personality assumes the legitimacy of transposition of human personality measures to brand personality research in “as is” manner (Ambroise and Valette-Florence, 2010) and, as a result, requires stronger theoretical foundation (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido, 2001). This is in agreement with Aaker (1997), who contemplated that the best way of compiling descriptives to measure a brand’s personality has not yet been established. This work tries to address the issue by focusing on laying the theoretical basis for establishing the personality traits of luxury brands using the lexical approach to personality and a comprehensive methodology that also considers and addresses the criticisms of existing measures. Consequently, the primary theoretical contribution of this research to the branding literature will be the development of a new measure of luxury brand personality that is reliable, valid, and generalisable to luxury brands with varying levels of luxuriousness and belonging to different product/service categories. Distinct from existing macro scales of brand personality (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009), the new framework is based on a micro approach that allows capturing the truly symbolic nature of luxuries.

In addition, this research makes a valuable contribution towards research on consumer behaviour by building a better understanding of the antecedents, mediators, and consequences of brand personality in the luxury context. Using self-congruence theory, it develops a conceptual model and applies the new scale to demonstrate that a) member group fit positively influences self-brand congruence; b) self-brand congruence positively impacts a number of consumer outcomes directly (purchase loyalty) as well as indirectly (purchase loyalty, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth communication outcomes) through emotional brand attachment, brand attitude, and brand personality appeal (purchase intention outcome only).

For a methodological standpoint, this research tries to address the limitations of previous works through the adoption of a rigorous and comprehensive methodology. This will allow the development of a new measure of luxury brand personality based on a stricter conceptualisation of the construct (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003) to ensure its purity. It would also facilitate the establishment of a proper theoretical basis for luxury brand personality traits through the use of multiple sources and methods for generation of an exhaustive pool of items from which the scale will be developed, purified, and validated using the statistical analyses.

Managerially, the proposed typology presents a dedicated measurement tool for practitioners. This is the first measure of luxury brand personality developed from the descriptions of luxury brands' personalities found in the natural language of luxury consumers and based on the key principles of the personality trait development process. This is particularly relevant in today's marketplace, where brands in many product categories have already achieved their functional equivalence and are primarily differentiated based on their symbolic qualities that are capable of producing considerably more lasting effects on consumers (Burke, 1994). As luxury brand managers seek to maximise brand's equity, they require a valid and reliable measurement tool that would enable precise determination of the personalities of luxury brands.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review chapter aims to critically review extant research on conspicuous and luxury consumption as well as research on brand personality and its nomological network (i.e. antecedents, mediators, and consequences). It also seeks to clarify current research ambiguities and propose a new perspective for identifying and understanding the brand personality of luxury brands and its influence on consumer outcomes.

The chapter comprises three main sections: a critical review of prior research on conspicuous consumption and luxuries (2.1 An interdisciplinary overview of prior research on luxury: theories of signalling and conspicuous consumption), a detailed assessment of research on brand personality and, particularly, brand personality scale development studies (2.2 Brand personality construct), and, finally, the model development (2.3 Developing a conceptual model of antecedents, mediators, and consequences of brand personality using self-congruence theory).

### **2.1 An Interdisciplinary Overview of Prior Research on Luxury: Theories of Signalling and Conspicuous Consumption**

#### **2.1.1 Conceptualising the Luxury Construct**

An emotionally charged notion, luxury has been the subject of speculative considerations for many centuries and approaches towards it have diverged over time, with a number of distinguished philosophers and scientists of the time contemplating the true repercussions of luxury ubiquity among higher social strata prior to the societal changes of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The views on luxury eventually changed from it being seen as detrimental and immoral for the society during the era of Plato and, later, Aristotle (Berry, 1994) to more economic debates on the positivity of luxury's impact (among other connotations) on the welfare of the society by such philosophers and economists as Bernard Mandeville or Jacques Rousseau (Mortelmans, 2005). Derived from the Latin word *luxus*, the word

“luxury” implies gratification of senses, irrespective of price. From the semantic standpoint, Kapferer (1997) characterises luxury in relatively broad terms by asserting that “luxury defines beauty; it is art applied to functional terms. Like light, luxury is enlightening. [...] They provide reference of good taste. [...] Luxury items provide extra pleasure and flatter all senses at once... Luxury is the appendage of the ruling classes” (p. 253).

With the disappearance of hereditary stratification among social classes and a gradual emergence of the fluid and democratic consumer society of the modern day, the role of luxury as a symbol of status and social success has become ever more so important as, increasingly, people find themselves being able and willing to afford luxury and consider such consumption an essential way of achieving and maintaining their place in the society (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). Despite the abundance of diverging views on the subject of luxury in the literature, one underlying characteristic that can be traced across much of research is that, compared to all ordinary products and brands in the marketplace, luxury is certainly extraordinary (Berry, 1994; Heine, 2012). Consequently, as something that has differed in appearance over the passage of time and across various cultures, luxury cannot be defined in an absolute way and is ultimately reliant on what is regarded as ordinary within the confines of historical, cultural, social, economic, and consumer contexts (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016).

Indeed, in his semiotic study, Mortelmans (2005) argues that it may be possible to define luxury in a narrow sense in terms of scarcity, premium quality, added value, and elevated prices. Such way of characterising it is clearly applicable to the well-established group of luxury establishments such as Burberry or Dior, and is, arguably, most useful for luxury managers as they strive to attribute some culturally relevant value to their products and communicate that value to the consumer. Yet, he insists that such approach could not possibly encompass the entire essence of luxury. The author claims that, given the perpetually changing appearance of luxury as a tool of social division and depending on the context, the intangible nature of luxury could transform even the most ordinary items into unique signs of taste and status. Hence, only the actual consumption of such products as special signifiers of social standing turns them into a luxury object.

Nevertheless, in the branding literature, marketing researchers have previously proposed a number of relatively narrow product-centric operationalisations of luxury. In addition, many advocated definitions point towards the existence of only two types of brands: either luxury or non-luxury (e.g. Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Silverstein and Fiske, 2003). Thus, Nueno and Quelch (1998) consider luxurious any brand with low functional yet high intangible and situational utility in proportion to price. Following this logic, a brand that is not priced considerably higher than products with similar tangible attributes cannot be called luxury. According to them, luxury brands can be represented by these three kinds:

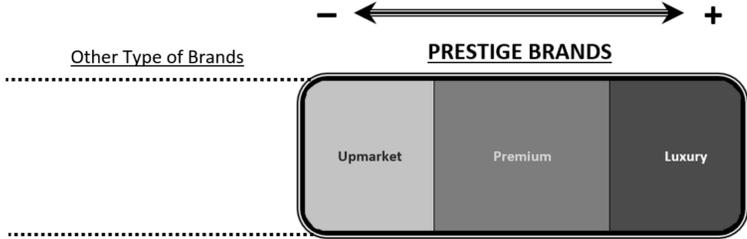
- “Limited awareness brands”, which most often belong to a family business and tailor a small product line to the niche customer group;
- “Well-known brands” that are unreachable by the general public due to high pricing and a lack of sampling possibilities;
- “Well-known brands”, which are attainable by the broader market in certain categories such as high-quality accessories.

Whilst managerially useful, such categorisation of all luxury brands is quite simplistic and rather problematic given the fact that the latter type is represented by relatively affordable mass-produced brands, yet premium brand extensions of more mainstream brands or attainable indulgences are completely excluded from consideration.

Another example is Vigneron and Johnson’s (1999) conception of luxury brands as occupying the extreme end of the prestige brand spectrum as illustrated below (Figure 1). The argument is that the level of prestige is a perceptual matter and depends on the totality of individual’s perceptions of a brand’s prestige position. Vigneron and Johnson’s (1999) conceptual framework of prestige-seeking behaviour remains one of the most influential works in the luxury domain and beyond, as few other studies have attempted to clarify the existence of luxury levels relative to other type of brands in a more formal manner due to the highly subjective and context-dependent nature of luxury meaning. However, the framework is quite superficial and discretionary in terms of pointing to where exactly the upmarket and premium continuum ends and the luxury one begins. In addition, their 2004

study offers a completely opposite stance on what constitutes luxury. In that study, luxury brands comprise the entire brand category, whilst the term “prestige” is used to refer to the extreme end of the luxury brand continuum (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). The justification is that, unlike the predominantly interpersonal motives for prestigious consumption, luxury consumption also includes personal aspects, thereby making it a more encompassing concept. According to the latter study, luxury can be defined in terms of five perceived facets of a luxury brand: conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality (non-personal-oriented perceptions), extended self, and hedonism (personal-oriented perceptions). Notably, the link between luxury and prestige brands has been closely examined by Dubois and Czellar (2002), who found that consumers tend to regard these two constructs as representing different conceptual domains, although the two terms do converge at a symbolic level where luxury emerges as a symbol of prestige.

Figure 1. Levels of Brand Prestige



Source: Vigneron and Johnson (1999)

Defining what constitutes luxury is even more challenging today, as following a period of active growth, the luxury market has become accessible to a much wider audience than was possible before and this phenomenon has further blurred the line between luxury and affordable brands. The shift in the distribution of household income has led to the emergence of mass wealth, where people have more disposable earnings to spend on more expensive goods. This rising income/possession equality has resulted in the increased consumption of status products among less advantaged with a perspective of possible position gains (Ordabayeva and Chandon, 2010). The birth of mass affluence made obvious a market gap between previously existing mass goods and highly priced luxury offerings, thereby creating an immense opportunity for companies to reposition their brands (Nunes,

Johnson, and Breene, 2004). Not only has the luxury become more reachable by a larger population, but it has also experienced a shift in its boundaries due to various demographic and cultural changes that have recently occurred in the capitalist markets. These changes, coupled with a rising interest in emotional elements of consumption, have caused an upsurge in new luxury products that could satisfy the needs of the moneyed middle market, namely, accessible superpremium, old-luxury brand extensions, and mass prestige (Silverstein and Friske, 2003). As a major growth driver, such opportunity was seized by many firms and allowed tapping the demand of the newly emerged consumer group with higher earnings. As a result, in the era of democratised luxury viewing luxury as a relatively stable construct becomes even more problematic (Roper et al., 2013).

The modern desire for luxury largely pertains to brands and the images they portray via brand prominence (Han, Nunes, and Dreze, 2010). Increasingly, luxury is less affixed to the product itself and more to what the brand symbolises. Heine (2012) defines a luxury brand as images in the minds of consumers, which encompass the characteristics of extraordinariness, high price, exceptional quality, aesthetics, scarcity and a large magnitude of symbolic features. However, in the wake of rapid democratisation of luxury Kapferer (2006) raised an important question about the confines of what is seen as a luxury and what is regarded as a premium range. One may wonder whether “new luxury” brands can be still regarded as a luxury? Additionally, other factors including the recent political changes (such as China’s growing role as a major world player) as well as the far-reaching digital revolution may be adding further ambiguity to the concept of luxury. For instance, the emergence of liberal economies around the world could drastically change individuals’ consumption habits and impact contemporary culture or, in a similar manner, the rise in popularity of the online channels could potentially fade luxury’s sense of conspicuousness and rarity (Kapferer, 2014).

Inspired by the spike of luxury popularity and democratisation that inevitably contribute to the blurring of the luxury meaning and likely render prior product-centric approaches to luxury meaning dubious, a recent study takes a discursive perspective on luxury where the dimensions of luxury brands are examined through the prism of luxury meaning as socially

constructed. The subjective nature of luxury consumption is then identified as the fundamental feature of consumption discourse and is integrated with experiential, moral, and artistic constructs (Roper et al., 2013). Such way of defining luxury boundaries emphasises the importance of consumers in creating luxury meanings by means of deliberate application of language, particularly at the time of ubiquitous consumption of masstige brands.

In approaching the concept of luxury Mortelmans (2005) advocates a socio-semiotic view, where luxury is no longer seen in its classic terms as lavish and wasteful in relation to human elementary needs. Instead, contemporary luxury products should be regarded as objects with specific meanings, which may be classified in terms of sign value that helps people distinguish themselves from others by connoting strive for status or, for instance, quest for beauty, affinity, happiness etc., on top of functional, economic, and social meanings (use, exchange, and symbolic values). In the field of marketing, the notion of luxury meanings having transformative nature as advocated by Mortelmans (2005) has been most recently investigated by Cristini et al. (2017) via a historical lens. Adopting a historical approach in order to provide insights into what luxury means in today's world, they reject the view of luxury as a black and white economic concept and find that the strive for luxury is often expressed through the modern need and crave of exceptional quality, quintessential brilliance, sustainable originality, and meaningfulness. Cristini et al. (2017) singularise high exclusivity, excellence, and creativity as three crucial prerequisites for an object to be considered luxury. However, the authors argue that in certain circumstances modern luxury galvanised by brands may exist without one of these requirements being high.

In the rapidly changing world, various internal and external forces may provoke luxury to take on new meanings in the future, thus requiring new approaches towards its understanding. However, even at present, despite the substantially growing academic interest towards theorising on the topic of luxury and luxury brands in the recent years, there is still a lack of general consensus in the research community on what constitutes luxury. As a result, this issue requires further exploration, which would not only allow to

gain a deeper understanding of luxury meanings but also better recognise why such fragmented interpretations emerge in research.

### **2.1.2 Conceptual Differences Between Luxury, Status, and Conspicuous Consumption**

To date, a great deal of the contemporary literature on luxury focuses on status and conspicuous consumption, whilst essentially implying the consumption of luxury products for socially oriented motives. Nevertheless, it seems important to recognise the subtle conceptual differences between luxury, status, and conspicuous consumption terms for present research purposes. Much of prior research on luxury originates from studies on conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899) and early economic works on relative consumption and signalling (Duesenberry, 1949; Leibenstein, 1950). Over the course of growing research on luxury, the application of these terms has been closely interlinked and, depending on the perspective of the researcher, one could be seen as encompassing the other and constituting merely a part of the entire concept. Thus, Vigneron and Johnson's (2004) well-known scale measuring the perceived conspicuousness of a brand contains a number of status-related items. However, new research has recently challenged the conviction that a signal should always be conspicuous (Berger and Ward, 2010; Eckhardt, Belk, and Wilson, 2015), which is a striking departure from the view of many foundational studies in the luxury domain. Another recent study has proposed that status and conspicuousness should be regarded as distinct facets of luxury brand perception (Truong et al., 2008).

The literature on luxury suggests that symbolic attributes of luxury brands are what distinguish them from standard brands beyond their functional value (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Dubois, Czellar, and Laurent, 2005), implying that people often purchase luxury goods for the symbolic values embodying status and prestige that such goods possess. Indeed, one of the most widely recognised fundamental motives for purchasing luxuries is to impress others and to show off wealth and status (Veblen, 1899; Berry, 1994; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). However, consuming luxury can also have a different purpose, including purchasing such products for personal and

hedonic reasons, such as experiences representing value to the self (Dubois and Laurent, 1994; Wiedmann, Hennings, and Siebels, 2009). At the same time, it could also be argued that status or conspicuous consumption do not have to be associated only with luxury products as symbols of status, since individuals are capable of deriving symbolic meanings from things other than luxury products, such as heritage, country- or culture-specific items. Consequently, in light of the fact that there's a growing recognition of the importance of personal orientation to luxury as will be discussed in one the following sections (section 2.1.4), luxury consumption may be regarded as a more encompassing concept that includes conspicuous and status consumption as a socially motivated luxury indulgence, but also other more intrinsically motivated types of luxury consumption.

### **2.1.3 Evolution of Luxury Research: Temporal Analysis of Different Perspectives**

Luxury serves an important purpose of cultivating social stratification in the present-day consumer society (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009) and is regarded as a concept with a truly multifaceted nature. In order to better understand its scholarly roots in the context of contemporary research on luxury one needs to look beyond the fields of consumer behaviour and marketing. Most recently, Gurzki and Woisetschläger (2016) performed a first comprehensive bibliometric review of the research on the subject of luxury, where they ordered and clustered all retrieved publications according to the citation makeup of the general scientific community followed by a systematic review of all papers with the aim of enhancing the interpretability of findings. According to their study of the luxury domain, publications containing the keyword “luxury” and other similar terms, including “status consumption”, “conspicuous consumption”, “status brand” or “prestige brand”, are deeply rooted in the fields of economics, sociology, psychology, and business as well as other social science disciplines of anthropology, philosophy, history, and literature.

Being a social signifier, luxury has been abundantly present in different societies for centuries, but it was not until Thorstein Veblen's (1899) pivotal work titled *Theory of the Leisure Class* that this concept first obtained the deserved recognition in social theory (Mortelmans, 2005). The most frequently cited piece among luxury researchers to date, this

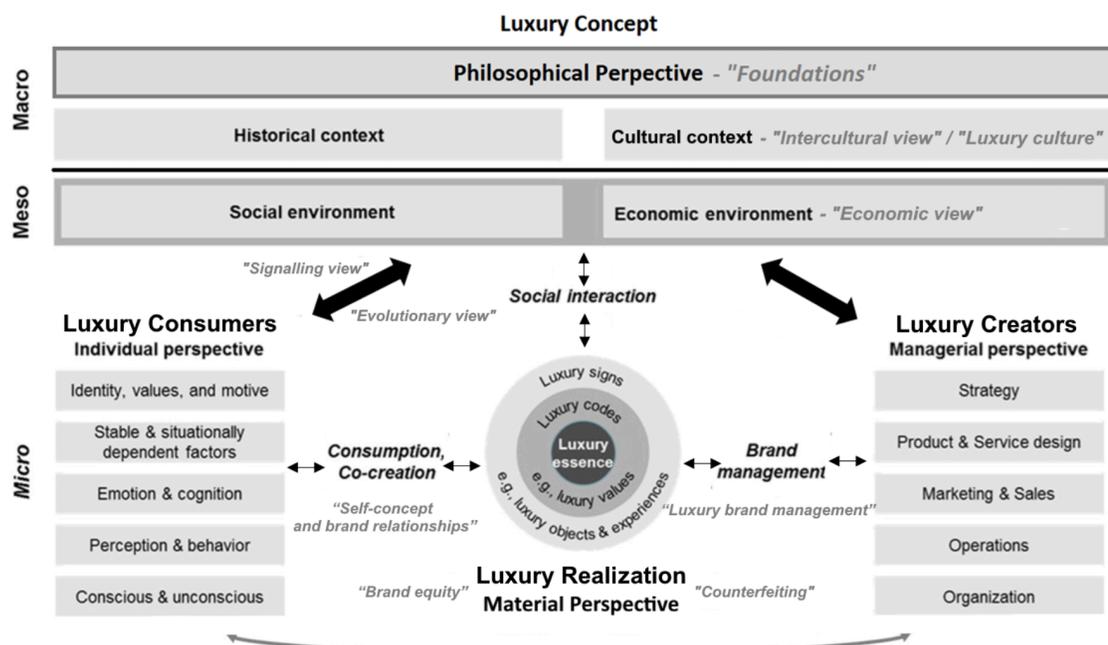
foundational work on conspicuous consumption has helped shape much of subsequent research in the luxury domain. In the study, Veblen (1899) depicts the emergence of the American upper class of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and their willingness to engage in the consumption of various luxury goods with the primary purpose of showing off their affluence. He puts forward an original argument disparate from prior entirely utilitarian explanations that, as wealth continued to surge and penetrate different parts of society, moneyed consumers began to derive additional benefits from the consumption of luxury goods that went beyond the qualities inherent in those products (i.e. primary utility) and included various status- and esteem- related aspects that were extraneous to those very luxury products or services (i.e. secondary utility).

Whilst in the era of Veblen (1899) the conspicuous demonstration of wealth was the prerogative of leisure class, the passage of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw significant changes in the luxury market as it continued to thrive by virtue of globalisation, the increased accessibility of luxury brands to larger segments of society following the growth of wealth as well as the calculated consolidation and diversification efforts of new and existing luxury brands (Silverstein and Friske, 2003; Nunes et al., 2004; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012). These trends and the resulting immense growth of the luxury market aided in the institutionalisation of the luxury industry, thus further elevating academic interest towards the subject of luxury and its place in the theory of consumption. Indeed, as part of a complete review of the research performed in the luxury domain, Gurzki and Woisetschläger (2016) have recently confirmed that the overwhelming majority of the analysed studies were published after the year 2000 coinciding with the time of blooming expansion of the luxury industry worldwide.

However, as was later discovered through the analysis of the citation patterns of academic researchers in the luxury domain, many of these studies draw on a number of foundational works besides Veblen (1899) in the luxury realm, which hinges on diverse theoretical perspectives. More specifically, Gurzki and Woisetschläger (2016) used co-citation patterns of the identified studies in the luxury research domain to perform cluster analysis, which enabled them to clearly identify 10 principal research areas within the

luxury field. Although many of these research streams developed concurrently over time, the authors were able to prioritise them in chronological order based on the mean year of publication of the cited references within each cluster and to clarify some temporal variations by means of systematic analysis. Such arrangement provides a clear and structured way of analysing the evolution of luxury research over time and through the prism of different theoretical perspectives, which come together under a multi-level (macro, meso and micro levels) conceptual framework of the luxury concept (Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. Gurzki and Woisetschläger’s (2016) Conceptual Model of Luxury



Source: Gurzki and Woisetschläger (2016)

### 2.1.3.1 Macro-level and Beyond: Luxury Research Foundations

A complete bibliometric review by Gurzki and Woisetschläger (2016) suggests that, although not a true creator of the theory of conspicuous consumption (Leibenstein, 1950), Veblen (1899) was the one who ignited much of contemporary academic conversation on the subject of luxury consumption being a social phenomenon by recognising that, unlike in the case of non-luxury goods and indispensable products, consumers are guided by rich

symbolic meanings of products and various psychological motives in the consumption of luxuries. Among other influential studies spanning a number of disciplines that laid rich intellectual base for future research on luxury are works by Levy (1959), Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), Bourdieu (1984), Lichtenstein et al. (1993), Ireland (1994), Bagwell and Bernheim (1996), Holt (1998), and Amaldoss and Jain (2005b) grouped together under the cluster titled “Foundations” (Figure 2). Thus, further to Veblen (1899)’s ideas of consumption representing a new way of constructing and visibly communicating one’s identity through interpersonal interaction, Levy (1959) offers a new perspective on the symbolic value of products and Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) build on the notion of product symbolism in the marketing theory to emphasise the emotive and imaginative aspects of product use that are particularly relevant for luxuries as they are often consumed as an expressive symbol.

With stronger economic orientation and policy implications in mind, Ireland (1994) and Bagwell and Bernheim (1996) contribute to the growing knowledge base in the luxury field by testing and expanding on the premise of Veblen’s (1899) theory that those who consume conspicuously get favourable treatment in the social environment through the examination of the conditions under which Veblen effects occur. Price cue can be seen as having symbolic meaning in the consumption of conspicuous products, where consumers maintain favourable perceptions of higher prices due to their ability to signal status and prestige to others (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). It is also central to Amaldoss and Jain’s (2005b) research, which recognises the value of social needs in consumption and integrates them in the formal economic analysis in order to establish their implications for pricing conspicuous products.

Despite the widespread acceptance and application of Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption, it has been critiqued for certain issues that it cannot resolve due to its restrictive nature. One such issue is related to the inability of the theory to consider different lifestyles held by individuals in a social structure that is not confined to vertical hierarchy, especially in the current age of postmodernity. Notably, Bourdieu (1984) and, later, Holt (1988) identify and emphasise the importance of not only economic and social

capitals in social consumption practices but also the cultural capital and how it helps in the construction of the social class. According to Bourdieu (1984), cultural capital is the accrued knowledge about the goods of artistic and intellectual customs acquired through social upbringing and educational discipline. While he recognises the essentially class-driven nature of conspicuous consumption, an important premise of his work is that he believes it should no longer be viewed through the lenses of a mere exhibition of dire possessions by the prevalent upper class, but, instead, as a more dynamic process, where the transmission of tastes is a “trickle round” process, and the notion of privilege is to be reevaluated in terms of cultural capital.

On the whole, these conceptually rich studies capitalise on the profound connection between luxury, culture, social and economic environment in its historical background, thus becoming the only research stream to most heavily draw on the *philosophical* perspective of luxury at the macro-level as well as (although less so) the *social* and *economic perspectives* at the meso-level, whilst additionally paying some attention to the *consumer perspective* and the *luxury essence* at the micro-level. As a result, this foundational research block provides a rich and meaningful conceptual basis for all luxury research that followed.

### **2.1.3.2 Meso-level: Signalling and Economic Views**

Based on the co-citation patterns (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016), another early research stream is more heavily focused on studying how status is established and signalled (i.e. the “signalling view”). Unlike the foundational cluster, it moves away from the macro outlook and, rather, contributes to the (mostly) *social* and *economic* perspectives at the meso-level as well as towards research on the actual *luxury consumers* and *luxury objects* (i.e. concrete luxury realisation) at the micro-level. Within the signalling stream, Leibenstein’s (1950) work is the most influential and highly cited as it seeks to incorporate the idea of social utility into the classic economic theory. Prior to Veblen’s (1899) seminal piece, the idea of status consumption has been marginalised by mainstream economists such as Alfred Marshall (1890). In his economic study “Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers’ Demand”, Leibenstein (1950) builds on Veblen’s

(1899) ideas about the importance of social factors in consumption by additionally incorporating into his economic analysis two opposing social needs of consumers: the need for uniqueness and the need for conformity. He examines the aspects of non-functional demand where external consumption factors are present – i.e. *bandwagon*, *snob* or *Veblen* effects – with the demand curve where such factors are missing. Based on the findings, he argues that when bandwagon is the most prevalent effect, the demand curve is more elastic than when there is no such effect, meaning that consumer preference for a product rises as the number of people purchasing it grows. At the same time, if snob or Veblen effects are considered, the demand curve is less elastic than when such effects are not present (and some parts could be positively sloped in the case of the existence of Veblen effect), as consumer preference for a product escalates with the increase in product rarity (*snob* effect) or as a direct function of the product's price (*Veblen* effect). This proposition can be explained by the way consumers classified into these three distinct groups view price and group influences. A number of more recent marketing studies have incorporated Leibenstein's (1950) ideas about external motivations for conspicuous consumption into their work with the emphasis on: conformity and uniqueness needs (Tian and Hunter, 2001; Amaldoss and Jain, 2005a) as well as need for status and affluence (Han, Nunes, and Dreze, 2010), with reference groups seen as representing a crucial source of brand meaning for affiliation purposes (Escalas and Bettman, 2005).

From the critical standpoint, Mason (1981) argues for the lack of prior research directly examining the motivations and preferences of consumers of conspicuous products, as most prior documentation of status-related behaviour is presented incidentally. He subsequently incorporates previous studies by Veblen, Leibenstein and other relevant scholars in an attempt to provide a comprehensive conceptual explanation of consumer behaviour that varies from social psychological to “rational” economic (Mason, 1984). The “rational” economic behaviour can be observed in many studies of utilitarian models of consumer decision-making, while the social psychological kind is reflected in three model types with underlying theoretical basis: Pavlovian, Freudian, and Veblenian. When applied to the context of status consumption, the Veblenian model is found to be the most applicable. Whilst calling for further psychological research on this subject, Mason (1984) postulates

that, conceptually speaking, all known exhibitions of conspicuous consumption can be further explained using a number of established theories, including the role theory, a set of cognition consistency theories, achievement motivation theory as well as the theory of social character formation.

In the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the motives for social consumption have also been investigated through the prism of information processing view (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) as well as through the experiential orientation (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Additionally, the research stream under the “signalling view” incorporates research by such influential academics as Belk (1984,1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992), who examined the role of self and the way it is defined across cultures and historical settings and how this affects the status signalling capacity of conspicuous goods and the elevated role of possessions in a person’s life (i.e. the rise of materialism).

Developed almost in parallel with the “signalling view” is the “economic view” with the main focus on policy implications by an array of researchers including Duesenberry (1949), Frank (1985a, 1985b, 1999), Easterlin (1995), Corneo and Jeanne (1997), Solnick and Hemenway (1998), Chao and Schor (1998) and more recent others. Work by James Duesenberry (1949) on the topic of consumption for status purposes is seen as influential by mainstream economists as it formally criticises the adequacy of the key assumption of the traditional utility theory that consumers make decisions autonomously in relation to other market players. On the contrary, the researcher argues that consumers’ decisions cannot be explained as mere functions of income and prices without the additional consideration of how individual’s consumption patterns compare to others in the marketplace. As a result, relative income rather than absolute becomes the answer to social welfare and prosperity (Duesenberry, 1949; Easterlin, 1995). Products whose value hinge upon the extent to which they compare with what others own come to be known as “positional goods” and the effects of such social comparability on consumers’ spending patterns become the subject of empirical testing (Frank, 1985b; Solnick and Hemenway, 1998). Much of research in this stream is based on economic theories and examines the influence of status consumption on the public at the macro-economic level.

### 2.1.3.3 Return to the Macro Outlook: Cultural Focus

In keeping with the timeline of luxury-related research evolution (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016), scholars eventually shifted attention from variability in luxury consumption across the social classes towards examining the differences between cultures (“intercultural view”), which later resulted in the appreciation of luxury consumption as a cultural phenomenon with luxury products acting as bearers of cultural meaning (“luxury culture” view). Whilst both streams exhibit a strong orientation towards the cultural context, the “intercultural view” adopts mostly a social psychology stance and aims to study cultural influences on luxury consumption through the lens of various cultural values, reference groups, and different self-concepts. Some studies consider the influence of reference groups (Bearden and Etzel, 1982) and, much later, psychological factors on status consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012) within the same cultural context. However, much of this research is interested in examining the cultural distinctions in the consumption of luxury and prestige brands, with work by Wong and Ahuvia (1998) being among the most influential in this specific area of inquiry. The origins of many studies concerned with the influence of culture can be traced back to Hofstede (1980) and Schwartz (1992) who posited that cultural values and norms, which affect individual behaviour, vary by culture. Importantly, some of the first marketing studies, including Dubois and Duquesne (1993) originate from this research block. According to their work, income alone does not provide a sufficient segmentation ground for consumers of luxury goods and, consequently, culture represents another factor that appears to be positively linked to luxury consumption.

Unlike the “intercultural view” that is grounded in the *cultural context* at the macro-level, but is primarily concerned with the *social environment* at the meso-level and *consumer perspective* at the micro-level given the discussed direction of its studies, the “luxury culture” view is largely positioned within the *cultural* and *historical contexts* and partially draws on the *philosophical concept* at the macro-level. According to McCracken’s (1986) model of meaning transfer, before such meaning can actually move from goods to consumers as they make brand choices on the basis of self-expression and identity

construction goals, it has to arise in the culturally constituted world. Thus, consumption objects such as luxury brands become the conveyors of brand meaning, thereby transforming consumption into a cultural endeavour. Studies in this research stream build a link between luxury, culture, and consumption (e.g. Berry, 1994; Dubois, Czellar, and Laurent, 2005): luxury products are seen as susceptible to cultural values and codes, and differences in such values across cultures come to influence consumption choices. Thus, Dubois, Czellar, and Laurent (2005) find that consumers can be segmented into three groups depending on their attitudes towards luxury: “Elitists” (who believe luxury to only be appropriate for the limited elite), “Democrats” (with more relaxed and open views towards luxury being attainable by a broader group of consumers), and “Distant” (with limited interest in luxury). While Dubois, Czellar, and Laurent (2005) show that the knowledge-, affect-, and behaviour-related facets of consumers’ attitudes to luxury are important, they intentionally prioritise the role of sociocultural influences that could suggest the presence of important differences in consumer attitudes across national cultures.

#### **2.1.3.4 Micro-level: Luxury Consumers, Producers, and Luxury Essence**

Other known research streams are considerably more recent and are most heavily focused on the *consumer* and *managerial perspectives* at the micro-level (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016). Thus, putting the luxury consumer at the centre of research, the “self-concept and brand relationships” cluster examines the social psychological mechanisms and conditions that facilitate luxury consumption from the individual perspective. This includes looking at how individuals use luxury brands for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a desirable identity (Belk, 1988) or focusing on the self-concept (Sirgy, 1982) and, for instance, the compensatory function of luxury consumption (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008, 2009; Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010). Developed almost concurrently is the “brand equity” stream with a key focus on the *managerial perspective*, yet a clear link to the previous stream with regards to the interest in identifying the motivational basis of luxury consumption (hence, it is also rather profoundly concerned with *luxury consumers* and the *luxury object* itself). Research within the “brand equity” stream places emphasis on the luxury brand acting as a critical asset (Aaker, 1991) and

focuses on its symbolic significance (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1997). Additionally, a number of its studies provide conceptual frameworks differentiating luxury brands from non-luxuries and establishing their value dimensions (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels, 2009).

Another reasonably recent research stream - on “counterfeiting” - is concerned with consumer motives for consuming non-authentic luxuries (Bloch, Bush, and Campbell, 1993; Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009) as well as their reactions towards such consumption (e.g. Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Eisend and Schuchert-Güler, 2006), and adopts both *consumer* and *managerial perspectives* in equal manner. At the same time, the “evolutionary view” stream signifies the plausibility of the evolutionary theory in the consumption setting, with the idea of mating goals used as an alternative explanation of luxury consumption among different genders (Buss and Schmitt, 1993; Kenrick et al., 2010). Here, the costly signalling theory is frequently used to show how mate quality can be manifested through status products (Griskevicius et al., 2006, 2007; Li et al., 2002; Janssens et al., 2011). As a result, this research stream is primarily concerned with studying *luxury consumers* at the meso-level and, to a certain extent, their *social environment* at the meso-level given this stream’s social-interactionist stance on luxury.

Lastly - “luxury brand management” - the most recent of all research clusters (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016), heavily contributes to the *managerial perspective* and, to a lesser degree, to the *consumer perspective* as well as the *luxury essence*, as it tackles the specificity of luxury brands and aims to establish the management standards given the fundamental differences of luxury brands with non-luxuries (Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). Even within the luxury domain itself luxury brands are found to differ along important dimensions (i.e. ontological and aesthetic forms), thus making the management of luxury ever more so challenging (Berthon et al., 2009).

#### **2.1.4 Orientations to Luxury: Prevalence of Social yet Growing Recognition of Personal**

As discussed in the previous section on the evolution of luxury research, much of prior work on luxury is focused on determining the role of social/interpersonal effects on the consumption of such products or brands. Even at present, marketing researchers continue to be fascinated with the variability of consumer behaviour in relation to various mostly psychological constructs in the context of outward-driven luxury consumption. One such recent study (Han, Nunes, and Dreze, 2010) adopts Veblen's (1899) ideas about the desire for status and wealth display among individuals engaging in conspicuous consumption. The authors propose a new way of classifying luxury consumers based on different levels of wealth and need for status that they possess. According to them, a luxury consumer may belong to one of the four identified groups: patricians, parvenus, poseurs, and proletarians. Each group within their taxonomy has a particular preference for brands that are high or low in prominence, which denotes the degree of the brand's conspicuousness. Each group also has motives to either show association or, on the opposite, dissociation from those belonging to their group and others. Thus, proletarians are low on both wealth and need for status, hence the reason why they do not participate in signalling using status brands. Poseurs, despite being poor, are high in need for status and consume counterfeits to imitate parvenus using loud signals. At the same time, parvenus choose loud luxury brands as they seek both association with the wealthy and dissociation from the poor. Finally, patricians are the members of the wealthy but low in need of status group and only engage in signalling to each other using quiet luxury brands or inconspicuous product lines of certain brands. In line with the propositions by Han, Nunes, and Dreze (2010), a signal does not always need to be conspicuous for effective signalling of status. Patricians, who prefer quiet luxury brands, tend to pay higher prices in order to signal to the right group of individuals they wish to associate with. This finding is consistent with the recently growing research on the utility of inconspicuous consumption, which is largely driven by the desire for public communication as a way for individuals with higher cultural capital to set themselves apart from the mass consumers (Berger and Ward, 2010; Eckhardt, Belk, and Wilson, 2015).

A number of other studies on the socially motivated consumption of luxuries form part of a wider body of literature on compensatory consumption. Thus, for instance, the need for self-integrity is examined in the context of status-oriented consumption, where the person's damaged ego can be repaired and protected from future threats through the consumption of luxury goods (Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010). According to the self-affirmation theory that was first proposed by Steele (1988), the main objective of the self-system is the preservation of its integrity. When faced with a real threatening event or one that is potentially perceived as menacing, people may employ certain types of responses as a way of coping with it. Self-affirmation theory suggests that, rather than accepting the failure or using defensive reactions, people self-affirm by reflecting on significant aspects of their life that are unrelated to the threat. By concentrating their self-resources on important domains, they come to the realisation that their self-worth does not depend on the judged implications of the current information (Sherman and Cohen, 2006). Given the important role that consumption plays in peoples' lives, it is believed that consumption offers an indirect route through which individuals can restore their self-integrity. Specifically, people experience ego-enhancing advantages through compensatory consumption of such products and seek ownership of status products when alternative routes are not available (Sivanathan and Pettit, 2010). This is especially relevant for low-income individuals, for whom the importance of consuming status products may be higher than for others, and can be at least partially explained by the hurt self-esteem of such individuals that triggers their status consumption. Nevertheless, reactive compensatory consumption described here is only one type of such behaviour and individual's behaviour can also be stimulated by the desire to protect the self from the future threats, i.e. proactive compensatory consumption of products, which are specifically affined to the possible future self-threats (Kim and Rucker, 2012).

Another contribution in this area is related to research on psychological states that a person can be intentionally or unintentionally placed in the everyday course of life and will try to avoid or recover from them by consuming luxury in a compensatory manner. This includes earlier research on special aversive states such as powerlessness, which

encourages compensatory status consumption (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008; Rucker and Galinsky, 2009). More specifically, it is found that interest in status-relevant products can be increased by psychological state of low power as a compensatory mechanism driven by a desire to restore the power (Rucker and Galinsky, 2008). According to this research, a state of low power is an unpleasant state and participants in the experimental setting show an increased desire to acquire luxury goods because they are associated with status and can help reinstate the feeling of power. Later research on the effects of power on consumer behaviour by Rucker and Galinsky (2009) studies how consumption preferences change according to the differences in power. They extend their earlier work by showing that consumption is also affected by states of high power and that powerful consumers are: better persuaded by persuasive advertising accentuating practical product features, more inclined to produce advertising word-combinations relying on aggressive approach, prefer high-quality products even when those lack status, and also demonstrate less interest in showcasing their products to others. Such states can be characterised by a short priming duration, but can also be more or less constantly present in a person whose power and influence are maintained or suppressed by social groups. For those who typically have short-lasting power fluctuations, willingness-to-pay may not serve as a strong indicator of purchase intentions and purchase behaviour as, for instance, participants would be likely to report less willingness-to-pay if they find other ways to restore power. Therefore, the effects of power states should be interpreted carefully with regards to their short priming duration and the presence of other factors influencing power restoration.

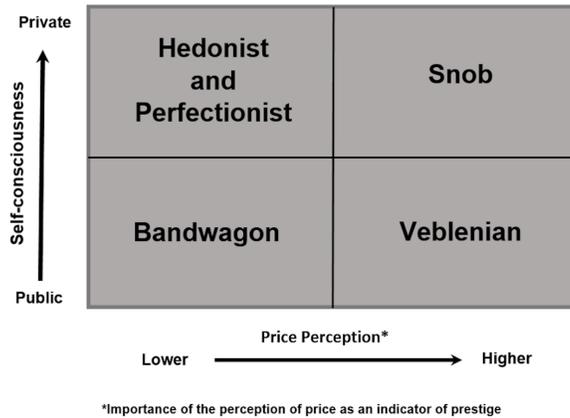
Although conspicuous consumption is still very much present in the modern society, there has been a growing recognition in the literature that merely social motives are not sufficient to understand the entire phenomenon of luxury consumption. Vigneron and Johnson (1999) synthesised prior research on the subject to develop a conceptual framework of prestige-seeking consumer behaviour (Figure 3 below), which not only recognises the value of interpersonal effects that go beyond the perceived conspicuousness of a product, but also incorporates new personally-oriented motives for luxury consumption that are independent of others' consumption habits. The framework comes in the form of a matrix operationalised using the notion of public vs. private self-consciousness and low vs.

high perception of price as a prestige signal. The term self-consciousness carries crucial importance as it influences consumer decision processes with respect to brand choices and the extent of its impact hinges upon the individual's susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). In the conceptual framework self-consciousness construct reflects a person's inclination to direct attention internally or externally as it aims to grasp and differentiate between the personal and interpersonal motives for luxury consumption. Thus, highly susceptible to reference-group influence, Veblenian consumers consider price as a signal of prestige as they primarily strive to impress others. Bandwagon consumers, on the other hand, are less concerned with price and put primary focus on the impressions of others about the luxury products they consume. Their main goal is to use the symbolism of the consumed luxury in order to attain group affiliation. At the same time, snob consumers regard price as an indicator of exclusivity and are predominantly concerned with the self-oriented consumption. Thus, unlike the first two, the snob effect is more complicated in that it originates from both interpersonal and personal effects. Snobs are driven by the need for uniqueness, which is the consequence of a social comparison process and implies a desire to be perceived as distinct from others. As a result, snobs seek exclusivity and rarity qualities in the consumption of luxuries in order to satisfy their need for uniqueness.

In addition, recognising the importance of personal orientation to luxury, Vigneron and Johnson (1999) introduce two personal effects on prestige consumption: the hedonic effect with the attention on the perceived emotional value and the perfectionism effect focused on the perceived quality value. The hedonic effect accounts for consumers' motivations that are independent of the consumption of other individuals and occurs when consumers employ the acquired brand to evoke feelings and affective states. Hedonist consumers do not put much reliance on price as a measure of prestige and are primarily concerned with personal thoughts and feelings. At the same time, the perfectionist consumers are the only type of the identified luxury consumers to be predominantly interested in the products' primary utility, i.e. their functional attributes. These quality-seeking consumers use the quality cue to determine the extent of a brand's prestige and might be inclined to make price inferences in support of product's quality. Perfectionist consumers seek reassurance

from prestige brands in terms of authenticity or craftsmanship as it boosts the value they get from using the actual product.

Figure 3. Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behaviours

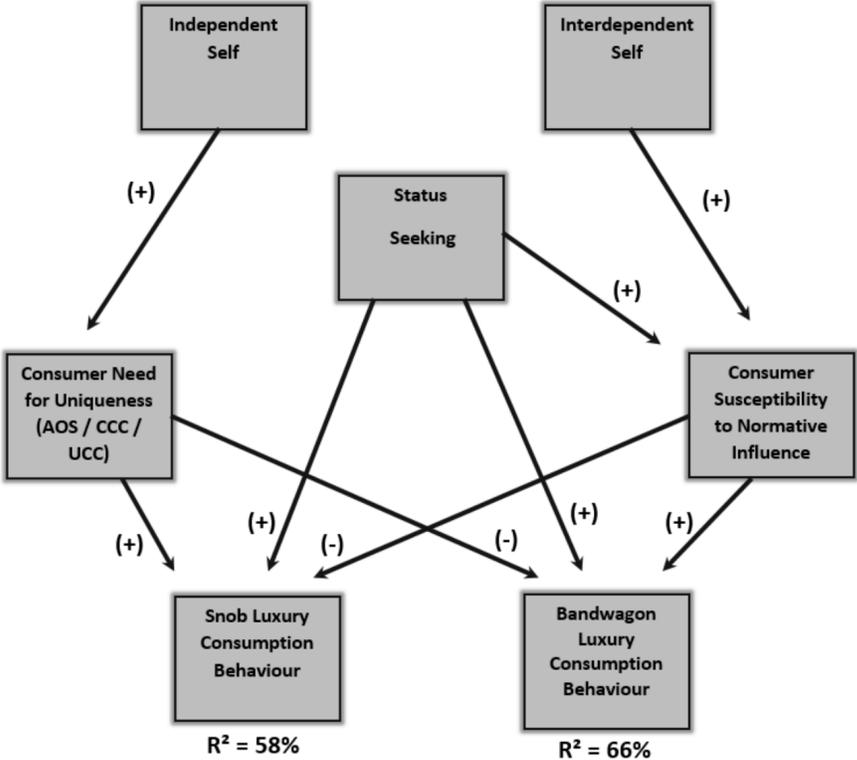


Source: Vigneron and Johnson (1999)

Some propositions put forward in Vigneron and Johnson’s (1999; 2004) framework of prestige-seeking consumer behaviour (later re-named as the brand-luxury construct framework), find reflection in the recent studies by Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012; 2014). The authors emphasise the self-concept – consumption relationship (see Figure 4 below), where the social or personal orientations of luxury consumers could be traced back to individual’s self-concept being independent or interdependent (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). As a general individual disposition, self-concept has much relevance in helping explain different types of conspicuous consumption given its accent on social relations or lack thereof. Through an empirical examination of two distinct types of conspicuous consumption, i.e. snob and bandwagon, they question the conventional treatment of conspicuous consumption in homogenous terms and examine it as a multidimensional heterogeneous behaviour driven by the independent or interdependent concept. Given the tendency among bandwagon consumers to seek social approval through luxury consumption, it appears that bandwagon luxury consumption is positively linked to the interdependent self-concept that emphasises social relations and comparisons. Furthermore, this relationship is mediated by consumer susceptibility to normative influence. However, the opposite is true of snob consumers who favour scarce, exclusive,

and uncommon luxury brands: their independent self-concept relates positively to the consumer need for uniqueness that averts them from purchasing popular luxury brands as those could not possibly accomplish the desired non-conformist signalling function. As a result, the independent self-concept of snobs promotes the personal orientation towards luxury consumption through the focus on self-expressive goals. However, their need for uniqueness stimulates the search for exclusive and rare luxury products as a way of enhancing not only one's self-image but also social image by means of acquiring the dissociative status. Consequently, despite the presence of strong personal motives among snobs, their actual consumption of luxury products depends on the consumption patterns of other individuals (Mason, 1992), meaning that the snob phenomenon remains to be viewed as an interpersonal effect.

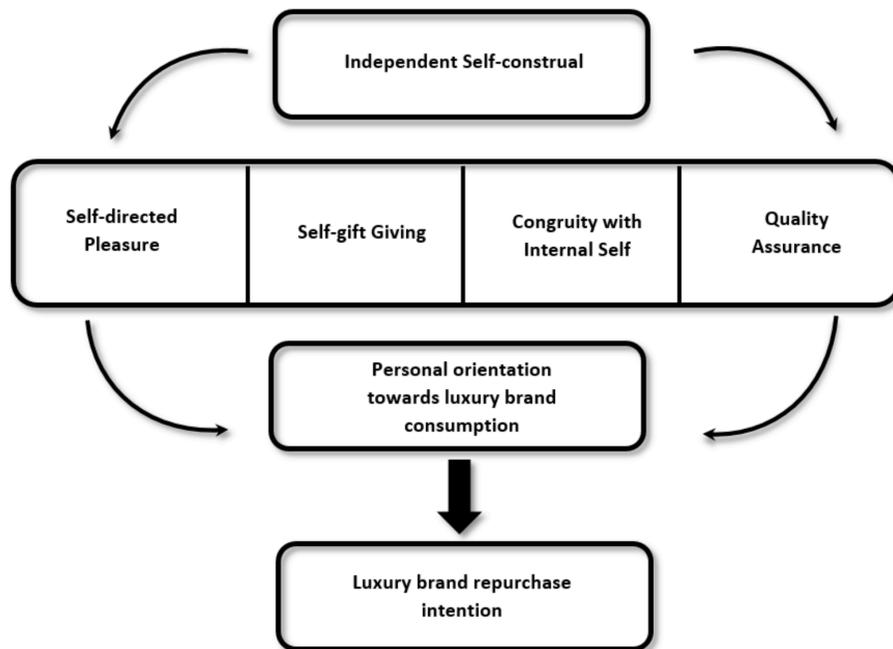
Figure 4. A Model of Conspicuous Luxury Consumption Behaviours and Their Psychological Antecedents



Source: Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014)

Renewed attention towards purely personal orientation to luxury brands comes from a study by Tsai (2005) who argues that not every consumer strives to engage in conspicuous consumption for the purpose of status gains. He believes that such personally motivated type of consumer should be better recognised by proposing a conceptual model of personal orientation towards luxury (see Figure 5 below), where consumers with independent self-construal are expected to seek a range of inconspicuous goals including self-directed pleasure, self-giving, congruity with internal self, and quality assurance that consequently influence consumers' repurchase intention of a luxury brand. Recent empirical evidence relating the personal motives to luxury consumer outcomes provides further support to the growing significance of personal orientation in luxury consumption in the contemporary society. Thus, for instance, Truong and McColl (2011) show that consumers with largely intrinsic motivations are likely to engage in buying luxury products for their outstanding quality and for self-directed pleasure. Additionally, Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. (2014) further investigated the nature of self-gifting and found that personally oriented motives serve as a trigger for the self-gifting gesture and luxury products tend to encompass certain self-oriented elements. However, they acknowledge that the very explicit act of buying luxury brands for oneself as a gift could potentially be prompted by other motives, such as socially oriented benefits.

Figure 5. Conceptual Model of Personal Orientation Towards Luxury



Source: Tsai (2005)

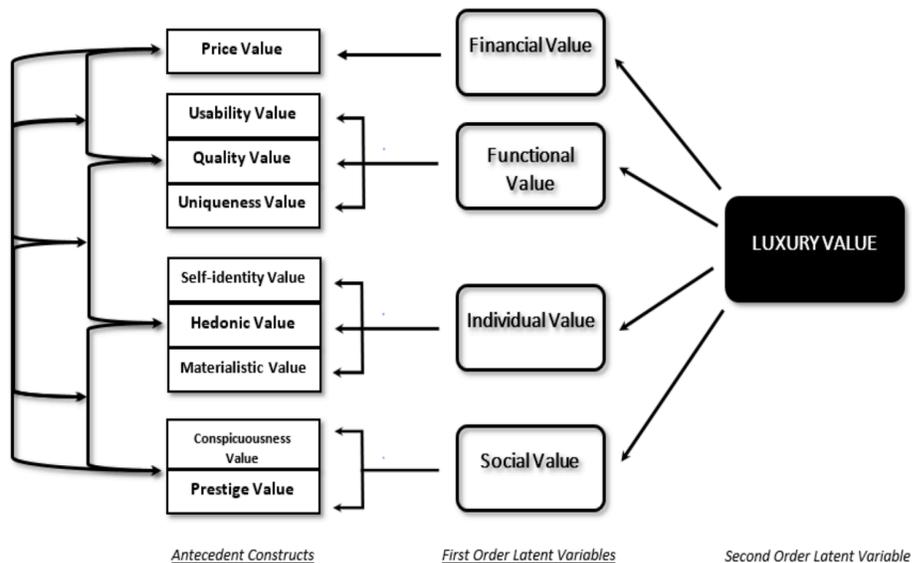
Other recent research highlights the achievement of not only socially oriented but also personally motivated goals through the consumption of luxury brands (and/or counterfeits) as it recognises that desire for luxury brands depends on the function served by the attitudes towards them (Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009). The study is based on the premise that attitudes may carry crucial social functions, such as facilitating self-expression as well as self-presentation. Attitudes that maintain a value-expressive function are known as value-expressive attitudes and those that fulfill a social-adjustive function are regarded as social-adjustive attitudes. More specifically, value-expressive attitudes towards a product aid consumers in conveying their primary views, values and attitudes to relevant others, thus allowing a person to consume such product as a way of expressing their self (Katz, 1960; Snyder and DeBono, 1985). At the same time, social-adjustive attitudes help consumers support relationships, as consumers feel determined to gain others' approval (DeBono, 1987). That is, if consumer's luxury brand attitudes perform a social-adjustive function that facilitates self-presentation, the preference for counterfeit products will be actually greater than for real luxury because counterfeit products have the shape and image attraction that is

coherent with a person's goal of conveying a certain image in the social context. In other words, the counterfeits are often the exact replica of the real luxury brands in terms of their surface similarity, which allows a person achieve their social goals by purchasing counterfeits for a lesser cost than genuine products. However, when the luxury brand attitudes serve a value-expressive function that enables self-expression, the preference for luxury brands will be higher as a person is motivated to consume products for their quality rather than image attributes. Interestingly, brand conspicuousness is identified as one variable that increases the ability of consumers' attitudes towards the luxury brand to perform a social function. This, however, does not imply that anyone whose attitudes serve a social-adjustive function will be more inclined to buy conspicuously branded counterfeits, and those with value-expressive function – genuine luxury brands. Such decisions will also depend on a range of previously established sociocultural (e.g. lower vs. higher social status), psychological (e.g. attitudes towards counterfeiting), and product-related (e.g. functionality, price, etc.) factors (Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009).

Finally, the review would be incomplete without mentioning the influential work by Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2007; 2009). Similar to Vigneron and Johnson (1999; 2004), they seek to organise the motives behind luxury consumption into a broader and better-structured perspective. However, these authors approach the issue from a different angle – by examining the dimensions that comprise the luxury value in consumers' perception. Their comprehensive multidimensional conceptualisation of luxury value (Figure 6) incorporates four basic motivational drivers for luxury consumption: financial, functional, individual, and social values. Thus, in addition to the undeniable presence of social utility in luxury consumption context encompassing conspicuousness and prestige aspects, the authors recognise the value of personal orientation represented by self-identity value, hedonic value, and materialistic value. The financial and functional value dimensions, which address the products' tangible utilities (i.e. basic utility) and perceived monetary features (i.e. economic utility), are also included in the framework. According to Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2007), focusing specifically on one of the identified dimensions may not be sufficient to explain the behaviour of luxury consumers, despite the independent nature of each of them. Because these values often interplay with each other

and affect person's luxury value perceptions and consumption behaviours differently, the overall perception of a luxury product would depend on the perception of all four values combined, derived from the personal weighting of antecedent constructs that the value dimensions consist of. Additionally, it is argued that situational conditions and individual attributes may influence the perception of a luxury brand, so that different kinds of consumers would have different perceptions of the same brand's luxury value and the general luxury value would assimilate those perceptions from distinct perspectives.

Figure 6. Conceptual Model of Luxury Value



Source: Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2007)

Based on the luxury consumer assessment of their value perceptions of luxury products, Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2009) identify four different kinds of luxury consumers: *the materialists*, who value materialistic and usability values most; *the rational functionalists*, who also give more preference to individual and functional aspects of luxury consumption and score highly on uniqueness and self-identity values; *the extravagant prestige-seekers*, whose ratings are highest on prestige, hedonic value (extravagance) and usability; and, finally, the *introvert hedonists*, who favour the individual aspects of luxury consumption as becomes clear from their highest rating on two factors of hedonic value: self-directed pleasure and life enrichment. Socially directed motives seem to be particularly

prevalent only among the extravagant prestige-seekers, which suggests that the personal aspects deserve more attention in research on luxury consumption.

### **2.1.5 Summary**

Chapter 2.1 sought to highlight the scope of research directions from which the comprehension of conspicuous and luxury consumption phenomena was expanded. It identified certain research streams with increasing modern relevance in the luxury domain that carry unique potential for further advancement. One such area is research on brand personality that was found to have unparalleled significance for status brands (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016). Thus, chapter 2.2 aims to critically reflect on past research on the subject of brand personality and, in particular, brand personality scale development and provide a new perspective as it recognises the need for a new measurement tool specifically designed for luxury brands and free from the important limitations of existing brand personality frameworks.

## **2.2 Brand Personality Construct**

### **2.2.1 Human Personality**

The notion of personality occupies a principal position in research on consumer and brand personality. Historically, personality has been studied from a number of different perspectives. These include:

- Psychodynamic theories of personality that aspired to understand the levels of personality and its development (e.g. Freud, 1923/1962; Adler, 1927);
- Behaviourism that sought to explain the observable behaviour in experimental context (e.g. Skinner, 1963) and social environment (e.g. Rotter, 1964);
- Humanistic theories, which regarded an individual as free to develop a relationship with the world through own conscious perceptions of it (e.g. Kelly, 1955);
- And, finally, personality trait theories that laid the foundation for subsequent research on traits as reflections of individual differences and their link to human

behaviour (e.g. Allport, 1937, 1961).

Given that research on personality has evolved from different standpoints, the term has many definitions that differ even between the researchers with similar perspectives (Pervin, 1990).

While each perspective has its own significance, the most impactful research on personality has focused on studying this construct from the trait perspective. Much prior work has speculated about the genetic nature of traits and, even though some researchers view traits as attributes without biological basis, many others suggest that traits are derived genetically (e.g. Eysenck, 1967; Pervin, Cervone, and Oliver, 2005). Once the importance of genetic factors in defining personality is acknowledged, another issue becomes evident: is personality stable over time or does it have a tendency to change? According to one of the most pronounced researchers in the field of personality, personality “is the dynamic organisation within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought” (Allport, 1937, p.28). Such definition implies that personality is, indeed, subject to development and change (albeit gradual) and is also seen as a unified whole.

The view of personality represented by traits, which are seen as a coherent and a relatively durable tendency in behaviour, led researchers such as Allport (1937, 1961) to believe that by knowing individual’s traits, one could give a description of their personality. The starting point was consideration of all personality terms present in the dictionary grounded in the assumption that natural language sufficiently embodies all relevant and salient human personality traits. However, as a separate examination of a wide range of personality characteristics was a highly meticulous job, it became apparent that personality psychology needed a more general model of trait domains, i.e. taxonomy of traits (John and Srivastava, 1999). Following years of research on human personality, the field began to merge on the “Big Five” personality conceptualisation based on the groundwork of Fiske in 1949. Fiske (1949) developed the poll of traits from the analysis of natural language terms that served as input for much of the subsequent personality measurement research. The five main factors, which were more clearly confirmed in Tupes and Christal (1992) and later

supported by various empirical works (e.g. Goldberg, 1990; Barrick and Mount, 1991) were: Extraversion, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. These were the dimensions on which brand personality research was based.

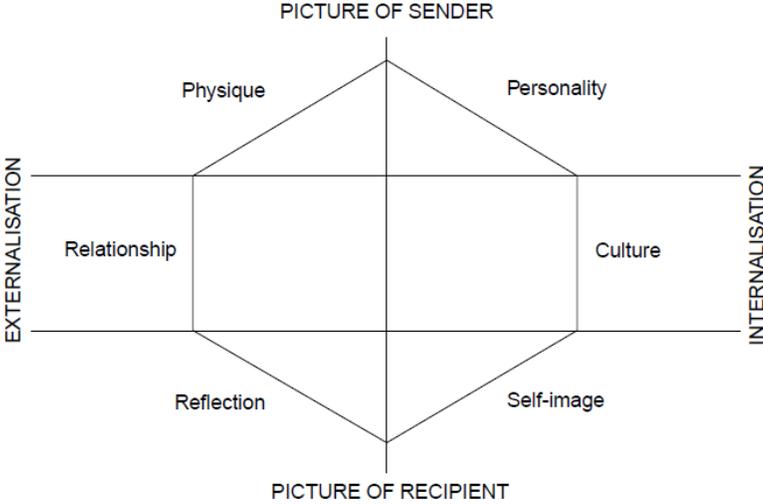
Unlike previous trait models (e.g. Eysenck and Eysenck, 1975), the Big Five personality model incorporates all principal dimensions of personality by integrating various personality concepts and measures and is, thus, considered to be the most complete model of human personality. The most widely adopted assessment tool is Costa and McCrae's (1992) Revised NEO personality inventory comprising 30 relatively narrow traits that fall under the five broad dimensions. As the five-factor model relies on the fundamental principles of trait theory, its basic dimensions are universal because they represent the foundational tendencies of human nature (McCrae and Costa, 1999). A number of empirical attempts have been made to determine the universality of these basic dimensions of human personality across diverse populations and, although individual items do not always load on the expected factor and the factors sometimes assume distinct labels (John and Srivastava, 1999), on a broad scale the same five factors have been subsequently confirmed in all cultures studied (McCrae and Costa, 1997; McCrae and Terracciano, 2005).

### **2.2.2 Brand Identity, Brand Image, and Brand Personality**

The constructs of brand identity and brand image are widely recognised by the research community as they readily capture a variety of associations exerted by a brand (e.g. Keller, 1993; Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2008). Thus, it becomes crucial to clarify the conceptual distinctions between these concepts and that of brand personality. Customarily, brand identity is regarded as an emission concept (i.e. desired identity), whilst the brand image is viewed as a reception concept (i.e. perceived image). Hence, brand identity represents a brand's meaning advocated by the brand managers and professed to the target segment of customers (Kapferer, 2008). Previous conceptualisations of brand identity are illustrated by a number of distinct grids whose aim is to facilitate the assessment of brands' symbolic, utilitarian, and social values. For instance, brand identity may be defined in terms of four distinct facets that regard a brand as a product, as an organisation, as a person, and, finally,

as a symbol (Aaker, 1996a/1996b; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). In addition, grounded in the constructivist school of thought is Kapferer’s (2008) brand identity prism that depicts a brand as a speech moving from the sender to the recipient, which cannot exist if the act of communication does not take place. According to this framework (see Figure 7 below), the sender is determined by the elements of physique (physical factors and brand’s qualities) and personality (a set of human personality traits), whilst reflection (target group image) and self-image (consumer’s thoughts and feelings about themselves in relation to the brand) define the recipient. The remaining two elements of brand identity, i.e. relationship (underlines the way of behaviour) and culture (values imbued in a brand) make a connection between the sender and the recipient.

Figure 7. Brand Identity Prism



Source: Kapferer (2008)

On the opposite, brand image is consumers’ own apprehension of the intended brand’s identity (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, and Van den Bergh, 2007). For instance, Keller (2008) depicts brand image as being comprised of: user profiles, purchase and usage instances, personality and values, and, lastly, history, heritage, and experiences.

Evidently, both brand identity and brand image embody numerous relevant associations regarding the brand, part of which are related to human aspects and represent human personality traits. As a result, brand personality can be seen as a common facet and a key compound of these two constructs (Kapferer, 2008; Aaker and Fournier, 1995). In an ideal setting, the desired and the perceived personality should be the same. However, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) point towards the importance of the conceptual and practical differentiation between the sender (the firm) and the receiver (the consumer) facets so that brand personality does not get mixed up with other facets of brand identity (or brand image).

Every consumption effort offers a number of conscious as well as unconscious symbolic meanings for the consumer (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). As a result, the notion of brand personality is instrumental in enabling the successful consumption of such qualities. It is typically employed as part of a general positioning strategy and, in instances where it is harmoniously and consistently communicated to the consumer, has the capacity to influence consumer perceptions in considerably more lasting ways than other marketing strategies (Burke, 1994). Brand personality is typically defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p.347). As part of her scale development work, Aaker (1997) sought to uncover how brand personality attributes are structured in the minds of American consumers. She used a range of commercial brands, including some well-known luxury brands, to examine brand meaning using a set of personality attributes and the results of her studies suggest that U.S. consumers perceive brand personalities in terms of five key dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. She found three of those dimensions to be comparable to the Big Five model of human personality traits.

Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera (2001) and Sung and Tinkham (2005) attempted to replicate the five-dimensional structure in Spain, Japan, and Korea. Importantly, their findings established the existence of crucial differences in the personalities of brands with different cultural backgrounds, as new brand personality dimensions emerged that were characteristic of local cultures (e.g. Ascendancy in Korea or Peacefulness in Japan).

Additionally, some of the dimensions applicable in the U.S culture were eliminated from the structure of these countries' brand personalities, including Ruggedness in Spain and Japan or Excitement and Sincerity dimensions in Korea. Thus, commercial brands have been found to convey both relatively culturally common as well as specific meaning due to important similarities as well as differences in the way individuals organise the symbolic and expressive attributes of commercial brands in relation to the values emphasised in their culture. Moving beyond the issue of cross-cultural replicability, Austin, Siguaw, and Mattila (2003) examined the generalisability of Aaker's scale at the respondent level (for a certain brand or a chosen product category) in the product category of restaurants and found that her scale was not generalisable to individual brands in that product category, including one brand (i.e. McDonald's) that was used in the original study. Hence, they suggested that Aaker's (1997) scale is likely to be successfully applied in research where data is aggregated across a range of different product categories rather than individual brands or a certain product category.

### **2.2.3 Introduction of Anthropomorphism Theory into Branding Research**

Anthropomorphism belongs to the set of the most common and relatively unsophisticated cognitive mechanisms that help individuals assign meaning to the world around them (Murphy and Medin, 1985). The theory of anthropomorphism arises from the tendency of individuals to imbue non-human objects with human-like characteristics, emotions or motivations typically associated with humans (Epley, Waytz, and Cacioppo, 2007). Whilst some objects may be anthropomorphised merely through their physical appearance, in real life such process most often extends to attributing personality adjectives to objects following the observed or imagined actions (Ambroise and Valette-Florence, 2010). As agents of communication, brands become employed for the purpose of generation and transfer of intended symbolic meanings to the consumer. As a result, they turn into subjects of inferential judgement on behalf of consumers regarding these assigned qualities.

Although the idea of brands as having personalities is not novel (Gardner and Levy, 1955), Aaker (1997) and, later, Fournier (1998) with her seminal work on brand relationships were among the first researchers to definitively assimilate the terms animism and anthropomorphism into research on brand personality in order to facilitate its understanding as a human-like entity. Theoretically, Aaker's (1997) research is deductively (a priori) constructed and framed on human personality measurement and, especially, on the Big Five taxonomy of human personality traits (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013b). According to her, the relevance of importation of theory and methodology from the field of human psychology can be explained by these anthropomorphic qualities of brands. Brands convey various meanings that arise in the culturally constituted world and move from consumption objects to consumers in the process of consumption (McCracken, 1986). By virtue of the marketing efforts and human-like portrayals, consumers become capable of associating different brands with desirable anthropomorphic features that play a crucial role in shaping a strong brand image (McCracken, 1989; Aaker, 1997). Brand personifications do not only lead to effective brand differentiation outcomes, but they also enable consumers to use a brand enriched with human-like attributes for the purpose of self-expression and for building a "relationship" with a brand they can relate to (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014).

#### **2.2.4 Existing Brand Personality Frameworks**

In the process of developing a first valid, reliable and generalisable measure of brand personality, Aaker (1997) used a broad definition of brand personality, which encompassed all human characteristics associated with a brand. Such extensive definition led to the use of personality scales from psychology, original qualitative research, personality measures used by academics as well as personality scales used by practitioners in the trait generation process. For familiarity purposes, a free-association task was employed with reference to symbolic, utilitarian and both, symbolic and utilitarian kinds of brands, and served as an additional source of personality characteristics. Traits were reduced by means of scale rating, thereby leaving a total of 114 personality traits to be confirmed through a large-scale survey. In terms of stimuli, 37 well-known brands from different product categories, including some luxury brands (i.e. Porsche, Mercedes, Lexus and Apple), were used. Five

brand personality dimensions were identified. However, despite the inclusion of adjective lists similar to the human personality inventory, Aaker's (1997) brand personality structure did not correspond to the Big Five typology, indicating that consumers may think about brands and individuals differently.

A number of other brand personality scales have been developed in recent years:

- I. Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera (2001) & Sung and Tinkham (2005) - based on Aaker's (1997) groundwork, these studies aim to determine the structure of brand personality across different cultures, including Japan, Spain, and Korea, and compare with the five facets identified by Aaker (1997) in the American context.
- II. Ambroise, Ferrandi, and Merunka (2005) – developed in the French context but relying on Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera's (2001) and other works (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido, 2001; Ferrandi, Valette-Florence, and Fine-Falcy, 2000; Ferrandi and Valette-Florence, 2002) for item generation, the new scale has been tested on merely two product categories (4 well-known brands) and culminated in a large number of personality facets.
- III. Sweeney and Brandon (2006) – developed in the Australian context using a different approach to personality: the Interpersonal Circumplex model.
- IV. Milas and Mlačić (2007) – developed in the context of Croatian brands, the new scale reflects how brand personality is related to personality dimensions derived from the natural language through the direct imposition of the AB5C personality model (Hofstee, De Raad, and Goldberg, 1992); among other anomalies, the authors report a lack of simple structure.
- V. Bosnjak, Bochmann, and Hufschmidt (2007) – developed in the German context using a person-centric perspective that allowed the incorporation of both positively and negatively valenced traits.
- VI. Geuens, Weijters and Wulf (2009) – developed in the Belgian context using a distinct from Aaker's (1997) brand personality conceptualisation, the resulting brand personality scale mirrors the Big Five human personality framework.

- VII. Kuenzel and Phairor (2009) – a preliminary work undertaken in the German context based on just one specific automobile brand and resulting in two dimensions.
- VIII. Heine (2009) – a preliminary development of a scale in the German context using the Repertory Grid Technique with the aim to establish the personality of luxury brands across multiple product categories.
- IX. Grohmann (2009) – a two-dimensional scale to measure the gender dimensions of brand personality.
- X. Heere (2010) – a preliminary work based on just one sports brand using a free listing technique and resulting in a two-dimensional structure.
- XI. Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010) & Valette-Florence and De Barnier– developed in the French context, both scales use a similar methodological approach and produce a five-dimensional measure stable across product categories (in the case of the first macro scale) as well as applicable only for a specific product category of print media brands (in the case of the latter micro-approach scale).

In order to provide the basis for meaningful comparisons and to identify strengths and limitations of existing frameworks, six brand personality scales with distinct conceptual and methodological approaches are reviewed in more detail. Thus, following the introduction of the first brand personality scale, Sweeney and Brandon (2006) built on Aaker's (1997) work yet pursued a different approach to modelling brand personality. They used the interpersonal circumplex approach that, unlike the Big Five human personality model, has a strong theoretical foundation in the early interpersonal theory. While this model was initially developed on the person-to-person relationships, it has been adjusted without the full explanation to describe person-to-brand relationships. According to their findings, Extraversion and Agreeableness in the five-factor human personality model are the only two factors that fully denote interpersonal relations. When comparing the five-factor measure with Aaker's model, two particular domains that Aaker (1997) considered comparable with the five-factor human personality structure, i.e. Sincerity and Excitement, are found to be incapable of entirely representing the interpersonal domains from the perspective of the circular circumplex approach. Yet, according to them, they are the only

factors that are more suitable for measuring brand personality compared with the remaining three factors.

Consequently, Sweeney and Brandon (2006) suggest that Extraversion and Agreeableness in the five-factor human personality model and Excitement and Sincerity in Aaker's (1997) brand personality measure are more suitable for measuring brand personality than the other dimensions in each of the two models. Findings reveal that Extraversion and Agreeableness factors from Trapnell and Wiggins (1990) human personality scale while scoring lower on the appropriateness scale, are significantly more suitable for describing brand personality than the other three dimensions. At the same time, Excitement and Sincerity factors from Aaker's (1997) measure are only seen as more appropriate than Competence, but not Sophistication. However, their model adds very little to the personality of luxury brands.

Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) justify Aaker's (1997) lack of correspondence to the loose domain specification that allowed the inclusion of non-personality brand characteristics. To address this problem, they developed a new typology of brand personality based on personality traits taken from human personality scales, complemented by traits generated by participants in relation to some brands. Unlike in Aaker (1997)'s work, expert judgement was employed to eliminate non-personality traits (see Table 1 for comparisons). Their testing procedures utilised a wide range of brands (193 in 20 product categories) including a number of luxury brands. The resulting typology encompasses five dimensions (i.e. Activity, Responsibility, Aggressiveness, Simplicity, and Emotionality), which fully resemble the Big Five human personality dimensions.

Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010) examined the foundations of anthropomorphism and the existence of proper techniques for attribution of personality traits to brands in order to establish the ontological validity of brand personality construct. They questioned the appropriateness of the mere imposition of traits from human personality scales to brands and, instead, followed a new approach to the development of a brand personality measure, with personality adjectives generated by questioning consumers and brand experts using a

range of relevant techniques. Admittedly, Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010) also included traits from a number of existing brand personality scales that are framed on human personality measurement. However, they ensured consumers assessed the applicability of such items to the context of brands. Further quantitative tests confirmed the existence on a brand personality measure consisting of five dimensions: Introversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Sophistication and Disingenuousness.

In light of prior brand personality scale development research being mostly concentrated on the creation of global measures, Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013) argued for the importance of a micro approach in examining specific brand personality traits. The micro level allows the examination of brands within a chosen context, which results in the generation of relevant culture-specific dimensions that may not, however, necessarily be present in macro scales. Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013) created a new personality scale specifically for print media brands in the French context by using a methodological approach similar to Ambroise and Valette-Florence's (2010) discussed above. More specifically, the items were generated through different stages of qualitative studies and validated by experts before being used as input in the Internet questionnaire. Results suggest that the personality of print media brands is composed of five dimensions: Respectability, Disingenuousness, Conviviality, Assertiveness, and Charm, - one of which (i.e. negatively valenced dimension Disingenuousness) can be found in the earlier "macro" level scale development study of Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010).

Given their highly symbolic nature, Heine (2009) recognised a need for the development of a separate personality measure for luxury brands. In contrast to Aaker (1997), Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009), Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010), and Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013) who relied on statistical analyses in establishing the key brand personality dimensions, Heine's (2009) sole method was qualitative research. Rather than applying theoretical basis to the process of item generation, the author pursued a data-driven method to identifying and analysing personality characteristics. The main sources of data were German luxury buyers, who took part in the in-depth interviews incorporating a number of elicitation techniques (repertory grid, etc.). The resulting dimensions were

derived through rough arrangements of associations into certain categories until a sensible framework was established (i.e. Modernity, Eccentricity, Opulence, Elitism, and Strength).

Author(s)	Definition of Brand Personality	Method: Item-Generation	Method: Item Reduction	Method: Sample	Method: Brands	Analysis	Key Dimensions
<b>Aaker (1997)</b>	The set of human characteristics associated with a brand	Personality scales in psychology, scales used by academics, practitioners, original qualitative research and items generated from a free-association task; 309 nonredundant traits identified	Scale rating; List reduced to 114 traits	Non-probability sampling: 16 participants in a free-association task and 25 participants in scale rating; Representative sample: 631 U.S. respondents in the main survey and 180 in the confirmatory survey	37 well-known brands from different product and service categories in the main study; 20 well-known brands in 10 product categories in the confirmatory study	Statistical analysis (e.g. exploratory principal components analysis and varimax rotation; confirmatory factor analysis)	Sincerity Excitement Competence Sophistication Ruggedness
<b>Sweeney and Brandon (2006)</b>	The set of human personality traits that correspond to the interpersonal domain of human personality and are relevant to describing the brand as a relationship partner	Expert judgment (32 academics); Sources: Aaker's (1997) 42-item scale, Wiggins (1979) scale, and Trapnell and Wiggins (1990)	None	Online questionnaire scale rating by 32 judges with academic background in marketing	Range of product categories (unspecified)	Mean and SD calculations of scale ratings; Paired sample t-tests; Verification of findings by four debriefed judges	Agreeableness & Extraversion (from the Trapnell and Wiggins (1990) five factor model of human personality)
<b>Heine (2009)</b>	See Aaker (1997)	Exploratory interviews with the use of elicitation techniques such as RGT; Collaborative RGT online	None	Non-probability sampling: 31 German luxury buyers in the main study;  52 students in complementary online study	Luxury brands in various product/service categories	Main study: content analysis of identified characteristics and iterative arrangement into sensible categories; Complementary study: tag clouds, factor analysis	Modernity Eccentricity Opulence Elitism Strength
<b>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf</b>	The set of human personality	Personality traits in Aaker's (1997) work,	Expert judgment; Survey	Representative sample: 1,235 Belgian survey	20 well-known brands in	Statistical analysis (e.g.	Responsibility Activity Aggressiveness

<b>(2009)</b>	traits that are both applicable and relevant for brands	personality scales measuring human personality and focus group task for personality trait generation; 224 nonredundant traits identified	pretest with statistical analysis	respondents in pretest; 12,789 Belgian respondents in the main survey; 4,500 Belgian respondents in test-retest task; 401 US respondents and European consumer panel in cross-cultural validation	pretest; 193 different brands from 20 different categories in the main study	principal components analysis with varimax rotation; confirmatory factor analysis)	Simplicity Emotionality
<b>Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010)</b>	The set of human personality traits that are both applicable and relevant for brands	Interviews with consumers and brand experts using the nominal group technique and assessment of applicability of several existing brand personality scales; additional questionnaires with consumers/students	Brand expert assessment	22 consumers and experts; multiple self-administered/Internet questionnaires with students/consumers	A range of global and local (French) brands across different product categories (e.g. 39 brands in 14 product categories in the quantitative stage)	Automated lexical analysis; Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses	Introversion Agreeableness Conscientiousness Sophistication Disingenuousness
<b>Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013)</b>	Implied definition of Azoulay and Kapferer (2003): "The set of human personality traits that are both applicable and relevant for brands"	Interviews with consumers and experts; internet questionnaire	None	780 questionnaire respondents chosen on the grounds of different ways of acquiring their print media publication	Print media publications: high circulation figures; paired with similar publications; and from the same category but different formats	Principal component exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses	Respectability Disingenuousness Conviviality Assertiveness Charm

### 2.2.5 Recognising the Limitations of Existing Brand Personality Frameworks

One key issue that emerges from the comparison of six brand personality scales in Table 1 is the way brand personality is defined in Aaker (1997) and Heine (2009). Aaker's (1997) definition affects the construct and content validity as it allows the inclusion of all human characteristics in the brand personality measure, even those that are not deemed to be

personality traits. According to its detractors, Aaker's (1997) measure intermixes brand identity with brand personality. Brand personality is also seen as an important but distinct from user personality component (Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). As one solution, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) suggest further narrowing the definition of brand personality to include "the unique set of human personality traits [which are] both applicable and relevant to brands" (p.151). As a result, characteristics related to cognitive abilities, gender, social class, and age should be excluded from a brand personality measure. A valid measure of brand personality should incorporate only known human personality traits.

While Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) reconcile the problem of defining brand personality through the adoption of a stricter definition, their brand personality framework is grounded on human personality taxonomies and may not accurately capture the essence of luxury brand personality. The typology is developed on an array of brands, which are high on functional motivations without checking for inter-brand equivalences.

Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010) question the legitimacy of transposition of theories of human personality to brands and for the first time develop a scale based on the descriptions generated from the actual consumers. However, they do not employ item purification techniques, and it is unclear whether the retained items are indeed personality traits or other characteristics. Additionally, Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010) developed a scale that is semantically and culturally sensitive to the French context, and may not be generalisable to other cultural settings.

This brings the discussion to another key issue of more holistic scales (i.e. Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009; Ambroise and Valette-Florence, 2010) that focus on cross-cultural and inter-category product dimensions: their generalisability to the area of luxuries. Thus, Aaker's (1997) measure had been criticised on these grounds, as Austin, Siguaw, and Mattila (2003) questioned its generalisability across specific types brands or product categories. According to the authors, Aaker's (1997) methodology is flawed as she removed all within-brand variance from her analyses. She used data aggregated across respondents to facilitate between-brand comparisons. Austin, Siguaw, and Mattila (2003)

tested the replicability and generalisability of the framework on one specific product category (i.e. restaurants), and the confirmatory factor analyses showed a lack of model fit even for a brand (McDonald's) used by Aaker (1997) to develop her measure.

Although Aaker (1997) used some luxury brands in her tests, the methodological concerns raised by Austin, Siguaw, and Mattila (2003) generate doubts on the generalisability of her scale to luxury brands. Furthermore, it might compel respondents to rate luxury brands on descriptors that may appear inapplicable (Batra, Lenk, and Wedel, 2006). This triggers the need to develop a brand personality measure from scratch (not an adaptation) exclusively for luxury brands.

Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013) pursued a micro approach to develop a scale that would be highly specific to a particular context of French print media brands and found that the predictive power of their brand personality measure was close to 20.5%, while the predictive power of a global measure was merely 1.5% on average. This points towards the usefulness of a micro approach for better understanding and capturing the essence of luxury brand personality.

Heine (2009) is the only attempt so far to develop a bespoke typology of brand personality for luxury brands. However, his research relies on the domain specification of brand personality laid out by Aaker (1997), criticised for its broadness and lack of accuracy and precision (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). As a result, he inherited the problems pinpointed by Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) and highlighted earlier. Furthermore, the theoretical and methodological grounding of Heine's assignment of brand characteristics to a structure of five personality dimensions is not clearly specified. However, Heine's (2009) five-dimensional personality taxonomy (i.e., Modernity, Eccentricity, Opulence, Elitism, and Strength) is different from the dimensions identified by Aaker (1997).

These criticisms make a pitch for the development of a new typology bespoke to the needs of luxury brands and based on a different methodological approach (detailed in the next chapter) free from the identified limitations.

## **2.3 Developing a Conceptual Model of Antecedents, Mediators, and Consequences of Brand Personality Using Self-Congruence Theory**

The last two decades have seen a drastic rise among marketing researchers trying to determine the nature of a brand's personality by identifying the key dimensions across which it could be measured in a variety of contexts. Despite its criticism (e.g. Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003), at present Aaker's (1997) work remains the dominant brand personality measure in the marketing domain. Whilst Aaker (1997) drew on past research to identify the possible antecedents and consequences of brand personality, the study falls short of specifying those relationships and empirically testing them. Moreover, with the exception of two studies (Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009; Grohmann, 2009), antecedents and consequences of brand personality have not received much attention in the context of scale development research on brand personality. In addition, no studies have investigated the role of mediator variables.

### **2.3.1 Brand Personality Antecedents**

A number of antecedents of brand personality have been identified through prior work (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013a), although additional research is needed for a deeper understanding of these relationships. Aaker (1997) proposed that brand personality could be formed through direct as well as indirect contact of a consumer with the brand. User imagery, company's employees, and product endorsers were identified as having a direct influence on brand personality. However, despite the existence of conceptual models supporting the transfer of personality traits associated with a brand directly to the actual brand (McCracken, 1989), currently there is still a lack of compelling empirical evidence for such effects. Furthermore, Aaker (1997) argued that indirect influence on brand personality happens via exposure to the attributes related to the product, product category associations, brand name/logo, advertising, price or channel of distribution.

Whilst an array of studies has been done to test these relationships predominantly applying Aaker's (1997) scale, many have failed to specify the predicted relationships

beyond the point of establishing the existence of a positive significant link between the variables of interest. Thus, Hayes, Alford, and Capella (2008) set to determine whether user imagery, product attributes and corporate associations manipulated in a print advertisement could lead to significant differences in brand personality dimensions. Although they managed to empirically demonstrate that, indeed, said associations embedded into print advertisements could result in varied perceived brand personality profiles, they do not provide theoretical explanations regarding why or how specific types of associations used in advertising could generate certain brand personality profiles. Another recent study examined the effect of employee behaviour on brand personality perceptions by drawing on stereotyping theory (Wentzel, 2009). The findings suggest that brand personality impressions might change in response to employee behaviour, however, the effect is more complex than originally predicted (e.g. Johar, Sengupta, and Aaker, 2005), as it might be impossible to estimate how brand personality impressions are influenced by employee behaviour without knowing if consumers view an employee as an ideal example of the brand's personnel or an individual with a set of idiosyncratic characteristics (Wentzel, 2009).

Likewise, other studies have researched the effects of brand name change on the perceptions of brand personality (M'Sallem, Mzoughi, and Bouhleb, 2009), consistent ad sequences as opposed to inconsistent ones and rounds of exposures to a single ad on consumer perceptions of brand personality (Yoo, Bang, and Kim, 2009), colour/shape of brand's physical packaging (Pantin-Sohier, Decrop, and Brée, 2005) and actual package design types on brand personality perceptions (Orth and Malkewitz, 2008), country-of-origin effects (Fetscherin and Toncar, 2009; Fetscherin and Toncar, 2010) as well as the effects of other branding activities, such as brand extensions, on subsequent variations in brand personality dimensions (Diamantopoulos, Smith, and Grime, 2005; Smith and Speed, 2005). However, they are all mostly silent on the underlying mechanisms for the expected relationships.

A similar issue extends to a number of further studies that have investigated other potentially relevant constructs and their relation to a brand's personality. For instance, Lim

and Ang (2008) have examined the role of culture in influencing brand personality and found that increased cultural conditioning towards utilitarian consumption elevated brand personality evaluations on brand personality characteristics from Aaker's (1997) scale. Few arguments are presented regarding the specific dimensions of which the stated effects would be more prominent under certain circumstances. Correspondingly, other studies focused on the effects of culture on the perceptions of brand personality but did not move beyond examining the sole existence of differences in brand personality perceptions across various cultural contexts (Murase and Bojanic, 2004; Foscht et al., 2008). This also extends to papers that have examined the role of another antecedent -brand experience - in influencing brand personality perceptions among consumers (Chang and Chieng, 2006; Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, 2009).

One study to make an important contribution towards studying the effects of antecedents on brand personality perceptions is Ang and Lim's (2006) study of metaphors in advertising. Furthering the rhetorical advertising theory, they investigated the influence of metaphors used in advertising on brand personality perceptions of utilitarian vs. symbolic brands. By disentangling the nature of metaphors, they made specific predictions regarding the effect of metaphoric ad elements on the perceptions of brand personality dimensions from Aaker's (1997) work. Thus, brands that were advertised using metaphors in advertisements were perceived as more sophisticated and exciting, but less competent and sincere, in comparison with advertisements employing literal ad components. As for product category influence, similar effects on brand personality also held for symbolic, as opposed to utilitarian, products. As regards the interaction effects, when compared with nonmetaphoric ad elements, the use of metaphoric elements magnified the perceptions of Sophistication (metaphoric headlines) and Excitement (metaphoric pictures) but diminished the perceptions of Sincerity in utilitarian products. At the same time, the use of metaphoric ad features enhanced the perceptions of Excitement (but not Sophistication) and reduced the perceptions of Sincerity for symbolic products. Applying these findings to the context of luxury brands might prove unreasonable both theoretically and empirically as luxury brands are widely regarded to be richer in symbolic attributes relative to standard brands (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999), thus making the job of

classifying luxury brands as symbolic vs. utilitarian comparatively more difficult. Moreover, metaphors tend to invoke perceptions of emotionality and upper-class character (Ang and Lim, 2006), which are readily linked to luxury brands on a collective basis, thus rendering the validity of stated predictions questionable in the luxury context.

Another study to advance the empirical research on the antecedents of brand personality is the scale development work by Grohmann (2009). As part of nomological validity testing, the two-dimensional scale of gender brand personality was subject to an investigation about whether spokespeople could shape the perceptions of a brand's personality. The key argument is that spokespeople have been traditionally identified as one of the key antecedents of brand personality (Aaker, 1997) and that modifying the associations related to the spokesperson is the most powerful route to redefining gender image of the product (Debevec and Iyer, 1986). More specifically, Grohmann (2009) varied the associations of masculinity and femininity in brand's spokespeople featured in a print advertisement and found that the feminine spokesperson intensified the perceptions of feminine brand personality, whereas the masculine spokesperson raised the perceptions of masculine brand personality. Notably, the participants were exposed to the advertisement on a singular basis, even though research suggests that consumers' perceptions are subject to change over a period of time in response to new brand information (Johar, Sengupta, and Aaker, 2005). Additionally, testing these relationships using the new scale of luxury brand personality would prove problematic as none of its dimensions represent the masculinity facet per se.

### **2.3.2 Brand Personality Consequences**

Past empirical research on brand personality has identified a range of variables that constitute the consequences of brand personality (see Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer's (2013a) meta-analytical study). However, similar to extant research on antecedents of brand personality, these studies do not provide a unifying mechanism through which brand personality affects consumer outcomes.

Among the key constructs that brand personality has been shown to influence are: brand image (Keller, 1993, 1998), brand attitude (Chang and Chieng, 2006), brand relationship strength (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel, 2004; Chang and Chieng, 2006), brand attachment (Swaminatha, Stille, and Ahluwalia, 2009), brand trust (Sung and Kim, 2010; Louis and Lombart, 2010), purchase/behavioural intentions (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, 2009; Kim, Magnini, and Singal, 2011), and brand fit (Grohmann, 2009).

Some researchers have traditionally viewed brand personality as an essential component of a brand image. Thus, Plummer (1985) suggested that brand personality forms brand image together with two other components, i.e. consumer benefit and product attributes. Similarly, Keller (1993, 1998) argued that brand image is shaped by brand personality, which serves a symbolic or self-expressive purpose. More recently, Chang and Chieng (2006) empirically determined that brand personality significantly and positively influences brand image in their study of consumers of coffee chain stores in two different regions: Shanghai and Taipei. They also empirically confirmed a significantly positive effect of brand personality on brand attitude as well as its influence on the consumer-brand relationship in one of the regions in the study.

A link between brand personality and a brand relationship has been suggested in a number of previous studies. In the interpersonal relationships domain, research has found that relationships are affected by the personalities of the partners in a given relationship (Robins, Caspi, and Moffitt, 2000) both directly and indirectly over time (Auhagen and Hinde, 1997). In the consumption context, Fournier (1998) has shown that consumers actively seek and cherish their ongoing relationships with brands and view them as important relationship partners. According to her, theories of animism could help explain how a brand becomes an alive, active relationship partner and brand personality is one of the key constructs that can vitalise the brand. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) also proposed that brand personality contributes to the formation of the consumer relationship and helps understand its development.

Consequently, Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel (2004) developed a conceptual model where they showed how brand personality might influence the strength of consumer-brand relationships directly as well as indirectly, especially when brands perform transgression acts. Hypotheses were made around Sincerity and Excitement brand personality dimensions in light of their fundamental nature as they represent major partner ideals in the context of intimate personal relationships (Fletcher et al., 1999). These two dimensions of brand personality also appear to capture the largest share of the variance in brand personality evaluations by consumers (Aaker, 1997). Aaker et al. (2004) proposed that stronger relationships would develop for sincere than for exciting brand personalities. However, when transgressions occur, they would have a weakening effect on sincere brands and lead to damaged relationships with no recovery symptoms, whereas a strikingly different pattern would happen in the case of exciting brand personalities (i.e. strength improvements when transgressions took place). This interactive effect of brand personality and transgressions on relationship strength was mediated by partner quality perceptions.

A causal link between brand personality and its other consequence brand attachment was examined given that brand personality helps develop the emotional aspects of a brand (Landon 1974). Research in consumer behaviour suggests that attachments to various objects, including brands, reveal an emotional bond (e.g. Shimp and Madden, 1988). Swaminathan, Stille, and Ahluwalia (2009) examined whether brand personality affected brand attachment and identified a significant positive relationship moderated by individual attachments styles. The results suggest that high anxiety types reported significantly higher levels of brand attachment for exciting vs. sincere brands depending on their level of relationship avoidance. In another study, Louis and Lombart (2010) tested a causal link between brand personality dimensions and brand attachment using the brand personality scale developed by Ambroise, Ferrandi, and Merunka (2005) comprising nine traits: friendly, creative, charming, ascendant, misleading, original, elegant, conscientious, and introvert. The results revealed the presence of a positive significant relationship between three brand personality traits, i.e. friendly, original, and elegant, on the attachment to the brand.

In the relationship marketing literature, trust has been defined as one of the main variables responsible for the success of relationship marketing activities (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Sung and Kim (2010) proposed that two dimensions of Aaker's (1997) brand personality would have a stronger influence on brand trust than brand affect: sincere and competent brands would be more likely to evoke trust in consumers than brands without such personality traits. This is because trust is typically associated with such beliefs as honesty, competence, and kindness (Coulter and Coulter, 2002), which can, in turn, be linked to Sincerity and Competence brand personality dimensions (Sung and Kim, 2010). On the opposite, Excitement, Sophistication and Ruggedness dimensions of brand personality often reflect brand's affective qualities, thereby leading to a stronger influence on brand affect than brand trust. The results suggest that sincere brands had a more statistically significant influence on brand trust than brand affect, while the influence of competent brands on trust over affect is only partially supported in some product categories. Surprisingly, a Ruggedness dimension is also shown to have a stronger effect on brand trust than brand affect. Finally, Excitement and Sophistication dimensions had a stronger influence on brand affect than brand trust, thereby supporting their predictions.

Similarly, Louis and Lombart (2010) examined a causal link between brand personality and brand trust. They used brand personality scale by Ambroise, Ferrandi, and Merunka (2005) developed in the French context and comprising nine major traits (friendly, creative, charming, ascendant, misleading, original, elegant, conscientious, and introvert). Results indicate the existence of significant effects between certain brand personality traits and each dimension of brand trust. Thus, conscientious and original brand personality traits had a significant positive effect on the credibility dimension; conscientious, friendly, original, and elegant – on the integrity dimension; and creative and conscientious – on the benevolence dimension of brand trust.

In line with suggestions from previous research that brand personality offers differentiation and results in higher preference, trust and loyalty (Biel 1993; Fournier 1998), Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) found that brand personality positively influences both consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, Kim, Magnini, and Singal

(2011) investigated the effect that perceptions of brand personality had on brand preference and attitudinal brand loyalty in the context of restaurant brands (Olive Garden and Chili's) and found a positive effect on both variables. Brand preference was conceptualised as a mediator between brand personality and attitudinal brand loyalty and had a significant indirect effect in both examples. In the case of Olive Garden, brand personality dimensions of Sincerity, Excitement and Sophistication, but not of Competence or Ruggedness, significantly influenced attitudinal brand loyalty and brand preference.

Additionally, Grohmann (2009) examined the effects of brand fit hinging on masculine/feminine brand personality in the context of brand extensions. Relying on Keller's (1998) research regarding the significance of brand fit in developing brand extension policy, Grohmann (2009) focused on studying the influence of brand fit based on a particular element of brand image construct that hadn't been examined in this context much previously, i.e. brand personality, on extension evaluations and purchase intentions. To test the predictions, they manipulated gender personality perceptions of brand extensions from functional product categories so as to measure the perceived brand fit with the parent product. In line with expectations, for masculine brand, the brand extension perceived as masculine in personality led to greater brand fit, with similar results in the scale of feminine parent brand/brand extension pair. Additionally, matching brand fit resulted in improved brand extension ratings and increased purchase intentions.

One theory that offers a useful avenue for studying the impact of brand personality on relevant antecedents and consequences is the self-congruence theory. Having been previously used predominantly in brand image research (Dolich, 1969; Graeff, 1996, 1997), in recent years its applicability has visibly grown in the area of brand personality research in light of the appreciation of the construct's self-expressive role, as it provides basis for consumer's ability to relate to the brand (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998), and recent scale development work (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009).

Its appropriateness to study brand personality relationships in the luxury context calls for particular attention, as extant research demonstrates that self-brand image congruency could impact status and conspicuous consumption (O'Cass and Frost, 2002) and lead to

positive consumer reactions (Jamal and Goode, 2001). More recent research has discovered the strong potential of self-brand personality congruence in explaining consumer responses on conspicuous consumption, thus recognising the highly symbolic nature of luxuries and the expressive function that is carried by the personality construct (Kressmann et al., 2006). Further research is required for gaining a better understanding of these relationships, which is something this thesis aims to accomplish as part of nomological validity testing. The following sections demonstrate the use of the self-congruence theory in the brand personality literature and how it provides the foundation for nomological validity testing in this work.

### **2.3.3 The Role of Self-congruence Theory in Brand Personality Research**

Past research offers important insights into the symbolic function of brands suggesting that consumers use possessions, including brands, to express different dimensions of their self (Belk 1988; Malhotra 1988; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993). As brand personality has a symbolic and self-expressive purpose, consumers should be naturally attracted to brands that convey congruent personalities. Arguably, these processes of self-brand congruence are allowed to function in the first place due to brand personality being composed of symbolic human personality traits. The self-congruence theory can effectively substantiate the brand's ability to articulate an individual's self-image (Sirgy et al., 1997). Borrowing its roots from the field of psychology, it denotes the willingness of consumers to compare themselves with relevant objects, such as brands, and to determine whether the brand matches their conception of their self (Sirgy, 1986).

The rationale underlying the self-congruence effect can be explained with self-concept motives, such as the need for self-consistency and affirmation (Biel, 1997; Malhotra, 1988; Aaker, 1999). The need for self-consistency drives individuals to act in ways that correspond to how they view themselves. It comes from people's natural preference for certainty, stability, security, and familiarity in everyday lives (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, and Giesler, 1992). Individuals possess a variety of salient beliefs and values about their actual selves, which they are strongly motivated to safeguard (Kressmann et al., 2006). There is an

inherent motivation to perform things that reward the self-beliefs and avoid those that threaten it (Epstein, 1980). In the consumption context, this typically translates into preferring and choosing brands whose personality matches consumer's view of their self, resulting in purchase behaviour and loyalty towards the brand (Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy and Samli, 1985). As regards the need for affirmation, individuals strive to self-confirm through relevant others due to the natural tendency to view themselves in a positive light (Allport, 1955; Steele, 1988; Tesser, 1988). Since personality traits constituting individual's selves are predominantly positive, their ability to express themselves through important traits can be linked to a positive affect, whilst the incapacity to do so may result in discontent (Aaker, 1999). Thus, consumers may prefer brands with high personality ratings on relevant dimensions in order to maintain a positive self-view.

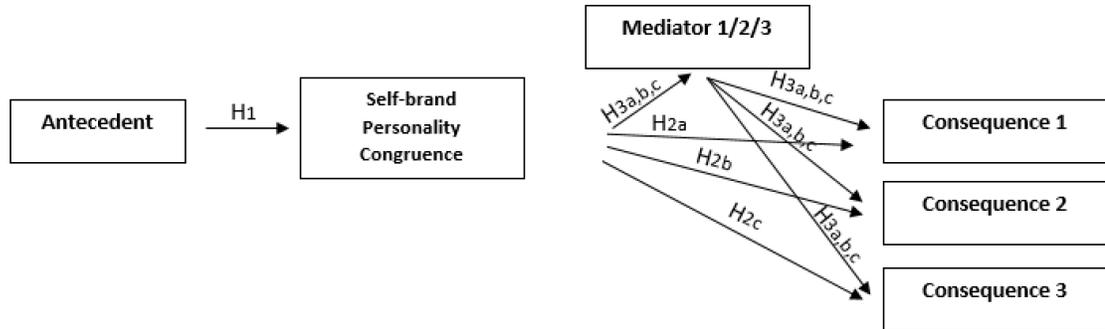
Scale development work in brand personality area (Aaker, 1997) has allowed new research to be conducted on the influence of brand personality on consumer attitudes in the presence of congruence with personality traits characteristic of the self as well as those made salient by situational cues (Aaker, 1999). The effects of brand personality – self-concept congruence on consumer responses were also examined in other recent works (Kressmann et al., 2006; Malar et al., 2011). Additionally, the key principles of the self-congruence theory have been applied in tests of nomological validity in the scale development research of Grohmann (2009) and, to a lesser extent, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009). More specifically, Grohmann (2009) examined the impact of brand personality – self-concept congruence on a number of consumer outcomes in the context of gender dimensions of brand personality. Unlike previous measures of self-congruence, where Sirgy et al.'s (1997) global measure or identical scales were used to assess brand and human personality congruence (Aaker, 1999), Grohmann (2009) were able to employ their brand personality scale of gender dimensions along with the corresponding human personality scale (i.e. sex role identity) to estimate congruence in a more valid manner. Grohmann (2009) found support for predictions regarding the positive significant impact of self-congruence on brand attitude, brand preference over other brands, brand affect and trust, attitudinal and behavioural loyalty, purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth. Deviating from the commonly accepted way of testing the self-congruence effect and its

subsequent link to consumer outcomes by matching a consumer's self-concept with brand personality traits, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) speculated that personal values should produce an important effect on consumer liking of a brand and behaviour. They attempted to test for congruence between consumer's values and chosen brand's personality dimensions by identifying the differential effect of brand personality dimensions on brand attitudes for consumers conforming to two different value dimensions, i.e. Conservation and Self-Transcendence. As expected, no prior theory-based predictions were made regarding the expected correspondence between the stated values and the brand personality dimensions. The analysis also showed a lack of significant results for most of the differences in the regression weights, suggesting that nomological validity was not fully established. These findings highlight the need for further research on the effects of self-congruence in brand personality area in line with the generally accepted definition of self-congruence that focuses on consumer's and brand's personality rather than personal values.

#### **2.3.4 Development of the Conceptual Model and Statement of Hypotheses**

The central focus of the proposed conceptual model (depicted in Figure 8 below) is the notion of self-brand personality congruence. As mentioned earlier, in research on brand personality self-congruence is grounded on the assumption that consumers show preference to brands that possess personality traits congruent with their own (Sirgy, 1982). As a result, in line with commonly used definitions of self-congruence, and interchangeably applied in the consumer behaviour research notions of self-image congruence (or personality) or self-congruity, it is defined here as a match between consumer's self-concept and a brand's personality (Kressmann et al., 2006). Integral to the concept of self-congruence, brand personality helps humanise the brand endowing it with symbolic characteristics and serves as a source of consumer's affection towards the brand (Fournier, 1998). This process of matching of a brand's personality with the actual/ideal/social self subsequently allows consumers to evaluate a brand as they use it for identity expression purposes. Consequently, the proposed model places the construct of self-brand personality congruence in the centre and incorporates an antecedent (H1), three partial mediators (H3a,b,c), and three separate consequences (H2a,b,c).

Figure 8a. Conceptual Model of Antecedents, Mediators, and Consequences



More specifically, according to the proposed framework perceived member group fit positively affects the congruence between the self and a brand's personality, which in turn influences three consumer behavioural responses (purchase intention, word-of-mouth, and purchase loyalty) directly as well as indirectly via three attitudinal measures (brand personality appeal, brand attitude, and emotional brand attachment) that will be tested in a piece-meal fashion, as shown in Figures 8b-d below. Currently, there is a scarcity of research on the antecedents of self-congruence. In order to test the effects of the identified antecedent on self-congruence, this work draws on the theoretical arguments of reference group research, and its effects on self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005) further explained below. As for the consequences of self-congruence, past research has shown brand personality – self-concept congruence to improve consumers' affective, attitudinal and behavioural responses as compared to incongruence (Grohmann, 2009). The proposed framework aims to systematically test the specified relationships and to examine the mediating effects of self-congruence and consumer behavioural responses, which past literature has largely overlooked.

Figure 8b. Conceptual Model with Brand Attitude Mediator

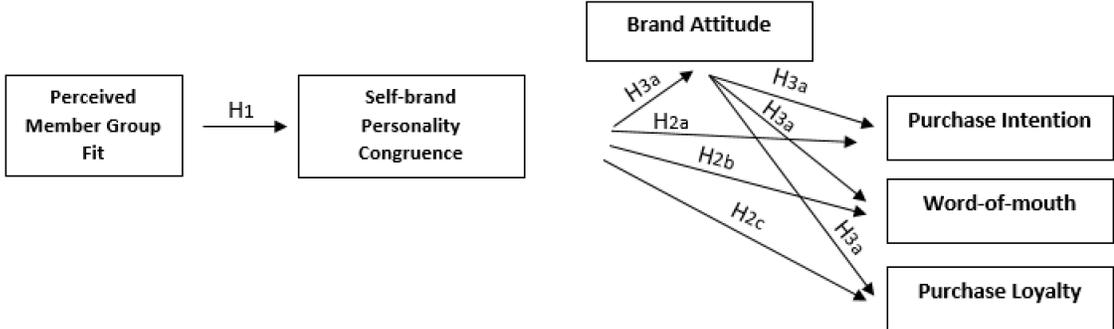


Figure 8c. Conceptual Model with Emotional Brand Attachment Mediator

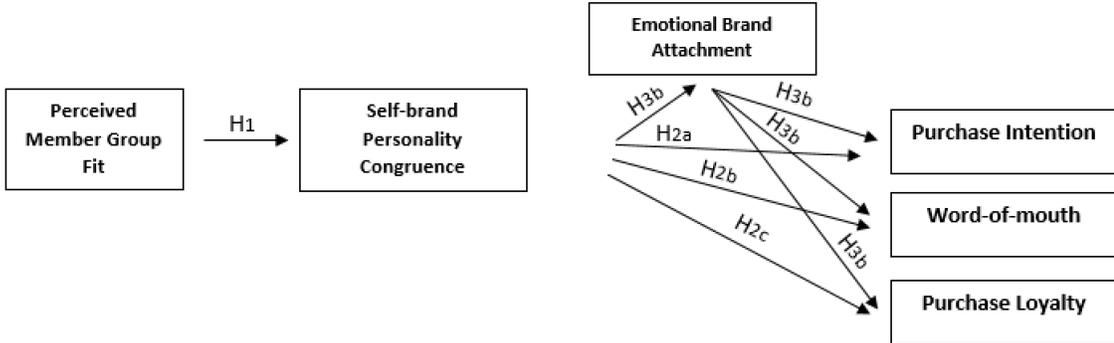
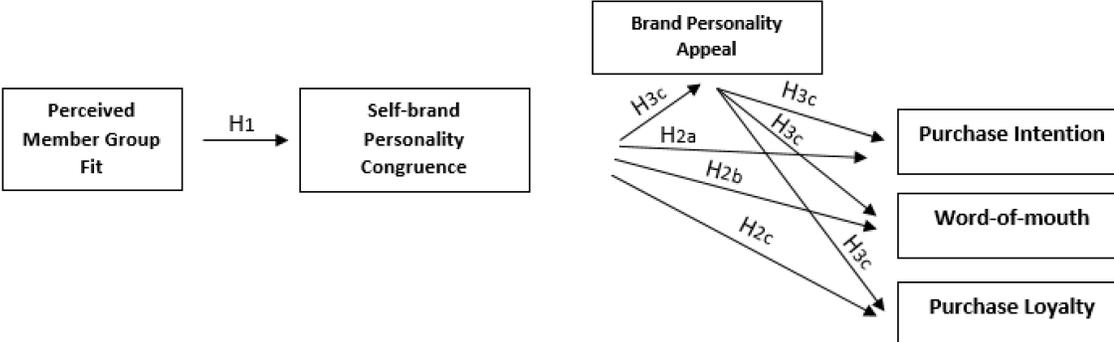


Figure 8d. Conceptual Model with Brand Personality Appeal Mediator



Some previous attempts to find empirical support for the self-concept - brand personality congruence effect on consumer preferences was elusive, arguably due to the conceptualisation of the self as a stable construct (Aaker, 1999). Years of consumer behaviour research provide evidence that individuals have multiple selves (e.g. Markus and Kunda, 1986; Tetlock and Manstead, 1985), which prompt them to behave differently in various life situations. Although a number of different conceptualisations of self have been used in prior literature, for the purpose of nomological validity testing the self-congruence concept is conceptualised as the actual self in this work. According to Sirgy (1986), the effect of actual self is frequently more important than that of alternative types of self, such as ideal self, social self or ideal social self. The actual self has also been previously used in studies to determine the effects of self-congruence on consumer behaviour in the luxury context (Jamal and Goode, 2001; Liu et al., 2011). Additionally, Kressmann et al. (2006) used actual and ideal self-congruence as two separate indicators for predicting consumer reactions and found either to be useful in research on luxury.

#### **2.3.4.1 Antecedent: Perceived Member Group Fit**

User imagery is well documented as one of the major antecedents of brand personality (Aaker, 1997; Lee and Back, 2010; Freling and Forbes, 2013) and is associated with psychological benefits that help consumers with self-presentation and identity construction pursuits (Keller, 1993). One important source of user imagery associations is brand usage by reference groups. Following the basic tenets of reference-group research, consumers use relevant others who are alike in pertinent characteristics to derive information for establishing and reinforcing their worldviews (Folkes and Kiesler, 1991). As social groups against which a consumer tends to evaluate themselves, reference groups provide consumers with a set of brand associations that could be linked to their mental representation of the self as they strive to fulfil their self-verification and self-enhancement goals (Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

As a result, consumers develop associations based on the brand usage by reference groups and transfer these characteristics from the brand to self as they pick brands with

associations congruent to their current or possible self (Escalas and Bettman, 2005). The more closely these brand associations are linked to the self, the higher is the level to which consumers have integrated the brand into their self-concept. Member group is considered to be a reference group that an individual believes to be part of, and the level to which brand usage by a member group affects a consumer depends on the extent to which such consumer believes they belong to a member group (Escalas and Bettman, 2003, 2005).

In line with the social perception theory, interpersonal relations may happen across different levels, including the self, the other person, and the other person's self-view (Kenny, 1988). Studies on social interaction suggest that impression formation processes ensue prior to the social interaction, facilitated by the extrinsic visual qualities becoming related to individual's internal states (Albright, Kenny, and Malboy, 1988). Thus, it has been shown that individuals can make accurate judgments that are in consensus with other individuals' judgments about another person's personality qualities even at zero acquaintance (Amabady and Rosenthal, 1992). In addition to categorical and/or behavioural cues as some of the potential sources of inferences, these accurate consensual perceptual judgments may also be facilitated by the assimilation of stereotypes, which relate outside cues to other individual's characteristics (such as personality traits) and reflect a socially constructed nature of the world (Albright et al., 1997). Arguably, brands may act as external cues as they take the form of categorical information or serve as stereotypes (Adaval, 2001).

At the same time, Gosling et al. (2002) identified two mechanisms, which allow other individuals' personalities to be inferred from the physical context: identity claims (that encompass symbolic assertions regarding how they wish to be seen by others: e.g. watches as identity claims since they reveal someone's status or lifestyle, such as providing low or high income cues) and behavioural residue (that includes unintended evidence of individual behaviour: e.g. accidentally left Apple MacBook in the back seat of a car may reflect a person's technological preference). These mechanisms are useful in obtaining a better understanding of both accurate and consensual inferences of individual's personality from inanimate objects. However, Polonsky (2012) argues that brand symbolism and personality

may reflect a separate mechanism through which someone's character may be inferred. Hence, given the highly symbolic nature of luxury brands and their unique positioning on specific personality traits (Heine, 2009), it may be expected that such brands would be a source of rich symbolic cues, thus enabling accurate inferences regarding what kind of people typically use such brands (i.e. their personalities) and aiding in accurate judgment with regards to the individual's membership to such a group of brand users.

As noted earlier, one crucial source of brand meaning is brand use by reference groups. Consumers develop specific associations between the reference group they believe they belong to (i.e. member group, see Escalas and Bettman, 2005) and the brands that are used by such group and transfer these meanings from the brand onto self as they choose brands with meanings related to a facet of their actual self. Hence, it is hypothesised that perceived membership to the group of the brand's users (i.e. member group fit) would lead to the higher level of self-brand personality congruence:

***Hypothesis 1a:*** Consumer perceptions that they belong to a member group that uses a luxury brand have a positive effect on their self-congruence evaluations.

#### **2.3.4.2 Consequences: Purchase Intention, Word-of-Mouth, and Purchase Loyalty**

Past research has found self-congruence to exert positive significant direct influence on certain consumer responses, including purchase intention, loyalty, and word-of-mouth communication (Kressmann et al., 2006; Grohmann, 2009). The proposed conceptual model argues for the presence of a less straightforward effect of self-congruence on consumer outcomes as it relies on some of the assertions from the theories of reasoned action/planned behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991) for the specification of its relationships. More precisely, it refers to the particular part of the theoretical model where individual's intentions are affected through attitudes shaped by salient behavioural beliefs. Essentially, the theory of planned behaviour is an extension of the original theory of reasoned action, which has been ubiquitously used in the area of social psychology for predicting and explaining behavioural intentions and actual human

behaviour in specific contexts (Madden, Ellen, and Ajzen, 1992). One of its main arguments is that individual's behavioural intentions influence their behaviour through a range of motivational factors that they encapsulate. In turn, three (two, according to the theory of reasoned action) conceptually independent predictors could determine such behavioural intentions, one of which is the focus in the present context: the attitude toward the behaviour. According to Ajzen (1991), in certain applications, two or more predictors (i.e. attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control) produce separate powerful influences on individual's intentions, whilst in others, just the attitude predictor adequately accounts for behavioural intentions on its own. The sufficiency of the attitude determinant is particularly true in instances where the attitudes are strong, indicating that the other determinants may be less predictive of behavioural intentions (Armitage and Conner, 2001).

The constructs that are regarded as mediators in the proposed conceptual framework are: brand attitude, brand personality appeal, and emotional brand attachment. When applied to the consumption context, attitudes from the theory of planned behaviour have been shown to produce the strongest correlation on intentions (Rah et al., 2004). Similarly, the three-dimensional brand personality appeal scale is largely grounded in the attitude theory, and all its dimensions represent evaluative attributes (Freling et al., 2011). As for the emotional brand attachment, consumers exhibit profound emotional attachment to brands that are related to central attitudes (Grewal et al., 2004). Thomson, McInnis, and Park (2005) maintain that positive brand attitudes are often manifested through strong brand attachments. However, it has been argued that the attitude construct alone is not capable of explaining the link between attitudes and "higher order responses that suggest commitment to future exchanges – concepts like [...] favourable word-of-mouth, willingness to forgo attractive new product offerings" (Park, Macinnis, and Priester, 2006). According to Park et al. (2006), brand attachment reflects the extent of the cognitive and emotional bond between the brand and the self and may be better at predicting stronger consumer outcomes than brand attitudes, such as word-of-mouth or brand loyalty.

Thus, in line with the above arguments, it is predicted that self-congruence would have a positive effect on consumer's behavioural intentions (purchase intention, word-of-mouth, and purchase loyalty) directly as well as indirectly through attitudinal/attachment measures (brand attitude, brand personality appeal, emotional brand attachment). Hence, the following predictions are made:

***Hypothesis 2a:*** Self-congruence has a positive direct effect on consumer's purchase intention.

***Hypothesis 2b:*** Self-congruence has a positive direct effect on word-of-mouth communication.

***Hypothesis 2c:*** Self-congruence has a positive direct effect on consumer's purchase loyalty.

#### **2.3.4.3 Mediators**

##### **Brand Attitude**

Brand attitude is considered as one of the most widely used cognitive predictors of consumer behaviour in the consumption context (Mitchell and Olson, 1981). The attitude towards a brand is evaluative in nature and primarily hinges on consumer's own perceptions of it. Under certain conditions, it is asserted to be a reliable determinant of consumer behaviour (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Baldinger and Rubinson, 1996). The link between self-brand personality congruence and brand attitudes has received some attention in the literature. Aaker (1999) found that consumer attitudes could be influenced by the compatibility of personality traits associated with a brand and traits related to a person's malleable self-concept. More recently, Grohmann (2009) showed that brand personality – own personality congruence results in favourable brand attitudes.

In the luxury context specifically, the effects of self-congruence on brand attitude, among other constructs, have been investigated with the application of Aaker's (1997)

scale. For instance, Liu et al. (2011) examined whether self-congruence exerts a positive influence on brand attitudes of consumers towards two luxury fashion brands (CK and Chanel). They adopted three distinct conceptualisations of self-congruence, i.e. brand personality congruity, brand user imagery congruity, and brand usage imagery congruity, in order to determine which type(s) were more (if at all) useful at predicting consumer responses to the brands. Brand personality congruence was defined as a match between the consumer's perceptions of a given brand's personality and perceptions of their own and measured in terms of absolute differences between self and brand personality ratings. At the same time, brand user imagery referred to the level of perceived compatibility between the typical user of a brand and the self, while brand usage imagery - to the degree of perceived similarity between the perceptions of the typical use of a brand and the perceived appropriateness of the situation of brand use. Unlike the first measure, brand user imagery and brand usage imagery congruence were measured using a similar method to the one developed by Sirgy et al. (1997), where respondents indicated the degree of self-congruence in a global manner having been asked to think about their perceptions of brand's users/typical use of brand as well as to deliberate on their actual selves/the fitting situations of brand use.

A surprising finding was that brand personality congruence did not produce a significant effect on attitude toward the brands studied, whereas the other two self-congruence measures were identified as stronger determinants of attitude. Given that the study employed Aaker's (1997) generic measure, it might be possible that brand personality congruence effect did not hold due to its inapplicability in the luxury context. This argument is in line with the key assumption of this scale development work that, given their highly symbolic nature and association to higher social status and class division (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Atwal and Williams, 2009), luxury brands need a new measurement tool as common scales might be too broad for such specific meanings.

In agreement with the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), the influence of social-function and affective attitudes on purchase intention has been recently examined in the context of luxury apparel and accessory brands (Bian and Forsythe, 2012).

According to the view of attitudes performing key social-functions (e.g. enabling self-expression and self-presentation) as postulated by the functional theory of attitude (Katz, 1960), social-function attitudes may be separated into social-adjustive and value-expressive attitudes. Social-adjustive attitudes promote consumption in order to gain approval in social settings, while value-expressive attitudes underpin the desire to consume a product as a means of self-expression (Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009). While social-function attitudes denote consumers' cognitive reactions towards a luxury brand, consumer's affective attitudes refer to the emotional aspect of consumers (beyond their rational aspect) and are elicited from the feelings produced by exposure to the luxury brands (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Based on this, Bian and Forsythe (2012) anticipated that social-function attitudes manifesting cognitive reactions would have a positive effect on purchase intention directly as well as indirectly via affective attitudes. The resulting link between affective attitudes and purchase intention is significantly positive, while the one between social-function attitudes and purchase intent is marginally positive, suggesting that consumers show higher purchasing intention towards luxury brands that correspond to their goals, innate beliefs, and values (self-expression/self-presentation) (Snyder and DeBono, 1985).

Building on the above findings, it is predicted that brand attitude construct would play a mediating role between self-congruence and the key consumer reactions:

***Hypothesis 3a:*** Self-congruence has a positive effect on consumer's behavioural intentions (purchase intention, word-of-mouth, and brand loyalty) indirectly through brand attitude.

### **Emotional Brand Attachment**

The self-expansion theory (Aron and Aron, 1986; Aron et al., 2005) is used to explain the nature of interpersonal attraction and helps understand why individuals long for intimate relationships in their lives. Within the framework of that theory, individuals are inherently predisposed to include relevant others into their self-concept. In the current context, this implies the inclusion of consumption objects, such as luxury brands, into the self. Being an essential element of self-congruence, brand personality helps animate and

energise a brand, thus creating the basis for emotional attachment between the consumer and the brand. That is, the more a consumer views the brand as part of their self-definition (i.e. self-congruency), the stronger should be their emotional attachment to the brand (Malar et al., 2011).

According to Malar et al. (2011), the self-verification theory could aid in explaining a positive relationship for congruency between the brand personality and the personality of the actual self and the emotional brand attachment. The theory postulates that people are naturally motivated to maintain and reinforce their conception of the self (Swarm, 1983). Guided by the self-verification motive, they embrace experiences that assert their self and avert from those that imperil it. The process of self-verification encourages predictable behaviour in line with their self-view and results in the affirmative assessment of the self and relevant others. Within the consumption context, this implies that consumer's self-concept motivates them to behave in ways that help fortify their self-concept by showing preference and choosing brands with similar brand personality, thereby forging stronger emotional brand attachment. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

***Hypothesis 3b:*** Self-congruence has a positive effect on consumer's behavioural intentions (purchase intention, word-of-mouth, and brand loyalty) indirectly through emotional brand attachment.

### **Brand Personality Appeal**

Whilst a substantial number of studies investigating the effects of brand personality on various consumer outcomes have established its importance (Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013), they do not explain what it is that makes one brand personality more effective or desirable than another. Freling, Crosno, and Henard (2010) introduced the term brand personality appeal to help determine the potential of a brand's personality and its impact on consumer reactions. The concept of brand personality appeal is grounded in attitude theory and brand equity literature and has three distinct dimensions: favorability, originality, and clarity. The favorability element measures how favourably consumers evaluate a given

brand's personality; the originality element establishes the degree of its newness and uniqueness, and the clarity element ascertains the extent to which a brand's personality is clear and discernible.

Freling et al. (2011) showed that brand personality dimensions could influence brand personality appeal dimensions. Additionally, they have empirically demonstrated that brand personality appeal influences consumer purchase intention and has the most influence on intentions when all the perceptions of brand personality's favorability, clarity, and originality are high. At the same time, in real-life situations, where one of the brand personality appeal dimensions is low (e.g. Favorability), managers could still successfully counteract the undesirable outcomes by keeping the other two dimensions high (i.e. Originality and Clarity). In line with these arguments, it is expected that in addition to purchase intention self-congruence would also positively affect two other measures of behavioural intentions employed in this framework, i.e. word-of-mouth and purchase loyalty, through brand personality appeal:

***Hypothesis 3c:*** Self-congruence has a positive effect on consumer's behavioural intentions (purchase intention, word-of-mouth, and purchase loyalty) indirectly through brand personality appeal.

#### **2.3.4.4 Summary**

The review of prior research on the topic of conspicuous and luxury consumption has sought to examine the state of a field from a variety of relevant research directions. Whilst existing studies in this research area reveal a range of theoretical perspectives including sociological, economic, or psychological, certain research streams that have increasing importance and the potential for further advancement of the luxury domain remain underrepresented. To-date, one such largely ignored by luxury literature topic is the concept of brand personality that carries crucial importance for status brands (Gurzki and Woisetschläger, 2016) and positively impacts brand equity following the fact that consumers seek to utilise brand personality dimensions so as to establish a brand's added

value (Valette-Florence, Guizani, and Merunka, 2011).

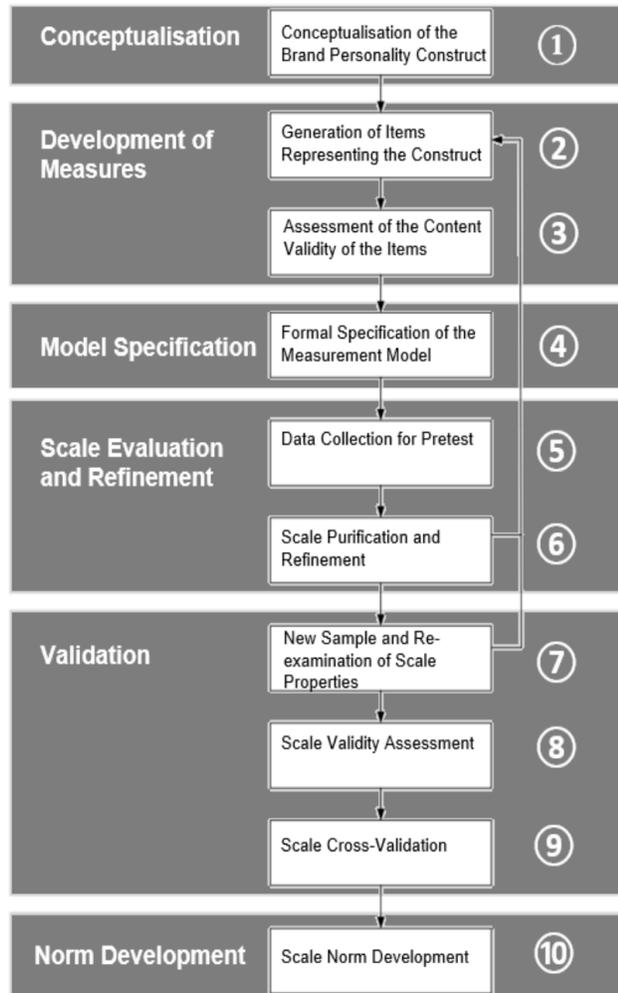
As a result, the next two sections aimed to synthesise the existing research on brand personality and, particularly, on brand personality scale development in order to offer a new perspective. The presented conceptual model hypothesises the relationships between the concept of brand personality and its antecedents, mediators, and consequences (i.e. nomological network) using self-congruence theory as part of a bigger scale development project. The following chapters describe the development of a new measure of luxury brand personality and provide evidence of its accuracy, reliability, and granularity using a series of statistical tests.

### **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

Most of the scale development work in the management domain is faced with the issue of instrument validation adequacy (Straub, 1989; Scandura and Williams, 2000; Boudreau, Gefen, and Straub, 2001). According to Scandura and Williams (2000), over time there has been a tangible reduction in management studies containing information on different types of construct validity evidence, such as discriminant or convergent validity. This trend raises concerns about researchers' ability to fully understand and effectively prioritise validation procedures given the breadth and complexity of existing works specifying technical recommendations for scale validation.

The methodology chapter adopts an updated and comprehensive set of recommendations by MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff (2011) organised in terms of a series of steps involved in the scale development process (see Figure 9). I aim to thoroughly address each step in this chapter, starting with the conceptualisation of the brand personality construct and concluding with the development of scale norms as its last step. Adherence to these comprehensive recommendations provides the necessary assurance that the nature of the target construct is well specified, the measurement model is clearly identified, the new scale is evaluated and purified, and the construct validity is assessed in a rigorous manner, thereby altogether ensuring the adequate quality of the new measure.

Figure 9. Overview of the Scale Development Procedure



In addition, a brief recap of validity and reliability testing procedures employed in prior brand personality scales presented below served as an additional reference point and helped ensure that the most appropriate scale development and validity testing procedures were selected for this study.

### 3.1 Methodology and Validity/Reliability Tests in Existing Brand Personality Scales

In an attempt to identify and assess the stability of the brand personality dimensions in her scale development study, Aaker (1997) employed principal components analysis. Factor analysis and a clustering procedure were used to identify the facets and the most salient traits from such facets to be included in the final brand personality scale. To check the

robustness of the identified brand personality dimensions, Aaker (1997) used a second independent sample of respondents to perform the confirmatory factor analysis on a new set of brands. Scale reliability was established through test-retest correlations and Cronbach's alpha. No construct validity tests were carried out in this study. However, Aaker (1997) emphasised the fact that the antecedents and consequences of brand personality had received little empirical attention at the time that study was published. Importantly, lack of construct and predictive validity testing in brand personality typologies is a problem that persists until today.

Highlighting the limitations of the factor approach to brand personality, Sweeney and Brandon (2006) advocated the usefulness of circumplex models in enhancing the understanding of the brand personality concept. The interpersonal circumplex, which is an alternative approach to the commonly accepted five-factor model of human personality, was used to test the hypotheses of whether two factors from the human personality model (i.e. Extraversion and Agreeableness) as well as Aaker's brand personality model (Excitement and Sincerity) were more suitable for measuring brand personality than other factors in both models. The appropriateness of items borrowed from existing human personality studies was assessed through an online questionnaire by 32 academics in a number of different product categories, 4 of whom were later debriefed to verify the results and provide a rationale for their ratings. Additionally, interviews with two industry practitioners helped confirm preliminary results. Finally, the analysis involved forming composites of items for each dimension of considered scales and doing paired sample *t* tests to accept or reject the hypotheses.

Having compiled an initial pool of personality items, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) ran a pretest on 20 well-known brands in the Belgian consumer context in order to reduce the number of items to an efficient scale. The principal components analysis with varimax rotation was done at the respondent level and resulted in a five-factor structure. A confirmatory factor analysis was then performed using the pretest sample later split in two for calibration and validation purposes. Given the small number of brands used in the pretest, a second study was then run on 193 brands in 20 various categories. Similarly, the

sample was divided in two in order to allow further item reduction and subsequent validation of the resulting scale. Both factor analyses were run on aggregated data at the brand level. One sub-sample was used to test the reliability of the new scale by checking the scores of factor loadings and their level of significance, composite reliabilities, and testing the model for different product categories as well as individual brands from the sample. Test-retest reliabilities were also assessed in an additional study, where correlations of the 5 dimensions for 84 brands were confirmed by carrying out a new survey on an independent sample after a period of 1 year. Discriminant validity was determined using Fornell-Larker test, where the average variance extracted within factors was compared with squared shared variance between the pairs of factors.

In addition, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) validated the scale cross-culturally by conducting a new study in the American context. A test of nomological validity was also performed, where the distinctive contribution of every brand personality dimension to brand attitude was examined based on the ratings of two consumer groups following different values. For this test, each respondent was asked to rate a given brand on 12 brand personality items and descriptors measuring brand attitude and to complete the Short Schwartz's Value Survey (Lindeman and Verkasalo, 2005) for assessment of respondents' values. Several differences found between groups of respondents low/high on Conservation and Self-Transcendence values in the impact of brand personality dimensions on brand attitude were according to the conceptual expectations. However, most of them were not significant, which led to researchers accepting that nomological validity was not truly supported. Finally, cross-cultural validity was further determined in 9 European countries on one specific brand (Coca-Cola).

Heine (2009) employed a different approach to the development of a luxury brand personality scale. He predominantly used qualitative techniques, such as the Repertory Grid Method, to identify relevant brand characteristics through interviews with a number of luxury consumers in the German context. A set of identified characteristics was then approximately arranged into five distinct categories. Furthermore, a complementary study using the simplified version of the repertory grid method online was carried out on a

student sample. The final matrix of entries was z-standardised and analysed using principal components analysis and varimax rotation. No further quantitative tests were done to confirm identified dimensions.

Author(s)	Reliability Testing	Validity Tests		
		Nomological	Discriminant	Predictive
Aaker (1997)	Test-retest; Internal Consistency (e.g. Cronbach's Alpha).	N/a	N/a	N/a
Sweeney and Brandon (2006)	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Geuens, Weijters and Wulf (2009)	Test-retest; Internal consistency checks.	Differential contribution of every brand personality dimension to brand attitude for two consumer groups following different value.	Discriminant validity checks across identified dimensions.	N/a
Heine (2009)	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

Overall, this review shows that previous brand personality scale development studies have largely failed to perform comprehensive validity testing, including tests of nomological, predictive and discriminant validity (Table 2 above). To address these limitations, the current work employs a number of validity checks to help ensure that the new scale of luxury brand personality appears to be measuring the intended construct under study.

### **3.2 Step 1: Conceptualisation of the Brand Personality Construct**

Correct specification of the construct domain is arguably the most crucial element of the construct validation process (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Indeed, failure to do so may result in a number of issues. These include creating further ambiguity about the nature of

the construct and how it compares to other similar constructs; deficiency or, on the opposite, contamination of its indicators due to the imposition of a definition that is either too narrow or too wide as well as the questionable validity of the confirmed relationships with other constructs (MacKenzie, 2003).

In an attempt to provide a clear and precise definition of the brand personality construct, I have carefully considered a number of consecutive aspects advocated by MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff (2011). First, the use of the target construct in prior theoretical and empirical research has been reviewed and its differences from other related constructs examined (Schwab, 1980; Spector, 1992). As discussed in the literature review chapter, Aaker's (1997) definition of brand personality delineated in terms of human characteristics belonging to a brand, whilst adopted in the majority of subsequent studies, has been criticised for its broadness (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003) as it encroaches into other facets of brand identity and brand image constructs (Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). According to Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009), it is thus imperative to shift focus to considering only personality traits in defining the brand personality construct, as looser conceptualisations render existing brand identity frameworks ineffective. These arguments clarify the need for an appropriate measurement instrument that would clearly capture the brand personality component without mixing sender and receiver aspects.

Similarly, the literature review chapter highlights the conceptual differences between brand personality and related constructs of brand identity and brand image by clarifying the role of brand personality as a common element and a principal aspect of both of these concepts. Despite the wide application of brand identity and brand image constructs in the branding domain, the need for a separate construct to better understand brands is very clear. The brand's core value originates from the deep meaning that consumers assign to a brand. As the brand detaches itself from a product over time and assumes a meaning of its own, brand personality becomes a pledge for the relationship longevity between a consumer and a brand (Fournier and Lee, 2009). In addition, similar to the way human personality aims to capture the uniqueness of every individual, brand personality concept speaks to the principal function of the brand, that is to ascribe distinctiveness to a given product or

service (Ambroise and Valette-Florence, 2010). In the modern consumer society of brand diversifications and consumers' swift changes in brand preferences (Kapferer, 2008), brand personality incarnates the idea of stability (whilst also incorporating the feasibility of change) and may be used to grasp the essential and stable aspect of brand identity.

Importantly, the new measure of luxury brand personality should be conceptually differentiated from the established brand personality frameworks such as Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009). Referring to the arguments made in the literature review chapter, beyond their conceptual and methodological inconsistencies these frameworks are grounded on human personality taxonomies and may not be able to accurately capture the essence of personalities of brands that are extremely high on symbolic features, thus hindering their generalisability to the luxury domain.

Following the examination of the prior conceptualisations of brand personality construct in the literature and its differences from related constructs, the next step was to clarify the nature of the conceptual domain of the construct (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). This involved specifying the general type of property to which the target construct applies as well as the actual object to which the property refers (i.e. entity) so as to avoid confusion in the process of measure development (Schwab, 1980). Within the confines of consumer behaviour literature, brand personality is regarded as a perceptual concept, and it is assumed that consumers possess a range of personality attributes structured in their minds in relation to a given brand (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera, 2001). Thus, the general type of property in this scenario refers to a perception of brand's personality by a consumer, whilst the entity is the actual brand.

The next important aspect was the illumination of the conceptual theme of the construct. This was done through the description of the common characteristics that would be typical of all exemplars of the construct yet uniquely held by them (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). In this case, such characteristics include any human personality traits found in the natural language of consumers that are deemed applicable and relevant for brands. At the same time, it implies the exclusion of any items representing functional

attributes, demographic variables, user imagery and appearance, and, lastly, brand attitudes (Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009) that were part of Aaker's (1997) conceptualisation of brand personality and subsequent studies that relied on her ideas. This would help develop a pure brand personality measure distinct from the brand identity concept, free from the flaws explained by Kapferer (2008).

Additionally, when clarifying the conceptual theme of brand personality construct, questions were raised regarding its stability over time, across situations, and cases (Chaplin, John, and Goldberg, 1988). Recent research suggests that exposure to new information may lead to changes in brand personality impressions depending on the type of new information as well as the way the person perceiving it views themselves (Johar, Sengupta, and Aaker, 2005). Nevertheless, personality traits are expected to be relatively enduring over time (McCrae and Costa, 1987), and consumers should be able to hold a distinct conception of a brand's personality once the initial inferences have been formed. As for the construct's applicability across situations and cases, it should be noted that the new scale of brand personality is being developed specifically for luxury brands and is, thus, expected to be appropriate only for these brands that manifest themselves through steep levels of exclusivity, excellence, creativity, and eloquence (Cristini et al., 2017). In addition to boasting a tremendous number of symbolic features, these brands are typically regarded as high on extraordinariness, price, quality, aesthetics, and scarcity (Heine, 2012; for a more detailed account of luxuries see the first section of the literature review chapter).

In human personality research, the construct of personality is typically treated as a multidimensional construct (Saucier and Srivastava, 2015). Touching upon the issue of construct dimensionality in the branding context, Aaker (1997) argued that brand personality should be treated as a multidimensional construct so that the various types of brand personalities could be identified and the influence of brand personality on consumer outcomes understood in a more meaningful manner. Similarly, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) recognised the multidimensional nature of the construct as they anticipated a structure of the new brand personality measure to be similar to the Big Five framework with five distinct dimensions. Hence, it is expected that further statistical analyses would

confirm the multidimensional nature of the construct of brand personality of luxuries.

As a result of careful consideration of these aspects, I adopt a stricter conceptualisation of brand personality originally proposed by Azoulay and Kapferer (2003, p. 151) as “the unique set of human personality traits that are both applicable and relevant for brands”. Such definition has already been assumed in some recent scale development studies (Milas and Mlačić, 2007; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009; Grohmann, 2009), where researchers contemplate whether the Big Five-like structure may successfully extend to brand personality in view of individuals’ desire to anthropomorphise objects around them (Brown, 1991).

### **3.3 Step 2: Generation of Items Representing the Construct**

Now that the target construct has been defined, I move onto the next stage of generation of items that fully represent the construct’s conceptual domain. These items may be obtained from a number of different sources with the key goal of capturing all of the essential elements of the construct’s domain, whilst limiting the possibility of inclusion of items that fall outside of the target construct’s domain (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011).

Following the publication of Aaker’s (1997) pivotal scale development work, more studies have begun to increasingly recognise the relevance of a human personality lexical measurement in studying brand’s personality (Milas and Mlačić, 2007; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). However, one issue with direct imposition of human personality scales is that such scales have never been validated in the brand personality context (Grohmann, 2009). Thus, their integration into the measurement of brand personality may not be suitable as human personality traits do not necessarily transform directly into brand personality traits as shown by Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido (2001). The fact that Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale dimensions do not directly match the Big Five model lends further support to this argument.

Acting on the criticism of Aaker's (1997) conceptualisation of brand personality for being too broad and loose (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003) and adopting a narrower definition, researchers continue being drawn to the idea of identifying personality traits that are relevant and applicable for brands from the existing human personality frameworks (e.g. Milas and Mlačić, 2007; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) have managed to develop a scale with dimensions matching the Big Five framework. However, they admit that a strong emphasis on the theoretical basis was replaced with a data-driven approach to choosing the items, where a range of meaningful traits may have been deleted due to their dissociation with one of the dimensions.

Failure to directly replicate the Big Five human personality framework in the context of brands (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido, 2001) insinuates that human personality frameworks should not be blindly used to measure brand personality. As a result, it seems imperative and appropriate to develop a new scale of brand personality of luxury brands from scratch using a different methodological approach rather than to rely on the existing framework of human personality in the hope of grasping these brand personality facets. Going to the roots of human personality scale development research, that formed the foundation material for the current elaborations and conceptualisations of personality frameworks, the current work uses a similar approach to provide solid foundations of the luxury brand personality traits (Cattell, 1943; Goldberg, 1982; John, Angleitner, and Ostendorf, 1988). The main reason for using natural language as a source of luxury brand personality attributes is based on the key assumption behind the lexical approach: "*Those individual differences that are most salient and relevant in people's lives will eventually become encoded into their language; the more important such a difference, the more likely is it to become expressed as a single word*" (John, Angleitner, and Ostendorf, 1988, p.174). In order to provide solid foundations of the luxury brand personality traits, the present work tries to elicit exclusively from the actual consumer portrayals of luxury brands (not any other sources), apposite and valid brand personality traits. Adapting the key assumption behind the lexical approach, it is expected that the use of luxury brand personality descriptors in the natural language will determine their salience and relevance.

As a result, in order to generate a set of items that fully grasp all of the essential aspects the construct's conceptual domain (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011), I employed a number of sources and methods. First, content analysis was undertaken using the online sources to see how consumers publicly portray luxury brands of different product categories in order to develop a pool of personality traits. This stage was complemented by in-depth interviews with regular luxury brand buyers incorporating Kelly's repertory grid technique. Based on the key assumption of the lexical approach to personality, it is hoped that this process will ensure the applicability, salience and relevance of the generated pool of brand personality traits to luxury brands.

### **3.3.1 Text Mining**

In the first stage, textual data from the Web and Social Media sources were mined in order to see how the public describes the personalities of different luxury brands from different categories. This is a flexible approach for identifying themes or patterns, and it is frequently used in marketing (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The method is similar to text mining, where researchers use indexing service to automatically identify patterns or trends in the textual data. For instance, Corley et al. (2010) used Spinn3r indexing service to identify all blog posts that contained a lexical match to the words "influenza" and "flu" so that they could spot the outbreaks and rises of influenza infection among the population. However, in this paper extra effort was put to collect and analyse all data manually in order to determine the personality traits and ensure that the traits were mentioned with reference to the actual brands rather than other notions (e.g. celebrities endorsing the brands).

The content analysis was performed on eleven luxury brands, which represented four different product categories: fashion/clothing, watches, homeware and cars. According to the recent PWC report on luxury (PWC, 2012), apparel, accessories and hard luxury are the most salient and the fastest growing product categories in the luxury sector with 27%, 26% and 22% of the total worldwide sales in 2011. Three luxury car brands were chosen from Top Gear, one of the top sites for motor vehicles, where they were frequently featured as the world's top luxury cars. The remaining seven brands were randomly selected from the

lists of featured designer brands in the respective product categories on Harrods.com and Selfridges.com websites, which are widely acknowledged as the UK's leading luxury retailers (BrandRepublic, 2013). In the clothing category, the chosen brands included Stella McCartney, Proenza Schouler, and Balmain; in the watch category – Tag Heuer, Bell & Ross, and Bremont; and in the homeware category – KitchenAid and Le Creuset.

Two online sources were used to identify personality characteristics for each of the chosen brands. Firstly, a popular American business magazine Forbes.com was selected as a credible third party source for identifying brand personality characteristics for each of the brands. According to the trusted web information company alexa.com, the traffic ranks of Forbes.com are consistently in the top few hundred worldwide, and the website has 13,365 entries related to the word “luxury”. On Forbes.com posts that were created in the past 365 days for each brand were analysed, ranging in quantity from 4 to 91 posts for luxury brands from the chosen product categories. Secondly, Facebook was used as a source of identifying and analysing consumer-generated information. Facebook is considered among top sites for user-generated content, where people connect and interact with each other (Gangadharbatla, 2010). Thousands of consumer and fan posts were identified on the official Facebook page of each chosen brand created during the period of November-October 2013.

### **3.3.2. Interviews**

In the next stage, 25 in-depth interviews were done with participants who identified themselves as frequent consumers of luxury brands. Interviewees covered a range of ages (mid 20s to mid 50s) and different professional backgrounds. The idea of purposeful sampling was applied to this context, where participants were recruited via a snowball technique with the aim to examine the true complexity of the brand personality construct through information-rich interviews (Benoot, Hannes, and Bilsen, 2016). The data saturation point was reached once new personality characteristics were no longer emerging through additional interviews (Francis et al., 2010).

An in-depth interviewing approach was pursued, as the main goal of the interviews was to explore how luxury consumers describe the personality of luxury brands using various personality characteristics. In the preparation of the generic interview protocol, a comprehensive guide for adequate reporting of qualitative studies by Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig (2007) was followed so as to improve the interview conduct. Thus, the interviewer's (mine) identity, credentials, occupation, gender as well as experience were clarified prior to the interview in order to increase the credibility of the findings. In addition, the possibility of transparent and frank discussion in the interview process was facilitated by the lack of prior close relationships with the participants, meaning the interviewees had no vested interest in believing their responses would affect the state of affairs afterwards.

Interviews started with the general discussion of participants' luxury buying habits and their descriptions of favourite luxury brands in different product and service categories through the use of animism techniques (see Appendix A). To encourage further elicitation of personal constructs, the Repertory Grid Technique was employed, where participants were presented with relevant and familiar stimuli, from the luxury brands they mentioned at the earlier stage of the interview, shown in groups of three, one set at a time (Marsden and Littler, 1998). Each participant was requested to look for commonalities and differences in the provided set of stimuli, and the process continued until no new descriptor "words" could be added to the pool of items. For each descriptor, participants were asked to provide an opposite characteristic for further stimulation. An additional task requested from the interviewees was to associate personality traits from existing scales to any luxury brands that came to their mind. This was important in order to examine the relevance and salience of existing personality measures. It appeared that many participants had difficulty matching any luxury brand names to the personality traits from Heine (2009) and Aaker's (1997) scales. A variation in the correspondence of brands to the two personality typology dimensions was also identified. Different respondents often named the same brands as best matching with completely different dimensions. These inconsistencies of personality perceptions in the existing scales are an issue that became part of a further investigation in a larger sample of consumers.

Additionally, 6 interviews were undertaken with luxury brand experts. All participants typically had at least a few years of experience working in a luxury business and dealt with branding-related issues on a frequent basis. First, interviewees were asked about the relevance of brand personality for luxury brands and whether they thought that luxury brands could essentially develop distinct personalities. Next, they were given personality-related questions regarding their own brand and such brand's competitors. Finally, they were requested to describe personalities of luxury brands in other product categories of their choice. Brand experts named some new descriptors (14 new traits), which were added to the final list of personality traits.

### **3.4 Step 3: Assessment of the Content Validity of the Items**

It is imperative to evaluate the items produced in the previous step for their content validity. Many conventional techniques advocate the use of the judge panel method in order to better understand the extent to which every item captures each element of the domain of the construct (e.g. Schriesheim et al., 1993; Hinkin and Tracey, 1999). Given that the lexical approach was adopted for the systematic development of a large pool of brand personality traits from the natural language of luxury consumers using a variety of sources and methods, each generated item should be readily a) in itself representative of an aspect of the construct's content domain and b) jointly with other generated items representative of the whole content domain of the construct (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011), as long as each item is a personality trait and not any other characteristic. Hence, to ensure the purity of the new measure, the generated list of characteristics was first screened against Norman's (1967) established and comprehensive list of personality traits to make sure that the pool includes only personality traits and no other items.

Next, in order to make better sense of the generated items and to check for possible outliers, all unique personality traits identified from the content analysis and the interviews and checked against Norman's (1967) list of traits were examined on the basis of their semantic relatedness. WordNet is the standard tool used by lexical analysts across the world (Pedersen, Patwardhan, and Michelizzi, 2004). WordNet allows for word comparisons

based on their semantic similarity or relatedness (Budanitsky and Hirst, 2006). In WordNet measures of semantic similarity are primarily suited for nouns and verbs as those are structured in the manner of *is-a* relations (Pedersen et al., 2004). However, some WordNet measures incorporate other relationships between the concepts including *is-an-attribute-of*, *has-part*, *is-made-of* relations for pairs of concepts. Being more flexible, measures of relatedness allow for estimating the extent of relatedness for different parts of speech. This is particularly useful in this case, as not all personality traits included in the final list are adjectives. Indeed, some of the characteristics recorded from the interviews and context analysis and representing personality traits according to Norman's (1967) list are nouns (e.g. perfectionist, daydreamer, show-off). WordNet has three measures of relatedness, of which HSO was found to be the most appropriate as it organises relations for pairs of concepts as having direction and determines their relatedness by identifying a path between them that is not too long and does not frequently alter its course (Hirst and St-Onge, 1998). As a result, semantic relatedness of all pairs of items was established that allowed the multidimensional scaling analysis to be performed in order to group related items into meaningful clusters. Items that did not belong to any of the clusters were eliminated for the purpose of further improving the content adequacy of the new measure (see next chapter for results).

### **3.5 Step 4: Formal Specification of the Measurement Model**

Once a unique set of items with adequate content validity has been established, it was possible to move onto the next step of making a formal specification of the measurement model, which can provide a valuable insight into the anticipated relations between the target construct and its indicators. A clear identification of the construct with formative or reflective indicators is desirable at this stage but this process is often impeded by the requirements of setting the scale of measurement and identifying all parameters of the model (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011), determining the construct-level error term (Bollen and Davis, 2009), dealing with the possibility of interpretational confounding that reflects the mismatch between the conceptualisation of the construct and its operationalisation (Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff, 2003), estimating the covariances

among the indicators and/or other exogenous measures (MacCallum and Browne, 1993) or employing parcels that pool a number of items to form a single index as indicators (Bandalos, 2002). Whilst the indicators cannot be identified at this stage as the new scale is being developed from scratch using the lexical approach, a number of useful observations can be made regarding the measurement model.

Unlike other variables, latent constructs can only be measured indirectly through the attributes individuals assign to them (Gefen, Rigdon, and Straub, 2011). According to Churchill (1979), in classic measurement theory, latent constructs should be grounded in relevant theory in instances when they are expressed by means of questionnaire scales or other measured variables. In personality domain, researchers identify the construct of personality, which may only be indirectly manifested through behavioural cues, as latent construct more than just statistically (Funder, 2009; Vukasović and Bratko, 2015). A number of studies provide evidence of good fit of the latent model of human personality (the Big Five) in confirmatory factor analysis as well as structural equation models (Bagozzi and Heatherton, 1994; Benet-Martinez and John, 1998). In addition, Saucier and Srivastava (2015) argue that the lexical approach has helped harmonise the field and generated more potential for the structural model excellence, as it enables the concurrent use of most of the relevant criteria, including the social relevance of the personality variables, their comprehensiveness, reliability, stability over time, generalisability across various settings as well as presence of causal basis and a valid theory. The most widely accepted Big Five model happens to be predominantly grounded in the first reported lexical studies (John and Srivastava, 1999). In parallel, the personality of luxury brands is represented by human personality traits that consumers relate to such brands in their minds, suggesting that brand personality of luxuries is also a latent construct, whose dimensions will be appropriately identified and confirmed in further statistical analyses.

Similar to prior brand personality scale development works (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Milas and Mlačić, 2007; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009), the type of measurement model that is conceptually fitting in this instance is that of a reflective model. It describes the relationship between the indicators and the associated latent construct and is grounded in the

assumption that individual's score on a measure of a latent construct represents a function of their true position of a latent construct, with addition of error (Schwab, 1980; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Following this, each of the model's measures should be regarded as a crude *reflection* of the latent construct.

Aaker (1997) treated brand personality as a multidimensional construct as she believed that only through the identification of unique dimensions one could discriminate between the different types of personalities. Grounding her scale in human personality frameworks, she argued that not all of the Big Five dimensions would be necessarily mirrored in the new brand personality scale, as brands personality dimensions may behave differently compared to human personality ones. Indeed, from Aaker's (1997) resultant five-factor structure, only three dimensions were comparable with the Big Five. Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) examined 17 factor structures of other brand personality scales and found that some of the Big Five dimensions, such as Extraversion or Conscientiousness, recurred more times than others. Importantly, they also discovered that dimensions that show no comparability with the Big Five are the ones that do not contain any personality traits. As the new measure of luxury brand personality employs a lexical approach to derive only personality traits (and not any other characteristics) exclusively from consumer portrayals of luxury brands, it is expected that multiple meaningful dimensions will be identified through factor analysis, with some of these dimensions showing resemblance to the Big Five factors.

### **3.6 Step 5: Data Collection for Pretest**

Naturally, the next step involved the collection of data for the pretest in order to assess the psychometric properties of the new measure and establish its validity (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). Given that the new measure is designed specifically for the luxury context and expected to accurately capture the symbolic properties of luxury brands as perceived by those who directly consume them, the sample was chosen with the intent to represent purely luxury consumers selected on the basis of their luxury consumption habits. Another important consideration was the size of the sample. Since the factors were weakly established at this stage, a larger sample size was necessary for

ensuring sufficient retrieval of population parameters (MacCallum et al., 1999). General recommendations with regards to the sample size suggest that at least 300 cases are required for factor analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007; Comrey and Lee, 2013). In addition, construct stability is another important issue that should be taken into account prior to data gathering efforts as constructs that are expected to vary over time or situations for theoretical reasons may require additional data collection efforts (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). Personality traits are known to be relatively stable over time as well as across different situations (McCrae and Costa, 1997), suggesting that it is reasonable to expect the construct to remain stable. Reported in more detail below are the key considerations that were involved in the data collection efforts for the pretest.

### **3.6.1 Sample**

Recruited through Qualtrics consumer panel, the first sample for the scale validation study was comprised of 389 U.S.-based respondents who identified themselves as luxury consumers via the screening question. Qualtrics is a Web-based survey tool that is being widely used in academia given its sophistication and flexibility in survey design and user-friendly interface. A non-probability sample was employed as all potential respondents were screened according to their prior luxury brand purchase behaviour in order to ensure they were luxury consumers. The majority of the respondents were females (71.1%) as opposed to (28.9%) males. The respondents covered a range of ages, with most age groups being represented relatively equally: 18-24 years (14.7%), 25-34 years (18.8%), 35-44 years (16.8%), 45-54 years (14.9%), 55-64 years (17.8%), and over 65s (17%). Education-wise, all respondents possessed a high/secondary school degree (10.6%) or higher. Specifically, 22.4% of respondents finished some college, 33.5% had a Bachelor Degree, 7% completed an Associate Degree, 19.6% had a Master Degree, 5.7% obtained a Professional Degree, and, lastly, 1.3% of respondents earned a Doctorate Degree. 43.8% of respondents indicated having a Managerial and/or Professional Specialty Occupation from the NORC (National Opinion Research Centre) 1980 Census Occupational Classification list (<http://ibgwww.colorado.edu>). At the same time, 13.7% stated being unemployed at the time, 10.4% performed Technical, Sales, and/or Administrative Support roles, 8.5% were

students, 2.1% had occupation in the area of Precision Production, Craft and/or Repairs, 1.5% worked in the Service sector, and .7% were Operators, Fabricators or Labourers. The remaining 19.3% indicated that none of the suggested occupations from the provided in the list fitted their job title.

### **3.6.2 Selection of Luxury Brands**

In order to ensure the chosen set of stimuli was comprehensive, the selection process was guided by four key principles. The first principle refers to the salience of chosen luxury brands among relevant consumers (Aaker, 1997). For this purpose, only luxury brands that were considered well-known among respondents were retained. The second principle implies the inclusion of luxury brands representing different levels of luxury. The importance of this criterion is justified by the fact that the luxury level may serve to differentiate luxury brands as they vary in the degree to which they possess characteristics typically used to describe luxury brands, such as price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, symbolism as well as extraordinariness (Heine, 2012). Hence, it is crucial to select a set of luxury brands belonging to different luxury levels ranging from entry- to top- and elite-level. The third principle underlies the selection of luxury brands depending on the consumption value they denote to a luxury consumer. Indeed, different luxury values help explain consumers' purchasing decisions as they rely on a range of social factors including the willingness to impress others or exhibition of status as well as individual, functional and financial elements (Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels, 2009). To aid in selecting brands that add different luxury value in consumer's perception, it was, thus, important to choose luxury brands that elicited a range of strong and weak individual luxury value perceptions across these four luxury value dimensions. Lastly, the fourth principle entails the selection of luxury brands that represent various brand personality types (Aaker, 1997). Reliance on these criteria resulted in a relatively wide selection of luxury brands that were truly representative of the contemporary international luxury market following the decision to retain well-known luxury brands with different levels of luxury, luxury value and personality types.

The initial pool of luxury brands was compiled primarily using consulting reports on luxury brands from leading consulting firms including BCG (2014), Deloitte (2014), McKinsey & Company (2012), luxury brands research organisations such as the World Luxury Association (WLA, 2012) as well as Heine's (2011) online directory of luxury brands covering a range of product/service categories and luxury levels (conceptofluxurybrands.com, 2016)<sup>1</sup>. The selection occurred according to 8 most salient product and service categories in the luxury market based on the findings of luxury consumer preferences in recent consulting reports (e.g. BCG, 2014): accessories, apparel, watch & jewellery, cosmetic, furnitures, food & wine, hotel & exclusive vacations, and cars & yacht. It was important to choose a wide range of luxury brands in order to increase the generalisability of the measurement scale. As a result, 96 luxury brands were pre-selected for rating purposes such that each product or service category comprised 12 luxury brands.

In order to identify and retain brands that met the above criteria, the selected 96 luxury brands were subjected to raters' assessment. For a full list of luxury brands see Table 3 below. Raters were recruited on the basis of identifying themselves as avid luxury consumers using convenience sampling. A total of 42 UK-based raters of different age groups, genders, and professional backgrounds each rated 24 assigned brands. More specifically, each rater assessed sets of 3 luxury brands representing 8 product or service categories mentioned above. They were requested to rate assigned luxury brands on brand salience ("How well do you know Brand X?" Not at all/Slightly/Moderately/Very/Extremely), luxury level ("Compared to other luxury brands you know, how would you rank Brand X with respect to its luxury level?" Not Luxury/Entry-Level/Medium-Level/Top-Level/Elite-Level), and luxury value ("Imagine that you own or have used Brand X in the past. Please rate the following statements"). According to Heine (2011), a luxury brand is evaluated in comparison to other luxury brands following the relative nature of luxury. Hence, raters were asked to rank a given luxury brand in comparison to other luxuries they knew. Luxury levels were measured using Heine's 4-level luxury hierarchy, with the option of "Not luxury" being included to

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this directory has been modified since year 2013 when it was used for the purpose of this research

allow raters pinpoint brands they did not believe to be a luxury. As for luxury value measurement, Hanzae, Teimourpour, and Teimourpour's (2012) adaptation of Wiedmann et al.'s (2009) existing measure was utilised. Eight key luxury value dimensions: conspicuousness value, hedonic value, materialistic value, prestige value, quality value, self-identity value, uniqueness value, usability value, were captured using one statement from each dimension with the highest factor loading. Notably, ratings of given luxury brands are a reflection of raters' perceptions about such brands and do not necessarily correspond to how luxury brand managers and industry leaders position these brands along luxury levels, values or personality traits.

Accessories	Apparel	Watch & Jewellery	Cosmetic	Furnitures	Food & Wine	Hotel & Exclusive Vacations	Cars & Yacht
Montblanc	Burberry	Rolex	Chanel	Baccarat	Antinori	Ritz Carlton	Ferrari
Etro	Giorgio Armani	Van Cleef & Arpels	Hermès	Meissen	Dom Perignon	Jumeirah Group	Bugatti
Balenciaga	Prada	Buccellati	Biotherm	Gaggenau	Champagne Mercier	Belmond	Lamborghini
Alain Mikli	Gucci	Chopard	Kiehl's	Kartell	Charbonnel et Walker	Maybourne Hotel Group	Aston Martin
Ray-Ban	Versace	Graff	Clarins	Bisazza	Numanthia	Quintessentially	Bentley
Fendi	Ralph Lauren	Tiffany & Co	Lancome	Wedgwood	Illy	Le Meurice Paris	Porsche
Goyard	Dolce & Gabbana	Baume & Mercier	Shiseido	Artemide	Masi Agricola	The Savoy Hotel	Ferretti
Furla	Miu Miu	Harry Winston	La Prairie		S.Pellegrino		Rolls-Royce
Coach			Aveda				Azimut
Carrera			Dior				Sunseeker
Louis Vuitton							Riva
							Mercedes-Benz

As a result, 4 identically structured surveys were carried out where 10 raters each assessed 24 assigned luxury brands (11 raters in survey 1 & 2). Subsequently, however, factor analysis of collected data from 4 surveys and reliability analysis for measuring intra and inter-rater levels of agreement (i.e. ICC), led to retaining data from a total of 27 raters (8 in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 8 in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6 in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5 in the 4<sup>th</sup> surveys). This was done in accordance with commonly accepted levels of significance for the reliability coefficient, i.e. at or above .75 to be considered excellent (e.g. Cicchetti, 1994). Descriptive statistics were used to sort

24 luxury brands in each survey according to their mean levels on brand salience (0 - minimum, 4 - maximum) and luxury values (1 - minimum, 5 - maximum). For brand salience, median levels were calculated and served as a reference cut-off point for brand selection. Preference was given to luxury brands whose mean levels were above the estimated median score and above the score 0, which implied zero brand knowledge. For luxury values, mean levels were used to calculate the 33<sup>rd</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> percentiles in order to estimate how high or low each brand were on 8 luxury values (1 - conspicuousness, 2 - hedonic, 3 - materialistic, 4 - prestige, 5 - quality, 6 - self-identity, 7 - uniqueness, 8 - usability). Thus, each luxury brand was assessed on how high or low it scored on each luxury value and a number of brands that were high as well as low on different values were highlighted for selection. For luxury levels, descriptive statistics were used to sort 24 luxury brands according to their median levels (1 - not luxury, 5 - elite-level). Consequently, an iterative process was used to retain luxury brands that scored relatively high on brand salience, high/low on different luxury values, and belonged to different luxury levels. Since it was important to select luxury brands so that each of the 8 chosen product/service categories was represented, on some occasions a decision was made to retain certain luxury brands that, for instance, scored lower than others on brand salience but were high or low on luxury values or luxury levels in comparison with other luxury brands. To provide an example, accessories luxury brand Carrera was rated as relatively low on brand salience (mean score of 1.364 placing it between “Slightly” and “Moderately” on the brand salience measure) but also the lowest on “conspicuousness”, “materialistic, and “usability” values and second lowest on “hedonic” and “quality” luxury value among the other 23 luxury brands in the first survey from the 4 survey set. Hence, it was important to retain that luxury brand as it helped select a representative set of luxury brands.

The analysis of raters’ assessment of a total of 96 luxury brands led to 57 of those brands being retained at this stage. Next, 18 raters from the previous group of 42 raters were assigned to complete a new survey (i.e. a set of 2 similarly organised surveys each completed by 9 raters). Subsequent factor analysis of collected data with 18 raters and reliability statistics (i.e. intraclass correlation coefficients for average measures) made a case for using data from all 18 raters. The aim of that survey was to assess the remaining

set of luxury brands on brand personality types and select those that scored particularly high or low on specific types and together covered all brand personality types used. In her scale development work, Aaker (1997) adopted brands from an EquiTrend study (1992) that had ratings of 131 consumer brands on 30 personality traits. Rather, here the idea was to use luxury brand personality traits identified through qualitative research as part of this scale development study described in detail in the next chapter. More specifically, 23 luxury brand personality clusters obtained from multidimensional scaling analysis in SPSS were utilised to identify luxury brands that had varied luxury brand personality profiles. Such approach would allow retaining certain luxury brands in a more precise and relevant manner. To reiterate, those clusters were as follows: extravagant, bold, businesslike, trustworthy, outspoken, stuck-up, energetic, honest, faithful, exact, understanding, masculine, unapproachable, sexy, practical, optimistic, sensual, ostentatious, elegant, original, sophisticated, intelligent, and brutal.

Descriptive statistics were used to sort a total of 50 luxury brands according to their mean levels ranging from 1 “not at all descriptive” to 7 “extremely descriptive”. In order to identify all brands that scored high on the different luxury brand personality types, 33<sup>rd</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> percentiles were calculated and served as cut-off points. Luxury brands used in each of the 2 surveys that had highest or lowest mean level scores on each brand personality profile were retained, with many luxury brands having high and/or low scores on a number of brand personality profiles simultaneously. For instance, luxury accessories brand Louis Vuitton from survey 1 had highest mean level scores on “ostentatious” luxury brand personality profile. At the same time, raters assessed luxury accessories brand Ray-Ban as being highest on “energetic” brand personality type in the same survey. In survey 2, luxury car brand Lamborghini scored highest on “masculine” brand personality type. Meanwhile, luxury furnitures brand Bisazza was rated as being high on “trustworthy”, “original” and “extravagant” brand personality profiles, while another furniture brand Kartell got low scores on “understanding”, “masculine”, “faithful”, “brutal”, “bold”, and “ostentatious” luxury brand personality types and only scored high on “approachable” type.

Consequently, 32 luxury brands were selected for the development of the measurement scale so that each luxury brand represented a particular product/service category and occupied a specific luxury level in the 8 x 4 matrix style (see table 4 below). Additionally, all retained stimuli represented various luxury values and different personality profiles for measurement scale generalisability purposes.

Table 4								
<i>Final Set of Luxury Brands Across Different Luxury Levels and Product/Service Categories</i>								
	Accessories	Apparel	Watch & Jewellery	Cosmetic	Furnitures	Food & Wine	Hotel & Exclusive Vacations	Cars & Yacht
Elite Level	Montblanc	Burberry	Rolex	Hermes	Baccarat	Antinori	Ritz Carlton	Lamborghini
Top Level	Balenciaga	Gucci	Graff	Kiehl's	Meissen	Dom Perignon	Jumeirah Group	Bentley
Medium Level	Ray-Ban	Versace	Tiffany & Co	Lancome	Bisazza	Charbonnel et Walker	Maybourne Hotel Group	Rolls-Royce
Entry Level	Louis Vuitton	Dolce & Gabbana	Harry Winston	Dior	Artemide	Illy	Le Meurice Paris	Mercedes-Benz

### 3.6.3 Survey Pre-test

Prior to launching the survey, a pre-test was run with 6 UK-based adult respondents in order to identify possible issues with the survey and improve its structure and contents. Cognitive interviews were used as a key testing method, where the first 3 respondents were requested to read-aloud all survey questions and asked about their thoughts as they answered each question and straight after. Particular focus was placed on cognitive rather than confirmatory or other kinds of feedback-seeking probes (Presser et al., 2004) as those could help better recognise whether a respondent understood what the question really meant, their thought process whilst answering a particular question, and how they derived an answer. Arguably, such approach helped improve the data quality as it shed light on the major flaws in the survey. Additionally, conventional pretesting was performed with the next 3 respondents where they were requested to complete a survey online similar to how it would be administered during the main launch and provide a written feedback concerning any confusion about what any of the questions were asking, awkward wordings, hesitation in answering any part of the survey or any other potential problems with the survey. Doing

this helped achieve confidence that any issues that were missed at the cognitive interview state were picked up and corrected.

### **3.6.4 Procedure**

As per instructions, each respondent was informed that the survey was part of academic research that focused on establishing the image of various luxury brands. The respondents were advised that it was imperative to learn which characteristics occurred to them when they thought of certain luxury brands. At the screening, stage respondents were asked to indicate whether they had purchased any of the specified luxury brands previously. All 32 luxury brands chosen through raters' assessment as stimuli at the earlier stage were presented as options in the screening process. In the main survey, each respondent was requested to rate 2 luxury brands. However, some respondents only rated 1 brand due to having a lack of knowledge for the remaining luxury brands in the list provided. The choice of luxury brands was completely randomised implying that each respondent did not necessarily rate the brands they indicated previously purchasing at the screening stage. A respondent could only proceed with the brand rating task for any specific luxury brand if they confirmed knowledge of such brand by first answering "Yes" or "No" to the question: "Do you know Brand X?" where "Brand X" was one of the 32 luxury brands from the stimuli list.

Once the salience of the rated brand was verified, each respondent proceeded with the brand-rating task. They were asked to rate the extent to which they believed the given characteristics described Brand X on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all descriptive" to "extremely descriptive", where Brand X was any of the 32 randomly assigned luxury brands. Each respondent rated a given luxury brand on a total of 195 brand personality traits, with 166 traits being brand personality traits identified through a prior qualitative stage in this work and additional 42 traits (with 13 trait overlap) being brand personality traits from Aaker's (1997) scale development paper. Every respondent was also requested to indicate whether they had owned the brand they rated or any other luxury brands in the same product category. They were then asked to complete a product choice

question where they needed to select all products, which to their knowledge were sold with Brand X from a comprehensive list of possible products with intentionally added product choices from other product categories. Asking respondents about brand ownership was integral to the product category knowledge question as this was then used for grouping various product choices under a certain product category and analysing selected luxury brands according to their product category. As respondents had to specify ownership of a variety of products, it was expected that their responses would not have a priming effect on the subsequent rating questions. Next, each respondent completed a product involvement measure by considering products they believed were sold with Brand X as per previous question. Lastly, each respondent answered some demographic questions including those related to their gender, age, education level and occupation.

Importantly, efforts were made to avoid careless responses following the recommendations of Meade and Craig (2012). This was done through the inclusion of a number of attention filters in the survey. Namely, two attention filters “Press Undecided” and “Tick Descriptive” were included in the brand personality-rating task for every luxury brand. In addition, another attention filter was placed at the end of the survey as part of the following questions comprised of three statements based on a 7-point Likert scale “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”:

- “I tried to answer this questionnaire to the best of my ability”
- “I had great difficulty understanding most of the questions”
- “I often think about the harm we are doing to the environment”.

### **3.7 Step 6: Scale Purification and Refinement**

In accordance with the next step of MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff’s (2011) scale development process guidelines, the new scale was purified and refined using statistical methods. The authors provide a detailed account of the necessary stages in the scale purification and refinement process for the first- or second-order constructs with reflective or formative indicators, which include determining the goodness of fit of the measurement model, examining validity of the set of indicators at the construct level, evaluating the

validity and reliability of each indicator as well as removing problematic indicators using the advocated criteria.

Given that at this stage the key aim was to uncover the underlying dimensions by means of principal axis factoring analysis using SPSS software, the initial focus was on the estimation of a factor solution and elimination of the problematic indicators. Next, the measurement model was estimated in SPSS AMOS software and evaluated for goodness of fit, with a number of problematic indicators eliminated at that stage. In addition, its indicators were examined individually as well as at the construct level for validity and reliability as per MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff's (2011) recommendations. Following this scale purification stage, new data was collected so as to validate the new scale using a different sample of luxury consumers (next step 7) as well as assess its validity (step 8).

### **3.7.1 Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis can be done to determine the number of dimensions underlying the target construct (Churchill, 1979). When performing the exploratory factor analysis, one of the most critical considerations involves the number of factors that should be retained as specifying too many or too few factors may have an adverse impact on the findings (Hayton, Allen, and Scarpello, 2004). One widely used technique is the Kaiser criterion that retains factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1960). It is the default retention standard used by statistical packages such as SPSS as it helps retain the key factors until further factors account for little variance. Another useful method for establishing how many factors to retain is a scree test. Developed by Cattell (1966), the test implies the examination of a plot of eigenvalues for discontinuities. The presence of a steep cliff helps identify the major factors, which is then replaced by a shallow line that captures a variety of minor factors accounting for a small portion of the variance. Although subjective in nature (Gorsuch, 1983), such method performs well in the presence of strong, empirically distinguishable factors and a number of studies looking into scree test interrater reliabilities have produced adequate results (e.g. Cliff, 1970; Zwick and Velicer, 1982). When deciding

on the number of factors to retain, it is important to consider whether a variable might be associated with more than one factor. Using rotation maximises high item loadings whilst minimising low item loadings, and results in a simpler and more meaningful solution irrespective of the rotation method used in a study (Williams, Onsman, and Brown, 2010).

With regards to the interpretation of the factor solution, the key considerations include an examination of variables and making decisions regarding which ones are attributable to a specific factor and labelling such factor correspondingly. As a rule, at least two or three variables should load on the same factor for adequate interpretation (Henson and Roberts, 2006). According to these researchers, the significance of latent factors rests on researcher definition. In order to refine the content of each factor, it is important to examine all items and retain those with high loadings on the respective factor. Whilst desirable, strong data that points towards systematically high communalities without cross loadings and a number of variables loading strongly on every factor can be hard to achieve in practice (Mulaik, 1990; Widaman, 1993). Item communalities are regarded as high when they are .80 or higher (Velicer and Fava, 1998), although more prevalent item communality magnitudes in the social sciences range from .40 to .70. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) recommend .32 as a minimum loading of an item for item retainment. Although in this work the aim was to retain items with higher loadings above .50, in some cases it was sensible to keep lower loading items (though above the .40 cut off point) if they reflected the conceptual intent (Williams et al., 2010). At the same time, a cross loading item is one that has a loading of .32 or more on more than one factor. If an item loads adequately to strongly on more than one factor, it is a good candidate for elimination. Finally, an effort was made to ensure that each factor has three or more items to avoid forming unstable and frail factors (Osborne and Costello, 2009), with aim to have the majority of factors with five or more items to achieve factor solidity.

### **3.7.2 Goodness of Fit of the Measurement Model**

Once the measurement model has been estimated, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff (2011) advocate considering the following criteria:

- The solution is proper, which can be checked by examining the convergence of the estimation procedure and ensuring absence of negative variance estimates in the output;
- The individual predicted relationships are statistically significant; where applicable, the critical ratios for the estimates of these relationships can be verified via z-tests;
- On the whole, the relationships are in agreement with the sample data; an insignificant chi-square statistic serves as an indicator of the model adequately fitting the sample data, as the covariances predicted by the model do not differ statistically from the sample covariances.

Adherence to these criteria provided evidence of the validity of the measurement model.

Purification of the scale by means of factor analysis was followed by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) run in AMOS software, thereby estimating a 54-trait 6-factor measurement model. As for the estimation method, maximum likelihood estimation was employed, as it results in parameter estimates that maximise the likelihood of the observed data, dependent on the constraints in the model and supporting assumptions (Gefen et al., 2011). Another important consideration was the choice of overall fit indices. According to Gefen et al. (2011), reporting on the overall model fit begins with the  $\chi^2$  and its degrees of freedom as these indices still represent the primary reference for many evaluations. The chi-square statistic is known to be highly sensitive to sample size, meaning that significant p-value of the chi-square test may reject the model due to sample size despite the model fitting the data well (Hooper, Coughlan, and Mullen, 2008). As a result, alternative fit indices may be used in order to determine if the model may still constitute a useful approximation. In this work, along with the chi-square statistic, two classes of indices are being reported: incremental and absolute.

For incremental measures of fit TLI (Tucker-Lewis index), CFI (the comparative fit index), and RNI (relative noncentrality index) the recommended values are above  $\geq .90$  (Marsh, Hau, and Wen, 2004; Gefen et al., 2011), with some advocating the values over  $\geq .95$  as indicative of better model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1998; Russell, 2002). RNI is not reported in this work because in AMOS CFI and RNI have an equal value between [0;1]. In

addition to these incremental indices, Gefen et al. (2011) recommend reporting the following absolute fit indices: GFI (goodness-of-fit index), AGFI (adjusted GFI), RMSEA (the root mean square error of approximation), and SRMR (standardised root mean square residual). As for the GFI index, the accepted practice is to have GFI at or above .90 for good model fit. RMSEA stands for an estimate of no fit per degree of freedom and is related to a “test of close fit” that serves as a viable option to the  $\chi^2$  test of exact fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). RMSEA should be lower than .05 for good approximate fit, although values up to .08 point towards approximate fit. At the same time, SRMR is generally expected to be less than .05 because a higher value implies that residuals are large on average, comparative to what may be anticipated from a model with a good fit. These fit indices were obtained prior to the model refinement and elimination of the problematic indicators so as to illustrate that content validity was not undermined through the action of improving overall fit indices (Gefen et al., 2011) as well as reported after the changes were made.

### **3.7.3 Elimination of Problematic Indicators**

At the next step, reflective indicators of the first-order construct of brand personality of luxuries were examined based on the output, and problematic ones were eliminated from the model (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). First, indicators with nonsignificant ( $z < 1.96$ ) or weak (squared completely standardised loadings below the .50 mark) relationships with the latent construct were identified and removed as those may point towards a lack of validity (Gerbing and Anderson, 1984). The measurement model was re-run based on these changes. Next, measurement error covariances were carefully evaluated for strength and significance. In cases where modification indices were above 3.84 and expected change estimates were substantial, the associated indicators were considered for elimination. Thus, indicators with the highest in magnitude modification indices with other measures were removed one by one, and the measurement model was re-run after each removal in order to examine the effect such changes produced. Provided that all the necessary elements of the construct domain were fully captured by the retained items, a number of indicators were eliminated following this procedure.

### **3.7.4 Assessment of the Validity and Reliability of the Set of Indicators at the Construct Level**

Fornell-Larcker is the most recommended and frequently reported criterion in marketing research (Hair et al., 2012). This test was used to determine the convergent validity of the first-order latent construct of luxury brand personality with a number of identified reflective indicators. As every indicator is associated with the same latent construct, the average variance extracted (AVE) by the target construct was estimated by averaging the squared multiple correlations for all indicators (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). AVEs above .50 indicated that the latent construct successfully accounts for most of the variance in its indicators on average (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011).

Additionally, Cronbach's alphas were calculated in order to estimate the internal consistency reliability of the identified indicators (Cronbach, 1951). The recommended values of Cronbach's alpha are .70 or higher for new measures (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Another useful indicator of indicator reliability that was estimated along with Cronbach's alpha is Fornell and Larcker's (1981) index of construct reliability, which is calculated using the ratio of the variance captured by the latent construct to the total variance in the measures, and whose recommended values are .70 or above (Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma, 2003).

### **3.7.5 Assessment of Individual Indicator Validity and Reliability**

The resultant measurement model was also assessed for the presence of validity and reliability of its indicators. First, the validity of individual indicators was evaluated by examining the strength and significance of the relationship between every indicator and its latent construct. Next, the extent of validity of every indicator was determined through the examination of the unique portion of the variance in the indicator captured by the latent construct (Bollen, 1989), which equals the square of the indicator's completely standardised loading or squared multiple correlation for the indicator. For adequate validity,

the value should exceed .50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

In addition, Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) advocate using a new alternative assessment method called the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations, whilst arguing for the low sensitivity of such common traditional method of testing validity as Fornell-Larcker test. It implies assessing the average of correlations of the items underlying different indicators (i.e. heterotrait-heteromethod correlations) relative to the average of the correlations of the items underlying the same indicators (i.e. monotrait-heteromethod). Since HTMT matrix captures the correlations of the items from both indicators separately, the calculation of the final HTMT score involved taking the geometric mean of the two average monotrait-heteromethod submatrices. Henseler et al. (2015) suggest using two absolute thresholds of .85 and .90 in order to establish validity, with the threshold of .85 being a preferred cut-off given its conservatism and higher sensitivity rate. As a result, HTMT matrices were calculated in an attempt to determine the presence of validity between pairs of different indicators (i.e. luxury brand personality dimensions).

As for the assessment of reliability, given that each indicator loads only on one focal construct, the above procedure and the examination of the squared multiple correlations for the indicator (desirable value above .50 for Fornell-Larcker test) also points towards individual indicator reliability.

### **3.7.6 Comparative Model Testing**

To check for the relative adequacy of competing measurement models, model fit indices of competing models were compared. The expectation was to confirm that the purified hypothesised model is the most parsimonious as it should clearly show a better model-data fit in comparison with other constrained models. To do this, the resultant measurement model was compared with more restricted competing models, starting from the independence (null) model and followed by orthogonal models with a varying number of uncorrelated factors and oblique models with factors combined together to compose a single factor correlated with the remaining factor (s).

### **3.8 Step 7: New Sample and Re-examination of Scale Properties**

It is recommended that the new model should be re-examined on a new set of respondents as a result of item removal as part of the scale purification process based on the data from the first survey (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). Such re-estimation carries considerable importance because the psychometric properties of the new measure could be the consequence of the idiosyncrasies in the first data sample. It also allows performing a valid statistical testing of the hypothesised measurement model. Based on the new sample of luxury consumers, the measurement model was re-estimated and re-examined for its goodness of fit and the psychometric properties (similar process to the above step). In addition, one other test was performed to establish the consistency of the focal construct, i.e. test-retest reliability.

#### **3.8.1 Sample**

The second sample was recruited through Qualtrics consumer panel for the purpose of scale calibration. This sample was comprised of 540 U.S.-based adult respondents. All respondents were recruited based on their previous luxury brand consumption patterns. Similar to gender distribution pattern in the first survey, 71.3% of respondents were females, with the remaining 28.7% being males. With regards to the age, most age groups were represented fairly evenly: 18-24 year olds (5.9%), 25-34 year olds (17.8%), 35-44 year olds (15%), 45-54 year olds (14.8%), 55-64 year olds (20.4%), and, finally, over 65 year olds (26.1%). As for the education level of respondents, a large majority held at least a University Undergraduate Degree (40.4%), whilst a further 33.9% also had a University Postgraduate Degree. Only 13.9% of respondents had High/Secondary School education, and 11.9% had some kind of Technical/Trade Qualification or Diploma. With respect to respondents' professions, just over half of all respondents had Managerial and Professional Speciality Occupations (50.8%). Another 9% worked in Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support jobs, whereas 2.4% were students, 1.4% worked in the Service sector, .8% worked as Operators, Fabricators, and Labourers, and .2% of all respondents

had jobs in Precision Production, Craft and Repairs. 15% of respondents were unemployed during the time the survey was administered. A further 22.4% of respondents held professions that did not match any occupation titles suggested on the occupation list.

### **3.8.2 Selection of Luxury Brands**

Luxury brands for the second survey were drawn from the original list of 32 luxury brands. A decision was made to identify luxury brands from that list with high values between their brand personality profiles as based on the results of survey 1 and to exclude those brands from the second survey given their similarity with other brands. To check the similarity of the personality profiles of each brand with the others, double entry intraclass correlation (ICCDE) was used as recommended by McCrae (2008). First, mean scores for each of the 54 brand personality traits were calculated for every luxury brand from the list. Next, mean scores were estimated for all luxury brands for each the 6 identified luxury brand personality dimensions: Playfulness, Stability, Stuck-upness, Elegance, Timidity, and Femininity. These figures were standardised using z scores since the profile agreement index must represent a close to nil baseline rate as per McCrae (2008). To calculate ICCDEs, every element in the paired profile was recorded twice in the reversed manner across the rows, and the Pearson correlations between two columns of data produced ICCDE coefficients.

Obtained ICCDE scores ranged from 0 to 1 and correlations above .7 were highlighted as they meant two given luxury brands were highly similar across the 6 identified brand personality dimensions from the new scale. Luxury brands that had the highest number of ICCDE scores over .7 were recognised and eliminated. Those luxury brands belonged to different product/service categories and luxury levels. Hence, in the process of elimination special attention was paid to ensuring that retained luxury brands fairly represented all 8 product/service categories and were proportionately spread across the 4 luxury levels. As a result, 8 brands were eliminated: Charbonnel et Walker, Versace, Graff, Artemide, Jumeirah Group, Le Meurice Paris, Bentley, and Mercedes-Benz. With the additional exception of Maybourne Hotel Group brand from “Hotel & Exclusive Vacations” category

that no respondents in survey 1 were familiar with and which was, therefore, excluded from survey 2 for salience purposes, the remaining 23 luxury brands were all used as stimuli in the second survey.

### **3.8.3 Procedure**

Respondents were provided with instructions similar to the first survey. As such, they were told that the survey was part of academic research with central attention placed on establishing the image of different luxury brands. Thus, the aim of the survey was to help researchers learn which characteristics came to mind when respondents thought of specific luxury brands. At the screening, stage respondents were asked to indicate which of the 23 luxury brands shown in the list, if any, they had previously purchased. Those who opted for the “None of the above” did not fit the main criteria adopted for this context of being recognised as a luxury consumer and were screened out. In the main part of the survey, respondents were asked to select all luxury brands they were familiar with from the same list of 23 luxury brands. Following their selection(s), each respondent was re-directed to answer questions related to one of the brands they had chosen. The way each respondent was diverted to answer a set of questions related to one of the selected luxury brands was completely randomised until a point where the quota of 30 completions set for each brand block was filled.

Each respondent answered questions related to only 1 luxury brand. First, they were asked to rate a chosen luxury brand on a range of characteristics with a note that those associations only apply to the actual brand and not to the respondent. The brand-rating task was based on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “Not at all descriptive” to “Extremely descriptive”. As a result, each respondent rated 1 brand on a total of 98 brand personality traits. 54 of those were brand personality traits retained following the results of the factor analysis based on survey 1, while the remaining 44 brand associations were brand personality traits taken from Aaker’s (1997) and Geuens, Wejters, and Wulf’s (2009) scale development work for validation purposes. More precisely, 42 traits were borrowed from Aaker’s (1997) work and 12 traits were taken from Geuens, Wejters, and Wulf’s (2009)

scale development piece, which together produced a 10-trait overlap with the new luxury brand personality measure. Next, respondents were asked to complete a number of brand-related measures used to establish nomological validity and explained in the following section (see Table 6). The first brand-specific measures were for Member Group Fit (Escalas and Bettman, 2003) preceded by two related questions designed to clarify whether a respondent could picture the brand's typical users and, if so, who those users were from the respondent's circles. More specifically, each respondent was first asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale (-3 – not at all clearly, 0 – undecided, 3 – very clearly) how clearly they could picture the typical users of a given luxury brand. Next, they were asked whether there were any typical users of a given luxury brand in their circles and, in case of a positive answer, given the option to select (as many) from the following choices: close friends, relatives, neighbours, co-workers, acquaintances, and/or friends of friends. As a result, a 3-item member group fit measure followed with statements referring to the typical users of a given luxury brand: I belong to this group of people; I fit in with this group of people; I consider myself to be this type of person. Other brand-related measures included: Brand Personality Appeal (Freling, 2011); Brand Attitude (Bian and Forsythe, 2012), Brand Loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), Product Involvement (Malar et al., 2011), Emotional Brand Attachment (Malar et al., 2011), Word-of-Mouth Communication (Grohmann, 2009), Purchase Intention (Bian and Forsythe, 2012), and Brand Familiarity (Kent and Allen, 1994). As for the brand attitude measure, this work draws on some of the arguments made in earlier research on the influence of brand attitudes on consumption of luxury brands (Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009; Bian and Forsythe, 2012). Specifically, it relies on the assumption that consumption of luxury brands is predominantly decided by social-function attitudes following consumers' desire to express their selves and show their social status through buying of luxuries (Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009). Indeed, self-expression attitudes emerge through luxury brands' unique image and exclusivity, which in turn match with consumer's need for uniqueness (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). At the same time, self-presentation attitudes are born through the power of luxury brands in enabling social stratification and reference group influences, thereby bolstering consumer's social image. Beyond social-function attitudes that mirror consumers' cognitive responses in relation to a luxury brand, Bian and Forsythe (2012) emphasised the importance of

affective attitudes in impacting consumer outcomes, such as purchase intention. Consequently, this work adopts the measure of brand attitudes from Bian and Forsythe (2012), thus incorporating items corresponding to social-function attitudes and affective attitudes.

Table 5 <i>Measures Included in Nomological Validity Tests</i>		
Measure	Anchors	Author(s)
<p><b><i>Perceived Member Group Fit</i></b>            I belong to this group of people.            I fit in with this group of people.            I consider myself to be this type of person.</p>	Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree	Adopted from Escalas and Bettman (2005)
<p><b><i>Brand Personality Appeal</i></b>  <i>BPA Favourability:</i>            Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory            Unpleasant/Pleasant            Bad/Good  <i>BPA Originality:</i>            Common/Distinctive            Ordinary/Novel            Predictable/Surprising  <i>BPA Clarity:</i>            Not obvious/Obvious            Vague/Well-defined            Unclear/Clear</p>	Bipolar Scale Points	Adopted from Freling, Crosno, and Henard (2011)
<p><b><i>Brand Attitude</i></b>  <i>Social-function Attitudes:</i>            This luxury brand reflects the kind of person I see myself to be.            This luxury brand would help me communicate my self-identity.            This luxury brand would help me express myself.            This luxury brand is a symbol of social status.            This luxury brand would help me fit into important social situations.            I would like to be seen wearing this luxury brand.  <i>Affective Attitude:</i>            This luxury brand would give me pleasure.            This luxury brand would make me feel good.            I would enjoy this luxury brand.</p>	Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree	Adopted from Bian and Forsythe (2012)
<p><b><i>Emotional Brand Attachment</i></b>  <i>Affection:</i>            Affection            Love  <i>Connection:</i>            Connection  <i>Passion:</i></p>	Absolutely Disagree - Absolutely Agree	Adopted from Malär et al. (2011)

Passion Delight Captivation		
<b>Purchase Loyalty</b> I will buy this brand the next time I buy (product category) . I intend to keep purchasing this brand.	Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree	Adopted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)
<b>Word-of-mouth Communication</b> I recommend to other people that the brand should be theirs as soon as possible. I recommend the brand to other people. I talked directly about my experience with this brand with them.	Absolutely Disagree - Absolutely Agree	Adopted from Kim, Han, and Park (2001)
<b>Purchase Intention</b> If I were going to purchase a luxury product, I would consider buying this brand. If I were shopping for a luxury brand, the likelihood I would purchase this luxury brand is high. My willingness to buy this luxury brand would be high if I were shopping for a luxury brand. The probability I would consider buying this luxury brand is high.	Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree	Adopted from Bian and Forsythe (2012)

Having completed measures related to the given brand, each respondent was then instructed to answer a set of questions related to them as a person. First, they were asked to rate the extent to which given characteristics, namely, 98 brand personality traits from the brand-rating task, applied to them as a person. Doing this allowed measuring the actual self-congruence by establishing profile similarity between the ratings of a luxury brand and self-ratings for each respondent using an identical set of traits (e.g. Kressmann et al., 2006). Additionally, respondents completed the Social Desirability Scale (Strahan and Gerbasi, 1972). Lastly, they completed a number of demographic questions at the end of the survey.

Importantly, similar to the first survey attention filters were included in order to identify careless respondents (Meade and Craig, 2012). Attention filter “PressUndecided” was included as part of the brand rating task, whilst another attention filter “Tick-Descriptive” comprised part of the human personality rating task for every luxury brand included in the survey. Those who responded incorrectly to those attention filters were automatically

eliminated from the sample. Lastly, the final question at the end of the survey included a question with three statements containing attention filters (same as described in step 5).

### **3.8.4 Test-Retest Reliability**

Brand personality is assumed to be relatively stable over the course of time (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). Test-retest reliability allowed determining the consistency of the focal construct. 540 U.S.-based respondents from the second sample who rated 23 luxury brands of different luxury levels and covering a range of product and service categories in survey 2 were contacted via Qualtrics software. The respondents were asked to rate the same luxury brand they rated the previous time, resulting in a total of 50 brand personality ratings (50 responses served as an intentional cut-off point) of 18 luxury brands on all 54 brand personality traits for systematic bias prevention purposes. In line with Aaker's (1997) approach to reliability testing procedures, test-retest survey was administered 5 months after the original survey in order to reduce the risk of subjects remembering their prior responses as well as to limit the risk of "brand personality" effects, where differences in responses happen due to the possible changes in the perception of personalities of such luxury brands over the passage of time.

### **3.9 Step 8: Scale Validity Assessment**

Once the psychometric properties of the scale had been examined using a new sample similar to the one employed for scale calibration and confirmed as acceptable, the next step was to establish construct validity of the new measure. MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff (2011) propose addressing the following key considerations in this process:

- The indicators of the latent construct are accurate representations of the target construct;
- The indicators of the underlying construct adequately account for the multidimensional nature of the construct;
- The indicators of the focal construct are discernible from the indicators of other related constructs;

- The latent construct's indicators are associated with the measures of other constructs included in the construct's nomological network.

### **3.9.1 Experimental Manipulation of the Construct**

In an examination of latent constructs with reflective indicators, one crucial challenge is to determine whether the indicators accurately capture the real-life phenomena (e.g. a pattern of behaviour) that they pertain to (Stogdill, 1969). Support for this test can be found through the experimental manipulation of the construct. It helps establish whether the scores on a scale have high correlations with direct manipulations or measures of the object's actual properties the scale is intended to measure. Although true experimental manipulations were not made in this section, two tests were done in attempt to demonstrate that the indicators accurately capture the actual phenomena they refer to: brand choices and factorial invariance testing via multi-group survey analysis.

#### **3.9.1.1 Brand Choices**

In this scale development work, the first test addressed the selection of luxury brands representing different product categories (8 categories) as well as levels of luxuriousness (4 levels) in the first sample. Choosing different kinds of luxury brands would aid in establishing whether the identified indicators are capable of accurately accounting for a diverse range of luxury brands' real properties. In order to further clarify if this is the case, the CFA model was re-estimated for luxury brands belonging to each level of luxuriousness and different product categories and acceptable fit (roughly equivalent to the overall model fit) was obtained for most models (see Table 5 below). Prior research (e.g. Marsh, Balla, and McDonald, 1988) suggests that most goodness of fit indices are affected by sample size, which could be the reason for the worse fit of some of the estimated CFA models (e.g. Furniture, Food & Wine, Hotel & Exclusive Vacations, Cars & Yacht).

	$\chi^2$ (DF, p)	TLI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Entry-Level (177 cases)	257.241 (155, .000)	.934	.946	.877	.833	.061	.060
Medium-Level (145 cases)	280.709 (155, .000)	.895	.914	.845	.789	.075	.078
Top-Level (184 cases)	278.410 (155, .000)	.926	.940	.873	.828	.066	.059
Elite-Level (183 cases)	299.180 (155, .000)	.911	.927	.863	.815	.071	.070
Accessories (104 cases)	214.972 (155, .000)	.937	.949	.845	.790	.061	.062
Apparel (104 cases)	249.434 (155, .000)	.881	.903	.822	.759	.077	.091
Watch & Jewellery (101 cases)	231.200 (155, .000)	.898	.917	.822	.759	.070	.085
Cosmetic (104 cases)	208.108 (155, .000)	.950	.959	.847	.792	.058	.063
Furnitures (69 cases)	264.658 (155, .000)	.845	.873	.755	.667	.102	.091
Food & Wine (59 cases)	186.113 (155, .000)	.949	.958	.778	.699	.059	.088
Hotel & Vacations (45 cases)	209.867 (155, .000)	.894	.913	.724	.626	.089	.084
Cars & Yacht (103 cases)	283.703 (155, .000)	.816	.850	.800	.728	.090	.078

Another test involved making choices with regards to the luxury brands to be used in the second survey. The results of the first survey allowed estimation of brand personality profiles of all 32 luxury brands using mean scores across traits that were part of each of the six identified brand personality dimensions. The similarity of pairs of these profiles was assessed using ICCDE scores (McCrae, 2008). A complete matrix of ICCDE coefficients covering all brand personality profiles allowed identification of brands with similar personalities and eliminating those from the sample (for a detailed description see Step 7: Selection of Luxury Brands). Doing this helped ensure that retained luxury brands were perceived to possess distinctive personalities by the actual luxury consumers. Good fit of

the re-estimated model suggests that the indicators correctly capture the object's real-life properties. In addition, it also shows that the indicators of the latent construct accurately capture its multidimensional nature (point 2 of scale validity assessment).

### **3.9.1.2 Tests of Factorial Invariance**

The tests of differences between luxury and non-luxury brands may also be considered another way of determining whether the indicators truly grasp the actual phenomena they relate to. Indeed, the key aim of this thesis was to develop a new scale of luxury brand personality specifically for luxury brands based on the assumption that luxury brands are abundant in symbolic benefits as they signify status and prestige values (e.g. Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999) and, hence, require a separate measurement tool following the generality of common scales (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). As the new scale captures the specific meanings relevant for luxury brands, it would be logical to expect that the new measure is not invariant in multigroup testing across luxury and non-luxury groups.

#### **3.9.1.2.1 Sample and Procedure**

76 U.S.-based adult respondents were selected to complete a survey, where they were asked to rate one of the 8 widely-known mainstream brands on a set of 54 brand personality traits retained after the factor analysis performed based on the first survey. Each brand covered a different product/service category in a similar arrangement to the way luxury brands were selected. Thus, 8 non-luxury brands represented 8 salient product/service categories: Aldo (accessories), Zara (apparel), Citizen (watch & jewellery), Maybelline (cosmetic), IKEA (furnitures), Gallo Family Vineyards (food & wine), Holiday Inn (hotel & exclusive vacations), and Fiat (cars & yacht category). In summary, each respondent rated one brand only after they had indicated familiarity with this brand. Thus, Aldo was rated by 12 different respondents, Zara – 7, Citizen – 11, Maybelline – 9, IKEA – 13, Gallo Family Vineyards – 6, Holiday Inn – 6, and Fiat - 12.

### **3.9.2 Discriminant Validity of the Scale in Comparison with Other Brand Personality Scales**

An important part of the construct validation process is being able to demonstrate that the indicators of the focal construct are discernible from the indicators of other relevant constructs. Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) brand personality scales are well-established and widely used in marketing research, and some of their dimensions partially overlap with the newly developed scale of luxury brand personality. As HTMT criterion could be applied across different constructs to assess the discriminant validity, HTMT matrices were estimated for the new scale and Aaker's (1997) scale as based on survey 1 & 2, and for Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) and the new scale using the results from survey 2.

### **3.9.3 Nomological Validity Testing**

Nomological validity is a crucial part of validity testing as it helps establish whether a new measure correlates positively with measures of distinct but theoretically related constructs in the conceptually predicted manner. Nomological validity is said to be determined if it could be empirically demonstrated that the new construct has distinctive antecedents, consequences, modifying conditions or determinable variations in its relatedness to the identified antecedents or consequences, or differences across conditions in manifesting the predicted effects (Iacobucci, Ostrom, and Grayson, 1995).

The hypotheses proposed in the literature review chapter were tested using the survey design in which the key brand measures were included together with the brand and personality-rating task as part of the second survey (Table 6). As a result, each respondent rated a given luxury brand and their own personality on a set of 98 brand personality traits. They then assessed each brand on the following measures: group fit (Escalas and Bettman, 2003), brand personality appeal (Freling, 2011), social-function and affective brand attitudes (Bian and Forsythe, 2012), purchase loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), emotional brand attachment (Malar et al., 2011), word-of-mouth communication

(Grohmann, 2009), and purchase intention (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Prior to conducting the tests of nomological validity, CFA was performed on these measures (except the cases where solutions did not converge), with problematic indicators removed for improved model fit: group fit ( $\chi^2 = 11.902$  (DF = 4,  $p = .018$ ), TLI = .992, CFI = .997, GFI = .992, AGFI = .968, RMSEA = .061, and SRMR = .0140), brand personality appeal ( $\chi^2 = 48.646$  (DF = 11,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .960, CFI = .979, GFI = .974, AGFI = .933, RMSEA = .080, and SRMR = .0287), brand attitudes ( $\chi^2 = 81.824$  (DF = 11,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .968, CFI = .983, GFI = .958, AGFI = .894, RMSEA = .109, and SRMR = .0276), and purchase and attitudinal loyalty ( $\chi^2 = 5.024$  (DF = 1,  $p = .025$ ), TLI = .989, CFI = .998, GFI = .995, AGFI = .954, RMSEA = .086, and SRMR = .0062).

As will be discussed in detail in the findings chapter section 4.2.3 (“Elimination of problematic indicators”) with regards to the new measure, the modified model was reported to have good fit as reflected by the fit indices:  $\chi^2 = 546.884$  (DF = 155,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .933, CFI = .945, GFI = .926, AGFI = .900, RMSEA = .061, and SRMR = .0520. In order to assess the comparative performance of the new measure of luxury brand personality, respondents also completed Aaker’s (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) brand personality scales. Confirmatory factor analysis of these scales using the second sample showed inadequate model fit. Thus, Aaker’s (1997) 42-item 5-factor model had the following fit:  $\chi^2 = 4288.783$  (DF = 809,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .743, CFI = .758, GFI = .658, AGFI = .619, RMSEA = .089, and SRMS = .1012. Elimination of a number of items with problematic regression weights estimates and modification indices led to the adjusted 16-item five-factor model with good model fit:  $\chi^2 = 271.570$  (DF = 94,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .943, CFI = .956, GFI = .943, AGFI = .918, RMSEA = .059, and SRMR = .0434. The validated scale was reduced to a total of 16 traits:

- Honest, sincere, real, sentimental (4 traits - Sincerity dimension)
- Trendy, exciting, spirited, cool (4 traits – Excitement dimension)
- Secure, leader, confident (3 traits – Competence dimension)
- Upper class, glamorous (2 traits - Sophistication dimension)
- Outdoorsy, western, and rugged (3 traits – Ruggedness dimension).

Similarly, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) CFA model produced relatively poor model-data fit:  $\chi^2 = 314.545$  (DF = 44,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .808, CFI = .872, GFI = .906, AGFI = .834, RMSEA = .107, and SRMR = .0684. Removing a problematic item from the Responsibility dimension (item down-to-earth) somewhat improved the overall model fit:  $\chi^2 = 193.206$  (DF = 34,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .860, CFI = .913, GFI = .940, AGFI = .883, RMSEA = .093, and SRMR = .0542. Preliminary comparisons of modified models' fit suggest good and similar model fit indices figures for all three scales, however, such fit was only achieved as a consequence of drastic removal of problematic items from Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) models.

In order to determine the extent and direction of the relationship between perceived member group fit and profile similarity scores of the new scale of luxury brand personality, the scores of statements measuring perceived member group fit were averaged for each respondent. Profile similarity was calculated using the intraclass correlation coefficient (double entry) that quantified the level to which each respondent's brand personality ratings on the new measure of luxury brand personality matched their self-personality ratings on that same measure (McCrae, 2008). For comparative purposes, profile similarity scores were also estimated for Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) scales and respondents' self-personality ratings on those measures.

For the analysis of the relationships between self-congruence and consumer reactions, a sample of 540 unique brand ratings was used as input into SPSS Process for statistical mediation analysis. Model 4 was used as a template for the procedure as it reflects both direct and indirect effects of the independent variable on the outcome variable in a multiple mediator models. The matrix procedure was executed with profile similarity acting as the independent variable. The scores of the mediators and the outcome variables were averaged at the respondent level. As the model only allows for one outcome variable, the matrix procedure was run three times with averaged purchase intention, averaged word-of-mouth, and average purchase loyalty used as outcome variables separately.

### **3.9.4 Test of Response Bias**

When completing self-reports, respondents frequently provide inaccurate answers to topics they identify as sensitive as they strive to appear in the best possible light (Fisher, 1993). Since social desirability could pose a problem to the validity of the survey findings, Strahan and Gerbasi's (1972) short version of the Social Desirability Scale was administered in the second survey to detect response bias. In that abridged version of the original Marlowe-Crowne Scale all statements could be responded with a "True" or "False" answer, where any response marked as "True" in the first five items or any response marked as "False" in the last five items would count towards the maximum score of 10, i.e. extreme social desirability bias. In the second survey, each respondent was assigned a response bias score by following the described scoring procedure. The aggregated scores were correlated with the averaged dimension scores from the new scale of luxury brand personality.

### **3.10 Step 9: Scale Cross-Validation**

It is typically recommended that the new scale is cross-validated using a new set of respondents in order to compare the new measurement estimates with the estimates obtained from the validation samples (step 9). This step is particularly useful for models that underwent significant modifications during the scale purification and refinement process (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). It is also used to establish the boundaries of scale generalisability or practicality in other settings. As shown later, the factor structure remained stable following the analysis using both samples and goodness of fit modification statistics for the final measurement model applied to sample 1 and sample 2 were all adequate. In addition, the scale was developed specifically for luxury brands and is not expected to be generalisable to other kinds of brands. Hence, it is regarded that the new model need not be cross-validated in this instance.

### **3.11 Step 10: Scale Norm Development**

Being recognised as the final step in the scale development process, norm development is important for the interpretation of the meaning of new scale scores (Spector, 1992). It typically involves administering the new measure to a representative sample of the population on behalf of the researcher and estimating the norms through the mean and standard deviation of obtained scores (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff, 2011). Whilst norm development stage is normally associated with extra data collection efforts, a starting step towards the development of the norms of the new luxury brand personality measure is to demonstrate that personality of luxury brands varies by levels of luxuriousness and product/service category using the data from the first sample. To do this, one-way ANOVAs were estimated in order to determine whether any of the identified luxury brand personality dimensions and the underlying traits mean scores differed based on different luxury levels and product/service categories.

### **3.12 Summary**

In summary, outlined in this chapter is a set of comprehensive consecutive steps that helped develop a new valid measure of luxury brands personality based on a clear conceptualisation and systematically constructed only from personality traits that are directly relevant and salient for luxury brands. In addition, the use of rigorous validation techniques aided in establishing construct validity of the new measure, which is something that prior brand personality scale development studies have failed to adequately address.

## **CHAPTER 4. RESULTS**

Reported and discussed in this chapter are the results from the different stages of scale development process. The first part (section 4.1) is concerned with the analysis of qualitative data collected for the primary purpose of brand personality trait generation. Based on the key assumption of the lexical approach to personality explained earlier, it is expected that a combination of multiple sources and methods at this stage will guarantee the salience, relevance, and applicability of the identified set of brand personality traits to luxury brands. Initial analysis of the generated pool of items resulted in the preliminary framework of luxury brand personality and its juxtaposition against studies by Aaker (1997), Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009), and Heine (2009). The next part (sections 4.2 & 4.3) aims to identify and confirm the structure of luxury brand personality dimensions via a series of quantitative procedures, including exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. In addition, scale properties are analysed for the presence of indicator reliability and validity. Section 4.4 provides adequate assessment of construct validity of the scale using experimental manipulations of the construct of luxury brand personality, establishing whether the construct is distinguishable from other similar constructs (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) scales), examining the relationships between the target construct and other measures in its nomological network as well as confirming incremental validity of the new measure. Finally, section 4.5 makes an important step towards new scale norm development through confirmation of personality variability by levels of luxuriousness and product category.

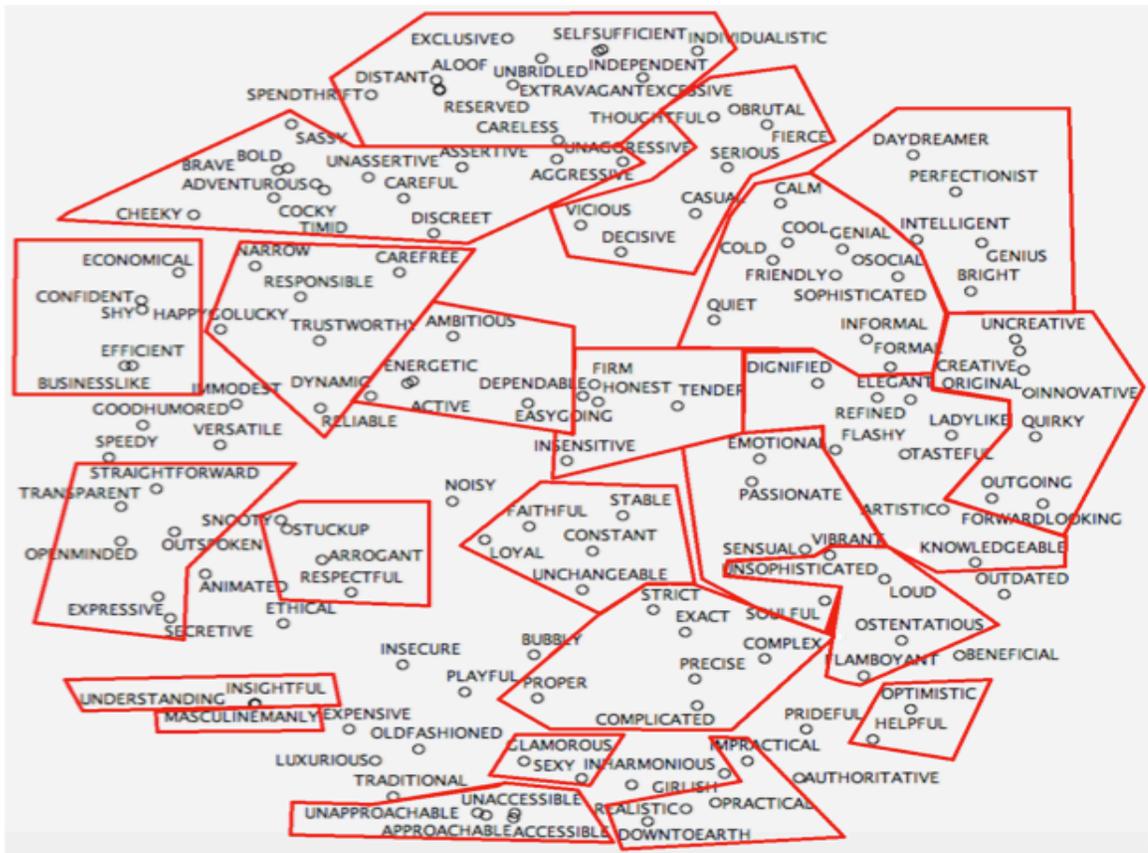
### **4.1 Analysis and Results From the Measure Development Stage (Steps 2 and 3)**

To start with, all data obtained in the process of online text mining and the in-depth interviews was used as input into the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo, which provides a researcher with an accurate and clear view of the data and allows arranging information in a suitable form (Welsh, 2002). NVivo aided in the process of identification of personality traits and the analysis of their frequency. Thus, the initial pool of personality-related items from content analysis and interviews was identified in NVivo

by means of manual sifting through data, whilst the frequencies of identified words were automatically calculated using NVivo tools. An extensive pool of over a 100 items established in the content analysis stage was screened against Norman's (1967) comprehensive list of personality traits, where non-personality adjectives were eliminated, and 56 personality traits were retained. A similar screening procedure was undertaken for the pool of items identified in the interview stage, with 150 personality traits being preserved.

Lastly, the final stage of the analysis involved evaluation of semantic relatedness of 166 non-redundant personality traits that were generated from both the content analysis and the interview stage and were ensured that they are personality traits and not other characteristics. During the lexical analysis of semantic relatedness, the brand personality traits from the online sources and interviews were entered in WordNet for the purpose of identifying semantically related words and matching them against the composed list of traits. For each pair of concepts, HSO established relatedness on a range from 0 to 16, where 0 implied a lack of relatedness and any higher figure leading to 16 suggested an increased level of relatedness between the two words. This allowed manually building a 166x166 relatedness matrix using the WordNet Similarity Tool. Next, 19 traits that had nil relatedness to all other traits in the matrix based on their HSO scores were eliminated from the analysis and a multidimensional scaling analysis was performed in SPSS on the remaining 147 traits so as to group related concepts into clusters. This procedure led to the graphical output with 23 meaningful clusters and 18 outliers (see Figure 10 below).

Figure 10. Multidimensional Scaling Analysis



The title for each cluster was chosen based on a brand personality trait that was positioned in the centre of its cluster so that it had the shortest distance to other traits within the same cluster and was most logical in the given context. Some clusters were large and comprised a number of semantically related, although not necessarily similarly valenced traits, whilst others only had two traits making up a whole cluster (e.g. clusters 11, 12, 14, and 16 from Table 7 below). Thus, the largest cluster is cluster 2 comprising 13 semantically related traits (i.e. bold, brave, adventurous, cheeky, sassy, timid, cocky, unassertive, assertive, careful, discreet, unaggressive, and aggressive), with trait bold selected as the most representative trait in that cluster and used as an important descriptor of luxury brands among luxury consumers. For instance, talking about a luxury brand that was unlike classic upscale French brands, an interviewee Julie stated: “[It is] more **bold**, like it’s less easy to wear it on a day-to-day basis”.

The second largest cluster 1 comprised 12 meaningfully related traits (i.e. extravagant, spendthrift, excessive, careless, independent, unbridled, self-sufficient, individualistic, exclusive, aloof, distant, and reserved), with trait extravagant occupying the central place in that cluster. Indeed, the analysis of the interviews with consumers of luxury brands points towards clear importance of the adjective extravagant in consumers' language as they use it and other semantically related traits to describe certain luxury brands. According to a luxury consumer Charmaine, "The first thing that springs to mind if I think about D&G are the creators. So they are quite camp, and they are really in your face and they are like, you know, snakes, skin, shoes and, you know, like [...] and lapels and just really quite **extravagant**. If I was to describe it as a person, I would say...likes to stand out in the crowd. So, again, I don't...I don't pick the most loudest pieces, I just go for things that I can invest in".

The third largest cluster is cluster 21 with 10 semantically related traits (i.e. sophisticated, cool, cold, formal, calm, quiet, genial, social, friendly, and informal) and trait sophisticated as its most indicative trait. According to Aaker (1997), Sophistication represents an important dimension of a brand's personality, and typical sophisticated brands can be described in terms aspirational characteristics of upper-class nature. Interviewees frequently mentioned brand personality trait sophisticated as they described luxury brands they knew and purchased. For instance, a luxury consumer Aimee said the following with regards to one of her favourite British brands Burberry: "I would say that they are, you know, **sophisticated**. I envision the person of Burberry to be [...] maybe a little nerdy because it's always the argyle pattern, you know. So maybe that, but they are smart, they are modern, and they are **sophisticated**. There you go!"

Other clusters covered not less important personality traits of luxury brands. For instance, cluster 6 titled "Stuck-up" emphasised the snobbish element of luxury brands that are frequently used in academic literature with reference to luxury brands (Dubois, Czellar and Laurent, 2005; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). According to the qualitative data collected, trait stuck-up and its semantically related words, such as snooty and arrogant, carry a negative connotation in the luxury context. For instance, a luxury consumer Saad

contemplated that “Prada would be more **stuck-up**, more sort of **arrogant**... more sort of one of those...I won’t call it “made in Chelsea” but I then realised they all live in Fulham, they are not actually from Chelsea. But you know, kinda has that air to it. So I associate them with being a lot more **snooty** and **stuck-up** than Gucci, which is perhaps more approachable”. Similarly, cluster 18 that includes traits ostentatious, flamboyant, loud, and unsophisticated signifies the status-signalling properties of luxuries and links to research on conspicuous consumption that emphasises the visual display or intentional manifestation of luxurious products in public (Trigg, 2001; O’cass and McEwen, 2004). According to interviewees, the cluster represents the opposite of understatement and subtlety: “compared to YSL, they [Givenchy and Cavalli] are a lot more **louder** brands. They are **in your face**. I have never seen anything subtle from these guys. It’s always loud and gold, and if you see it, you know it.” (from the interview with a luxury consumer Saad); “Because they [Gaultier and Versace] just have the...you wanna put feathers on something, they are the first people to do it, you know. The most **over the top**, very **loud**, you know” (from the interview with a luxury consumer Aimee). On a different note, cluster 19 titled “Elegant” incorporates such traits as elegant, tasteful, dignified, refined, knowledgeable, ladylike, flashy, and artistic that are essential for describing luxury brands. Thus, interviewee Nina suggested that “just everything associated with **elegance** Chanel is” and another respondent Svetlana thought that “elegant” was among the characteristics best suited to describe a luxury brand Dior. In addition to the identified clusters (Table 7), there were 18 outliers that were not regarded as being particularly related to any cluster. Among the outliers were such traits as: speedy, immodest, good-humoured, insecure, expensive, luxurious, prideful, authoritative, beneficial, outdated, girlish, inharmonious, versatile, noisy, animated, ethical, old-fashioned, and bubbly.

Table 7  
Identified Clusters

<b>Cluster 1</b> <u>Extravagant</u> Spendthrift Excessive Careless Independent Unbridled Self-sufficient Individualistic Exclusive Aloof Distant Reserved	<b>Cluster 3</b> <u>Businesslike</u> Economical Efficient Confident Shy	<b>Cluster 7</b> <u>Energetic</u> Active Dynamic Ambitious Easy-going	<b>Cluster 11</b> <u>Understanding</u> Insightful	<b>Cluster 17</b> <u>Sensual</u> Passionate Emotional Soulful Vibrant	<b>Cluster 21</b> <u>Sophisticated</u> Cool Cold Formal Calm Quiet Genial Social Friendly Informal
<b>Cluster 2</b> <u>Bold</u> Brave Adventurous Cheeky Sassy Timid Cocky Unassertive Assertive Careful Discreet Unaggressive Aggressive	<b>Cluster 4</b> <u>Trustworthy</u> Happy-go-lucky Carefree Responsible Reliable Narrow	<b>Cluster 8</b> <u>Honest</u> Dependable Firm Tender Insensitive	<b>Cluster 13</b> <u>Unapproachable</u> Unaccessible Approachable Accessible	<b>Cluster 18</b> <u>Ostentatious</u> Flamboyant Loud Unsophisticated	<b>Cluster 22</b> <u>Intelligent</u> Genius Bright Perfectionist Daydreamer
	<b>Cluster 5</b> <u>Outspoken</u> Straightforward Transparent Open-minded Expressive Secretive	<b>Cluster 9</b> <u>Faithful</u> Loyal Stable Constant Unchangeable	<b>Cluster 14</b> <u>Sexy</u> Glamorous	<b>Cluster 19</b> <u>Elegant</u> Tasteful Dignified Refined Knowledgeable Ladylike Flashy Artistic	<b>Cluster 23</b> <u>Brutal</u> Fierce Vicious Decisive Serious Thoughtful Casual
	<b>Cluster 6</b> <u>Stuck-up</u> Snooty Arrogant Respectful	<b>Cluster 10</b> <u>Exact</u> Strict Precise Proper Complicated Complex	<b>Cluster 15</b> <u>Practical</u> Realistic Down-to-earth Impractical	<b>Cluster 20</b> <u>Original</u> Creative Innovative Quirky Outgoing Forward-looking Uncreative	
			<b>Cluster 16</b> <u>Optimistic</u> Helpful		

Comparisons with two existing factor-based models of brand personality by Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) as well as Heine's (2009) preliminary framework of luxury brand personality suggest a certain affinity with the new taxonomy. Interestingly, the identified clusters appear to be only in a limited way comparable to Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions (see Table 8), since the item content of the comparable dimensions does not match well. This could potentially imply that these similar traits might be used to denote completely different, more specific meanings in the luxury context. It should also be noted that the comparisons are taking place at a broad level and the new taxonomy will be further calibrated and validated through survey research, which would narrow the number of traits down to the most salient ones. However, at this stage clusters "Sophisticated", "Elegant", and "Sexy" from the new taxonomy can be found in Aaker's (1997) dimension Sophistication as they share such traits are glamorous ("Sexy" cluster), sophisticated ("Sophisticated" cluster) and somewhat synonymous traits

feminine/ladylike; upper class, good-looking & smooth/tasteful, dignified & refined (“Elegant” cluster). Dimension Competence in her work, which includes such descriptors as reliable, intelligent, and confident, covers clusters “Trustworthy”, “Intelligent”, and “Businesslike” in the new taxonomy. Additionally, five clusters “Practical”, “Honest”, “Original”, “Optimistic” and “Sophisticated” are partially related to Aaker’s (1997) Sincerity dimension as they share a number of identical as well as synonymous traits such as: down-to-earth (“Practical” cluster), honest (“Honest” cluster), original (“Original” cluster), friendly (“Sophisticated” cluster), and cheerful/optimistic (“Optimistic” cluster). Items from clusters “Masculine”, “Exact” and “Brutal” are relatable to Aaker’s (1997) Ruggedness dimension, as they tend to denote the meanings of masculinity and firmness. In addition, clusters “Extravagant”, “Energetic”, and “Original” share trait similarities with the Excitement dimension from Aaker’s (1997) work, including the exact trait match independent (“Extravagant” cluster) and synonymous traits imaginative from Aaker’s (1997) Excitement dimension and creative, original, innovative (“Original” cluster), spirited/energetic, active, dynamic, ambitious, and forward-looking from the new taxonomy (“Energetic” & “Original” clusters). As a result, all dimensions from Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale find some reflection in clusters from the new taxonomy, but only a few traits are identical within the mentioned dimensions, whilst others suggest similarity but belong to clusters that generally denote different meanings to Aaker’s dimensions.

Table 8  
*Luxury Brand Personality Taxonomy*

<b>Extravagant</b> Spendthrift, Excessive	<b>Bold</b> Brave, Adventurous	<b>Businesslike</b> Economical, Efficient	<b>Trustworthy</b> Responsible, Reliable	<b>Outspoken</b> Transparent, Secretive	<b>Stuck-up</b> Snooty, Arrogant
<b>Energetic</b> Active, Dynamic	<b>Honest</b> Dependable, Firm	<b>Faithful</b> Loyal, Stable	<b>Exact</b> Strict, Precise	<b>Understanding</b> Insightful	<b>Masculine</b> Manly
<b>Unapproachable</b> Unaccessible, Approachable	<b>Sexy</b> Glamorous	<b>Practical</b> Realistic, Down-to-earth	<b>Optimistic</b> Helpful	<b>Sensual</b> Passionate, Emotional	<b>Ostentatious</b> Flamboyant, Loud
<b>Elegant</b> Tasteful, Dignified	<b>Original</b> Creative, Innovative	<b>Sophisticated</b> Cool, Cold	<b>Intelligent</b> Genius, Bright	<b>Brutal</b> Fierce, Vicious	

When compared with Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) brand personality scale, that is based on a stricter definition of brand personality and is grounded on the Big Five taxonomy, all five dimensions seem to coincide to a certain degree with a number of clusters from the new framework. Thus, the dimension Responsibility from Geuens,

Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) scale is reflected in the following clusters: cluster "Trustworthy" with the directly matching trait responsible, cluster "Faithful" with the exact trait stable, and cluster "Practical" with trait down-to-earth as an immediate equivalent. As for the Activity dimension in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) measure, it can be clearly related to cluster "Energetic" with traits active and dynamic and cluster "Original" with trait innovative, all of which represent a direct match. Similarly, the Aggressiveness dimension in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) work is readily comparable with cluster "Bold" that contains matching traits bold and aggressive. At the same time, dimensions Simplicity and Emotionality do not contain exactly matching traits in a similar way to the other dimensions; however, their item content can be seen as synonymous to certain clusters in the new taxonomy. Thus, the dimension Simplicity and its traits ordinary and simple may be seen as almost antipodal to some of the items from cluster "Elegant" in the new measure, including traits elegant, tasteful, dignified, and refined. As regards the dimension Emotionality, trait romantic could be lexically linked to traits sensual, passionate, and emotional from cluster "Sensual" in the new taxonomy and trait sentimental is also synonymous with trait emotional from that same cluster.

With respect to the preliminary framework of luxury brand personality by Heine (2009), the comparisons are more difficult as the measure is not factor-based and the item context of each dimension is highly varied, with most dimensions including a number of seemingly unrelated traits. For instance, Heine's (2009) Eccentricity dimension includes traits that semantically represent that dimension in a clear way, such as traits eccentric, crazy, bizarre; however, it also encompasses traits that are not related to the key meaning the dimension apparently denotes: intellectual, cultured, witty, liberal, adventuresome, or individualistic. Similarly, dimension Modern incorporates obviously relevant traits such as future-conscious, modern, and progressive, whilst also representing traits that are not directly related to the essence of that dimension, including traits lively, dynamic or energetic. As a result of this inconsistency, whilst a number of clusters from the new taxonomy partially match each of the five dimensions from Heine's (2009) framework, some of the clusters match more than one dimension from Heine's (2009) work. For instance, cluster "Extravagant" contains items that are comparable with Heine's (2009) Eccentricity (trait

individualistic), Opulence (trait extravagant), and Elitism (trait reserved) dimensions. In the same way, cluster “Sophisticated” comprises traits that are relatable to Heine’s (2009) Elitism (traits cool, cold) and Strength (trait sophisticated) dimensions. In case of Modernity dimension, it is comparable with items from “Energetic” and “Original” clusters; Eccentricity dimension – items from “Practical”, “Trustworthy”, “Honest”, “Original”, “Intelligent”, “Bold”, “Sexy”, and “Extravagant”; Opulence dimension – items from “Sexy”, “Extravagant”, “Ostentatious”, “Sensual”, and “Bold”; Elitism dimension – items from “Outspoken”, “Unapproachable”, “Honest”, “Sophisticated”, “Extravagant”, “Elegant”, “Stuck-up”, and “Intelligent”; and Strength dimension – items from “Masculine”, “Bold”, “Energetic”, “Outspoken”, “Elegant”, “Sensual”, “Sophisticated”, “Understanding” and “Honest”. As a result, a number of traits from Heine’s (2009) work have been identified in the new framework, but their semantic properties put them in different dimensions than those used by Heine (2009).

Table 9 below further highlights the identified differences in terms of brands used and resulting dimensions between these three typologies and the new measure.

Author(s)	Rationale for Stimuli/Brand Selection	Brands	Identified Dimensions	Dimension Match With The New Luxury BPS
Aaker (1997)	<i>Three Criteria:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salient, Well-known brands;</li> <li>- Range of brands with various personality types;</li> <li>- Different product categories serving utilitarian, symbolic and symbolic/utilitarian functions.</li> </ul>	<i>For Model Calibration:</i> 37 brands from 23 product and service categories chosen on the basis of their personality; <i>For Scale Validation:</i> Randomly selected independent sample of 20 brands from 10 product/service categories.	Sincerity Excitement Competence Sophistication Ruggedness	Sophisticated, Elegant & Sexy/Sophistication; Trustworthy, Intelligent & Businesslike/Competence; Practical, Honest, Original, Optimistic & Sophisticated/Sincerity; Masculine, Exact & Brutal/Ruggedness; Extravagant, Energetic & Original/Excitement.
Heine (2009)	<i>First Empirical Study:</i> Those mentioned by consumers in the interviews; <i>Complementary Online Study:</i> Selected to best represent one of the five identified dimensions.	N/a	Modernity Eccentricity Opulence Elitism Strength	Energetic & Original/Modernity; Practical, Trustworthy, Honest, Original, Intelligent, Bold, Sexy & Extravagant/Eccentricity; Sexy, Extravagant, Ostentatious, Sensual & Bold/Opulence; Outspoken, Unapproachable, Honest, Sophisticated, Extravagant, Elegant, Stuck-up & Intelligent/Elitism; Masculine, Bold, Energetic, Outspoken, Elegant, Sensual, Sophisticated, Understanding & Honest/Strength.
Geuens,	<i>Study 1:</i>	<i>Study 1:</i>	Responsibility	Trustworthy, Faithful & Practical/Responsibility;

Weijters and Wulf (2009)	Well-known brands representing different purchase motivations; <i>Study 2:</i> National/international brands and functional, image, experiential and emotional brands; <i>Study 3:</i> National/international brands from the list identified in study 2; <i>Study 4:</i> Brands representing functional, image, experiential and hedonic qualities; <i>Study 5:</i> Widely known brand with global appeal.	20 brands with high scores on functional, experiential, symbolic and/or emotional motivations; <i>Study 2:</i> 193 brands in 20 different categories; <i>Study 3:</i> 84 of the 193 brands from 12 product categories; <i>Study 4:</i> 20 brands; <i>Study 5:</i> Coca-Cola brand.	Activity Aggressiveness Simplicity Emotionality	Energetic & Original/Activity; Bold/Aggressiveness; Elegant/Simplicity; Sensual/Emotionality.
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This section has identified a meaningful set of personality traits relevant and applicable for luxury brands from the content analysis and in-depth interviews. The lexical analysis of semantic relatedness has allowed the identification of preliminary luxury brand personality clusters established through multidimensional scaling analysis. Analysis of the new preliminary framework and its comparison with three existing brand personality frameworks shows that the new measure shares different traits or dimensions with each one of them. However, whilst separate items from clusters of the new taxonomy might be semantically matched with certain traits from competing scales' dimensions, the clusters to which these traits actually belong often denote completely different meanings from the dimensions of existing measures. For instance, items from cluster "Stuck-up" from the new taxonomy are comparable with only one trait "haughty" from Heine's (2009) Elitism dimension, which also incorporates a wide range of traits seemingly unrelated to "haughty", including traits "elegant", "noble", "accomplished", "flawless" or "perfectionist" yet still encapsulated under Elitism dimension. As a result, "Stuck-up" cluster may be regarded as a unique dimension that is largely absent from existing brand personality frameworks. Evidently, further refinement of the identified clusters through survey research is necessary for more meaningful comparisons.

## 4.2 Scale Purification and Refinement (Step 6)

This section reports and reviews the results of quantitative procedures used to identify the structure of luxury brand personality dimensions. This includes the discussion of findings from the exploratory factor analysis and subsequent item reduction process as well as the estimation of the CFA model and initial examination of its psychometric properties, including the assessment of goodness of fit, elimination of problematic indicators, determination of validity and reliability of individual indicators and a set of indicators at the construct level, and examination of the relative adequacy of competing measurement models to ensure the identified structure produces the most parsimonious data-model fit.

### 4.2.1 Factor Analysis: Item Refinement

Basic frequency analysis in SPSS showed that respondents produced a total of 688 unique luxury brand ratings, which results in roughly 1.77 luxury brand ratings per respondent. All brands except Maybourne Hotel Group were assessed at least a few times by different respondents (Table 10), with the large majority of luxury brands getting 25 and more ratings per brand.

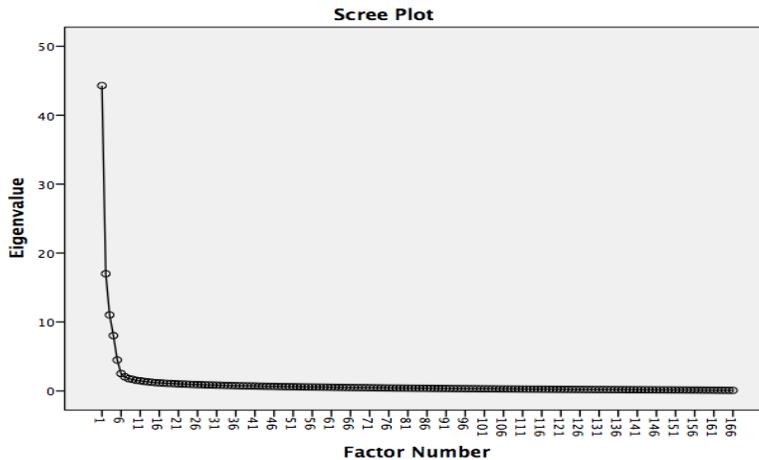
Table 10  
*Luxury Brand Frequencies*

<b>Brands Assessed</b>	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Antinori	3	.4
Artemide	8	1.6
Baccarat	25	5.2
Balenciaga	26	9
Bentley	26	12.8
Bisazza	13	14.7
Burberry	25	18.3
Charbonnel et Walker	4	18.9
Dior	27	22.8
Dolce & Gabbana	27	26.7
Dom P_rignon	25	30.3
Graff	23	33.7

Gucci	26	37.4
Harry Winston	25	41.1
Hermes	25	44.7
Illy	27	48.6
Jumeirah Group	9	49.9
Kiehl's	26	53.7
Lamborghini	26	57.5
Lancome	26	61.2
Le Meurice Paris	10	62.7
Louis Vuitton	27	66.6
Meissen	23	70
Mercedes-Benz	26	73.7
Montblanc	26	77.5
Ray-Ban	25	81.1
Ritz Carlton	26	84.9
Rolex	27	88.8
Rolls-Royce	25	92.5
Tiffany & Co	26	96.2
Versace	26	100
Total	689	

As the first step of scale purification process, a scree plot based on the data collected from the survey was run in order to understand which factors explain most of the variability of the collected data (Figure 11). It shows that the first 6 factors help explain most of the variability as the line begins to straighten after factor 6.

Figure 11. Scree Plot



Factor analysis was conducted on 166 brand personality traits at the respondent level. Principal axis factoring analysis with Varimax & Kaiser normalisation rotation resulted in a 6-factor solution. The rotated 6-factor matrix explains 87.374% of the total variance, with Factor 1 (Playfulness) explaining 44.286%, Factor 2 (Stability) – 17.003%, Factor 3 (Stuck-upness) – 11.031%, Factor 4 (Elegance) – 8.037%, Factor 5 (Timidity) – 4.493%, and Factor 6 (Femininity) – 2.524%. All 6 factors provide meaningful, easily interpretable results. In the final solution dimension Playfulness is comprised of 17 traits, dimension Stability – 15 traits, dimension Stuck-upness – 10 traits, dimension Elegance – 5 traits, dimension Timidity – 4 traits, and dimension Femininity – 3 traits. The final list of 54 items for each factor and their factor loadings can be found in Table 11. Only three items had cross-loadings: Loyal (factor loading .658 onto Stability dimension) with cross-loading .392 onto Playfulness dimension, Glamorous (factor loading .622 onto Elegance dimension) with cross-loading .372 onto Playfulness dimension, and Quiet (factor loading .428 onto Timidity dimension) with cross-loading .423 onto Stability dimension.

Dimension Playfulness contains such traits as: playful, spontaneous, energetic, vibrant, adventurous, expressive, artistic, innovative, down-to-earth, easy-going, approachable, outspoken, speedy, assertive, quirky, experimental, and sassy. Some of these traits find partial reflection in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) brand personality scale dimensions Activity (i.e. active, dynamic, innovative) and Responsibility (i.e. down-to-earth). They are also synonymous with some traits from the Sincerity and Excitement dimensions in Aaker's (1997) work: down-to-earth, original, and friendly (Sincerity) and daring, spirited, and contemporary (Excitement). The highest loading traits from the new scale, i.e. playful (.760\*), spontaneous (.757\*), energetic (.747\*), vibrant (.733\*), and adventurous (.725) seem to be associated with Aaker's (1997) Excitement and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) Activity dimensions, both of which have been linked to the Extraversion facet from the Big Five by the authors. Similarly, traits playful, energetic, vibrant, and adventurous from the new scale can be clearly associated with Activity, Excitement-seeking and Positive Emotions facets of the Extraversion dimension from the Big Five.

Dimension Playfulness of the new luxury brand personality scale plays a particularly

important role in the luxury context. It has long been established that consumers tend to actively use consumption objects, such as brands, to reinforce and express their identity (Belk, 1988; Kleine, Kleine, and Allen, 1995). Most often, consumers purchase brands for their symbolic meaning, which they then use to create and re-define their self-concept (Levy, 1959). Such high-involvement products as luxuries possess inherent status-and wealth-signalling properties and have rich symbolic value (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). As means of self-expression, luxury brands can help consumers signal these positive, extroversive dispositions to relevant others. In addition, perceived playful qualities of a luxury brand could help consumers evoke feelings and affective states through its acquisition (e.g. hedonic and self-directed pleasure benefits (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Tsai, 2005; Truong and McColl, 2011), hence it may be imperative to recognise the potential of intrinsic motivations to luxury within the confines of this dimension.

In Heine's (2010) luxury brand personality preliminary framework the new dimension Playfulness seems to tap into a whole range of dimensions, sometimes matching characteristics from the opposite ends of the same dimension. For instance, such traits as dynamic and energetic can be found in his Modernity dimension; synonymous traits adventuresome, creative, artistic, and imaginative on the "eccentric" end of the Eccentricity dimension, while trait down-to-earth on the opposite end ("decent") of that same Eccentricity dimension; and traits approachable and easy-going on the "democratic" end of the Elitism dimension. Such mismatch between the item content of the new scale and Heine's (2010) luxury brand personality framework makes comparisons between the two somewhat nonsensical.

Dimension Stability is comprised of the following traits: stable, constant, efficient, trustworthy, loyal, helpful, understanding, beneficial, honest, reliable, dependable, tasteful, authoritative, perfectionistic, and traditional. Some of these traits are similar with Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) Responsibility dimension, i.e. responsible and stable, which resembles the Conscientiousness dimension from the Big Five. Similarly, 5 traits from the new scale are either a direct match or highly synonymous with traits from Aaker's (1997) Sincerity dimension (i.e. honest, sincere, real) and Competence dimension (i.e. reliable and

secure), which are also comparable with the Agreeableness and Conscientiousness dimensions in the five-factor human personality framework. As a result, the new dimension Stability taps into both Agreeableness (trustworthy, understanding) and Conscientiousness (stable, efficient, reliable, dependable) dimensions in the Big Five framework.

The emergence of this dimension in the luxury context carries much significance as endurance, solidity, loyalty and trustworthiness are the well-documented aspirational qualities of luxury brands that many consumers find relevant in the competitive market and desirable for the purpose of self-expression (Heine, 2012; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). In Heine's (2010) luxury brand personality framework some synonymous traits are present and tap into the Eccentricity and Elitism dimensions in his work.

Dimension Stuck-upness encompasses traits stuck-up, snooty, self-centered, snobbish, cocky, unaccessible, insecure, flashy, loud, and ostentatious. Such traits as flashy, loud and ostentatious are somewhat antipodal of Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) Simplicity dimension and traits ordinary and simple that it encapsulates. However, the highest loading traits stuck-up (.803\*), snooty (.775\*), self-centered (.773\*), snobbish (.755\*), and cocky (.754\*) from the new dimension do not match any facets in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) work. When compared with Aaker's (1997) final list of traits, trait friendly from the Sincerity dimension seems to connote a distantly synonymous, albeit in the opposite direction, meaning for trait "unaccessible" from this new dimension, while no other traits have similar meanings. Thus, the new dimension Stuck-upness appears to have apparent importance in the luxury context but is barely evident in the more generic scales.

Traits from the new dimension Stuck-upness appear to be most closely aligned with reversed facet Modesty (not show-off) from Agreeableness dimension in the Big Five. High levels of "show-offness" are typically associated with feeling superior and entitled to special treatment and high status (Lee and Ashton, 2004). One of the main reasons for purchasing luxury brands is for status-seeking purposes (Han, Nunes, and Dreze, 2010). As a result, purchasing luxury brands characterised by conspicuous dispositions allows individuals to manage their impressions on others in a desirable manner and create

favourable images in social interactions. Interestingly, Heine (2010)'s scale contains Opulence and Elitism dimensions, however, their item content does not match the semantic meaning of any traits from the Stuck-upness dimension in the new scale, with the exception of traits prominent, ornate, and haughty. Hence, it does not capture the meaning of the highest loading traits from that dimension in the new scale with clarity.

Dimension Elegance comprises traits elegant, sophisticated, extravagant, exclusive, and glamorous. This new dimension can be regarded as relative opposites of the Simplicity dimension in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) work with traits ordinary and simple that it contains. Additionally, it mirrors some of the key characteristics from Aaker's (1997) Sophistication dimension: upper class, glamorous, good-looking, and charming. Aaker (1997) found this dimension to misalign with any of the dimensions in the Big Five as it alludes to something that consumers might not have but often find appealing. However, in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) framework dimension Simplicity, which potentially contains semantically antipodal traits in relation to the Elegance dimension from the new scale, is comparable with the Openness dimension from the Big Five. In the luxury context, this dimension helps idealise a luxury brand as elements such as elegance, sophistication and glamour create the essence of what is considered true style in the high fashion industry (DeJean, 2007). The new dimension is partially reflected in Heine's (2010) Opulence dimension with such characteristics as glittering, glamorous, and extravagant.

Dimension Timidity is represented by traits timid, shy, unassertive, and quiet. All traits in this dimension have a relatively negative connotation - something that has also been reported in prior brand personality research (e.g. d'Astous and Levesque, 2003; Smit, Van den Berge, and Franzen, 2003; Davies, Chun, da Silva, and Roper, 2004). The new dimension appears to have the somewhat polar meaning in comparison with Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) Aggressiveness dimension with its traits aggressive and bold, had they been interpreted in the context of "assertiveness". However, it does not reflect any traits from Heine's (2010) scale and only partially mirrors, albeit in reversed manner, trait confident from Aaker's (1997) Competence dimension. Facets Self-consciousness (shy) and Vulnerability (not self-confident) from the Big Five Neuroticism dimension seem to

coincide most with the traits from the dimension Timidity in the new scale. Notably, luxury brands that are characterised using traits from this dimension do not necessarily imply the low level of conspicuousness, that would otherwise put this dimension on the opposite spectrum end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension Stuck-up. For instance, consumer interviews from the qualitative stage of this scale development work suggest that some interviewees consider traits shy, timid, and quiet that comprise the dimension Timidity as opposites of such characteristics as bright and open-minded: “What is the opposite of **bright** [when it comes to considering a brand’s personality]?” – “A bit **grey**, a bit like **shy** in terms of personality, in some ways more **reserved** as opposed to being very **open-minded**” (from the interview with luxury consumer Nina).

Dimension Femininity contains three traits: feminine, womanly, and (their semantic opposite) masculine. One trait that is somewhat synonymous to masculinity in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) work is trait bold from the Aggressiveness dimension, although, generally, this dimension is meant to connote largely different meanings about brands, i.e. ones that help characterise brands as aggressive, bold, and pretentious. Interestingly, in Aaker’s (1997) scale paper trait feminine belongs to the dimension Sophistication, while trait masculine is part of the Ruggedness dimension. In addition, gender dimensions are largely absent from Goldberg’s (1990) five-factor model. At the same time, consumers often rely on masculine and feminine brand personality traits for self-expressive purposes and prefer brands high on those traits in order to enhance their own degree of perceived masculinity or femininity (Sirgy, 1982; Fournier, 1998). Gender dimensions are especially relevant with such brands as luxury brands because they carry high symbolic significance for consumers who strive to fortify these values in themselves (Grohmann, 2009). In the preliminary scale developed by Heine (2010) specifically for the luxury context, the dimension Strength seems to capture both the feminine and masculine aspects of luxury brand personality, albeit it also includes a range of other non-gender related traits.

Table 11 <i>Factor Loadings of the items retained after the first reduction (R1)</i>						
Items	Brand personality dimensions					
	Playfulness	Stability	Stuck-upness	Elegance	Timidity	Femininity
	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1
Down-to-earth	<b>.763</b>					
Playful	<b>.760</b>					
Spontaneous	<b>.757</b>					
Energetic	<b>.747</b>					
Vibrant	<b>.733</b>					
Easy-going	<b>.731</b>					
Adventurous	<b>.725</b>					
Approachable	<b>.719</b>					
Expressive	<b>.718</b>					
Artistic	<b>.693</b>					
Innovative	<b>.682</b>					
Quirky	<b>.583</b>					
Experimental	<b>.559</b>					
Outspoken	<b>.546</b>					
Sassy	<b>.528</b>					
Speedy	<b>.517</b>					
Assertive	<b>.510</b>					
Helpful		<b>.753</b>				
Stable		<b>.750</b>				
Understanding		<b>.722</b>				
Beneficial		<b>.706</b>				
Reliable		<b>.687</b>				
Constant		<b>.674</b>				
Efficient		<b>.665</b>				
Trustworthy		<b>.658</b>				
Loyal	.392	<b>.658</b>				
Honest		<b>.641</b>				
Authoritative		<b>.622</b>				
Dependable		<b>.591</b>				
Tasteful		<b>.567</b>				
Perfectionistic		<b>.523</b>				
Traditional		<b>.494</b>				
Stuck-up			<b>.803</b>			
Snooty			<b>.775</b>			
Self-centered			<b>.773</b>			
Snobbish			<b>.755</b>			
Cocky			<b>.754</b>			
Insecure			<b>.703</b>			

Flashy		.688	
Unaccessible		.649	
Loud		.577	
Ostentatious		.473	
Elegant			.686
Sophisticated			.684
Extravagant			.655
Exclusive			.637
Glamorous	.372		.622
Timid			.639
Shy			.623
Unassertive			.470
Quiet	.423		.428
Feminine			.740
Womanly			.725
Masculine			-.608

Additional analysis to test for the stability of the conducted factor analysis was performed. More specifically, the sample including the final set of 54 items was randomly split into two equal subsamples and the factor analysis was run on both of them. Obtained results suggest that the factor structure remains the same, which grants further confidence for the chosen factor structure.

#### 4.2.2 Goodness of Fit of the Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed in Amos software using the set of 54 items retained from factor analysis and comprising 6 indicators (dimensions) associated with only one latent construct of luxury brand personality. In line with the recommendations by MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff (2011), the resultant measurement model was initially examined for the evidence of validity using three key criteria. First, the solution was determined as proper following the fact that the estimation procedure converged and all variance estimates in the output were positive. Second, all item loadings were statistically significant as suggested by the critical ratio (C.R.) being higher than [1.96] at .001 level of significance. However, the third point regarding the insignificant chi-square statistic as an indication of the model adequately fitting the sample data could not be

confirmed. The chi-square statistic is known to be sensitive to sample size (Hoper et al., 2008), implying that this criterion may need to be interpreted with less scrutiny as alternative fit indices may provide further support of model fit.

The CFA model had unsatisfactory model fit as indicated by its fit indices:  $\chi^2 = 7613.544$  (DF = 1362,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .726, CFI = .739, GFI = .609, AGFI = .573, RMSEA = .082, and SRMR = .1244. It was imperative to eliminate a number of problematic indicators in order to further purify the new measure.

#### **4.2.3 Elimination of Problematic Indicators**

To start with, the reflective indicators were examined based on the output. All indicators had significant loadings, however, some of them were weak (below the .50 level) and had to be removed. Those items were: Speedy (.473) and Quirky (.495) from the dimension Playfulness, Authoritative (.492) and Traditional (.399) from the dimension Stability, Loud (.454), Flashy (.426), and Insecure (.364) from the dimension Stuck-up, Quiet (.457) from the dimension Timidity, and Masculine (.300) from the dimension Femininity. To reflect these changes, the CFA model was re-estimated and its modification indices examined. Strong and significant measurement error covariances (values over 3.84 and large expected change estimates) were identified and also removed. The modified model has a considerably better fit as shown by the fit indices:  $\chi^2 = 546.884$  (DF = 155,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .933, CFI = .945, GFI = .926, AGFI = .900, RMSEA = .061, and SRMR = .0520.

The purified measure consists of 20 items, where Dimension 1 (Playfulness), Dimension 2 (Stability), and Dimension 3 (Stuck-upness) have 4 items each, Dimension 4 (Elegance) and Dimension 5 (Timidity) have 3 items each, and, lastly, Dimension 6 (Femininity) has 2 items. In Dimension 1 items vibrant, expressive, artistic, innovative, down-to-earth, easy-going, approachable, outspoken, speedy, assertive, quirky, experimental and sassy were dropped. The deletion of those traits is not dubious as the remaining items playful, spontaneous, energetic, and adventurous, which are also the highest loading items as per factor analyses based on survey 1 data, successfully convey the essence of this dimension.

Similarly, items constant, efficient, loyal, helpful, understanding, beneficial, honest, tasteful, authoritative, perfectionistic, and traditional were removed from Dimension 2 without compromising its main substance. The key items retained in Dimension 2 were stable, trustworthy, reliable, and dependable. In Dimension 3 the reserved items were stuck-up, self-centered, cocky, and unaccessible. This meant the elimination of such traits as snooty and snobbish, which were, nevertheless, well represented by a more encompassing item stuck-up (also the highest loading item). Additionally, items insecure, flashy, loud, and ostentatious were also removed from Dimension 3. Dimension 4 was reduced to items elegant, sophisticated, and glamorous. Items extravagant and exclusive were dropped from that factor. Trait extravagant was initially expected to load with the already dropped items flashy, loud, and ostentatious from Dimension 3 due to the similarity in their meaning. Perhaps its semantic relation to traits elegant and glamorous was responsible for the shift of dimensions (Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). In Dimension 5 item quiet was removed, thus preserving items timid, shy, and unassertive. This is not problematic as item quiet has other semantic meanings, which could compromise the intended meaning of the new dimension. Lastly, item masculine was dropped from Dimension 6, whilst items feminine and womanly were retained. Marketing of luxury brands is highly gender-driven, hence, it could be expected that a brand scoring low on femininity factor would likely be infused with a range of masculinity-oriented qualities. Indeed, it has been shown that masculinity and femininity dimensions of brands are, as a rule, negatively correlated (Grohmann, 2009). Thus, consumers who perceive brands as being high on femininity would rank them as being low on masculinity, and the other way around.

All things considered, the new validated scale has several dimensions that are partially comparable with the already existing generic scales. Dimension Playfulness is relatable to Aaker's (1997) Excitement dimension, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) Activity dimension, and Heine's (2010) Modernity and Eccentricity dimensions. Dimension Stability can be matched with Aaker's (1997) Sincerity and Competence dimensions, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) Responsibility dimension, and Heine's (2010) Eccentricity and Elitism dimensions. Elegance dimension is comparable with Aaker's (1997) Sophistication dimension, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) Simplicity dimension,

and Heine's (2010) Opulence dimension. In a more distant manner, dimension Timidity can be linked to Aaker's (1997) Competence dimension and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) Aggressiveness dimension. Femininity dimension is somewhat comparable with Aaker's (1997), Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009), and Heine's (2010) dimensions Sophistication/Ruggedness, Aggressiveness, and Strength respectively, which have some gender-related characteristics. However, those characteristics are part of more general facets and, as such, none of those dimensions truly reflect the constructs of masculinity and femininity. Lastly, dimension Stuck-upness emerges as a new dimension, whose traits cannot be meaningfully associated with traits in any dimensions from the competing scales.

#### **4.2.4 Validity and Reliability of the Set of Indicators at the Construct Level**

Fornell-Larcker (1981) test was performed in order to establish the convergent validity of the new measure. Based on the results of survey 1, AVE scores for all factors except Timidity (AVE = .479) were above .5 suggesting the presence of convergent validity of those dimensions: Playfulness (.617), Stability (.646), Stuck-upness (.619), Elegance (.673), and Femininity (.825). The squares of correlations between pairs of dimensions ranged between .0001 and .35. In addition, resulting comparisons of the key dimension's AVEs with shared variance's squared correlations prove the existence of discriminant validity for all dimensions (see Table 12 below).

Table 12 <i>FORNELL-LARCKER TEST (SURVEY 1)</i>				
Key Dimension	Other dimension	Shared Variance (estimate)	Squared Correlation	Key Dimension AVE
<b>Playfulness</b>	Stability	.513	.263	<b>.617</b>
	Stuck-upness	-.128	.016	
	Elegance	.442	.195	
	Timidity	.091	.008	
	Femininity	.370	.137	
<b>Stability</b>	Playfulness	.513	.263	<b>.646</b>
	Stuck-upness	-.286	.082	
	Elegance	.593	.352	
	Timidity	-.127	.016	
	Femininity	.242	.059	
<b>Stuck-upness</b>	Playfulness	-.128	.016	<b>.619</b>
	Stability	-.286	.082	
	Elegance	-.013	.000	
	Timidity	.225	.051	
	Femininity	-.035	.001	
<b>Elegance</b>	Playfulness	.442	.195	<b>.673</b>
	Stability	.593	.352	
	Stuck-upness	-.013	.000	
	Timidity	-.204	.042	
	Femininity	.287	.082	
<b>Timidity</b>	Playfulness	.091	.008	<b>.479</b>
	Stability	-.127	.016	
	Stuck-upness	.225	.051	
	Elegance	-.204	.042	
	Femininity	.189	.036	
<b>Femininity</b>	Playfulness	.370	.137	<b>.825</b>
	Stability	.242	.059	
	Stuck-upness	-.035	.001	
	Elegance	.287	.082	
	Timidity	.189	.036	

Reliability was established by calculating Cronbach's alphas and composite reliability

scores. As expected, all indicators proved to be highly reliable with Cronbach alpha values exceeding the accepted .70 cut-off point (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994): .865 (Playfulness dimension), .878 (Stability dimension), .864 (Stuck-upness dimension), .857 (Elegance dimension), .719 (Timidity dimension), and .904 (Femininity dimension). In addition, composite reliability scores based on standardised factor loadings and error variances were established (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All scores were above the recommended .70 cut-off value: .866 (Playfulness dimension), .879 (Stability dimension), .866 (Stuck-upness dimension), .860 (Elegance dimension), .730 (Timidity dimension), and .904 (Femininity dimension).

#### 4.2.5 Individual Indicator Validity and Reliability

First, the magnitude and significance of the estimates were determined with a z-test of the estimates' critical ratios. Next, AVE's calculated using the Fornell-Larcker (1981) procedure (described above) helped confirm the validity and reliability adequacy of individual indicators with the exception of indicator Timidity with a value falling slightly below the recommended .50 value (.479) Following these results, HTMT matrices were also calculated in attempt to further determine the presence of validity between pairs of different indicators. As shown in Table 13, all HTMT scores were below the cut-off point of .85, with the highest HTMT scores being .583 (Stability-Elegance pair) based on the data from survey 1. These results provide additional evidence of the validity of individual indicators.

	Playfulness	Stability	Stuck-upness	Elegance	Timidity	Femininity
Playfulness	1.000	.510	-.115	.451	.084	.373
Stability	.510	1.000	-.277	.583	-.124	.246
Stuck-upness	-.115	-.277	1.000	-.025	.258	-.053
Elegance	.451	.583	-.025	1.000	-.235	.287
Timidity	.084	-.124	.258	-.235	1.000	.528
Femininity	.373	.246	-.053	.287	.528	1.000

#### 4.2.6 Comparative Model Testing

This procedure helped establish the relative adequacy of competing measurement models. Competing models were assessed based on the four key fit indices reported in prior works:  $\chi^2$  (with DF), CFI, TLI, and RMSEA (e.g. Tian and Bearden, 2001). As expected, the six-factor oblique model clearly showed a better model-data fit in comparison with other constrained models in this sample. Based on the results, the six-factor oblique model was the most parsimonious one as indicated by the model's fit indices: Chi-square = 546.884 (DF = 155 and  $p = .000$ ), CFI = .945, TLI = .933, and RMSEA = .061. This model was compared with more restricted competing models starting from the independence (null model) that had the worst fit (Chi-square = 7346.316 (DF = 190 and  $p = .000$ ), CFI = .000, TLI = .000, RMSEA = .234), followed by orthogonal models with varying number of uncorrelated factors and oblique models with factors combined together to compose a single factor correlated with the remaining factor (s). The best fitting model combinations are presented in Table 14 below.

	<b>CMIN</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>
(Independence Model) Null Model	7346.316	190	.000	.000	.234
Four-factor orthogonal model	1102.877	169	.870	.853	.090
One-factor oblique model	893.772	170	.887	.873	.089
Three-factor orthogonal model	914.879	167	.895	.881	.081
Two-factor oblique model	647.986	159	.932	.918	.067
One-factor orthogonal model	634.426	160	.934	.921	.066
Two-factor orthogonal model	695.322	164	.926	.914	.069
Three-factor oblique model	587.735	158	.940	.928	.063
Four-factor oblique model	565.820	157	.943	.931	.062
Five-factor oblique model	550.600	156	.945	.933	.061
<b>(Default Model) Six-factor oblique model</b>	<b>546.884</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>.945</b>	<b>.933</b>	<b>.061</b>

In line with expectations, the structure of luxury brand personality dimensions was successfully identified by means of SPSS factor analysis and estimation of a CFA model in SPSS AMOS. The results suggest the existence of six unique luxury brand personality

dimensions that, based on preliminary comparisons, appear to be distinct from existing brand personality frameworks.

### **4.3 Re-examination of Scale Properties (Step 7)**

This section provides the results of the re-estimation of the obtained measurement model based on another independent sample. Using this new sample, the aim is to demonstrate the adequacy of the scale's psychometric properties and re-examine its fit.

#### **4.3.1 Goodness of Fit of the Measurement Model**

Using data from the new sample, the CFA scale was re-estimated and its properties examined. In line with expectations, evidence of the validity of the new measurement model was confirmed with the following criteria: 1) the solution is proper; 2) the hypothesised relationships are statistically significant; 3) whilst chi-square statistic is insignificant, given its sensitivity to the sample size other fit indices are considered. Indeed, the new CFA model based on 20 items retained from the previous measure purification process showed good model fit:  $\chi^2 = 375.681$  (DF = 155,  $p = .000$ ), TLI = .958, CFI = .965, GFI = .936, AGFI = .913, RMSEA = .051, and SRMR = .0449.

#### **4.3.2 Validity and Reliability of the Set of Indicators at the Construct Level**

Similar to the procedure used for the first sample, Fornell-Larcker test (1981) was performed in order to provide support for the convergent validity of the new measure (Table 15). According to the results of the new sample, the key dimensions' AVEs were all above the .5 cut-off point for convergent validity: Playfulness (.673), Stability (.717), Stuck-upness (.620), Elegance (.677), Timidity (.625), and Femininity (.835). The squares of correlations between factors varied from .000016 to .299. Likewise, discriminant validity can be assumed for the second sample following that all between-factor squared correlations were lower than the variance-extracted estimates.

Table 15 <i>FORNELL-LARCKER TEST (SURVEY 2)</i>				
Key Dimension	Other dimension	Shared Variance (estimate)	Squared Correlation	Key Dimension AVE
<b>Playfulness</b>	Stability	.371	.138	<b>.673</b>
	Stuck-upness	-.083	.007	
	Elegance	.299	.089	
	Timidity	.078	.006	
	Femininity	.257	.066	
<b>Stability</b>	Playfulness	.371	.138	<b>.717</b>
	Stuck-upness	-.260	.068	
	Elegance	.547	.299	
	Timidity	-.153	.023	
	Femininity	.205	.042	
<b>Stuck-upness</b>	Playfulness	-.083	.007	<b>.620</b>
	Stability	-.260	.068	
	Elegance	.051	.003	
	Timidity	.246	.061	
	Femininity	-.004	.000	
<b>Elegance</b>	Playfulness	.299	.089	<b>.677</b>
	Stability	.547	.299	
	Stuck-upness	.051	.003	
	Timidity	-.295	.087	
	Femininity	.383	.147	
<b>Timidity</b>	Playfulness	.078	.006	<b>.625</b>
	Stability	-.153	.023	
	Stuck-upness	.246	.061	
	Elegance	-.295	.087	
	Femininity	.163	.027	
<b>Femininity</b>	Playfulness	.257	.066	<b>.835</b>
	Stability	.205	.042	
	Stuck-upness	-.004	.000	
	Elegance	.383	.147	
	Timidity	.163	.027	

As for the reliability assessment, Cronbach's alphas were estimated for each of the 6 dimensions of the new luxury brand personality scale. All indicators appear to be highly reliable with the following reliability values: .891 (Playfulness dimension), .908 (Stability dimension), .863 (Stuck-upness dimension), .858 (Elegance dimension), .828 (Timidity dimension), and .909 (Femininity dimension). Moreover, inter-item correlation matrix and item-total statistics provide information about how high the correlations between items within each dimension were. The lowest corrected item-total correlation was .632 for trait Unassertive from the Timidity dimension, whilst most other correlations were above the .70 level, thereby suggesting that all scale items are certainly tapping well into the new construct. In addition, composite reliability scores were determined for each indicator. All scores had values above the recommended .70: .912 (Playfulness dimension), .938 (Stability dimension), .900 (Stuck-upness dimension), .896 (Elegance dimension), .895 (Timidity dimension), and .921 (Femininity dimension). Lastly, the average Pearson correlations on 6 luxury brand personality dimensions represented by 20 brand personality traits from the final scale at initial and second response times were the following: Playfulness = .76, Stability = .80, Stuck-upness = .77, Elegance = .76, Timidity = .76, and Femininity = .80. This confirms test-retest reliability of the new measure.

#### **4.3.3 Individual Indicator Validity and Reliability**

Again, the magnitude and significance of the estimates were confirmed with a z-test of the estimates' critical ratios. Following this, high AVE scores from Fornell-Larcker test determined individual indicator validity and reliability. HTMT matrices provided further evidence of validity among individual indicators. All HTMT scores fell below the recommended value of .85, with .549 (Stability – Elegance) being the highest score.

	Playfulness	Stability	Stuck-upness	Elegance	Timidity	Femininity
Playfulness	1.000	.385	-.065	.319	.068	.247
Stability	.385	1.000	-.269	.549	-.147	.206
Stuck-upness	-.065	-.269	1.000	.036	.255	-.007
Elegance	.319	.549	.036	1.000	-.316	.381
Timidity	.068	-.147	.255	-.316	1.000	.160
Femininity	.247	.206	-.007	.381	.160	1.000

#### 4.3.4 Comparative Model Testing

The analysis of the new sample indicates that the six-factor oblique model has the best model-data fit (Chi-square = 375.681 (DF = 155, p = .000), CFI = .965, TLI = .958, and RMSEA = .051), with some other five-, four-, and three-factor oblique models showing more inferior model-data fit (see Table 17 below for best fitting model combinations).

	<b>CMIN</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>
(Independence Model) Null Model	6580.866	190	.000	.000	.250
One-factor oblique model	910.153	170	.884	.871	.090
Four-factor orthogonal model	770.455	169	.906	.894	.081
Three-factor orthogonal model	626.254	167	.928	.918	.071
Two-factor orthogonal model	539.720	164	.941	.932	.065
One-factor orthogonal model	461.924	160	.953	.944	.059
Two-factor oblique model	449.656	159	.955	.946	.058
Three-factor oblique model	411.890	158	.960	.952	.055
Four-factor oblique model	397.774	157	.962	.954	.053
Five-factor oblique model	383.241	156	.964	.957	.052
<b>(Default Model) Six-factor oblique model</b>	<b>375.681</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>.965</b>	<b>.958</b>	<b>.051</b>

Overall, the results of this analysis provide further confidence for the parsimoniousness of the new measure of luxury brand personality, as the re-estimated measurement model produces good fit and indicates similar psychometric properties to the previous model estimated based on the developmental sample of data.

#### 4.4 Scale Validity Assessment (Step 8)

The findings reported in this section concerning experimental manipulation of the construct, discriminant, and nomological validity testing all seek to confirm the presence of construct validity of the new measure.

##### 4.4.1 Experimental Manipulation of the Construct: Tests of Factorial Invariance Across Different Brand Groups

Factorial invariance was tested with regards to its two elements: configural and measurement invariance (Yu and Shek, 2014). First, configural invariance was determined by evaluating whether the model structure remained invariant when estimated for two different groups, i.e. luxury and non-luxury, simultaneously. Hence, a baseline model was initially tested separately for a luxury and a non-luxury sample using AMOS Software, and the goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that the constrained model for the non-luxury group was not substantially worse than the luxury group model (see Table 18 below). Following this, a baseline model M0 was estimated through the multigroup analysis. The comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values suggest that the hypothesised six-factor model fits relatively well across the two groups of brands, thereby supporting the configural invariance of the model across two groups. The chi-square value of the baseline model (656.460) subsequently served as a benchmark figure against which all other tests of invariance were compared.

	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	TLI	NFI	IFI	RMSEA	AIC
<b>Separate Group Analyses</b>								
Group 1 (Luxury)	375.681	155	.965	.958	.943	.966	.051	485.681
Group 2 (Non-luxury)	278.507	155	.911	.891	.824	.913	.103	388.507
<b>Multigroup Analyses</b>								
M0	656.460	310	.956	.945	.920	.956	.043	876.460

M1	746.609	345	.948	.943	.909	.949	.044	896.609
Criterion for goodness of fit	-	-	≥.90	≥.90	≥.90	≥.90	≤.10	-

Next, in order to establish measurement invariance, equal constraints were added to the model's parameters across groups. More specifically, for the testing of the M1 (fully constraint model), all parameters were named using the Plugins function in Amos and then constraints from the error terms were removed (as AMOS imposes them automatically). Having assessed the fully constraint model, the chi-square different test for chi-square values of M1 and M0 was applied so as to determine whether the difference was significant. The comparison yielded an  $\chi^2$  difference value 90.149;  $df = 35$ , which was statistically significant at the .001 level. This implies that some equality constraints do not hold across the two groups, and further testing is necessary to locate the source of non-invariance.

Typically, factor loadings are the starting point for identifying what is causing non-invariance within the multigroup model. This testing procedure is referred to as metric invariance testing (Yu and Shek, 2014) and often begins with establishing or rejecting invariance for all factor loadings, followed by freeing one factor at a time in a logically consistent way so as to determine the source of non-invariance among certain factors that were constrained to be equal. To test the invariance of factor loadings linked to all six factors in the model, all parameter labels were eliminated with the exception of those related to factor loadings from the fully constrained model M1. A chi-square difference test for the new model (M2) and M0 produced a difference in  $\chi^2$  values of 15.545 ( $df = 14$ ;  $p=.342$ ). These results suggest that the specified model is invariant across the two groups. However, since the model failed the measurement invariance test, the next step was to examine each factor for group invariance as certain factors could still be different across the two groups (i.e. only partial measurement invariance may exist between the luxury and non-luxury groups).

First, all factor loading constraints were removed from the Stuck-upness factor as its items had highest regression weights. Metric invariance was established, suggesting that the

Stuck-upness factor loadings are equivalent across luxury and non-luxury brands. Next, the Elegance factor was freed whilst all other factors remained constrained. Similarly, metric invariance was established. Consequently, Playfulness, Stability, Timidity, and Femininity were freed one by one (M5-M8), whilst retaining other factors constrained, and metric invariance was confirmed for either model. Following this procedure, pairs of factors were freed one by one, then three factors, four factors, and five factors were freed to confirm or reject metric invariance.

As a result of this exploratory procedure, metric non-invariance was found when factor loading constraints for Stability, Stuck-upness, Timidity, and Femininity factors were freed, and those for Playfulness and Elegance dimensions constrained (M56) following identification of significant p-values from the chi-square difference test (as shown in Table 19 below). In order to identify specific traits within the two dimensions that serve as a cause of non-invariance for luxury and non-luxury groups, factor loadings for different traits from the dimensions Playfulness and Elegance were constrained one at a time. The results of chi-square difference testing indicate (see M56d-M56g; M56j) that non-invariance across the two groups exists when: factor loadings for Elegance factor are constrained together with traits Spontaneous, Energetic, and Adventurous from Playfulness dimension (M56d); factor loadings for Elegance are constrained along with traits Energetic and Adventurous from Playfulness dimension (M56e); factor loadings for traits Energetic and Adventurous from Playfulness dimension are constrained only (M56f); factor loadings for Playfulness dimension are constrained together with traits Sophisticated and Glamorous from Elegance dimension (M56g); and, finally, non-invariance exists when factors loadings for traits Energetic and Adventurous from Playfulness dimension are constrained along with traits Sophisticated and Glamorous from Elegance dimension (M56j).

Table 19. *Testing for Factorial Invariance Across Two Groups: Luxury and Non-Luxury*

Model	Description	$\chi^2$	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	p-value (chi-sq difference test)
M0	Baseline	656.460	310	-	-	
M1	Fully constrained	746.609	345	90.149	35	.000
M56	Factor loadings for Playfulness and Elegance constrained	666.769	315	10.309	5	.067
M56d	Factor loadings for Elegance and traits Spontaneous, Energetic, Adventurous (Playfulness dimension) constrained	666.701	314	10.241	4	.037
M56e	Factor loadings for Elegance and traits Energetic and Adventurous (Playfulness dimension) constrained	665.82	313	9.36	3	.025
M56f	Factor loadings for traits Energetic and Adventurous (Playfulness dimension) constrained only	661.578	311	5.118	1	.024
M56g	Factor loadings for Playfulness and traits Sophisticated and Glamorous (Elegance dimension) constrained	666.764	314	10.304	4	.036
M56j	Factor loadings for traits Energetic, Adventurous (Playfulness dimension), Sophisticated, and Glamorous (Elegance dimension) constrained	665.815	312	9.355	2	.009

As anticipated, tests of factorial invariance across two different groups, luxury and non-luxury, have revealed the existence of non-invariance. Whilst configural invariance was confirmed for these groups, measurement invariance had to be rejected, as certain equality constraints did not remain stable across the two groups. Having tested the invariance of factor loadings associated with each of the six factors, it was found that factors Playfulness and Elegance were the cause of non-invariance between luxury and non-luxury groups. More specifically, certain traits related to these factors acted as sources of non-invariance. In the case of Playfulness those traits were: Spontaneous, Energetic, and Adventurous. As for Elegance, the traits that caused non-invariance were: Sophisticated and Glamorous. Tables 20 and 21(Part 1)/(Part 2) demonstrate the mean values of each personality dimension of the new scale and each personality trait falling under the six identified dimensions across all luxury brands and provide further insight towards the above findings.

Table 20  
Mean Values of Each Personality Dimension from the New Scale

	<b>Playfulness Dimension</b>	<b>Stability Dimension</b>	<b>Stuck- upness Dimension</b>	<b>Elegance Dimension</b>	<b>Timidity Dimension</b>	<b>Femininity Dimension</b>
Luxury Brands						
ANTINORI	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
BACCARAT	0.316	1.632	-0.408	2.175	-1.368	0.553
BALENCIAGA	0.804	0.679	0.196	1.405	-0.905	0.750
BURBERRY	0.185	1.621	-0.742	1.634	-1.237	0.613
DIOR	0.758	1.458	-0.308	1.778	-1.133	1.550
DOLCE & GABBANA	0.875	1.033	0.333	1.567	-1.556	1.233
DOM PERIGNON	0.211	1.055	-0.422	1.833	-1.698	-1.016
GUCCI	0.340	1.580	-0.200	1.760	-1.547	0.800
HARRY WINSTON	-0.083	1.729	-0.250	1.986	-1.917	0.604
HERMES	0.484	1.371	-0.202	2.011	-1.828	0.984
ILLY	1.136	1.591	-1.477	1.758	-1.455	0.455
KIEHL'S	-0.091	1.909	-1.273	0.803	-1.167	0.568
LAMBORGHINI	1.950	1.083	0.800	1.811	-2.144	-1.417
LANCOME	0.608	1.050	-0.833	1.400	-1.033	1.500
LOUIS VUITTON	0.359	1.578	0.109	2.031	-1.750	1.406
MEISSEN	-0.300	1.200	-1.000	0.533	-1.400	0.700
MONTBLANC	0.120	1.543	-0.228	1.870	-1.667	-0.304
RAY-BAN	0.825	1.583	-1.292	0.344	-1.578	-1.133
RITZ	-0.217	1.808	-0.375	2.133	-1.856	-0.567
CARLTON						
ROLEX	0.417	2.042	-0.200	1.889	-1.589	-0.217
ROLLS- ROYCE	0.533	1.725	0.325	2.489	-1.744	-0.833
TIFFANY & CO	0.008	1.875	-0.683	2.256	-1.800	1.583
Non-luxury Brands						
ALDO	0.250	0.208	0.083	0.472	-0.694	0.458
CITIZEN	0.205	1.409	-1.227	1.091	-1.152	-0.091
FIAT	1.083	0.708	-1.188	0.111	-1.500	-1.083
GALLO FAMILY VINEYARDS	-0.167	0.583	-0.833	-0.278	-0.278	-0.250
HOLIDAY INN	0.250	1.167	-1.875	-1.167	-1.389	-1.833

IKEA	0.750	1.096	-1.346	-0.718	-1.436	-0.654
MAYBELLINE	0.611	1.444	-2.278	0.556	-1.222	1.333
ZARA	-0.179	-0.107	-0.321	0.048	-0.286	0.571

**Table 21**  
**Mean Values of Each Personality Trait from the New Scale (Part 1)**

	Playfulness Dimension				Stability Dimension			
	Playful	Spontaneous	Energetic	Adventurous	Stable	Trustworthy	Reliable	Dependable
<b>Luxury Brands</b>								
ANTINORI	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
BACCARAT	-0.158	-0.105	0.737	0.789	1.526	1.737	1.579	1.684
BALENCIAGA	0.643	0.857	0.714	1.000	0.571	0.643	0.857	0.643
BURBERRY	-0.161	-0.032	0.581	0.355	1.677	1.452	1.871	1.484
DIOR	0.533	0.733	0.900	0.867	1.633	1.500	1.267	1.433
DOLCE & GABBANA	0.833	0.633	1.000	1.033	0.967	1.000	1.067	1.100
DOM PERIGNON	0.281	-0.031	0.188	0.406	1.000	1.063	1.063	1.094
GUCCI	0.320	0.000	0.400	0.640	1.240	1.680	1.680	1.720
HARRY WINSTON	-0.667	0.042	0.083	0.208	1.667	1.625	1.750	1.875
HERMES	0.613	-0.097	0.419	1.000	1.194	1.323	1.452	1.516
ILLY	1.000	1.091	1.000	1.455	1.364	1.545	1.909	1.545
KIEHL'S	0.045	-0.318	0.182	-0.273	1.727	1.909	2.045	1.955
LAMBORGHINI	1.800	1.733	2.100	2.167	1.000	1.200	1.067	1.067
LANCOME	0.633	0.500	0.533	0.767	1.033	0.933	1.267	0.967
LOUIS VUITTON	0.000	0.313	0.375	0.750	1.563	1.469	1.750	1.531
MEISSEN	-0.400	-0.200	0.000	-0.600	1.200	1.400	1.000	1.200
MONTBLANC	-0.130	0.087	0.304	0.217	1.174	1.739	1.652	1.609
RAY-BAN	0.600	0.600	0.867	1.233	1.567	1.533	1.667	1.567
RITZ CARLTON	-0.433	-0.500	0.367	-0.300	1.867	1.767	1.933	1.667
ROLEX	-0.067	0.000	0.800	0.933	1.567	2.000	2.433	2.167
ROLLS-ROYCE	0.433	0.233	0.633	0.833	1.600	1.467	1.933	1.900
TIFFANY & CO	-0.100	-0.233	0.300	0.067	1.867	1.967	1.900	1.767
<b>Non-luxury Brands</b>								
ALDO	0.500	0.167	0.167	0.167	0.333	0.000	0.250	0.250
CITIZEN	-0.182	0.182	0.273	0.545	1.364	1.273	1.364	1.636
FIAT	1.333	1.000	1.083	0.917	0.750	0.333	0.833	0.917
GALLO FAMILY VINEYARDS	-0.167	-0.333	0.000	-0.167	1.000	0.500	0.167	0.667
HOLIDAY INN	0.667	0.167	-0.333	0.500	1.167	1.167	1.167	1.167
IKEA	0.846	0.308	0.769	1.077	1.077	1.000	1.154	1.154
MAYBELLINE	0.778	0.333	1.000	0.333	1.444	1.222	1.444	1.667
ZARA	0.143	-0.571	-0.286	0.000	0.000	-0.143	-0.143	-0.143

**Table 21**  
**Mean Values of Each Personality Trait from the New Scale (Part 2)**

	Stuck-upness Dimension				Elegance Dimension			Timidity Dimension			Femininity Dimension	
	Stuck-up	Self-centered	Cocky	Unaccessible	Elegant	Sophisticated	Glamorous	Timid	Shy	Unassertive	Feminine	Womanly
Luxury Brands												
ANTINORI	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
BACCARAT	-0.053	-0.737	-0.526	-0.316	2.368	2.263	1.895	-1.474	1.263	1.368	0.579	0.526
BALENCIAGA	0.071	0.643	-0.071	0.143	1.429	1.500	1.286	-0.714	1.000	1.000	0.929	0.571
BURBERRY	-0.677	-0.323	-0.871	-1.097	1.774	1.968	1.161	-1.323	1.258	1.129	0.774	0.452
DIOR	-0.300	0.033	-0.633	-0.333	1.833	1.700	1.800	-1.233	1.333	0.833	1.667	1.433
DOLCE & GABBANA	0.533	0.567	0.100	0.133	1.600	1.567	1.533	-1.467	1.633	1.567	1.200	1.267
DOM PERIGNON	-0.031	-0.625	-0.563	-0.469	1.938	1.750	1.813	-2.000	1.844	1.250	-1.063	0.969
GUCCI	0.000	-0.600	-0.080	-0.120	1.720	1.920	1.640	-1.800	1.760	1.080	0.880	0.720
HARRY WINSTON	-0.167	-0.250	-0.625	0.042	2.250	2.042	1.667	-2.042	1.917	1.792	0.625	0.583
HERMES	-0.194	-0.290	-0.323	0.000	1.968	2.065	2.000	-1.968	1.710	1.806	1.097	0.871
ILLY	-1.636	-1.273	-1.455	-1.545	1.818	2.091	1.364	-1.455	2.091	0.818	0.727	0.182
KIEHL'S	-1.364	-1.182	-1.636	-0.909	0.727	1.545	0.136	-1.409	1.136	0.955	0.636	0.500
LAMBORGHINI	0.933	0.500	1.233	0.533	1.533	1.933	1.967	-2.267	2.333	1.833	-1.400	1.433
LANCOME	-0.533	-0.633	-1.100	-1.067	1.500	1.200	1.500	-1.033	1.167	0.900	1.567	1.433
LOUIS VUITTON	0.469	0.094	0.125	-0.250	2.125	2.000	1.969	-1.906	1.781	1.563	1.250	1.563
MEISSEN	-1.200	-0.800	-1.000	-1.000	0.800	1.000	-0.200	-1.800	1.200	1.200	0.600	0.800
MONTBLANC	-0.130	-0.217	0.217	-0.783	2.043	2.130	1.435	-1.652	1.739	1.609	-0.348	0.261
RAY-BAN	-1.500	-1.067	-0.833	-1.767	0.333	0.633	0.067	-1.800	1.700	1.233	-1.000	1.267
RITZ CARLTON	0.133	-0.533	-0.567	-0.533	2.267	2.100	2.033	-1.933	2.133	1.500	-0.400	0.733
ROLEX	-0.200	0.000	-0.233	-0.367	1.933	2.167	1.567	-1.667	1.733	1.367	-0.100	0.333
ROLLS-ROYCE	0.367	0.533	0.167	0.233	2.600	2.433	2.433	-1.933	1.900	1.400	-0.900	0.767
TIFFANY & CO	-0.267	-0.800	-1.233	-0.433	2.400	2.233	2.133	-2.100	1.800	1.500	1.733	1.433
Non-luxury Brands												
ALDO	0.000	0.167	0.333	-0.167	0.417	0.583	0.417	-0.750	0.750	0.583	0.500	0.417
CITIZEN	-1.364	-1.091	-1.455	-1.000	1.455	1.182	0.636	-1.364	1.182	0.909	-0.182	0.000
FIAT	-1.000	-1.000	-1.167	-1.583	0.500	0.167	-0.333	-1.333	1.500	1.667	-0.667	1.500
GALLO FAMILY VINEYARDS	-1.000	-0.500	-0.833	-1.000	-0.167	-0.167	-0.500	-0.333	0.500	0.000	-0.333	0.167
HOLIDAY INN	-2.000	-1.000	-2.333	-2.167	-1.333	-0.667	-1.500	-1.667	1.333	1.167	-1.833	1.833
IKEA	-1.692	-1.077	-1.077	-1.538	-0.769	-0.538	-0.846	-1.846	1.462	1.000	-0.538	0.769
MAYBELLINE	-2.333	-2.000	-2.111	-2.667	0.444	0.556	0.667	-1.111	1.222	1.333	1.556	1.111
ZARA	-0.714	0.143	-0.714	0.000	-0.143	0.286	0.000	-0.429	0.286	0.143	0.286	0.857

#### 4.4.2 Discriminant Validity

As part of discriminant validity testing, HTMT ratio of correlations was calculated for the dimensions of the new luxury brand personality scale and dimensions from Aaker's (1997) brand personality measure (survey 1 & 2) as well as for the dimensions of the new measure and dimensions from Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) brand personality framework (results below).

	Playfulness	Stability	Stuck-upness	Elegance	Timidity	Femininity
Sincerity	.724	.829	-.351	.514	.130	.449
Excitement	.967	.588	-.132	.614	-.052	.393
Competence	.627	.900	-.293	.906	-.568	.289
Sophistication	.496	.575	.169	.810	-.305	.370
Ruggedness	.540	.256	-.040	-.065	.549	.097

	Playfulness	Stability	Stuck-upness	Elegance	Timidity	Femininity
Sincerity	.571	.815	-.436	.477	.115	.373
Excitement	.813	.446	-.078	.575	-.073	.318
Competence	.438	.715	-.040	.681	-.249	.243
Sophistication	.338	.479	.192	.791	-.314	.388
Ruggedness	.452	.130	-.045	-.100	.439	-.080

	Playfulness	Stability	Stuck-upness	Elegance	Timidity	Femininity
Responsibility	.533	.821	-.336	.541	-.021	.280
Activity	.904	.588	-.181	.817	-.083	.237
Aggressiveness	.680	.284	.383	.495	-.159	.141
Simplicity	.306	.038	-.105	-.243	.713	.242
Emotionality	.513	.473	-.176	.581	.209	.613

As previously mentioned, validation of the new scale showed the relatedness of some of its dimensions with the specific dimensions from Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) scales. Dimension Playfulness from the new scale was found to be comparable with Aaker's (1997) Excitement dimension and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) Activity dimension. According to the HTMT scores, dimension Playfulness and dimension Excitement from Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale exhibit an HTMT value that exceeds the recommended threshold of .85 as based on results of the first survey, thereby suggesting a potential lack of discriminant validity. Similarly, dimension Playfulness and dimension Activity from Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) framework share an HTMT value of .904, which is also above the proposed .85 cut-off point. At the same time the proposed threshold, whilst being useful at pointing towards discriminant validity issues in research scenarios, does not directly imply the absence of discriminant validity. In absolute terms, the lack of discriminant validity could only be proved if an HTMT value was equal to one, which would then imply that the true correlation between the two dimensions from competing scales was most likely equal to one (Henseler et al., 2015). Additionally, an HTMT score for the Playfulness dimension and the Excitement dimension based on the results of survey 2 shows an acceptable value of .813.

The other two HTMT values from survey 1 that were treated with some caution were HTMT scores for the Stability dimension from the new scale and the Competence dimension from Aaker's (1997) work (HTMT score of .900) as well as for the Elegance dimension and Aaker's (1997) Competence dimension (HTMT score of .906). Whilst the Stability dimension shares similar traits with the Competence dimension from Aaker's (1997) scale and a relatively high HTMT value was expected, there was found to be no similarity between the Elegance dimension from the new scale and Aaker's (1997) Competence dimension. Hence, the high HTMT value was not anticipated for the Elegance/Competence pair, but according to the results from survey 2, is not problematic as HTMT value for those dimensions is within the acceptable norm at .68. Looking at the results of analysis from survey 2, an HTMT value of the Stability/Competence pair is also acceptable at .715, suggesting presence of discriminant validity.

### 4.4.3 Nomological Validity Testing

#### 4.4.3.1 Antecedent: Influence of Member Group Fit on Self-Congruence

As noted in section 3.9.3 (“Nomological Validity Testing”), profile similarity reflects the extent to which two profiles of characteristics resemble each other and was determined via the intraclass correlation coefficient (double entry) that quantified the level to which each respondent’s brand personality ratings on the new measure of luxury brand personality matched their own personality ratings on that same measure (McCrae, 2008). To calculate ICCDEs, every element in the paired profile was recorded twice in the reversed manner across the rows and the Pearson correlations between two columns of data produced ICCDE coefficients. Results of SPSS bivariate correlation analysis show that perceived member group fit is positively and significantly correlated with profile similarity scores for the new measure. More specifically, the effect of the averaged measure of perceived member group fit on the profile similarity of respondent’s self-personality, and brand personality is .455\*\* and is significant at the .01 level. Comparatively, the analysis of the bivariate correlations of the averaged perceived member group fit and profile similarity scores for Aaker’s (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) scales also points towards positive and significant relationships. However, those correlations are appreciably lower: .334\*\* for Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) scale and .249\*\* for Aaker’s (1997) scale, suggesting that the new scale of luxury brand personality performs better in the context of these relationships.

In addition, statistical comparisons between correlations coefficients estimated on the same set of respondents were made in order to confirm they were statistically different. The results of Williams T2 and Z-bar1 tests (Steiger, 1980) suggest that the correlations between the perceived member group fit and profile similarity scores for the new measure and Aaker’s (1997) are statistically different (Williams T2 (DF = 537, p = .000) = 5.372, Z-bar1 (p = .000) = 5.223). The same is true for the two correlations involving the new scale and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009): Williams T2 (df = 537, p = .001) = 3.259 and Z-bar1 (p = .001) = 3.225.

#### 4.4.3.2 Consequences

##### **Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Congruence on Purchase Intention**

As for the consequences of self-congruence, the results of SPSS Process matrix analysis point towards presence of statistically significant total and indirect effects of profile similarity (i.e. self-congruence) on all outcome measures as well as a significant direct effect of profile similarity on one of the outcomes, i.e. purchase loyalty. The total effect model with purchase intention as the dependant variable is significant as indicated by  $R\text{-sq.} = .174$ ,  $F(1, 538) = 113.072$ ,  $p = .000$  (Table 23). According to that model, the overall effect of profile similarity coefficient is equal to 1.836 ( $p = .000$ ). Partitioning the effect of profile similarity on purchase intention, the model with direct effects on the outcome measure is significant according to the model summary  $R\text{-sq.} = .620$ ,  $F(4, 535) = 217.844$ ,  $p = .000$  (Table 24). However, the direct effect of profile similarity is insignificant at  $p = .207$  (coeff = .177). Thus, hypothesis 2a cannot be supported. At the same time, the direct effects of emotional brand attachment (coeff = .154) and brand attitude (coeff = .667) on purchase intention are significant at  $p = .001$  and  $p = .000$  respectively, and the effect of brand personality appeal (coeff = .142) is significant ( $p = .014$ ) at the .05 significance level. Additionally, looking at the indirect effect of profile similarity on purchase intention the significant value holds for all relationships as suggested by the lower and upper limit confidence intervals of bootstrapping method, with the total indirect effect = 1.659, the effect of emotional brand attachment = .258, the effect of brand attitude = 1.230, and that of brand personality appeal = .171 (Table 25). Hence, hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c are supported in this case. Also, in line with the predictions of the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), self-congruence exerts the most pronounced effect on purchase intentions via brand attitudes (social-function and affective) making it the most influential mediator for this outcome measure.

Table 25. Purchase Intention Outcome: Total Effect Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.417	.174	2.442	113.072	1.000	538.000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		.246	.086	2.860	.004	.077	.414
Profile Similarity		1.836	.173	10.634	.000	1.497	2.175

Table 26. Purchase Intention Outcome: Direct Effect Model

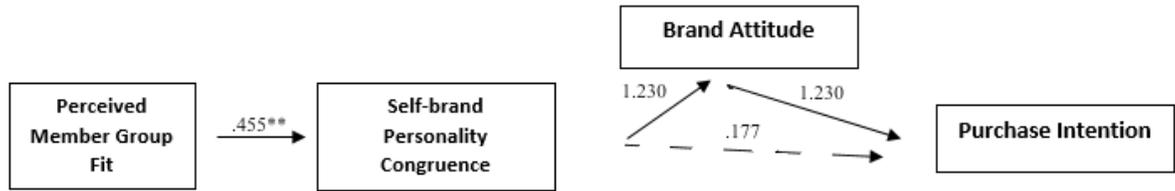
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.787	.620	1.130	217.844	4.000	535.000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		-.474	.318	-1.492	.136	-1.099	.150
Emotional Brand Attachment		.154	.045	3.403	.001	.0650	.243
Brand Attitude		.667	.049	13.450	.000	.570	.764
Brand Personality Appeal		.142	.057	2.476	.014	.029	.255
Profile Similarity		.177	.140	1.264	.207	-.098	.452

Table 27. Purchase Intention Outcome: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects

Total effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.836	.173	10.634	.000	1.497	2.175
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.177	.140	1.264	.207	-.098	.452
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention					
	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	1.659	.158	1.333	1.966	
Emotional Brand Attachment	.258	.089	.084	.454	
Brand Attitude	1.230	.151	.959	1.543	
Brand Personality Appeal	.171	.072	.031	.315	

Visual presentation of the main effects is shown in Figure 12a-c below. As with all other outcome measures, all mediations are partial.

Figure 12a. Main effects with Brand Attitude Mediator

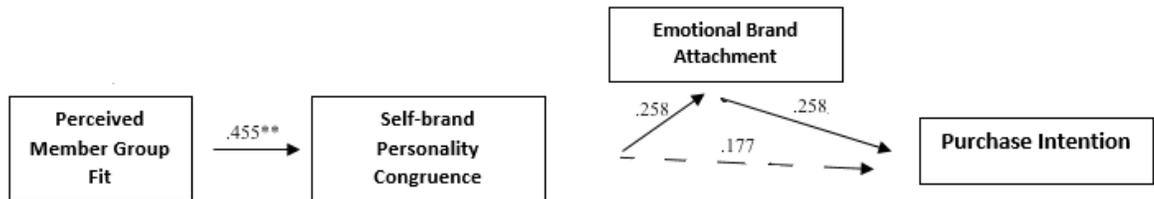


Note: \*\*Significant at the .01 level

————> Positive significant relationship

- - - -> No significant relationship

Figure 12b. Main effects with Emotional Brand Attachment Mediator

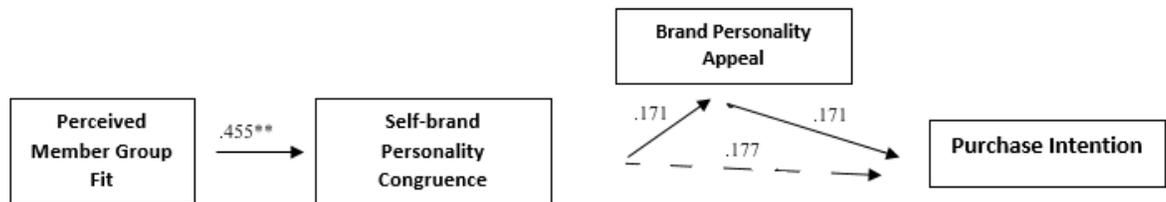


Note: \*\*Significant at the .01 level

————> Positive significant relationship

- - - -> No significant relationship

Figure 12c. Main effects with Brand Personality Appeal Mediator



Note: \*\*Significant at the .01 level

————> Positive significant relationship

- - - -> No significant relationship

## Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Congruence on Word-of-Mouth Communication

With the word-of-mouth communication as the outcome variable, the total effect model is significant according to  $R\text{-sq.} = .144$ ,  $F(1, 538) = 90.762$ ,  $p = .000$  (Table 26). The total effect of profile similarity is 1.793 and significant at  $p = .000$ . The model showing direct effects of all variables on the outcome measure is significant as indicated by  $R\text{-sq.} = .670$ ,  $F(4, 535) = 271.039$ ,  $p = .000$  (Table 27). Similar to its effect on purchase intention, the impact of profile similarity on the word-of-mouth communication is insignificant with  $p = .231$  (coeff = .167). Hence, hypothesis 2b cannot be supported. The effects of emotional brand attachment (coeff = .648) and brand attitude (coeff = .360) are significant at  $p = .000$ , while the effect of brand personality appeal (coeff = -.104) shows a near-significant trend ( $p = .069$ ) albeit in the wrong direction. The negative directionality of the brand personality appeal effect is surprising, as it is conceptually logical to expect positive word-of-mouth communication for brand personalities regarded as more rather than less appealing. At the same time, the total indirect effect of profile similarity on this outcome is significant and equal 1.626 (Table 28). The indirect effect of profile similarity on word-of-mouth communication is significant for emotional brand attachment (coeff = 1.087) and brand attitude (coeff = .664), whilst being insignificant for brand personality appeal (coeff = -.126). Thus, hypotheses 3a and 3b are supported, while hypothesis 3c is rejected for this outcome measure. For this outcome measure, the indirect effect of profile similarity is strongest via emotional brand attachment. This finding is in line with Park et al. (2006) who argued that emotional brand attachment may hold a higher explanatory power for higher order constructs that go beyond the intent to purchase (i.e. word-of-mouth).

Table 28. Word-of-Mouth Communication Outcome: Total Effect Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p		
.380	.144	2.903	90.762	1.000	538.000	.000		
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
		constant	-.987	.094	-10.544	.000	-1.170	-.803
		Profile Similarity	1.793	.188	9.527	.000	1.423	2.163

Table 29. Word-of-Mouth Communication Outcome: Direct Effect Model

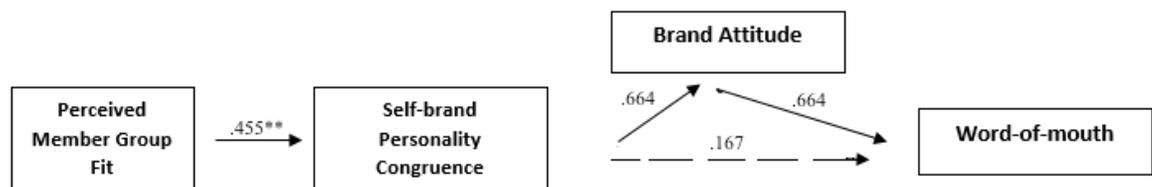
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p			
.818	.670	1.127	271.039	4.000	535.000	.000			
			coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
			constant	-.168	.317	-.530	.597	-.791	.455
			Emotional Brand Attachment	.648	.045	14.347	.000	.559	.736
			Brand Attitude	.360	.049	7.301	.000	.263	.457
			Brand Personality Appeal	-.104	.057	-1.823	.069	-.217	.008
			Profile Similarity	.167	.140	1.198	.231	-.107	.442

Table 30. Word-of-Mouth Communication Outcome: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects

Total effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.793	.188	9.527	.000	1.423	2.163
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.167	.140	1.198	.231	-.107	.442
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication					
		Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL		1.626	.160	1.319	1.931
Emotional Brand Attachment		1.087	.129	.860	1.334
Brand Attitude		.664	.104	.456	.859
Brand Personality Appeal		-.126	.067	-.264	.001

Visual presentation of the main effects is shown in Figure 13a-c below.

Figure 13a. Main effects with Brand Attitude Mediator

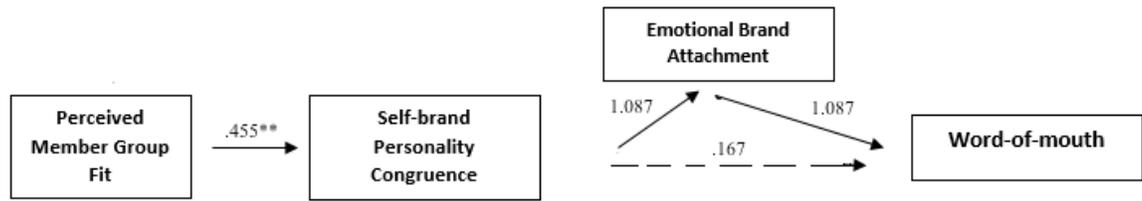


Note: \*\*Significant at the .01 level

—————> Positive significant relationship

- - - - -> No significant relationship

Figure 13b. Main effects with Emotional Brand Attachment Mediator

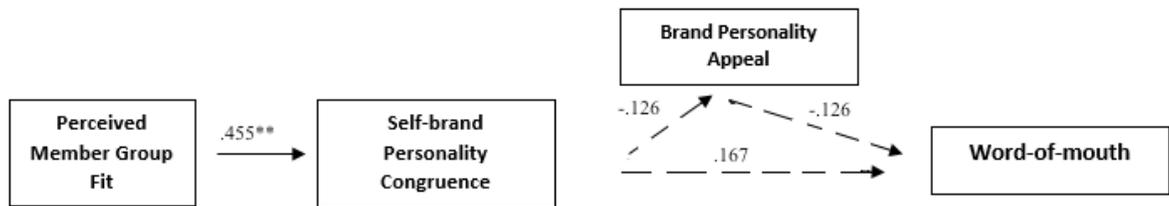


Note: \*\*Significant at the .01 level

————> Positive significant relationship

- - - -> No significant relationship

Figure 13c. Main effects with Brand Personality Appeal Mediator



Note: \*\*Significant at the .01 level

————> Positive significant relationship

- - - -> No significant relationship

### Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Congruence on Purchase Loyalty

Similar effects hold for purchase loyalty outcome measure with the addition of the significant direct relationship between profile similarity and purchase loyalty that was not otherwise present in prior cases. The total effect model is significant as indicated by  $R\text{-sq.} = .164$ ,  $F(1, 538) = 105.582$ ,  $p = .000$  (Table 29). According to the model, the total effect of profile similarity on purchase loyalty is significant ( $p = .000$ ) and equals 1.914. The model showing direct effects on purchase loyalty is also significant according to  $R\text{-sq.} = .581$ ,  $F(4, 535) = 185.567$ ,  $p = .000$  (Table 30). With the exception of the negative effect of brand personality appeal on the outcome (coeff =  $-.114$ ) that reveals a substantial trend towards significance  $p = .078$ ), all other effects are positive and significant.

Thus, the effect of profile similarity on purchase loyalty equals .428 and is significant at  $p \leq .05$  ( $p = .007$ ), thereby supporting hypothesis 2c. This is in contrast with the findings for the other two outcomes that showed insignificant relationship for profile similarity. Being a crucial predictor of consumer behaviour towards a brand, brand loyalty underlines the extent of attachment a consumer holds for a brand (Liu et al., 2012). Purchase loyalty signifies the behavioural dimension of the brand loyalty construct and implies consumer's inclination to keep purchasing a specific brand over the passage of time. Inevitably, brand loyalty requires that consumer forms a strong mental linkage between the brand and the self (as measured by profile similarity), leading to a positive and significant relationship between the two constructs. Additionally, the effects of emotional brand attachment (coeff = .456) and brand attitude (coeff = .465) on purchase loyalty are positive and significant at  $p = .000$ .

With regards to indirect effects, the total indirect effect of profile similarity on purchase loyalty is significant according to the lower and upper limit confidence intervals of bootstrapping method and equals 1.486 (Table 31). Similar to the effects on word-of-mouth communication outcome, the effect of profile similarity via emotional brand attachment is also high for this higher order construct with coeff. = .765. However, it is not as substantial as its effect via brand attitude measure with coeff. = .858. Lastly, the indirect effect of profile similarity on purchase loyalty via brand personality appeal is negative and insignificant. It appears that the effect of brand personality appeal is only positive and significant in the case of purchase intentions (Freling et al., 2011), whilst remaining insignificant for other consumer behavioural responses. As a result, hypotheses 3a and 3b are also supported for this outcome variable, while hypothesis 3c is rejected due to insignificant effects for brand personality appeal.

Table 31. Purchase Loyalty Outcome: Total Effect Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p		
.405	.164	2.842	105.582	1.000	538.000	.000		
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
		constant	-.838	.093	-9.055	.000	-1.020	-.656
		Profile Similarity	1.914	.186	10.275	.000	1.548	2.279

Table 32. Purchase Loyalty Outcome: Direct Effect Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p			
.762	.581	1.432	185.567	4.000	535.000	.000			
			coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
			constant	-.047	.358	-.132	.895	-.750	.656
			Emotional Brand Attachment	.456	.051	8.957	.000	.356	.556
			Brand Attitude	.465	.056	8.367	.000	.356	.574
			Brand Personality Appeal	-.114	.065	-1.767	.078	-.241	.013
			Profile Similarity	.428	.158	2.718	.007	.119	.737

Table 33. Purchase Loyalty Outcome: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects

Total effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
1.914	.186	10.275	.000	1.548	2.279	
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
.428	.158	2.718	.007	.119	.737	
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
			Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL			1.486	.161	1.173	1.817
Emotional Brand Attachment			.765	.122	.548	1.031
Brand Attitude			.858	.131	.612	1.123
Brand Personality Appeal			-.137	.074	-.283	.004

#### 4.4.4 Incremental Validity

#### Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Congruence on Purchase Intention (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

Comparative performance of Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) scales in estimating the consequential relationships for self-congruence is relatively more inferior to the new scale of luxury brand personality. As shown in Tables 32-33 below, for the purchase intention outcome variable the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables (R-sq.) in the total as well as

direct effects model is higher for the new scale (with  $p = .000$  in all cases):  $R\text{-sq.} = .620$  in the direct effects model and  $R\text{-sq.} = .174$  in the total effect model for the new scale compared with  $R\text{-sq.} = .619$  (direct effect) and  $R\text{-sq.} = .067$  (total effect model) in Aaker's (1997) example and  $R\text{-sq.} = .620$  (direct effect) and  $R\text{-sq.} = .116$  (total effect model) in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) example. The figures for the total and total indirect effects are also comparatively higher in case of the new scale: 1.836 (total) and 1.659 (total indirect) for the new scale, 1.234 and 1.167 for Aaker's (1997) scale, and 1.485 and 1.324 for Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) scale respectively (Table 34). However, the direct effect of profile similarity is insignificant for all scales. Additionally, whilst being significant across all three measures, the indirect effects of profile similarity on purchase intention are comparatively stronger in the case of the new measure: 1.230 (brand attitude), .258 (emotional brand attachment), and .171 (brand personality appeal). This is in contrast with the competing measures: .877 (brand attitude), .154 (emotional brand attachment), .136 (brand personality appeal) in case of Aaker (1997), and .982 (brand attitude), .196 (emotional brand attachment), and .147 (brand personality appeal) in case of Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009).

Table 34. Purchase Intention Outcome: Total Effect Model (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.259	.067	2.758	38.515	1.000	538.000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		.614	.078	7.844	.000	.460	.768
Profile Similarity		1.234	.199	6.206	.000	.844	1.625
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.341	.116	2.612	70.592	1.000	538.000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		.534	.077	6.928	.000	.383	.685
Profile Similarity		1.485	.177	8.402	.000	1.138	1.832

Table 35. Purchase Intention Outcome: Direct Effect Model (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>									
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p			
.787	.619	1.133	216.957	4.000	535.000	.000			
				coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant				-.535	.315	-1.698	.090	-1.153	.084
Emotional Brand Attachment				.157	.045	3.477	.001	.069	.246
Brand Attitude				.674	.049	13.682	.000	.578	.771
Brand Personality Appeal				.159	.056	2.860	.004	.050	.269
Profile Similarity				.067	.137	.493	.622	-.201	.335
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>									
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p			
.787	.620	1.131	217.794	4.000	535.000	.000			
				coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant				-.474	.318	-1.489	.137	-1.099	.151
Emotional Brand Attachment				.157	.045	3.471	.001	.068	.246
Brand Attitude				.669	.049	13.588	.000	.572	.765
Brand Personality Appeal				.146	.057	2.581	.010	.035	.257
Profile Similarity				.160	.130	1.233	.218	-.095	.416

Table 36. Purchase Intention Outcome: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>						
Total effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
1.234	.199	6.206	.000	.844	1.625	
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
.067	.137	.493	.622	-.201	.335	
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention						
			Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL			1.167	.154	.857	1.471
Emotional Brand Attachment			.154	.058	.062	.302
Brand Attitude			.877	.139	.610	1.160
Brand Personality Appeal			.136	.046	.054	.235
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>						
Total effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
1.485	.177	8.402	.000	1.138	1.832	

Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention					
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.160	.130	1.233	.218	-.095	.416
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Intention					
		Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL		1.324	.150	1.016	1.636
Emotional Brand Attachment		.196	.070	.071	.353
Brand Attitude		.982	.136	.727	1.248
Brand Personality Appeal		.147	.058	.038	.264

Visual presentation of the main effects is shown in Figure 14a-c below.

Figure 14a. Main effects with Brand Attitude Mediator

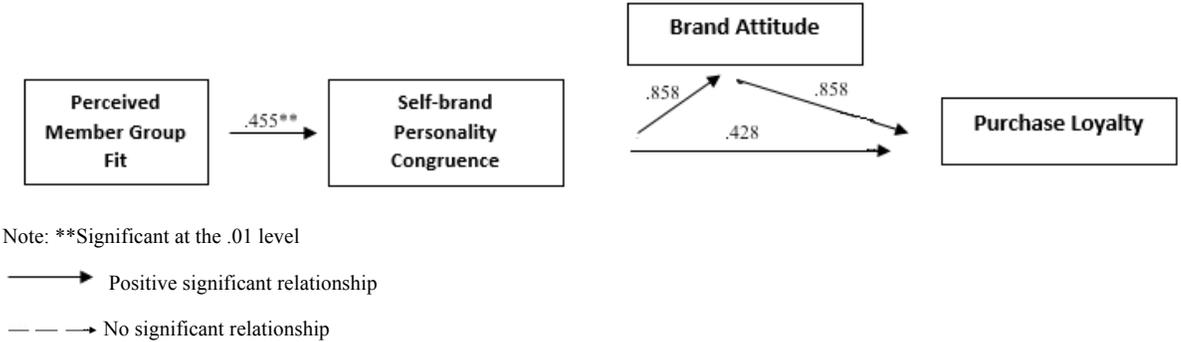


Figure 14b. Main effects with Emotional Brand Attachment Mediator

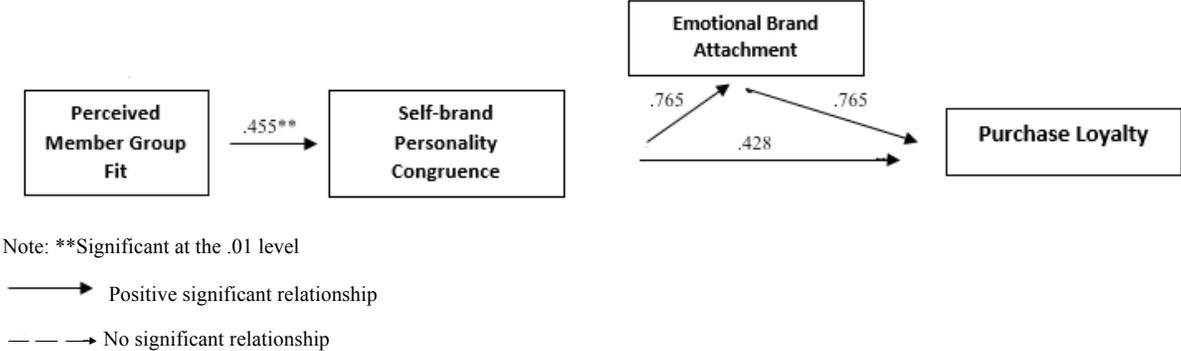
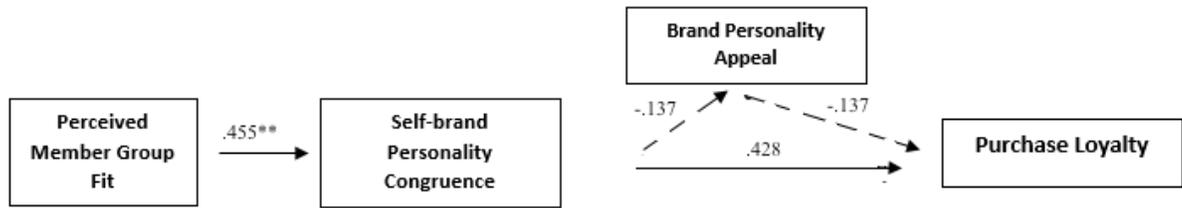


Figure 14c. Main effects with Brand Personality Appeal Mediator



Note: \*\*Significant at the .01 level

————→ Positive significant relationship

- - - - -> No significant relationship

### Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Congruence on Word-of-Mouth Communication (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

In a similar manner, the results indicate that the new scale of luxury brand personality is also more superior with respect to the word-of-mouth communication outcome measure. R-square equals .670 for the direct effects model and .144 for the total effect model for the new scale, whilst it is .669 and .051 respectively for Aaker’s (1997) measure, and .669 and .085 for Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) measure. Although the direct effect of profile similarity on word-of-mouth communication remains insignificant for all measures, the new scale performs better on the total and total indirect effects: 1.793 and 1.626 for the new scale, 1.157 and 1.034 for Aaker’s (1997) scale, and 1.365 and 1.249 for Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) scale (Table 37). Moreover, the indirect effects of profile similarity on word-of-mouth communication are significant and numerically higher for emotional brand attachment (1.087) and brand attitude (.664) for the new scale as opposed to .640 and .473 for Aaker’s (1997) and .812 and .534 for Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) scale. However, the indirect effect via brand personality appeal is negative and insignificant across all three measures.

Table 37. Word-of-Mouth Communication Outcome: Total Effect Model (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.226	.051	3.219	29.014	1.000	538.0000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		-.619	.085	-7.316	.000	-.785	-.453
Profile Similarity		1.157	.215	5.386	.000	.735	1.580
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.292	.085	3.102	50.245	1.000	538.000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		-.689	.084	-8.204	.000	-.854	-.524
Profile Similarity		1.365	.193	7.088	.000	.987	1.743

Table 38. Word-of-Mouth Communication Outcome: Direct Effect Model (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>								
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p		
.818	.669	1.128	270.579	4.000	535.000	.000		
			coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant			-.205	.314	-.652	.515	-.822	.412
Emotional Brand Attachment			.652	.045	14.433	.000	.563	.741
Brand Attitude			.364	.049	7.396	.000	.267	.460
Brand Personality Appeal			-.093	.056	-1.674	.095	-.202	.016
Profile Similarity			.124	.136	.909	.364	-.144	.391
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>								
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p		
.818	.669	1.129	270.556	4.000	535.000	.000		
			coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant			-.187	.318	-.587	.558	-.811	.438
Emotional Brand Attachment			.650	.045	14.412	.000	.562	.739
Brand Attitude			.364	.049	7.403	.000	.267	.461
Brand Personality Appeal			-.097	.057	-1.707	.088	-.208	.015
Profile Similarity			.116	.130	.892	.373	-.139	.371

Table 39. Word-of-Mouth Communication Outcome: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>						
Total effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
1.157	.215	5.386	.000	.735	1.580	
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
.124	.136	.909	.364	-.144	.391	
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication						
			Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL			1.034	.181	.658	1.384
Emotional Brand Attachment			.640	.133	.380	.908
Brand Attitude			.473	.091	.321	.680
Brand Personality Appeal			-.079	.044	-.167	.000
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>						
Total effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
1.365	.193	7.088	.000	.987	1.743	
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
.116	.1299	.892	.373	-.139	.371	
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Word-of-Mouth Communication						
			Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL			1.249	.169	.900	1.565
Emotional Brand Attachment			.812	.126	.583	1.082
Brand Attitude			.534	.097	.361	.724
Brand Personality Appeal			-.097	.054	-.201	.004

**Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Congruence on Purchase Loyalty (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))**

With regards to the third outcome variable purchase loyalty, the results provide a similar picture as before, with the exception of the presence of the significant direct effect in the new scale of luxury brand personality (effect = .428 at  $p = .007$ ) but no such effect in the competing measures. Thus, R-squares for the direct effects as well as total effect models (with  $p = .000$  in all cases) are .581 and .164 in the case of the new scale and are weaker at

.577 and .057 in Aaker's (1997) example and .577 and .091 in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) example (Tables 38-39). Additionally, the total and total indirect effects are higher for the new measure at 1.914 and 1.486 respectively, while Aaker's (1997) are less strong at 1.219 and 1.018 and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) - at 1.411 and 1.197 (Table 40). Lastly, the indirect effects of profile similarity on purchase loyalty are significant via emotional brand attachment and brand attitude across all measures, but are, again, insignificant for all via brand personality appeal. The new scale shows stronger indirect effects at .765 and .858 respectively, compared with Aaker's (1997) .456 and .626, and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) .577 and .704.

Table 40. Purchase Loyalty Outcome: Total Effect Model (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.238	.057	3.207	32.286	1.000	538.000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		-.443	.084	-5.249	.000	-.609	-.277
Profile Similarity		1.219	.215	5.682	.000	.797	1.640
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>							
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p	
.302	.091	3.090	53.913	1.000	538.000	.000	
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		-.512	.084	-6.111	.000	-.677	-.347
Profile Similarity		1.412	.192	7.343	.000	1.034	1.788

Table 41. Purchase Loyalty Outcome: Direct Effect Model (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>								
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p		
.759	.577	1.447	182.218	4.000	535.000	.000		
		coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant		-.180	.356	-.506	.613	-.879	.519	
Emotional Brand Attachment		.465	.051	9.092	.000	.365	.566	
Brand Attitude		.481	.056	8.635	.000	.372	.590	
Brand Personality Appeal		-.076	.063	-1.201	.230	-.199	.048	
Profile Similarity		.201	.154	1.304	.193	-.102	.504	

<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>								
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p		
.760	.577	1.446	182.466	4.000	535.000	.000		
			coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant			-.137	.360	-.380	.704	-.844	.570
Emotional Brand Attachment			.462	.051	9.052	.000	.362	.563
Brand Attitude			.480	.056	8.622	.000	.370	.589
Brand Personality Appeal			-.084	.064	-1.317	.189	-.210	.041
Profile Similarity			.214	.147	1.457	.146	-.075	.503

Table 42. Purchase Loyalty Outcome: Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects (Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009))

<i>Aaker (1997)</i>						
Total effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
1.219	.215	5.682	.000	.797	1.640	
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
.201	.154	1.304	.193	-.102	.504	
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
			Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL			1.018	.169	.704	1.361
Emotional Brand Attachment			.456	.100	.277	.674
Brand Attitude			.626	.117	.419	.871
Brand Personality Appeal			-.064	.049	-.154	.032
<i>Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009)</i>						
Total effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
1.411	.192	7.343	.000	1.034	1.789	
Direct effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
.214	.147	1.457	.146	-.075	.503	
Indirect effect of Profile Similarity on Purchase Loyalty						
			Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL			1.197	.161	.901	1.521
Emotional Brand Attachment			.577	.102	.395	.803
Brand Attitude			.704	.117	.490	.956
Brand Personality Appeal			-.085	.064	-.216	.040

Consequently, nomological validity has been mostly established for the new scale in the context of the specified relationships. Using self-congruence theory to examine one of the sources of luxury brand personality and some of its effects on a range of consumer outcomes through the concept of self-congruence, it has been determined that perceived member group fit influences self-congruence (supporting hypothesis 1), measured as profile similarity between the brand personality and self-personality assessment. It also exerts a significant direct effect on purchase loyalty (but not purchase intention or word-of-mouth communication, hence rejecting hypotheses 2a and 2b) and produces significant indirect effects on all outcomes measures via emotional brand attachment and brand attitude (supporting hypotheses 3a and 3b). Additionally, self-congruence positively and significantly impacts purchase intention via brand personality appeal (but not other outcomes, thus partially supporting hypothesis 3c). Hence, with the exception of hypothesised direct effects of profile similarity on purchase intention and word-of-mouth communication and an indirect effect via brand personality appeal in the case of word-of-mouth communication and purchase loyalty outcomes, the predicted relationships held for the new measure of luxury brand personality. It has also been shown that the new measure performs better compared to two competing measures of brand personality, Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009), following the results pointing towards lower figures for the investigated effects and absence of support of hypothesis 2c for those measures.

To sum up, a series of experimental manipulations using both samples show that the identified indicators of the latent construct are accurate representations of the focal construct. In addition, dimensions from the new measure are distinguishable with regards to other brand personality dimensions from Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) prominent frameworks. Lastly, the scale has been applied to demonstrate that luxury brands with personalities congruent with that of a luxury consumer are: a) positively influenced by member group fit; b) produce a positive direct impact on purchase loyalty (but not any other measures); c) has a positive indirect effect on consumer responses (purchase loyalty, purchase intention, and WOM communication) via emotional brand attachment and brand attitude; d) exerts a positive indirect effect on purchase intention via

brand personality appeal. Relative inferiority of competing brand personality frameworks in estimating the nomological network of the focal construct is also demonstrated.

#### 4.5 Development of Scale Norms (Step 10)

This section reflects the analysis performed to develop norms that would help in the interpretation of scores on the new scale.

First, one way ANOVA was performed to see whether six identified factor mean scores differed based on the luxury levels. According to Table 41 below, there is a statistically significant difference in the factor mean in Factor 4 (Elegance) and Factor 5 (Timidity) given the significance values of .022 and .000 respectively, across different luxury levels.

		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
REGR factor score 1 (Playfulness)	Between Groups	3	1.613	1.96	0.119
	Within Groups	685	.823		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 2 for analysis 1 (Stability)	Between Groups	3	1.216	1.455	0.226
	Within Groups	685	.835		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 3 for analysis 1 (Stuck-upness)	Between Groups	3	1.270	1.446	0.228
	Within Groups	685	.878		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 4 for analysis 1 (Elegance)	Between Groups	3	2.555	3.234	0.022
	Within Groups	685	.790		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 5 for analysis 1	Between Groups	3	5.942	6.917	0

(Timidity)	Within Groups	685	.859		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 6 for analysis 1	Between Groups	3	.984	1.323	0.266
(Femininity)	Within Groups	685	.744		
	Total	688			

In order to get a more detailed understanding of which luxury levels were statistically significantly different from each other, the Bonferroni post hoc test was performed considering its flexibility and simplicity. As can be seen from Table 42, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean level of Factor 4 (Elegance) between Entry and Elite ( $p = .044$ ) levels. In addition, Factor 5 (Timidity) mean reveals statistically significant differences between Elite and all other luxury levels: Elite and Entry ( $p = .001$ ), Elite and Medium ( $p = .001$ ), and Elite and Top Level ( $p = .003$ ). The remaining four factors, i.e. Factor 1 (Playfulness), Factor 2 (Stability), Factor 3 (Stuck-upness) and Factor 6 (Femininity), show no significant differences across 4 luxury levels.

Table 44  
*Multiple Comparisons: Luxury Brand Personality Dimensions by Product Category*

Bonferroni					
Dependent Variable	Luxury Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	
REGR factor score 4 for analysis 1 (Elegance)	<b>Entry level</b>	Medium level	.008	.100	1.000
		Top level	-.079	.094	1.000
	<b>Elite level</b>	Entry level	-.252*	.094	<b>.044</b>
		Top level	-.008	.100	1.000
	Medium level	Top level	-.088	.099	1.000
		Elite level	-.261	.099	.051
	Top level	Entry level	.079	.094	1.000
		Medium level	.088	.099	1.000
		Elite level	-.173	.093	.377

REGR factor score 5 for analysis 1 (Timidity)	<b>Elite level</b>	<b>Entry level</b>	.252*	.094	<b>.044</b>	
		Medium level	.261	.099	.051	
			Top level	.173	.093	.377
			Medium level	-.024	.104	1.000
		<b>Entry level</b>	Top level	.023	.098	1.000
	<b>Elite level</b>		Entry level	.364*	.098	<b>.001</b>
			Top level	.024	.104	1.000
	<b>Medium level</b>		Entry level	.047	.103	1.000
			Top level	.047	.103	1.000
	<b>Top level</b>	<b>Elite level</b>	Entry level	.388*	.103	<b>.001</b>
			Top level	-.023	.098	1.000
			Medium level	-.047	.103	1.000
			<b>Elite level</b>	.341*	.097	<b>.003</b>
	<b>Elite level</b>		<b>Entry level</b>	-.364*	.098	<b>.001</b>
			<b>Medium level</b>	-.388*	.103	<b>.001</b>
			<b>Top level</b>	-.341*	.097	<b>.003</b>

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

With the aim to gain insight into which brand personality trait means from the 6 factors produced statistically significant differences across various luxury levels, one way ANOVA of 20 luxury brand personality traits by luxury level was performed (Table 43). 2 trait means from Factor 6 (Femininity) produced significant differences across the luxury levels: Feminine ( $p = .001$ ) and Womanly ( $p = .001$ ). None of the trait means from other factors showed significant differences across different luxury levels at the .001 or .05 significance levels.

However, when considered at the .1 significance level, trait Self-centered ( $p = .063$ ) from Factor 3 (Stuck-upness) produced statistically significant differences across luxury levels. Also, 2 additional trait means from Factor 4 (Elegance) showed statistically significant differences between luxury levels: Elegant ( $p = .091$ ) and Sophisticated ( $p = .059$ ). Lastly, in Factor 5 trait Shy ( $p = .072$ ) mean indicated statistically significant differences across luxury levels at the .1 significance level. All other trait means produced

statistically insignificant differences and were, therefore, stable across different luxury levels.

Table 45  
*ANOVA: Luxury Brand Personality Traits by Product Category*

		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Playful	Between Groups	3	4.767	1.536	0.204
	Within Groups	685	3.104		
	Total	688			
Spontaneous	Between Groups	3	4.552	1.461	0.224
	Within Groups	685	3.115		
	Total	688			
Energetic	Between Groups	3	3.128	1.205	0.307
	Within Groups	685	2.595		
	Total	688			
Adventurous	Between Groups	3	4.563	1.623	0.183
	Within Groups	685	2.811		
	Total	688			
Stable	Between Groups	3	2.877	1.268	0.284
	Within Groups	685	2.268		
	Total	688			
Trustworthy	Between Groups	3	1.802	0.89	0.446
	Within Groups	685	2.024		
	Total	688			
Reliable	Between Groups	3	2.705	1.385	0.246
	Within Groups	685	1.952		
	Total	688			
Dependable	Between Groups	3	3.778	1.986	0.115
	Within Groups	685	1.903		
	Total	688			
Stuck-up	Between Groups	3	4.817	1.238	0.295
	Within Groups				

	Within Groups	685	3.892		
	Total	688			
Self-centered	Between Groups	3	8.661	2.44	<b>0.063</b>
	Within Groups	685	3.549		
	Total	688			
Cocky	Between Groups	3	1.094	0.291	0.832
	Within Groups	685	3.761		
	Total	688			
Unaccessible	Between Groups	3	2.792	0.812	0.488
	Within Groups	685	3.441		
	Total	688			
Elegant	Between Groups	3	3.468	2.165	<b>0.091</b>
	Within Groups	685	1.602		
	Total	688			
Sophisticated	Between Groups	3	3.665	2.493	<b>0.059</b>
	Within Groups	685	1.470		
	Total	688			
Glamorous	Between Groups	3	2.248	1.246	0.292
	Within Groups	685	1.804		
	Total	688			
Timid	Between Groups	3	1.611	0.777	0.507
	Within Groups	685	2.072		
	Total	688			
Shy	Between Groups	3	4.906	2.344	<b>0.072</b>
	Within Groups	685	2.093		
	Total	688			
Unassertive	Between Groups	3	.905	0.396	0.756
	Within Groups	685	2.286		
	Total	688			
Feminine	Between Groups	3	16.890	5.468	<b>0.001</b>

	Within Groups	685	3.089		
	Total	688			
Womanly	Between Groups	3	18.256	5.895	<b>0.001</b>
	Within Groups	685	3.097		
	Total	688			

Similarly, one-way ANOVA was run in order to establish whether there were statistically significant differences in the six factor mean levels across different product/service categories (Table 44). According to the results, there appear to exist statistically significant differences in each factor mean scores between different categories with the exception of Factor 2 (Stability): Factor 1 (Playfulness) ( $p = .000$ ), Factor 3 (Stuck-upness) ( $p = .000$ ), Factor 4 (Elegance) ( $p = .000$ ), Factor 5 (Timidity) ( $p = .000$ ), and Factor 6 (Femininity) ( $p = .025$ ).

		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
REGR factor score 1 (Playfulness)	Between Groups	7	3.384	4.23	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	.800		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 2 for analysis 1 (Stability)	Between Groups	7	1.409	1.696	0.107
	Within Groups	681	.831		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 3 for analysis 1 (Stuck-upness)	Between Groups	7	7.351	9.037	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	.813		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 4 for analysis 1 (Elegance)	Between Groups	7	3.248	4.204	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	.773		
	Total	688			

REGR factor score 5 for analysis 1	Between Groups	7	16.541	22.968	<b>0</b>
(Timidity)	Within Groups	681	.720		
	Total	688			
REGR factor score 6 for analysis 1	Between Groups	7	1.695	2.306	<b>0.025</b>
(Femininity)	Within Groups	681	.735		
	Total	688			

To alienate factor means that produced statistically significant differences between different product categories, the post hoc analysis using the Bonferroni procedure was performed. As shown in Table 45, Factor 1 (Playfulness) mean score reflects a statistically significant difference between Watch and Jewellery and Apparel ( $p = .002$ ) as well as Watch and Jewellery and Food and Wine ( $p = .000$ ) product/service categories. In addition, there are statistically significant differences between Food and Wine product category and others, including Cosmetics ( $p = .032$ ), Furniture ( $p = .044$ ), and Cars ( $p = .052$ ). In Factor 3 (Stuck-upness) the mean shows significant differences between Apparel and such product categories as: Accessories ( $p = .043$ ), Cosmetics ( $p = .005$ ), and Food and Wine ( $p = .009$ ). Factor 3 (Stuck-upness) mean score also demonstrates statistically significant differences between Watch and Jewellery and Food and Wine ( $p = .065$ ) categories. Additionally, statistically significant differences can be observed for Cosmetics product category Apparel ( $p = .005$ ) and Watch and Jewellery ( $p = .052$ ) respectively. Lastly, there are statistically significant differences between Cars and the following product categories: Accessories ( $p = .000$ ), Apparel ( $p = .000$ ), Watch and Jewellery ( $p = .066$ ), Cosmetics ( $p = .000$ ), Furniture ( $p = .000$ ), and Food and Wine ( $p = .000$ ). Factor 4 (Elegance) mean suggests statistically significant differences across Watch and Jewellery and these categories: Accessories ( $p = .000$ ), Apparel ( $p = .018$ ), Cosmetics ( $p = .028$ ), and Food and Wine ( $p = .002$ ). Factor 5 (Timidity) mean score indicates the existence of statistically significant differences between Cosmetics and Accessories ( $p = .006$ ), Watch and Jewellery ( $p = .049$ ), Furniture ( $p = .002$ ), Food and Wine ( $p = .000$ ), Hotels and Exclusive Vacations ( $p = .002$ ), and Cars ( $p = .000$ ) respectively. Hotels and Exclusive Vacations category is statistically significantly different from Apparel ( $p = .064$ ) and Cars ( $p = .000$ ). Furthermore, there are similar

differences between Food and Wine and Apparel ( $p = .000$ ), Watch and Jewellery ( $p = .095$ ), and Cars ( $p = .003$ ). Factor 6 (Femininity) mean shows the presence of statistically significant differences between Furniture and Cars ( $p = .061$ ).

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
REGR factor score 1 (Playfulness)	Watch and Jewellery	Accessories	.236	.125	1.000
		Apparel	.493*	.125	<b>.002</b>
		Cosmetics	.184	.125	1.000
		Furniture	.157	.14	1.000
		Food and Wine	.660*	.147	<b>.000</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	.231	.16	1.000
		Cars	.204	.125	1.000
	Food and Wine	Accessories	-.424	.146	.105
		Apparel	-.167	.146	1.000
		Watch and Jewellery	-.660*	.147	<b>.000</b>
		Cosmetics	-.476*	.146	<b>.032</b>
		Furniture	-.504*	.159	<b>.044</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	-.43	.177	.434
		Cars	-.456	.146	<b>.052</b>
REGR factor score 3 for analysis 1 (Stuck-upness)	Apparel	Accessories	.398*	.125	<b>.043</b>
		Watch and Jewellery	.079	.126	1.000
		Cosmetics	.473*	.125	<b>.005</b>
		Furniture	.328	.14	.548
		Food and Wine	.531*	.147	<b>.009</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	.14	.161	1.000
		Cars			

		Cars	-.306	.125	.414
		Accessories	.319	.126	.326
	Watch and Jewellery	Apparel	-.079	.126	1.000
		Cosmetics	.394	.126	<b>.052</b>
		Furniture	.249	.141	1.000
		Food and Wine	.452	.148	<b>.065</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	.061	.162	1.000
		Cars	-.386	.126	<b>.066</b>
		Accessories	-.075	.125	1.000
	Cosmetics	Apparel	-.473*	.125	<b>.005</b>
		Watch and Jewellery	-.394	.126	<b>.052</b>
		Furniture	-.145	.14	1.000
		Food and Wine	.058	.147	1.000
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	-.333	.161	1.000
		Cars	-.779*	.125	<b>.000</b>
		Accessories	.704*	.125	<b>.000</b>
	Cars	Apparel	.306	.125	.414
		Watch and Jewellery	.386	.126	<b>.066</b>
		Cosmetics	.779*	.125	<b>.000</b>
		Furniture	.634*	.14	<b>.000</b>
		Food and Wine	.838*	.147	<b>.000</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	.446	.161	.162
REGR factor score 4	Watch and Jewellery	Accessories	.539*	.123	<b>.000</b>
for analysis 1		Apparel	.422*	.123	<b>.018</b>
(Elegance)		Cosmetics	.406*	.123	<b>.028</b>
		Furniture	.196	.137	1.000
		Food and Wine	.569*	.144	<b>.002</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	.206	.158	1.000
		Cars	.267	.123	.847
		Accessories	.439*	.118	<b>.006</b>

REGR factor score 5 for analysis 1	Cosmetics	Apparel	.146	.118	1.000
(Timidity)		Watch and Jewellery	.372*	.119	<b>.049</b>
		Furniture	.521*	.132	<b>.002</b>
		Food and Wine	.781*	.138	<b>.000</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	.610*	.151	<b>.002</b>
		Cars	1.322*	.118	<b>.000</b>
		Accessories	-.342	.138	.380
	Food and Wine	Apparel	-.635*	.138	<b>.000</b>
		Watch and Jewellery	-.409	.139	<b>.095</b>
		Cosmetics	-.781*	.138	<b>.000</b>
		Furniture	-.261	.15	1.000
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	-.171	.168	1.000
		Cars	.540*	.139	<b>.003</b>
		Accessories	-.171	.151	1.000
	Hotels and exclusive vacations	Apparel	-.464	.151	<b>.064</b>
		Watch and Jewellery	-.238	.152	1.000
		Cosmetics	-.610*	.151	<b>.002</b>
		Furniture	-.089	.163	1.000
		Food and Wine	.171	.168	1.000
		Cars	.711*	.152	<b>.000</b>
		Accessories	-.883*	.118	<b>.000</b>
	Cars	Apparel	-1.175*	.118	<b>.000</b>
		Watch and Jewellery	-.949*	.119	<b>.000</b>
		Cosmetics	-1.322*	.118	<b>.000</b>
		Furniture	-.801*	.132	<b>.000</b>
		Food and Wine	-.540*	.139	<b>.003</b>
		Hotels and exclusive vacations	-.711*	.152	<b>.000</b>
REGR factor score 6 for analysis 1		Accessories	.108	.133	1.000
(Femininity)	Furniture	Apparel	.223	.133	1.000

Watch and Jewellery	.305	.134	.641
Cosmetics	.1	.133	1.000
Food and Wine	.165	.152	1.000
Hotels and exclusive vacations	.016	.164	1.000
Cars	.41	.133	<b>.061</b>

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Given that each factor means demonstrated statistically significant differences across various product categories, it was also useful to identify specifically which traits from each of the 6 factors produced significant differences. One way ANOVA was run on 20 luxury brand personality traits by product category. With the exception of 3 traits from Factor 1 (Playfulness): Spontaneous, Energetic, and Adventurous, as well as trait Timid from Factor 5 (Timidity) that proved stable across different product categories, all other traits showed significant differences across two product/service categories mentioned above at below .1 significance level (Table 46).

		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Playful	Between Groups	7	6.796	2.211	<b>0.032</b>
	Within Groups	681	3.074		
	Total	688			
Spontaneous	Between Groups	7	2.950	0.945	0.471
	Within Groups	681	3.123		
	Total	688			
Energetic	Between Groups	7	2.307	0.887	0.516
	Within Groups	681	2.600		
	Total	688			
Adventurous	Between Groups	7	3.412	1.213	0.293
	Within Groups	681	2.813		
	Total	688			

Stable	Between Groups	7	6.555	2.943	<b>0.005</b>
	Within Groups	681	2.227		
	Total	688			
Trustworthy	Between Groups	7	8.335	4.257	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	1.958		
	Total	688			
Reliable	Between Groups	7	5.171	2.69	<b>0.009</b>
	Within Groups	681	1.923		
	Total	688			
Dependable	Between Groups	7	4.734	2.515	<b>0.015</b>
	Within Groups	681	1.882		
	Total	688			
Stuck-up	Between Groups	7	23.922	6.482	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	3.690		
	Total	688			
Self-centered	Between Groups	7	18.510	5.416	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	3.418		
	Total	688			
Cocky	Between Groups	7	23.992	6.775	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	3.541		
	Total	688			
Unaccessible	Between Groups	7	17.597	5.345	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	3.292		
	Total	688			
Elegant	Between Groups	7	8.278	5.37	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	1.542		
	Total	688			
Sophisticated	Between Groups	7	5.366	3.727	<b>0.001</b>
	Within Groups	681	1.440		
	Total	688			

Glamorous	Between Groups	7	4.054	2.274	<b>0.027</b>
	Within Groups	681	1.783		
	Total	688			
Timid	Between Groups	7	1.440	0.693	0.678
	Within Groups	681	2.077		
	Total	688			
Shy	Between Groups	7	5.056	2.437	<b>0.018</b>
	Within Groups	681	2.075		
	Total	688			
Unassertive	Between Groups	7	6.795	3.042	<b>0.004</b>
	Within Groups	681	2.234		
	Total	688			
Feminine	Between Groups	7	51.658	19.49	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	2.650		
	Total	688			
Womanly	Between Groups	7	51.926	19.508	<b>0</b>
	Within Groups	681	2.662		
	Total	688			

In general, the analysis performed in this section has allowed establishing that personalities of luxury brands vary by levels of luxuriousness and product category. This variability was confirmed at the level of individual luxury brand personality dimensions as well as the unique traits underlying each of the six dimensions.

#### 4.6 Summary

Based on the lexical approach to personality, this chapter set out to identify the structure of brand personality of luxury brands. Online text mining and in-depth interviews resulted in the generation of an extensive pool of brand personality traits (166 non-redundant traits) that are relevant and applicable for luxury brands only. To identify the underlying scale

dimensions, exploratory factor analysis was performed using the developmental sample of luxury consumers. This led to the identification of a six-factor structure and estimation of a CFA model that was further purified and its indicators examined for validity and reliability. In addition, the new scale was subject to rigorous validity assessment that involved experimental manipulations of the construct, establishing discriminant validity of the new dimensions of luxury brand personality with regards to other brand personality dimensions and examining the nomological network of the new measure with the application of self-congruence theory. Efforts were made to lay some ground for the development of norms for the new measure, and the results suggest that personalities of luxury brands differ by levels of luxuriousness and product category.

## **CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

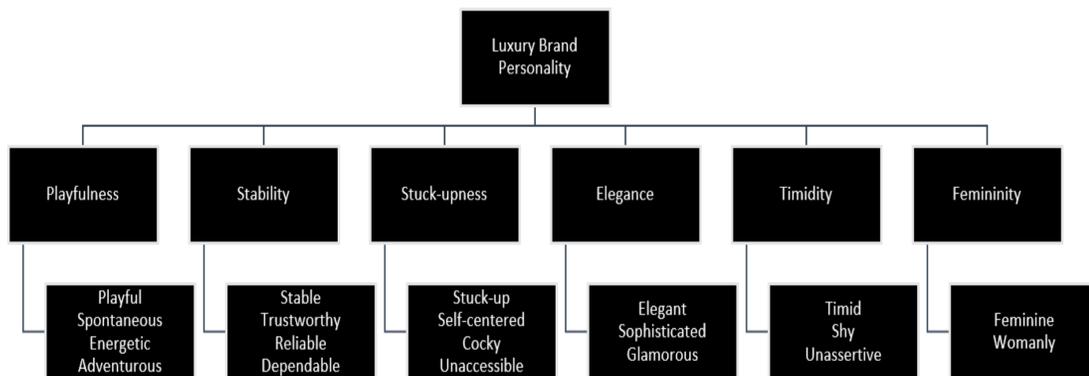
### **5.1 Summary of the Research**

The key objective of this thesis was to develop a new more representative typology specifically for luxury brand personalities. A rigorous and comprehensive methodology was followed using the recommendations from MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff (2011) in order to address the conceptual and methodological limitations of previous works. The lexical approach to personality was chosen for the development of a salient and relevant typology exclusively grounded in the natural language of consumers. A combination of multiple sources and methods in the main stage of the item generation process has led to the discovery of a large pool of personality characteristics relevant and applicable for luxury brands that were subsequently screened against Norman's (1967) comprehensive list of personality traits so as to ensure they were personality traits and not any other descriptives. This stage resulted in the identification of 166 unique personality traits. Further analysis of semantic similarity and multidimensional scaling analysis of these traits allowed carrying out preliminary rationalisation of the truly multidimensional nature of the construct. At this point, 23 meaningful clusters of luxury brand personality traits were discerned and 18 semantically unrelated traits eliminated.

In order to uncover the most salient dimensions, principal axis factoring analysis with Varimax & Kaiser normalisation rotation was performed based on the assessment of 32 luxury brands by a total of 389 U.S. respondents. The analysis resulted in six salient personality dimensions: Playfulness, Stability, Stuck-upness, Elegance, Timidity, and Femininity. The CFA model analysis allowed further re-examination of the resultant structure of luxury brand personality dimensions and elimination of problematic indicators that improved the overall validity and reliability of the scale as well as that of the individual indicators comprising the new 20-item measure (Figure 12). The new model was deemed the most parsimonious following the comparisons of fit of competing measurement models. With the aim to confirm the identified structure, the properties of the new scale were re-assessed using a new sample of 540 U.S. respondents and 23 luxury brands chosen with varied brand personality profiles established based on the results of the first survey.

Similarly, high levels of reliability of the identified six dimensions were confirmed through Cronbach’s alphas and test-retest reliability assessment of the construct. In addition, scale validity was established by means of experimental manipulations, tests of discriminant validity of the new scale in comparison with Aaker’s (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf’s (2009) accepted brand personality measures, and tests of nomological validity. In general, the results of these analyses provide strong evidence for the validity, reliability, and granularity of the new measure of luxury brand personality.

Figure 15. The New Scale of Luxury Brand Personality



As the main goal of the thesis was to develop a new measurement tool of luxury brand personality using lexical approach (Cattell, 1943; Goldberg, 1982; John, Angleitner, and Ostendorf, 1988), meaningful and valid brand personality traits were elicited exclusively from the actual consumer portrayals of luxury brands, thus excluding descriptions used by people who are not true consumers of such products. Although non-users of luxury brands are often exposed to luxury brands via marketing efforts as well as other sources (e.g. word-of-mouth), it is quite likely that personality descriptors retained in their language would be based on stereotypical views of what a luxury brand should represent and might not be helpful in determining the true essence of luxury brand personalities. For instance, non-users of luxury may mostly possess status-related descriptors of luxury brands in their language as they view them as being “out of reach” for the more general population and may not spontaneously think to use characteristics that denote other important facets of luxury brand personality. Therefore, it stands reasonable to speculate that only by using the

luxury brand personality descriptors of actual buyers of luxury products would it have been possible to determine the most salient and relevant traits of these brands.

Increasingly, consumers are engaging in symbolic consumption of products. Brand personality is one construct that provides a systematic approach to the generation of symbolic benefits for consumers (Heine, 2010). Following the identification of six salient dimensions of luxury brand personalities, certain parallels can be drawn in relation to motivations and consumption patterns of luxury consumers. For instance, consumption of luxury brands based on the perceptions of Stuck-upness and traits stuck-up, self-centered, cocky, and unaccessible that it entails are most likely to be linked to extrinsic motives for consuming luxuries and prominently featured in the literature of luxury brands as discussed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. Similarly, consumers who buy luxuries that are perceived as high on Timidity (traits timid, shy, and unassertive) may also be engaging in consumption of inconspicuous product lines for extrinsic reasons so as to quietly signal their wealth to relevant others. On the other hand, luxury brands that are perceived to be playful, stable, elegant, or feminine may be purchased for both intrinsic – a phenomenon that has been given increased amount of attention in recent studies (Tsai, 2005; Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels, 2007; 2009; Wilcox, Kim, and Sen, 2009; Truong and McColl, 2011) - and extrinsic motives and consumed in both private and public settings.

### **5.1.2 Discussion of Comparisons with Existing Scales**

Since the publication of Aaker's (1997) seminal scale development work on brand personality, there has been a growing interest towards the construct and a number of other researchers have made attempts to advance knowledge in the field through replication studies (e.g. Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera, 2001; Sung and Tinkham, 2005), preliminary works (e.g. Kuenzel and Phairor, 2009; Heine, 2009; Heere, 2010) as well as comprehensive development of new brand personality scales based on different conceptual and methodological principals and purposed for a variety of cultural settings (e.g. Ambroise, Ferrandi, and Merunka, 2005); Milas and Mlacic, 2007; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009; Ambroise and Valette-Florence (2010).

Three existing brand personality frameworks were used for meaningful comparisons with the emerging structure of luxury brand personality in the previous chapter. Although holistic in nature, Aaker's (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) studies represent two widely accepted brand personality scales in the branding domain that have been replicated cross-culturally and selected here on the basis of their conceptual and methodological particularities. In addition, Heine's (2010) preliminary scale of luxury brand personality grounded in Aaker's (1997) conceptualisation was included for similitude checks. Other brand personality frameworks add little to the personality of luxury brands (Sweeney and Brandon, 2006; Milas and Mlacic, 2007) and are semantically and culturally sensitive to different contexts (e.g. Ambroise and Valette-Florence, 2010).

As discussed earlier, one aspect that separates Aaker's (1997) structure of brand personality dimensions from some of the more recent studies is differences in construct conceptualisation (Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009)). Her definition of brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (p.347) has been criticised for being too broad and loose (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003), which has led to the growing realisation for the need to adopt a stricter definition of brand personality (Sweeney and Brandon, 2006; Milas and Mlacic, 2007; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009; Ambroise and Valette-Florence, 2010). Thus, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) who identified a Big Five-like structure of brand personality blamed the wideness of Aaker's (1997) definition for the lack of full compatibility of her scale with that of human personality.

Lexical approach to personality suggests that the most important individual differences in human activities eventually become encrypted into the natural language (Goldberg, 1993). Its relevance to the area of branding was partially acknowledged by Aaker (1997) as she elicited a range of familiar and meaningful personality traits using free-association tasks in the item generation process, and was subsequently supported by other researchers who adopted her core arguments. However, additional supplementation of the generated pool of brand personality characteristics with numerous attributes obtained directly from personality scales that were used to develop and purify variations of the Big Five

personality framework and other personality scales (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009) shows how such research predominantly transposes human personality theories to branding and employs personality scales initially developed in the psychology domain in “as is” manner (Ambroise and Valette-Florence, 2010).

Unlike other scale development studies on the brand personality construct, the approach adopted in this work reflects complete reliance on the lexical approach to personality, where exclusively consumer perceptions of luxury brands’ personalities were used to develop a valid and appropriate personality scale based on multiple sources and methods in a purely qualitative item generation phase. In addition, pursuance of a micro approach in the development of a scale of brand personality that is very specific to the context of luxury brands in hope of better understanding and grasping the essence of luxury brand personality implies the feasibility of clear differences in the structure of the new measure in comparison with existing macro frameworks of Aaker (1997) and Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) developed based on a wide array of brands.

To reinstate the findings from the previous chapter, when matching the new measure against Aaker’s (1997), it became apparent that 3 dimensions from the newly developed scale of luxury brand personality reflect the semantic content of 4 dimensions from Aaker’s (1997) work with relative clarity. Playfulness dimension is comparable with Aaker’s (1997) Excitement dimension via traits daring and spirited from that facet. Stability dimension is relatable to Aaker’s (1997) Sincerity and Competence dimensions with traits such as honest, sincere, real, reliable, and secure in her study. The new Elegance dimension can be linked to some characteristics from Aaker’s (1997) Sophistication dimension (e.g. upper class, glamorous, and good-looking). However, whilst these dimensions tap relatively well into the dimensions from the new scale, none of them fully capture the entire semantic content of these facets. In addition, Stuck-upness dimension only remotely corresponds to Aaker’s Sincerity dimension, which contains trait friendly that can be regarded as partially antipodal to trait unaccessible from the new scale. The new dimension Timidity is distantly relatable to Aaker’s (1997) Competence dimension via trait confident (though in a reverse manner) in her work, whilst Femininity dimension is somewhat comparable with Aaker’s

Sophistication and Ruggedness facets as those contain certain gender-relevant characteristics. While the latter three dimensions have some matching characteristics that are part of the more general facts, they do not truly encapsulate the notions of timidity, stuck-upness and femininity. Given the obvious degree of disparateness of the two scales it becomes apparent that Aaker's (1997) holistic measure is too broad to precisely capture the particularities of luxury brands' personalities.

Similar comparisons can be made for the structure of the new scale and the generic scale of Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009), where 3 dimensions from the new framework can be matched with 4 dimensions from Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) work with an adequate degree of clarity. Thus, dimension Playfulness from the new scale is relatable to Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) Activity dimension as it contains traits active, dynamic, and innovative. Dimension Stability is comparable with Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) Responsibility dimension through traits stable and responsible in their work. The new dimension Elegance can be matched with the dimension Simplicity from Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) work given the antipodal traits ordinary and simple that it encompasses. In a more distant manner, Timidity dimension from the new luxury brand personality framework corresponds to antipodal traits aggressive and bold in Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) Aggressiveness dimension in the context of semantic meanings of "assertiveness". At best, Femininity dimension from the new scale shows remote similarity to the Aggressiveness dimension from Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) framework with the trait bold that it encapsulates. At the same time, Stuck-upness dimension from the new scale does not match any dimensions from Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) work. Overall, similar to Aaker's (1997) universally accepted the scale of brand personality, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) scale does not truly encompass the ideas of timidity, stuck-upness and femininity that the new scale contains.

Heine (2009) recognised the need for a separate measurement tool and made the first attempt to identify the structure of luxury brand personality dimensions through qualitative research in the German context. Borrowing Aaker's (1997) conceptualisation of brand personality, he identified a five-dimensional personality taxonomy that is semantically

disparate from Aaker's (1997) measure. Heine's (2009) work may only be regarded as preliminary given the methodology he followed, including the potentially flawed definition of the construct (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003) as well as the unclear specification of the process in which identified personality characteristics were assigned to the new measure. In addition, the identified structure may be sensitive to the cultural context (Heine, 2010).

Given the criticisms and the consequent mismatch between the item content of the new scale and Heine's (2009) framework of luxury brand personality, comparisons with his scale were relatively superficial and tentatively undertaken for reference purposes only. Thus, dimension Playfulness from the new scale was matched with Heine's (2009) Modernity and Eccentricity dimensions given the overlap of similar traits: dynamic and energetic (from Heine's Modernity dimension) and adventuresome (from Heine's Eccentricity dimension). The new Stability dimension corresponds to Eccentricity (items serious, respected, solid, and well-regarded) and Elitism (items honest and authentic) dimensions in Heine's (2009) work. Elegance dimension is somewhat relatable to Heine's (2009) Opulence dimension through its characteristics glittering and glamorous. Dimension Femininity from the new scale corresponds to Heine's (2009) dimension Strength that encapsulates both feminine and masculine aspects of brand personalities of luxuries alongside other non-gender related characteristics. With the exception of item haughty in Elitism dimension of Heine's (2009) work, there's no correspondence of the new dimension Stuck-upness with that of Heine's (2009). On the whole, Stuck-upness emerges as a new dimension from comparisons with all three scales. In addition, Timidity dimension from the new scale cannot be compared with any dimensions from Heine's (2009) preliminary scale.

Unlike measures of human personality that are entirely based on lexical approach, the majority of brand personality scales are limited to only positively valenced traits (Bosnjak, Bochmann, and Hufschmidt, 2007). The rationale is that brands generally evoke positive associations and the overriding purpose of the scale work is to establish the degree to which brand personality influences the likelihood of consumers' seeking the products as opposed to avoiding them (Aaker, 1997). However, dimensions Timidity and Stuck-upness from the

new scale of luxury brand personality contain mostly negatively valenced traits. Within the luxury confines, certain segments of consumers prefer consuming quiet luxury brands or inconspicuous product lines when signalling status to others (Han, Nunes, and Dreze, 2010). The growing desire for inconspicuous consumption reflects a way for individuals with higher cultural capital to differentiate themselves from the crowd (Berger and Ward, 2010; Eckhardt, Belk, and Wilson, 2015). Thus, one possibility is that such consumers show preference to luxury brands that are high on Timidity dimension in order to achieve these consumption goals. Meanings connoted by the dimension Timidity are barely present in the generic scales, implying its specificity for the luxury context given the power of signalling qualities of luxuries.

At the same time, luxury brands measuring high on the negatively connoted Stuck-upness dimension would be sought out by snob consumers who view price as a sign of exclusivity and are mostly concerned with self-oriented consumption (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Snobs are guided by the need for uniqueness that implies a desire to be perceived differently from other consumers and give preference to exclusive and uncommon luxury brands (Balabanis and Kastanakis, 2012). Similar to Timidity, this dimension carries much relevance in the luxury context but is not attributable to common brands.

Aaker (1997) has been criticised for the inclusion of a range of descriptives that compromise the purity of the measure. Some of these include gender characteristics, which have been purposefully excluded by contemporary notions of human personality traits following the acceptance of the Big Five (Bosnjak, Bochmann, and Hufschmidt, 2007). However, masculinity and femininity represent personality traits that are relevant for brands (Grohmann, 2009). The emergence of gender dimensions of brand personality in both frameworks oriented towards luxury brands further supports their relevance for luxury consumers as they seek to fortify such values in themselves via consumption of these brands high on symbolic qualities.

### **5.1.3 Brand Symbolism: Brand Personality vs. Human Personality**

The idea that individuals are capable of spontaneously associating different brands with specific personality traits similar to the way they form impressions of other people was first introduced into branding research by Aaker (1997). It has emerged amidst the increased documentation of a range of cognitive mechanisms related to the perception of social stimuli (e.g. individuals) with potential applicability for the perception of marketing stimuli (e.g. objects) (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido, 2001). Aaker's (1997) arguments regarding the anthropomorphic qualities of brands facilitated the justification of relevance of transferring the theory and methodology from the human psychology domain onto research in branding. Theoretically, her scale of brand personality is deductively framed on human personality measures, including the Big Five taxonomy of human personality. However, the results of Aaker's (1997) work reveal that only three dimensions from her scale are related to the three dimensions from the Big Five taxonomy: Agreeableness to Sincerity, Extraversion to Excitement, and Conscientiousness to Competence. The absence of full compatibility of Aaker's (1997) resultant structure of brand personality and the Big Five taxonomy has led her to conclude that brand personality dimensions function in distinct ways or impact consumer outcomes for different reasons.

Given the findings from Aaker's (1997) scale development work, Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido (2001) continued to question whether the eminent features of brands can be encrypted as stable traits and conveyed through individual words as it occurs in the realm of human personality traits. In addition, they contemplated if should the personality metaphor be appropriate for describing personalities of brands, personality descriptors would relate to the same factors when employed to characterise distinct brands. To address these concerns, they examined the personalities of 12 mass-market brands in the Italian market using the Big Five taxonomy and identified structures that substantially deviated from the Big Five model of human personality traits. More specifically, their results support a two-dimensional solution for describing brands' personalities similar to Digman's (1997) meta-factor solution that was formed from the amalgamation of the five dimensions at a higher degree of abstraction. From the identified two broad factors, the first was

determined by markers of Agreeableness and Emotional Stability dimensions and corresponded to the notions of stability, consistency, and amiability, whilst the second was represented by markers of Extraversion and Openness and related to the perceptions of energy, activity, and innovation. They also found the same descriptors to load on different factors when juxtaposing characterisations of different brands from the chosen list.

Following these results, Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido (2001) remained hesitant regarding the best way of systemising personality descriptors for measuring brand personality, as similar markers may not be applicable for describing all brands. Consequently, their scepticism was directed at the overall suitability of human personality dimensions for describing the personalities of brands. Notably, Sweeney and Brandon (2006) who adopted the interpersonal circumplex approach with a strong basis in the early interpersonal theory to modelling brand personality, found Extraversion and Agreeableness factors from the Big Five to be the only two factors that entirely denote interpersonal relationships and significantly more appropriate for characterising brand personality than the remaining three dimensions.

Milas and Mlačić (2007) continued efforts to confirm the relevance of the human personality lexical measure to the context of brand personality arguing that the adjectives used at the Big Five level of abstraction may be too broad for concrete depictions of brands' personalities and that a human personality measure with lower level of abstraction, such as AB5C model, may be more suitable for describing brand personality. According to their findings, the identifiable structure represents a mixture of different dimensions with very heterogeneous items that could not be meaningfully attributed appropriate labels, which is distinct from the solution reported by Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido (2001). Only factor structures obtained from the analysis of few singular brands produced the anticipated similarity to the Big-Five structure, although factors characterising brand personality remained less clear than those found in self or peer evaluations of human personality. However, in line with previous findings, Extraversion and Agreeableness factors were most frequently identified as separate factors. At the same time, Emotional Stability was the least frequent factor, while Conscientiousness and Intellect seldom

emerged as discernible factors and were mostly present in a blend of markers from different dimensions.

Work by Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) is a first comprehensive scale of brand personality that has been shown to fully resemble a Big Five-like structure. Whilst adopting a narrower definition of brand personality to include only personality traits relevant and applicable for brands and not any other characteristics, Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) continued the tradition of deductive construction of the scale using a range of the Big Five human personality measure versions. What started as a theory-driven approach turned into data-driven method, where the preliminary findings were balanced so as to accurately depict the anticipated structure. Their 12-item measure of brand personality developed in the Belgian context and validated cross-culturally produces the following match to the Big Five: Responsibility/Conscientiousness, Activity/ Extraversion, Emotionality/Emotional Stability, Aggressiveness/Agreeableness, and Simplicity/Openness.

In the process of development of a new measure of luxury brand personality, no preliminary expectations regarding the similarity with the Big Five structure were announced for several reasons. Prior research has not only questioned the suitability of mere transposition of human personality measurement to the branding research, but also the assumptions regarding brand and human personalities being structured in a similar manner (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). In addition, human personality research found personality traits to vary depending on social class and social status of individuals, with some traits being irrelevant to certain classes and social status (Anderson et al, 2001; Cheng et al. 2010). Thus, whilst Anderson et al. (2001) found that Extraversion is linked to high social status, they failed to confirm the relevance of other dimensions such as Conscientiousness or Openness to Experience to higher status groups. With these arguments in mind, the expectation was to identify certain dimensions from the structure of luxury brand personality that would carry a resemblance to some of the Big Five dimensions, with other dimensions being dissimilar to the Big Five-like structure.

Surprisingly, the results of confirmatory factor analysis that further reduced the identified structure of luxury brand personality dimensions to the final 20-item solution suggested a substantial level of compatibility between the two structures. Thus, with the exception of Femininity dimension, which contains gender-related traits that are largely absent from the Big Five taxonomy, the remaining 5 dimensions produced a relative match to one or more dimensions from the Big Five: Playfulness matched Extraversion dimension (traits energetic and adventurous were linked with Activity and Excitement-seeking facets), Stability and Stuck-upness matched distinct facets of the Agreeableness dimension (trait trustworthy related to Trust facet, whilst all traits from the dimension Stuck-upness were antipodal of the Modesty facet), and Timidity indicated affiliation to Intraversion (opposite of Extraversion) as well as Neuroticism dimensions via links to its Self-consciousness and Vulnerability facets. On the whole, Stability dimension was also comparable with Conscientiousness from the Big Five. Furthermore, Elegance dimension could be partially linked to the Openness dimension through the match between trait sophisticated and Openness to Values (Unconventional) facet. These results contradict prior research, which suggested that personality traits vary according to social class and social status of individuals with traits from such dimensions as Conscientiousness or Openness to Experience lacking relevance to higher social status and class strata (Anderson et al., 2001; Cheng et al. 2010). However, whilst the resemblance of the two frameworks is imperfect, there is an undeniable degree of relatedness between them. It may be possible that a more successful transfer of the personality metaphor is due to luxury consumers' frequent experiences and close relationships with these brands high on symbolic characteristics, which enables them to more easily imagine such brands as human beings (Fournier, 1998; Huang, Mitchell, and Rosenaum-Elliot, 2012).

## **5.2 Theoretical Implications**

The importance of brand personality construct for status brands has been recently emphasised by Gurzki and Woisetschläger (2016) and prior research confirmed the significance of brand personality in ensuring a brand's success via different consumer reactions (Louis and Lombart, 2010; Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer, 2013a). However, there

has been a lack of prior interest in the construct despite the understanding that marketers can energise the perceptions of brand personalities in the minds of consumers through the manipulation of its different sources. From the theoretical standpoint, this study gives a first proper attention to the concept of brand personality in the luxury context through the development of a comprehensive scale of luxury brand personality using the lexical approach and analysis of semantic similarity. Using rigorous methodology in pursuit of addressing the conceptual and methodological pitfalls of prior scale development works, this work has shown that luxury brand personality is a truly multidimensional construct that allows for different kinds of personalities to be discerned and makes way for better understanding the various ways in which brand personality affects luxury consumer reactions (Aaker, 1997). The identification of the structure of luxury brand personality points towards the existence of a number of dimensions that are largely specific to the given context (Stuck-upness, Timidity, and Femininity), implying that holistic measures of brand personality (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009) could not possibly capture the entire essence of luxury brand personality.

In addition, this work has questioned the legitimacy of deductive imposition of human personality research. With Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf (2009) being the only study that found full compatibility with the Big Five at the aggregate brand level through data driven methods, it remains arguable whether the enforcement of human personality lexical measure on brand personality would maintain its relevance for individual brands or different types of brands (such as luxuries). Interestingly, the new measure shows a substantial degree of similarity with a number of facets underlying each of the Big Five dimensions. Indeed, luxuries are high-involvement products that are purchased for a large magnitude of symbolic features and act as legitimate relationship partners by assuming the active and contributing role in the relationship with the consumer (Fournier, 1988). This should make their personification of behalf of consumers considerably easier relative to ordinary brands. However, the resemblance of the two measures is imperfect, with certain dimensions relating to more than one dimension of the Big Five (e.g. Stability to Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) and items from the new scales corresponding to only one or two facets of the Big Five dimensions. Furthermore, comparisons of the

compatibility of the new measure with the Big Five taxonomy produce distinct results from the comparisons of Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf's (2009) measure with the Big Five and its related facets. Overall, the findings are partly in line with arguments by Milas and Mlačić (2007) that human personality measure might work better for describing the personalities of some individual brands but not the others. However, given the above arguments, it is not possible to conclude that brand personality dimensions may operate on a similar level as the human personality dimensions in the luxury setting.

Consequently, this work makes an important contribution to the branding literature by showing that a micro perspective to brand personality using the lexical approach as the basis for personality trait generation may be necessary for developing a better understanding of the true nature of specific kinds of brands. In this research, it has allowed a detailed examination of personalities of luxury brands and identification of context-specific dimensions that are not present in existing macro scales (Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009). Moreover, it provides some support to the recent literature on the relevance of human personality measure to brand personality (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido, 2001; Milas and Mlačić, 2007; Geuens, Weijters, and Wulf, 2009) by showing that for some types of brands different facets from the Big Five taxonomy may be useful for describing their personalities. However, the direct imposition of the Big Five measure may not be suitable as only through laying groundwork using the lexical approach it would be possible to identify those relevant (sub) dimensions.

Furthermore, this research advances the theoretical understanding of the consumer research in the luxury domain as it provides first theoretical insights into the antecedents, mediators, and consequences of luxury brand personality based on the new measure. Using self-congruence theory that is based on the assumption that consumers show preference to brands that possess personality traits congruent with their own (Sirgy, 1982), this research has established the positive influence of the member group fit antecedent on self-congruence (H1). In addition, self-congruence has been confirmed to positively impact a number of consumer outcomes. Thus, it produces a positive affect on purchase loyalty through a significant direct effect (H2c), whilst also positively influencing purchase loyalty,

purchase intention and word-of-mouth communication indirectly through emotional attachment and brand attitude (H3a&b). Lastly, a further indirect effect of self-congruence has been identified for purchase intention via brand personality appeal construct (partial support of H3c). These results provide a foundation for further research into the antecedents, mediators, and consequences of brand personality construct.

### **5.3 Managerial Implications**

In recent years the luxury industry has been experiencing unprecedented growth marked by the diversification and consolidation efforts from the existing luxury brand firms as well as the surge in new entrants into the market, all seeking to provide consumers with desirable offerings (e.g. Silverstein and Friske, 2003). For these firms, the ability to correctly and precisely measure perceptions of luxury consumers with regards to a luxury brand's personality has a strong managerial relevance. Indeed, growing functional equivalence among luxury brands increases the importance of brand differentiation on the basis of their symbolic qualities (Aaker, 1996a). In addition, Aaker (1991) established that a brand acts as an asset that converts into the consumer's higher willingness to pay and, as a result, improved financial value of the company that owns and manages it. Prior research has linked consumer perceptions to behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988) and identified brand personality as one of the determinants of brand equity given that consumers utilise brand personality dimensions when seeking to establish a brand's added value (Valette-Florence, Guizani, and Merunka, 2011).

The new scale presents a dedicated measurement tool of luxury brand personality grounded on the actual language of luxury consumers and based on the key principles of personality trait development process. Hence, marketing managers can employ this scale as a replacement for presently used provisional measures. For new entrants into the luxury market with unformed personalities, it would aid in determining a key set of relevant and desirable brand personality traits that would allow precisely capturing the symbolism of that brand in the minds of consumers. As for more established players, the new measure can be used on individual luxury brands as well as for comparisons of luxury brands across different product and service categories to help marketing managers re-evaluate the

intended brand's personality and establish reference points for differentiation from the brand personalities of competing luxury brands. Overall, the new scale would be helpful in determining the correct positioning of a luxury brand as well as setting a brand's communication strategy that would be instrumental in ensuring the intended personality of a brand successfully translates into the perceived personality.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

Prior research has pointed towards the relevance of certain personality traits to social classes and social status (Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich, 2010), with researchers linking Extraversion from the Big Five personality traits to higher social status but not any other facets (Anderson et al., 2001). Indeed, on the basis of preliminary comparisons there was some degree of resemblance between the structure of the Big Five framework and the new structure of luxury brand personality but it was not limited to relative similarity of Extraversion dimension from the Big Five and Playfulness dimension from the new framework. Interestingly, some traits from the newly identified facets of the luxury brand personality were somewhat comparable with the Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience, dimensions that showed no prior affiliation with higher status groups (Anderson et al., 2001). However, the similarity of traits comprising the dimensions of the Big Five framework and the new scale was noticeable, it was quite superficial, thus limiting the possibility of proper empirical assessment of the relationship between certain personality traits and social status of individuals as part of nomological validity testing. This matter calls for further empirical investigation and, as such, is noted as a limitation of the present study.

Despite its benefits, the lexical approach has some important limitations. One such limitation is that certain language terms may be used not only for descriptive but also for expressive or appraisal means, thereby rendering such terms inappropriate for the theoretical description of personality (John, Angleitner, and Ostendorf, 1988). At the same time, some important differences may not be noticeable by people, hence, no words in a natural language may exist to describe them. The meaning of the terms from natural

language may also be at times ambiguous and specific to the context. While these are the unavoidable limitations of the lexical approach, it remains the foundational method in many existing personality studies. Given the deficit of foundational work in brand personality research, this PhD study lays solid ground for a better conceptualisation and measurement of the construct. However, based on the key assumption of the lexical approach to personality, only public portrayals of various luxury brands by actual luxury consumers were used as a foundation of luxury brand personality traits in hope to ensure the applicability, relevance, and salience of the identified traits to luxuries. Similarly, true luxury consumers were employed to validate and calibrate the new measure. As a result, neither sample includes consumers who do not buy luxury products. This implies that the study is limited to the way luxury consumers perceive brand personality of luxury products, which may be different from that of non-luxury or aspiring consumers.

Solid foundations of the luxury brand personality traits were laid through the use of a number of sources and methods, one of which was the content analysis of multiple online sources with the aim to determine how consumers publicly describe luxury brands from different product and service categories. Facebook was one of the major sources of consumer-generated luxury brand personality traits. The key expectation at this stage of the scale development process was to gather as large pool of traits applicable and relevant to luxury brands' personalities as possible. Although Facebook is commonly regarded as a top site for user-generated content, one downside of using this outlet as a key source of data was the likelihood of positive bias from Facebook posters given the risk of cognitive dissonance from negative commenting. Many existing brand personality scales are limited to only positively valenced traits (Bosnjak, Bochmann, and Hufschmidt, 2007) as brands commonly evoke positive associations and the primary purpose of the scale development efforts is to determine the extent to which a brand's personality affects the likelihood of consumers seeking rather than avoiding the products (Aaker, 1997). Nevertheless, in light of frequently controversial connotations of luxury brands, the new measure of luxury brand personality also includes a number of negatively valenced personality traits and using Facebook as a key data source may have limited the number of such traits in the initial trait pool, which should be considered a limitation of this work.

Being an imperative part of validity testing, nomological validity helped establish whether a new measure of luxury brand personality correlated positively with measures of theoretically related (but distinct) constructs in a way that was anticipated conceptually. To determine nomological validity, the self-congruence theory was identified as the strongest theoretical basis for the development of a conceptual framework that demonstrated that the new measure had separate antecedents, consequences as well as distinctive mediators. Since all relationships in the model were hypothesised for the central construct of self-congruence, of which a brand's personality is crucial part, the model should also be applicable for brands that aren't luxury via generic measuring of brand personality. Consequently, the model is not limited solely to the luxury context.

In the first survey more than half of respondents completed rating tasks for two luxury brands, as opposed to all respondents only rating a single luxury brand in the second survey. As for data analysis, in instances where one respondent rated more than one brand, two brands were nested within a respondent suggesting that some observations were not independent. This comes as another limitation of the present work.

Finally, the scale presented in this work is a dedicated framework for luxury brand personality and may not be applicable to other brands that also possess varying levels of symbolic motivations because luxury brands are seen as the extreme example of symbolic goods (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012). Despite such limitations, this study is the first to develop a personality scale of luxury brands by means of lexical approach and semantic similarity and contributes to advancing the understanding of the symbolism of luxury brands.

## APPENDIX A.

### Generic Luxury Consumer Interview Protocol (Semi-structured/In-depth Interview)

*Many thanks for agreeing to participate in the interview!*

*I would like to talk to you about your views on some luxury brands that you buy or use.*

(Introductory stage aimed to make the interviewee comfortable and get him talking (Hermanowicz, J. C., 2002)).

*What luxury or upmarket brands do you usually buy?*

*How often?*

(Followed by additional prompting questions: e.g. asking about any other brands that they typically buy or the last luxury brand they had purchased)

*Which ones do you consider your favourites?*

*Any particular reason for that?*

*Are these the ones you most frequently buy?*

*What makes these brands different from the others?*

*What type of people do you think use them?*

*In what circumstances are these brands used?*

Next step: ask an interviewee to describe some of their favourite brands in two-three different product or service categories as if they were a person, as past research has explicitly used animism as an explanation for the brands being human-like (e.g. Aaker, 1997 and Fournier 1998):

*You have mentioned brand X as your favourite. Do you have any other favourite brands in other product categories?*

*You have just mentioned that you occasionally buy luxury brands in the “XYZ” category. What are your most favourite brands in this category?*

*Let us consider the “XYZ” (whatever the interviewee names among their favourite brands in a particular category) brand. Think of this brand as a person. Which human characteristics would best describe it?*

*You have also mentioned “ABC” brand in the same category. If it were a person, what characteristics would be most suited to describe it?*

(Followed by additional prompting questions: e.g. What else? Can you explain why? Give me an example? etc.)

*Can you personify this brand?*

*What is the first person that comes to mind when you think of the brand X?*

*Can you think of a real person that typifies the qualities of that brand?*

(Followed by additional prompting: e.g. What else? Can you elaborate why?)

*I am going to provide you with some characteristics and I want to see if you could think of any luxury brands that match them?*

(Provide an interviewee with one adjective from every dimension of Heine’s (2009) and Aaker’s (1997) personality traits and see what response you get)

Similar routine applied to other brands:

*Let us go back to the other category of luxury brands that you mentioned earlier. What is your most favourite brand in that category?*

*Which human characteristics do you believe best represent this brand’s personality? What is your next preferred brand in that category?*

*How would you describe it if they were a person?*

Next: Repertory Grid Technique Exercise (steps followed by using Coshall, J. T., 2000 (“Measurement of Tourists’ Images: The repertory grid”) and Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Holman, 1996 (“Using Repertory Grids in Management”).

*Let us talk now about fashion luxury brands as it is a universally popular brand category. You are allowed to choose three of the eight cards lying on the table. When you pick them and turn them around, you will see three logos for particular fashion brands. Are you well familiar with each of them?*

(Available are logos of 8 chosen luxury brands: The Kooples, Saint Laurent, Christopher Kane, Lanvin, Roberto Cavalli, Valentino, Givenchy and Charlotte Olympia). The main aim here is to obtain the construct-contrast pairs by the triad method.

*Now look at the three brand logos you selected and tell me one way in which any two are similar and different from the third. It is up to you to decide which two are more similar among three given brands.*

*Now that you have identified two characteristics, can you decide if the remaining five brands also possess the characteristics defined by the construct?*

During the exercise, an interviewee completes a table that highlights the contrast along the identified characteristics (i.e. positively valenced characteristic on the left as opposed to a negatively valenced one on the right) among given luxury brands by writing down such characteristic(s) and ticking whether listed brands possess it or not.

Table Example:

	The Kooples	Saint Laurent	Christopher Kane	Lanvin	Roberto Cavalli	Valentino	Givenchy	Charlotte Olympia	
Sophisticated	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	Unsophisticated
Elegant	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	Not Elegant

*Now we repeat the process for other brands. You are free to choose another triad (Turn the cards around and let them choose again but this time they should have at least one brand that is different from the previous triad). Once the similar and a different characteristic have been identified, a respondent is asked to decide if the remaining brands possess the named*

characteristic. Keep selecting additional triad combinations until a respondent can no longer come up with extra characteristics.

*On a more general note, what other (human) characteristics do you believe could successfully describe any of those fashion brands separately?*  
(The idea is to get more specific characteristics).

After this point, an interviewee is thanked for their participation and let go.

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