

Inclusivity in Exclusivity:

an analysis of luxury fashion campaigns and consumer perception

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ABSTRACT

Driven by exclusivity and elitism, luxury fashion brands should appropriately integrate racial inclusivity and balance this in their ad campaigns in order to appeal and relate to a wider array of audiences. The fashion industry is predominantly white and is characterized by nepotism, which is problematic in this day and age. To tackle the inherent racism within the industry, some brands feature models of African descent in their advertising campaigns, however, this can be seen by consumers as a symbolic attempt of representation instead of an authentic one. Therefore, this thesis answers the question of how luxury brands communicate racial inclusivity in their ad campaigns and how their consumers perceive it. By examining the various forms of communication utilized in luxury brands' advertising campaigns, the thesis aimed to understand how renowned luxury maisons such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Giorgio Armani, Versace, and Christian Dior convey the notion of racial inclusivity without losing the entire concept of exclusivity that has defined brands like these for decades. Guided by Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding theory, this thesis additionally explores how consumers perceive the communication put forward by these brands in regards to racial inclusivity. Through a mixed methods analysis, including a multimodal discourse analysis of 50 photographs from luxury brands' advertising campaigns, and a quantitative survey, the results brought to light three prevailing themes, namely equipose of power, veiled prejudice, and racial incongruity, prevalent in the communication of luxury fashion brands regarding racial inclusivity. Consumer perception on the racial representation was influenced by both the explicit details of the campaigns, but also by their personal and cultural values and beliefs. A high exposure to events of racism within the past year and how consumers react upon encountering these events played a role on whether they perceived the racial representation in an ad campaign as appropriate. The study also found that consumers hold higher regard for certain luxury brands in terms of their approach to racial representation based on the composition of the ad campaigns presented, as visual elements such as lighting and color made a difference on their perceptions, even if the campaigns possessed similar quantities of models of color.

Keywords: *luxury, fashion, advertising, race, representation*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction of the Research Question

Developing strong and sustainable relationships with stakeholders is one of the vital approaches for organisations to proceed towards their business objectives (Cornelissen, 2007). When done correctly, stakeholders become collaborative partners for organisations, providing political support, economic resources and a plethora of other benefits (Steyn, 2004). For the majority of brands, especially the luxury ones, customers have been the stakeholder group responsible for the brands achieving their long-term goals. This success is heavily dependent on brand loyalty, which is displayed by the high purchase frequency of the customers. Additionally, due to the democratization of luxury brands, the concept of exclusivity is diminishing day by day, as more luxury products are becoming available to the mass market (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Thus, with the shift in the attainability of luxury products, these fashion brands have to make adjustments to their communication strategies and marketing techniques in order to appeal to a wider customer base. Luxury brands have a worldwide presence and are faced with the issue of having to connect with millions of people of different backgrounds and cultures. On that account, luxury brands now have to tread a fine line between retaining their exclusivity while being inclusive of race in their communication. This is one of the principal reasons why luxury brands have started paying close attention to the topic of inclusivity and diversity in their communication strategies, particularly in the past few years as there has been a drastic rise in movements and approaches towards reaching equality, inclusion, and acceptance. Striving to better understand the necessary strategies behind effective inclusive brand communication, this paper will answer the following research question: how do luxury brands communicate racial inclusivity in their ad campaigns, and how does their audience perceive that communication?

While the luxury brands update their marketing and brand communication tactics in order to be more inclusive and appeal to a wider audience range, it is similarly integral to comprehend how audiences perceive this communication by brands. Advertisement campaigns of luxury fashion brands are the integral form of communication that takes place between the brand and the audience, and therefore, they hold utmost significance to effectively communicate the brand messages and values (Reynolds et al., 1995). Thus, taking into account the influence of advertising,

it is no surprise that it is the driving force of marketing and the fundamental element of brand identity (Aaker, 1996). Hence, transmitting messages through advertising campaigns is an efficient way to communicate with the consumer, as it transfers the brand values across and builds relationships with the target audience (Ouwensloot & Tudorica, 2001). Additionally, luxury brand perception holds a significant role in the consumers' purchase intention (Sari & Kusuma, 2014). Therefore, the success and survival of a luxury brand is directly related to how they are perceived by the consumers, as a positive perception will amplify the sales while a negative one can drown the company. Elliott & Cameron (1994) define perception as the set of processes with which individuals discern and decipher the information they receive. Consumers generally possess varying ideas and perceptions about the quality of products depending on demographic and economic factors such as their ages, income levels, and educational backgrounds (Agyekum, 2015).

Bagozzi et al. (1999) stated that emotional reactions also contribute to how consumers perceive brands. All of these factors play an integral role in determining what the consumer perception is of a specific luxury brand and the products they offer. As an example, one of the prominent consumer perceptions is that an elevated price is an indicator of high quality, which is why luxury brands boast about the superior quality of their products (Kotler et al., 2001). While price is a significant indicator of consumer perception, there are numerous other factors that actively influence the perception of luxury brands and how it affects consumers' purchasing behaviors. Thus, this thesis aims to comprehend how consumers' purchase intention works in regards to luxury products and how they perceive the racial representation and relate to the models depicted in luxury brand ad campaigns in order to build a solid foundation for this research. Identity representation through advertising campaigns is integral to any fashion brand as advertisements fundamentally govern the ways that people perceive and relate to the brand (Plous & Neptune, 1997). Williamson (1978) further elaborates that the advertisements' omnipresence and inevitability have the ability to culturally impact our modern society. Additionally, the communicative capacities of advertisements are quite influential drivers of social communication (Leiss et al., 1986). It is a well-known fact that humans possess a need for belonging, and when luxury brands depict realistic models of all races in their advertisements, it speaks more to the target audience as they are able to relate to the models, and this, in turn, positively affects their

buying behavior. This is because the driving force of success of luxury brands is the desire and profound understanding of identity (Ekinici, 2020). Therefore, while currently luxury brands are attempting to be more inclusive and convey that aspect to the audience, it is crucial to understand whether they are doing so effectively based on how the target audience perceives the communication put forward by brands (Fernandez, 2018).

1.2. Societal Relevance

This thesis dives deep into the communication strategies of several luxury brands that are actively engaging in inclusive brand communication, and analyzes them in terms of how effectively this is done based on their audience's perception and grasp of the communication. Being the leaders and the trendsetters of the industry, luxury fashion brands should be compelling and pertinent in their communication of racial inclusivity in order to inspire the rest of the industry to adopt inclusive communication. Discriminatory crimes, such as the George Floyd incident of 2020, are occurring to this day and galvanizing the public to take action and to partake in global digital protests in support of Black Lives Matter (Hill et al., 2020). Therefore, the matter of racial injustice is far from solved in the current age, and appropriate representation in the media is a necessary step forward in the right direction. Additionally, fashion content found on social media is not solely consumed by individuals interested in fashion, but they are shared a myriad times and, thus, circulated vastly and absorbed by many. Contemporary digital culture consumes an abundance of content every day, and studying whether the content shared by the fashion industry is racially inclusive will shed much needed insight into this exclusive industry that has so often been associated with institutionalized racism (Coker, 2020). This thesis aims to bridge the gap between racial inclusivity and luxury exclusivity, in an attempt to illuminate on how the issue of racism still persists in renowned brands' communication tactics and how consumers perceive this. Moreover, this thesis can be of use to brands looking into the practice of appropriate racially inclusive communication as it not only profoundly analyzes existing ad campaigns in terms of the issue, but also examines how individuals exposed to the ads perceive them.

1.3. Scientific Relevance

While numerous studies have been published with a primal focus on fashion advertisements and racial portrayals, none of them analyzed luxury fashion brands' advertising campaigns in regards to the racial representation and consumer perception. Therefore, this thesis can prove to be useful for players in the fashion industry concerned with inclusive advertising, marketing, and communications. Newman (2017) asserted that the fashion industry fails to reflect the reality of races, as merely a very small percentage of models were black who walked runways during fashion weeks, who were photographed in brand editorials, or featured in advertising campaigns. The research paper discussed how black models were not featured as extensively as white models due to the idea that they did not fit an aesthetic that excluded models of color. Staying within the theme of models featured to walk the runways and be in advertising campaigns, Sadre-Orafai (2016) examined representation within the industry from a body measurement angle, which is a significant topic in fashion, but it does not address the type of representation that this thesis does. Furthermore, print advertising in luxury fashion brands have been visually analyzed to uncover the attributes in their communication practices, particularly in Chanel and Gucci, however, the focus was not on race and on the ways models of color are represented (Kohrs, 2021). Luxury fashion brands are notable for depicting ads in line with their aesthetics and messages, and as a result, a lack of representation sends the message that a massive part of the target audience cannot relate or associate themselves with the brand and its aesthetics. Amatulli et al. (2016) analyzed the aesthetics and personalities that fashion brands portray in their advertising campaigns in fashion magazines, and confirmed that the messages summon prominent symbolic meanings in the brands' consumers. In contrast, this thesis touches upon consumer perception in regards to viewing ad campaigns from luxury fashion brands and elaborated on the racial inclusivity that the brands were communicating. Therefore, while there exist studies on luxury brand communication and racial bias in the fashion industry, this thesis fills the gap between the two aspects by shedding light on how luxury brands' ad campaigns communicate racial inclusivity to their consumers, and how the consumers regard this. The study of these issues is essential for luxury brands appealing to a wider audience, and towards diminishing racial injustice within the fashion industry.

1.4. Summary of the Sections

The next section will be the theoretical framework which covers imperative terms and background information in their entirety in order to build a solid foundation for this thesis. From luxury brand intricacies to racial inclusivity in the fashion industry, the theoretical framework provides necessary details that are utilized in the sections that follow. Furthermore, the methodology section discusses the methods used in the study and the rationale behind these choices. Taking into account that this study employs a mixed methods approach, specifically a multimodal discourse analysis and an online survey, the methodology is extensive in terms of the advertising campaigns chosen for the qualitative analysis, and the participants and scales utilized for the quantitative analysis. Subsequently, all of the data discovered during the analysis are disclosed in the results section with profound depth. Finally, this thesis wraps up in the conclusion, alongside with the limitations faced in the process and additional advice for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Luxury Brands

Comprehending the nuts and bolts behind luxury brand communication is essential in tackling how luxury brands appeal to their audience in terms of inclusivity and how the audience perceives the communication. Luxury brands are highly exclusive as they have a limited stock of unique products that are on a high price range and therefore inaccessible to the average consumer (Fionda & Moore, 2009). They offer branded goods that consumers perceive as being of the highest quality, offering authentic value in terms of functional and/or emotional benefits, having a prestigious image within the market due to the craftsmanship and artisanship of luxury brands, having a high price and being worth it, and having the ability to inspire a profound connection and relatability with the consumer (Ko et al., 2019). Furthermore, the products offered by luxury brands have a critical criterion, which is having an inherent and unique know-how that usually has to do with either a particular attribute or the overall quality and performance of the product (Dubois & Czellar, 2002). The high exclusivity of luxury brands makes luxury goods innately rare and challenging to obtain, thus making the promotion of luxury goods differ from ordinary goods, since the former is not as extensively advertised as the latter, as discussed in *Brand Culture* (Schroeder et al., 2010). The book further explores the notion of a communication paradox that is faced by luxury brands, which means that these companies should not extensively advertise their products as that would lead to an over-exposure and therefore diminish the idea of exclusivity and rarity in the perception of the brands' target audiences. Thus, luxury brands have to strategically balance their exposure ration with their awareness needs, in order to effectively communicate their luxury products to the target audience without having a negative impact on their brand image.

Luxury brands are inherently prestigious based on the aforementioned factors that differentiate their offered products from the rest in the market. In the eyes of the consumer, luxury is associated with prestige, which is why both "luxury" and "prestige" are interchangeably used to describe brands that hold substantial intangible value (Dubois & Czellar, 2002). Furthermore, consumer perceptions and evaluative judgments on brands are a result of emotional reactions (Bagozzi et al., 1999). A study portrayed that when consumers think of luxury brands, they often associate their products with beauty, refinement, hedonic pleasures and self-indulgence, whether

it is private or public (Dubois & Czellar, 2002). Luxury products are therefore not seen as necessary, but sybaritic, and are often characterized by a high price tag (Berry, 1994). However, luxury is a very subjective concept that varies in every geographic location or setting (Phau & Prendergast, 2000). As a result, consumer perceptions of luxury are quite inconsistent across market segments as the definition of indulgence varies greatly (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). This therefore means that there may not exist a clear-cut answer into whether a luxury brand communicates well or not with their audience, as perceptions of consumers vary based on their demographics and social status. Bearing in mind the aforementioned aspects that characterize what luxury is, luxury fashion brands can be defined as brands that create top-quality products distinguished by high prices, limited quantities, unique attributes, and symbolic associations that grant the feeling of opulence and feed the hedonic pleasures of their consumers.

2.2. Consumer Perception

In the past, markets for luxury brands were majorly saturated in Western countries, but they have increasingly expanded to the East where the novelty rich markets have commenced to dominate (Sherman, 2009). Luxury brand consumers are therefore both from the East and the West, and it is no surprise that their perception of what luxury products entail differs greatly, as there are personal and cultural aspects that come about. Essentially, the majority of luxury brand consumers of both the Eastern countries and the Western purchase luxury products for predominantly symbolic reasons, with the aim to portray their individuality or social goals and status (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Wilcox et al. (2009) further argue that consumers who fundamentally purchase luxury products in order to express their individuality and social standing tend to solely purchase real luxury products, instead of opting for counterfeit luxury products, because these types of consumers tend to possess deeply rooted intrinsic values and beliefs of what luxury really is. Essentially, consumers who value expressing themselves through material objects have a tendency to consume products from luxury brands that specifically possess characteristics that are in tune with the consumers' intrinsic values and beliefs (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). This is because the purchase of products from luxury brands channels a sense of prestige, social hierarchy, and an upper-class persona that such consumers wish to exhibit (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). These

aspects, otherwise known as central attitudes, inspire consumers to develop profound emotional attachments to luxury brands that depict the same values, because it creates major resonance between a brand and a consumer (Grewal et al., 2004). Therefore, consumers who purchase luxury products do not merely purchase an item, but they buy into a specific dream that is delivered through an effective and distinct communication by the luxury brands (Dubois & Paternault, 1995).

Effective communication determines a brand's success and survival within the market, as they need to compellingly target their audience in order to create sales and encourage brand loyalty. However, this concept is slightly tricky with luxury brands, as the perception of a brand's luxury level subjectively depends on the people purchasing and utilizing their products (Kemp, 1998). Additionally, building upon how the idea of luxury varies from one geographical context to the next, Christodoulides et al. (2009) state that luxury and necessity products vary from one society to another because the goods considered as a basic necessity in one country may be considered a luxury in another. Thus, this further emphasizes the entire concept of luxury being subjective and varying from one market to another, as it fundamentally focuses on a hedonic dimension. Moreover, while luxury brands did not heavily rely on advertising in the past, as their entire reputation was built on the idea of exclusivity, this can no longer be considered to be the case. Short-term financial gains are a more accurate depiction of the goals of luxury brands today, as they have to survive within an industry that is being heavily saturated with up-and-coming brands everyday. As a result, luxury brands commenced to utilize mass marketization strategies, which often means that these brands 'over-market' their products which diminishes the idea of exclusivity and appeals to a wider audience (De Barnier et al., 2012). Kapferer (2006) suggests that while there is evidence of democratization occurring within the luxury industry, luxury consumption is still one of the fundamental tactics used to belong to a social class or circle. Thus, a paramount motivation for individuals consuming luxury products is to satiate their hedonic pleasures, which is a factor that allows people to merge themselves with people who possess similar hedonistic needs (Dogan et al., 2018).

As previously stated, luxury products are known to be quite expensive and unattainable for the majority of consumers, however, they are the fastest growing sector in recent years (Han et al., 2010). Consumers' expenditures for luxury brand products surged by 50% between the years 1994 and 2004, whereas expenditures for other non-luxury products solely rose by 7% (Keane &

McMillan, 2004). Thus, consumption of luxury products remains rapidly growing as the possession of such products allows individuals to belong to a specific social class that is higher on the social spectrum (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). Additionally, luxury brand consumers attain certain social and psychological advantages that can only be obtained through the possession of luxury products (Shukla, 2011). An example of such advantages include the acceptance in high-class social circles, which aids them in establishing their roles within the society (Wang et al., 2012).

Audience perceptions of luxury brands dictate how they will approach and behave towards the brand. A relationship between a brand and the consumer is of utmost significance when discussing audience perception, however, luxury brands still have not entirely perfected their approach on inclusivity because of the range of consumers they possess. Essentially, brands fear that by being more inclusive, they may lose control and the enticement of exclusivity (Grassi & Wigley, 2018). Thus, there is a thin line between brands' need to be exclusive and uphold their high status while being inclusive in terms of portraying models of color, and so luxury brands must strive to generate inclusivity in manners that would not compromise the perceived exclusivity of their offerings (Grassi & Wigley, 2018). Furthermore, Dittmar (1992) argues that there exist two sources behind the subjective representations of people, which are the perceptions of objective reality that deal with depiction of the world outside individuals, and the interpretation of symbolic reality which deals with the collection of socially shared symbols that possess definite meanings for all members of a group. This idea translates into how luxury brands communicate with their target audiences through the use of specific symbols which define the symbolic reality, whereas the objective reality deals with how consumers perceive that message. To delve deep into the brand communication of luxury brands in terms of model inclusivity and relatability with the consumer, and the perception of this communication by their consumers, the advertisements of several luxury fashion brands are analyzed throughout this thesis. While luxury brands tend to focus on exclusivity and need to emphasize on that, it is essential for them to focus on how to be more inclusive (Brewer et al., 2012). Moreover, further emphasizing on the importance of brands portraying inclusivity, luxury brands must adopt a multi-ethnic advertising strategy in order to increase the relatability with their audiences, as a large number of their consumers may be the ethnic majority that is underrepresented in the ad campaigns (Strebinger et al., 2017). Thus,

embracing a more inclusive strategy in their campaigns and representing a wide array of different models can be a step forward for luxury brands in terms of building stronger relationships with their consumers.

An agreeable brand image leads to brand loyalty from the part of consumers, and that leads to the creation of brand equity (Esch et al., 2006). That is why the creation of a solid brand image is a priority for luxury fashion companies. In their campaigns, luxury fashion brands utilize sensory aspects in the forms of color and texture, which are key factors in the assessment of these brands as evidenced by the fact that a myriad of well-known fashion firms, including Chanel, Dior and Louis Vuitton, were in the top 100 list of brands possessing international brand equity (Interbrand, 2020). Kevin Roberts (2005) suggested three dimensions of brand association, namely mystery, sensuality, and intimacy when it comes to fashion brands, and these dimensions are customarily prevalent in luxury fashion brand ad campaigns in order to communicate to the consumer. Mystery is the cognitive part of the brand image that indicates cognitive thoughts, products attributes, symbolic, and psychological meanings of the brand (Chang & Chieng, 2006). Sensuality is the sensory aspect of the brand image, and it reflects how the consumers react to the visual look, scent, or texture of the products offered (Roberts, 2005). And finally, intimacy is the affective dimension that is measured by how the consumers feel the brand's empathy, commitment, and how they feel when owning products from the brand (Roberts, 2005). Roberts (2005) further argued that these dimensions are the fundamental factors that lead to a strong relationship between the brand and the consumer, and thus these factors have to be communicated accordingly by the brands. These factors make up the brand image, and as a result, consumers obtain the entire perception of a brand from their advertisements (Snyder & DeBono, 1985).

2.3. Classicism

The advertisements of luxury brands usually tend to adopt a classical style, in order to reinforce the notion of high-quality artisanship, exclusivity, heritage, and the high value of the luxury products. Ewen (2003) argues that classicism, as discussed by art historians, is the primary phase in a recurring stylistic cycle that commences with simplicity, symmetry, and order, and further transforms into an elaborate and extravagant style. These classicist aspects define luxury fashion products, as in their inherent state they are products that are built on the simple foundation

of an item, but are further embellished and designed in a unique manner in order to differentiate them from other, more accessible and less distinctive products available on the markets. Moreover, classicism is associated with artistic movements that correspond with historical periods characterized by wealth and power (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). These two characterizations of classicism are essentially what luxury brands attempt to convey to their target audience through the means of strategic brand communication. Classicism represents power, wealth, and taste, and achieves the visual representation of “the power structure in any period, today and yesterday” (Conway & Roenisch, 2006). Luxury brands’ campaigns contain a basic composition, unadorned and unembellished, in order to easily direct the attention of consumers on the luxury products; these components of the luxury brand ads are principal factors of relative classicism, which is a style that “rejects outspoken conspicuous consumption” (Schroeder et al., 2010).

Compelling visual imagery defines the core identity of brands and their advertising strategies. This is why marketing strategists heavily rely on visual storytelling in the form of images as they are acquiescent from the consumer’s perspective and, therefore, do not risk being misleading or objectionable (Schroeder, 2008). Visual storytelling used in brands’ advertising strategies further revealed the disclosure of social issues because of the representational power that these images hold (Schroeder, 2006). Thus, through visual advertising, brands communicate their brand story with the consumers by revealing and staying relevant with contemporary social issues. Furthermore, brands utilize their advertising in order to resolve cultural contradictions (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). This is another aspect of brand communication that affects how consumers see the brand, as by resolving cultural contradictions, brands can successfully target a much wider audience and attract new customers. As stated before, luxury brands tend to adopt a classicist style when it comes to their brand communication. This style generally brings about the sense of durability, stability, virtue, and power (O’Gorman & McGrath, 1998). All of these aspects make up the essence of a luxury brand, as through their possession of psychological dimensions and material solutions, they provide those feelings of stability and power to their consumers. However, as mentioned earlier, classicism as a style has been established at a time heavily defined by racial prejudices and power asymmetries (Millar, 2005). Therefore, while luxury brands adapt this style in their advertising campaigns today, they have to do so conscientiously in order to steer clear from representing visual imagery that may come across as offensive or racist to consumers.

Nevertheless, classicism is a central cultural referent structure that is utilized by a particular set of brands to convey the message of luxury, power, durability, and is adapted by numerous compound contemporary branding strategies (Schroeder, 2008). Moreover, marketing specialists of luxury brands must tactfully utilize branding concepts in conjunction with culture, politics, and ideology in order to strategically appeal to their consumers without appearing insensitive and losing credibility. That is because the world has become defined by brands, as they play a fundamental role in infusing culture with meaning and thoroughly influencing the present-day society (Schroeder, 2008). Dior's 2021 campaign is an example of a luxury fashion brand adapting a classicist approach in their advertising campaigns. The campaign gathered inspiration from the Renaissance-era painter Caravaggio, and through Chiaroscuro lighting emphasizing the shadows and the lights, it succeeded in the creation of painting-like three-dimensional photographs that resemble works of art (Gordon, 2021). Therefore, these art styles are quite prominent in contemporary ad campaigns by luxury fashion brands. Classicism conveys the idea of high-quality and timelessness that defines these brands and highlights the concept of purchasing a work of art and not just a piece of clothing.

2.4. Racial Inclusivity in Fashion

Racism has been embedded in our society in terms of social, cultural, psychological and institutional structures for many years and it severely impacts the individuals affected by it (Hacker, 1992). The fashion industry is overwhelmingly white, as stated by Angela Burt-Murray, the Deputy Editor of Glamour Magazine (Newman, 2017). Despite the industry being one of the major contributors of the entertainment industry, the representation of various races is extremely limited. The levels of black employment within the modeling makes up a limited number, as it is lower than the actual representative number of the population (Wissinger, 2015). During fashion weeks, black models make up a very small percentage of runway models, and additionally, they make up a smaller percentage in big-budget editorial shoots and fashion advertisements (Newman, 2017). As a matter of fact, a study portrayed that only 9% of all models pictured in the full-page photographs of beauty and fashion magazines were black (Newman, 2017). This number portrays and reinforces the notion of tokenism that has been widely prevalent in the fashion industry in the

past, and today. Tokenism is defined as “the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from under-represented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). To demonstrate the progress that the fashion industry is making in terms of being more racially inclusive, a study conducted in the 60s demonstrated that black models made up less than 0.3% of the total advertisements of models found in various fashion and beauty magazines such as *Life* and *Vogue* (Kassarjian, 1969). A similar study was conducted almost thirty years later which portrayed a slightly higher exposure of black models, however, the number was still quite low and there were gender-related discrepancies noted (Plous & Neptune, 1997). To be more precise, the study concluded that one out of every five advertisements in magazines with a predominantly white woman readership, namely *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*, contained one black female model and no advertisements in magazines with a predominantly white male readership, namely *Esquire* and *GQ*, contained a black female (Plous & Neptune, 1997). However, black male models were solely pictured in 0.8% of advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour* and in 6.7% of advertisements in *Esquire* and *GQ* (Plous & Neptune, 1997). Thus, while there was a slight increase in racial representation in the fashion industry, it was still quite low, especially in terms of black male representation. Furthermore, the study portrayed that over 60% of advertisements, that contained clothing items covered in animal prints that were patterned after a predatory animal, were represented on black female models (Plous & Neptune, 1997). This concept of cultural appropriation is additionally sustained by the fact that fashion loves black culture, but not black people (Newman, 2017). In 2008, *Vogue Italia* published a black issue where they solely featured black models across all of the pages of the renowned fashion magazine. However, none of the black models featured portrayed curly or kinky hair that resembles the natural hairstyles of black women, as they were all depicted with aquiline noses, big eyes, oval face shape, and sleek straight hair - portraying black female models with the typical attributes that are associated with white female models (Newman, 2017). Hence, this *Vogue* issue was quite problematic despite its attempt to appear progressive and appeal to a wider audience demographic, as they emphasized the fact that all of the characteristics possessed by natural black women were effaced in order to conform to the fashion magazine’s whitewashed aesthetic (Newman, 2017). An aspect that plays a factor between the choice of a black or white female model is that there is more

demand for models of color if they possess thinner lips, smaller noses, and slimmer figures - characteristics that represent the European standard of beauty (Newman, 2017). When several prestigious brands were confronted on the fact that they did not have a fair representation of black models on their runways, the blame was placed on the modeling agencies and casting directors, as brands do not choose the models personally (Givhan, 2013). Luxury brands that did not have black models in their showings in London, Milan and Paris included Giorgio Armani, Versace, Chanel, and so on - were scrutinized for being inappropriate and having a lack of accountability (Givhan, 2013).

Additionally, the concept of cultural appropriation is significant in the fashion industry as it revolves around brands claiming intellectual property, traditional knowledge, and artifacts from other cultures without giving them credit and getting permission (Scafidi, 2005). A prominent issue that takes many forms, cultural appropriation is the stealing of various cultural patterns or religious symbols, and may involve an offensive representation of a culture and a race (Pozzo, 2020). While some brands may argue that they take inspiration from other cultures with an aim to advocate cultural diversity and showcase an appreciation for other people's traditions and cultures, it often is not perceived in such a way by the people whose culture the brands appropriated (Sharoni, 2016). Numerous cases of cultural appropriation in fashion have been noted throughout the years, such as a Victoria's Secret runway that featured tribal headdresses (Pozzo, 2020), and brands such as Zara and Anthropologie incorporating Mexican designs and patterns in their clothing, the action of which the culture minister of Mexico described as a privatisation of "collective property" (Marriott, 2021). Cultural appropriation is considered to be unethical and discriminatory as it further contributes to the issues of institutionalized racism. Particularly in the fashion industry, which is white-dominated, it is a recurring problem as this act encourages the desensitization of respect towards other people's traditions and cultures (Mulvaney, 2013). Therefore, this aspect is integral in a study on racism in fashion, as it is a leading concern prevalent to this day.

2.5. Encoding-Decoding

The key media theory used to study brand communication of luxury brands in terms of their portrayal of models, and how the consumer perceives the brand communication, is the

encoding and decoding theory coined by Stuart Hall (1991 [1973]). Hall provoked oppositions between popular and high culture and portrayed the ways everyday life impacted communication in the stages of production, distribution and reception of media (Sender & Decherney, 2016). The central concept in this theory is the concept of circulation, which deals with understanding how audiences induce the semiotic codings of texts (Sender & Decherney, 2016). Nowadays, this concept is intensified through the intervention of social media users who actively participate in modern-day journalism online, by partaking in discussions that equilibrate the dominant voice of the political and media organizations hegemonizing the social media platforms (Sender & Decherney, 2016). In 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement gained immense momentum after the death of George Floyd, an African-American male whose death was inflicted by police officers in Minneapolis (Hill et al., 2020). This event ignited nationwide protests, which led to major protests all around the world in support of Black Lives Matter. However, this was not the first time that a black man was killed as a result of police brutality. In 2014, Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old African-American male, was shot to death by a police officer in Ferguson (Halpern & Cobb, 2015). The news outlets reported on this story by portraying a visual of Brown that represented him in a negative light rather than using a photo with his family, which led to an outrage as some social media users even resorted to calling him a “thug” based on that photo alone (Stampler, 2014). As a result, the hashtag #IfTheyGunnedMeDown was trending all over social media that translated to “If they gunned me down, what photo of mine would they use in the news?” where people posted two photos of themselves: one with their families or friends, holding a child, juxtaposed with another photo of them with a drink, wearing a chain necklace (Stampler, 2014). This hashtag shed much needed light on how black men are portrayed in the media, and how this representation does not raise any questions in Americans who regularly watch the news as they have become desensitized to black men being associated with crime (Campbell, 2019). The negative representation of black people dominated the news, and its inherent issues went unchallenged in the media industry (Campbell, 2019). Similarly, the fashion sphere was not entirely inclusive of black models in their ad campaigns and the aftermath of the BLM movement in 2020 sparked necessary conversation in the field. The fashion industry is driven by exclusivity and not inclusivity, as noted from their VIP front row fashion shows and the prevailing nepotism that defines the industry (Coker, 2020). Nevertheless, with the powerful activism of social media,

brands can easily get “cancelled” if they communicate ideas that do not go in accordance with what the majority of social media users agree with.

The social media posts that stemmed from the deaths of Michael Brown and George Floyd are perfect examples of the role that social media plays in bringing about difficult topics of conversation and challenging the topics often miscommunicated in the media. Hall (1980) confronted the idea of preferred reading of media texts, where “politics of signification” expressed the power of those meanings within cultures. The circulated photos in the case of Michael Brown depict the power of mass media to present anything in the manner they wish to convey, which Hall speaks about when describing the concept of representation, especially when it comes to race and ethnicity. According to Hall (1980), the central key into unraveling the dominating meaning is to analyze the media representations, which is what this thesis essentially tackles by analyzing the ad campaigns to see how they represent black models. Thus, when decoding the media texts, this thesis covers the denotative reading, which is what the producer of the text intended, and the connotative meaning, which is what the message was received to be. By analyzing the ad campaigns, it will be more clear how the leading brands of the fashion industry communicate the notion of inclusivity of different races, in contrast with the survey results that will portray how the audience receives this message. The perceptions of the audiences will have differences based on their personal backgrounds and beliefs, as Stuart Hall proposed that there is an essential correlation between the social situations of individuals and the meanings that they conjure from the media texts (Fiske, 1992). This is how the first hypothesis was formed (H1): stating that participants’ high exposure to events of racism throughout the past twelve months has a positive influence on their perception of racial inclusivity in Christian Dior’s campaign, which is depicted in a classicist style and features a balance of models of color. Luxury brands are at the top of the fashion industry chain, and therefore they are the driving influencers of the field who present photos the meanings of which serve their interests. Media representations function through the concept of hegemony, where these companies display media texts that reflect the ideologies and interests of the wealthy and the powerful (Gramsci, 1971). There is also the matter of these photos representing the idea of groupthink which does not offer much room for complex interpretations (Barthes, 1972). With brands’ ad campaigns, the images represent the values and beliefs of the brands - as a result, a racially inclusive ad campaign would signify the brand’s support for diversity. However, when

leading companies strive to aim for balance in terms of representation of races, Campbell (1991) argues that this balance is often “a code word for middle American values” and does not represent society as a whole.

The thesis looks into the message of the luxury brand advertisements and how the perceptible and concealed features of the ads converge with Stuart Hall’s dominant, negotiated, and oppositional reading positions. Furthermore, the thesis studies the encoded messages in luxury brand ads and how the decoding done by the audience may differ for each message based on the audience’s cultural, social and gender aspects. The next two hypotheses that look into the audience’s cultural and social aspects in regards to how they perceive the ad campaigns of luxury brands in terms of racial inclusivity are the following: H2 assumes that people who are impulsive in their shopping habits and are doing so more for hedonic reasons perceive the ad campaigns of luxury brands as having good racial representation, as they do not dig deeper and spend time decoding the actual messages. With the same justification in mind, H3 proposes that people who have a passive response when encountering an event of racism are more likely to consider racial representation in luxury fashion brands’ campaigns as good. Furthermore, brand communication aids brands in connecting and building a relationship with their target audiences with the purpose of making sales and enforcing brand loyalty, but it also influences consumers, informs and educates them (Pang et al., 2019). That is why once brands become more inclusive, they can aid in fighting the racial injustice present in today’s world (Schmidt et al., 2018). Seeing that the research question deals with comparing the communication of fashion luxury brands with how the audience perceives that, the encoding and decoding theory will facilitate the uncovering of various messages from the ads and compare it with how exactly the audience comprehends the said messages.

By understanding what a luxury brand entails and how consumers perceive it, the theoretical framework provides insight into the communication that takes place between a brand and its consumer. The style of classicism detailed one of the principal communication methods used by luxury brands to convey their notion of opulence, heritage, and durability, and it was juxtaposed with racial inclusivity in luxury fashion brands’ ad campaigns as classicism was developed in an era characterized by racial discrimination. The encoding-decoding theory of Stuart Hall guides the in-depth analysis of the ad campaigns chosen for this study, and casts light on what

the brands aimed to communicate and how it was perceived by the audiences. The advertising campaigns of luxury brands with a focus on racial representation and consumer perception is a complex study that requires a profound and systematic methodological approach, which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design of this thesis is meant to provide a pertinent framework for the study. One of the most integral decisions in the research design process was determining how to tackle the research approach, since that determines the entire outcome of the study as it provides the most suitable way to gather data and relevant information. Taking into account that this study explores the advertising campaigns of several luxury brands in order to comprehend how these kinds of brands effectively tackle the relevant issue of racial inclusivity and analyze how their audience perceives this communication, the research design of this study is a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. The methods include a survey and content analysis in the form of a multimodal discourse analysis. The utilization of these two methods of obtaining and analyzing data are appropriate as the necessary information that is discovered will be twofold. The surveys gather data relating to consumer perception of luxury brand communication, while the multimodal discourse analysis allows for the profound perusal of how luxury brands communicate their ideas of inclusivity. Both of these methods constructively contribute to finding the answers to the proposed research question, as they aid in obtaining data from both perspectives.

3.2. Qualitative Analysis

The research design initially commences with a qualitative analysis, as 50 photographs from several advertisement campaigns of the following luxury brands: Versace, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Christian Dior, and Giorgio Armani, are closely inspected in terms of several paramount aspects, such as the presence of racially diverse models, through a visual critical discourse analysis. This interdisciplinary research method views language as a form of social practice, and it contributes to the systematic investigation and collection of implicit and explicit power relations and ideologies (Johnson & McLean, 2020). By analyzing 50 up-to-date, this thesis examines the material and social ramifications of the discourse regarding racial inclusivity in the world of fashion luxury brands. The analysis looks into numerous aspects, which include whether the advertisement of the luxury brand has actively attempted to make the advertisement inclusive in

terms of depicting models of various races, the particular wording used, if applicable, that would give additional information on how the brands are trying to effectively communicate racial equality and inclusion. Furthermore, the advertisements analyzed are exclusively of the aforementioned luxury brands that are popular within the sector.

3.2.1. Rationale of the Advertisements Chosen

Numerous luxury brands were noted to not have included any black models in their fashion shows in Milan, London, and Paris in early 2010s. Among these brands, the most notable ones included Versace, Chanel and Giorgio Armani (Givhan, 2013). As a result, the advertisements that are analyzed throughout this thesis through a critical discourse analysis of the visual semiosis include ad campaigns of these brands, and others like Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton. This thesis covers the analyses of campaigns from the early 2010s, and juxtaposes them with recent campaigns of the same brands from the recent years. Furthermore, these brands were chosen because of their popularity in the industry, and several campaigns were utilized from each brand to depict any changes that occurred between older advertisements and newer ones.

Following the criticisms over the lack of black models in their fashion shows, Armani unveiled a collection in the fall of 2016, titled “New Normal.” The aim of this campaign was to be inclusive of models from all backgrounds and ages in order to create unity and connect with their audience of various nationalities and races. Depicting models like Liu Wen and Elisa Sednaoui, who are from different cultures and backgrounds, the campaign was striking (Silhouette and Style, 2016). Shot in black and white, the campaign emphasized the notion of equality, by focusing the viewers’ attention on the models and accentuating the elegance and timelessness of the models. The next campaign from this brand is their fall 2018 campaign, which featured a group of male and female models dressed in party outfits, in a close circle. This campaign was chosen because it did feature several black models and models of other descent, further building on their idea to be more inclusive. In contrast, the Gift 2020 campaign of Giorgio Armani portrayed no black models whatsoever, despite the fact that the campaign was released months after the BLM movement made headlines. The Gift 2020 campaign featured women clad in luxurious garments and sequins, and men dressed up in upscale suits. It demonstrated the lavish luxury of the Giorgio Armani,

however, the lack of representation of non-white models was unforeseen. Several months later, the Spring 2021 collection dropped and the campaign portrayed both a white model and a black model - which proved to be equally inclusive.

The next notable luxury brand discussed in this thesis is Chanel. The first campaign analyzed is their 2012 Spring/Summer collection, which is distinguished by its stunning visuals and photography. The campaign was shot by the late Karl Lagerfeld, who was an influential figure in fashion, and it focused on simple and elegant clothing and accessories of the season. The models, a black female and a white female, posed in varying athletic poses in every photograph, and it was entirely shot in black and white. Luxury brands are known for high quality and standing the test of time, and this is evident in the campaign photographs as they are inclusive and beautiful, and do stand the test of time. However, at the same time, the fashion show of Spring 2012 portrayed no black models walking the runway. Additionally, photographs from the last campaign that is analyzed for Chanel is from their 2021 Cruise collection which solely featured Lily-Rose Depp, a white model and the latest face of Chanel.

A recent campaign that was well-received was Christian Dior's Spring Summer 2021 campaign, shot by Elina Kechichevna. It took inspiration from Caravaggio, the revolutionary 17th century painter, as all of the photographs in the campaign resembled actual works of art (SHOWstudio, 2021). Furthermore, the Dior menswear campaign for Spring/Summer 2021 was designed alongside Amoako Bofo, an artist from Ghana, and the entire catwalk tackled the issue of diversity by solely featuring black male models (De Klerk, 2020). The fashion show sparked up a lot of conversation, especially because it was during the time that the BLM movement was at its peak traction on social media. The representation of models, alongside the clothing designed by Ghanaian artist, exhibited an entire side to the luxury fashion brand that was groundbreaking. However, this was not Dior's first feature of black models for their campaigns. In 2015, Rihanna was the first black woman to front a Dior campaign, the visuals of which are analyzed in the next chapter, as it was quite a revolutionary undertaking. This occurred when the brand was being led by Raf Simons, the Belgian designer who enlisted numerous younger names to be the faces of Dior (Milligan, 2015). All of the ad campaigns that are studied for Christian Dior prominently feature black models, which portrays that some brands skilfully represent people of color, while others appear to approach the issue incongruously.

Dior, along with other prominent luxury fashion brands, is owned by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, which is the French multinational luxury corporation and conglomerate specialized in luxury goods. LVMH owns Louis Vuitton, which is why this thesis will also analyze several ad campaigns by them, to explore the similarities and differences of two luxury fashion brands that are owned by the same conglomerate. The ad campaigns chosen for Louis Vuitton are their Spring/Summer 2020 campaigns for both men and women, and their 2012 campaign is used for comparison.

Lastly, there are several ad campaigns from Versace that are significant to this study as their portrayal of different races has been quite problematic in the past, and they were also one of the brands that did not feature black models on the catwalk. Two photographs from the brand's Spring/Summer 2011 campaigns were chosen as they represent very specific white models. Moreover, several photographs from Versace's Eros 2012 campaign and their 2013 Spring/Summer campaign are further analyzed as they feature both white models and black models, however the photographs are edited in such a way that the models almost have the same features and skin color. And finally, their Spring/Summer 2021 campaign is looked into, as it portrays the evolution of Versace in terms of appropriate model representation.

The sampling used for the multimodal discourse analysis of luxury brand advertising campaigns was purposive, as 50 photographs were chosen based on how they tackled representation throughout time. Thus, for example, a Louis Vuitton ad campaign from 2012 was chosen, along with a 2020 campaign to discover the patterns and changes throughout time in regards to racial inclusivity. The juxtaposition of a few campaigns from the same brand over a span of several years allowed for an insightful analysis of the brand's communication tactics of race in accordance with the trends and the social media movements that were prominent each year. Therefore, the 50 photographs used as a sample for the multimodal discourse analysis were purposefully chosen to fit into the criteria of relevance, progression, and conformity with social movements. The five brands chosen for this study are key players in the luxury fashion industry, and they provide a reliable insight into how the leading companies of the sector approach racial representation.

3.2.2. Method of Analysis

Content analysis is the most suitable way of approaching the analysis of the media text chosen, as it allows for the identification and quantification of paramount categories of visual content, and for the perusal of the prevailing relationship between the categories (Lazović, 2012). By assigning meanings to the visual elements portrayed in the ad campaigns, underlying messages can be brought to light. The multimodal critical discourse analysis, with a focus on visual images, guides the qualitative results, as the advertisements used generally do not contain textual elements. Through the set of tools presented by Machin and Mayr (2012) for visual analyses, the qualitative results section takes into account what the various ideas and values that the objects pictured, from clothing pieces to the *mise-en-scène*, represent. This analysis is done as transparently and objectively as possible, as it solely analyzes the visual elements and connects them to the concepts explored in the theoretical framework without additional biased interpretations of the contents of the photographs from the campaigns.

The industry of luxury fashion has historically conveyed the messages of opulent lifestyles, standing out due to the exclusivity and the uniqueness of the products offered, and buying into a dream of belonging to an elite social class (Dubois & Paternault, 1995). Thus, this industry is known for strategically communicating material interests and selling dreams to their consumers (Von Wachenfeldt, 2019), however, through communicating a certain exclusivity, they may have avoided conveying the notion of inclusivity. As a result, the multimodal discourse analysis contributes towards answering the research question as it fundamentally analyzes how race is represented by the brands and communicated to their audiences. These campaigns, due to their considerable visual content of color, imagery, and in some cases text, often demand for a multimodal discourse analysis (Berger, 2016). Furthermore, since this is a study of fashion campaigns, the garments are also visually analyzed as clothing pieces can indicate “conformity or resistance to socially defined expectations for behavior” (Rubinstein, 2001). This analysis additionally compares ad campaigns from one brand with those of another, in order to find recurring patterns and symbols, as the images often can convey similar messages, or contradict each other (Rose, 2007).

As discussed earlier, the principal aim of the qualitative analysis is to uncover the patterns, themes, and visual aspects that characterize the communication tactics of racial inclusivity in the

advertising campaigns of luxury brands. Hall's encoding and decoding theory is the foundation behind this analysis, as the negotiated, intended, and oppositional readings help guide it. The intended reading is the explicit visual aspects present in the photographs of the ad campaigns, they can be defined as the media text the luxury brands aim to communicate to their audience. Thus, in the qualitative analysis of the ad campaigns, this represents the elements directly expressed by the luxury brands. In contrast, the audience can dismiss the explicit data and create meanings by themselves, based on their social, cultural, and personal beliefs and values. This is the oppositional reading, and in the multimodal discourse analysis, it is the implicit meaning discovered through the analysis of the visual elements, based on the concepts expounded in the theoretical framework. Lastly, the negotiated reading of the qualitative analysis is the combination of the intended and oppositional readings, the middle ground between what the brands wanted to communicate and what the audience perceived from that communication in regards to racial inclusivity. In the results section, this is seen in the elucidation of the visual elements of the photographs, with a look into how consumers perceive this. As a result, the qualitative results section deals with the explicit meanings of the photographs, contrasted with the implicit meanings derived from the chosen media texts. The visual critical discourse analysis aimed to be completely transparent, avoiding the interference of the personal background of the researcher.

3.3. Quantitative Analysis

The next step of the data gathering process for this research paper is through the means of surveying, which is the quantitative method of the study. It is an integral step, as audience engagement in terms of brands' online presence is valuable in comprehending their loyalty and perception of brands (Krebs & Lischka, 2017). The survey was done through Qualtrics, and it was distributed in several ways including: social media, mobile, and email. The technological advancements in the survey collection aid in increasing the ways that the researcher can interact with the respondents, by utilizing an extended range of advertisements, visual content, and a range of such stimuli (Couper, 2005). The survey facilitates the answering of the second part of the research question, which is how the audience of the fashion luxury brands perceive the messages that the brands communicate through their advertisements. Therefore, the survey participants were chosen to be people actively engaged on social media and being aware of fashion luxury brands,

thus being either active consumers of luxury products, or active followers of the brands' social media pages, or people who keep up-to-date with the industry.

This thesis was conducted with research ethics in mind at all times, and strived to avoid bias in all aspects, including in data analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, all of the survey participants consented to take part in the study and had the liberty to stop responding at any given time were they not comfortable with answering the questions. The answers recorded on Qualtrics were completely anonymous to ensure participant integrity and be ethical.

3.3.1. Measurements

This thesis aimed to survey 150 participants regarding their luxury fashion consumption and perception of the communication on racial exclusivity based on campaigns of the aforementioned luxury brands. In total, there were 199 participants, however, after data clean-up due to incomplete responses, the total number of participants was 152 ($N = 152$), which met the aim of the study in terms of the amount of data gathered. Out of all the respondents, there were 111 females making 73.0% percent of the total share, 40 were male, making 26.3% of the total share, and 1 non-binary/third gender. Additionally, there was an option that offered the participants to not share their gender, however, no participant chose that. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 47 years old, with the average age being 24.07 ($SD = 4.36$). Thus, while there was a variety of participants of different ages, 131 of them were in their 20s, making up 86.2% of the overall share. This was the ideal age range in terms of diversity but also exposure to current affairs and social movements as the respondents were specifically chosen to be over 18. The majority of the participants, namely 60.5% of them had completed their Bachelor's degree in college, followed by 24.3% of them who completed their Master's degree. This question ensured that the participants were educated, which is an integral aspect prior to asking them on their analysis and interpretation of racial inclusivity in ad campaigns. Participants based in the Netherlands dominated the study with 40.8% of the total sample, followed by participants in Armenia with 12.5%, and those based in the UK and Northern Ireland with 8.6%. The rest of the countries the participants were based in included Germany, Austria, Canada, Denmark, United States of America, Belgium, France, Greece, India, Poland, Portugal, Spain, United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Malaysia, Nepal, New

Zealand, Pakistan, Qatar, Sweden, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Moreover, 93 of the respondents belonged to the White/Caucasian ethnic group totaling 61.2% of the sample, followed by 23 Eastern Asians that made up 15.1% of the sample, and 10 Asian - Indians with 6.6%. The remaining ethnic groups were Hispanic, Black/African-American, Mixed Race, and others, which included Middle Eastern and Cypriot participants. Evidently, the survey participants had diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicities and countries of residence, to provide increasingly accurate results that would not be solely based on a single location as the recent movements and the protests for racial discriminations (e.g. the BLM movement) have been relevant worldwide through social media (Persio, 2020). Furthermore, the yearly household incomes were asked in order to comprehend the participants' financial abilities and/or inclinations towards the purchase of luxury products. Seeing that most participants were in their 20s, possible students, the modal income was less than €20,000 which was chosen by 46 participants. This was followed by €60,000 to €79,999, which was chosen by 26 participants. Yearly household incomes that were more than €80,000 made up 26.9% of the entire sample.

3.3.2. Procedure

The survey commenced by asking questions about the respondents' age and background in order to assure that the participants involved are in accordance with this study's expected demographics. It proceeded by asking about their interest and involvement with luxury fashion brands, which further narrowed down the reliability of the study participants. Existing scales were used to effectively gather and understand the data (Munshi, 2014). Additionally, the survey included three photographs from three luxury brands' advertising campaigns, namely from Chanel, Christian Dior, and Louis Vuitton. These photographs were analyzed in the content analysis of this research, and were then used to gather the participants' opinions and perceptions.

The survey had participants respond to questions that documented their demographic background, levels of education, purchasing behaviors, perceived racism, and asked them to evaluate three ad campaigns taken from the qualitative analysis section. The data was collected through Qualtrics, and later analyzed through IBM's SPSS statistics tool. This tool was used to conduct all of the necessary analyses, including several factor analyses, simple linear regression

analyses and a paired sample t-test. The factor analyses were used to clean up the data in preparation for the succeeding steps, as it grouped information accordingly in order to reveal essential patterns of correlations. Furthermore, following the factor analyses, the following three integral criteria were examined, including the correlations being above .30, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy being above .60, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity being significant. Three linear regression analyses and a paired samples t-test were conducted to test the hypotheses.

3.3.3. Operationalization

Existing scales have been utilized in the survey, as they have been tested previously for reliability and validity, and thus they offer more well-grounded results. Taking into account that this thesis focuses on racial inclusivity in the luxury fashion brand sphere, questions about racial perception and experiences were asked in order to commence with the survey and understand how participants perceive these topics and whether they have encountered events associated with it.

Luxury consumption tendencies within the participants was one of the initial steps in this study. However, consumption of luxury products is not as simplistic as it sounds due to the fact that not everybody shares the same concept of what luxury is or of what an elite social circle entails. Dubois and Duquesne (1993) suggest that varying social classes possess their own particular set of cultural values and beliefs that have the power to influence the proclivity of luxury brand consumption. Thus, this section of the survey utilized the Luxury Consumption Tendency Scale (LCTS) in order to decipher the respondents' inclination towards purchasing luxury fashion products, and how pertinent and involved they are within the world of luxury (Dogan et al., 2018). Based on this scale, statements were provided in the survey, where the participants rated their luxury consumption tendencies on a Likert-type 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree. Some examples of the statements were the following:

“I care more about what a product symbolizes than its functional features.”

“I would like to feel that I belong to an exclusive minority through the products I purchase.”

Racism is ubiquitous and detrimental, the effects and perceptions of which should be understood in order to provide a solid foundation for the survey. Initially, the Perceived Racism Scale (PRS) was utilized to measure the participants' perceived exposure to racism (Atkins, 2014). This scale is a nonspatial measure of the prevalence of perceived racism in various domains and it seeks to compute the diverse dimensions of aroused emotions and cognitive appraisals of the participants' personal encounters with racism (Atkins, 2014). The first prompt taken from the Perceived Racism Scale was to ask the participants to state the frequency of them encountering an event of racism in their lifetimes, or within the last year, as an open-ended question. This shed insight into how relevant this topic is to the participants and it was a solid foundation for the questions that follow. The second part of this question prompted the participants to give an emotional response to the last time they have experienced racism, followed by a list of emotions such as anger, anxiety, frustration, where participants rated each emotion on a Likert-type scale from 1 = not at all, and to 5 = extremely (Atkins, 2014).

Another scale that was prevalent in the survey is the Racism Reaction Scale (RRS), which was created by Thompson et al. (1990) as a part of a racial awareness activity. A question was asked regarding how the respondents react when they perceive a sight where racism is evident, for example an advertising campaign of a luxury brand that either does not feature any black models, or features them in a problematic manner. Similarly, the participants rated a list of actions, such as "ignore it", "try to change things", among others, on a Likert-type scale from 1 = not at all, and to 5 = extremely.

The next part of the survey focused on the purchasing behaviors of the respondents, and it utilized the Purchasing Involvement Scale (PIS) developed by Slama and Tashchian (1985). This scale aids in the comprehension and prediction of consumer behavior regarding the brands and the ad campaigns they communicate to their audiences. According to Kassarian (1981), there are varying consumer types that can be recognized due to the level of their involvement with purchasing, stating that this involvement consequently affects their purchasing behavior. Apart from purchasing involvement, other concepts that require to be identified are shopping enthusiasm and need for cognition, which are all determinants of purchasers' motivation (Schmidt & Spreng, 1996). Shopping emanates various instrumental rewards, such as a bargain price, and experiential rewards, such as enjoying the shopping process (Schmidt & Spreng, 1996). Purchasing

involvement does not relate to shopping enthusiasm or need for cognition, and it essentially means that individuals can be actively engaged in purchasing behaviors for the augmentation of satisfaction with the purchase (Schmidt & Spreng, 1996). The general measure of the purchasers' self-relevance of purchasing activities is the entire concept of purchasing involvement (Karaatli, 2015). Thus, with the help of this scale, the following prompts will be asked to the participants:

“I feel like I have to browse through many alternatives in order to make sure I get the best product,”

“I prefer to purchase from brands that portray various models in their ad campaigns, particularly ones I can relate to physically,” and so forth.

The questions will be answered through a Likert-type scale with five choices, from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree. This section provided insight into the mindset of individuals when they engage in purchasing activities, and it measured their purchasing involvement of the luxury brands that were studied in the qualitative part of this thesis.

The next part of the survey portrayed three photographs from three ad campaigns from three luxury fashion brands: Chanel, Christian Dior, and Louis Vuitton. The prompt was for the respondents to rate the following statements for each brand and their ad on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree:

“This brand comes to mind immediately when i want to purchase a fashion product

“This brand captures the times”

“The design of this brand's ads is really well done,” among other similar statements.

All of the aforementioned scales provided a solid foundation for the survey, which aimed to collect reliable results for the answering of the research question.

3.3.4. Factor Analysis

The first factor analysis done was to identify the emotions felt by participants upon encountering an event of racism, the responses to which were taken from the Perceived Racism Scale by Atkins (2014). The 8 items which were Likert-scale based were entered into factor analysis using Principal Components extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation based on Eigenvalues (>1.00), $KMO = .81$, $\chi^2 (N = 152, 28) = 713.09$, $p < .001$. The resultant model explained 70.4% of

variance in emotions to racism. Factor loadings of individual items onto the two factors found are presented in Table 3.1. The factors found were:

Passive Emotions. The first factor included five items that can be described as passive emotions. These included items such as hopelessness, powerlessness, shame, etc.

Active Emotions. In contrast, this factor included three items that portray active emotions, such as anger and frustration.

A reliability analysis portrayed that the passive emotion group's Cronbach's alpha was .84, while the active emotion group's was .87, signifying that both factors are acceptable.

Table 3.1. Factor and reliability analyses for scales for the participants' emotions felt during their latest encounter with an event of racism

| Items | Passive Emotions | Active Emotions |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| stress | .89 | |
| shame | .86 | |
| powerlessness | .72 | |
| hopelessness | .55 | |
| anxiety | .48 | |
| anger | | .95 |
| frustration | | .93 |
| sadness | | .66 |
| <i>Eigenvalue</i> | 4.58 | 1.06 |
| <i>Cronbach's α</i> | .84 | .87 |

In terms of the reaction to racism scale, the factor analysis is confirmative as it was based on a preexisting scale by Thompson et al. (1990). Similarly, there were 8 Likert-scale based items that were entered into factor analysis using Principal Components extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation based on Eigenvalues (>1.00), $KMO = .82$, $\chi^2 (N = 152, 28) = 593.75$, $p < .001$. The

resultant model explained 66.8% of variance in reactions to seeing racist representation in media. Factor loadings of individual items onto the two factors found are presented in Table 3.2. The factors found were:

Active Reactions. The first factor included six items that can be described as active reactions to racism, such as being angry, speaking up, and trying to change things.

Passive Reactions. This factor included 2 items that represent passive reactions to racism, including to ignore it or be powerless. The factor analysis demonstrated that powerless had a .63 loading for the active reactions and a .49 loading for the passive reactions, however, I've decided to assign it to passive despite its lower rank as the content better corresponds to that factor.

A reliability analysis portrayed that the active reaction group's Cronbach's alpha was .89, meaning that the factor is acceptable, while the passive reaction group's was .12, which signifies that the items in that factor are not reliable. However, the variables found in this factor analysis were not utilized in the results section, as the previous factor analysis conveyed a similar idea and was more reliable.

Table 3.2. Factor and reliability analyses for scales for the participants' reactions upon seeing a racist representation in media

| Items | Active Reactions | Passive Reactions |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| angry | .84 | |
| frustrated | .80 | |
| try to change things | .79 | |
| speak up | .79 | |
| stressed | .78 | |
| sad | .76 | |
| ignore it | | .83 |
| powerless | | .49 |
| <i>Eigenvalue</i> | 4.19 | 1.15 |
| <i>Cronbach's α</i> | .89 | .12 |

The final factor analysis measured the participants' purchasing behaviors to identify their purchasing involvement based on the scale by Karaatli (2015). Respondents were asked to respond to 8 statements regarding their purchasing behaviors on a 5-item Likert-scale that scaled from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The 8 statements were analyzed using the Principal Components extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation based on Eigenvalues (>1.00), $KMO = .76$, $\chi^2 (N = 152, 28) = 346.57$, $p < .001$. The resultant model explained 56.6% of variance in the respondents' purchasing behaviors. Factor loadings of individual items onto the two factors found are presented in Table 3.3. The factors found were:

Impulse Shoppers. This factor included 5 items and identified respondents who shop based on their impulses, and often purchase items based on symbolic reasons instead of functional. Additionally, these respondents wish to belong to exclusive groups with the clothes/accessories they purchase.

Educated Buyers. Representing respondents who take more time and put more thought when engaging in purchasing behaviors, as they often prefer ads to be more inclusive for them to be able to identify with the models and shop from the brands. Consisting of 3 items, this factor also depicts respondents who look for unique clothing instead of falling into impulsive purchasing behaviors.

A reliability analysis portrayed that the impulse shoppers group's Cronbach's alpha was .82, meaning that the factor is acceptable, while the educated buyers group's was .45, meaning that it cannot be accepted.

Table 3.3. Factor and reliability analyses for scales for the participants' purchasing behaviors regarding luxury products

| Items | Impulse Shoppers | Educated Buyers |
|--|------------------|-----------------|
| I would like to feel that I belong to an exclusive minority through the products I purchase | .84 | |
| I care more about what a products symbolizes than its functional features | .84 | |
| I usually buy products that I do not need physically but rather emotionally | .77 | |
| I prefer an expensive products over a cheap product | .69 | |
| I shop according to my desires, even when I do not need to shop | .63 | |
| I feel like I have to browse through many alternatives in order to make sure I get the best product | | .81 |
| I prefer to purchase from brands that portray various models in their ad campaigns, particularly ones I can relate to physically | | .66 |
| I am interested in products that have unique features that other products do not have | | .49 |
| <i>Eigenvalue</i> | 3.15 | 1.38 |
| <i>Cronbach's α</i> | .82 | .45 |

4. Results

4.1. Qualitative Analysis

For this section of the thesis, 50 individual ads from numerous campaigns of Chanel, Christian Dior, Versace, Giorgio Armani, and Louis Vuitton, were profoundly analyzed in order to discover the recurring themes and patterns over the years. The industry of luxury fashion has historically conveyed the messages of opulent lifestyles, standing out due to the exclusivity and the uniqueness of the products offered, and buying into a dream of belonging to an elite social class (Dubois & Paternault, 1995). Thus, this industry is known for strategically communicating material interests and selling dreams to their consumers (Von Wachenfeldt, 2019), however, through communicating a certain exclusivity, they may have avoided conveying the notion of inclusivity. As a result, this section will contribute towards the answering of the research question as it will fundamentally analyze how race is represented by the brands and communicated to their audiences. Advertisement campaigns from several leading names of the luxury industry were chosen, namely Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Christian Dior, Giorgio Armani, and Versace, due to the fact that these luxury maisons have been around for a very long time and are known for their traditions of craftsmanship and know-how, which is an indicator of their strong reputation within the luxury sector. These campaigns, due to their considerable visual content of color, imagery, and in some cases text, often demand for a multimodal discourse analysis (Berger, 2016). Furthermore, since this is a study of fashion campaigns, the garments will also be visually analyzed as clothing pieces can indicate “conformity or resistance to socially defined expectations for behavior” (Rubinstein, 2001). This analysis additionally compares ad campaigns from one brand with those of another, in order to find recurring patterns and symbols, as the images often can convey similar messages, or contradict each other (Rose, 2007). The list of patterns and themes that were unveiled during the analysis of the advertisement campaigns were extensive, which was then refined into three overarching themes: equipoise of power, veiled prejudice, and racial incongruity. The analysis will initially utilize denotation by describing what the visual materials contain, which will then be followed by connotation, which will encompass what the overall message is received as.

4.1.1. Equipoise of power

The term *equipoise of power* refers to the luxury brands' attempts in communicating an equilibrium of power among the races pictured in their ad campaigns. In a sense, this section focuses on the racial inclusivity found in the campaigns, coupled with the power stances that aim to portray the races as being equal and convey a similar power dynamic between them. As Barthes (1972) argued, the decoding of the ad campaigns may reveal the concept of groupthink, which is what the brands wanted to communicate in general and therefore, this may not result in profoundly complex interpretations. While this section will focus on the portrayal of balance between the races, it is important to keep Campbell's (1991) point in mind, that balance may be depicted but it may not represent the beliefs and values of the entire society. After all, advertisement campaigns are prepared by trained marketing executives, who strategically depict what they wish to communicate to their audience. Nevertheless, the analysis delves deep into the denotations, as well as connotations, which will provide a holistic view of the research question.

Chanel's Spring/Summer 2012 campaign, shot by the late Karl Lagerfeld, is an exemplary advertisement campaign that possesses the essential visual cues to be assigned to this theme. The images from the campaign are shot entirely in black and white and they portray two models, a black female and a white female, with cropped hair, as they pose in a variety of ballet poses. In two of the images from the campaign, the white model is pictured to wear white, while the black model is pictured to wear black. And in the next two images, both models are seen to wear all-white outfits. Initially, the duality of black and white is highlighted in the campaign, not only due to the clothing being black and white, but also the models, and the black and white photography. There is an equilibrium of power as in three of the four images chosen, both models are of the same height, and positioned in the same fashion: the white model on the right, while the black model on the left. Solely in Figure 4.1, the black model is pictured on the left, and is above the white model, as both are suspended in air, clutching onto the barre. The models create a synchronic image in every photo as they mirror each other's elegant poses. The aspect of both races being in sync additionally emphasizes that they possess a similar level of authority and power. Shot in black and white at the beach on a cloudy day, the background is rather gray which instantly draws the viewer's attention to the models and the garments they wear. Additionally, the clothing featured on the campaign is mostly diaphanous and intricately embroidered, which is an

indicator of luxury brands and the high quality fabrics utilized in their clothing pieces. The equality in power is also seen in an image where both models are wearing the iconic Chanel tweed blazer in white (Figure 4.1: Chanel's 2012 S/S campaign), paired with a white tweed pencil skirt. This outfit reflects the image of a refined businesswoman, and since both the models are wearing the absolute same thing, it reflects that both black and white women are in power, who should be respected in the workplace as, with the dainty ballerina poses, they hold utter elegance, grace and confidence. Another integral detail in all of the images of this campaign is that both models wear white wristbands and white shoes, sandals and heels. This detail signifies the similar fashion both models are portrayed in, without prejudice.



Figure 4.1: Chanel Spring/Summer 2012 Campaign

Louis Vuitton's Spring/Summer 2020 Campaign is a prime example of how the times have changed and how the luxury maison has taken steps into communicating racial inclusivity to their consumers. In contrast to their Spring/Summer 2012 Campaign that lacked racial inclusivity, the 2020 campaign stands out due to its strong presence of models of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Both campaigns are equally visually pleasing, with delicate and diaphanous fabrics that convey the notion of luxury and refinement. The 2020 campaign features both white models and black models, with their natural hair colors and hair textures. The hair texture is an integral visual aspect that demonstrates how there is no Westernization of the black models or a beautification of the white models, but rather, they are pictured exactly as they are, in their natural states. Furthermore, all of the models are portrayed wearing similar clothes from the collection, signifying the equality between the individuals pictured. While the female's collection campaign features an equal distribution of white and black models, the campaign for the men's collection of 2020 features predominantly male black models clad in well-tailored suits, with translucent fabrics flowing in the air. The clothing is rather plain, which is why the models wearing them are juxtaposed against a background with heavy prints. Similar to their 2012 campaign, the floral element plays a significant role in the campaign, as it is a known indicator for the spring and summer seasons. Designating Virgil Abloh as Louis Vuitton's artistic director of the men's collections in 2018 was a move towards the right direction in achieving inclusivity within the luxury fashion industry, as he is the third appointed black designer of a luxury French maison (Chin, 2018). The campaigns that followed Abloh's appointment portrayed a new level of racial transparency in the industry, not only in the brand's campaigns but also on the runway (Dike, 2019).

Christian Dior's 2021 menswear campaign is in collaboration with a Ghanaian artist named Amoako Boafo and it exclusively features black male models, which is the brand's first ever all-black fashion show (De Klerk, 2020). The designs of the apparel are reflections of the artist's paintings, as the works are printed on the clothes themselves. The photographs are taken in natural lighting against a neutral concrete background, which shifts the viewer's attention directly to the model and the clothing. The paintings of black men on light sweaters, worn by black male models, creates a sort of mirroring effect that goes in accordance with the title of the collection, "Portrait of an Artist." Furthermore, apart from the paintings being meticulously printed on the clothing with intricate detailing of the finger painting technique, the collection is also characterized by berets and Breton stripes that showcase the brand's French origin. Thus, Dior's 2021 Spring/Summer menswear campaign is a mix of the maison's French heritage and African artistry. The compositions of the images in this campaign are quite basic in the sense that they are unostentatious, such as the solid gray background against which the models are posing, which is a

tactic to focus the viewer's attention directly to the model and the clothes he is wearing as can be seen in Figure 4.2. This aspect in the images conforms to Schroeder et al.'s (2010) point that luxury brands follow the classicist style and that means repudiating explicit conspicuous consumption. There exists a distinct collocation between Dior's 2021 menswear campaign and classicism, as while luxury brands tend to adopt this style to communicate artisanship, wealth, beauty, and refinement, they have to do so in a way that steers clear of the inherent racial prejudice and power asymmetry that defined the era of classicism. By uniquely employing models of African descent and showcasing clothing by a Ghanaian artist while using the classicist style of unadorned imagery, the campaign takes advantage of the art style in a revolutionary way that highlights black models, black talent, and black artistry.



Figure 4.2: Amoako Boafo's collaboration with Christian Dior, 2021 menswear campaign

The theme of art remains consistent for the brand's womenswear campaign of the same season, where all of the photographs resemble Renaissance paintings in Caravaggio's style. Chiaroscuro lighting prevails throughout the entire campaign, as the play between light and

shadow highlights the clothing of the season. The style reinforces the concepts of luxury, wealth, and exclusivity - which reflects Christian Dior's heritage and denotes a historical period distinguished by wealth and power. Both white and black models are equally portrayed in the campaign, draped in Dior's garments. The 17th century artistic inspiration for the campaign is juxtaposed with modern outfit details such as the woman's power suit and revealing dresses. This mix of classic and modern defines the campaign, and the evident inclusion of black models further highlights the brand's racial transparency, which is an aspect that contradicts the traditional style of classicism. These models are equally distributed throughout the campaign, with poses that complement and mirror the other models. Therefore, the brand adeptly follows Schroeder and Zwick's (2004) theory that advertising imagery contributes towards the resolution of cultural contradictions, as the ad campaign seemingly aims to rectify cultural contradictions. This Spring/Summer 2021 campaign adopts a multi-ethnic approach through a classicist style, which fortifies the relatability the brand is communicating to their audiences - the balanced racial representation and the power symmetry stand out in the scenery adorned by *mise-en-scène* traditionally archetypal of Renaissance paintings. Half-burnt candles in candelabras, a wide array of exquisitely cut fruit, and substantial fabrics in rich earth toned colors draped on the floors and the dining table, are all details that additionally reflect the style of Caravaggio's paintings. Garments the women are clad in range from delicate dresses that drape the models' bodies, to brocaded full dresses that take up significant space in their overpoweringly intricate patterns. All of the colors in the collection uphold the color scheme of *chiaroscuro* and Caravaggio's paintings with their deep earthy tones, royal blues, and rich crimsons, as pictured in one of the photographs from the campaign in Figure 4.3. However, while both this campaign and Louis Vuitton's collaboration with the Ghanaian artist possess good racial representations, the style of the Renaissance painting does mostly conform to an aesthetic that caters predominantly to white tastes. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis (H4) assumes that the survey participants will identify Louis Vuitton's ad campaign as more racially inclusive than Christian Dior's, upon being exposed to one photograph from each brand's campaign. These patterns and colors are further found on Dior's iconic canvas book bags and the Caro bags, which serve as additional details in the painting-like images of the campaign.



Figure 4.3: Christian Dior's Spring/Summer 2021 Campaign

The campaign of Christian Dior's 2021 resort collection also deserves a mention, due to its major presence of black female models who are all pictured in various power poses. The photos were taken against stony backgrounds, which invoke the feelings of ancient European grounds. The setting, as Machin and Mayr (2012) stated, proficiently connotes the ideas and the discourses, the actions and the identities. In this case, the stony European setting creates a colder atmosphere, which is juxtaposed by the warmth of the burning candles and the warm colors of the clothing. Heavily influenced by the creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri's Italian background, the garments take inspiration from the Puglia region (Carreon, 2021). In three of the images from the campaign, black models are shot individually, two of them wearing golden jeweled headbands that look like crowns, all of them clad in flowy and intricately embellished dresses and brown leather corsets. Two of them are shot sitting on stone steps with a myriad white candles burning around them. One of the models leans against the steps, with her hands spread wide apart, looking directly into the camera. The power she holds is intense, as the candles, the crown, the assertive non-traditionally feminine pose create an unequivocal sense of strength. The other model is shot in the same setting,

however, she has her legs crossed as the voluminous ornate skirt of the gown falls around her. She has her hands to the side as she seems to be mid-thought or mid-explanation, and all the focus falls on her. Being photographed still in that position, the black model seems to be holding the room in her hands, making the audience cling onto her next move. The gold headband, the sturdy leather corset, and the hazy smokes from the side of the image further contribute to the depiction of her ferocity. In another image from the campaign, three models are depicted, two of whom are of African descent while one is white, and they are all wearing similar flowy white dresses with daintily detailed Tombolo lace, which is reminiscent of 15th century lace made popular in the South of Italy, and floaty skirts (Carreon, 2021). The white graceful femininity of the dresses is contrasted by the robust brown leather element found in the corset on the white model and the thick belt on the black model. Thus, in both their menswear and womenswear campaigns, Dior strategically utilizes the classicist style in a way that empowers models of African descent and maintains a level of balance and equality that has the power to positively relate to the viewers.

4.1.2. Veiled prejudice

The theme of *veiled prejudice* relates to the ad campaigns of luxury brands that have a problematic portrayal of black models that are either racist or simply lack appropriate representation. Marketing executives of luxury brands who design the campaigns, especially in recent years, may be inclined to be “politically correct” and include black models in order to be one with the times and to appear racially inclusive in their communication, however, this may be done in a way that is incongruous or ignorant. Furthermore, this section will cover the notion of tokenism as construed by Simpson and Weiner (1989) that is prevalent in the fashion industry. Cultural appropriation will also be included in this section, as it is a significant theme in the inherently discriminatory activities from various brands within the industry. This theme will additionally encompass the constituents of the images in the campaigns in order to connect them with the theme of veiled prejudice and broader cultural meanings (Dyer, 1982). In advertisement campaigns, storytelling is done through images, and it is important to keep in mind that the story may be more convoluted than what is explicitly portrayed (Berger, 2016). However, Machin and Mayr (2012) argue that the meanings behind advertisements are communicated by visual features, which is what this entire analysis aims to elucidate on without bias.

Washed ashore at a mystifyingly scintillating beach is the entire essence of Versace's Spring/Summer 2013 campaign. The images portray various male and female models, with only one black female model, as they are photographed in various poses. Paraphernalia relating to the Greek culture is quite significant in this campaign, as seen in the gladiator shoes on both female and male models, the flowy dresses with golden detailing, the golden logo patterned undergarments worn by male models. This aspect highlights the luxury brand's association with Greek mythology, as the logo of Versace is the Medusa - a fitting metaphor for what the brand communicates through their ad campaigns and garments. According to ancient Greek mythology, Medusa was known for having snakes for hair and a gaze so powerful it would turn anyone to stone, literally strike them with absolute terror (Glennon, 2017). Thus, Versace's aim is to empower women and make them appear powerful in their fierce femininity, and be able to manipulate the traditional male gaze (Hengel, 2016). In the campaign, this is reinforced by the fact that the female models are clad in flowing dresses with gold detailing, while the men are solely wearing gladiator sandals and black underwear embellished with golden details of the brand's notable pattern. Thus, the lack of clothing on male models, and the fact that the majority of them are splashed on the sparkling sand while the female models stand in power poses, placed higher and taller than the opposite gender. The problematic representation of the black race is evident in not only the fact that there is only one black model, but by the prevailing issue that while the rest of the models are white but tan, the skin colors are heavily edited to reflect each other. Thus, the black model's skin, as well as the white models' skins, are edited in such a way that they all look as though they have the same skin tone. As a result, for the average viewer, it may be tough to distinguish the races represented in the campaign. Another factor that adds to the darkness of all of the models' skins, is that the shoot represents nighttime with the strong influence of sapphire blue that represents the night sky. Therefore, race gets eclipsed in this campaign. All of the images (see Figure 4.4), are overpowered by the blues, juxtaposed with the warmth of the orange dress of the female model, and the intense scarlet of one of the male model's hair. Additionally, the black model's hair is sleek, straight and long, which is the Western ideal of beauty. The model is, therefore, styled and edited to conform to a Western standard of beauty, that is not characteristic of her race. The representation of the black female model in this campaign goes in accordance with

Newman's (2017) statement that brands choose models of color that possess features that define the European standard beauty, such as small noses and slim figures.



Figure 4.4: Versace Spring/Summer 2013 Campaign

Giorgio Armani, despite the brand's persisting prominence in the luxury fashion industry, has been problematic in their representation of models of color for years. In their "New Normal" campaign for Spring/Summer 2016, the designer opted to shoot iconic models from the 90s in a natural state. There are 4 models in the two photos chosen from that campaign. The first photo solely shows four white models, with the wind sweeping their hair back and looking entirely natural. Dressed in all white, the models gaze into the camera with solemn facial expressions. All of the photographs are shot in black and white, to imitate the natural, classic look the campaign was going for. In the second photo, four additional models are pictured, out of whom one is black, one is Asian, and the remaining two are mixed race. Thus, while the first photo consisted of an

entirely white model selection, the second one went for a more racially inclusive approach. However, this was not done in a favorable manner and can be deemed problematic due to the following reason: the black model is portrayed wearing a white striped shirt, while the other three models who have light skin are wearing black striped shirts. There is an evident contrast between the models' skin color and what they are wearing, and the fact that the white models in the previous photo were wearing all white, that can deliver the discriminatory message that black models cannot wear black, while white models can wear both colors. However, this isn't the only time Armani problematically portrayed black models in terms of what they are wearing. Emporio Armani's Fall/Winter 2018 campaign encompasses the theme of an office party, with a vast group of men and women of various ages. There are seven female models and five male models, out of whom there is one black female and one black male. The models stand close together, in a line, hugging or leaning into one another. The two black models are placed side by side, while the white, Asian, and mixed race models are spread out evenly. Furthermore, taking into account the fact that it is an office party, all of the male models are wearing formal suits except for the black male who's pictured wearing a black leather jacket. The leather jacket not only stands out amidst all the formal suits, but it makes the black male seem rebellious and delinquent. Additionally, the rest of the male models have their hands around females' waists, while the black male has his hands in his pockets, further highlighting his wayward ways.

The brand's problematic portrayal of race does not end there. In the Spring/Summer 2021 womenswear campaign of Giorgio Armani, two models are shot side by side, the white model on the left, and the black model on the right. Shot in black and white, the campaign highlights luminous silk fabrics and intricate dainty dresses. The white model is wearing a printed silk suit and is leaning against a wall while looking directly into the camera. Her clothes, her stance, her gaze, and her slicked back straight hair add to a powerful representation of a strong female. With her hands in her pockets, she gives off the impression that she is sure of herself and is laid back. In contrast, the black model is pictured from the side looking toward the white model. Her back is completely hunched, making a semi-circle, which conveys the opposite image of the white model. With her hunched pose, no direct eye contact, hands behind her back, the black model is seen as weak, powerless, more of a follower while the white model is shown as a leader. Figure 4.5 portrays the facial expression of the black model as tired, while the white model looks confident.

Thus, even though this campaign aired following the BLM movement, the luxury company still fails to represent the black race in an appropriate manner that would empower and relate to the brand's black consumers.



Figure 4.5: Giorgio Armani's Spring/Summer 2021 Campaign

4.1.3. Racial Incongruity

Lack of representation of black models will be covered in the theme of *racial incongruity*. While some brands, as seen in the previous theme, attempt to be racially inclusive even if they do so in an ill-mannered way, this section will focus on luxury brands that have absolutely no racial representation in their advertisement campaigns. While the Louis Vuitton ad campaign of Spring/Summer 2020 solely featured black models which was not inclusive in terms of diversity, it still offered an insight into appropriate representation of the black race in fashion. Throughout time, the fashion industry was chiefly white dominated, which is why all black campaigns can be refreshing and eye-opening, particularly recently as a political response to BLM. Whereas an all-white representation can seem problematic in current times, because it fails to address an integral

segment of society and majorly contributes to the issue of under-representation in the fashion industry. Newman (2017) found that barely 9% of the models portrayed in photographs of beauty and fashion magazines were black, and this indubitably implies campaigns as they are frequently found in those types of magazines such as Vogue, Elle, and Glamour. Such fashion magazines belonging to global media, provide advertisers with the opportunity of communicating to and reaching the target audience that shares similar consumption-related symbols (Terpstra & David, 1991). Moreover, this lack of representation stretches into the fashion runways as well, as black models solely make up a small fraction of the models who showcase the luxury brands' garments and who are involved in exclusive editorial shoots (Newman, 2017). Many years ago, lack of representation of various races in the media was not questioned, as it was the norm. However, with the rising social movements such as the BLM, and the fight for equality, lack of representation in this age is not only problematic, but impertinent. Thus, this theme will encompass all of the ad campaigns chosen for this study that were not racially inclusive. This theme will also be the weakest in its racially inclusive communication with the brands' target audiences as the management of brand equity is done through the management of brand communication (Berger, 2016).

Staying in line with the Greek imagery and sapphire blue tones, the Versace Eros campaign for both men and women portrays two white models. The male model is of Italian descent with a skin tone that is heavily tanned and edited as prevalent in the previous campaigns of Versace mentioned in this analysis, and the female is white with ginger hair. In one photo, they are side by side, the man on his knee, while the woman stands tall and proud. Clad in a flowy white dress with a gold belt, gold bracelet, and gold gladiator-style sandal heels, the woman is the depiction of a Greek Goddess. The male model is photographed wearing underwear and gold gladiator shoes, with a glistening body highlighting his muscled physique and portraying his immortal strength. Thus, the male model bears resemblance to a Greek God, which represents the name of the luxurious perfume being advertised. In Greek mythology, Eros is the god of love and sex, and the sculpted, oiled body of the male model reflects just that. In another photo from the Eros campaign, the male model wears nothing but a Versace robe that has a crimson red outer layer highlighting the fiery love element, and an azure blue inner layer that reflects the blue serenity of the photo. He is clutching onto a massive turquoise bottle of the perfume, as he intensely gazes into the camera.

Thus, both models are portrayed in power poses, but there is no inclusion of models of color in order to portray diversity and inclusion in the campaign. The brand's Spring/Summer 2011 campaign also featured no black models and was so disconnected from reality in its model representation. The campaign featured three models, one female and two males, all of whom were white with bleached platinum blond hair. In both photos from the campaign, the male models solely wear black leather pants that create immense contrast with the paleness of their skin and the blond of their hair. The female model wears a dress in both photographs, as she stares directly into the camera while the male models look sideways. The elements in this campaign connote the power of the woman who stares right into the eyes of the viewer, while the lack of clothing on the men and the lack of eye contact make them seem inferior as the focus is on the woman. Thus, the brand achieves in portraying the figure of a strong female, it fails to represent diversity.

Louis Vuitton has represented black models in their recent campaigns, however, their Spring/Summer 2012 campaign lacked representation. The campaign carries similarities to the brand's more progressive campaigns due to the elaborate floral elements that denote the spring and summer collections and the pastel hues of the garments. As depicted in Figure 4.6, the entire campaign is shot in a diner scene, with pastel pink silk curtains that further connote the luxurious fabrics of the brand. However, it solely features two white females who differ from one another based on their hair colors, one has black hair while the other has platinum white hair, which showcases how the brand aimed to create contrast between the two models. With the abundance of milkshakes and sundaes, all placed on either side of the models to create symmetry, add to the high-class, pin-up aesthetic that the campaign is going for. There is a symmetrical balance among the elements in the advertisement campaign, with blank/white space in the background that brings focus to the models and the pastel pink details of the setting. The models face each other, with facial expressions that signify they are mid-conversation and possibly engaged in gossip - and as viewers, we are merely spectators watching the scene unfold before us. Due to the similarity of the two models, the mirroring of each other's outfits, and the playful nature of their demeanor, the campaign reinforces the notion that fashion is uniquely exercised by solely a part of a given group (Simmel, 1997). Unfortunately, in this case, the part of a group merely reflects one race, signifying racial incongruity. Brands in the past were not as racially inclusive as they are now, following certain social media movements and more people speaking up about the issue. The images from

the campaign possess explicit and implicit ideological significance, therefore operating as means of cultural domination and persuasion (Berger, 2016). Explicitly, they denote the lack of diversity within the exclusive members of society who consume luxury products, and implicitly, they connote a prejudice against individuals who do not conform to the European beauty standard.



Figure 4.6: Louis Vuitton's Spring/Summer 2012 Campaign

Ideologies allow for the validation and preservation of power relations, often considered to be the groupthink as they reflect what the majority believe in (Fairclough, 2013). In this theme of racial incongruity, these ideologies reflect the idea of power relations in terms of race, as the advertisement campaigns mentioned in this section do not portray any black models whatsoever, largely giving power to the white race. According to Fairclough (2013), hegemony is the driving force of ideologies, as it depicts the cultural, economic, and political domination of social groups in a given society. Giorgio Armani released a Gift campaign in 2020 for their Christmas holiday collection, which is a holiday celebrated by many members of society. Nevertheless, the campaign solely portrayed two white females and two white males, completely disregarding all other races. This was deemed problematic because of its lack of representation, especially due to the fact that it was aired months after the BLM movement took the world by storm. Shot in black and white in

a heritage building, the photos of the campaign are reflective of heritage, luxury, and glamour as the men wear velour suits while the females wear sparkly gowns. Furthermore, the women stare into the camera depicting powerful female figures, while the men look to the side, which is an element seen in Versace's Spring/Summer 2011 campaign that also lacked racial representation.

No single ad campaign has the ability to convey the absolute truth and reflect the true reality that we live in, however, they can be used to illustrate the brand's values and beliefs, what they stand for and against (Van Dijk, 1995). As seen in the theme of equipoise of power, Chanel has been successful in depicting a balance of black and white models in their previous campaigns, even before the social movements were trending worldwide. However, their recent Cruise Campaign of 2020/2021, shot in an intimate setting of a mansion that possesses elements representative of luxury such as stone columns and a massive swimming pool, only utilized their white brand ambassador - Lily Rose Depp. While the reclusive location and the presence of one model explains that the campaign was shot during the pandemic and thus, the brand opted to do more of a low-key shoot of their cruise collection, it does not translate well as a campaign that came out post-BLM. Similar to Chanel's previous campaigns, the concept of absolute elegance and femininity is favorably emphasized through the pose of the model and the clothing featured. The iconic tweed in Figure 4.7, paired with a plethora of gold details in the chain, the belt, the bikini, and the Chanel brooch highlight the essence of the brand. The natural hair done in a French braid adds to the intimate photoshoot the brand was going for, which is also seen in the natural lighting and the rich greens of the trees and the blueness of the water in the swimming pool. Thus, while the brand triumphantly conveys the notion of elegance and luxury, its lack of representation is uncharacteristic of a luxury brand of today.



Figure 4.7: Chanel's 2021 Resort Campaign featuring Lily-Rose Depp

4.2. Quantitative Analysis

4.2.1. Regression Analysis

The first hypothesis (H1) was formed with the justification that once a person is exposed to more events of racism, then they will be more likely to identify whether an ad campaign is racially inclusive or not. Stemming from their awareness of encountering events of racism, they are more likely to make sound judgments regarding a brand's communication in terms of race. Thus, to discover whether the number of times participants have been exposed to events of racism has an influence on their perceived racism scale in regards to the ad campaigns used in the survey, a simple regression analysis was conducted. Initially, the participants' response to the number of times they experienced events of racism within the past 12 months was tested for normality in terms of skewness and kurtosis, where one response (namely the number '1200') was removed as

it was considered an outlier. A simple linear regression with the participants' belief that Christian Dior's ad campaign is inclusive of race as criterion and the number of times they have been exposed to events of racism within the past 12 months as predictor was conducted. The model was found to be significant, $F(1, 149) = 11.57, p = .001, R^2 = .07$. As a result, the number of times the participants were exposed to events of racism had a positive significant influence on their perception of the Dior campaign's racial inclusivity ($b^* = .27, p = .001$), meaning that the hypothesis is accepted.

A simple linear regression with the participants' belief that Chanel's ad campaign features good racial representation as criterion and impulse shoppers, which signify participants who are driven by their impulses when it comes to shopping and shop more for symbolic purposes rather than functional, as predictor was conducted. The model was found to be significant, $F(1, 150) = 28.53, p < .001, R^2 = .16$. As a result, the type of shoppers that purchase items due to impulses and symbolic purposes had a positive significant influence on their perception of the Chanel campaign's way of representing race ($b^* = .40, p < .001$), meaning that the second hypothesis (H2) of impulse shoppers' perceiving the ad campaigns of luxury fashion brands as having good racial representation is accepted.

In order to strengthen this hypothesis, the same simple linear regression analysis was conducted with the other two luxury fashion brands' depiction of good racial representation as perceived by the impulse shoppers. Once again, impulse shoppers was the criterion, while Christian Dior's ad campaign's level of racial representation was the predictor. The model was found to be significant, $F(1, 150) = 10.72, p = .001, R^2 = .07$. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted as respondents' impulse shopping habits had a positive significant influence on how they received Christian Dior's ad campaign in terms of racial representation ($b^* = .26, p = .001$).

Louis Vuitton's representation of race in their ad campaign was also used as predictor, with impulse shoppers as criterion, in the last simple regression analysis for this hypothesis. The model was significant, $F(1, 150) = 19.58, p < .001, R^2 = .12$. The hypothesis of impulse shoppers believing that all racial representation is good and appropriate in the ad campaigns utilized in the survey is accepted for the third time, indicating its significance ($b^* = .34, p < .001$).

Similarly, another set of simple linear regression analyses were conducted to discover whether participants who responded passively upon encountering events of racism were more likely to believe that the racial representation in the ad campaigns were good or not. This was the third hypothesis (H3) formed, which assumed that participants with passive reactions towards events of racism would view representation in the campaigns as good, due to a lack of activism approach. The criterion here was the perception of Chanel's ad campaign being appropriately representative of race, with respondents who experienced passive emotions when coming across racist events as predictor. The model was significant, $F(1, 150) = 8.56, p = .004, R^2 = .05$. The hypothesis of passive emotion portraying respondents perceiving the racial representation as good in Chanel's ad is accepted, due to the positive significance found ($b^* = .23, p = .004$).

Another simple linear regression test was conducted with how respondents perceive the racial representation in Christian Dior's Spring/Summer 2021 ad campaign as criterion, and passive emotions as predictor. The model was not significant with results portraying the following, $F(1, 150) = 3.26, p = .073, R^2 = .02$. This showcased that respondents who demonstrated passive emotions when seeing an event of racism did not have a significant influence on their perception of good racial representation in Christian Dior's campaign, ($b^* = .15, p = .073$), rejecting the hypothesis.

Lastly, Louis Vuitton's ad campaign was tested in terms of how respondents, who exhibited passive emotions when encountering racial events, felt about the representation of race. Consequently, the dependent variable used in this simple linear regression analysis was the perception of racial portrayal, while the independent variable was the passive emotions. The model was found to be significant, $F(1, 150) = 19.63, p < .001, R^2 = .12$. On that account, the passive emotions experienced by participants during events of racism had a positive significant influence on how inclusive they perceived the ad campaign of Louis Vuitton to be in terms of racial representation, ($b^* = .34, p < .001$), meaning that the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, while the hypothesis was accepted for both Chanel and Louis Vuitton's ad campaigns, it was not accepted for Dior. As a result, following the three analyses, I cannot claim that passive emotions have a significant effect on the perception of racial inclusivity in luxury fashion ad campaigns.

4.2.1. Paired samples t-test

While both campaigns feature models of African descent, the Louis Vuitton campaign depicted them in power stances, unwaveringly staring directly at the camera. In contrast, the Dior campaign features them in more passive roles, which is why this fourth hypothesis (H4) was formed as visually it seems that Louis Vuitton's campaign is significantly more racially inclusive and progressive. A paired samples t-test was conducted to identify whether the survey participants found Louis Vuitton's ad campaign to be more racially inclusive than Dior's. While there was a difference in the scores for Dior's campaign ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.06$), and Vuitton's campaign ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.01$) conditions; $t(151) = -9.18$, $p < .001$. As expected, these results suggest a significant difference and prove that Louis Vuitton's ad campaign was perceived to be more racially inclusive than Dior's. Therefore, H4 is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1. Conclusion

To comprehend how luxury fashion brands communicate racial inclusivity to their consumers, 50 of their ad campaigns were analyzed and a survey was conducted with 152 respondents, where the findings portrayed that while brands may attempt to showcase racial inclusivity on the surface, the perception by consumers differs by not only what they see but through their social situations. This thesis aimed to identify the methods utilized by luxury fashion brands in their communication of racial inclusivity, and measure the consumers' perceptions of the communication. Based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the luxury fashion brands' advertising campaigns, it can be concluded that there is a difference in communication of racial inclusivity that depends on each brand and the perceptions vary accordingly. The qualitative analysis portrayed that the most inclusive racial representation, referring to the models of various races featured who exhibited a similar equilibrium of power, were done by luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, and Chanel. Whereas other luxury brands, such as Versace and Giorgio Armani, predominantly possessed a problematic portrayal of racial prejudice in their campaigns. Furthermore, the campaigns that ostensibly seem to be racially inclusive were put into a survey where participants were asked to rate them according to their perception of racial representation. Thus, the appropriate response to the research question would be that while brands may strive to communicate racial inclusivity in order to appeal to a wider audience range and be increasingly well perceived by their consumers, the perception is often not as well-received as expected. Particularly, the concept of veiled prejudice and tokenism plays a significant role here, as among the ad campaigns analyzed for this thesis, there were plenty that solely made a perfunctory attempt at representation in order to make it visually apparent that the brand was inclusive, however, a closer examination of the campaigns suggested that the representation was merely a symbolic effort and could be defined as problematic.

5.2. Discussion

The principal theory used was Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding theory, as the qualitative analysis of the ad campaigns featured a plethora of encoded messages which were

decoded in this research paper through the means of intended, oppositional, and negotiated readings. The analysis portrayed that, generally, luxury fashion brands explicitly depicted exclusivity and opulence through the *mise-en-scène*, and attempted to depict inclusivity through models of African descent. However, the oppositional reading suggested that the depiction of models of color in certain cases reinforced the notion of tokenism, as their presence in the campaigns was symbolic. While some compromise was noted between what the luxury brands intended to communicate and what the consumers perceived, the negotiated reading, with the help of data collected from the survey, demonstrated that participants found some campaigns more inclusive than others based on personal and psychological aspects such as social status, upbringing, and cultural values. Additionally, Hall's theory enabled the discovery of the three prevailing themes in the ad campaigns, such as the equipoise of power between the races, the veiled prejudice, and the racial incongruity which represented the absolute lack of representation. Upon further analysis of these themes, there were two dominant discoveries found. While some brands improved their representation over time and showcased growth and understanding of appropriate representation such as Louis Vuitton's 2012 ad campaign versus their 2020 ad campaign, other brands remained inadequate in their representation such as Giorgio Armani. Louis Vuitton's ad campaigns proved to possess not only a balance in racial representation, but also colors and patterns that put significant emphasis on the power of racial inclusivity. The responses collected from the survey further confirmed the results of the qualitative analysis, as participants found Louis Vuitton's campaigns to be more racially inclusive than Christian Dior's despite the fact that both of the campaigns, at first glance, represented models of African descent in an equal manner, holding equal power. Furthermore, the study found that a high exposure to events of racism within the participants in the past twelve months positively influenced their perception of identifying racial inclusivity in campaigns, particularly Dior's. This conformed with the media theory used, as Hall suggested a principal correlation between individuals' social situations and the meanings they invoke from media texts (Fiske, 1992).

The underlying messages existing in the ad campaigns were brought to light through the means of a multimodal discourse analysis. By evaluating the visual codes and texts in the ad campaigns, it was found that the notion of exclusivity and opulent lifestyles that luxury brands tend to communicate overshadowed the notion of inclusivity. The concept of buying into a dream

and having the need to belong to an elite social class as proposed by Dubois and Paternault (1995) is observed in the majority of the ad campaigns studied, however the inclusivity factor is missing, diminishing the perceived relatability consumers crave to have with a brand upon purchase. Moreover, the campaigns that utilized the classicist style to further enhance their heritage and artisanship depicted more inclusivity than ones that were not in that style. Hegemonic discourse was prevalent in most ad campaigns, made increasingly evident through the notion of tokenism and lack of appropriate representation.

5.3. Limitations

While the research analyzed an extensive collection of luxury fashion brands' ad campaigns to uncover the intricacies in their racial communication and juxtaposed the findings with data obtained from survey participants regarding their perceptions on the ads, it still is not free from limitations. The study solely analyzed ad campaigns from five renowned luxury brands, when in reality, there is a large pool of other luxury brands that have dealt with the topic of racial inclusivity in a completely different way. Thus, while the ad campaigns used in this thesis did offer profound insight into how the brands communicated with their target audiences at the time that the campaigns were done, it was quite limited in terms of the variety of luxury fashion brands and the years of the ad campaigns. Additionally, although there was diversity in the ethnic backgrounds of the respondents of the survey, a majority of them were White/Caucasian, and the way they perceive racial discrimination could be different from respondents that belong to other races. The survey utilized three ad campaigns for the participants to respond to, because more images would require more time to fill out, and might have discouraged some participants from completing it fully. However, if more images were provided from ad campaigns for them to respond to, the perception of consumers in regards to racial inclusivity communicated by luxury brands would have been more extensive, and as a result, more accurate. Thus, a more expansive approach to the survey would have provided increasingly profound insight into how consumers perceive the communication.

5.4. Further Research

Further research regarding this topic could include and study ad campaigns from several other luxury brands, especially ones that were established in the 21st century, as they would be more aware and advanced of social movements and would be more inclined to appease their consumers. The respondents of the survey would be more balanced in terms of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and they would be offered an incentive to provide their opinions and perceptions on an increased amount of ad campaigns from several luxury fashion brands. Nevertheless, this study succeeded in providing an in-depth analysis of various ad campaigns from renowned fashion brands and gathered audience perceptions on the topic. The world of fashion is ever-growing, particularly with the technological disruptions that occur on the regular, and thus, there is never a limit to what can be studied and to what extent. Future researchers should take the findings of this thesis into account as it would provide a vital foundation for them to build on their research. With more social movements taking the internet by storm, and more individuals advocating for equal rights and equal representation, there is hope that soon all brands will incorporate an equilibrium of power mentality when representing models of all races in their campaigns. There is always room to learn and to grow, especially in the luxury industry that should embrace inclusivity in their communication of exclusivity.

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7. Appendix

7.1. Chanel's Ad Campaigns

7.1.1. Spring/Summer 2012 campaign





7.1.2. Cruise Campaign 2021



7.1.3. Spring/Summer 2019 Campaign



7.2. Christian Dior's Ad Campaigns

7.2.1. Resort 2021 Campaign





DIOR

7.2.2. Spring/Summer 2021 Campaign



DIOR



DIOR



DIOR



7.2.3. Homme Spring/Summer 2021 Campaign





DIOR

7.2.5. Garden Campaign 2015



7.3. Giorgio Armani's Ad Campaigns

7.3.1. "New Normal" Fall 2016 Campaign



7.3.2. Fall 2018 Campaign



7.3.3. Gift 2020 Campaign



7.3.4. Spring/Summer 2021 Campaign



7.3.5. Emporio Armani Fall 2020 Campaign



7.3.6. Spring/Summer 2016 Campaign



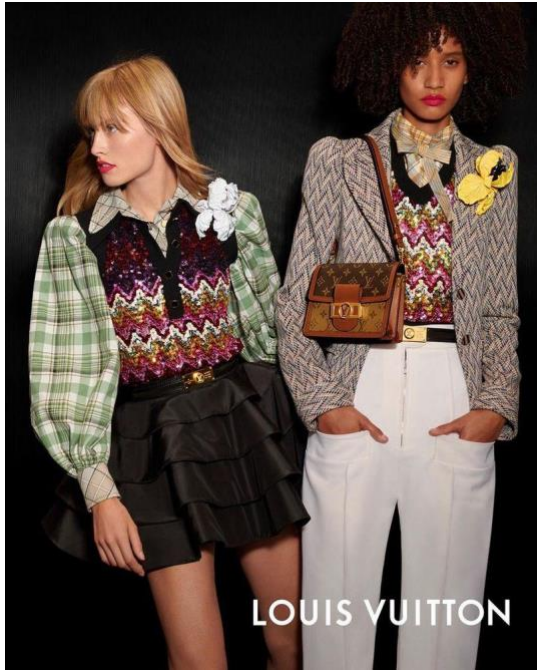
7.4. Louis Vuitton's Ad Campaigns

7.4.1. Homme Spring/Summer 2020



LOUIS VUITTON





7.4.2. Spring/Summer 2012 Campaign



Sold exclusively in Louis Vuitton stores and on louisvuitton.com. 888-VUITTON

LOUIS VUITTON



Sold exclusively in Louis Vuitton stores and on louisvuitton.com. 888-VUITTON

LOUIS VUITTON



Sold exclusively in Louis Vuitton stores and on louisvuitton.com. 888-VUITTON

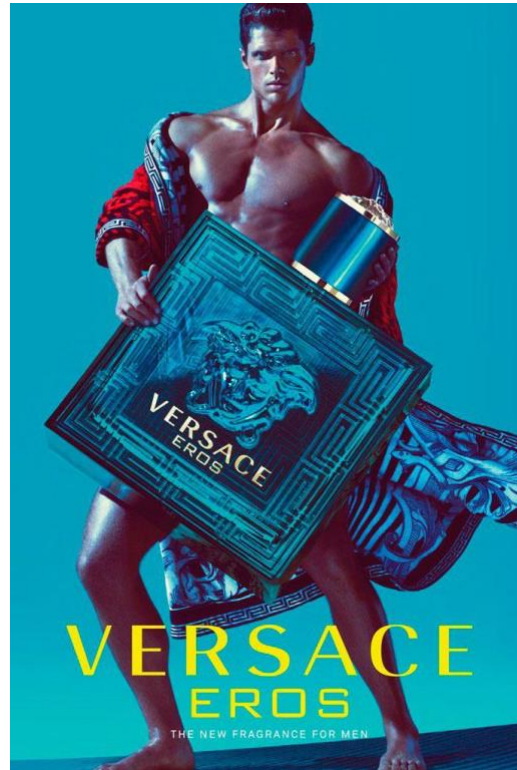
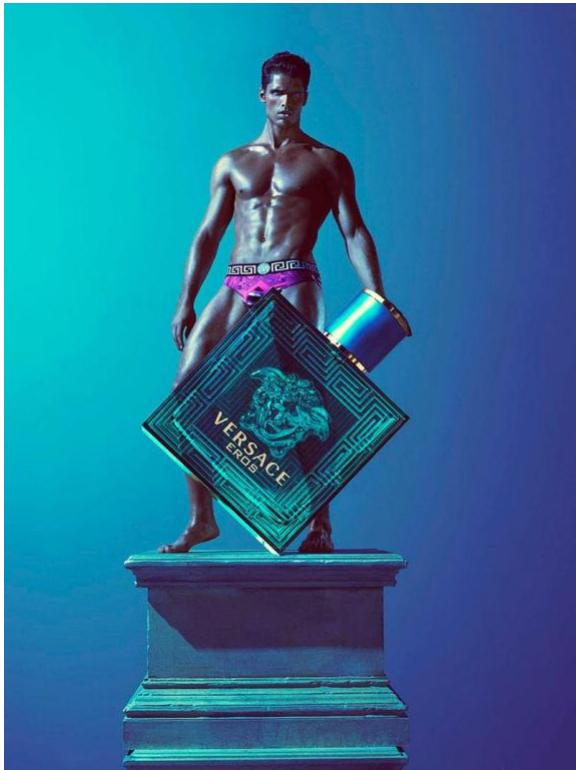
LOUIS VUITTON



LOUIS VUITTON

7.5. Versace's Ad Campaigns

7.5.1. Eros 2012 Campaign



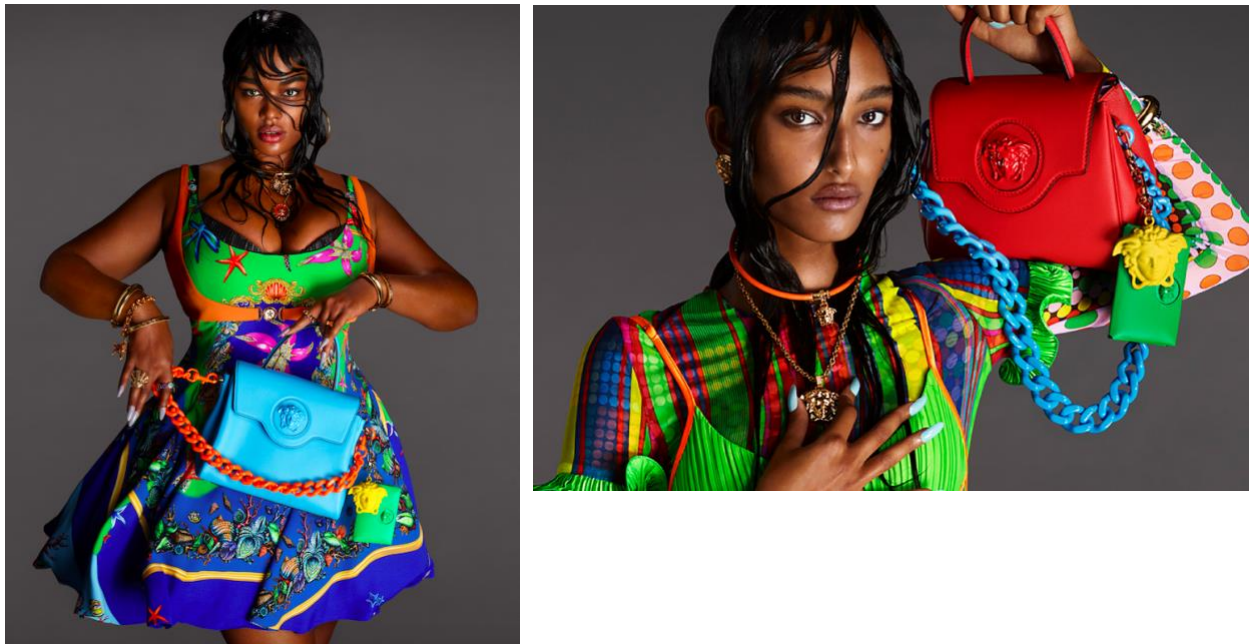
7.5.2. Spring/Summer 2013 Campaign



7.5.3. Spring/Summer 2011 Campaign



7.5.4. Spring/Summer 2021 Campaign



7.6. Survey

Informed Consent

Welcome to the research study!

As part of the Media & Creative Industries studies, I am interested in understanding how luxury fashion brands communicate racial inclusivity to their consumers, and how the consumers perceive this. You will be presented with information relevant to luxury brands and racism, and asked to answer some questions about it. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

The study should take you around 8 minutes to complete. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact me for any questions or to discuss this research, please e-mail 558839si@eur.nl.

By proceeding with this survey, you confirm that the study is voluntary, you are at least 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

Demographics

How would you describe your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

What is your ethnic background?

- White/Caucasian
- Asian - Eastern
- Asian - Indian
- Hispanic
- Black or African-American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Mixed Race
- Other

In which country do you currently reside?

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

- Less than high school degree
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree in college (2-year)
- Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (JD, MD)

Purchasing Behaviors

Information about income is very important to understand. Would you please give your best guess? Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income in (previous year) before taxes.

- Less than €20,000
- €20,000 to €39,999
- €40,000 to €59,999
- €60,000 to €79,999
- €80,000 to €99,999
- €100,000 to €149,999
- €150,000 or more

Please rate your feelings and behaviors relating to purchasing products offered by luxury fashion brands (these brands are characterized by high-quality unique products with high price points; e.g. Louis Vuitton, Balenciaga, Gucci, etc.)

| | 1 (strongly disagree) | 2 (disagree) | 3 (neither agree nor disagree) | 4 (agree) | 5 (strongly agree) |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I feel like I have to browse through many alternatives in order to make sure I get the best product | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer to purchase from brands that portray various models in their ad campaigns, particularly ones I can relate to physically | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am interested in products that have unique features that other products do not have. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer an expensive product over a cheap product | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I care more about what a product symbolizes than its functional features | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I shop according to my desires, even when I do not need to shop | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I usually buy products that I do not need physically but rather emotionally | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would like to feel that I belong to an exclusive minority through products I purchase | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

In the next 6 months, how likely are you to purchase a piece of clothing/accessory from a luxury fashion brand?

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Not likely at all

Perceived Racism

How many times have you encountered an event of racism in the past 12 months? (enter number, 0 = N/A)
an event of racism: you have seen a prejudice against someone occur due to their race, or you personally have been prejudiced against due to race.

Please rate the following emotions as the responses you have felt during your last encounters of events of racism.

| | 1 (never) | 2 (rarely) | 3 (sometimes) | 4 (often) | 5 (always) |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| anger | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| anxiety | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| sadness | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| frustration | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| hopelessness | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| powerlessness | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| stress | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| shame | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How do you react upon seeing a racist representation or lack of racially inclusive representation in media (e.g. advertisements, movies, magazines)?

| | 1 (never) | 2 (rarely) | 3 (sometimes) | 4 (often) | 5 (always) |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| angry | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| frustrated | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| sad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| stressed | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| powerless | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ignore it | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| speak up | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| try to change things | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Evaluating Ad Campaigns



Chanel S/S 2012 Campaign

Please evaluate this ad campaign based on the prompts below

| | 1 (strongly disagree) | 2 (disagree) | 3 (neither agree nor disagree) | 4 (agree) | 5 (strongly agree) |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This brand comes to mind immediately when i want to purchase a fashion product | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand captures the times | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The design of this ad is really well done | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand/ad has a beautiful color scheme | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have solid support for this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The racial representation is done well in this ad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand communicates well with me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I respect this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I approve of this brand's approach to racial representation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



Christian Dior S/S 2021 Campaign

Please evaluate this ad campaign based on the prompts below

| | 1 (strongly disagree) | 2 (disagree) | 3 (neither agree nor disagree) | 4 (agree) | 5 (strongly agree) |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This brand comes to mind immediately when i want to purchase a fashion product | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand captures the times | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The design of this ad is really well done | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand/ad has a beautiful color scheme | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have solid support for this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The racial representation is done well in this ad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand communicates well with me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I respect this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I approve of this brand's approach to racial representation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



Louis Vuitton S/S 2020 Campaign

Please evaluate this ad campaign based on the prompts below

| | 1 (strongly disagree) | 2 (disagree) | 3 (neither agree nor disagree) | 4 (agree) | 5 (strongly agree) |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This brand comes to mind immediately when i want to purchase a fashion product | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand captures the times | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The design of this ad is really well done | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand/ad has a beautiful color scheme | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have solid support for this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The racial representation is done well in this ad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This brand communicates well with me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I respect this brand | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I approve of this brand's approach to racial representation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |