WEBMOSPHERE OF LUXURY FASHION BRANDS AND WEBROOMING
INTENTIONS OF CONSUMERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

A qualitative approach towards webrooming intentions of luxury fashion brand consumers
and the role of webmosphere in it

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ABSTRACT

The purchase intentions of consumers evolve with time, especially with luxury consumers their consumption patterns are bound to be changing with digitization. The advancement of shopping choices also widened the scope of consumers' shopping choices, where consumers saw the online stores of luxury fashion brands as a source of information gathering platform and in-store as the final checkout point. However, the rise in webrooming poses a threat to marketers as millennials being the potential future spenders are mostly dependent on online shopping, making it important for luxury fashion brands to understand the reasons behind webrooming. Moreover, new-age luxury brands delivering a good experience on their websites pose a threat to traditional luxury brands' online growth. Considering these aspects, the aim of this study is to look into the role of webmosphere in influencing the webrooming intentions of consumers in the Netherlands. A qualitative method was approached for conducting the research. A total of 10 luxury consumers based in the Netherlands were interviewed for this research. All the data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis.

The analyses revealed that webmosphere of luxury fashion brands does play an important role in determining the webrooming intentions of consumers. Lack of sensually engaging website, trust issues, lack of customer service, lack of availability of stock, and being exclusive about price was found to be the strong determinants that led the luxury fashion consumers to webroom and buy things in-store. Moreover, luxury consumers being conscious of status and hedonic values attached to shopping, often felt these elements missing while shopping online, which is why the online websites for luxury fashion brands were considered as a mere catalog of the recent trends and updates about the brand. This study helps luxury fashion brand marketers to understand the ever-changing consumer behavior of luxury shoppers and would show the significance of website atmosphere or webmosphere in determining the purchase intentions of luxury fashion brand consumers. The findings of this research also provide an overview of the current problems faced by luxury fashion consumers and suggest adequate solutions that could be considered by luxury marketers to improve the online growth of the brands and sustain them in the digitalized

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market. Furthermore, the research related to webrooming and the role of websmosphere in terms of luxury fashion brands is very current and new, thus contributing to the academia and providing insight to develop future research based on similar topics.

Keywords*: Luxury fashion brands, Webrooming, Webmosphere, consumers, purchase intentions*

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1. Introduction

The recent developments of the internet and technology have changed the way consumers shop. Multi-channel shopping is considered as a prominent reason for behavioral changes in consumers' shopping journeys (Arora & Sahney, 2019). For instance, oftentimes consumers prefer to shop offline while using the online shops only to gain information about the product. This portrays the webrooming behavior of consumers (Arora & Sahney, 2019). The commonness of webrooming by consumers is a major problem that is faced by e-commerce site owners, especially with online luxury retailers. According to hapticmedia (2020), luxury brands are facing a decline in their online sales due to lack of engagement on their website. It is further found that many consumers use the websites of the luxury fashion brands for obtaining pre-purchase research and does not end up buying from the website. This increased attention to webrooming behaviors among luxury consumers slows down the online growth of these brands (Jain & Shankar, 2021). As a result of these constant changes in consumer behavior, marketers are required to increase the online engagement with consumers' to improve the online sales of the companies (Flavián et al., 2019). Moreover, the rapid growth of digitization among the consumers makes it a necessary for luxury fashion brands to adapt to the digital technologies and be more digitally inclusive in their business strategies (Hapticmedia, 2020). For instance, the Netherlands is ranked fourth in the EU in terms of digitalization (*The Netherlands Named One of the Most Advanced Digital Economies in Europe*, 2021). The country is also ranked 3rd in terms of digital skills and adaptation of digital technologies. Thereby, reflecting the digital connectivity of a country's population and the importance for brands to be more digitally advanced in their strategies.

With the advent of Covid-19, many luxury fashion brands have shifted their shopping ideology from brick to click strategy (Jain & Shankar, 2021). To drive more consumer attention many brands have adopted the idea of webmosphere (Paz & Delgado, 2020). Webmosphere can be defined as the use of various online interactive factors to create a sense of positive feeling in the minds of the consumers and further influence their purchase intentions (Paz & Delgado, 2020). Although many researchers have studied the effects of webrooming behaviors (Flavián et al., 2019); Aw et al., 2021), there is a little research related to the effectiveness of webmosphere in influencing the webrooming intentions of consumers in the luxury fashion industry (Aw et al.,2012; Jain & Shankar, 2021; Paz & Delgado, 2020).To dive deeper into this topic a research question is posed: "How can webmosphere of luxury fashion brands be used as a tool to influence the webrooming

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intentions of consumers in the Netherlands?". This research will try to unfold the relationship between webmosphere and webrooming whereby it would dig deeper into the various aspects related to webmosphere and how it influences the minds of the consumers. Furthermore, this research would also try to understand the reasons why consumers webroom in terms of the luxury fashion brands.

To answer this question, three research objectives are also developed which are as follows:
1: To examine the phenomenon of webmosphere and how it influences the online shopping experience of consumers?
2: To study how webmosphere drives the purchase intentions of consumers?
3: To investigate how luxury fashion brands use webmosphere to influence the purchase intentions of consumers?

This research on webmosphere and webrooming intentions of luxury fashion brand consumers has great academic and scientific relevance. Although there has been ample literature related to luxury fashion brands and consumers purchase intentions (Hun et al., 2011; Zhang & Kim, 2013, Kim, 2019) there is little research based on webrooming intentions of consumers. Previous research based on webrooming, mostly focused on the webrooming intentions of consumers in a retail context and it studied the various motivations of consumer behavior to webroom (Flavián et al., 2019; Shankar & Jain, 2021, Aw et al., 2021). However, research related to webrooming intentions in relation to luxury fashion brands was very scarce (Shankar & Jain, 2021). Thus, reflecting a gap in the existing literatures. Furthermore, Shankar & Jain (2021) in their research also states the need to have more research related to webrooming intentions of luxury consumers due to the lack of online presence of luxury brands. Moreover, the concept of webrooming and webmosphere is very new and current, creating new avenues for future research topics (Flavian et al., 2019; Paz & Delgado, 2020). Furthermore, with the knowledge gained from studying the existing literatures, the topic of this this research is found to be a pioneer study that combines the concept of webmosphere and webrooming intentions. Whereby, making it a relevant contribution to the academia and provides avenues to conduct future research.

With the advent of COVID -19, the world has become more digitally inclusive than before (Hapticmedia, 2020). Brands have started to adopt digital tools to make their online presence more engaging than before. However, in case of luxury fashion brands it may not be the case. The luxury market still is in infancy when it comes to adopting standard digital strategies to its marketing mix (Shankar & Jain, 2021). Considering that the future is digital,

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luxury fashion brands needs to have a better understanding about the consumer behavior and the possibilities in the digital atmosphere (Hapticmedia, 2020). This research will help marketers develop strategies based on the luxury consumers' shopping behavior and would give a better insight to the needs and wants of the consumers, especially in the online market. Moreover, considering the increased competition in the luxury market, the marketers will have to come up with strategies than can withstand the new age consumers (Hapticmedia, 2020).This research will help marketers understand their future customers and initiate online strategies that fits to the target audience. Thereby helping brands improve their online sales. As such this research will help luxury fashion brands pave its way in the online market and understand the specific needs of consumers.

To answer the research question and discuss the objectives, this paper shall follow the following structure: the next chapter contains 'Theoretical Framework', where it will give an overview of luxury fashion brands, purchase intentions of consumers, brand experience, webrooming intentions, and webmosphere. The third chapter is 'Methodology'. This chapter takes the reader through the various methods that were adopted to conduct this research and the process of data analysis, ethical considerations, and reliability and validity of the research. In the fourth part, the researcher talks about the 'Results' of this research. It also dives deeper into specific findings and how it is relevant to answering the research question. The final part is the conclusion, which gives an overview of the findings of the research, its theoretical implications, and how it is relevant to the managerial side. It also talks about the limitation of the research and the future possibilities.

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2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter looks into various previous literatures that talks about luxury fashion brands, webrooming, consumers purchase intentions and webmosphere of luxury fashion brands. The first part of this chapter tries to define luxury fashion brands and it details about the various tiers of luxury fashion brands in the society. The next section explains about the consumers purchase intentions, where it tries to understand the various factors that determines a consumers purchase intention in general and is further developed upon the luxury fashion consumers purchase intentions. The third section in this chapter dives into the concept of brand experience and the role of e-brand experience and its impact on the websites of luxury fashion brands. The fourth section talks the importance of webmosphere and its influence on webrooming intentions of luxury fashion consumers.

2.1 What is a luxury fashion brand?

The idea of luxury has changed and taken many guises with the advancement of technology and the internet (De Klerk, 2020). With the concept of luxury being very broad, its meaning can also differ based on consumer perceptions and societal aspects related to it (Fionda, 2019). The term luxury is derived from the Latin word Luxus, which means extra; conveying the meaning that luxury is related to the extra comfort and pleasure that an individual seeks (Fuchs et al., 2013). As quoted by Coco Chanel, luxury begins where the need ends (Berry, 1994). Moreover, luxury can be based on various characteristics it entails (Hung et al., 2011). According to the research by Fionda (2019), high quality, exclusivity, and high pricing are the three factors that define how luxurious a brand is. Berry , (1994) defines luxury as a feeling that is driven by desire and leisure.

In addition, luxury can often be defined in two ways, one from the consumer's perspective and the other from the managerial perspective (Hein, 2010). The author further explains that the concept of luxury is deeply associated with how a consumer perceives it to be. These associations are strongly related to aspects such as exclusivity, high quality, aesthetics, and high prices. By the same token, Hung, et al., (2011) describe that luxury brands create a sense of appeal to the minds of people that signifies an emotional, experiential, and symbolic value in them. As mentioned by Hein (2010), these characteristics have the strong ability to bridge the gap between an individual's inner desire and the external world. Which is considered to be a strong determinant of purchasing luxury brands (Hung et al., 2011). Furthermore, products such as bags, clothes, shoes, scarves, and makeup all

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together comprise the luxury fashion industry and it is seen as a decorative element of one's style (Fuch et al., 2013). Hence, luxury fashion brands can be described as a brand that holds products of uniqueness, style, exclusivity, quality, and high prices. Which has the ability to make an individual feel special and appeal to the desires of people.

Luxury is a term that holds different meanings based on different sections of society, according to Hein, (2010), there are four different levels of luxury, namely, entry-level, mid-level, top-level, and elite level. Entry-level luxury brands are not considered luxury brands as it falls just above the premium brands. For instance, Hugo Boss is considered to be an entry-level luxury brand (Hein, 2010). Medium-level luxury brands are those that fall widely into the luxury segment but still are slightly behind the high street choices. Examples of such brands include Dolce and Gabbana, Escada, and Moschino (Hein, 2010). The top-level luxury brands are those that have strong historic brand value and have established themselves years ago (Hein, 2010). This level is considered to be the most popular and widely accepted luxury brands across the world. Brands such as Gucci, Versace, CHANEL, and Louis Vuitton can be considered top-level luxury brands. Finally, the elite level luxury brand is those brands that have their niche and is established in the highest quality of that sector (Hein, 2010). These brands determine the benchmark of quality and exclusivity in that segment. For instance, Puiforcat is regarded as the elite level brand in the silverware industry (Hein, 2010).

Considering these different levels of luxury, this research aims to examine the top level of the luxury sector. Brands that fall under this category, for instance, CHANEL, Gucci, Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton, share important characteristics of a luxury brand, such as steep prices, exceptional quality, aesthetically pleasing, and strong heritage value (Fionda, 2019; Hein, 2010). These are some of the luxury brands that have gained popularity in the market and have remained consistent in the luxury market for a long time (Hein, 2010). Moreover, brands falling under the top tier are considered to be the most popular and key players of the luxury market (Hapticmedia, 2020) Thus, making the top tier of the luxury market ideal to further research.

2.2 Understanding consumers purchase intentions

The decision-making process is one of the crucial stages of a customer's purchase journey (Jain et al., 2015). The decision-making procedure of customers is often referred to as purchase intentions (Jain et al., 2015). Purchase intentions can be defined as a process of decisions making before purchasing a product (Garcia et al., 2020). Various factors can

influence the purchase intentions of consumers (Jain et al., 2015). Previous studies have shown that awareness, knowledge, persuasion, motivation, price, and quality as factors that can influence the intentions of consumers (Jain et al., 2015; Garcia et al., 2020; Tahir, 2021). The decision-making process of consumers can also vary based on the shopping platform; online or in-store. For instance, in case of the online shopping, consumers often tend to make decisions based on reviews of similar products (Garcia et al., 2019). However, a consumer may be less influenced by the reviews when purchasing in-store as they tend to believe what they see in person (Jain et al., 2019). Thus, consumer's purchase intentions are situational in nature and the needs can also vary based on it.

2.2.1 Purchase intentions of luxury consumers

Luxury consumers are often considered to be brand-conscious people who prefer famous brand names to attain a certain level of status in society (Zhang & Kim, 2013). Although quality seems to be a pressing factor as to why consumers purchase luxury items, researchers have shown that consumers often confuse quality with the brand name (Hun et al., 2011; Zhang & Kim, 2013, Kim, 2019). Moreover, having a higher price tag indicates higher quality and seems to attract the status quo of consumers (Zhang & Kim, 2013). Furthermore, consumers who buy luxury fashion brands expect a certain level of representation by using those products, such as prestige and status in the society (Zhang & Kim, 2013). These factors altogether make the consumers buy more luxury goods. Thus, making the name of the brand a strong determinant when shopping for a luxury fashion brand. In addition, luxury consumers are often moved by factors such as the experience they have while shopping (Kejmar & Steffanson, 2015). Unlike regular consumers, luxury consumers' purchase intentions are driven by factors such as the atmosphere of the store, the feelings they achieve while shopping, and what that brand makes them look like in the eyes of others (Liu et al., 2013). Thereby differentiating the needs of a luxury consumer from that of a regular consumer.

2.2.2 Luxury Online

Studies have shown that the internet has changed the way people shop and has altered their behavior and value system towards a brand (Tahir, 2020). With the advent of Covid-19, most luxury fashion brands have opened online shopping websites (Tahir, 2020). Although luxury brands were slightly against digitalization, the pandemic forced them to do otherwise (Guilbualt, 2021). While, online shopping is driven by factors like convenience,

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availability, time, and price, it leaves the luxury brands to adopt an environment that showcases the exclusivity and rarity of the brand within the website (Gabisch & Gwebu, 2020). On one hand, brands like Gucci and Louis Vuitton have become more active on its website by including virtual tours and online sales assistance, while on the other hand, a brand like CHANEL still considers online shopping as a woo against the traditional values of luxury (Guilbault, 2021). They believe that there are various other options than selling products online. However, during the pandemic CHANEL like any other brand was forced to go online; but with lesser digital engagement (Guilbault, 2021). This lack of presence on its e-commerce platform was seen to be one major reason for its fall in sales during the pandemic (Guilbault, 2021). Thus, making the online brand experience a pressing factor for luxury fashion brands to consider (Kejmar & Stefansson, 2015).

2.3 Brand Experience

With the increased competition, marketers have realized that the experience a brand provides to its customers has a greater role in determining the success of a brand (Brakus et al., 2009). Research shows that various factors construct the brand experience, such as sensory, intellectual, affective, and behavioral; these are considered to be a few dimensions that influence the brand experience. Moreover, these dimensions altogether can affect a consumer's satisfaction level, loyalty toward the brand, and the overall attachment to the brand (Brakus et l., 2009). However, a consumer's experience with the brand is not just limited to these factors. A consumer experience also touches upon hedonic goals such as the feeling of fun and fantasies attained while shopping (Kim, 2019). This reflects that a consumer's experience with a brand occurs both directly and indirectly. A direct experience is achieved when a consumer shops or buys the products (Kim, 2019). Indirect experience can occur when consumers are exposed to marketing activities of the brand, such as advertising, the online presence of the brand, or the presence of the website itself (Kim, 2019). Hence, this indicates that the relationship that a customer has with the brand can be experienced both directly and indirectly.

2.3.1 E-Brand Experience

The drastic growth in online shopping means marketers have to keep an eye on the online presence of the brand (Kim, 2019). Similar to physical stores, online stores also require a strong experience to share with their consumers. The online brand experience or e-brand experience is a broad concept with many subsets attached to it (Quan et al., 2019;

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Kim, 2019). Website experience, customer experience on the web, virtual expertly marketing, and online purchase experience are various factors that construct the e-brand experience as a whole (Kim, 2019). Although the aim of all these dimensions remains the same, the website-based brand experience has a greater role in determining the overall consumer behavior of individuals toward a brand (Quang et al., 2019). Studies have also shown that it is paramount to have a unique brand experience to initiate a repeat visit to the brand's website (Gabish & Gwebu, 2011).

Furthermore, it can indeed be challenging for a brand to create sensory experiences through its website as opposed to the experience provided by a brand through its in-store experience (Quang et al., 2019). Moreover, studies have shown that online brand experience is equivalent to the physical brand experience because brands offer a high level of interactivity in their online stores too (Gabish & Gwebu, 2011). For instance, brands like Burberry had initiated a virtual shopping experience on their website where it displayed an environment equivalent to their in-store experience (*A Digital Experience*, 2022). However, a gap remains between in-store and online shopping experiences, which is why this research will dive deeper into the concept of brand experience and how luxury fashion brands can bridge this gap by creating a more engaging experience through their website.

2.3.2 Website experience and luxury consumers

Customers expect a brand's website to be interactive and experiential. Brands like Gucci, Prada, and Dior are struggling to create interactive websites while also maintaining their traditional brand values and exclusivity (*Why So Many Luxury Brands Are Terrible at Ecommerce*, 2022). Previous research reflects a supportive statement regarding the above where it shows that customers want a website experience and not just any normal website (Kim, 2019; Anderson & Hansen, 2011). A website experience can be described as a platform that is engaging, memorable, and interactive; a website that can talk with its customers and build a personalized relationship with the customer and the brand itself (Anderson & Hansen, 2011). Furthermore, having a more elaborate product description equal to how a sales assistant describes a product in-store could enhance the shopping experience of luxury consumers (Anderson & Hansen, 2011). For instance, brands such as Louis Vuitton and Burberry have more advanced product descriptions and, this small difference has made a huge impact on their online turnover (Chang & wildt, 1994; Anderson & Hansen, 2011). Thus, reflecting the importance of the atmosphere created on the web for its audience.

2.4 The role of Webmosphere

The experience gained while shopping is a strong determinant of leading consumers toward purchasing decisions (Aw et al.,2021). The more immersive experience they receive higher the chances are for them to turn into loyal customers of that brand (Sahu et al., 2021). Luxury consumers are those sections of consumers who always look for sophisticated products and are also driven by the experience they gain with the brand (Okonkwo, 2009). This experience that a person gains through online shopping is often termed as webmosphere (Paz & Delgado, 2020). Webmoshere is the concept of using immersive web environments; this is often achieved through the immersive design of websites, for instance, the graphics, audio, and video elements on the website, the placement of texts, product descriptions, etc. All these factors together create the atmosphere of the website which can lead to a positive feeling in the minds of the consumers to purchase the product (Paz & Delgado, 2020). However, most brands fail to establish their uniqueness of the brand through their online shopping site (Aw et al.,2021).

Consumers often use the online shopping websites of luxury brands mostly for gathering pre-purchase information and comparing prices within various brands (Jain & Shankar, 2021). However, luxury consumers are perceived to be less bothered about the price of the product (Onkonkwo, 2009). Moreover, they consider the need for physically seeing the product and making the purchase as it can be a huge investment of money (Jain & Shankar, 2021). In the same token, consumers also tend to buy luxury products as to the experience they gain while shopping with the brand. Furthermore, luxury consumers always look for a personalized experience with the brand which is often gained through factors like in-store sales assistance, the unique atmosphere in the store, etc. (Jain & Shankar, 2021). All these factors are considered to be strong determinants for influencing the purchase intentions of consumers (Jain & Shankar, 2021). Although luxury fashion brands like Gucci, have established an online shopping website, customers mostly prefer to purchase the products offline as the online site fails to create an in-store atmosphere online, preventing them from shopping online (Jain & Shankar, 2021). Thus, showcasing a gap between luxury fashion brands and the webmosphere of the brand.

2.4.2 Rise of webrooming and the reasons behind it

As the shopping sphere expands and with different shopping options available, brands have less control over the customer's purchase journey (Sahu et al., 2021). The

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growth of multi-channel shopping has led to consumers becoming more aware and careful about the products they purchase (Aw et al.,2021). Thus, limiting the predictability of purchasing destinations of consumers (Kang, 2019). This rising trend in shopping has led to webrooming behaviors by consumers (Kang, 2019). Webrooming can be defined as the term that is used to explain the phenomenon of searching for products online and further shopping them offline (Flavián et al., 2019). It is observed that webrooming helps consumers increase self-satisfaction and trust towards the product (Aw et al.,2021). According to previous studies, 42% of European consumers webroomed (Flavián et al., 2019). This increased popularity of webrooming makes it one of the most popular cross-channel behaviors of consumers (Aw et al., 2021). This recent trend has made online shopping sites the main source of information gathering and physical stores as the final destination for making the purchase (Flavián et al., 2019).

The need for physically touching and feeling the product is seen to be the major reason why people choose to webroom (Aw et al.,2021). The increase in webrooming intentions could slow down the growth of luxury fashion brands. The missing presence of engagement with the physical aspects of the brand is seen to be the major concern for it (Paz & Delgado, 2020). The ambiance of the shop, the need for touch, and trying on the clothes are the popular reasons why consumers end up webrooming (Aw et al.,2021). Thus, ensuring that websites of luxury fashion brands lack the immersive experience that is felt while shopping in-store. Further reflects a gap between consumers' purchase journeys and online shopping experience. In addition, in the coming future spending power lies within the millennials. Millennials, being digital savvy is mostly driven toward online shopping. Prompting luxury brands to consider having an engaging online presence to increase online sales (Haptic media, 2020).Moreover, the increased competition from newly launched luxury brands with new mindsets and new tools to incorporate luxury online, pose as a threat to the traditional luxury brands (Hapticmedia, 2020). Whereby, making webrooming a major concern for the top-tier luxury fashion brands (Shankar & Jain, 2021). This further entices the top-tier luxury fashion brands adapt to the needs and desires of new-age consumers (Hapticmedia, 2020).

2.4.3 Significance of Webmosphere for luxury fashion brands

The use of webrooming among luxury shoppers mostly lies in its usage of online sites for pre-purchase research (Jain & Shankar, 2021). Studies confirm that luxury shoppers mostly prefer to webroom as it allows them to deeply understand the product they are buying

and then buying them in-store helps them confirm the product and also gives them confidence about the originality of the product they are purchasing (Jain & Shankar, 2021). Moreover, many luxury consumers distrust shopping luxury products online as the internet has the potential to counterfeit the actual products by replacing them with duplicates (Shankar & Jain, 2021). All these factors relate to the risks attached to the shopping for luxury fashion online. However, previous research has shown that having an e-commerce site that perfectly portrays the brand story and brand value through its website could help gain the trust of consumers to purchase products online (Paz & Delgado, 2020). According to Paz & Delgado (2020) having a website that reflects the brand and positively immerses the consumers could gain their trust of the consumers. For instance, the luxury fashion brand Burberry has gained popularity in the luxury digital market by creating an immersive online presence. The brand has also seen a rise in its revenue after immersing its target audience through its online website (Sweney & Butler, 2021). Thus, showcasing the importance of webmosphere with the webrooming of luxury fashion consumers.

2.5 Conclusion

In a nutshell, the consumers of luxury fashion brands are very concerned about what the brand makes them feel. Experience is one of the major element attached to luxury shopping. The purchase intentions of consumers can be easily influenced by the experience that a luxury brand provides to them. Due to the lack of experience on the luxury fashion brands website, even during the digitally advanced world, consumers prefers to shop in-store. However, they use the online platforms of these luxury fashion brands as a source to attain pre-purchase information, leading to the rise of webrooming amongst the consumers. Furthermore, the website atmosphere of webmosphere has the ability to influence the purchase intentions of consumers. Various new-age luxury fashion brands have already initiated a digital experience on their website. The absence of webmosphere or poor webmosphere of the top tier luxury fashion brands potentially increases the chance of webrooming and leaves opportunities of rivals to entice the consumers by having a good website atmosphere. Thereby, pressing the significance of webmosphere and the rising webrooming intentions of luxury fashion brand consumers. To further understand the various motivations behind webrooming and the role of websmophere amongst the consumers in the Netherlands, various interviews based on thematic analysis was conducted. The following methodology section describes the various methods adopted to find answer to the research question.

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3. Methodology

Research methodology plays a significant role in this research study since it helps the techniques and approaches that the researcher adopted to collect data. This chapter explains the methods used by the researcher to find answers to the research question "how can webmosphere of luxury fashion brands be used as a tool to influence the webrooming intentions of consumers in the Netherlands", It also tries to answer the objectives of this research:

1: To examine the phenomenon of webmosphere and how it influences the online shopping experience of consumers?

2: To study how webmosphere drives the purchase intentions of consumers?

3: To investigate how luxury fashion brands use webmosphere to influence the purchase intentions of consumers?

The chapter does not only show the techniques embraced in collecting the data but also the approaches adopted to analyze the collected data. It also discusses the research design applied for this particular research study the approaches and techniques on how the data was gathered help the readers and other scholars to understand the sources from where the data was gathered as well as how the data successfully qualified to be utilized in this study. Validity and reliability will also be discussed in length in this chapter to show the considerations for the studies and materials utilized for this particular research study. Finally, the chapter will evaluate the ethical issues and risks encountered while conducting the research process as well as outline the various steps which were taken into account to ensure the success of the research study.

3.1 Data collection method

For this research, a qualitative approach was held considering that most of the research related to this topic was done on quantitative research. Moreover, conducting qualitative research helped to gain a deeper understanding and meaning of the topic (Aw et al., 2021). Conducting a qualitative study also helps to have richer responses overcoming the limitations of the current quantitative-based studies (Aw et al., 2021). The primary data for the study was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted on millennial consumers (25 – 35 years) from the Netherlands who were frequent shoppers of luxury fashion brands. In-depth interviews were conducted as it fits appropriately in terms of finding deeper information (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). Moreover, in-

depth interviews allow the researcher to explore various opinions and meanings attached to a concept and study upon various examples given by the participants themselves (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). Thereby, giving more sources of explanation and understanding to the research. The interviews followed a semi-structured style with a combination of both open-ended and close-ended questions. Having semi-structured interviews allowed more freedom to adapt the questions to the situational demands and understand how millennial shoppers decide what to buy (Stokes & Bergins,2006). The interview questions were guided by an interview guide which ensured the flow of the interview (Appendix A). The interview guide included a few suggestive concepts and key points that explored: participants' previous experience with webrooming, reasons for webrooming, the role of online experience while making purchasing decisions, and the reasons for shopping in physical stores after searching online (Aw et al.,2021). Since qualitative research is iterative in nature the interview guide was also changed with time.

3.2 *Sampling*

3.2.1 Units of analyses

The unit of analysis was luxury fashion brand consumers itself. As it was important for this research for the participants to have prior experience shopping and knowledge about luxury fashion brands to get insightful information that would help in answering the research question. Moreover, the researcher ensured that the participants for this research was frequent luxury shoppers. People who shopped on a monthly basis was considered as frequent shoppers (Statista, 2020). The Netherlands is the chosen population for acquiring the samples, as this country seems to have an estimated higher growth rate in global comparison in the luxury industry by the year 2025, and currently, it has a growth rate of 5.14% (Statista, 2022). Consumers belonging to 25-35 years, precisely millennials were considered as the ideal age group for this research, as this age group are frequent users of online shopping sites in the Netherlands (Statista, 2021). Moreover, millennials (25-35 years) are considered to be more advanced in terms of internet use and digital savvy towards shopping, they are the ones buying products in-store after researching about them online (Aw et al.,2021). They are also considered to be the biggest spenders and who has potential to provide great number of conversions (Costin, 2021). Thus, making them relevant for this research. Furthermore, there were a total of 10 interviewees out of which 6 were identified as females and 4 belonged to the male category.

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Commented [FL14]: Still a very broad group. Can you say more about whether they are men, women, education, income, etc.? Are they from the whole of Netherlands?

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3.2.2 Sampling strategy

For selecting the sample, non-probability purposive critical case and snowball sampling was used. As it helps to recruit people having experience with webrooming. Purposive sampling helps to identify people with the knowledge or understanding about the topic being researched (Aw et al.,2021). Incorporating the critical case type helps to reveal insights about the study that may be applicable to like-minded cases. It also helps to have a higher degree of generalizability (Aw et al.,2021). Furthermore, combining snowball sampling helps to connect with like-minded people that may help conduct the research (Aw et al.,2021). Respondents was acquired through personal contacts and via posting on social media channels and further applied snow ball sampling for acquiring more participants in the similar category. Moreover, to get participants that fall under luxury fashion consumers, the researcher went to De Bijenkorf, a luxury department store in the Netherlands (de Bijenkorf • Mode, Cosmetica & Interieur • Gratis bezorging, 2022). Snowball sampling was applied were the researcher approached people while shopping for these luxury brands and explained the research. Their contact information were collected and an interview was scheduled with them. The sample for this research was recruited after considering various aspects such as the location, age, frequency of shopping and previous experience shopping with luxury fashion brands both online and in-store which is explained in detail in the upcoming section.

3.2.3 Sampling Criterion

For selecting the sample, both inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria was followed. An inclusion criterion ensures the characteristics a sample should have in order to be considered fit for the research (Bronte-Stewart et al., 2011). An exclusive criterion is the characteristics that may be additional to the ones mentioned in the inclusion criteria or can also be characteristics that are exempted from considering for this research. Moreover, establishing such a criteria results in a high quality research (Bronte-Stewart et al., 2011). The factors that were considered in the inclusion criteria is as follows:

Location: For the participant to be considered eligible for this research he or she had to be living in the Netherlands. Tourists or people who came for visiting the Netherlands for a short period was not considered for this research.

> **Commented [FL16]:** Are you summarizing here or saying that you also took this into account? I am confused as I do not feel you have addressed all these sampling criteria? I would like to have a separate subsection on sampling criteria. It could be instead of sampling strategy.

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Age: As mentioned in the units of analysis section, the age of the respondents had to fall in between 25-35 years as this age group seems to be mostly using online shopping sites in the Netherlands and this study was particularly about millennial consumers (Statista, 2021).

Frequency of shoppers: For this research, the participants were chosen based on their frequency of shopping. People who shop on a monthly basis was considered as frequent shoppers (Statista, 2020).

Past experience: While selecting the participants, the researcher ensured that the participant has experience shopping with luxury fashion brands. It is required to have previous experience shopping for luxury fashion brands as it can help provide relevant data for answering the research question.

Regardless of all the above-mentioned characteristics, there was one exemptional factor for this research. The researcher only considered samples who were also a consumer of non-luxury fashion brands. Those samples who only bought luxury products were not considered for this research as it was important for the sample to have knowledge about both luxury and non-luxury products; as the interview questions also had a few questions that compares the shopping from luxury to non-luxury. All of these factors were considered while selecting the samples for this research.

3.2.4 Interviews

A total of 10 participants were interviewed for this research after considering the limited timeline (March-May 2022) and the methodological guidelines for conducting this research. Table 1 displays the key details about the interviewees. Most of the interviews lasted around 45 minutes and a few up to 60 minutes. All the interviews were conducted via the video conferencing software, Zoom, and were recorded with the embedded software within zoom. The interviews were conducted online considering the feasibility of time for both the parties. Later on, the transcription tool, Otter.ai was used to transcribe the recording. To protect the privacy of the participants, their anonymity was guaranteed, and a consent form was presented to the interviewee (Appendix C). The interview was recorded and the participant was informed about the recording and permission for it was also obtained. The interview began only after the consent of the participants has been reported. The researcher also ensured to brief about the scope of the research and how the

data will be used. The participants were well informed about their rights and were free to skip or quit the interview. The interview also included a non-recorded part which included a few soft questions to ensure the comfortability of the interviewee. As this interview was conducted online, both the interviewee and interviewer were in their own private space. Although the researcher expected certain technical errors during the interview, to the researcher's luck there was no issue related to audio visual clarity throughout all the interviews. However, since the interview was conducted online, the interviewer struggled to catch the facial expressions of the interviewee.

As shall be explained in the data analysis section, the analysis of the data began during the interview itself. Where various observations and relevant points were noted down during the process.

PSEUDONYME	GENDER	AGE	COUNTRY	FREQUENCY OF SHOPPING
Interviewee 1	Female	27	Netherlands	Once a month
Interviewee 2	Female	25	Netherlands	Once a month
Interviewee 3	Female	31	Netherlands	Once a month
Interviewee 4	Female	35	Netherlands	Twice a month
Interviewee 5	Male	27	Netherlands	Once a month
Interviewee 6	Male	30	Netherlands	Twice a month
Interviewee 7	Male	29	Netherlands	Once a month
Interviewee 8	Female	32	Netherlands	Once a month
Interviewee 9	Male	28	Netherlands	Once a month
Interviewee 10	Female	34	Netherlands	Once a month

Table 1: Sample description

3.3 Operationalization

The main components of this research are luxury fashion consumers, webrooming intentions, and webmosphere of luxury fashion brands. As discussed in chapter 2, the webmosphere of a luxury fashion brand is determined by the experience that a brand provides on the website. Studies show that E-brand experience plays an important role in determining the purchase intentions of consumers (Kim, 2019). Notably, luxury fashion brand consumers are very driven by the experience they gain with the brand (Anderson & Hansen, 2011). This research tries to understand how luxury fashion brand consumers are

driven by the webmosphere of the luxury brands and the role of webrooming in it. As showed in Figure 1, this research tries to explore the concept of webmosphere through the lens of online website experience of consumers and further looks into how having good website experience can influence the purchase intentions of consumers. Furthermore, this research looks into how the webmosphere can influence in reducing or increasing the webrooming intentions of consumers. The researcher also tries to discover the role of online website experience in influencing the purchase intentions which then influences the webrooming intentions of consumers. The data analysis section tries to find the relationship between these three concepts and directs it towards answering the research question. In addition, the interview guide (Appendix B) that was used for the data collection was framed in a way that provided insights about the relationship between, webmosphere, webrooming and consumers purchase intentions.

Figure:1

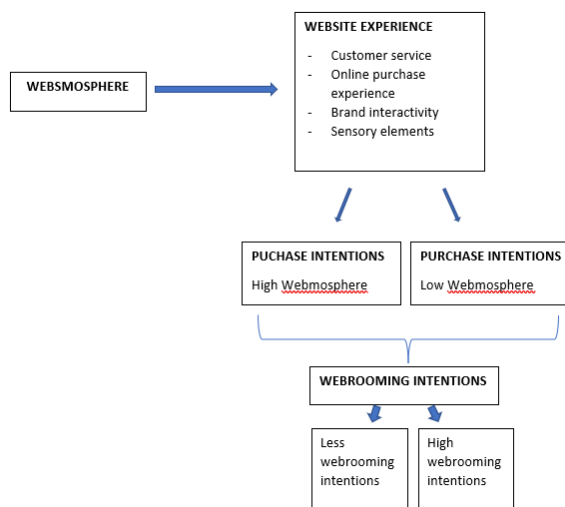### 3.4 Data Analysis: Thematic analysis

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The transcribed data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Conducting a thematic analysis allows the researcher to find meaningful patterns relevant to the research (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). Moreover, conducting a thematic analysis allowed the researcher to have richer information to understand the reasons related to why consumers webroom and how webmosphere has a role it in, making it the most conducive method for the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the thematic analysis allowed to have a code-based approach to the data, giving the freedom to sort, describe and analyze the data in-depth (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process for the thematic analysis was followed by the step-by-step framework by Braun & Clarke (2006). The framework listed 6 steps of coding which made it easier for the researcher to examine and structure the data with rich patterns and descriptions, giving a more comprehensive examination. The coding process included familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, examining the data and comparing with the overall codes, reviewing the themes, and defining the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006. In addition, the suggestion by Kvale (2007) to start the data analysis at the beginning of the interview was also followed. Where the interviewer noted down certain points or observations that stood out during the interview. By doing this, it gave the researcher an idea about what to keep in mind while making the observations and determining the results. From generating initial codes to defining the themes was done manually by the researcher itself using techniques of labeling and color-coding the frequent patterns. The transcriptions were read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data and for finding relevant patterns. The codes were grouped together and color-coded to define as a sub-theme. These subcategories of themes were then formed under five different themes. A thematic table with the main themes, sub-themes, and codes is included in Appendix B.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the validity of the research, efforts were made by the researcher to make the research transparent, beginning from the process of sampling to transcribing, everything is recorded or specified in detail with reasoning, making the research valid. Furthermore, the results of the analysis were interpreted by the researcher's knowledge and were then implicated in existing theories. This proves that this research has face validity (Guest et al., 2012). Although thematic analysis greatly depends on the personal interpretation of the researcher and can be biased, continuous efforts were made by the researcher to ensure that it was less biased. In addition, during the selection of samples, a strict sampling criterion was followed, which further ensures the validity of a research and results in giving a standard research (Bronte-Stewart et al., 2011). Moreover, having only one researcher

resulted in less room for misunderstandings. In addition, qualitative research in itself is largely dependent on personal interpretation, and reliability is not greatly achieved (Guest et al., 2012).

3.6 Ethical considerations

To ensure that this research was conducted ethically, every interviewee was asked to sign an informed consent and was also given the freedom to quit the interview if they felt uncomfortable. In addition to the informed consent form, the interviewer also explained the research and asked for virtual consent so that it was present in the recording of the interview. Furthermore, the anonymity of the interviewee was guaranteed and has informed them that the transcripts of the interview will only be used for academic purposes. The contact details of the interviewer were shared with the interviewee in case they had any concerns or questions regarding the research in the future. These factors together ensured that the research was held in an ethical manner.

3.7 Conclusion

To sum up, for this research a qualitative semi-structured interviews was conducted. Samples were chosen after considering both inclusive and exclusive sampling criterion. The data collected was coded and analyzed using thematic analysis. The main concepts of this research, namely, webmosphere, webrooming and purchase intentions were operationalized based on the theoretical framework. All these three concepts were included in the interview guide, to get a better understanding about the concepts and its relation to finding answer to the research question. The researcher ensured to be ethical through out the data collection process. There were several themes and subthemes that was found relevant for this research during the data analysis, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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Commented [FL20]: You also need a conclusion here to sum up the main points. After having read your methodology, it still feels a bit vague. You should keep going back to what you want to find out in order to explain why you are choosing certain methods, sampling criteria or ways of analysing. Also,

4. Results

This section explores the result of the data analysis and reports all the themes and sub themes relevant to the research question. The findings to answer this question was obtained by conducting thematic analysis based on the 10 interviews that was conducted on luxury fashion consumers based in the Netherlands. The final list of codes obtained from the analysis has given a detailed view as to how webmosphere can influence the webrooming intentions of consumers. Several codes were generated which led to developing of various themes and sub-themes. As mentioned in the previous chapter the analysis of the interview data was conducted with the help of the software Otter.ai.

A total of 5 themes were found with each theme having several subcategories and codes. The first observed theme was motivations to buy luxury with the sub themes, status symbol, sense of growth achievement and long-term investment. This theme defines the various reasons as to why consumers prefer luxury brands. This theme also helps to develop an understanding of the consumer needs which is then related to enhancing the shopping experience of these consumers. The second identified theme is website usage with sub-theme, pre-purchase information. This theme describes how luxury fashion brand consumers make use of the websites. The third theme is the motivation to shop in-store where it dives deeper into the various reasons why a consumer prefers to shop in-store rather than online in terms of luxury fashion brands. This theme is followed by nine other sub-themes, which are, sensory needs, hedonic values, customer service, shopping interaction, monetary value, high society, and FOMO on the in-store experience. All of these sub-themes are also followed by several number of codes. The fourth identified theme is the motivation to shop online, it has one sub themes, namely, convenience. The subtheme convenience describes the luxury fashion brand consumers preferences in online shopping due to the convenience factor involved while shopping. The final observed theme is the reasons to webroom, this theme is followed by 2 subthemes: lack of experience and too many hassles. This is one of the important themes identified as it helps to give more direction to find the answer to the research question. This theme revolves around the current difficulties encountered by the consumers and the reasons as to why they are at least sometimes forced to webroom.

4.1 Motivations to buy luxury

   The theme of motivations to buy luxury look into the various motives that a customer has to purchase luxury products. It further is divided into various categories of sub-themes such as status symbol, long-term investment, and sense of growth. Since this study is specifically based on luxury fashion brands, it is important to find meaning in what luxury entails to the consumers. To begin with, the theme status symbol, dives into various social factors that contribute to the thought of purchasing luxury fashion brands. The second sub-theme long-term investment looks into more of a futuristic side to luxury brands. The final sub-theme, sense of achievement shows the importance of luxury in terms of measuring a person's success and growth.

4.1.1 Status symbol

   This sub-theme considers the influence of society in relation to choosing luxury. During the interview, it was well noticed that most of the interviewees purchased luxury brands to feel rich and have a personality in the society. Moreover, using luxury products is also considered to be a way to feel special and unique. The word special was used multiple times in several interviews by the interviewees to mention the reasons for luxury consumption. Interviewee 8 clearly states:

   luxury brands are like you know, it is like, it is giving you a special feeling. And it
   makes you feel classy. It makes you feel rich. It makes you look elegant. Yeah,
   maybe and I am a person like when I when I want a unique thing to be mine. That's
   why I go for all such.

As discussed by Interviewee 8 purchasing luxury brands gives a sense of importance and personality to an individual in the society, as mentioned by Interviewee 5, luxury also has a lot to do with the status a person wants in the society. "Also status because I don't know I like flaunting" (Interviewee, 5).

   In terms of feeling important, certain interviewees feels that using luxury brands enhances their personality and increases their confidence level. "So, if I if I use that product, I'm always confident to run towards the crowd. Because I feel confident on myself, I'll be boosted not because I'm showing off myself. It's a kind of self-satisfaction, which I get." (Interviewee 9). Furthermore, the prestige and recognition these luxury brands have gained as a brand is also a reason for people to buy them as they have been long established and theirs indeed a value to the brand which further is spread to the person that is using. Hence

giving a sense of recognition and value in the society itself. Interviewee 8 highlights the recognition of luxury brands:

> Another thing about luxury brands is that their look like even if they've changed a lot during the time, there are always particular things that make you like, even if you see it from a distance, you can instantly recognize the kind of brand it is which brand it is.

In the same token, interviewee 9 also shares the same thought by saying, "I'm really fond of the status of the brand. Because (a reference to a brand name) is one of the top leading brands in the world, everybody knows that." All these findings directly show the influence of societal aspects on luxury brand consumption and how it contributes to ones status in the society. Be it feeling important, special, unique, or rich, all these together contribute to having a personality and belongingness to a certain elite culture in the society. Thus, ensuring that using luxury fashion brands is indeed a way to show off one's status and feel important in society. The findings of previous research by Liu et al, (2013) also reflects that high prices attracted the luxury consumers as that was a way for them to showcase their wealth and status to others.

4.1.2 Sense of growth achievement

As consumers, there's always something that we tend to achieve while buying a product. As mentioned in the above category, it can also be to achieve a status in the society. In this theme, by a sense of growth achievement, this research focuses on achievements that are measured by a person's success, growth, and inspiration to grow. This was indeed an interesting finding to see how consumers relate so much to a brand and its level of success. Popularly, success was mostly driven by being wealthy, having a good profession, etc., (Liu et al., 2013) however, in this theme there's more to success. Leading a luxurious life, and buying luxurious products/brands are also considered to be a way of expressing one's success. For certain interviewees, it was observed that spending their hard-earned money on luxury products was a way to motivate them to grow more. On the same note, interviewee 9 says that "when I'm purchasing or buying those kinds of things, or the products of those kinds of brands, I'm getting a kind of self-satisfaction that I'm growing because I spend money." Interviewee 9 further points out that,

> I do feel special because whenever I go to stores like that atmosphere the people surrounding me and everybody is either successful or running to be successful. And

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that gives me a kind of motivation and inspiration to be a better version of myself to push myself harder. It can change my lifestyle and things like that.

This confirms that consumption of luxury is surely a way to increase one's self-confidence to grow and also inspire one to be more successful, boosting the self-confidence of individuals. Moreover, it also proves that luxury is not just consumed by the elite or the people belonging to the higher society but also by people who are earning well and have a good consumption orientation. The finding from Sheikh et al., (2017) also states that people consume luxury products to enhance their behavior and to feel successful like others in the society

4.1.3 Long term investment

One of the most popular findings of luxury usage was its timeless features and futuristic uses. Consumers often found luxury as a way of investment. The classic and timeless designs of luxury products prompted them to think of it as an investment that even their future generations could use. While talking about the classic nature of luxury fashion brands, one of the interviewees excitedly shared the views related to long-term investment and critically compares it with non-luxury fashion brands.

> If I buy a (reference to a luxury fashion brand name) handbag, I'm sure I can pass it on to my daughter if I want to. So those things kind of last and they have a quality that regular consumer brands can't reach. Fast fashion and luxury are different for reasons. Even if they look the same. The quality isn't going to be (Interviewee, 7).

For a majority of interviewees buying luxury was sort of like investing in quality "Luxury means quality"(Interviewee, 2) . Luxury products are known for its quality and the quality element present in it indeed does trigger the consumers to invest in it. However, interviewee 4 had a different thought about quality,

> I am more of a quality type of person I do to love brands, as is but because in the end of the day, it is always a matter of practicality and a manner of quality. There are a lot of cases that items that are non-branded, are so more qualitative than a branded one. So, I would say go for quality over.

In this case, quality is a situational factor and it does not clearly indulge with the quality of a luxury brand. On the other hand, there were consumers who did not even doubt the quality of luxury brands and trusted them without a question. "Whatever they produce, they keep like a certain quality and standard to their products. Something which is reliable" (Interviewee 6). Likewise, the quality aspect of luxury is not just limited to the product itself, it also reflects the other external factors which interviewee 3 highlights the quality of a

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sales representatives in luxury stores compared to a non-luxury store, "we can see the difference in the quality of the salesperson, the way they dress the way they the way they present themselves in front of us." Therefore, with respect to the above finding, consumption of luxury can be defined as an investment in long-lasting trends, investment in high-quality items, and something that is reliable over time. Furthermore, to give more direction towards answering the research question, it is relevant to look into the online behavior of luxury fashion consumers. The theme website usage draws a clear picture of the different ways of online shopping for luxury fashion brands.

4.2 Website Usage

Website usage was one of the most frequent themes, where the participants often mentioned the use of luxury fashion brands' websites in relation to research purposes. Although many people considered the websites of luxury fashion brands as aesthetically pleasing, they did not consider them as e-commerce sites. The following section further elaborates on the sub-theme pre-purchase information. Where it elaborates on the different reasons why consumers use the websites of luxury fashion brands.

4.2.1 Pre-purchase information

This sub-theme addresses the various research purposes for which luxury fashion brand consumers use the websites. Luxury fashion brands often change their style every now and then, which is why consumers are required to keep tracking the websites of these brands. Let alone for shopping, they are also considered to be a source to gather information about the products, the latest updates about the brand, etc. Several interviewees such as interviewee 1 shared their opinion regarding this:

> I really see the websites as more like a catalogue. I feel like the websites a lot of it is kind of more just like art, So it's not just like E-commerce. You see them as like, you know, they're not like buy now buy this, buy that in your face like that. So, I just usually look at it as a reference.

Thus, it clearly reflects how the e-commerce sites of these luxury fashion brands fail to complement the needs of their consumers. Furthermore, it also shows how it is a feast to the eyes but does not make a consumer want to buy from them. Moreover, certain luxury brands tend to not reveal the prices of the products to remain exclusive, Interviewee 5 had shared their personal experience regarding the difficulties faced due to not being able to view the price.

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Commented [FL27]: It sounds like something about academic papers. Can you change it ?

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> And their exclusivity means sometimes not showing up the prices on the website. The moment that you want to start shopping, that's when it annoys me sometimes…Because even if probably even if I could afford it, I would still want to know the price. And most of them don't really show their prices... I just don't end up buying.

This factor of not showing the prices could prevent the consumers from actually purchasing from the website. This situation does act as a strong determinant for webrooming as consumers are prevented from the option to actually shop. For instance, interviewee 8 sees the usage of luxury fashion brand websites as a source to get opinions from people before actually going to the shop and buying. Especially with shopping at least a certain group of people prefers to get the opinion from their near and dear ones before the final purchase. For many consumers, websites of these luxury fashion brands are used as a source to complete that need. The below quote from interviewee 8 reflects the same:

> So, what I do is, I just go online, and I just browse it and if I like it, yeah, I can show it to my mom, see, see, this is what I'm gonna buy. This is what I'm liking. Whether is it good or bad? So, I can show it to my husband? I can and I can ask him whether it is good or bad. Yeah. So, every time he cannot accompany me to the stores, and and for that reason, yes, I do. I do a you know, online browsing

This conversation further confirms how the lack of buying options, prices etc. makes even the potential luxury online customers bounce from the website without actually purchasing. Moreover, previous studies also show that the purchase intentions of consumers are predominantly influenced by the website quality and product-related factors; which includes attributes such as information related to the product, price etc. (wells et al., 2011). Wells et al., further explain that external non-product-related factors also play a major role in influencing the purchase intentions of consumers. Factors such as the environment of the website, its appeal and design play a significant role in determining the same (Wells et al., 2011). Therefore, it can be said that the luxury fashion brand consumers prefer to use websites of luxury fashion brands mostly for researching about the latest products, or trends available in the market.

It is also noticeable that the lack of product information on the website prompts the consumers to side more towards physical shopping. This acts a tool to encourage consumers to use luxury fashion brand websites as a source to gain pre-purchase information. Furthermore, according to Wells et al, (2011), the purchase intentions of consumers are not just limited to influences related to website quality and product related factors, non-product

related aspects are also a part of it. In order to understand in depth the different factors that influences the purchase intentions of luxury fashion brands, it is important to understand the motivations behind choosing in-store shopping over online shopping for luxury fashion brands.

4.3 Motivations to shop in-store

The theme, motivations to shop in-store highlights the different reasons that drive consumers to choose in-store shopping for luxury fashion brands. This is also one of the themes that have gained the greatest number of sub-themes and codes. This sub themes are categorized as hedonic values, sensory needs, monetary values, the high society, shopping interaction, customer service, and FOMO related to the in-store luxury experience. The sub-theme hedonic values were formed after finding recurring themes related to the consumer's internal satisfaction gained through shopping for luxury fashion brands. The second sub-theme, sensory needs explain the need for sensory information while purchasing a luxury product. The third sub-theme, monetary value describes the role of price in terms of shopping in-store. The fourth sub-theme is customer service. Which was one of the most frequent mentions during the interview. It touches upon various aspects that contribute to satisfying a customer. The sub-theme of shopping interaction elaborates on the need to socially connect with the rest of the customers. The sub-theme of trust walks through the importance of trust in general and the need for building trust on the websites. Finally, FOMO relates to in-store experience is a sub-theme that explains the various FOMO effects that a customer seemed to have in terms of luxury shopping.

4.3.1 Hedonic values

The sub-them personal satisfaction relates to the internal satisfaction a consumer gains through shopping in terms of luxury fashion brands. The interviews show that a consumer's shopping preference and the level of satisfaction they gain through shopping has a lot to do with how that makes them feel after shopping. For certain consumers, shopping in-store is seen to be a therapeutic process that gives them some kind of internal satisfaction, joy, and happiness. Several interviewees including the ones quoted below show how much consumers relate their internal satisfaction to the in-store shopping experience. Interviewee 2 said "I personally do enjoy shopping, it is therapeutic for me, shopping in-store kind of gives me internal satisfaction. For me, shopping in-store for luxury fashion brands gives me some kind of happiness." For some, shopping was a process that made them feel important and

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> **Commented [FL34]:** I am not sure what you mean by this. Feel before shopping or after?

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seen. The recurring occurrence of sentences like "they make you feel seen" (Interviewee 6), they make you feel important" (Interviewee, 2), in reference to the in-store shopping for luxury fashion brands reflects its importance to it. Furthermore, luxury consumers are mostly those section of people in the society who wants to have a unique identity to themselves, where they prefer to be seen and well recognized by others. They mostly try to build their personality through the eyes of these brands which is another significant finding that is explained in detail in the coming sections.

Interestingly, shopping in-store for these luxury brands also has traits related to one's self-esteem, and assurance of what they feel about themselves. "it's sort of like an extension of your character or your personality" (Interviewee, 7). As much as this connects to one's personal behavior, shopping for luxury fashion brands in the store is also observed to have a great influence over a consumer's mood. It has the ability to enhance one's mood by making one feel good about themselves.

And when you actually go into a store, you feel different. You want to feel I mean, that's the whole environment that you built, you have the hype you have, they make you feel like you're a luxury and you're a brand. And that's the whole feeling that you get when you go walk into a bougie store. Let it be (name of the brand) that's the feeling that you get, you don't get treated that way online for some reason, I just do not get that feel (Interviewee 7).

These snippets from the interview indeed reflects the motivation to shop in-store, it also reflects how consumers are satisfied with the in-store experience that they often miss that presence online, which is also one of the strong motivations for luxury fashion brand consumers to shop in-store. Moreover, in-store shopping is considered a source of entertainment that is mixed with emotions of leisure and adventure. Interviewee 5 further explained that:

When I wear them, I feel good. And it's like I make this bucket list of things that I want when I was a kid growing up, being in (Reference to a place) and seeing all these bougie people owning them. And what's high in fashion right now what's trending right now what's classic, right? And I love collecting them and ticking them off my bucket list.

Therefore, the motivation to shop in-store for luxury fashion brands is mostly driven by behavioral factors that include various kinds of feelings of satisfaction that is gained through the ambiance of the store, the atmosphere created in the in-store, and most importantly, the

luxury ambiance makes them feel good about themselves and is a great way of enjoyment; prompting consumers to choose in-store over online shopping for luxury fashion brands.

In addition to these factors there are other dimensions to why consumers shop in-store; the little details to the store such as the store's layout, the staff, design, availability of stock, etc. also actively contribute to the in-store shopping experience that can also trigger positive feelings in the minds of the consumers (Trintafillidou et al., 2017). The various characteristics that contribute to triggering the in-store shopping intentions in the minds of the luxury fashion brand consumers are discussed in the coming sections.

4.3.2 Sensory needs

The second sub-theme, sensory needs revolve around the sensory aspects that contribute to the in-store experience and the way it indulges in the consumer's choices regarding in-store shopping. A large part of shopping in-store is for the touch and feel of the product. Shopping in-store gives you the freedom to see the product, touch it and feel it before the actual purchase. Interviewee 2 had mentioned these needs during the interview, she said that "So, I have to go feel, a need to wear it. I want to touch it. I want to see how it goes with me." Interviewee 2 further explains how these aspects are never met in online shopping.

> online for some reason, I just do not get that feeling. When I'm putting that kind of money on the table. I want to see the product. I want to talk to the people over there.
> I want to know more about it. I want to see other options. I want to touch it, feel it.

While the element of touch, vision, and feel is identifiably a strong need, Interviewee 1 aptly describes the need for seeing the product in person due to factors such as differences in size and variations attached to it.

> I want to try it on because it's different by the end of the day, different companies sizing. It's a little bit different here and there and I definitely want to try it on and put it on and I want to feel the clothing and sometimes I feel like something would look good on me but when I wear it doesn't look that flattering on me. So, I definitely want to try it on whether it's (reference to a luxury fashion brand name) or not. or whatever, but definitely want to try it off. (Interviewee 2)

As much as sensory aspect is a prominent aspect to shopping, websites often also miss to bring these elements to it. Interviewee 6 shares the thoughts regarding the lack of trust towards the sizing of the product displayed online.

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the things the stuff where accessories when you see it in person. Sometimes they're smaller than they look into that site or sometimes bigger. So, which is why I mentioned that I am an in-store person when it comes to some of it while shopping. Although technology cannot really bring the sensory elements to the website, having more detailed information about the product, pictures of the product from different angles, detailed descriptions can be ways to avoid the gap between the sensory elements and online shopping. During the interview, several luxury fashion brand consumers expressed their thoughts about considering shopping online for these luxury fashion brands if it provided them with more sensually acceptable information. During the interview with interviewee 4, the interviewee gave reference to a brand's website that was very sensually appealing and creates an urge to buy. Interviewee 4 said that,

> there's actual description of the product instead of just, you know, some flowers name or some gemstones name that usually. And, you know, there was also the work that people put into it, and how it's different from the rest of similar things. And it's, it's really nice when you read that sort of thing, because you have a sort of personal connection to that. And it tends to make you want to buy a lot more.

However, there were several objections to this statement by many other participants who believed that the websites for luxury fashion brands cannot complement to the sensory experience that is felt in-store. Interviewee 9 even used metaphorical expressions to connect with the difference that is felt online and in-store for luxury fashion brands. "There is a difference between seeing the picture of Mount Everest and experiencing Mount Everest". Therefore, it can be concluded that sensory factors are important factors that trigger the motivation for consumers to shop in-store for luxury fashion brands. Trintafillidou et al., (2017) in their studies also mentions the influence of sensory elements in providing a whole retail shopping experience.

4.3.3 Monetary Value

As discussed in the above sections, the hedonic values that are underpinned by in-store shopping are one of the strongest motivations to prompt people to shop in-store. However, there are other factors to luxury shopping. One of the main aspects of luxury is the price itself. Price is a major reason for the consumption of luxury products. Moreover, it is also considered to be a strong determinant of consumers' motivation towards in-store shopping for luxury fashion brands. Interviewee 2 explains in detail about it. The following is the quote from that conversation, When I'm putting that kind of money on the table. I

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want to see the product. I want to talk to the people over there. I want to know more about it. I want to see other options. I want to touch it, feel it. This quote from the interview indeed reflects that the monetary value of the products is definitely a reason for evoking the need to personally see the product. Moreover, it also shows that the monetary value is directly connected towards sensory needs. All together making a strong reason to shop in-store.

Furthermore, luxury fashion brand consumers consider shopping for luxury as a means of investment. Which also adds on to the increasing importance of the monetary aspect and the need to shop in-store. As mentioned in the previously, certain websites of these luxury fashion brand do not show the prices, disturbing the customers purchase journey. This not only motivates the consumers to shop in-store, but also discourages them to shop online. Although, luxury consumers are prestigious and is wealthy enough to purchase, they still show concern towards knowing the price. "I'll search for the price range, and I'll see if I can afford that or not. And then I'll come to a conclusion or decision to buy it" (Interviewee 9). There by, pressing upon the importance that money holds a great role over determining the shopping preference of luxury fashion brand consumers. The study conducted by Liu et al., (2013) also describes price as a determinant towards in-store shopping in case of luxury brands. Moreover, unlike normal shoppers' luxury consumers are concerned about wealth and they tend to create an occasion to display it (Liu et al., 2013). Which gives the thread towards the societal aspects that motivates luxury fashion brand consumers to shop in-store.

4.3.4 The high society

This theme groups together various concepts attached to the societal influence related to luxury consumption. While status is a factor that all individuals strive to achieve, luxury consumers tend to receive it just by consuming luxury products. Unlike the non-luxury shoppers, luxury shoppers are concerned about the status that brings along to them after having a luxury product. The expectations attached to it after purchasing a luxury product and a normal product vary differently in terms of the societal values. This concept was clearly evident in most of the interviews; the interviewees expressed that the consumption of luxury was related to being accepted and recognized in the high society. Interviewee 5 said,

> when I'm mostly walking around the, you know, rich streets, for example, or in the city, or when   I'm heading to an event or whatever, and I show up with, let's say, a very famous luxury brand. It just makes me feel like oh, yeah, you know, I'm a little higher than that, like high society stuff.

As much as status signals luxury, there are instances where this is not felt online. Interview 9 shares the journey of how the lack of feeling of luxury on the website has led to the doors of the store.

> Online shopping you sit at your home with your pajama's. You sit near the TVs? You you are in a meeting you browse; it doesn't make any difference, you know? Just like shopping. Yeah, normal shopping. But whenever you are in store, yes, you are treated special, you feel rich, you know, you have an appointment. You go there.

Therefore, shopping in-store for luxury fashion brands makes them feel more recognized in society and signals the feelings of belonging to the higher class. While these instances clearly indicate the presence of status, it also shows that the websites of luxury fashion brands fail to bring this collective feeling.

There are certain brand-oriented materialistic factors that contribute to the status symbols of these consumers. Being brand-oriented and materialistic, a greater degree of luxury consumers has the tendency to flaunt their status through the brand they are shopping for. Multiple interviewees actively agreed to this during the interview, sentences like "just the packaging and how they give to the product", were used to admire the in-store shopping factor that signaled the status attached to these brands. These little details to the brand are related to feeling more powerful and important in society. Wealth itself is already a factor to feel powerful in the society, being welcomed and shopping in a luxury store in person surely does makes them more valued. This finding is also consistent with the previous findings, where the status and the power withheld are a great influence to motivate consumers to shop in person (Liu et al., 2013).

4.3.5 Customer service

Customer service is one of the themes that has occurred on a frequent basis in most of the interviews. Around 90% of the respondents had mentioned the importance of customer service during the process of shopping both in-store and online in terms of luxury fashion brands. Subsequently, this theme covers the relationship that a customer has with the staff in the store, the knowledge base of the staff, and the overall services attached to shopping. To begin with, interviewee 2 highlights the importance of customer service during shopping.

> (…) Just how they welcome you and make you feel like, you are important, and that's customer service, I feel like it's there's a huge difference when the customer service that you get from an online store, and that you actually get from an actual

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store, you're like the important person over there, and every client and every customer matters. So that's great when you walk into a store (…). But if your customer services and if it's not good, if it's not up there is going to break the company. And I think that's number one when I walk into a store and they make you feel

As mentioned by interviewee 2, customer service plays a huge role in determining the consumers preference to shopping, be it online or in-store that is one of the primary factors that a customer looks into. Like interviewee 2 said, there is a huge gap between the online and in-store customer services.

Unlike the in-store experience, certain websites of these luxury fashion brands fail to bring the same output online. One of the respondents also spoke about the luxury of having a personal store assistant that is open to help the customers during the process of shopping; making the customers more comfortable and welcomed to shop.

so especially when it comes to shopping, so when, when I go there in person or on shopping, whatever. They make you feel seen. And then they really want to get to know what your style is. What are you looking for? And they trying to suggest you the whole thing. It's a whole I mean, it's stuff also, like, you know, they make you feel like, you know, make you feel special (Interviewee 6).

The respondent further pointed out the expectations from the websites of these brands, "if they have like the person, you know, suggesting things from behind, like, you know, somebody who you chat with, or like, you know, something like that, that kind of customer service. It's not too much then." However, there were a few contrasting opinions to it. According to interviewee 2 even having a personal assistant online can be a hassle as there are a lot of processes involved in it

there's a lot of difference between typing questions in the question-and-answer section in the website and talking to somebody in real life. Asking you can ask for opinions just this look better if you had what would you do? If you, would you think it would go for this or not? Or do you think these suits me better? And this is what I like.

As reflected by Interviewee 2, customers are really fond of easy shopping, they prefer to have shopping done in the easiest way possible, especially with luxury fashion brands where it involves existence of strong hedonic values. Moreover, one of the interviewees also said that the store assistant gives a personalized experience and successfully fulfills the needs.

whenever you go there, you feel like you are treated in a spirit, you know, in a very special way. And your every, you know, tantrums are taken care (…), representatives of the shops, you know, always you know, explaining you about the products explain to you about its material, it's special. And explaining about a description. Yeah, all such things make you feel you know, you have to come back again and to Yeah, to experience such you know, uniqueness with them (Interviewee 8).

These factors put down by interviewee 8 clearly explain the motivation of a customer to shop in-store. Moreover, interviewee 6 also highlights the special treatment that can be experienced only in-store. For instance, interviewee 5 said, "…sometimes they offer you have like champagne…nice waiting areas", which can never be experienced during online shopping. These factors all together contribute to the customer experience. Thus, it can be said that the customer service felt online and in-store vary differently, and due to the high customer experience felt in-store, consumers still prefer to shop in-store. Moreover, the lack of customer service online is also reducing the experience felt online. Previous research also confirms that having a more satisfying customer experience and attentive sales representatives makes shopping in physical stores more attractive than ever (Liu et al., 2017).

4.3.6 Shopping interaction

This theme tries to explain the various kinds of interaction that a customer tries to achieve during shopping. A certain group of customers finds shopping as a way to socialize and talk to other like-minded people, expecting to widen their social circle and interact with people that motivate them to grow. In addition, some customers prefer to shop in-store because of the crowd present, being in such a crowd makes them feel successful and encourages them to earn more and raise their standards of living. Interviewee 9 shares the expectations attached to interaction during the shopping.

whenever I go to stores like that (referring to luxury stores) my atmosphere the people surrounding me and everybody is either successful or running to be successful. And that gives me a kind of motivation and inspiration to be a better version of myself to push myself harder. It can change my lifestyle and things like that.

In the same token, Interviewee 8 says that shopping in-store for these luxury fashion brands is also a way to improve one's personality, where it gives a self-assurance regarding yourself. "When you actually dress up and you go there and you talk to the people, it, it sorts

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of, you know, it brings up your personality to the level that, okay, I am a person who can use this". Such interactions with people can never be achieved through websites, these further reflect why consumers are attracted to physical stores. This is indeed a case that online marketers may have to consider to find an alternative to. Interviewee 8 also says that going to the store is also a way to compare with the rest of the customers and see what other people are buying. Interviewee 8 states that "talk see the see the people there how much what are everybody shopping. These variant needs achieved through social interaction and consistently promoting customers to shop in-store. The findings from Haridasan & Fernand (2018) also states that consumers look forward to social bonding while shopping in-store. They further explains that meeting friends and family while shopping also motivates consumers to shop from the store.

4.3.7 Trust

A consumer's trust is a major factor involved in influencing the choices of consumers. In this section, the researcher discusses the trust element involved in the shopping process. Although it is an important aspect of shopping, with luxury consumers there is less concern about lack of trust. As one of the main highlights of luxury brands themselves is that they have been long established and have gained momentum in the market, however, that is not the case with the websites of these brands. Here's what interviewee 2 said regarding that,

> I know how the website just hypes the product up and as we've known so I really just, for some reason, in my brain, I do not depend on that website a lot, I have to be the store and I want to share other people's genuine reviews.

Among all the 10 interviews, most of the interviewees were stressing on the need for reviews and their interrelation to building trust with the website, in conversation with interviewee 4 it was also evident that both customer service and reviews together build the trust towards shopping: "so whenever I can trust this website or whether you know getting that website because customer service is better or this type of reviews". As mentioned by interviewee 4, reviews seem to be a pressing factor that can build trust towards a brand. According to interviewee 7, in terms of the websites of luxury fashion brands, there are not many reviews in it. "a lot of the brands are like it takes away from the aesthetic, so they don't actually give an option for customer review." The importance and the need to have reviews on the website were indeed clear during the interview as participants often stated it with sentences such as, I want to know the reviews.

These findings clearly show the importance of reviews to build trust in the minds of consumers; especially for the websites of these luxury fashion brands. Liu et al. (2017) also state that consumers are very concerned about the risks attached to online shopping and having reviews is one way that can eliminate that fear in their minds and build a more trustworthy relationship with the websites of the brand and the customers. Furthermore, it can be concluded that a lack of trust in online shopping for luxury brands acts as a strong motivation to shop in-store.

4.3.8 FOMO related to the shopping experience

As discussed in the preceding sections, hedonic values, sensory needs, monetary value, customer service, shopping interaction, the high society and trust are the discussed sub themes under motivation to shop in-store. In this section the final sub-theme under motivations to shop in-store will be explained.

The sub-theme of FOMO or fear of missing out related to the luxury shopping experience contemplates the fear attached to losing the in-store experience. Many interviewees frequently mentioned how they do not want to miss any of the exclusive store experiences. Some of the interviewees talk about the different choices that a store may have from the online sites. Especially with regard to luxury fashion brands, the stock available online is very less compared to what they have in-store. Interviewee 7 states that "you'll still have other options that you might not notice on the website." This lack of stock online results in consumers to come to the store as they have much wider choices in the store. Moreover, according to interviewee 10 it is not only about the availability of the products, but the various ways it may look on you, and that experience is not found on the website. Interviewee 10 said that, "for a lot of people that they are not like really good at styling themselves. Difficult to choose a certain outfit". This also takes us back to the theme of sensory needs, which shows a correlation between the FOMO effect on the overall in-store experience. Which also shows the possibilities that website can offer to improve the engagement online.

Furthermore, multiple participants mentioned the importance of the feeling that shopping in luxury stores gives them, they refer to it as "it's an exclusive feeling", "feeling special", "different vibe", and "unique experience", (Interviewee 10, Interviewee 7, Interviewee 7, Interviewee 8) all these quotes reflect how the store experience is felt by the customers. This again signals those customers do not want to miss out on these experiences that a luxury store gives them. Interviewee 1 pointed out the same perspective while talking

about the in-store experience for luxury brands; stating that "you miss out on the atmosphere that you would get". These instances from the interview es show that consumers of luxury fashion brands do not want to risk them missing out on what they may have in the store. Thus, shows that luxury consumers have the tendency to shop in-store due to the fear of what they miss in real. These findings also align with the previous researches (Kang et al., 2020). The FOMO effect in the luxury consumers is not just limited to the feelings of exclusivity or availability of stocks, it further extends its roots towards the customer service.

As discussed in the previous sub-theme 'Customer service', it is found that customer service is also a reason that the customer does not want to miss out. According to the words of Interviewee 1, it says that:

> You miss out on like, like, for example, sometimes they offer you have like champagne, even if you don't take it like that's still part of the experience, you know? And just like seating or whatever, it's just like, you're so you miss out on the atmosphere that you would get.

This shows a clear picture of how customers are very well satisfied with the in-store experience of these luxury fashion brands and they just do not want to lose that experience by shopping online. Once again, proving that the overall shopping experience that a customer gains through shopping in-store for luxury fashion brands is highly satisfactory; while comparing that to the experience given online, it is not yet satisfactory.

Overall, it can be concluded that factors such as hedonic values, monetary value, customer service, sensory needs, high society, shopping interaction, and FOMO related to the in-store shopping experience all together contribute to the motivation towards shopping in-store more often, these factors also contribute towards decreasing the popularity of online shopping for luxury fashion brands. Thus, leading to increased webrooming intentions. Furthermore, to direct the findings of this research toward answering the research question, it is necessary that the other side of the coin is also looked into. As a matter of fact, the upcoming section will dive into the theme motivations to shop online, giving more detailed information about the motivations to shop online in terms of luxury fashion brands.

4.4 Motivations to shop online

This theme focuses on the online side of shopping. It looks more into the various reasons why luxury consumers prefer shopping online. The sub-theme found under this theme is convenience. Convenience, as the name suggests explains more about consumers

choosing to shop online because of various personal and external convenient factors. A detailed understanding of the findings is given in the following section.

4.4.1 Convenience

One of the main features of online shopping itself is the convenience factor. Anyone can shop anytime, anywhere. Similarly, during the interview, convenience was one of the most popular patterns that occurred while talking about online shopping preferences. To begin with, interviewee 5 talks about the luxury of time that comes with shopping online.

> I think I love shopping online. Don't get me wrong, it's I'm quite a lazy. So sometimes online works the best for me because I'm not very I don't sometimes I barely really have the time to go to the city and do shopping and as much as I'd love to, but when I do get the time, I always love to go.

This shows that the provision to shop online for these luxury fashion brands is mostly considered by consumers that are lazy shoppers. For instance, in the same lines as of interviewee 5, another interviewee also talks about the convenience factor of online shopping through the lens of comfortability and laziness to go out. Interviewee 7 said, "it is more convenient to shop online than to actually you know, dress up, go out of the house, go there shopping like it has a lot of work."

As much as the convenience of time makes online shopping a preference, many other interviewees happen to have contradictory views about this. Interviewee 2 objects to it by saying that "I cannot do that online and I just don't feel comfortable doing that online how much ever the technology might improve or develop I just don't think that's just me." This statement shows interviewee 2's aversion toward technology. However, with the advent of COVID-19, things had changed a lot for online shopping, whereby many luxury brands started their e-commerce platform during that time. During the conversation with Interviewee 8, she highlighted the transformation from in-store to online due to convenience, regardless of the experience gained in the store.

> My personal preference, depends on the time depends on energy depends on my mood, and depends on me every time. So, most of the time. Most of the time during before, before my pregnancy or before the kid. I always used to go in stores to shop. And after the COVID hit the world. It was like it was everything online, everything online and then we realized everybody including me realized it is online shopping also better experience to do and from them. Even now. Even now the world is getting

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you know, back to normal. Even now people and me are comfortable doing online

shopping.

Although this was not the case of the majority of the interviewees, this shows the potential

of the ecommerce platform to grow and widen the market.

In addition, one of the participants also highlighted about the convenience to shop in

multiples brands at a time while shopping online, interviewee 1 pointed saying that,

I also like to have a lot of things in the same place. So, I that's why I mostly buy from

a multi brand. Because it's not that I only love one brand, or I only look for one type

of style. I'd rather have everything in one place that were like multiple brands

All in all, convenience is a major plus to the online market, even though a majority of

consumers prefer to shop in-store due to the experiential factor. Convenience acts as the

primary and the most found motive for shopping in-store for luxury fashion brands. In

addition, the implications of this theme are also found to be relevant in previous studies (Liu

et al., 2013). Furthermore, the results of this theme show that convenience is the only factor

that motivates a consumer to shop online, then and again reflecting the lack of preference for

online shopping. This also signals a consumer's urge to webroom more. The upcoming

theme discusses more the reasons to webrooming.

4.5 Webrooming intentions

This is the final theme of this research. The theme webrooming intentions focuses on

the various motives or influences that make a consumer bounce from shopping online and

end up buying in-store. The sub-themes formed under this are lack of website experience

and too many hassles.

4.5.1 Lacking the experiential value

The theme, lack of experience gives a detailed overview of all those factors that

contribute to the experiential element attached to shopping. As discussed in the above

section under motivation to shop in-store, luxury consumers are very fond of the experience

gained while shopping. This sub-theme gives a clear understanding of the different factors

related to the experience that is found to be missing on the e-commerce platforms of various

luxury fashion brands.

To begin with, several interviewees pointed out the importance of sensory inputs in

the shopping for luxury fashion brands, "I do not think I would buy it from online, I want to

Commented [FL47]: It could sound like they do not have experience with websites, but that is not what you mean right? Maybe say: lacking the experiential value (or quality)

touch the product, know and feel it." (Interviewee 2). however, today's technology is not yet advanced to that level where consumers can actually touch and feel the product. This lack of presence of sensual elements prevents the consumers from shopping for these luxury fashion brands online. In response to this lack of sensory inputs, there are ways that marketers can try to overcome this situation, one of the interviewees expressed the need for details on the website that can equal the sensory experience that is felt in-store. Interviewee 7 said that

> So, there's actual description of the product instead of just, you know, some flowers name or some gemstones name that usually. And, you know, there was also the work that people put into it, and how it's different from the rest of similar things. And it's, it's really nice when you read that sort of thing, because you have a sort of personal connection to that. And it tends to make you want to buy a lot more.

However, one of the interviewees had a contradictory view point regarding the information given on the website. Interviewee 1 said that

> I think it's pretty detailed. If you want to shop online you can find most information on the website you know, zoomed in photos and care instructions, almost everything. I think it's pretty detailed overall, if you want to shop online. I have the temptation to but sometimes I just prefer to do it in person.

Although interviewee 1 said that everything is present online, it is evident that they still prefer to shop in-store, which can indeed be due to the lack of experience felt online. Interviewee 4 stresses the importance of having a good picture on the website, "Pictures, that is something I like. So, if there is if I can see the product in all angles if I can have measures if I can have also experienced other people of sizing." However, according to interviewee 9, there still exists a huge gap in the experience that is felt online and in-store. Interviewee 9 couldn't stress more about it.

> when we go through the online website, we don't watch it in like cinema theatres or in 60 FX or 70 FX, we will be watching it now phone or in our tablet or computer or laptop that can never I mean, that can never give the feeling which we actually get by going to the store. So, it's entirely different.

These findings clearly show that, indeed, there is a lack of sensory information on the website, however, websites of these luxury fashion brands seem to have not yet understood the needs of their consumers which reduces the experience that they can give online. Furthermore, it was noticeable that while shopping online, the information that the consumer was looking for was not present. For instance, interviewee 1 mentions that there

were mostly descriptions or products that did not give any sort of information to a person who is trying to buy. While talking about this interviewee 1 expressed the annoyance that was faced when trying to shop online.

> some of them don't even have prices, which is one thing I notice, because I don't know how much it is. And some you can't even like really order properly online, you have to like place. So overall, I really see the websites as more like a catalogue. You see them as like, you know, they're not like buy now buy this, buy that in your face like that. So, I just usually look at it as a reference.

This clearly shows a strong motivation to webroom, where the website itself does not give the required information, thereby prompting the consumer to consider in-store shopping for these luxury fashion brands. Furthermore, one of the other most important patterns that frequently occurred was the lack of website personality. As discussed in the section related to the theme, motivations to buy luxury, one of the foremost reasons was to feel luxurious and entice yourself with the personality of the brand. However, while shopping online for these luxury fashion brands, clearly, that is not the case. Interviewee 2 details about it in as,

> when you actually go into a store, you feel different. You want to feel I mean, that's the whole environment that you built, you have the hype you have, they make you feel like you're a luxury and you're a brand. And that's the whole feeling that you get when you go walk into a Bougie store. Let it be (reference to luxury fashion brand names), that's the feel that you get, you don't get treated that way online for some reason, I just do not get that feel.

In conclusion, it is evident that the websites of luxury fashion brands lack the experiential aspect online and it is no different from any other non-luxury brand. The lack of information given in terms of sensory information, product-specific information, and the overall experience itself is found to be missing on the website; triggering to increase in the webrooming intentions of consumers.

4.5.2 Too many hassles

The hassles attached to shopping online, in general, can be a bit frustrating for consumers. With luxury fashion brands, it can be a bit more challenging. The interviewee 5 showed the frustration towards online shopping for luxury fashion brands and here's what interviewee 2 said,

I always find myself not pleased or happy when I do an online shopping. And it doesn't feel like I just, I just, I don't Yeah, I'm not happy with it. And now I want to return I want to contact customer care now to figure out a way to travel. It's a lot of hassle for me, maybe I'm an old person, maybe I'm an old school person. That's just what works with me.

While interviewee 2 touches upon the long process attached to returning a product, according to interviewee 8, in case of luxury fashion brands, even purchasing a product online can take a while.

(…) (reference to a luxury fashion brand name) have beauty products, which are which have for which the price is displayed, and they have a buy option that for the beauty products. And that is not same for the (reference to luxury fashion brand name) bags, and there, you know, outerwear collections. And you can't you don't even you know, have the buy option there for the for the accessories, and outerwear. (…) it says something like contact an advisor, when you just go to the contact and advisor it shows, you know, to fill all your details, and then they call you or they give you an appointment is this this is annoying.

This personal example does give a clear picture of the long-lasting process that a person may have to undergo to actually shop from an online store of luxury fashion brands. Given the fact that online shopping is a matter of convenience, the above example says otherwise. Considering this situation, it is acceptable that consumers prefer to shop in-store and having such a process can indeed prompt the consumers to end up webrooming.

4.6 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter concludes that the websites of luxury fashion brands fail to meet the expectations of luxury consumers. Factors such as lack of customer service, trust issues towards online shopping, lack of product related information, being exclusive about prices are found to be the prominent reasons that makes the consumer side more towards in-store shopping. It can also be observed that websites are not able to match to the experience that a consumers gains in-store. While during in-store shopping consumers are treated with high customer service and luxury ambience, that is not the case with online shopping. Luxury consumers, being concerned about feeling rich and powerful, does not feel the same when shopping online. All these triggers the luxury consumers to shop in-store. The findings of this research also states that having an experience equal to that of in-store, may influence their purchase intentions and would actually consider shopping online. Moreover, these

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factors all together form the webmosphere of a brand's website. The findings of this research show that the webmosphere of a brand can influence a consumer's preferences towards shopping online. Thus indicating the findings of this research towards answering the research question. The results of this research will be further discussed in detail in the next chapter.

5. Conclusion

According to the researcher's knowledge and considering the present literature, this research is the first to conduct exploratory research about the concept of webmosphere and its relation to webrooming in case of luxury fashion brands in the Netherlands. While Arora and Sahney (2019) examined the webrooming behavior in context of omni-channel shopping, this research further explores the influence of webmosphere in influencing the webrooming intentions of luxury fashion brand consumers in the Netherlands. The results of the studies concludes that, luxury consumers are usually very concerned about the aesthetics, and they want to be well recognized in the society, moreover status and the acceptance in the society is one of the major factors that luxury consumers tend to achieve by purchasing from such brands. The answers to the main objectives of the research shall also be discussed in this section followed by the research question, the objectives are: To examine the phenomenon of webmosphere and how it influences the online shopping experience of consumers?, To study how webmosphere drives the purchase intentions of consumers? and To investigate how luxury fashion brands use webmosphere to influence the purchase intentions of consumers?

Firstly, websmopshere is a phenonmena that is related to the website atmosphere of a brand. The webmosphere of a brand can include factors such as, the overall online brand engagement towards its customer, reflection of the brand value, customer service, navigation of the website, sensual information about the product, ease of website use and portrayal of customer reviews on the website. All these together enhances the consumer experience on a website and it further enhances the webmosphere of the brands. The findings of this research shows that, factors such as lack of customer service online, trust issues towards online shopping, lack of information are found to be the prominent reasons that makes the consumer side more towards in-store shopping. Thus, reflecting that the webmosphere of a brand can influence a consumer's preferences towards shopping online. Thereby answering the phenomena of webmosphere ,and its influence over online shopping experience of consumers.

Secondly, luxury fashion brand consumers are identifiably status-oriented and give high importance to the hedonic values such as fun, pleasure and personal satisfaction attached to shopping, which again is missing while shopping online for these brands. The findings of this research clearly reflects that having a website that appeals to the hedonic values of a consumer can influence the purchase intentions of these consumers. Thus, indicating the importance of having a webmopshere that serves to the different consumption

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needs of the luxury fashion brand consumers. Which can potentially influence the purchase intentions of consumers. Whereby, answering the second objective, 'how does webmosphere drive the purchase intentions of consumers? The results of this research establish that luxury fashion brands fail to achieve the various consumption needs of their online customers.

Finally, As stated in the preceding section, having more information related to the products, a sensually appealing atmosphere, showing the price of the product, and reducing the steps in online shopping could be something that these luxury fashion brands could consider to influence the purchase intentions of consumers. According to the findings of this research, the websites of most of the luxury brands lacks these elements on their websites. Then and again, reflecting the importance of webmosphere and how luxury brands can make use of it. Whereby, answering the final objective, 'how do luxury fashion brands use webmosphere to influence the purchase intentions of consumers?'.All these objectives provide a clear path to finding answers to the research question, which will subsequently be covered in the following paragraphs.

The lack of experience present on the website is considered to be the prominent reason for the increased webrooming intentions in the minds of consumers. On the other hand, social status and hedonic values being an important aspect of luxury are not greatly achieved during online shopping, which also contributes to the lack of experience felt online. Moreover, luxury brands being new to the online era lacks to gain the trust of the consumers, such distrust also promotes consumers to webroom. Furthermore, the lack of customer experience online is also a prominent reason to increased webrooming intention. Thus, the research question, how the does webmosphere of luxury fashion brands be used as tool to influence the webrooming intentions of consumers in the Netherlands can be answered to find that webmosphere can indeed influence the webrooming intentions of luxury consumers. The findings of this research show that lack of webmosphere is a prominent reason to increased webrooming. Most of the luxury fashion brands fail to meet the customers' expectations online. Firstly, having given an aesthetically pleasing, mindfully engaging, and filling customer service in the store experience, most of the luxury brands is evidently not able to convey the same experience through its e-commerce platform. Secondly, this research also highlight that being exclusive about showing prices, limited availability of products online, lack of luxury vibe is perceived to be the strong motives behind webrooming, which again reflects the importance of having an ecommerce platform that is engaging to the senses of consumers whereby also helps to achieve the hedonic values that they gain while shopping in-store. Thirdly, lack of trust towards shopping online,

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especially while purchasing costly items is also considered to be the reason to webroom. Finally, all these together limits the website usage of these luxury fashion brands to mere research purposes. Furthermore, the finding from the interviewes also clarifies that luxury consumers see the websites as mere catalog and a place to explore the recent trends and do research before buying in-store but not really a platform to check out. Thereby, proving again the need for an engaging website atmosphere that can equal the in-store experience.

In accordance to the findings above, having a webmosphere can potentially influence the consumers purchase intentions which could be an effective way to reduce the webrooming intentions of consumers. Moreover, it can enhance the website experience of luxury fashion brands, which is currently lacking that element. Furthermore, the results of this research also showed that experience has a major role in influencing the purchase intentions of consumers, both online and in-store. Given that online experience is lacking various factors that has the ability to trigger purchasing motives in the minds of the consumers, it shows the potential for making the consumers shop online as well by implementing a more engaging webmosphere.

5.1 Theoretical implication

The findings of this research to an extend resembles the findings of extant literatures which was discussed in the theoretical framework.

To begin with, the consumption patterns of luxury consumers are divided into two; intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors (Sheetal et al., 2015). According to Sheetal et al., 2015, Fulfillment of goals, sense of achievement, self-satisfaction, quality and pleasure are identifiably the motivations that lead to consumption of luxury goods. The authors further state that extrinsic factors such as status, uniqueness are also important elements that motivates consumers to prefer luxury brands. The aforementioned was also found to be important findings in this research. Moreover, the findings of this research shows that shopping in-store for the luxury fashion brands, makes them feel good about ones self and is a kind of fun and leisure activity.

While these factors are prominent to identifying the motives behind a luxury consumer shopping preference, experience plays a major role in influencing the purchase intentions of consumers (Swinyard, 1993). The experience gained while shopping is considered as an enjoyment and less of a chore (Haridasan & Fernando, 2018). The authors further argue that the in-store experience has the ability to indulge with the customers inner feelings, it enables them to achieve the hedonic value, and gather sensory information about

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the product. Moreover, the author states that social interaction is also considered to be one of the prominent factors that you can avail with in-store shopping experience (Haridasan & Fernando, 2018). As states in the results chapter, sensory needs, hedonic values, shopping interaction considered to be prominent findings in this research regarding the motivations to shop in-store for luxury fashion brands.

Furthermore, Haridas & Fernando, (2018) highlights about the importance of convenience in online shopping. However, as reflected in the results chapter above, it does not compliment to the luxury consumer's needs. Luxury consumers are motivated towards shopping that entails experience (Aw, 2019). The author also points out that the lack of experience felt online can prompt the buyers to webroom more often. The findings of Aw (2019) are also significant to the findings of this research. It was also observed that, lack of sensory interaction on the websites are one of the major reasons for increased webrooming. Having more sensually appealing contents on the website could potentially drive more online sales.

5.2 Managerial implications

Although, there is a wide array of research based on internet technologies, social media and its influence on luxury brands, the research related to webrooming intentions of luxury fashion brand consumers and the reasons attached to it remain unexplored. The findings of this research will help marketers to develop online marketing strategies to enhance the e-commerce platforms of luxury fashion brands and implement a more likable atmosphere for its users. This paper also gives a clear understanding about the needs of customers, their expectations towards online shopping, and the reasons to webroom. These two contributions is explained in detail in the next couple of paragraphs.

Luxury consumers are very keen towards the experience the brand provides. The lack of experiential value present on their online websites is considered to be one of the strong reasons to increase the webrooming intentions of consumers. Having a more experiential website or a webmosphere as the researcher refers to, that reflects the luxury environment and the feel to the buyer could be an effective way to make the consumers buy from the website itself. The following are a few ways that could improve the webmosphere of these brands.

Firstly, luxury marketers should pay more attention to building more trust for their e-commerce sites, as it was observed that online shoppers stopped themselves from buying online due to the lack of trust in the website. Secondly, the overall experience of the

websites could be enhanced by having good customer service, which was found to be missing at least in certain cases, especially when comparing it with in-store shopping. It would be advised for the luxury fashion brand marketers to focus more on enhancing the customer service online, this can potentially improve the online sales for these luxury fashion brands. Thirdly, although not disclosing the price is part of the luxury fashion brand's ideology to remain exclusive, online shoppers prefer to see the price before buying. This is something these marketers could take into account to improve the online sales of these luxury fashion brands. Finally, certain online customers regardless of their interest to shop online is forced to shop in-store due to the lack of availability of stock. Considering this situation, it would be ideal for luxury fashion brand marketers to have more stocks available for its online customers as well.

All these above suggestions observably could serve the needs of a luxury consumer and could positively impact the online sales of luxury fashion brands.

5.3 Limitations and future research

Despite all the measures that were taken to ensure that the research gave full attention to the topic of study, due to the limitations to the scope of the study, there existed few limitations. Considering that this research was done using thematic analysis and analyzed with coding, to an extent it was subject to the personal interpretation of the researcher. Although the researcher had tried to be iterative and self-critical towards the researcher's thought, the study may still be biased towards the researcher's knowledge regarding the topic. Furthermore, due to the limited time span and feasibility factors, this research was specifically focused on consumers based in the Netherlands.

In the future, it is recommended to conduct the research based on a different market and a different scale of consumers. For instance, a cross-cultural examination of Asian and western consumers and the role of webmsophere and webrooming intentions per culture could be an interesting topic to further study upon. Since the topic of the research is new and current it also leaves an avenue to conduct further research based on the major digital advancements in the world. It would be interesting to conduct a study on the concept of how the Metaverse can help in the enhancement of webmosphere.

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INTRODUCTION

- □ Explanation of consent form
- □ How are you?
- □ Where do you live?
- □ *Few ice breaking questions

SHOPPING HABITS

- □ Are you a shopoholic person?
- □ Do you prefer to shop online or in-store, and why?

WEBROOMING (Will explain about it in the beginning of the interview, so that the participant is familiar with this term)

- □ What is your understanding about webrooming?
- □ Have you ever webroomed while shopping for luxury brands? Could you please explain the reason as to why?
- □ How do you think webrooming can help you in your shopping?
- □ What do you expect to gain through webrooming?
- □ Have your expectations met after webrooming? Could you please explain more about it

BRAND EXPERIENCE - ONLINE

- □ How would you describe brand experience in your understanding?
- □ What do you expect while shopping online in terms of the online shopping experience?
- □ Have your expectations ever been met while shopping online? Could you please explain more about it
- □ Do you think that the online shopping experience influences your purchase intentions? And how?
- □ Which are the major brands that you think have a good online shopping experience and why?

- □ While shopping online, have you ever felt like anything is missing? Could you please describe more about it.
- □ How would you like to describe your overall experience shopping online for luxury fashion brands?

BRAND EXPERIENCE IN-STORE
- □ What do you hope to achieve shopping for luxury fashion brands in-store?
- □ Given that you have an option to shop online, why would you choose to shop in-store?
- □ How would you describe the in-store shopping experience as a whole?
- □ How would you differ shopping for a non-luxury brand a luxury brand? In terms of experience?
- □

PURCHASE INTENTIONS
- □ Why do you choose to search online before making an in-store purchase?
- □ What could be the potential reasons that could influence your decisions while purchasing a product?
- □ How do you think the online brand experience can influence your purchase intentions?

LUXURY BRANDS
- □ What is your perception of luxury fashion brands?
- □ Why do you tend to buy luxury products?
- □ What are the things that you look for while shopping for luxury brands?

CUSTOMER'S PURCHASE JOURNEY
- □ Could you please explain a normal journey that you go through while purchasing a luxury product?
- □ What are the difficulties, if any that you have faced while shopping for luxury fashion brands?

CONCLUSION
- □ In your opinion, what could be the suggestions that could help luxury fashion brands to increase their online experience?

APPENDIX B

CODING SCHEMA

Main themes	Sub Categories	Codes
Motivation to buy luxury	*Status Symbol*	Status
		Show off
	Sense of growth achievement	Feel Successful
		Inspiring to grow
		control
	Long term investment	Quality
		Classic
		Timeless
		Increases value with time
		Can use over generations
Website Usage	*Pre-purchase information*	Trend updates
		Look book
		Looking for price
		Searching new design
		Reference
		Planning for in-store shopping
		Reviews
		Show other people products
		Overview of what to expect in-store
		Pictures
Motivations to shop in-store	*Hedonic values*	Pleasure
		Fun
		Internal satisfaction
		Bucket list check
		Feeling of being seen
		Excitement to purchase something new in-store
		Therapeutic feeling

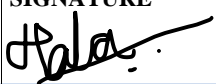|	Sensory needs	Need for touch
		Need to see
		Need to feel the product
		Need to try out
	Monetary value	Big investment
		Need to assure the worth by seeing the product in-person
	The high society	Feel important
		Recognizability in the society
		Rich feeling
		Feeling of belonging to high society
		Brand packaging
	Customer Service	Knowledgeable staff
		Personal styling assistant
		Big waiting rooms
		All tantrums taken care of
		High treatment with Champagnes and beverages while shopping
		Freedom to ask opinions
		Personalized suggestions
		Direct help for decision making
		Smooth process of shopping
		Welcoming environment
		Quality of the staff
	Shopping interaction	Socialize with other customers
		See what other people is buying
		Meet successful people
	Trust	Assurance of product when seen in-person
		Reliable
	FOMO on in-store experience	More choices
		Different vibe
		Exclusive feeling

Motivations to shop online	Convenience	Luxury of time
		Shop from different stores at once
		Don't have to dress up and go out
		Shop anywhere
Webrooming intentions	Lack of experience	No personality to the website
		Missing the luxury vibe online
		Doesn't feel special online
		Lack of assurance on how the product looks on consumers
		Lack of representation to different sizes
		Trust issues with website
		Less of an ecommerce
		Lack of customer service
		All tantrums taken care of
		Less of an
		High treatment with Champagnes and beverages while shopping
	Too many hassles	Doesn't show prices
		Lack of stock availability
		Shipping issues
		Hassle to return
		So many procedures to enquire about a product

APPENDIX C

Project Title and version	WEBMOSPERE OF LUXURY FASHION BRANDS AND WEBROOMING INTENTIONS OF CONSUMERS IN THE NETHERLANDS
Name of Principal Investigator	Hala Fathima
Name of Organisation	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Hala Fathima. I am inviting you to participate in this research project about webmosphere of luxury fashion brands and webrooming intentions of consumers in the Netherlands. The purpose of this research project is to understand the relationship between webmosphere and webrooming intentions of consumers and how luxury fashion brands websites play a role in it.
Procedures	You will participate in an interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. You will be asked questions about your shopping preferences and purchase intentions. Sample questions include: What do you hope to achieve while shopping for luxury fashion brands? You must be in between 25 – 35 years
Potential and anti-cipated Risks and Discomforts	There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
Potential Benefits	Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. As a result of participating, you may better understand luxury fashion brands and their marketing activities The broader goal of this research is to give more insight to the marketers of luxury fashion brands and help them understand their new audience

Sharing the results	Your plan for sharing the findings with the participants should be provided. If you have a plan and a timeline for the sharing of information, include the details. You may also inform the participant that the research findings will be shared more broadly, for example, through publications and conferences.
Confidentiality	Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Moreover, only trained research staff will have access to your responses. Within these restrictions, results of this study will be made available to you upon request. As indicated above, this research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' offices or on the researchers password-protected computers and will be destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.
Compensation	*There shall be no compensation*
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the primary investigator through mail: 572374ah@eur.nl
Statement of Consent	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.

Audio recording (if applicable)	I consent to have my interview audio recorded ☒ yes ☐ no	
Secondary use (if applicable)	I consent to have the anonymised data be used for secondary analysis ☒ yes ☐ no	
Signature and Date	**NAME PARTICIPANT** **DIMITRA**	**NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR** **HALA FATHIMA**
	SIGNATURE	**SIGNATURE**
	DATE 06/05/2022	**DATE 06/05/2022**