



MASTER'S DISSERTATION

HOW NON-FASHION CAMPAIGNS INFLUENCE  
CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION IN LUXURY FASHION  
IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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INSTITUTO PORTUGUÊS DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE MARKETING, JUNE, 2025

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Dissertation submitted to IPAM, to meet the requirements for the obtention of the degree of Master in *Global Marketing* performed under the scientific supervision of *Lama Al Imam*.

INSTITUTO PORTUGUÊS DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE MARKETING, JUNE, 2025

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Lama Al Imam, for her support and for always helping me navigate the challenges I faced throughout this thesis.

To my parents, Isabel and José, thank you for giving me the platform and freedom to achieve what I've achieved. To my sister Rita and Adriano, your presence and encouragement have meant a lot.

To all my friends, thank you for being there.

Too much discourse is a problem. I'm not into protesting. All the confusion of my life... has been a reflection of myself! Myself as I am, not as I'd like to be.

## **DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL WRITING**

I, André Manuel Ferreira Moreira declare on my honour that the work presented here to obtain a Master's degree in 2025 from the Instituto Português de Administração de Marketing is original, the result of research I have carried out, and that the use of contributions or texts by other authors is duly referenced, in accordance with the principles and rules of Copyright and Related Rights.

Furthermore, I declare on my honour that in the case that this work includes content developed with total or partial origin from artificial intelligence tools, these are clearly identified and duly referenced.

Porto, 13 of June of 2025.

The author:



## ABSTRACT

The fashion industry has depended on carefully styled campaigns to strengthen brand image and increase product attractiveness. However, these campaigns are changing according to the updated consumer habits, which affects purchasing selections. This study tests how consumer buying decisions are influenced by the non-fashion campaigns in the luxury fashion sector during the digital age. To enhance online presence of luxury brands, brands can employ non-fashion campaigns, which results in more expressive communications with customers and improved brand perception. This research explores the impact of non-fashion campaigns on consumers' purchase intentions by analyzing psychological and emotional responses. It combines the theories of brand attachment and digital consumer behavior. Qualitative analysis via focus groups of luxury fashion brands consumers, who engage on digital platforms, explored how these factors affect acquisition intentions. The findings signal that emotional engagement, symbolic resonance, and perceived authenticity influence customer attitude more than direct product presentation. This research contributes to the comprehension of luxury branding methods in an artificially fragmented offline environment. Findings indicate that non-fashion campaigns improved purchase intention by emotional connections, highlighting authenticity, and by using wealthier culturally based stories. These campaigns were clearly very effective amongst younger digitally orientated audiences and could be effective in preserving brand elitism and relevance in the emerging luxury fashion landscape.

**Keywords:** Luxury fashion, Non-fashion campaigns, Purchase intention, Digital consumers, Emotional branding, Brand authenticity

## RESUMO

A indústria da moda tem dependido de campanhas super estilizadas para reforçar a imagem dos seus produtos e torná-los mais atrativos. No entanto, essas campanhas estão a adaptar-se ao novo comportamento de consumo, o que acaba influenciando as decisões de compra. Este estudo investiga como as campanhas não-fashion impactam as escolhas dos consumidores de luxo na era digital. Para fortalecer a sua presença online, as marcas de luxo podem implementar campanhas não-fashion, que ajudam a comunicarem-se melhor com os consumidores e a valorizar a imagem da marca. A pesquisa procura analisar o impacto das campanhas não-fashion na intenção de compra, levando a cabo as respostas psicológicas e emocionais dos mesmos. As teorias de apego à marca e do comportamento do consumidor digital são trazidas à tona. Uma análise qualitativa é realizada por meio de grupos focais com consumidores de marcas de luxo que já estão acostumados ao digital, para entender como esses fatores influenciam a intenção de compra. Os resultados mostram que o engajamento emocional, a ressonância simbólica e a percepção de autenticidade são mais importantes para a atitude do consumidor do que apenas a apresentação do produto. Esta investigação contribui para a compreensão dos métodos de *branding* de luxo num ambiente *offline* artificialmente fragmentado. Os resultados indicam que as campanhas não-fashion aumentaram a intenção de compra ao estabelecer ligações emocionais, realçar a autenticidade e utilizar narrativas culturalmente ricas. Estas campanhas revelaram-se eficazes junto de públicos jovens e digitalmente orientados, podendo também ser eficazes na preservação do elitismo das marcas no emergente panorama da moda de luxo.

**Palavras-chave:** Moda de luxo, Campanhas não-fashion, Intenção de compra, Consumidores digitais, Branding emocional, Autenticidade da marca

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDA - Attention–Interest–Desire–Action (advertising model)

AI - Artificial Intelligence

AR - Augmented Reality

CRM - Cause-Related Marketing

eWOM - Electronic Word-Of-Mouth

F/W - Fall/Winter (season notation)

Gen Z - Generation Z (participants aged 18–30)

NFT - Non-Fungible Token

P-A-D - Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (model used in emotional branding)

S/S - Spring/Summer (season notation)

SMMa - Social Media Marketing Activities

SNS - Social Networking Sites

VR - Virtual Reality

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates the complex ways that non-fashion campaigns, such as moving away from traditional fashion items to more culturally and artistically driven narratives, affect consumer purchase intention for luxury fashion in a digital landscape. With the new landscape of luxury changing constantly now, it is critical for brands to understand the nuanced interaction between non-fashion campaigns and purchase intentions if they wish to constantly maintain their allure and exclusivity. Ultimately, the research finds that the influence of non-fashion campaigns on purchase intention is rarely straightforward and direct, but operates within deeper emotional, symbolic, and cultural domains, with perceptions of brand authenticity and exclusivity reliant on generational and cultural lenses.

There are five significant chapters in the thesis:

Chapter 1 – Introduction: This chapter describes the context, research problem, aims, and significance of your research; Chapter 2 - Literature Review: This chapter reviews the existing body of academic literature on luxury branding, symbolic consumption, brand authenticity, and emotional storytelling, and presents the theoretical framework; Chapter 3 - Methodology: this chapter explains the research design and pilot study, focus group structure, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and the thematic analysis methods; Chapter 4 - Data analysis and discussion: this chapter discusses the focus groups findings, identifies emergent themes, and makes the connection with often-discussed theoretical perspectives; Chapter 5 - Conclusion: this chapter summarizes the key findings, reviews contributions to theory/concepts and practice, considers limitations and future directions.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH RELEVANCE**

High-end fashion has conventionally prospered on ideals of exclusivity, artistry, and legacy, characteristics that have been traditionally conveyed through brick-and-mortar stores, prominent runway presentations, and sleek marketing (Creevey et al., 2021; Chu et al., 2019; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020). In recent times, the swift digital transformation has altered how consumers engage with luxury brands, making these formerly exclusive entities more accessible while testing their capacity to uphold a sense of exclusivity (Nash, 2019; Sayem, 2022).

In the meantime, campaigns that are non-fashion in nature, emphasizing cultural, artistic, and lifestyle stories, use different and emerging tactics for influencing purchase intentions in the digital era. This study investigates how non-fashion campaigns change the engagement of consumers with luxury brands and, importantly, the influence of non-fashion campaigns on perceptions of authenticity and exclusivity on behalf of the brand brand and meaningful consumer-brand relationships, which will be the focal point of analysis and conclusions will be drawn from this exploration of the fundamental elements of conveyances of stories through mediated representations of consumers' engagement with luxury brands. This dissertation ultimately seeks to enrich understandings of how luxury brands may adapt to an expanding digital context and changing consumer expectations while leveraging their heritage and exclusivity.

Digital platforms have become vital instruments for luxury brands to connect with consumers, merging classic values with contemporary tactics to maintain their significance and appeal.

In the meantime, non-fashion campaigns have emerged as a new and innovative area of activity for luxury brands to change consumer behavior. They signal a shift from a product orientation to a perception of experience, and focus on culture, art, and lifestyle stories, rather than standard fashion products, usefully tracking with the rise of experiential marketing. Experiential marketing is an approach to marketing that focuses on creating memorable experiences for consumers to stimulate emotional attachment and loyalty. In addition, functional models of digital consumer behavior and brand attachment place a premium on authenticity, exclusivity, and personal relevance when establishing relationships between consumers and brands in the digital age. While the use of non-fashion campaigns is gaining traction, a significant gap remains in the literature as to their impact on consumer buying intentions in the luxury fashion context. Prior research, generically, has considered how storytelling, especially in campaign setting, affects consumers' decision-making process; however, the degree of influence non-fashion campaigns pose - particularly in relation to consumer perceptions of authenticity and exclusivity in a digital context - has not been used for academic inquiry thus far.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To explore the role of non-fashion campaigns in shaping consumer purchase intention of luxury brands
- To examine the impact of these campaigns on brand authenticity and exclusivity
- To assess how these factors influence consumer purchase intentions in terms of demographics.

This research seeks to fill these gaps by examining the impact of non-fashion promotions on consumers' purchase intentions within the luxury fashion industry. In particular, it aims to examine the psychological and emotional responses triggered by these campaigns and their impact on views regarding brand authenticity, exclusivity, and relevance. This study aims to deliver practical insights through analysis of the collected data.

“The biggest challenge for the luxury sector today is not the general macroeconomic context or the weakness of key markets like China, but customer fatigue with a luxury industry that seems increasingly banal. This crisis could last longer than others. One could call it the trivialisation of luxury; I call it ‘luxury fatigue’.”

**FRÉDÉRIC GRANGIÉ**  
CEO, CHANEL WATCHES & FINE  
JEWELLERY

**BOF**

Figure 1 – Frédéric Grangié for Le Temps

“In an interview with Swiss newspaper Le Temps, Frédéric Grangié said the industry’s most worrying issue is customer fatigue and the trivialisation of luxury.

“Customers are tired of being bludgeoned by luxury,” Grangié said, forecasting two years of difficult business.

Exquisite, exclusive creations are at the heart of what keeps customers excited about and loyal to a luxury brand. An overly commercial approach to fuelling luxury growth has weakened the allure brands have held over many years. “Over-distribution is a major risk factor at the moment,” Grangié said.” - BOF, October 2024

### **1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is structured into five chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

1. Chapter 1 – Introduction: Outlines the context, research problem, objectives, and relevance of the study.
2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review: Examines existing academic work on luxury branding, symbolic consumption, brand authenticity, and emotional storytelling, and presents the theoretical framework.
3. Chapter 3 – Methodology: Describes the research design, focus group structure, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, and the thematic analysis approach.
4. Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Discussion: Presents the findings from the focus groups, interprets emergent themes, and links them to theoretical perspectives.

5. Chapter 5 – Conclusion: Summarizes the key findings, highlights contributions to theory and practice, acknowledges methodological limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

This structure ensures a logical flow from theoretical grounding to practical implications, enabling a rich exploration of how consumers interpret and respond to non-fashion luxury branding strategies.

## **1.4 RESEARCH RELEVANCE AND CONTRIBUTION**

In an era where digital attention is fragmented and brand loyalty is increasingly symbolic, understanding how consumers interpret non-fashion luxury campaigns has never been more relevant. While traditional advertising focused on product features and aspirational imagery, contemporary luxury communication often deploys abstract narratives, cinematic visuals, and emotional symbolism to build cultural capital and identity resonance. This shift raises critical questions about how such campaigns are received by diverse demographic groups, and whether their intended meanings align with consumer perceptions.

The relevance of this research lies in its intersection between branding strategy, consumer psychology, and cultural studies. It contributes to a growing body of literature that explores emotional branding, authenticity, and the symbolic value of luxury. By focusing on the reception of non-fashion campaigns — a relatively under-explored domain — this dissertation provides insights into how meaning is co-constructed between brands and audiences. It also highlights generational differences in how luxury is perceived, felt, and remembered, offering implications for more inclusive and targeted branding practices.

From a managerial perspective, the findings offer practical guidance for luxury brand strategists seeking to craft emotionally engaging, culturally relevant campaigns that maintain exclusivity while adapting to the demands of digital storytelling. The study also underscores the value of qualitative methods in capturing the richness of symbolic consumption and narrative interpretation, areas often overlooked in quantitative brand research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review outlines the theoretical and conceptual base for examining non-fashion luxury campaigns, especially with regard to their emotional, symbolic, and cultural relevance. As luxury brands and the notion of luxury branding is changing due to digitization, cultural diversity, and other shifts in consumer space, scholarly work has also turned to embrace storytelling, emotional branding, and symbolic communication of brands, as fundamental ways of engaging consumers (Chu et al., 2019; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020). The luxury campaigns of today, while using more physical, product-centric ways of communicating, have shifted to use images, sociocultural narratives, and emotionally-driven experiences to express meaning (Petraavičiūtė et al., 2021; Azemi et al., 2022).

In this chapter, multidisciplinary perspectives from marketing, cultural studies, semiotics, and consumer psychology are integrated to improve understanding of how luxury brands, in non-fashion campaigns—constructed symbolic and emotional value. The literature review structure reflects the primary theoretical and empirical contributions regarding five aspects:

- **Section 2.1** describes the evolution of luxury marketing campaigns encompassing the strategic alignment of digital and physical media, emergence of influencer-style formats, and emergence of laterally referred to “phygital” brand experiences—which emphasize exclusivity, and innovation (Kotler et al., 2021; Sayem, 2022).
- **Section 2.2** pertains to emotional branding and storytelling as a mechanism for brand loyalty and symbolic convergence. These elements include narrative construction, parasocial experiences, and consumer participation in co-creation to construct meanings associated with the brand (Fetais et al., 2022; Payne et al., 2021).

- **Section 2.3** illustrates that luxury isn't a prefix to brand; luxury brands are representative of cultural capital and symbolic consumption. This section talks through anti-fashion, how redefine luxury, and brand equity through values driven campaign (Bourdieu, 1986; Creevey et al., 2021).
- **Section 2.4** articulates the semiotic and symbolic aspects of fashion branding. It explains visual storytelling, art minimalism, and an aware consumer with cultural capital as interpretative agency of the brand consumer (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2021; Kusumasondjaja, 2019).
- **Section 2.5** discusses the emotional and cultural reception of luxury campaigns, especially the effects of digital technologies, generational differences, cultural narratives, and the future possibilities of sustainability and metaverse strategies (Jain & Mishra, 2020; Zha et al., 2023; Birdsey et al., 2023).

Taken together, these sections provide a theoretical model for understanding how non-fashion luxury campaigns operate as both commercial messages, and cultural texts that create emotional attachment, status signaling and brand loyalty across geographies and generations.

## **2.1 MARKETING CAMPAIGNS AND MEDIA STRATEGY**

According to Kotler et al. (2021), a marketing campaign is a coordinated set of actions intended to promote a brand or product that is intended to be consistent with overall strategies. From a luxury perspective, coordinating these activities can be more complicated, as they must mix traditional media with internet channels, influencer marketing, and, where

appropriate, pull in sustainability causes to reach much more emotionally and symbolically driven consumers (Ryan, 2020; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020).

This section explores three critical dimensions of luxury campaign strategy:

- **Marketing Campaign Foundations (2.1.1):** Establishing contemporary campaign formats, and objectives, including a nuanced discussion of influencer marketing, the role of digital word-of-mouth (eWOM), and sustainability/cause marketing (Kurdi et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2020; Schamp et al., 2022).
- **Digital Transformation in Luxury Branding (2.1.2):** Evaluating how the use of digital channels, namely social media, impacts consumer engagement and loyalty. Studies suggest the need for a growing emphasis for personalization of content and flexibility in strategies in the digital environment (Song & Kim, 2022; Halwani, 2020).
- **Hybrid and “Phygital” Campaigns (2.1.3):** Exploring the way luxury brands manifest the blend of experience in 'real-time' and the growing emergence of 'immersive' experiences - with emerging technologies such as in store events, AR/VR installations, and QR-enabled storytelling (Nash, 2019; Sayem, 2022; Galhotra & Dewan, 2020).

These three areas of focus highlight the evolution of marketing campaigns from transactional communication tools to complex and experiential narratives, which create emotional attachment and symbolic value, straddling the media ecosystem (Chu et al., 2019; Jansen, 2020).

## 2.1.1 MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Kotler et al. (2021) define a marketing campaign as "a series of actions intentionally planned to promote the purchase of a product or service," and highlighting marketing campaigns that relate to the overall marketing plan are critical. Marketing campaigns encompass both traditional media, like print media and television, and contemporary platforms like email, social media, and content marketing (Ryan, 2020). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2020) identified certain key steps for developing a marketing campaign: objectives, target audience, message, communications media, implementation, and evaluation. Influencer marketing, as the new form of modern word-of-mouth advertising, can change consumer behaviors by changing attitudes to increase brand awareness and preferences for the brand (Chopra, Avhad, & Jaju, 2020). Brands can help consumers to have a more favorable connection with their brand, by utilizing influencers who have these qualities which ultimately results in higher purchase intentions and increases brand loyalty for the consumers.

Kurdi et al. (2022) analyze the effects of different channels of digital marketing on decision making for consumers in regard to purchasing and the moderating effect of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Being aware of the impact of digital channels for achieving consumer goal such as seeking more information and peer approval can be very beneficial for marketers. Similarly, Hanaysha, Shaikh, and Alzoubi (2021) establish a relationship between the elements of the marketing mix and the consumer's purchase decision in the retail sense. For example, advertising, the intensity of distribution, and the store image were found to have a significant impact on consumer goals in the process of making a purchase decision. The issue of sustainability is found to still be relevant in marketing strategies by Amoako et al. (2020) as shown in their research which studied the

impacts green marketing has on the consumer regarding their purchasing behavior and brand loyalty. Sailer, Wilfing, and Straus (2022) also studied sustainable fashion marketing in Black Friday and what drives consumers, stating that sustainable brands face a challenge in value (of their brands) when they prioritize discounts. Many authors, such as Gao et al. (2020), have also studied the effectiveness of cause-related marketing (CRM) campaigns and there is a strong indication that emotional attachment and transparency help to influence consumers attitudes towards CRM and motivate them to engage with the campaigns. Hence, brands need to align campaigns according to consumption values and motivations to engage those consumers in to making purchases. Schamp et al. (2022) studied advertising elements in CRM and the effect of message types and visual designs in consumer engagement.

Marketing campaigns tend to highlight lifestyle, culture, and art, demonstrating how the brand is versatile and representing how the brand can articulate a vision beyond a typical fashion product (Jansen, 2020). For instance, Balenciaga's Spring 2025 marketing campaign works with storytelling to create connection with consumers and to share their work by breaking down the elements of art and personal narrative (Balenciaga, n.d.). The use of this storytelling process does not only refocus the brand, but it shows that a brand can change and enhance their way of thinking and responding to the consumers they connect with and what they are likely to respond to in the digital world (Chu et al., 2019). Non-fashion narratives that demonstrate individuality and status as aspirational, have a unique way of reaching middle-class and even upper-middle-class consumers, as they aim to finalize their luxury experiences (Liu et al., 2018). Integrating demographic information by understanding age, gender, and income level will help tailor a marketing campaign to specific consumers (Hanaysha, Shaikh, & Alzoubi, 2021).

## **2.1.2 IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

The research of Song and Kim (2022) was built on the notions of brand page satisfaction and brand love as the two mechanisms of impact on loyalty from luxury brands' social media marketing, whilst Halwani (2020) has identified gaps in luxury brands' social media advertising. This suggests a need for luxury brands not only to refine their approach to digital marketing but also a need for brands to cater to various approaches (i.e. make digital advertisements adaptive to different consumers, etc.) in this era of innovative digital.

## **2.1.3 BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL REALMS IN LUXURY CAMPAIGNS**

As Nash (2019) points out, although digital campaigns can reach a large audience, physical experiences (i.e. in-store events and pop-ups) matter in reinforcing the brand identity and exclusivity. Sayem (2022) mentions that phygital campaigns (a combination of physical and digital experiences) enable the user to seamlessly transition from online to offline experiences. Consumer-facing phygital campaigns often incorporate QR codes, AR displays, and other interactive installations (Galhotra & Dewan, 2020). Phygital campaigns and other hybrid strategies offer an opportunity for luxury brands to create a storyline through all channels for the consumer (Creevey et al., 2021).

## 2.2 EMOTIONAL BRANDING AND STORYTELLING

As Chu et al. (2019) and Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2020) point out, we see luxury brands increasingly using storytelling as a way to create emotion around aspiration, nostalgia, and also identity connection; all factors that contribute to brand loyalty and differentiation.

This section explores five dimensions of emotional branding as applied to non-fashion luxury campaigns:

- **Storytelling in Luxury Marketing (2.2.1):** Discusses the opportunities for creating consumer involvement from a branding perspective, particularly through parasocial interaction and emotional engagement (Fetais et al., 2022; Azemi et al., 2022).
- **Emotional Engagement and Consumer Loyalty (2.2.2):** Discusses the emotional processes and identity processes of long-term brand loyalty and commitment that can be revealed through the use of values-based narratives and symbolic connection (Ko et al., 2016; Socha, 2023).
- **Collaborative Narrative-Building (2.2.3):** Discusses the role that collaborative storytelling, mentions about user-generated content, and/or influencer marketing play when shaping perception and trust [Kim & Sullivan (2019), Jin et al. (2021) and Yang et al. (2020)]
- **The Psychological Impact of Storytelling (2.2.4):** draws on the consumer behavior literature around narrative archetypes, and emotional engagement, which may help define the relationship between the storytelling employed by luxury brands, its effect on consumer perception, and consumer buying behavior (Júnior et al. 2022; Woodside & Fine, 2019).

- **Co-Creation and Consumer Participation (2.2.5):** Manages how co-creation capitalizes on the possibility to create brand meaning, authenticity and emotional investment in stories and campaigns, especially through social media (Payne et al., 2021; Nyadzayo et al., 2020; Rundin & Colliander, 2021).

These combined themes show the opportunity for storytelling as not only a content strategy, but also as a method of emotion to form consumer identity, loyalty and long-term brand equity, to the consumer's view.

### **2.2.1 STORYTELLING IN LUXURY MARKETING**

The importance of storytelling is on the rise in luxury marketing as brands look to engage consumers on a more emotional level and increase brand loyalty. Emotional engagement contributes to purchases, particularly in the luxury space where goods are framed as elite symbols of aspiration (Chu et al., 2019; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020). In their work on sensory marketing, Shahid et al., (2022) discuss the importance of sensory marketing cues or physical brand experiences in inducing emotional attachments and brand loyalty to luxury brands in retail settings. The authors explain that storytelling can act as a very powerful sensory cue that produces some emotional reaction leading to memorable consumer experiences. Fetais et al. (2022) explored the relationship between brand storytelling as a social media marketing activity (SMMa) and brand loyalty for luxury fashion brands and claimed storytelling enables companies to create captivating stories that connect with audiences, build community interaction, and create lovemarks - brands that consumers feel an emotional bond towards. Azemi et al. (2022) argue that storytelling can

promote luxury brands' SMMA by developing emotional ties and influence parasocial behaviours between the consumer and the luxury brand, if luxury brands communicate own brand stories which resonate with consumers values and dreams then they may enhance perceived value and rationalize price premiums.

### **2.2.2 EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND CONSUMER LOYALTY**

Story-giving encourages consumers to co-create stories with the brand, thereby increasing engagement and improving brand authenticity and exclusivity (Ko et al., 2016). Narratives that resonate with consumers' personal values and goals can influence their purchasing behaviours (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020). An example of this, is Loewe's Spring/Summer 2024 collection, which used story-giving to enhance their brand position and constructed it from unconventional characters and aesthetics (Socha, 2024).

### **2.2.3 COLLABORATIVE NARRATIVE-BUILDING**

Kim and Sullivan (2019) suggest that emotional branding is a powerful means to create a strong connection between consumers and a fashion brand in a time when user-generated content could disrupt brand narratives.

 **CONNOR** ✓  
@homocowboi

Why is this abandoned chair in Paris giving Juergen Teller for Balenciaga



Figure 2 – UGC Regarding Juergen Teller Campaign for Balenciaga

Likewise, Lund et al. (2020) cite that it is important to tell the story and counter negative storytelling on social media in order to positively position the brand. Jin et al. (2021) have shown that fashion posts with relatable characters or influencers are significantly more trustworthy, a necessary constituent of fashion marketing. By producing narratives that elicit pleasure, arousal, and dominance, fashion brands may have better success in emotional branding, thereby creating stronger ties to their audiences (Yang et al., 2020). Choudhry et al. (2022), suggest that followers are attracted to the creative storytelling about these digital beings and they create a power that transcends traditional marketing limitations.

## **2.2.4 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF STORYTELLING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

Júnior et al. (2022) findings recognize that storytellers can reignite consumer purchasing behavior by establishing storyworlds that reflect consumer and aspirational experiences, along with the consumers' essence. Since luxury brands serve to enhance self-perception through stories that resonate with consumers' aspirations (Woodside & Fine, 2019), they provide another dimension of emotional connection, which Garassini and Matysiewicz (2020) uses storytelling archetypes principle to develop emotional reactions about brand value. These narratives often emphasize themes of transformation, exclusivity, and empowerment, allowing consumers to envision themselves as part of the brand's story (Chu et al., 2019).

## **2.2.5 CO-CREATION AND CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN NON-FASHION CAMPAIGNS**

Co-creation is described in terms of an often reciprocal process of co-production, where consumers and brands come together to make value (Payne et al., 2021). Co-creation has become a powerful way of developing and enhancing consumer engagement and loyalty in the luxury sector (Ko et al., 2016). For instance, Nyadzayo et al. (2020) examine the role of value co-creation where consumers felt the value they were providing was part of the brand's identity leading them to full brand loyalty. Chu et al. (2019) state that interactive campaigns on serving platforms like Instagram and TikTok allow brands to collect 'user-initiated consumer-generated content' and integrate it into brand narratives. This produces consumer engagement and a feedback loop, thus accompanying future growth and strategies for

potential campaigns (Chua et al. 2019). Ko et al. (2016) also mention allowing consumers to play the role of a brand ambassador is beneficial, as it enhances brand value perceptions. Social media is essential to co-creation because it also enables consumers dynamic interactions with brands to enhance and increase engagement and participation (Cheung et al., 2021).

Influencer marketing is an emerging method to enhance co-creation (Chopra et al., 2020). According to Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2020), the attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise of influencers significantly shape consumer behaviour and their willingness to co-create. Rundin and Colliander (2021) propose a new typology of influencers in advertising, and argue that various influences can generate different consumer responses. Nyadzayo et al., (2020) describe how brand engagement develops the self-concept of consumers, increasing their participation in co-creation. Keeling et al., (2020) advance this issue with a review of two contrasting aspects of value, co-creation and co-destruction of value in the interaction between health services and consumers.

## **2.3 LUXURY BRANDING AND CULTURAL CAPITAL**

Bourdieu (1984) cultural capital theory establishes a theoretical basis from which consumers interpret luxury as a marker of taste, identity, and position in the social hierarchy or social class. In an increasingly digital world, which democratizes access to branding content and challenges traditional notions of exclusivity in luxury markets, brands must respond to changing cultural expectations of consumer behaviour without sacrificing the aspirational allure of their marketplace.

This section explores how luxury branding is shaped by cultural signals, ethical pressures, and non-fashion narratives that appeal to symbolic interpretation and emotional connection.

- **Anti-fashion (2.3.1):** Discloses how anti-fashion cultural aesthetics have foregrounded the strategies of luxury brands, continuing a long history of aesthetic subversion in fashion (Steele, 1997).
- **Evolution of Luxury Branding (2.3.2):** Discusses how the luxury communication landscape has shifted from heritage and craftsmanship to digital storytelling and inclusive access (Creevey et al., 2021; Sayem, 2022).
- **Sustainability and Ethical Considerations (2.3.3):** Addresses how emergent conceptions of luxury combine social responsibility with cultural context, while evolving consumer motivations create pressures towards various consumer consciousness (Wang et al., 2021; Shin & Jeong, 2022; Razmus & Fortuna, 2022).
- **The Strategic Role of Non-Fashion Campaigns (2.3.4):** Summarizes how non-fashion stories have equalised expectations of luxury brands and cultivated cultural relevance and emotional depth (Dekhili et al., 2019; Monkhouse et al., 2012; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020).

These considerations depict how luxury brands create symbolic capital not just through complex material items, but also spatially, through storytelling that language as part of culturally and into valued grounded branding.

### **2.3.1 ANTI-FASHION**

Based on Steele (1997), the anti-fashion of the 1970s could be characterized as it was in part a deliberate attempt to subvert traditional fashion aesthetics, accentuating styles viewed as alternative or in opposition to contemporary fashion.

### **2.3.2 EVOLUTION OF LUXURY BRANDING**

Traditionally, luxury branding was based on exclusivity, craftsmanship, and heritage, and was communicated through physical stores, fashion shows and glossy advertisements (Creevey et al., 2021). The emergence of digital platforms opened access to luxury and necessitated an innovative response to creating exclusivity in a more accessible digital environment (Nash, 2019; Sayem, 2022). Digital transformation has extended the range of luxury brands and altered the way in which consumers perceive and use brands. Nowadays, consumers typically engage with brands through various social media dialogue platforms, e-commerce websites and social and virtual experiences (Sayem, 2022). However, luxury branding is still based on expanded storytelling, as brands express storytelling through digital tools to share compelling stories, and include heritage, tradition and values with new technology to remain relevant (Creevey et al., 2021).

### **2.3.3 SUSTAINABILITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

With a shift away from consumers' perspectives, so too will the notion of luxury. Businesses are redesigning the definitions of luxury to correspond with the shift towards

changing consumer expectations around their sustainable and ethical responsibilities. For example, Wang et al. (2021), state that consumers place great reliance on the value perceptions of sustainable luxury brands in formulating purchase intentions. Cultural and religious factors could also have significant impact on brand associations; Goyal (2020), depicts the importance of adjusting the marketing and branding strategies for different audiences. Shin and Jeong (2022) demonstrated the importance of advertising can create heritage for premium private label products, which blurred the distinctions between luxury and affordable luxury products. Razmus and Fortuna (2022) reiterated this trend and further explained heritage and emotional connection to their findings, as well as understanding how this affects consumer motivation. Overall, these studies suggest that as luxury brands continue to adapt, the brand needs to change its values to remain relevant, balancing both tradition and innovation, as it relates to sustainability in relation to shifting societal values. Muniz and Guzmán (2021), suggest the pandemic has sped up some of the changes in consumer behaviour, generating new expectations for luxury brand marketing. Consistent with this idea, Kim et al. (2020) offered their assessment of the continuing advantages of applications related to the brand image and product quality initiatives in shifting purchase intentions; these suggest that luxury brands experience an asset of both positioning and strength in the real world.

#### **2.3.4 THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF NON-FASHION CAMPAIGNS IN BUILDING BRAND EQUITY**

As noted by Dekhili et al. (2019), non-fashion campaigns allow brands to communicate values and stories that operate outside of their product offering in a way that creates deeper

emotional connections with consumers. This is consistent with Creevey et al. (2021) who point out that brand equity in the digital age is, to some degree, dependent on a brand's ability to create culturally relevant and resonant stories.

Monkhouse et al (2012) draw attention to cultural sensitivity as an important factor to brand equity in international markets, with luxury brands, for example, using the regional context of their campaigns often based around local traditional and values to be seen as authentic and inclusive (Jansen, 2020). Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2020) discuss how non-fashion campaigns contain a focus on exclusivity and how a large part of brand equity can often feature intangible attributes such as; heritage, innovation and craftsmanship to enhance feelings of luxury and exclusivity.

## **2.4 SYMBOLISM AND INTERPRETATION IN FASHION**

Luxury branding increasingly draws from the cultural storytelling space whereby meaning is constructed through language, visual cues, absence, and socio-cultural engagements (Petraavičiūtė et al., 2021; Hietanen et al., 2020). In this pursuit of creating brand meaning, semiotic theory is useful. Semiotic theory assumes that brands operate as signs and systematically convey meaning through cultural filters (Barthes, 1967; Floch, 2000). Given consumers' increasing ability to discern symbolism, brands might need to develop stories that balance clear meaning with interpretive openness (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022). Also, minimalism and the 'negative' have traditionally facilitated demonstrations of exclusivity and sophistication but are now also attractive modes of luxury branding in the digital age (Kusumasondjaja, 2019; Zha et al., 2023). These elements are not simply aesthetic choices but cultural strategies, demanding high levels of literacy and familiarity

with elite consumption codes — a form of symbolic capital rooted in Bourdieu's (1986) framework of cultural capital. This section explores how symbolism operates across visual communication and audience interpretation in luxury branding:

- **Semiotics and Visual Language (2.4.1):** Studies the ways in which luxury brands use meanings in images and symbolic storytelling, with cultural relevance, across many international markets, while connecting visual identity to emotional meaning and social values (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Petravičiūtė et al., 2021).
- **Visual Minimalism and the Semiotics of Absence (2.4.2):** Explores the ways in which minimal aesthetic, deliberate silence, and art create a sense of exclusivity and bond consumers with brands (Kusumasondjaja, 2019; Zha et al, 2023; Marsasi & Yuanita, 2023).
- **Cultural Capital and the Consumer as Interpreter (2.4.3):** Adapting Bourdieu's (1986) ideas on cultural capital to advance our understanding of luxury marketing, the article illustrates that the interpretation of luxury marketing campaigns are influenced by educational attainment, cultural literacy and social exposure, especially in the contexts of sustainability and identity politics (Enríquez & Archila-Godinez, 2021; Tubadji, 2021).

When viewed together, these concepts demonstrate how the nonverbal and symbolic forms of signification found within luxury branding is firmly situated relative to ideas of social class, the codes of aesthetic values and the interpretive capabilities which individual consumers possess that will ultimately influence how consumers decode that (nonverbal) branding signification and then emotive engagement that they have with brand messaging.

## 2.4.1 SEMIOTICS AND VISUAL LANGUAGE IN LUXURY BRANDING

Semiotic theory gives signs and symbols meaning which can connect with consumers when looked at from an emotional perspective. Recent research acknowledges the importance of brand personality congruence in luxury branding, suggesting that congruency between a brand's visual identity and a consumer's self-concept can increase brand love and loyalty (Shetty & Fitzsimmons 2021). Wang et al. (2020) describe how multinational luxury brands must consider diverse audience engagement of their visual languages, contextualizing the messaging to articulate a cultural meaning for luxury branding. This is aligned with semiotic concept as the meaning of visual stimuli will be influenced by cultural values.

As consumers do not see sustainability messages as conventional in the luxury industry, a well-defined brand narrative reinforced by visuals to portray a commitment to environmentally responsible processes can establish a unique value. Evidence indicates that sustainability messages, through communicating visually, can strengthen brand identification and brand engagement (Amatulli et al., 2021; Kang & Sung, 2021). Research shows that branded content placed on sustainability and social responsibility has a higher amount of engagement than branded content that lacks a sustainability message, which demonstrates that visuals need to resonate with consumer values to be effective (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022). In addition, some studies have also noted that the transient nature of content, especially on social platforms, can boost of perceived exclusivity, meaning that luxury brands need residuals or images to equally engage consumers (Lim et al., 2021).

According to Petravičiūtė et al. (2021) luxury brands communicate both functional and symbolic value through visual storytelling, which influences consumer perceptions and also purchase intentions. Hietanen et al. (2020) argue that meanings associated with luxury

are multilayered and fluid and in order to reflect this, luxury brands need to accommodate the multifaceted meanings within their communication.

#### **2.4.2 VISUAL MINIMALISM AND THE SEMIOTICS OF ABSENCE IN LUXURY BRANDING**

Kusumasondjaja (2019) states expressive aesthetics have a stronger engagement effect than classical aesthetics, showing that minimalism can represent sophistication and exclusivity. Such an assertion conforms with semiotic theory, which considers absence as being equivalent to luxury. Absence provides the opportunity for consumers to elicit and unfold their desires and interpretations (Kusumasondjaja, 2019). Lee et al. (2018) also considers the impacts of visual complexity and brand familiarity on consumers' perceptions, finding that consumers experienced the minimalistic visual effectively when using familiar luxury brands as test brands, as they did not create visual overload on the page and correspondingly related with the core identity of the brand.

Peluso et al. (2017) examine the "art infusion" effect (exclusivity/sophistication in luxury advertisements through a recognisable artwork) as unconventional minimalistic statements, whereas Baghi and Gabrielli (2018) consider the potential of visual conspicuousness concerning cause-related marketing as creating exclusivity, exemplifying the strategic absence for luxury to engage consumers meaningfully. Zha et al. (2023) document the impacts of audiovisual communication on luxury brand marketing, concluding that a more meaningful consumer experience that utilizes visual and auditory communication elicits a better memory. This recent interpretation of visual minimalism provides evidence that by removing traditional text-heavy communication during the purchase process

enhances prestige and informativeness, linking to the semiotics of absence. Furthermore, Marsasi and Yuanita (2023) study the elements of brand attachment in luxury consumers and finds that visual simplicity can increase consumer attachment to luxury brands. This suggests that visual simplicity with minimal elements can provide depth of emotional engagement to the brand.

### **2.4.3 CULTURAL CAPITAL AND THE CONSUMER AS INTERPRETER**

Cultural capital—a concept central to Bourdieu’s (1986) theory—encompasses non-financial social assets (e.g., knowledge, skills, education) that shape individual behaviors and enable social mobility. Enríquez and Archila-Godinez (2021) demonstrate that individuals leverage cultural capital—drawing on cultural knowledge and social connections—to articulate brand dissatisfaction and negotiate brand relationships, thereby fostering collective identity. Brandão and Popoli (2022) discuss how cultural perceptions, shaped by geographic mobility and migration, influence consumer preferences and the success of various businesses in urban settings. Murray and Fisher (2022) argue that bridging social capital on social networking sites (SNS) —though theoretically inclusive— is unevenly actualized due to cultural capital disparities, as users from dominant cultural groups often leverage their knowledge and networks more effectively to cultivate cross-group ties, suggesting platform design and literacy initiatives must address these asymmetries to democratize digital connectivity. The issue of sustainability, particularly in the fashion industry, is addressed in Tubadji (2021), who examines the gap between environmental awareness and consumer behavior regarding textile waste management with

cultural capital playing a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and actions concerning sustainability.

## 2.5 EMOTIONAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF CAMPAIGNS

Research has established that consumers' motivations are influenced both internally—in terms of values associated with uniqueness, sustainability or self-expression—and externally—due to social and cultural pressures (Dhaliwal et al., 2020; Pang et al, 2021). Digital technology enhances emotional engagement in luxury brands, through social narratives and co-created meaning associated with a brand, on the brand's own digital platform. It is important to note that emotions can stem from digital stories and brand co-creation approaches used in the online space (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020; Youn et al., 2021). This section investigates the emotional and cultural impact of non-fashion luxury campaigns across multiple interconnected domains:

- **Consumer Behavior in Luxury Fashion (2.5.1):** The discussion of consumer behavior includes the psychological and social motives related to luxury consumption. The functions of influencers and social media is central to how these factors shape overall consumer purchase intention, and among Gen Y and Z consumers (see Sung et al, 2023; and Busalim et al, 2022).
- **Cultural and Economic Influences (2.5.2):** The authors highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity to significantly address the structural inequality, and the consumption practices related to luxury (Mohr et al., 2021 and Nunn, 2020).
- **The Sharing Economy and Sustainability (2.5.3):** This section considers the implications of second-hand and rental consumption facing younger generations who

are conscious about ethically sustainable consumption practices (Styvén & Mariani, 2020; Jain & Mishra, 2020).

- **Digital Technologies and Emotional Storytelling (2.5.4):** This section discusses the implications of immersive and hybrid storytelling, and the use of AR/VR technologies for emotional engagement (Galhotra & Dewan, 2020; Milfeld & Flint, 2021).
- **Challenges and Opportunities (2.5.5):** This topic addresses the challenges luxury brands face in essentially balancing heritage versus the need for innovation to support the narrative outside of fashion (Casciani et al., 2022 and Jansen, 2020).
- **Cultural Narratives (2.5.6):** The authors focus on the power, and greater authenticity, derived from local and regional cultural value in interpreting campaigns (Dekhili et al., 2019 and Monkhouse et al., 2012).
- **Sustainability and Social Responsibility (2.5.7):** While this resource covers 'social responsibility' sufficiently, it authored warned about the need for transparency and an ethical consistency in luxury campaigns, especially in terms of the potential for 'greenwashing' (Lau et al., 2022 and Jastram et al., 2020).
- **Digital Storytelling and Purchase Intentions (2.5.8):** Investigated the influence of digital formats of content and sensory experiences on interaction and behavior (Galhotra & Dewan, 2020; Sayem, 2022).
- **The Future of Non-Fashion Campaigns (2.5.9):** Discussed the future state of the space looking at the intersection of metaverse spaces, AI, and blockchain in recreating consumer-brand interactions and lead to a new aspect of campaign authenticity (Birdsey et al., 2023; Lau et al., 2022).

The examined dimensions collectively reveal that both emotional and cultural factors together drive consumer engagement, brand loyalty, and the curation of changing narrative power of luxury campaigns that go beyond the aesthetics of the product.

### **2.5.1 CONSUMER OF LUXURY FASHION**

A systematic review of consumer behavior shows a number of influences on luxury consumption, including perceived value, perceived quality, and perceived exclusivity (Dhaliwal et al., 2020). Concerning Generation Y and Z, research indicates that social norms and peer influences substantially affect purchasing intentions (Jain, 2020). Sung et al. (2023) show that subjective norms and perceived behavioral control affect luxury purchase intentions significantly among Generation Y consumers. Also, among Generation Z consumers, Pang et al. (2021) highlight the significance that the need for uniqueness and the bandwagon effect have on their purchasing intentions. It is not easy for brands to manage the tension between individuality and social conformity. Consumers want brands that are unique yet also want to belong and feel connected to a community (Pang et al., 2021).

A systematic review of consumer behavior by Dhaliwal et al. (2020) identifies the important determinants influencing luxury purchasing decisions. Individual, psychological, cultural, and social factors were identified in this comprehensive review of 202 studies. Luxury items involve consumer preferences, not only driven by their desires but, also by social pressures. Influencers (Busalim et al., 2022) can change perceptions of value and drive purchase intentions through parasocial interactions. Jansom and Pongsakornrunsilp (2021) also stress the importance of trust in impulse buying behavior and mention that characteristics of Internet celebrities can greatly influence luxury purchase decisions.

## **2.5.2 CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCES**

Cultural and economic factors influence consumer behavior, requiring brands to adapt their strategies to resonate with local preferences and values (Mohr et al., 2021). Nunn (2020) contends that economic inequalities in contemporary society cannot be removed from the cultural and institutional ramifications of historical injustices with this meaning that there is a need for economic policy that not only provides remedies for the gaps created through historical, path-dependent conditions, but also deals with those disparities through deliberate, history based intervention and policies that foster equity in development.

## **2.5.3 THE SHARING ECONOMY AND LUXURY CONSUMPTION**

The emergence of the sharing economy has created new consumption patterns in luxury fashion where millennials are renting luxury products as a substitute to ownership. This trend conveys a very important transition in consumer perspectives around ownership within the luxury product category and how they relate to elements of sustainability and cost effectiveness (Jain & Mishra, 2020). The research underscores that a strong social narrative needs to be developed for luxury products (especially when they are rented) to make them be relevant to Millennials (Jain & Mishra, 2020).

Styvén and Mariani (2020) contend that perceived sustainability and economic reasons are critical points in the second-hand luxury engagement decision-making process for consumers. The findings highlight consumers' connection with sustainability and their views of second-hand luxury products as viable consumption alternatives to fast fashion, acting on salient ethical issues in luxury (Styvén & Mariani, 2020). In addition, Jain and

Mishra (2020) evaluate the relationship of social projection, the perceived risks of consumption behaviors, and other considerations of Millennial luxury consumption. They document that economic reasons are important, but a novel finding suggests that consumers (of luxury items) are motivated to consume when luxury products provide social status, even when shared on a sharing platform.

#### **2.5.4 IMPACT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Milfeld and Flint (2021) researched the divisive effects of social narrative videos, highlighting the potential for storytelling can lead to diverse interpretations and emotional responses among consumers. The effects can be even more pronounced in interactive and immersive storytelling situations (Youn et al., 2021). Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) allow consumers to become personally, and thereby memorably, engaged with the brand narrative, and according to Galhotra & Dewan (2020), seeks to enhance emotional engagement. Similarly, storytelling in non-fashion campaigns may involve nostalgia or aspirational aspects of storytelling that induce powerful emotion to drive consumer actions (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020).

#### **2.5.5 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NON-FASHION LUXURY CAMPAIGNS**

A major issue relates to the challenge of maintaining brand consistency and brand exclusivity when entering non-traditional spaces (Casciani et al., 2022). Attempting to balance the innovation to traditional fashion can be difficult, especially with the desire to

hold an 'innovation position' (Chu et al., 2019). To that end, unlike traditional fashion communications, which can be assessed through direct sales and consumer engagement indicators, the outcome from non-fashion communications is often speculated through indirect measurements and will express themselves over longer terms (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020). Contradictory to traditional fashion in this period, non-fashion has incredible opportunity for creative expression and to differentiate by addressing broader cultural considerations, such as sustainability and inclusion. Caring for such issues enhances cultural relevance and, ultimately, people's considerations for engagement (Jansen, 2020).

Archer et al., (2020) referred to how the value of social media influencers became vital for the communications of luxury during the pandemic. As a rapid shift towards a digitally first strategy occurred, there were challenges for some brands who were not prepared for this shift towards their 'non-fashion' luxury strategy. Faschan et al. (2020) highlight the importance of luxury in developing strategies that consider cultural contexts. Such cultural contexts provide both challenges and opportunities, especially regarding the interplay between regional values and luxury consumption behaviours.

### **2.5.6 THE ROLE OF CULTURAL NARRATIVES IN NON-FASHION CAMPAIGNS**

Cultural narratives play a substantial role in determining the appeal and authenticity of luxury brands. For instance, East Asian consumers are very focused on face-saving and group-oriented features when evaluating brands, which affect their perception of exclusivity and quality (Monkhouse, et al., 2012). Adapting non-fashion campaigns to a region's cultural preferences increase consumer engagement and makes a statement about the brand's cultural sensitivity (Dekhili, et al., 2019; Jansen, 2020). Luxury brands that tap into local pride and

heritage by ensuring cultural stability and meaning (using traditional craft methods) in their campaigns have an appeal to local consumers, while also demonstrating cultural sensitivity (Jansen, 2020). Attending to the cultural and social aspects related to consumers (age, gender, income level and so forth) is important for brands that seek to expand more meaningfully in different consumer markets, especially in emerging markets (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015).

### **2.5.7 SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN NON-FASHION CAMPAIGNS**

Today's consumers expect luxury brands to be ethical and environmentally responsible; (Dekhili et al., 2019). In addition to improving brand image, ethical awareness campaigns also support the public good (Lau et al., 2022). When luxury brands operationalize sustainability within their storytelling and branding, they build emotional connections with consumers, especially those consumers exhibiting ethical consumption (Creevey et al., 2021). Kong et al. (2020), examined consumer responses to brands operating sustainability within their marketing. Transparency and responsibility are implicated in consumer perceptions too. Jastram et al. (2020) emphasized sustainability disclosures need to be transparent and luxury, as well as mass-market brands, struggle to communicate credible sustainability information. Transparency is an ongoing issue, particularly since consumers are mindful of greenwashing, and any lack of authentic/valid claim will default and deprive brands of the associated trust (Caitagan & Pongasornwupsil, 2022). Most environmentally-related marketing strategies faced situational challenges as expected, especially perceiving the associated luxury brand.

## 2.5.8 THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Luxury brands can now weave narratives through their digital platforms - exemplified by social media and brand websites - that engage consumers and influence their buying intentions (Nash, 2019). Furthermore, marketers have the flexibility of trying different storytelling options - videos, blogs, or interactive content - keeping consumer engagement more engaged (Sayem, 2022). Interactive digital storytelling can affect consumer behaviors based on the response of using virtual-based programs such as virtual reality (VR) experiences and augmented reality (AR) try-ons (Galhotra & Dewan, 2020). For example, using a virtual fitting room can enrich a consumer's experience thus adding consumer satisfaction and decreasing return rates which illustrates the efficiency of a digital storytelling solution (Galhotra & Dewan, 2020).

Digital storytelling should tell an authentic story with respect to the brand values to allow consumers to remain engaged and trust the brand (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020). Campaigns that include consumer-generated content such as reviews or shared experiences can create a deeper emotional connection with the consumer and create feelings of community with the brand (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020). Visual storytelling has shown an increase in luxury campaigns perceived value through a multisensory experiential relationship with 'audiences' (Chu et al., 2019). High-quality or an exceptional pictorial story along with the overall brands design and aesthetic are examples of a hands-on communicable storytelling experience (Balenciaga, n.d.). Loewe provides tactile fabrics and earthy colors in its campaigns providing a good sense of authenticity and timelessness leveraging contemporary understanding of consumer preferences direct to sustainability and crafted goods (Socha, 2024). Developments in digital technology such as 3D modelling and AI

suggested designs, can allow brands to prepare multi-sensory tailored experiences for consumers (Casciani et al., 2022).

### **2.5.9 THE FUTURE OF NON-FASHION CAMPAIGNS IN LUXURY BRANDING**

Lau et al. (2022) claim that the inclusion of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, provides different avenues for storytelling and engaging consumers. Sustainability will affect the future of non-fashion campaigns as Dekiili et al. (2019) highlighted that as consumers become more environmentally aware, luxury brands must shape their storytelling to be aligned with sustainability.

Overall, these entrance points offered by the emerging technologies, specifically the metaverse and digital fashion, give luxury brands some excellent opportunities to innovate their non-fashion campaigns (Birdsey et al., 2023). Sayem (2022), experimentation in virtual spaces offer opportunities for brands to communicate luxury products in an immersive environment while engaging new consumer attendees.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the comprehensive research model and methodological approach employed to investigate the complex influence of non-fashion campaigns on consumer purchase intention in the luxury fashion sector. Considering the complex subjectivity of consumer responses to luxury branding, qualitative research was deliberately selected. Qualitative research focusing on semi-structured focus group discussions and thematic analyses, opened up the momentous emotional, symbolic and cultural dynamics that combine to inform consumer attitudes and behaviours, presenting conclusions in regard to indirect influence and generational differences.

This chapter provides the conceptual and methodological outline of the study. This chapter provides the conceptual and methodological outline of the study. In section 3.1, the conceptual model is introduced, including the four mediators through which non-fashion campaigns impact consumer purchase intention in the luxury fashion context - Emotional Engagement, Brand Authenticity, Exclusivity, and Cultural Relevance. Section 3.2 sets out the sampling criteria and focus group design, including demographic segmentation and the rationale for participant selection. Section 3.3 discusses the form of data analysis, specifically, thematic analysis. Section 3.4 discusses some of the inherent limitations of using focus groups, such as groupthink, social desirability, and translation. Finally, in section 3.5, some cases are presented that demonstrate how some selected luxury brands have employed non-fashion campaigns, which serves as an anchor for the subsequent analysis.

### **3.1 RESEARCH MODEL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

This section presents the conceptual model guiding this dissertation and then outlines the qualitative methodology used to explore how non-fashion campaigns influence consumer purchase intention in luxury fashion. First, we introduce the four mediating constructs in our conceptual framework (Graph 1). Next, it's described the sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures.

#### **3.1.1 CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

Drawing on prior work in emotional branding, brand authenticity, exclusivity, and cultural capital (e.g., Chu et al., 2019; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020; Bourdieu, 1986; Monkhouse et al., 2012), this study posits that Non-Fashion Campaigns influence Purchase Intention through four mediators:

##### **1. Emotional Engagement**

The degree to which a non-fashion campaign evokes an affective response (e.g., nostalgia, inspiration, surprise) that creates an emotional bond with the brand. Research shows that emotional resonance can directly alter purchase intent (Chu et al., 2019; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020).

##### **2. Brand Authenticity**

The extent to which consumers perceive the brand as genuine, value-driven, and consistent with its heritage. Authenticity signals (transparent storytelling, heritage alignment) foster trust and legitimacy (Ko et al., 2016; Creevey et al., 2021).

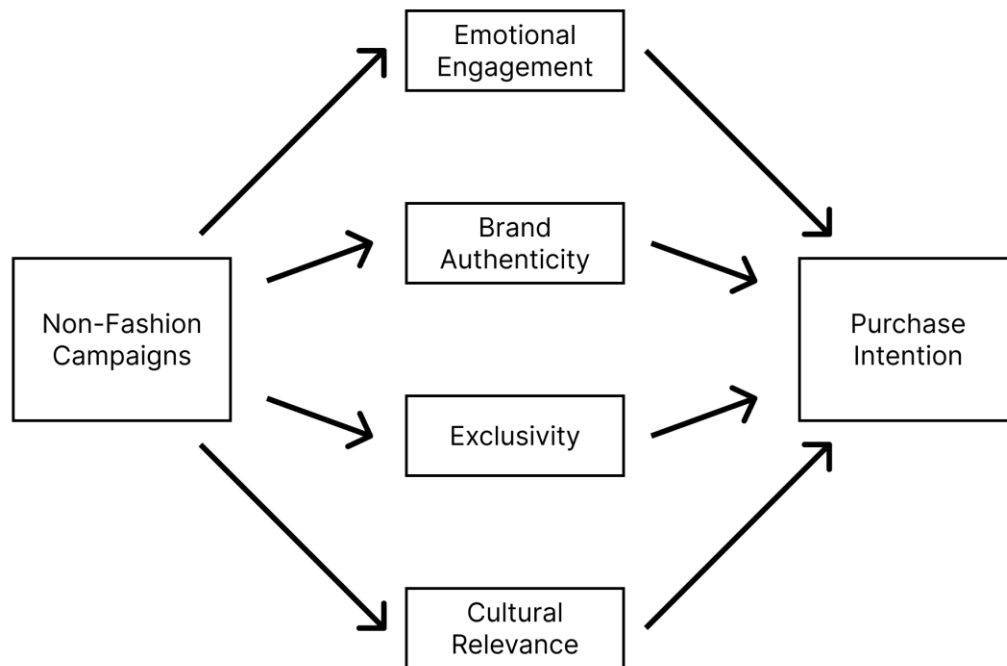
### **3. Exclusivity**

The perception of rarity, uniqueness, and high-status association—traditionally core to luxury. Non-fashion campaigns often appear more accessible (digital content), yet they must preserve an aura of scarcity to maintain luxury positioning (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020; Nash, 2019).

### **4. Cultural Relevance**

The degree to which a campaign's themes, visuals, or narratives resonate with consumers' personal identities, social values, or cultural heritage. Campaigns that tap into local or generational cultural capital amplify symbolic meaning and strengthen purchase likelihood (Bourdieu, 1986; Monkhouse et al., 2012).

Each of these mediators is hypothesized to positively influence Purchase Intention (i.e., the willingness to buy a luxury fashion item after exposure to a non-fashion campaign). In other words, the stronger a campaign's emotional engagement, perceived authenticity, sense of exclusivity, and cultural relevance, the more likely consumers are to intend a purchase.



Graph 1 – Conceptual Model of the Influence of Non-Fashion Campaigns on Purchase Intention

### 3.1.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A qualitative research design was chosen to capture the nuanced, symbolic, and emotional dynamics that non-fashion campaigns can trigger in luxury consumers. Qualitative methods allow for an in-depth examination of participants lived experiences and how they interpret visual narratives (Mohajan, 2020). The present study employs semi-structured focus group discussions and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While qualitative designs prioritize depth over quantification, ensuring consistency in interpretation remains essential. As Sürücü and Maslakçı (2020) observe, “the validity and reliability of the scales used in research are essential factors that enable the research to yield

beneficial results.” Focus groups were selected over in-depth interviews to encourage interaction and discussion among participants, allowing for the emergence of shared meanings and differing perspectives that may not surface in one-on-one settings. To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, inter-coder reliability was established by having multiple researchers independently code the data and then reconcile any discrepancies through discussion. This process helped to minimize individual bias and enhance the credibility of the thematic interpretations.

## **1. Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling was used to recruit a total of 24 participants who are knowledgeable about or actively engaged with luxury fashion. To enable cross-generational comparisons, participants were divided into three cohorts:

- Generation Z (18–30 years) – 8 participants
- Millennials (30–50 years) – 8 participants
- Generation X+ (50+ years) – 8 participants

All participants live in Portugal and hold at least a secondary or above educational qualification (with very few of the 50+ group lacking this). In terms of profession, these participants are students, professionals in creative industries, self-employed and retired. Gender parity and cultural variability were prioritized to reflect the symbolic heterogeneity of commitments to luxury brand interpretation.

## 2. Data Collection

Data were collected through three semi-structured focus groups (one per generational cohort), each lasting 94–116 minutes. Focus group sessions were conducted in Portuguese, recorded (audio-only) with participants' consent, then transcribed and translated into English for analysis. The discussion guide—adapted from prior studies on luxury branding and non-fashion narratives—prompted participants to share:

- Perceptions of non-fashion vs. traditional fashion campaigns
- Emotional and psychological reactions to specific non-fashion campaigns
- Perceived campaign elements that influence purchase intentions (e.g., symbolism, storytelling, exclusivity signals)
- Impact of demographic factors (age, gender, cultural background) on campaign interpretation
- Suggestions for improving non-fashion campaigns

## 3. Ethical Approval

Ethical clearance was granted by the IPAM Porto Institutional Review Board. All participants provided written informed consent after being briefed on the study's purpose, data confidentiality, and voluntary nature.

#### 4. Data Analysis

Transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A hybrid coding process combined:

- Deductive codes from the conceptual model (Emotional Engagement, Brand Authenticity, Exclusivity, Cultural Relevance, Purchase Intention).
- Inductive codes that emerged during line-by-line reading (e.g., symbolic references, narrative confusion, digital fatigue).

NVivo (Version XX) was used to manage and organize codes. Analysis followed six phases:

1. Familiarization – Reading transcripts multiple times to note initial impressions.
2. Generating Initial Codes – Tagging relevant data segments with both deductive and inductive codes.
3. Searching for Themes – Grouping similar codes into provisional themes (e.g., “Nostalgic Resonance,” “Authenticity Tension,” “Exclusivity Dilution,” “Cultural Alignment”).
4. Reviewing Themes – Checking that themes cohere within each generational cohort and across cohorts.
5. Defining & Naming Themes – Refining theme labels (e.g., “Emotional Bonding via Nostalgia,” “Authenticity vs. Innovation Conflict”).
6. Producing the Report – Weaving themes together to answer research objectives, with illustrative quotes (e.g., “Some of these campaigns... take me back to watching classic films or flipping through old photo books” – Marta Veloso, 47)

## 5. Limitations

- **Groupthink & Social Desirability:** Participants may conform to dominant voices or express “acceptable” opinions rather than true beliefs (Suen et al., 2020; Delgado et al., 2020).
- **Sample Representativeness:** All individuals reside in Portugal and a considerable number work in creative fields making it difficult to generalize beyond the sample to luxury consumers more broadly (Mohajan, 2020).
- **Moderator Influence:** The researcher was the only moderator and coder which could incur unintentional bias in leading the discussion or interpreting the themes (Gundumogula, 2020).
- **Temporal Limitations:** Each focus group lasted between 94 and 116 minutes, providing a snapshot used to understand participants' views but not necessarily their long-term exposure to a campaign or algorithmic influence.

### 3.1.3 DETERMINING SATURATION

To ensure adequate depth and breadth of thematic coverage, we monitored code emergence across the three focus-group transcripts and ceased recruiting new participants once no new codes appeared for two consecutive discussion sessions. By the end of the third focus group (Generation X+), iterative comparison of codes showed that all major themes—Emotional Engagement, Brand Authenticity, Exclusivity, Cultural Relevance, and Purchase Intention—had reached stability, with no novel sub-themes emerging. This approach follows

guidelines by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), which recommend discontinuing data collection once thematic saturation is achieved.

### **3.2 SAMPLE AND FOCUS GROUP DESIGN**

The researchers used purposive sampling to find participants who were familiar with or involved in luxury branding and fashion culture. The sample consisted of 24 participants representing the three generational cohorts of Generation Z (18-30), Millennials (30-50) and Generation X+ (50-above). The generational cohorts enabled comparative analysis of different interpretative patterning in relation to age-related cultural experiences and consumption. The participants were males and females in the age groups of 18 to 30, 30 to 50 and 50 above, currently living situated in Portugal, and educated to a higher level except for the 50 plus group. Participants were employed, self-employed, retired and also, students.

Recruitment was conducted through professional contacts from the creative industries sector, ensuring a level of heterogeneity and relevance to the research objectives. The sample was gender balanced and equal in educational profile with cultural heterogeneity being the key focus to reflect the symbolic heterogeneity when interpreting luxury brands.

Data was collected through three semi-structured focus groups, each lasting between 94 and 116 minutes. The conversations were recorded in Portuguese with the agreement from participants and later transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Participants were asked to reflect on emotional, aesthetic and symbolic responses.

Ethical approval for the project was obtained from IPAM Porto's institutional research board. Participants were informed about the research purpose, and informed consent was gathered in advance of research participation.

### 3.2.1 FOCUS GROUP DESIGN

#### Introduction

- Welcome participants and explain the purpose of the focus group.
- Outline the structure of the discussion and ensure confidentiality.

#### Section 1: Perceptions of Non-Fashion Campaigns

- How do you perceive non-fashion campaigns by luxury brands compared to traditional fashion campaigns?
- Can you share any specific non-fashion campaigns that stood out to you? What made them memorable?
- How do non-fashion campaigns influence your perception of a luxury brand's identity?
- Do you think these campaigns enhance or dilute the brand's exclusivity and heritage? Why?

#### Section 2: Emotional and Psychological Responses

- How do non-fashion campaigns make you feel? Can you describe any emotional responses you have experienced?
- Do these campaigns evoke any particular memories or associations for you?
- How do non-fashion campaigns influence your attitude towards the brand?
- Do you feel more connected to the brand through these campaigns? If so, how?

### Section 3: Factors Influencing Purchase Intentions

- How do non-fashion campaigns affect your likelihood of purchasing products from the brand?
- Are there specific elements within these campaigns that drive your purchase intentions?
- How do you think your age, gender, or cultural background influences your response to non-fashion campaigns?
- Do you believe these campaigns are tailored to specific demographic segments? If so, how?

### Section 4: Overall Impact and Suggestions

- What overall impact do non-fashion campaigns have on your perception of luxury brands?
- Do you think these campaigns are effective in maintaining the brand's allure and exclusivity?
- What suggestions do you have for luxury brands to improve their non-fashion campaigns?
- Are there any specific themes or narratives you would like to see more of in these campaigns?

Question	Supporting Literature	Research Objective
How do you perceive non-fashion campaigns by luxury brands compared to traditional ones?	Chu et al. (2019); Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020)	Explore the role of non-fashion campaigns in shaping purchase intent
Can you share any specific non-fashion campaigns that stood out to you?	Jansen (2020); Chu et al. (2019)	Explore the role of non-fashion campaigns in shaping purchase intent
How do these campaigns influence your perception of a luxury brand's identity?	Ko et al. (2016); Creevey et al. (2021)	Examine the impact on brand authenticity and exclusivity
Do these campaigns enhance or dilute the brand's exclusivity and heritage?	Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020); Chu et al. (2019)	Examine the impact on brand authenticity and exclusivity
How do non-fashion campaigns make you feel?	Júnior et al. (2022); Yang et al. (2020)	Explore psychological and emotional responses
Do these campaigns evoke memories or associations for you?	Garassini & Matysiewicz (2020); Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020)	Explore psychological and emotional responses
How do these campaigns influence your attitude toward the brand?	Ko et al. (2016); Kim & Sullivan (2019)	Explore psychological and emotional responses
Do you feel more connected to the brand through these campaigns? How?	Chu et al. (2019); Ko et al. (2016)	Explore psychological and emotional responses
How do non-fashion campaigns affect your likelihood of purchasing from the brand?	Kurdi et al. (2022); Lau et al. (2022)	Explore role of non-fashion campaigns in shaping purchase intent
What campaign elements drive your purchase intentions?	Schamp et al. (2022); Gao et al. (2020)	Explore role of non-fashion campaigns in shaping purchase intent
How do your age, gender, or culture influence your response to campaigns?	Monkhouse et al. (2012); Hanaysha et al. (2021)	Assess influence of demographic factors
Are these campaigns tailored to specific demographic segments?	Jain (2020); Liu et al. (2018)	Assess influence of demographic factors
What is the overall impact of non-fashion campaigns on your view of luxury brands?	Jansen (2020); Dekhili et al. (2019)	Explore role of non-fashion campaigns in shaping purchase intent
Do these campaigns maintain the brand's exclusivity?	Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020); Creevey et al. (2021)	Examine the impact on brand authenticity and exclusivity
What suggestions do you have for improving non-fashion campaigns?	Nash (2019); Faschan et al. (2020); Halwani (2020)	Provide practical recommendations
What themes or narratives would you like to see more in these campaigns?	Woodside & Fine (2019); Chu et al. (2019)	Explore psychological and emotional responses

Table 1 – Interview questions, supporting literature, and corresponding research objectives

### **3.3 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE**

The data was subsequently analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify, code and interpret patterns of meaning in participant responses. Thematic analysis was appropriate because of its flexibility and relevancy to studying rich, qualitative data in a social and cultural context. Braun and Clarke (2006) provide researchers with an opportunity to explore and analyze both semantic content (what is explicitly said) as well as latent meanings (underlying foundations) that might require reflection and negotiation among the researchers to share and construct a collective understanding. Similarly, thematic analysis lends itself to unpack the symbolic and emotive dimensions of luxury brands, as each brand means something unique from each participant's perspective.

Using Braun and Clarke (2006) as a guide, the analysis was completed in six phases: (1) immersing myself in the transcripts, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. After generating initial code lists on the manuscripts, the texts were read again multiple times, until each participant transcript was reviewed, transcribed, and logged before I began coding to ensure reliability. The data was coded manually with the assistance of qualitative coding software to also ensure consistency. Once generated, codes were organized into broader themes such as authenticity, affective connection, symbolism, generational disjuncture and interpretive complexities.

### 3.4 LIMITATIONS OF FOCUS GROUPS

Many times participants are coerced into adopting opinions of hegemonic participants in a process often referred to as groupthink (Suen et al., 2020). This groupthink can reveal conflicts (Bernas et al., 2020) and inhibit authentic expression, which is of paramount importance when composing sensitive questions, such as those related to sexual orientation and gender identity (Hülür & Macdonald, 2020). If social desirability bias leads participants to respond to questions in ways they believe are perceived as socially accepted rather than reflecting their true feelings, this will warp the data (Delgado et al., 2020).

Too often focus groups occur without sufficient time for participants to explore issues thoroughly, meaning the group's understanding is very superficial and does not emerge in a group that fully understand complex issues (Gundumogula, 2020). Diversity is critical for understanding people's perspectives as it enhances the research data, however, that same diversity can create misunderstanding or misinterpretation with participants based on their level of familiarity with the issue of study (Janke et al., 2021).

Some studies cite small sample size when smaller and less representative, may not be representative of the large population, and therefore, limit the generalizability to populations (Suen et al., 2020; Trajkova & Martin-Hammond, 2020). In addition, because of the rich and complexity of discussion, it may not always be possible to draw conclusions (Gundumogula, 2020).

In order to manage these concerns, a strict two - step transcription protocol was used. The first step was to transcribe the audio recordings verbatim in Portuguese, before subsequently translating to English. The second step was to take select excerpts and back - translate into Portuguese to check semantic fidelity to the originals. Nonetheless, several

idiomatic phrases and cues with meaning inherent to cultural contexts (e.g., the use of regional slang or metaphors associated with luxury) may have been lost. While we acknowledge that such translation decisions could have potentially influenced meaning for code assignment and interpretation of themes (particularly those dealing with emotionality and cultural meaning), we are confident that this process contributed to fidelity of the representation of participants' valuations.

### **3.5 CASE STUDIES**

#### 1 – Ernest W. Baker Fall/Winter 2020

##### Annex 1

“For Fall/Winter 2020, Ernest W. Baker takes inspiration from the American Pop culture phenomenon of the late 1970s. Focusing on the opposing energies of the time, contrasting depravity and decadence, the traditional with avant-garde, the epitome of the movement can be found in the iconic anomaly of Studio 54. The club emitted feelings of both freedom and elegance, grit and glamour combining to create a kitsch, futuristic luxury that was unseen for the time. Coming through dark times, the thought was forward-thinking with an optimism for a renewal of possibilities for the future. The collection aims to portray a retro-futuristic sentiment, exploring the glorification of modernism from this era, creating a fantasy of what it might have felt like to be lucky enough to pass through the velvet ropes of the club. A reference is made to the mix of characters that entered through those doors; the way they dressed, the way they walked and talked and posed, possibly in anticipation of a New Year’s

Eve celebration and a restoration of optimism. Building on this fantasy, the collection is as appropriate now as it was then, a dark yet elegant reality brought to life by the photography of Vladimir Kaminetsky and styling of Mauricio Nardi.” - Fucking Young Magazine

## 2 – Loewe Spring/Summer 2024 & 2025 precollection

Annex 2 & 3 respectively

“(…) Dirt bikers, ballroom and ballet dancers, bodybuilders, scuba divers, leather daddies and jockeys all jockey for attention in the quirky images, lensed by Juergen Teller against a white backdrop. (...) According to Loewe, Teller’s eye adds “a varnish of dry humor to the whole, twisting traditional studio imagery with a blunt sense of directness and a quirky taste for oddness.” (...)” – WWD

## 3 – Balenciaga Spring 2025

Annex 4

“On December 10th, 2024, Balenciaga will debut This is a Balenciaga Campaign by Juergen Teller, a series of photographs accompanied by a video co-created by Teller and his wife and creative partner, Dovile. The video is narrated through a light-hearted conversation between the two, reflecting on their work and creative process, exploring the act of creation as conceptual inspiration. The images feature Olympic medalist pistol shooter Kim Ye-Ji alongside athlete and model Romeo Beckham, singer Kim Petras, and models Sua Lee, Khadim Sock, and Akolde Meen—sitting or reclining on select pieces from Demna’s personal collection of vintage furniture in front of landmarks and in the

city's various neighbourhoods, as a tribute to Paris. The talents carry a range of new Balenciaga bags, including the Hampton Carry All—a spacious bag in structured box calf leather with a decorative Bel Air-inspired front flap; the Rodeo Tote—a sleek addition to the line with its signature turn-lock closure; and the Hourglass Pochette—a compact clutch iteration of the House's signature Hourglass bag. Also featured is the Rodeo Top Handle bag, a new version of the Rodeo, crafted from supple matte calfskin with versatile closures for multiple styling options; Le City; and the Bel Air Bag.

Still-life images reveal Balenciaga footwear, eyewear, jewelry, and bags including the new Monday Sneaker and Bel Air Sandal, and showcase the Nano Choker, Nano Sunglasses, Basketball Sneaker, and a variety of handbag styles, including the Bel Air shoulder bag, Holdall Bowling Bag, Hourglass Pochette, Rodeo Top Handle Bag, Le City Bag, and Rodeo Tote bag.” - Balenciaga

The case studies reveal that while the brands are innovating through creative storytelling and visually engaging campaigns, their focus remains predominantly on promoting seasonal collections rather than diversifying into new product categories or targeting untapped consumer segments. This strategic emphasis highlights a commitment to reinforcing brand identity, rather than pursuing broader market penetration or category expansion.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter serves as the empirical core of the dissertation, presenting and interpreting the key findings derived from the three semi-structured focus group discussions. The analysis is systematically conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. The primary aim of this chapter is to delve into how consumers emotionally, symbolically, and culturally interpret non-fashion luxury campaigns, and critically, how these interpretations vary across distinct generational and demographic lines. The data underpinning this analysis was collected from 24 participants, carefully segmented into three generational cohorts: Generation Z (18–30), Millennials (30–50), and Generation X+ (50+). This chapter moves beyond a mere description of data to provide an interpretive understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which non-fashion campaigns influence luxury consumers, particularly illuminating the subjective and often unconscious processes of meaning-making that shape their responses. The insights presented here directly inform the conclusions of this study, particularly regarding the indirect influence of campaigns on purchase intention, the contingent perceptions of authenticity and exclusivity, and the significant role of demographic factors in shaping consumer responses.

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS**

This chapter presents and interprets the key findings derived from three semi-structured focus group discussions, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. The primary aim is to explore how consumers emotionally, symbolically, and culturally interpret

non-fashion luxury campaigns, and how these interpretations differ across generational and demographic lines.

The data collection involved 24 participants that had been segmented into three generational cohorts — Generation Z (18–30), Millennials (30–50), and Generation X+ (50+). Participants represented a range of careers and were chosen based on their exposure to luxury branding and digital media. This segmentation enabled a comparative analysis of interpretive patterns across age, cultural experiences, and aesthetic expectations.

The analysis followed a hybrid coding approach: deductive codes were derived from established literature on luxury branding (e.g., Chu et al., 2019; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020), while inductive themes emerged organically during transcript review. Codes were processed using NVivo, allowing for consistency in thematic clustering, frequency tracking, and demographic cross-tabulation. Although inter-coder reliability would not be relevant to this single-researcher design, the internal validity was enhanced through reflective memoing, iterative coding, and mapping themes across demographic variations.

A total of ten themes emerged and were presented under five main categories:

- Generational Divergences and Authenticity – looks at the differences in brand trust and brand identification among the different ages.
- Emotional and Symbolic Engagement – looks at how campaigns generate emotional responses, nostalgia, and artistic nostalgia.
- Exclusivity and Visibility – focuses on the tension between traditional luxury exclusivity and mass-market exposure.
- Cultural Capital and Interpretation – examines how sociocultural background shapes symbolic decoding.

- Identity Representation and Social Alignment – analyzes the extent to which campaigns reflect participant values and aspirations.

All themes are substantiated through participant quotes and are positioned in the literature. These findings were intended to provide a more multidimensional interpretation of consumer co-production of brand meaning in non-fashion campaigns and offer new and different implications for brand strategies. The following section describes the demographic themes and distribution of thematic codes that emerged from the data.

#### 4.1.1 THEMATIC CODEBOOK AND INDICATORS

This section presents the coding structure used during data analysis, outlining the key themes aligned with each of the study’s research objectives. These codes were applied during the analysis of focus group transcripts and reflect both theoretical constructs and emergent participant patterns.

##### Objective 1: Role of Non-Fashion Campaigns in Purchase Intention

Code	Description
Perceived Value	When participants express what value the campaign adds (e.g., uniqueness, prestige)
Storytelling Appeal	Comments on narratives, art, lifestyle, or creative aspects
Authenticity Signal	Mentions of campaigns feeling sincere, trustworthy, "true to brand"

Influence on Purchase	Direct mentions of wanting to buy after a campaign
Aesthetic Impact	Visuals, mood, or artistry being a reason to consider purchase

Table 2 – Codes Related to Purchase Intention

### Objective 2: Authenticity & Exclusivity

Code	Description
Brand Authenticity	Whether campaign maintains or breaks the brand's identity
Exclusivity	Whether the campaign strengthens or dilutes the luxury feel
Cultural Relevance	When campaigns align with cultural/heritage values
Dilution Risk	Expressions of confusion, disconnection, or feeling the campaign is “too generic”

Table 3 – Codes Related to Brand Authenticity and Exclusivity

### Objective 3: Demographic Influence

Code	Description
Age-Specific Reaction	Comments that reflect generational perspectives
Gender-Based Themes	Mentions of emotional or aesthetic appeal by gender
Cultural Lens	Comments showing different cultural backgrounds affect perception
Digital Native Advantage	Familiarity or preference for interactive/digital campaigns

Table 4 – Codes Related to Demographic Influence

#### 4.1.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CODING PATTERNS

To demonstrate generational trends in referential focus, the table below shows the frequency of codes across age cohorts. The findings showed an overall tendency for Brand Authenticity and the Emotional Response to be universally important, while an older demographic (50+) was more favourable of the Storytelling Appeal, and younger demographics (18-30) were more likely to reference Exclusivity and Digital Engagement. These differences support the demographic segmentation outlined in the findings.

Code	50+	30-50	18-30
Influence on Purchase	1	1	2
Dilution Risk	2	1	1
Storytelling Appeal	4	1	1
Brand Authenticity	3	4	4
Emotional Response	2	2	2
Aesthetic Impact	1	0	1
Cultural Relevance	0	1	0
Digital Engagement	0	2	1
Demographic Targeting	0	1	0
Exclusivity	0	0	2

Table 5 – Code Frequency by Age Group

The results indicate a generational divide in how non-fashion campaigns were understood, especially in terms of authenticity, exclusivity, and emotion. With respect to age, younger respondents demonstrated more willingness for campaigns that would be considered non-traditional or "weird," while older groups focused more on storytelling and legacy alignment. The next section provides a description of the frequencies involved in the topic analysis, while the table below summarizes the main themes that recurred across the demographic groupings. The themes were designated based on how frequently and strongly they were present in participant responses and are designed to serve as an intermediate between raw coding and deeper interpretation.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supporting Codes</b>	<b>Common Across</b>
<b>Desire for Authenticity</b>	Participants value when campaigns reflect a brand's identity and values honestly.	Brand Authenticity	All groups
<b>Emotional Connection</b>	Aesthetic beauty, nostalgia, and storytelling trigger emotional responses.	Emotional Response, Aesthetic Impact	Strong in 18–30 and 30–50
<b>Exclusivity vs. Accessibility</b>	Participants feel mass advertising threatens the luxury image.	Exclusivity, Dilution Risk	50+ and 18–30 especially
<b>Cultural Relevance &amp; Diversity</b>	Participants noted diversity, inclusion, and cultural adaptation in campaigns.	Cultural Relevance	30–50 group most vocal
<b>Visual &amp; Artistic Appeal</b>	Non-fashion campaigns appreciated for art direction and originality.	Storytelling Appeal, Aesthetic Impact	30–50 and creatives in all groups
<b>Generational Differences in Engagement</b>	Younger participants more accepting of weirdness and strangeness.	Digital Engagement, Demographic Targeting	Clear differences across ages

Table 6 – Top Recurring Themes Across Demographics

### 4.1.3 KEY CROSS-THEMATIC INSIGHTS

Based on the demographic coding patterns and common themes that emerged from the data, several overarching points were identified that were common across groups of participants. These points provide insight into the manner in which non-fashion campaigns are emotion-based and symbolically interpreted, and they set the stage for the subsequent discussion of the thematic outline in more detail.

1. Authenticity strengthens emotional impact: Participants usually trust brands more for campaigns with authenticity in identity (e.g., Cartier, Rolex).
2. Emotional triggers affect memory, not always purchases: Many respondents remembered ads that they liked but that didn't necessarily create a change in behaviour.
3. Strangeness divides generations: Younger respondents (18–30) embraced strangeness (e.g., Balenciaga) while older respondents (50+) were much more doubtful.
4. Mass exposure weakens exclusivity: Especially among the 50+ and 18–30 groups, participants noted that TV or mass-market ads made brands feel "less elite."
5. Cultural references matter: Participants in the groups notably referred to campaigns that were historically based (e.g., Christmas, European elegance) more than campaigns that were generic or "woke" based.

The contextual analysis increases understanding about the way participants from a number of demographics interpret and engage with non-fashion campaigns from luxury brands; specifically, about the complex relationships that exist between brand awareness, emotional engagement, and generations of media literacy - and therefore raises consideration of this significant new component to the evolving landscape of luxury marketing.

## **4.2 THEMATIC DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

This section explores the main thematic categories that emerged from the data, focusing on how participants emotionally and symbolically interpret non-fashion luxury campaigns. The thematic analysis shows generational, aesthetic, and cultural differences in perceptions, leveraged by quotations from participants and theoretical links. Each subsection discusses a different theme, provide a thoughtful analysis on how luxury brands are being evaluated in the contemporary digitally and socially diverse environment.

### **4.2.1 WEIRDNESS AS A SYMBOL OF POSTMODERN LUXURY**

The repeating mention of "weirdness" in consumer responses, particularly in the 18-30 cohort, is indicative of a tipping point for an entire generation's understanding of luxury. Status, a characteristic previously assessed by visual symmetry, timelessness, and exclusives were effectively controlled narratives that didn't include flaws, which have been mostly disregarded by the focus group consumer. In observing the focus group data, younger consumers now seem to prefer brands that transcend established normativity via ambiguity, provocation, or surrealism. As Daniel Neves (19) stated, "I love weird. I love weirdness in brands — my favorite brands, you know? Balenciaga, Rick Owens — they're known for being weird, for not being like other brands." Neves' preference may reflect an alteration of the meaning of luxury, in a postmodern sense, that now reflects irony; fragmentation; and multiplicity of narrative. In postmodern theory, meaning is not a property; rather, it is liquid and shaped by the individual (Baudrillard, 1981). In this light, luxury campaigns that

intentionally resist coherent narratives (e.g., Balenciaga’s dystopian visuals or Loewe’s hyperreal portraits) are not failing — they are engaging consumers in a co-creative, meaning-making process. They are inviting the viewer to feel, interpret, or resist a brand's message, not just decode it.

#### **4.2.2 EMOTIONAL DISRUPTION AS ENGAGEMENT**

What makes “weird” campaigns effective for younger audiences is not just their deviation from tradition, but their ability to provoke emotional and cognitive friction. This aligns with research by Júnior et al. (2022), who assert that storytelling in luxury contexts functions not through clarity but through affective ambiguity — images or narratives that generate curiosity, discomfort, nostalgia, or awe. For younger consumers, these emotions become part of the luxury experience itself. Rather than following a classical AIDA (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action) model of advertising, these campaigns operate on a more experiential and psychological level. They provoke a pause, an emotional jolt, a reconsideration of what fashion means. João Fonseca (38) captured this when he said: “Anti-campaigns are disruptive in a good way... they make me stop, even if I don’t understand them fully.” In this context, weirdness becomes a strategy of disruption — a break in the visual monotony of marketing that invites engagement not through clarity, but through emotional provocation.

### **4.2.3 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND PLAYFULNESS IN GEN Z**

Beyond emotional impact, weirdness in branding also resonates with younger consumers' identity needs. Members of Gen Z often construct identity through symbolic consumption — choosing brands not just for their functional value, but for the meanings they signal to others (Pang et al., 2021). Non-fashion campaigns filled with odd characters, unusual visuals, or surreal environments become mirrors for self-expression. A Balenciaga ad featuring a model sprawled on vintage furniture while staring blankly at the camera may not make logical sense — but for a 20-year-old digital native fluent in memes, surreal humor, and irony, it feels authentic. Moreover, these consumers value fluidity over fixed roles. The more a brand can shift its tone — from serious to absurd, glamorous to grotesque — the more it reflects the shifting cultural identities of its audience. This flexibility aligns with research from Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2020), who argue that modern luxury is increasingly about symbolic elasticity — a brand's ability to mean different things to different people.

### **4.2.4 BRAND RISK-TAKING AS CULTURAL CREDIBILITY**

In addition, younger consumers admire brand boldness. Campaigns that take risks — that abandon product displays in favor of abstract storytelling or visual experimentation — are often seen as more credible, artistic, and culturally literate. These campaigns break free from transactional motives and instead position the brand as a cultural actor. Sofia Almeida (41) noted this shift clearly: “It’s like luxury is trying to be more artistic, almost conceptual. Less about selling clothes, more about selling a lifestyle.” This connects with broader

societal trends: the rise of cultural capital as a driver of brand loyalty. Brands that challenge the norm signal that they “get it” — that they’re aligned with underground trends, digital subcultures, or avant-garde movements. As such, they are not just selling products, but affiliating consumers with a cultural tribe.

#### **4.2.5 GENERATIONAL CONTRAST AND TENSION**

However, it’s essential to note that this celebration of weirdness is not universal. Older consumers, particularly those 50 and above, expressed discomfort with these campaigns. For them, luxury is still rooted in elegance, restraint, and coherence. Isabel Ferreira (54) articulated this duality: “Some of these campaigns are trying too hard to be different — they lose elegance.” This generational tension reinforces the idea that authenticity is not a universal metric, but a socially constructed and demographically modulated concept. For older consumers, deviation from brand heritage may feel like loss of meaning. For younger ones, the same deviation feels like creative evolution. This suggests that luxury brands must carefully segment their storytelling strategies, balancing bold experimentation with respectful nods to tradition.

#### **4.2.6 STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR LUXURY MARKETING**

This analysis holds several key implications:

- Weirdness is not randomness — it is a deliberate strategy to provoke, engage, and invite co-interpretation.
- Luxury brands should use “weird” campaigns to build long-term emotional memory, not just immediate purchase intent.
- Generational differences must be respected. The same campaign that earns Gen Z admiration may alienate older consumers unless carefully contextualized.
- Weirdness, when backed by visual craftsmanship and symbolic clarity, becomes not just tolerated — but revered.

### **4.3 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF KEY THEMES**

This section expands and deepens the original thematic interpretations, now organized under the structure previously used (sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.5), but enhanced with additional participant quotes, theoretical references, and strategic insights.

#### **4.3.1 GENERATIONAL DIVERGENCES AND THE PERCEPTION OF AUTHENTICITY**

One of the most salient contrasts emerge from the focus groups concerned generational perceptions of brand authenticity. Participants aged 50 and older tended to value classic brand identities, and they would express discomfort with campaigns that meaningfully diverged from classic accepted brand norms. Rita Moreira (32) explained, "When more classic brands try to shift they become poorer...they lose the essence,". Meanwhile, participants who were younger felt encouraged to experiment, and celebrated

disruption as an indication of authenticity. As Daniel Neves (19) noted, “I love weird. I love weirdness in brands — my favorite brands, you know? Balenciaga, Rick Owens — they’re known for being weird, for not being like other brands.” This separate divide shows the different perspectives each generation has in terms of authenticity. For older consumers' generational perspective, authenticity was linked to continuity and heritage, while for younger consumers' generational perspective, authenticity linked with ideas of reinvention, audacity, and alignment with current cultural social norms. Ko et al. (2016), and Creevey et al. (2021) states that perceived authenticity is based in consistency across time, while Liu et al. (2018) points out the consumer-driven approach to brand narratives espousing an increasing preference with Gen Z for brands that provide expressive narratives designed from individual or group points of view. Thus, strategically, luxury brands should aim to find the right balance in considering the aspects of heritage or evolution, while crafting messages that would and should be interpreted differently across segments without changing their core values of authenticity.

#### **4.3.2 EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS AND SYMBOLIC RESONANCE**

Emotional resonance also emerged as a powerful mediator of brand engagement. Campaigns that evoked nostalgia, beauty, or cinematic storytelling were especially impactful among women in the 30–50 age group. Marta Veloso (47) shared, “Some of these campaigns... take me back to watching classic films or flipping through old photo books.” This emotional layering enhances symbolic attachment and campaign memorability. Research by Chu et al. (2019) and Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020) underscores the value of emotional branding in luxury, where emotional appeal often drives symbolic loyalty more

than immediate purchase. Emotional engagement becomes an extended form of brand interaction, influencing consumer decisions over time rather than prompting direct conversion. Luxury marketers should therefore measure campaign effectiveness not solely through short-term sales but through long-term emotional impact.

### **4.3.3 EXCLUSIVITY, MASS MEDIA, AND THE RISK OF DILUTION**

A recurring concern expressed by both younger and older participants was the perceived dilution of luxury through overexposure. Henrique Rodrigues (24) argued, “The moment a brand starts putting out TV ads, which are accessible to literally anyone, it kind of takes away from the brand's luxury status.” Isabel Ferreira (54) added, “I don’t want to see my favorite brand on every bus stop.” These concerns highlight the symbolic function of scarcity in luxury branding. According to Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020) and Dekhili et al. (2019), luxury brands must maintain not only product scarcity but also message scarcity to uphold exclusivity. Strategic communication must therefore avoid overexposure. While digital platforms allow for broad reach, luxury messages should remain curated and context-specific. Invite-only digital events, gated content, and limited storytelling drops are examples of tools that preserve brand mystique. At the same time, others viewed these campaigns as an opportunity to reposition brands as cultural commentators, not just product sellers. Sofia Almeida (41) captured this shift: “It’s like luxury is trying to be more artistic, almost conceptual. Less about selling clothes, more about selling a lifestyle.” The contradiction between broad visibility and exclusivity was not seen as inherently negative but required balance and clarity. As Carlos Teixeira (45) cautioned, “provocation for provocation’s sake can dilute everything the brand has built over time.”

#### **4.3.4 CULTURAL CAPITAL, SYMBOLISM, AND INTERPRETATION**

Participants with creative or global professional backgrounds, such as designers or consultants, expressed a high tolerance for abstraction and complexity in campaigns. João Fonseca (38) remarked, “Anti-campaigns are disruptive in a good way... they make me stop, even if I don’t understand them fully.” Helena Matos (61) added, “I remember Loewe’s ad more than others. It’s weird, but it tells a story.” These responses reflect a growing appreciation for campaigns that function as cultural artifacts. As discussed by Woodside & Fine (2019) and Yang et al. (2020), postmodern branding favors symbolic ambiguity and emotional disruption over linear narrative. Jansen (2020) emphasizes the role of aesthetic richness in luxury branding, where the campaign’s visual and interpretive depth becomes a key aspect of consumer engagement. For brands, this means prioritizing narrative sophistication and artistic direction to resonate with consumers who value cultural capital.

#### **4.3.5 IDENTITY REPRESENTATION AND SOCIAL ALIGNMENT**

Identity representation and cultural alignment were also significant drivers of emotional connection. Marta Veloso (47) explained, “I like seeing older women in ads. Makes me feel like I’m still part of the brand’s audience.” Margarida Lopes (57) added, “That ad with Portuguese tile patterns really spoke to me.” These examples demonstrate that visual and cultural cues significantly influence brand relatability. The literature supports this view: Monkhouse et al. (2012) and Kim & Sullivan (2019) assert that campaigns that reflect the demographic or cultural identity of the consumer foster stronger emotional alignment. Liu et al. (2018) further argue that inclusive storytelling builds long-term brand equity

through relevance and resonance. Therefore, luxury brands should approach representation not as tokenism but as a strategic alignment with consumer values and lifestyles. Collectively, these insights demonstrate that non-fashion campaigns are more than aesthetic exercises — they are vehicles for emotional, cultural, and symbolic connection. The strategic implications are clear: luxury brands must treat storytelling as a long-term branding tool, use digital platforms with precision, and localize content to reflect the cultural and demographic richness of their target audiences. In doing so, they reinforce their place not just as product providers, but as cultural and emotional touchstones in consumers’ lives.
















Theme	Gen Z (18–30)	Millennials (30–50)	Gen X+ (50+)
Brand Authenticity	 (7)	 (10)	 (11)
Emotional Engagement	 (12)	 (10)	 (8)
Exclusivity	 (6)	 (7)	 (10)
Cultural Relevance	 (9)	 (8)	 (5)
Purchase Intention	 (10)	 (10)	 (7)

Table 7 – Frequency of Thematic Codes Across Generational Cohorts

As illustrated in Table 7, the frequency of key themes (Emotional Engagement, Brand Authenticity, Exclusivity, Cultural Relevance, and Purchase Intention) varies noticeably across generations. Gen Z participants show the highest emphasis on Emotional Engagement, whereas Gen X+ respondents prioritize Brand Authenticity and Exclusivity.

Millennials tend to fall in between, valuing both emotional resonance and authenticity almost equally. This visual summary underscores how each cohort interprets non-fashion campaigns differently, setting the stage for deeper analysis in the following sections.

#### **4.4 QUANTITATIVE PATTERNS IN THEMATIC FREQUENCY AND STRATEGIC INTERPRETATION**

While this study is primarily qualitative, a frequency-based overview of thematic codes provides valuable insights into how different demographic groups interpret non-fashion luxury campaigns. This section synthesizes those patterns in relation to the study's three research objectives:

1. To explore the role of non-fashion campaigns in shaping consumer purchase intention
2. To examine the impact of these campaigns on brand authenticity and exclusivity
3. To assess how demographic variables influence these perceptions and responses

These patterns, presented in combination with selected participant feedback and supported by theoretical frameworks, help clarify where symbolic engagement, emotional resonance, and perceived value converge — and diverge — across audiences.

Code	Mentions
Brand Authenticity	11
Emotional Response	9
Exclusivity	7
Storytelling Appeal	8
Dilution Risk	6
Aesthetic Impact	6
Cultural Relevance	5
Influence on Purchase	5
Digital Engagement	4
Demographic Targeting	4

Table 8 – Frequency of Thematic Codes Across Generational Cohorts

Research Objective 1:

To understand how non-fashion campaigns influence consumer purchase intentions in the luxury fashion sector.

Interpretation:

The data reveals that non-fashion campaigns have a non-linear and indirect influence on purchase intention. Rather than prompting immediate buying behavior, these campaigns operate by:

- Shaping emotional associations
- Creating lasting impressions
- Establishing brand salience

Participants often described campaigns as “memorable,” “inspiring,” or “curious,” even if they didn’t intend to purchase immediately. This aligns with the concept of emotional branding, where narrative and mood foster long-term loyalty and brand affinity. As João Fonseca (38) noted, “they don’t make me buy now, but I’ll remember them when I do.”

The implication is that purchase intention is nurtured through repeated symbolic exposure and resonance—not through direct promotion of products. This aligns with Wiedmann and Mettenheim (2020), who argue that emotional engagement, when coupled with luxury narratives, contributes to aspirational identity-building rather than short-term transactional behavior. Additionally, Chu et al. (2019) and Woodside & Fine (2019) show that storytelling in luxury fashion generates psychological value by placing consumers within the brand’s symbolic universe. This effect was echoed in your focus group by João Fonseca (38), who said: “They don’t make me buy now, but I’ll remember them when I do.” These insights are also supported by Júnior et al. (2022), who highlight that storytelling evokes affective responses and identity projection—key drivers of purchase intention in luxury sectors.

#### Research Objective 2:

To examine whether non-fashion campaigns affect perceptions of brand authenticity and exclusivity in luxury fashion.

#### Interpretation:

Perceptions of authenticity and exclusivity are highly contingent on demographic and cultural factors. For older and more brand-loyal participants, drastic stylistic shifts were seen as threats to brand authenticity and exclusivity. Rita Moreira (32) expressed concern that “when more classic brands try to shift, they become poorer... they lose the essence.” On the

other hand, younger and creatively inclined participants welcomed bold shifts as a new kind of authenticity, one that aligns with cultural fluidity and self-expression. Campaigns that were ambiguous or abstract were often interpreted as more genuine — “less about selling, more about meaning,” as Sofia Almeida (41) described. Thus, brand authenticity is not static but socially constructed and redefined by the values of the consumer. Exclusivity, similarly, can be enhanced or diluted depending on how and where the campaign is delivered. Authenticity and exclusivity were perceived differently across demographic and cultural backgrounds. Some participants feared that experimental campaigns risk diluting brand heritage, reflecting Creevey et al. (2021) and Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020) who note that digital expansion challenges the traditional cues of exclusivity in luxury.

Meanwhile, younger and creative participants viewed these same campaigns as extensions of brand authenticity—especially when brands used storytelling to express cultural or artistic values (see Ko et al., 2016; Chu et al., 2019). Sofia Almeida (41) captured this: “Less about selling, more about meaning.”

Moreover, Jansen (2020) emphasizes how cultural narratives and artistic framing in luxury storytelling appeal to modern consumers’ desire for personal and aesthetic resonance, making authenticity a socially constructed and fluid concept.

### Research Objective 3:

To explore the role of demographic variables (age, gender, and cultural background) in shaping responses to these campaigns.

Interpretation:

This objective yielded clear and rich differentiation:

Age:

- Younger participants (18–30) embraced experimental formats and “weirdness” as signs of relevance and cultural savvy.
- Older participants (50+) valued coherence, elegance, and tradition.

Gender:

- Women were more emotionally responsive overall, particularly to storytelling and aesthetic quality.
- They also emphasized values representation, especially age inclusivity and feminine identity in complex portrayals.

Cultural Background:

- Participants with international exposure or creative professions showed greater openness to ambiguity, symbolic messaging, and artistic narratives.
- These participants referenced campaigns as part of a broader cultural or artistic experience, rather than as mere commercial tools.

The findings suggest that effective segmentation is crucial. Non-fashion campaigns are most impactful when they align with the visual literacy, emotional values, and cultural expectations of their target audience. Demographic factors proved critical in shaping perceptions and emotional responses. Key differentiations include:

- Age: Younger participants (18–30) were more open to non-traditional, “weird” campaigns, reflecting findings from Jain (2020) and Pang et al. (2021) on Gen Z and Millennials’ openness to symbolic innovation and digital storytelling.

- Gender: Female participants were more emotionally attuned to narrative and aesthetic appeal, consistent with Kim & Sullivan (2019), who argue emotional branding resonates more with women due to relational identity patterns.
- Cultural background and profession: Creative professionals and participants with global exposure appreciated abstract or symbolic storytelling—aligning with Jansen (2020) and Monkhouse et al. (2012), who show that cultural capital shapes how consumers interpret luxury signals.

These findings suggest that segmentation based on symbolic literacy and lifestyle identity is more effective than traditional demographic targeting alone, echoing the segmentation approaches outlined by Liu et al. (2018). The data illustrate that the effectiveness of non-fashion luxury campaigns lies not in direct persuasion but in symbolic alignment, emotional provocation, and narrative memory. Consumer responses were shaped by age, professional identity, and cultural literacy — suggesting that luxury branding is now a deeply interpretive and generationally contingent process. Brands aiming for strategic impact must therefore engage both the emotional and cognitive faculties of their audiences, tailoring tone, symbolism, and depth to match the interpretive capabilities of different consumer groups.

#### **4.5 THEMATIC INTERPRETATION OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS**

This section expands on the coded themes emerging from the focus groups, following a structured analytical approach. For each theme, the data is interpreted using a three-step model: (1) representative participant quotes, (2) interpretation of what these responses reveal, and (3) implications for luxury fashion marketing strategy in the digital era.

### **4.5.1. Emotional Response**

#### Participant Quotes:

"Some of these campaigns... take me back to watching classic films or flipping through old photo books." — Marta Veloso (47)

"There's a kind of emotional intimacy they create that I don't usually feel with traditional fashion ads." — Sofia Almeida (41)

#### Interpretation:

These quotes show the emotional depth found in non-fashion campaigns, especially those that spark nostalgia, create a mood, or convey artistic feeling. Campaigns that bring back past eras, capture cinematic styles, or share familiar emotions connect strongly with people of all ages, especially women aged 30 to 50.

#### Strategic Implication:

Luxury brands should employ emotional storytelling that connects with memory and mood. As supported by Chu et al. (2019) and Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020), emotional resonance drives symbolic loyalty and improves campaign recall even when immediate purchase intention is low.

### **4.5.2. Brand Authenticity**

#### Participant Quotes:

"When more classic brands try to shift, they become poorer... they lose the essence." — Rita Moreira (32)

"If I could give an opinion, it would be for brands to try being a bit more authentic." —  
Francisca Oliveira (25)

Interpretation:

Participants are worried about brand drift, where innovation loses touch with a brand's historical identity. Authenticity is seen not just in design but also in the consistency and tone across campaigns.

Strategic Implication:

In this regard, there must be a balance between innovation and coherence. Ko et al. (2016) and Creevey et al. (2021) argue that authenticity will be kept when the storytelling narrative meets the long-standing brand values and consumer realities.

### **4.5.3. Storytelling Appeal**

Participant Quotes:

"Anti-campaigns are disruptive in a good way... they make me stop, even if I don't understand them fully." — João Fonseca (38)

"I remember Loewe's ad more than others. It's weird, but it tells a story." — Helena Matos (61)

Interpretation:

The power of narrative, especially non-linear and symbolic storytelling, is evident here. Participants remember campaigns not for product placement but for the emotional or artistic story conveyed.

Strategic Implication:

Narrative-based marketing can create or enhance brand affinity. As shown in research by Jansen (2020) and Yang et al. (2020), artistic storytelling improves engagement and creates more profound and lasting emotional or symbolic associations with luxury brands.

#### **4.5.4. Dilution Risk**

Participant Quotes:

"The moment a brand starts putting out TV ads, which are accessible to literally anyone, it kind of takes away from the brand's luxury status." — Henrique Rodrigues (24)

"I don't want to see my favorite brand on every bus stop." — Isabel Ferreira (54)

Interpretation:

Widespread visibility can compromise perceived luxury. Overexposure reduces mystique and exclusivity—key elements of luxury's symbolic power.

Strategic Implication:

Brands should control their distribution channels and maintain narrative scarcity. Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020) and Dekhili et al. (2019) emphasize that controlled exposure sustains luxury brand value.

#### **4.5.5. Exclusivity**

Participant Quotes:

"The moment you go down the path of mass advertising, I think that sense of exclusivity is immediately affected." — Matilde Sampaio (23)

"It's similar to how some luxury brands are selective about who they even allow into their physical stores. There's this controlled experience around the brand, and mass advertising kind of breaks that barrier." — Henrique Rodrigues (24)

Interpretation:

Exclusivity remains central to the luxury value proposition. Younger participants, though digitally active, still value scarcity and selective visibility.

Strategic Implication:

Luxury marketing must protect exclusivity even on publicly available platforms. Strategies might include limiting content access, invite-only digital events, or segmented storytelling for audiences.

#### **4.5.6. Influence on Purchase**

Participant Quotes:

"They don't make me buy now, but I'll remember them when I do." — João Fonseca (38)

"When I eventually consider buying something, they're already at the top of my list—not just because of the product itself, but because of the way they've made me feel along the way." — Sofia Almeida (41)

Interpretation:

Non-fashion campaigns influence purchase intentions over time. Rather than prompting immediate transactions, they foster brand salience and consideration.

Strategic Implication:

Marketers should not only rely on short-term sales conversions to measure preparedness, but also on the long-term emotional cue for the brand. This aligns with Chu et al. (2019) and Woodside & Fine (2019), who highlight symbolic influence in luxury branding.

#### **4.5.7. Aesthetic Impact**

Participant Quotes:

"It all comes down to the content and the aesthetic of what's being shown in the ad." —

Daniel Neves (19)

"Balenciaga... reached their target audience through strangeness, because the pieces they presented... were always very different from what brands were used to seeing." — Rita

Moreira (32)

Interpretation:

Visual storytelling is not just for aesthetics, but part of how consumers classify luxury.

Artistic direction directly relates to observed consumer value.

Strategic Implication:

High-quality imagery, art direction, and mood must be prioritized. Jansen (2020) and Balenciaga (2024) demonstrate how visual excellence contributes to authenticity and desirability in luxury campaigns.

As illustrated in Annex 1 (Figure 3: Ernest W. Baker F/W20), the campaign's dark-yet-elegant palette and retro-futuristic styling exemplify the "magazine-shoot" quality that respondents praised for its visual sophistication. By foregrounding bold lighting and high-contrast settings, the Ernest W. Baker imagery directly supports the idea that visual excellence contributes to perceived brand value.

#### 4.5.8. Cultural Relevance

##### Participant Quotes:

"That ad with Portuguese tile patterns really spoke to me." — Margarida Lopes (57)

"The brand communicated Christmas in a beautiful and magical way, evoking the old traditional 'Old Money' vibe—unlike how brands sometimes present Christmas nowadays, which can seem a bit odd and lacking in tradition." — Francisca Oliveira (25)

##### Interpretation:

Culturally embedded campaigns generate higher emotional resonance. Participants appreciate narratives that feel specific and grounded.

##### Strategic Implication:

Luxury brands should localize storytelling where possible. It was illuminated by Monkhouse et al. (2012) and Jansen (2020) that authenticity is reinforced when brands incorporate audiences' cultural identity and values. Along with this, for many of the participants, they conjured up specific images as they discussed the way non-fashion campaigns infused cultural narratives. This, as noted by a few respondents, consisted of Loewe's Spring/Summer 2024 (Annex 2, Figure 4) and Spring/Summer 2025 (Annex 3, Figure 5) precollections, which were shot by Juergen Teller, consisted of disparate subcultural iconography (e.g., dirt bikers, ballroom dancers, and leather daddies) situated against a stark white background. These pairings resulted in what one participant referred to as "quirky directness," which connected to viewers by highlighting out art lewdness and playful creativity. This was not only impactful but moved beyond traditional fashion identity tropes and suggested forward looking alignment with contemporary avant-garde perspectives - cultural relevance can emerge not only from a specific, local heritage but also through subcultural or artistic references to cultural identity that feel relevant and inclusive.

#### 4.5.9. Digital Engagement

##### Participant Quotes:

"For decisions that require more thought-like buying a handbag worth thousands of euros-brands might prefer to present these products in magazines or on social media, where I can take my time to understand the ad and only move on when I'm ready." — Francisca Oliveira (25)

"At first, I found them strange. But over time, with the repeated exposure, the constant visual presence of them being worn by so many influencers and appearing in so many marketing campaigns, it kind of made them feel like a normal, consumable product in society. And that ended up making me like them." — Rita Moreira (32)

##### Interpretation:

Digital engagement fosters deeper consumer interaction, especially among Gen Z. Interactive features and social media storytelling are increasingly influential touchpoints.

##### Strategic Implication:

Digital platforms must be treated as storytelling spaces, not just broadcast channels. Sayem (2022) and Galhotra & Dewan (2020) recommend immersive, interactive formats to enhance emotional branding in the digital sphere.

Annex 4 (Figure 6: Balenciaga Spring 25) further demonstrates how digital channels drive engagement. The Juergen Teller photos in Annex 4 show high-contrast, mobile-first framing (e.g., close-up portraits against Parisian landmarks) that naturally lend themselves to Instagram carousels and short video formats—formats that participants describe as “fun” because they translate seamlessly to AR filters and story-based posts.

#### 4.5.10. Demographic Targeting

##### Participant Quotes:

"I like seeing older women in ads. Makes me feel like I'm still part of the brand's audience."

— Marta Veloso (47)

"Given my age group... I don't like this image, I don't like this marketing approach. I would prefer the old-school marketing that I grew up with." — José Carneiro (58)

"I think maybe because I'm the youngest, I tend to like weirder things... I enjoy trying out different stuff, because I don't yet know 100% what I like." — Daniel Neves (19)

##### Interpretation:

Participants are sensitive to demographic cues in campaign imagery and tone. Age inclusivity and realistic portrayals improve brand connection.

##### Strategic Implication:

Luxury brands should adopt nuanced segmentation. According to Kim & Sullivan (2019) and Liu et al. (2018), targeting must focus on more than just age by looking at lifestyle, values, and identity-based messaging. This thematic analysis demonstrates how non-fashion campaigns convey meanings to consumers through emotion, symbolism, and culture. This supports the strategic positioning of narrative based branding to sustain luxury identities in a digital age.

## 4.6 LIMITATIONS OF FOCUS GROUPS

While the focus group methodology provided valuable qualitative insights into consumer perceptions of luxury brand campaigns, it is important to acknowledge several

inherent limitations. These do not undermine the validity of the study but rather frame its findings within a transparent and critically reflective research posture.

#### **4.6.1. Group Dynamics and Conformity Bias**

A key limitation relates to the groupthink phenomenon where participants align their views with dominant voices in the room. There were a few individuals (e.g., Francisca Gonçalves in the 18-30 group, and Rita Moreira in the 30-50 group) who led the conversation in both age-group sessions. At times their more dominant conversation style overtook the direction of the group or defined what was seen as an acceptable or “informed” opinion. This may have created an uncomfortable barrier for less outspoken individuals (e.g., Mafalda Gomes in the 18-30 group) to express contradictory or otherwise nuanced opinions - especially on issues that are prone to sensitivity such as inclusivity or brand identity politics. Such dominance may impact both the depth and diversity of the data, especially when this is reflective of a powerful underrepresentation of dissenting views that belong to a minority body.

#### **4.6.2. Limited Generalizability**

Focus groups yield rich, context-specific data, however they lack statistical generalizability. The purposive sampling approach, while ensuring demographic specificity, was not representative of the larger population of luxury consumers. All participants resided in Portugal, and many had educational or professional backgrounds related to creative

industries. While this added depth, it also introduced an intellectualized lens that may not reflect mainstream consumer behavior across cultures or income levels.

### **4.6.3. Social Desirability Bias**

Some responses were likely shaped by social desirability, especially during discussions around body image, inclusivity, and political messaging in campaigns. In particular, the younger group appeared more cautious in how they framed controversial views, perhaps due to peer presence. This tendency may have led to the downplaying of more critical or unpopular opinions, creating a sanitized version of participant sentiment. Conversely, certain strong opinions (e.g., critiques of “woke” branding or body diversity in advertising) may have been overstated for performative effect.

### **4.6.4. Emotional vs. Behavioral Disparity**

There was a notable disconnect between emotional reactions and actual consumer behavior. Many participants expressed admiration for artistic, nostalgic, or symbolic campaigns but simultaneously admitted these had little to no influence on their real-life purchase decisions. This underscores a critical limitation in inferring behavioral intention from emotionally charged qualitative data—a common issue in interpretivist research on symbolic consumption.

#### **4.6.5. Moderator Influence and Single-Researcher Interpretation**

Given that the researcher was both the moderator and only analyst of the sessions, it is possible the researcher unintentionally influenced the dynamics of discussion or interpreted comments through confirmation bias. Although the researcher took care to ask open-ended questions and allow themes to emerge organically, the presence of an academic researcher (particularly one who is knowledgeable of the subject matter) may unintentionally influence tone, timing, or emphases. In addition, the thematic coding and interpretation were conducted by the same researcher and there was no inter-coder reliability check; this increases the possibility of potential subjective filtering of the responses. This is considered a limitation of the study as it could be a potential influence on objectivity and replicability of the findings. Future research could take steps to ameliorate this risk through triangulation (i.e., using multiple coders, peer debriefing, or member checking etc.). These types of steps could reduce individual bias, careful analysis and improve the trustworthiness of the results.

#### **4.6.6. Temporal and Platform Constraints**

Participants and researchers engaged in timely and insightful dialogue (94–116 minutes) probably resulted in meaningful dialogue but with an element of haste, further inhibiting deeper consideration of nuanced concepts. Some ideas—like the effects of algorithmic exposure, authenticity of the influencer, or digital saturation—barely received more than a nod or wave from the participants within the focus group due to time limitations. Similar to the notion of compressed time frames in an age of digital luxury branding that exists in fragmented channels and long exposure arcs, focus groups compress the time frame

so that for each participant they are only offered a partial optic into an otherwise longer experiential cycle.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This final chapter summarizes the findings from the master's dissertation on how non-fashion campaigns can affect consumer purchase intention in luxury fashion in the digital age. The central goal of this dissertation study was to examine the very complex psychological and emotional responses prompted by non-fashion campaigns, how these responses affect a consumer's view of brand authenticity and exclusivity, and how demographic variables can moderate all of these factors. We wanted to establish how non-fashion campaigns impact consumer purchase intention, how they raise brand authenticity and exclusive perceptions, and how demographic features establish those perceptions.

This chapter will summarize the contributions of the dissertation to both theory and practice, outline the limitations of the study, and suggest directions for future research. It will first summarize the key findings and summarize the complex topical characteristics and consumer responses, then address the theoretical contributions of this research: reframing emotional branding, expanding theory to rethink cultural capital, and establishing weirdness as a postmodern luxury aesthetic. Once the theoretical contributions are addressed, it will outline action and strategic implications for luxury fashion brands. Finally, it addresses the methodological constraints encountered during the study and suggests promising directions for future academic inquiry, ensuring a logical flow from empirical observations to broader academic and industry relevance.

## **5.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

Qualitative analysis of focus group discussions indicates that consumer responses to non-fashion luxury campaigns are intricate and multifaceted. The research consistently shows that the influence these non-fashion luxury campaigns have on positive purchase intention are rarely direct or immediate but work through layers of emotional, symbolic, and cultural influences. The perceptions of authenticity and exclusivity in branding are overall highly generational and contextual in nature and consequently must be approached with caution by luxury marketers in the digital age.

### **5.1.1 THE INDIRECT AND LONG-TERM INFLUENCE ON PURCHASE INTENTION**

The research shows that fashion campaigns typically do not generate immediate transactions in luxury fashion campaigns. The influence of non-fashion campaigns appears to be generally indirect and delayed - it is mainly contributing to the emotional associations and the impression that lasts. Participants repeatedly referred to these types of campaigns as "memorable", "inspiring", or "curious", even though they declared there was no immediate intent to buy a product. This finding contradicts the common models of advertising which assume that if a company places a product advertisement in front of someone (and enough times), they will convert to a buyer. However, these experiences align more with the concept of emotional branding, where narrative and mood lead to prolonged loyalty and affinity toward the brand over time. For example, one participant, João Fonseca (38) stated "they don't make me buy now, but I'll remember them when I do". This testimonial demonstrates

that an exploration of luxury purchase intention is achieved through eventual repeated symbolic exposure and emotive engagement, rather than direct promotion of product and transaction. The campaigns can be characterized as cultivating a "brand salience reservoir". By persistently generating strong emotional and cognitive engagement, through abstract or unconventional content, if need be, brands place themselves in the consumer's long-term memory and consideration set, and a position of good standing. So, when the consumer eventually makes a luxury purchase decision - usually high involvement and decided after considerable thought taken weeks or months after the first exposure to that campaign - the emotional and symbolic associations created prior from the luxury brand's campaign are "pull factors" on the subconscious level. This is not only a reduction in cognitive effort required for brand selection, but a significant increase in likelihood of converting that sale, even if the brand's campaign was not overtly transactional. This indicates luxury brands should continuously redefine the context of success measures for their non-fashion campaigns to include measures on 'long-term brand recall', 'emotional connection', and in the end "brand equity", as this process depicts true indications of a powerful salience reservoir directly linked to future sales.

### **5.1.2 CONTINGENT PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND AUTHENTICITY AND EXCLUSIVITY**

The perception of brand authenticity and exclusivity is highly dependent on demographics and cultural drivers. A clear generation gap emerged when analyzing these constructs, as older participants, especially 50 and older adults, and consumers who showed high loyalty to traditional luxury brands viewed drastic stylistic changes in campaign style

as a direct threat to brand authenticity and exclusivity. Rita Moreira (32) articulated this concern, stating, "when more classic brands try to shift, they become poorer... they lose the essence". This viewpoint emphasizes a desire for longevity and customary heritage in luxury branding. At the other end of the spectrum, younger and more creative participants embraced bold changes as a new type of authenticity, and identification with cultural fluidity and self-expression. Daniel Neves (19) recognized this hesitation and declared, "I love weird. I love weirdness in brands — my favorite brands, you know? Balenciaga, Rick Owens — they're known for being weird, for not being like other brands.". This suggests that for these consumers, authenticity is urgent in their innovation, and departure from the norm of the ordinary. Additionally, wide visibility, and about mass advertising vehicles such as television or billboard advertising, was often cited as damaging the perceived luxury of a particular brand. Henrique Rodrigues (24) argued, "The moment a brand starts putting out TV ads, which are accessible to literally anyone, it kind of takes away from the brand's luxury status." a sentiment echoed by Isabel Ferreira (54) who added, "I don't want to see my favorite brand on every bus stop". This observation highlights the vital symbolic role of scarcity in luxury brands and indicates that the scarcity of messages, the managed exposure to brand communications, is as important as product scarcity for sustaining a perceived aura of exclusivity. However, some participants, such as Sofia Almeida (41), viewed non-fashion campaigns as a strategic opportunity for brands to reposition themselves as cultural commentators rather than mere product sellers. She observed, "It's like luxury is trying to be more artistic, almost conceptual. Less about selling clothes, more about selling a lifestyle". This indicates that authenticity can be facilitated by the strategic use of storytelling to engage cultural or artistic expressions that are relevant to a wider audience. Overall, this creates what we can refer to as an "Authenticity Paradox" in digital luxury. The authenticity

paradox also extends to identity construction more broadly; in our postmodern consumer culture, everybody is constructing their own personal brand in ways that feel "real" yet are often highly performative. As Beverland (2006) indicates, authenticity in luxury is not an objective feature but a narrative that is constructed with certain symbolic cues that appeal to certain audiences. The constructed nature of authenticity resonates with Goffman's (1959) idea of identity as performance because consumers (and brands) present their identity in ways that fit strategic self-presentation and social expectations. In this case, brands are continuously expected to seem dignified through heritage and craftsmanship, while also being able to signal their significance by drawing cultural relevance and innovation. This means the authenticity paradox looks like this: the more functionality and origin is emphasized, the less credible it becomes. Simply put, luxury brands must simultaneously pay homage to their handcrafted origins and craftsmanship and appeal to traditionalist consumers, while also signalling their newness through radical innovation and cultural relevance for the modern and digitally native consumers. The strategic answer is not in choosing one path over the other, but instead in separating the authenticity signals. Core brand values and heritage stories are delivered through modes of exclusivity and tradition, while experimental, non-fashion campaigns and other means of promotion, especially in digital and online spaces, promote a different type of authenticity, based on cultural credibility and risk-taking in art, to a potential customer base that is contextually aware of and more familiar with these different routines of consumption. This separation allows the brand to have different ways of showing themselves, while staying true to their existing core brand identity. Therefore, brands should use multi-layered authenticity strategies, which should account for contours in what is delivered, how it is delivered, and where it is delivered, to manage the ongoing level of tension that exists for brands between exclusivity

and accessibility in a democratized digital marketplace. This will necessitate a level of brand architecture sophistication and management of media platforms.

### 5.1.3 DEMOGRAPHICALLY MODULATED RESPONSES

The research demonstrated that demographic factors strongly shape consumer responses to non-fashion campaigns and produce clearly differentiated and richly diverse perceptions and preferences.

- **Age-Based Responses:** Younger participants (18–30) enthusiastically embraced experimental formats and "weirdness" as indicators of relevance and cultural savvy. Daniel Neves (19) exemplified this, stating, "I love weird. I love weirdness in brands — my favorite brands, you know? Balenciaga, Rick Owens — they're known for being weird, for not being like other brands.". This group was more willing to embrace unconventional campaigns and recognize disruption as an authentic display. This generational slippage also reveals fundamentally different media literacies, aesthetic expectations, and values based on the fact that younger generations have been immersed in internet culture, memes, and irony as they consumed their media, meaning they are much more used to ambiguity and disruption in media. The group was more confused by the discomfort of the luxury fashion markers, while the older participants had clear expectations for coherence, elegance, and tradition, and expressed discomfort and doubt when the proposals strayed from conventional luxury markers. Isabel Ferreira (54) articulated this perspective, saying, "Some of these campaigns are trying too hard to be different — they lose elegance". José Carneiro

(58) also stated, "I don't like this image, I don't like this marketing approach. I would prefer the old-school marketing that I grew up with".

- **Gender-Based Responses:** Female participants generally exhibited greater emotional responsiveness, particularly to storytelling and aesthetic quality. Marta Veloso (47) shared, "Some of these campaigns... take me back to watching classic films or flipping through old photo books". Sofia Almeida (41) added, "There's a kind of emotional intimacy they create that I don't usually feel with traditional fashion ads.". They further emphasized the importance anchored in values representation, such as age inclusiveness and nuanced representations of feminine identity in campaigns. Marta Veloso (47) specifically noted, "I like seeing older women in ads. Makes me feel like I'm still part of the brand's audience". This illustrates the depth of relevance of relatable representations of identity and emotionality in contemporary luxury branding and marketing, especially for female consumers.
- **Cultural Background and Profession:** Those who had worked in creative industries, and participants who had lived in different countries, indicated a greater familiarity with abstraction and symbolic messaging, and conveyed a greater willingness to accept branding and advertising narratives. João Fonseca (38) remarked, "Anti-campaigns are disruptive in a good way... they make me stop, even if I don't understand them fully". Margarida Lopes (57) noted, "That ad with Portuguese tile patterns really spoke to me,". This tells us that campaigns that are based on culture can generate greater emotional levels. Therefore, we might consider that cultural capital and aesthetic literacy is reinforced through interpretation. Participants who are more comfortable with artistic and symbolic content are more inclined to find meaning in non-fashion advertisements as cultural artifacts rather than just

commercial instruments. Adriano Correia (35), having grown up in Toronto and spent time in Paris, noted his "much more open-minded" approach to these campaigns.

The differences noted by demographic segment suggest a widening "interpretation gap," and as a result, the marketing of luxury to a "one size fits all" approach is becoming less relevant and increasingly disengaging for select groups. The implication of this gap indicates a shift away from demographic approaches to a micro-segmentation marketing approach based on lifestyle identity and cultural literacy. Brands should not only consider tailoring the content of their campaigns, but the media for delivery and framing to match the contextual interpretation capacity and aesthetic comprehension standard of each cohort. For instance, a quirky representational campaign targeting Gen Z might be presented on TikTok and the campaign may have an ironic tone, while a campaign directed to older generations based on heritage significance, might be in a more traditional print medium, and a broader framed or aspirational tone. The goal is to alleviate the interpretation gap by speaking in different "luxury languages" to different demographics. Effective luxury marketing requires a deeper familiarity with audience semiotics. Brands should invest in sophisticated audience analytics that map audience as more than their demographics, and include psychographics, cultural capital, and digital consumption trends to effectively build the varied campaigns they will be organizing and enable each audience to receive the campaign correctly based on their cultural interpretation.

The following table summarizes the principal findings across the research objectives and presents generational differences in consumer behaviours as indicated in the findings.

Research Objective	Key Finding	Generational Nuances (18-30)	Generational Nuances (30-50)	Generational Nuances (50+)	Supporting Quotes/Examples
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	Indirect, long-term influence via emotional and symbolic associations.	Campaigns create "memorable" impressions, leading to later consideration.	Campaigns foster emotional connection and brand salience over time.	Campaigns are remembered but rarely drive immediate purchase.	"They don't make me buy now, but I'll remember them when I do" (João Fonseca, 38)
<b>Authenticity &amp; Exclusivity</b>	Perceptions contingent on demographic/cultural factors; tension between mass exposure and mystique.	"Weirdness" signifies new authenticity; mass exposure dilutes exclusivity.	Value artistic/cultural commentary; balance between visibility and exclusivity is key.	Drastic shifts threaten heritage; mass exposure strongly dilutes exclusivity.	"I love weird. I love weirdness in brands, Balenciaga, Rick Owens they're known for being weird, for not being like other brands." (Daniel Neves, 19); "lose the essence" (Rita Moreira, 32)
<b>Demographic Influence</b>	Age, gender, cultural background critically shape responses.	Embrace experimental formats, digital engagement, cultural savvy.	Emotionally responsive to narrative/aesthetics; appreciate cultural relevance.	Value coherence, elegance, tradition; less open to ambiguity.	"Some of these campaigns... take me back to watching classic films" (Marta Veloso, 47)

Table 9 – Summary of Key Findings Across Research Objectives and Generational Cohorts

## **5.2 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

This research makes a significant contribution to the academic literature surrounding emotional branding, cultural capital, semiotics, and digital transformation related to luxury fashion, extending these frameworks to include cultural contexts. This study provides insight into the postmodern redefinition of luxury and the use of "weirdness" as a method of emotional disruption and identity construction.

### **5.2.1 RECONCEPTUALIZING EMOTIONAL BRANDING BEYOND AIDA**

The research provides a reconceptualization of emotional branding, moving beyond traditional linear models such as AIDA (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action). The data indicates that non-fashion campaigns operate on a more experiential and psychological level, provoking complex emotional responses like curiosity, discomfort, nostalgia, or awe, rather than merely immediate desire. João Fonseca (38) articulated this dynamic, stating: “Anti-campaigns are disruptive in a good way... they make me stop, even if I don’t understand them fully”. This statement inverts the AIDA model that is instrumental in fashionable luxury consumption, as it arguably illustrates how affective uncertainty and resonance are becoming increasingly motivational in luxurious consumption. This study demonstrates that affective engagement, through abstract narratives and contingent ambient-like settings, creates brand distinctiveness and symbolic loyalty, rendering brands "lovemarks". As such, I would include "emotional friction" as a valuable engagement consideration in postmodern luxury branding. In traditional emotional branding, polar conditions, that's completely joy

or only sadness or only desire, are sought; anti-fashions purposely include ways of creating cognitive and emotional dissonance. Friction—those feelings of intrigue, confusion, or even mild discomfort—force more careful brand message processing, leading to not only stronger recollection but a unique way of attachment (often intellectual, rather than emotional). Carlos Teixeira (45) noted this, stating, "It's not joy or sadness or desire—it's that sense of 'What am I looking at?' And when people are curious, they lean in. They talk. They share". This moves beyond passive consumption to active interpretation, turning the campaign into a "puzzle" or "conversation starter". Luxury brands suggest specificity and strength of emotional response versus traditional positive or negative valence are what matter most. Regardless, this suggests that the researcher and practitioner should start to discover new psychological models for luxury consumer behavior that consider ambiguity, paradox, and emotional friction in the creation of brand equity rather than relying on simple pleasure-seeking frameworks.

### **5.2.2 EXPANDING CULTURAL CAPITAL THEORY IN A DIGITAL CONTEXT**

This study expands Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital by empirically demonstrating its critical role in decoding complex, non-fashion luxury narratives within a digital environment. The interpretation of luxury campaigns is significantly shaped by an individual's education, cultural literacy, and social exposure. Participants with creative or global professional backgrounds consistently showed a higher tolerance for abstraction and complexity in campaigns. Helena Matos (61) remarked on this, with Helena stating, "I remember Loewe's ad more than others. It's weird, but it tells a story". This highlights how aesthetic literacy and familiarity with "elite consumption codes" enable certain consumers

to appreciate campaigns as cultural artifacts rather than mere commercial messages. The research implicitly points to the emergence of "Digital Cultural Capital" as a crucial factor in luxury consumption. This extends Bourdieu's theory by suggesting that proficiency in navigating digital subcultures, understanding meme aesthetics, and interpreting fragmented online narratives (such as Balenciaga's unconventional campaigns on platforms like TikTok) constitutes a new form of cultural capital. Daniel Neves (19) stated, "I love weird. I love weirdness in brands — my favorite brands, you know? Balenciaga, Rick Owens — they're known for being weird, for not being like other brands.". Consumers with high digital cultural capital are not merely culturally literate in traditional art forms; they are also adept at understanding the rapidly evolving visual and narrative languages of the internet. This enables them to understand the irony, to meta-commentary on, and the intentional ambiguity of non-fashion campaigns, making what otherwise might look like confusing advertisements to signals of their own sophisticated digital identity. This points to future research correctly examining the elements and consequences of, not just "Digital Cultural Capital," on consumer behaviour but explicitly on 'brand loyalty' and 'purchase intent' in digitally native luxury markets. Future research could also examine correlations between social media engagement behaviours, meme literacy and preferences for experimental luxury aesthetics.

### **5.2.3 "WEIRDNESS" AS A POSTMODERN LUXURY AESTHETIC**

The study provides empirical evidence for "weirdness" as a deliberate strategy of disruption in luxury branding, marking a significant departure from traditional ideals of aesthetic harmony and timelessness. Younger consumers are drawn to campaigns that are

confusing, provocative, or surreal, reflecting a postmodern redefinition of luxury. Daniel Neves (19) expressed this preference by saying, "I love weird. I love weirdness in brands — my favorite brands, you know? Balenciaga, Rick Owens — they're known for being weird, for not being like other brands." This is consistent with semiotic theory where meaning is tenuous and subject to interpretation. Meaning can be absent (or ambiguous), or in some cases this absence or ambiguity can be seen as sophisticated. Use of visual minimalism, alongside the semiotics of absence, in advertisements contributes to the postmodern aspects of luxury branding because they suggest sophistication and exclusivity through understatement or unconventional means. The research demonstrates that "weird" is not simply aesthetic. It is a strategic element of ambiguity that reinforces a new exclusivity. By crafting narratives and statements that the consumer cannot understand immediately, luxury brands create an implicit barrier to entry: only people with enough cultural capital (including digital cultural capital) and a desire to "work" to understand the message will be able to. This has created a club or in-group of people who only somewhat understand or must use signifiers to understand the context of the message, and their belonging within the elite, culturally sophisticated "tribe". The "weirdness" itself acts as a filter, creating exclusivity not through products and scarcity but scarcity of interpretation. This means luxury brands can intentionally use ambiguity, oddness, unconventional aesthetics, and the strategies or tactics of 'weirdness' to implicitly segment the luxury market.

### **5.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings detailed in this dissertation provide actionable recommendations for luxury fashion brands who want to successfully manoeuvre the challenges posed by the

digital landscape, while maintaining their prestige and loyalty from consumers. The recommendations focus on a transition from product-led to experience- and narrative-led marketing to be leveraged into different generations and culture.

### **5.3.1 EMBRACE UNCONVENTIONAL CAMPAIGN DESIGN WITH PURPOSE**

Younger consumers, particularly Gen Z, are more intrigued by campaigns that are confusing, shocking, or surreal, seeing them as real and novel. The "weirdness" creates emotional and cognitive friction that leads to deeper thoughtfulness and ultimately long-term memory. The downside is the appeal of these creative forms may be lost on older consumers. luxury brands should intentionally design campaigns that deviate from traditional aesthetics to provoke emotional and cognitive responses. Weirdness should not simply be a great and instant response - it should truly mean something, that is open to some form or level of co-interpretation and develop long-term emotional memory beyond purchase intention. For example, Balenciaga's Spring 2025 campaign, co-developed with Juergen Teller, effectively uses conversational, incidental video and strange settings to muddy the act of creation and offer a point of view for the brand to function in the context of a cultural actor. The success of weirdness appears to relate to the transition from "shock value" to "interpretive value". Campaigns that are cool, different, or weird but founded on artistic integrity, symbolic clarity or a larger narrative, even ambiguously, are well-regarded and seem intelligent, and more importantly, offer the potential for some level of active interpretation and intellectual engagement. On the other hand, "provoking for the sake of provoking," or loosely connecting to a sense of lack of inspiring brand trajectory risks undermining brand credibility and turning the brand into a "meme" or a "joke" in the minds of the consumers. Carlos Teixeira

(45) cautioned that "if it's pushed too far or repeated without variation, there's a real risk of turning the brand into a kind of spectacle—a meme, essentially". The objective is for the "weirdness" to have a purpose in conveying cultural literacy and artistic risk instead of simply being a gimmick to attract attention. Therefore, brands should employ creative teams with solid semiotic understanding and cultural foresight to be sure that unique campaigns are innovative yet multi-dimensional, creating intellectual engagement rather than being an epiphanic surprise. It also means pre-testing of unique campaigns need to be conducted rigorously, including testing with multiple audience segments.

### **5.3.2 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF EXCLUSIVITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

Overexposure through mass advertising (i.e., television and billboards) can diminish the perceived luxury and exclusivity of a brand. Digital consumers, especially younger ones, are still hungry for scarcity and exclusivity. Isabel Ferreira (54) stated, "I don't want to see my favorite brand on every bus stop".

So how do luxury brands keep control of their distribution and create "narrative scarcity" in the narratives they build for their consumers? Some successful strategies we identified: invite-only digital events, gated content, and storytelling drops with limited duration. While the digital world gives scale, luxury messaging is, at least still for now, curated and context specific. A noteworthy example, Louis Vuitton has never done TV advertising in Portugal, further establishing its exclusivity, participants noted that when luxury brands do TV advertising, they lose exclusivity. This indicates luxury brands need to think of a "Digital Velvet Rope" strategy, using digital tools not to reach mass engagement, but to generate access and control visibility. Rather than mass broadcasts to everyone, brands

can use the digital world to build digital communities, curate experiences (e.g., AR/VR try on for selected clients) and limited-time digital content events. Just like luxury physical environments and experiences are exclusive, digital can be much the same. Digital access does not necessarily have to result in a threat to exclusivity, rather, it can be a new way to reinforce exclusivity, by making the digital experience itself an exclusive experience. The goal is to foster a sense of inclusion for consumers rather than ruining their day with yet another advertisement. Luxury brands should invest in increasingly sophisticated CRM and digital experience platforms capable of delivering exceedingly customized and segmented digital experiences to consumers that approximate the curated experience of a physical luxury boutique context. This process also implies investigating technologies like blockchain which provide explicit verifiable digital scarcity and authenticity.

### **5.3.3 PRIORITIZE EMOTIONAL STORYTELLING AND AESTHETIC EXCELLENCE**

Campaigns that evoke nostalgia, beauty, or cinematic storytelling are highly impactful, particularly among women in the 30-50 age group. Marta Veloso (47) shared, “Some of these campaigns... take me back to watching classic films or flipping through old photo books”. This emotional layering significantly enhances symbolic attachment and campaign memorability, driving symbolic loyalty more effectively than immediate sales. Furthermore, visual excellence and artistic direction directly contribute to the perceived value of the brand. Luxury brands should employ emotional storytelling that connects with memory and mood, utilizing high-quality imagery, sophisticated art direction, and cohesive aesthetics. Campaign performance should be evaluated on long-term emotional consequence

and brand associations and not solely on short-term conversions. Examples are numerous, but Cartier's Christmas video, for instance, conjuring "Old Money" vibes, or other brands such as Loewe that emphasize tactile fabrics with earthy tones. Since tactile and olfactory senses do not translate to online experiences, luxury brands need to make that "Sensory-Digital Bridge" with their non-sartorial campaigns. That should mean a scrupulous approach to campaigns that ensure visceral or tactile textures, authentic audio soundscapes, appropriate colour palettes, or cinematic pacing that elicit the tactile experience and experiential aspects of luxury. An example might include use of close-up shots of fabric textures, appropriate ambience sounds, or lighting that suggests either warmth and/or coolness to trigger multi-sensory imagining in comparison to seeing images of an object. In this sense, you get to a point where the digital content can be differentiated away from merely being visual and connected to more elemental or primal emotional responses associated with luxury. Investment in digital production should exceed just making it look nice; therefore, investments in high-fidelity, creative digital production, suggested standards of quality in sound, CGI for fabric's materiality, and working with artists able to facilitate multi-sensory storytelling, would aid to create rich and immersive digital experiences that support the lack of physical interaction and strengthens emotional connection.

#### **5.3.4 LEVERAGE CULTURAL CAPITAL AND LOCALIZE STORYTELLING**

Cultural background and professional experience also shape interpretation of campaigns. Campaigns that are culturally anchored tend to have more emotional connection, especially if they reference local heritage or build upon references from subcultures. Margarida Lopes (57) noted, "That ad with Portuguese tile patterns really spoke to me". As

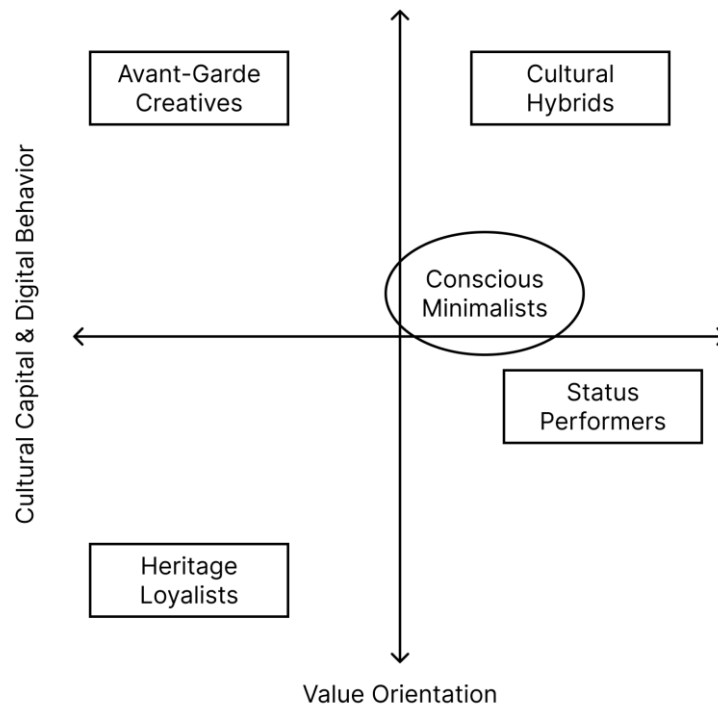
such, luxe brands would be wise to focus on the intricacy of narrative and the art direction involved, in captivating consumers who have a passion for cultural capital. When possible, narratives should utilize local relevance to mirror the cultural identity and values of the audience to enhance authenticity. For example, employing local traditions can enhance storytelling authenticity - like Portuguese-style tiles, or leveraging artistic irreverence that feels current and inclusive, like Loewe's use of a variety of subcultural icons. Luxury brands need to move from a strategy of "global homogenization" to "culturally agile storytelling." This implies not merely translating campaigns, but transcreating them—adapting narratives and visuals to resonate deeply with specific cultural nuances while retaining the core brand identity. This can include nuanced references to local art forms, historical nuances, and even current subcultures. The goal here is to create material that feels authentic to a place or cultural moment, rather than a communications message for a global audience. This means a greater feeling of connection, having perceived authenticity. This is also the only way to avoid brand criticisms like 'woke-washing'. Brands should be investing in local creative talent and cultural anthropologists when they establish campaigns so that not only are they regionally focused, but also deeply culturally centred so that output doesn't feel superficially - and can build trust. While these nuances feel superficial, this represents a deeper understanding of consumer values, and cultural semiotics.

### **5.3.5 IMPLEMENT NUANCED DEMOGRAPHIC TARGETING AND LONG-TERM BRAND BUILDING**

Demographic influences such as age, gender, and cultural background are core to the perception of campaigns. Brands that take a "one size fits all" approach are missing huge

consumer segments. In addition to demographic influences, non-fashion campaigns also build brand salience over short term transactions for the brand. Luxury brands must look at finer segmentation beyond traditional age and gender and rather look at lifestyle, values, and identity-written messaging. A campaign should click with the visual literacy, emotional values, and cultural expectations of the audience. Realistic representation of consumer segments, like advertising with older women, as well as age-inclusive campaigns will enhance connection to the brand. Marta Veloso (47) stated, “I like seeing older women in ads. Makes me feel like I’m still part of the brand’s audience”. Campaign success should be measured by long-term emotional impact and brand association, rather than solely by short-term conversions. Luxury brands should develop an "Identity Resonance Matrix" to map their target audiences (graph 2). This matrix would go beyond basic demographics to include psychographic profiles, cultural capital indicators (e.g., engagement with art, literature, niche subcultures), digital behaviour patterns (e.g., preferred platforms, content consumption habits), and explicit values (e.g., sustainability, inclusivity). This matrix categorizes luxury consumers into five identity-driven segments based on two key dimensions: cultural capital and digital behaviour (Y-axis), and value orientation (X-axis). The model shows how different combinations of cultural engagement and value priorities inform constructions of authenticity and exclusivity while determining brand relevance. The Identity Resonance Matrix, derived from qualitative research, offers luxury brands the opportunity to develop a more meaningful understanding of their target consumers beyond simplistic demographic constructs. For example, within this new predictable phenomenology presented in the matrix, we see that Heritage Loyalists prioritize continuity and craftsmanship, Avant-Garde Creatives favour aesthetic disruption and cultural provocations. Cultural Hybrids favour multiplicity and diversity, Status Performance pursues symbolic capital, while Conscious

Minimalists practice sustainability while validating quiet luxury. By also developing campaigns that align with these informed identity clusters, brands can create tailored messages, imagery and channel strategies, while developing brand esteem based on deeper emotional connections and long-term loyalty even in a fragmented consumer landscape.



Graph 2 – Identity Resonance Matrix: Conceptual Segmentation of Luxury Consumers by Cultural Capital and Value Orientation

With this matrix in place, campaigns can then be tailored to resonate with specific "identity clusters" within the matrix so that the chosen aesthetic, narrative and channel can integrate and correspond to each specific identity cluster's unique interpretive frameworks and identity. The ensuing personalized engagement can facilitate consequential emotional engagement and sustainable commitment. Luxury brands should be investing in detailed consumer research and AI-styled analytics to construct these polysemous identity profiles

and inform more precise and effective luxury marketing that goes beyond demographical, surface-level targeting and instead concentrates on deep identity alignment.

Table 10 outlines strategic recommendations for luxury fashion brands, organized through key areas of focus.

Strategic Area	Recommendation	Rationale and Key Actions
Campaign Design	Embrace Purposeful Unconventionality	Design campaigns that provoke emotional and cognitive responses (e.g., "weirdness") to build long-term memory and invite co-interpretation. Avoid mere shock value; ensure artistic integrity and symbolic depth.
Brand Positioning	Segment Authenticity Signals	Communicate core heritage through traditional, exclusive channels, while deploying experimental campaigns on digital platforms for culturally literate audiences. Balance tradition with innovation.
Digital Strategy	Implement a "Digital Velvet Rope"	Leverage digital platforms for curated access and controlled visibility. Create exclusive digital communities, personalized AR/VR experiences, and limited-edition digital content to reinforce exclusivity.
Audience Engagement	Prioritize Emotional Storytelling & Aesthetic Excellence	Craft narratives that connect with memory and mood, using high-quality visuals, soundscapes, and cinematic pacing to evoke sensory experiences. Measure success by long-term emotional impact.
Cultural Relevance	Adopt Culturally Agile Storytelling	Transcreate campaigns to resonate deeply with specific cultural nuances and subcultures, rather than simply translating. Invest in local creative talent and cultural anthropologists.
Targeting & Measurement	Develop an "Identity Resonance Matrix"	Move beyond traditional demographics to map psychographic profiles, cultural capital, digital habits, and values. Measure long-term brand salience and emotional connection, not just immediate sales.

Table 10 – Strategic Recommendations for Luxury Fashion Brands in the Digital Era

## 5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the focus group technique used in this dissertation offered insightful qualitative perspectives of consumer perceptions of luxury brand campaigns, there were some modal constraints that were to be recognized. These limitations do not diminish the credibility of the research but rather establish a portrayal of baseline findings with regards to a critical reflexivity and transparent research position. A significant limitation relates to group dynamics and conformity bias. The environment of focus groups can lead to groupthink, where participants may align their opinions with more dominant voices present. In the generational sessions, certain individuals frequently led conversations, occasionally swaying the group's direction or establishing the tone for what was deemed an "acceptable" or "informed" opinion. In practice, participants such as Francisca Gonçalves (23) in the 18 - 30 age range, and Rita Moreira (32) in the 30 - 50 age range were identified as very active in leading the discussion. This may have inadvertently impeded other less assertive participants from having dissenting discussions or presenting more nuanced perspectives, especially in discussions on potentially sensitive topics including inclusivity or brand identity politics. Mafalda Gomes (22) in the 18-30 group was identified as a less assertive participant whose views might have been underrepresented. Such dominance risks skewing the depth and diversity of the collected data, especially when minority perspectives might be underrepresented. Furthermore, the study inherently faces limitations regarding generalizability. Although focus groups provide rich, context-based data, they do not hold statistical generalizability to the broader pool of individuals. Purposive sampling, while encouraged as a meaningful approach by ensuring participants are somewhat relevant to the demographic by selecting individuals that know or participate in luxury fashion, does not

even make these sample representatives to the broader luxury consumer market, and although each participant was currently living in Portugal, many had some form of education or work experience correlating with creative industries and while this gave quality to discussion depth, it also instituted an education-based perspective that is contrary to the behaviour or psyche of a consumer, regardless of culture or income bracket.

It is tempting to think of social desirability bias as an undesirable outcome of qualitative interviews; however, it was another barrier that likely influenced the participant responses throughout various levels of discussion, especially concerning body image or inclusion and politics frame in campaigns. The younger group, for example, seemed more guarded in framing politically polarizing frameworks, and it is even probable that participants influenced each other's responses since there was a level of perception by those outside of the group. This could have led to a potential lack of expression regarding the consumer sentiment that is more disparaging or unwelcoming. Conversely, a strong opinion about "woke" branding or body diversity in advertising, could also have been exaggerated for performative impact, (both Matilde Sampaio (23) and Francisca Gonçalves (23) concurred that brands reaching too hard to be "woke" could also make people feel irritation and lost trust).

A notable disparity was observed between participants' emotional reactions and their actual consumer behaviour. Many expressed admirations for artistic, nostalgic, or symbolic campaigns but simultaneously admitted that these campaigns had little to no direct influence on their real-life purchase decisions. João Fonseca (38) stated, "They don't make me buy now, but I'll remember them when I do". This emphasizes a salient limitation of inferring behavioural intention from more typically emotional qualitative data -- a known difficulty in much interpretivist research on symbolic consumption.

Lastly, as sole moderator and analyst of the focus groups, it may have been possible for the researcher to influence discussion behaviours, or perhaps, theorized interpretations through confirmation bias. While the researcher deliberately conducted the groups using open-ended questions to allow themes to emerge, the presence of an academic researcher in the role of moderator, especially one heavily invested in the issues, could potentially influence the tone, tempo, and emphasis of discussion. Additionally, as thematic analysis and classification was conducted by a single researcher without an inter-coder reliability, there is increased risk of subjective filtering of responses. The temporal and platform constraints of the sessions provided a rich but time-limited conversational space, which may have ben impeded deeper exploration of nuanced themes. Impact of algorithmic exposure, authenticity of influencers, or exhausting nature of digital experience were just brief mentions. In a digital time landscape, where luxury branding often occurs across dispersed channels and extended exposures, the time-constrained focus group can be only a narrow view inside a bigger experiential cycle.

## **5.5 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, there are multiple opportunities for future research that could further the knowledge of non-fashion campaigns of luxury brands.

Firstly, Given the observed "Authenticity Paradox" and "Interpretive Gap" across generations of luxury consumers, future research could take a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative depth and quantitative breadth, potentially through large-scale surveys measuring the effects of specific campaign elements that were deemed "weird" or abstract

for more demographic segments as well as verify statistically the differences presented among respondents in this qualitative study and the overall impact of "Digital Cultural Capital" on brand perception and purchase intent. Longitudinal studies measuring consumer engagement and purchase behaviours long-term would also be beneficial to fully understand the indirect long-term influence of out of the ordinary, non-fashion related campaigns on brand recall and consumer loyalty.

Secondly, the notion of "emotional friction" as a new engagement metric deserves dedicated research attention. Future work could involve psychophysiological measures (e.g., eye-tracking, galvanic skin response) or neuroimaging to better understand consumers' emotional and cognitive processing of ambiguous prompting or unconventional luxury marketing campaigns. This could provide deeper awareness of how discomfort, curiosity, or wonder is 'encoded' in brand memory and brand affinity, but in a way that goes beyond self-reported measures of emotional response.

Thirdly, more extensive research is warranted for the "Digital Velvet Rope" marketing strategy. Future research could measure and compare the efficacy of various digital exclusivity approaches, including NFT-gated content, invitation-only private social media groups, or personalized AR/VR experiences. Examination of how to maintain the luxury brand mystique but take advantage of the digital reach could lead into A/B testing of digital access models (in terms of perceived exclusivity and brand community formation).

Fourthly, the "Sensory-Digital Bridge" for emotional engagement is an avenue for experimental research. Studies could build digital campaigns that are purposely designed to manipulate visual and auditory elements to encourage and provoke specific non-visual sensory experiences (e.g., texture, scent). Then consumer responses to these manipulated dimensions could be appropriately measured. This knowledge could provide brand managers

with practical implications for developing more captivating and emotionally engaging digital luxury content.

Lastly, the subtleties of "culturally agile storytelling" call for deeper investigation. Comparative studies across global markets, with their cultural values and subcultures, may yield best practices in transcreating luxury stories. Research may also investigate brands' ethical challenges when engaging with themes associated with "woke" or social responsibility-based brands, particularly the perception of authenticity when aligning with social causes. This can include the assessments of consumer scepticism towards "greenwashing" or "woke-washing" or understanding the nuances contributing to the development of trust and authenticity with value-driven luxury strategies.

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## Webgraphy

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