The Role of Luxury Fashion Brands

A qualitative research of how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relate to young consumers’ self-concept.

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Abstract
The market for luxury brands has outpaced other consumption categories through its growth, and has been found in continuous development. As there is an increasing amount of luxury categories, the consumption of luxury fashion brands account for the largest proportion of luxury profits, and the marketing costs for such brands has shown to surpass those of other fashion categories. Consumer researchers have throughout decades emphasized how individuals participate in consumption behavior to form their self-concept in relation to brands. However, previous research has disregarded the multidimensional perspective regarding the theory of self-concept when examining the consumption of brands. Hence, the current research paper aims to strengthen the existing self-concept theory by exploring the role in which luxury fashion brands have by focusing on how the consumption of such brands relate, and contribute, to the consumer’s self-concept. By applying a qualitative method to investigate such purpose, and involving the existing theory of self-concept, brand image, and brand personality, it appeared that luxury fashion brands has a function to operate as a confidence booster for young consumers’ perception of their self-concept. In terms of the theoretical contribution of this paper, this research further illustrates how the theoretical explanation of brand image and brand personality relates to two different dimensions of the consumer’s self-concept. The consumption of luxury fashion brands has shown a significant role in individuals’ consumption behavior by emphasizing a striving, and motivating, part in the self-concept of young consumers.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Self-Concept, Brand Image, Brand Personality, Luxury Brands, Fashion.
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1. Introduction

The first chapter of this paper introduces the contextual background followed by the problem of this thesis. The problematization highlights the research gaps identified in the literature, which developed the aim led by two identified research questions. This chapter ends with a description of the outline of this paper.

1.1 The Consumption of Luxury Fashion Brands

The increasing market of luxury brands is responsible for the development of $220 billion in the global industry, and has thereby outpaced other consumption categories through its growth (Keller, 2009). As the market for luxury brands is hardly new, and has been endured for decades, the market has been found in continuous development due to the emergence of new luxury brand consumers who do not find themselves in the typical segment entailing wealthy income (Giovannini et al., 2015).

Although there is an increasing amount of luxury categories, the consumption of luxury fashion brands (clothing and accessories, such as shoes, bags, glasses etc.) account for the largest proportion of luxury profits, and the most robust growth in the market (Fionda & Moore, 2009). The marketing costs for luxury brands surpass those of other fashion categories (Moore & Birtwistle, 2004; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), which from a marketing perspective suggest the consumption of luxury fashion brands’ prominence for research.

Given such growth figures contributing to the global industry of luxury, as well as being the fastest-growing brand segments, the consumption of such brands has appeared to be under-investigated and scantily understood in the academic literature (Berthon et al., 2009; Dubois & Duquesne, 1993; Miller & Mills, 2012; Zhan & He, 2012).

As luxury brands are often used synonymously with high price, quality, exclusiveness, and prestige, what determines brands as luxurious has remained inconclusive in the literature (Berthon et al., 2009; Keller, 2009; Miller & Mills, 2012). The indecisiveness in research is due to scholars viewing the conception of luxury brands from two different angles by considering its function in consumption and how it is characterized, which elucidates two different dimensions of luxury brands.
1.2 Problematization

Consumer research has throughout decades emphasized how individuals participate in consumption behavior to form their self-concept in relation to brands (Belk, 1988; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Giovannini et al., 2015). When consumers are in the process of shaping ‘the self’, the consumption of fashion brands has shown a convincing dimension of symbolic meaning in comparison to other categories of consumption (Anggraeni, 2015). According to Escalas & Bettman (2005), the practice of consuming brands has not merely the ability to express the consumer self, but it further helps individuals to create and build their self-concept.

Consumer research has previously highlighted that there is a connection between consumption behavior and the brand choices individuals make, which has been explained as the congruency between brand image and the consumer’s self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Fournier, 1998; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Giovannini et al., 2015). For instance, while Amatulli & Guido (2011) attempted to determine the intentions of consumers for purchasing luxury fashion brands and found congruency to be the motivation, Giovannini et al., (2015) claimed that the consumption of such brands help consumers process their self-concept. However, researchers seem to have disregarded the multidimensional perspective regarding the theory of self-concept when examining the consumption of brands, and thus not provided a deeper analysis of how the consumption of luxury fashion brands contributes, and relates, to the consumers’ self-concept, which will be taken into consideration in the current paper.

As the market for the consumption of luxury brands, particularly the context of fashion, is surpassing that of other consumer categories (Miller & Mills, 2012), this market yet remains under analyzed in the sense of qualitative data (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). Another interesting aspect highlight that the luxury market is often associated with high-income consumers who belong to the upper class (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993), yet the study of Giovannini et al., (2015) show that more and more young individuals’ consumption patterns towards luxury fashion brands are increasing despite their lower earnings. This aspect makes it not merely interesting for research, but also becoming a strategically important segment for the market of luxury brands.
According to Escalas & Bettman (2005), the brand choices people make are based on the congruency between brand image and the consumer’s self-image. This relationship has been examined in various contexts.

Previous research has studied this congruence relationship between the consumption of brands and the consumer’s self-concept in the contextual settings of social groups (Chan et al., 2012; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Weinberger, 2015), politics (Guzmán et al., 2015), food (Bardhi et al., 2010), sporting events (Kwon et al., 2016) and fashion (Anggraeni, 2015; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012; Peters, 2014; Titton, 2015). Although the luxury market for fashion brands has been endured for decades and demonstrates a significant development for the global industry (Fionda & Moore, 2009; Keller, 2009), the consumption of luxury brands in the context of fashion is under analyzed and scarcely understood in academic literature (Berthon et al., 2009; Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). In particular, qualitative research has remained open for discussion regarding the conception of luxury brands due to the perspective of considering its role and how it is described, which shows upon different dimensions of luxury brands, and further creates different understandings (Berthon et al., 2009; Keller, 2009). According to Berthon et al., (2009), it is of more significance to comprehend the role of luxury brands rather than to define its attributes as the function will accordingly provide an understanding of its characteristics.

1.3 Research Aim
Given the abovementioned research gaps, the function luxury fashion brands have in regards to the consumer’s self-concept is yet unclear. The aim of this paper is to strengthen the existing self-concept theory by examining the role luxury fashion brands have in the consumer’s self-concept. As the problem discussion identified that research has disregarded the multidimensional perspective of the consumer’s self-concept, this study will attempt to contribute with knowledge to the self-concept theory by involving the different perspectives of self in relation to the consumption of luxury fashion brands.

Hence, this paper attempts to provide a deeper understanding of how luxury fashion brands relate to the consumer’s self-concept. This will be achieved through a qualitative approach by conducting ten semi-structured interviews with young consumers in the ages of 24-30. The current dissertation takes the stand of a constructionist ontological perspective by applying a scientific position to subjectively interpret the empirical findings of this paper.
1.4 Research Questions
The aim will be achieved by answering the research questions developed from the research problem discussed in the previous section:

- How do young consumers relate to their self-concept when consuming luxury fashion brands?
- How does the consumption of luxury fashion brands contribute to the consumer’s self-concept?

1.4 Outline of Thesis
The objective of this study is to strengthen the theory of self-concept by examining the role that luxury brands have in the consumer’s self-concept, and relating the consumption of luxury fashion brands to the multidimensional self-concept of consumers. In order to achieve the aim of this dissertation, the current paper will be structured around seven chapters. Chapter one presents the background and problem phenomena of this research, and further followed by the aim and research questions. Chapter two portrays a review of relevant literature leading to the tentative research model in which this theoretical framework builds upon. Chapter three discusses the design of this research by explaining the philosophical perspective, methodology, research criteria, and the ethical reflections of this paper. Chapter four provides a presentation of the key findings by analyzing the data in relation to the theoretical concepts in the literature review. Chapter five involves a reflective discussion answering the stated research questions in regards to the findings. Chapter six concludes the paper and highlights any identified aspects that answer the aim and research questions in this thesis. Chapter seven depicts reflections upon possible limitations this research has encountered, and further provides suggestions for future research.
2. Literature Review

This chapter presents the theoretical foundation for this paper in order to achieve the addressed aim and research questions. The stream of literature depicts the three key concepts, which are divided in sections that deal with the theory of self-concept, brand image, and brand personality. This chapter ends with a literature conclusion followed by the theoretical framework of this paper.

2.1 Introduction to Literature Review
As the aim of this thesis is to examine the role of luxury fashion brands by investigating how the consumption of such brands contribute, and relate, to the consumer’s self-concept, the literature review provides three relevant themes to help achieve the aim of this paper: the self-concept theory, brand image, and consumer and brand personality. The first section will discuss the concept of the self in order to study how the consumption of brands can contribute, and relate to the consumer’s self-concept. Considering the research problem, scholars have frequently viewed the self-concept from one perspective by disregarding to view the concept from a multidimensional perspective. Therefore, the first part will discuss the different perspectives of the self. Not merely being the main topic of this paper, but the theory of self-concept demonstrates prominence for including in the literature review. The next theme provides an understanding of the brand image concept, and its importance in the consumption behavior of consumers as well as in the consumer’s self-concept. The brand image section also argues for brand personality to be highly influencing in the outcome of brand image. As the relationship between brand image and self image have shown to be a crucial motivating factor for consumption, the last part of the literature survey provides an understanding of the brand personality concept.

2.2 The Self-Concept Theory
To be able to grasp the consumer’s self-concept, an understanding of how the concept has been defined and employed in the practice of consumption is necessary. In academic research, the self-concept of consumers have been utilized, approached, and referred to differently in its relation to consumption. To begin with, the theory of self-concept has been identified in several theoretical notions in regards to the consumption of brands. While sharing an equal foundation, consumer researchers have referred to the conception as self-brand connections (Escalas & Bettman, 2005), consumer identity projects (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Ferreira
& Scaraboto, 2015), the symbolic project of the self (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998), brand personification (Lin & Sung, 2014), consumer-brand relationship (Fournier, 1998) and the self-construal concept (Lee & Workman, 2015; Sung et al., 2012; Swaminathan et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2015; Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2015).

In regards to the consumption of brands, the concept of the consumer self has extensively been agreed upon as fragmented, incoherent, and diffuse (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk, 1988; Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Sirgy, 1982). Arnould & Thompson (2005) illustrated the term consumer identity projects describing individuals as identity seekers and makers where they “forge a coherent if diversified and often fragmented sense of self” (p. 871). Consumers are situated in a marketplace comprising of symbolic and mythic resources where they continuously shape their self-concept in regards to pertinent brands in which an individual wishes to be associated with (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). From this perspective, brands contain laden meaning and value in helping the individual consumer to actively create and shape their self-concept. In other words, it is implied that consumers do not possess a fully accomplished ‘self’, which is aligned with the arguments of Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998), Escalas & Bettman (2005), and Sirgy (1982) where the authors indicate the self-concept of consumers to be a dynamic and continuous development process between the individual consumer and the marketplace.

What the aforementioned scholars thus have in common is the view of considering individuals’ self-concept as fragmented. Consumers in a postmodern society appear to be vulnerable by what Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998) refer to as ‘dilemmas of the self’ where these dilemmas are influenced by the feeling of lacking individual meaning. Hence, consumers fill this emptiness of personal meaningless by constructing their self-concept through the consumption of brands in order to create a ‘self’ in which these individuals become satisfied with (ibid). The self-concept of consumers is therefore viewed as rapidly changing in regards to the dynamic environment of the marketplace.

Other than discussing how the consumer’s self-concept has been viewed from the consumption point of view, it is just as vital to discuss how consumption can be used in relation to the self-concept of consumers. When individuals consume in the process of shaping their self-concept, the consumption of brands may act as a statement for individuals to express ‘we are what we have’ (Kwon & Mattila, 2015). More specifically, what
consumers want to illustrate with the brands they consume is an indication of how they live (ibid). In particular, Escalas & Bettman (2005) further elaborates upon the concept of the self, and how it is connected to the consumption of brands, by asserting brands to operate as a tool, both privately and publicly, for individuals to (a) actively create their self-concept (b) differentiate their consumer self from other individuals, (c) express the individual self, (d) increase their self-esteem, and (e) claim their individuality. The researchers introduced the relationship between brands and the consumer’s self-concept as the “degree to which consumers have formed a self-brand connection” (Escalas & Bettman, 2005, p. 379). This connection tend to become more robust when brands have the capability to assist consumers in achieving objectives strived by ‘the self’ (ibid). Hence, the act of consuming brands has not merely the ability to express the consumer self, but its role also helps individuals to create and build their self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

Ultimately, as the aim of this paper is to investigate the role of luxury fashion brands and how the consumption of such brands relate to the consumers’ self-concept, it is necessary to consider the different dimensions of the ‘self’ by taking its motives into consideration. As most researchers consider the consumer’s self-concept from one perspective and disregard the multidimensional perspective of the self-concept, which was the main identified gap (See e.g., Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Fournier 1998; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Giovannini et al., 2015), the next section will discuss the different perspectives of the ‘self’ in order to investigate how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relate to the consumer’s self-concept, which is the focus of this paper.

2.2.1 Perspectives of ‘the Self’
In terms of consumption, the self-concept theory consists of different self-motives construed from a multidimensional perspective (Sirgy, 1982). When individuals consume brands, researchers have stated that the brand choices people make are based on the congruency between brand image and the consumer’s self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). In this sense, there has to be a congruency between the image of the brand and the perception of oneself for consumers to choose a specific brand. However, one may wonder what the consumer’s self-image entail. The consumer’s self-concept can be viewed from several perspectives due to its motives (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012). Most frequently, the consumer’s self-concept can be explained as the individual’s thoughts and feelings toward its self-concept, referencing the self as an object (Lin & Sung, 2014). Although considering that
an individual’s self-concept can be viewed from different dimensions when it comes to consumption, a description of the four distinguished parts of self will be provided. Adapted from the research of Sirgy (1982) and Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012), the author of this current paper has further provided an illustration of a consumer’s self-concept (See Figure 1). Figure 1 illustrates how a consumer’s self-concept can be viewed from four distinguished perspectives, which have shown to be underlying, and crucial, motives for the consumption of brands (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012).

The first dimensional perspective of the self-concept, the actual self, refers to how individuals perceive themselves. According to Sirgy (1982), when it comes to the various aspects of the self-concept, different types of situations have the tendency to influence the choice of which part of self to express. When a person decides upon which image of self to present in a social situation, the use of products, or brands in this case, is one means of doing so (ibid). The second part, the ideal self, concerns how an individual would like to perceive him or herself (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Sirgy, 1982). This concept has also been referred to as the ‘idealized image’ and ‘desired self’ (Sirgy, 1982), which may be viewed as something to strive for. In the means of consumption, consumers can purchase products or brands to further illustrate a part of self they want to achieve (ibid).

![Diagram of the Self-Concept](image-url)

Figure 1: Illustration of the Self-Concept

Adapted from Sirgy (1982) and Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012).
Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012) argues the third perspective of an individuals’ self-concept to be the social self, which deals with how a person presents itself to other people. In other words, how other people perceive an individual based on what is emphasized (Sirgy, 1982). What consumers choose to emphasize with their consumption practices can be further influenced by the social situation (Schenk & Holman, 1980). The last part of the concept is referred to as the ideal social self, which is similar to the former perspective. However, what differentiates these two dimensions is, according to Aguirre-Rodriquez et al., (2012), who a person desires to be perceived as – the ideal self an individual wishes to be perceived as in social circumstances.

Finally, considering the consumption of brands, research has shown there has to be a congruency between the image of the brand and the consumer’s self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Thomas et al., 2015) where brand image has shown to play a crucial role in consumer behavior when it comes to the choice of brands (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Gardner & Levy, 1955). Therefore, the next upcoming section will elucidate an understanding of the brand image concept.

2.3 Brand Image
The literature of brand image in relation to the consumer’s self-concept has shown to be quite restricted. Not merely in the sense of connecting the theory of self-concept to brand image, but also in defining the notion, which has not remained stable over a period of decades (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). The researchers Dobni & Zinkhan (1990) employed a foundation analysis in search of brand image where the purpose was to provide “a centralized collection of definitions and conceptions of brand image” (p. 110), as they viewed the term to have lost its value and richness due to misuse and overuse. Developing an appropriate and stable definition of the concept is crucial as it determines the nature of research questions, methods, and the approach to how findings are interpreted in relation to the research process (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990).

Based on the aforementioned statement, brand image has been conceptualized in different ways by several scholars. While Dobni & Zinkhan (1990) defined brand image as the logical or emotive perception in which consumers relate to a brand, Keller (1993) took the position to describe the notion as brand associations in the consumer’s memory that forms the perception about a brand. Kashif et al., (2015) claimed the same standpoint as Keller (1993) in their
research and further elaborated that the memories established in the mind of consumers help individuals to form meaning to the brand, and if the associations towards a brand’s image turns out positive, the higher probability of creating a robust brand loyalty. Cho et al., (2015) provided numerous conceptualizations in their review of brand image literature, which demonstrated brand image as a) the embodiment of a brand in which mirrors the consumer’s self image, b) messages and meanings associated with a brand, and c) the total impression of a brand.

According to Ismail & Spinelli (2012), there are several factors that contribute to the development of brand image whereas some of them are different types of brand users, experiences with the brand, the brand itself, consumers’ perceptions of the brand, product attributes, and marketing activities. They also claim that the sources of the brand’s image development could either be through brand communication, such as the brand’s marketing activities, or through the consumer’s direct experience with the brand (Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Building on the abovementioned statements about what may be the contribution for the formation of brand image, and what might be the source of its development, Gardner & Levy (1955) formed the concept of brand image by identifying more persistent motivations in consumer behavior in regards to consumption. The researchers found that the consumers’ image of a brand was the most crucial aspect of their purchase choice where the image is based on the set of ideas, attitudes, and feelings consumers possess towards brands (Gardner & Levy, 1955). While Gardner & Levy (1955) expressed the importance of brand image, Amatulli & Guido (2011) attempted to determine the intentions of consumers for purchasing luxury fashion brands, and found congruency between the image of the brand and consumer to be the motivation for the selection of brands.

While Cho et al., (2015) views the concept of brand image to be different from other constructs in the brand equity model such as brand experience, involvement, associations, and personality, Keller (1993) claims a position stating that “one component of brand image is the personality or character of the brand itself” (p. 4). However, while viewing the different concepts of brand equity, the terms have shown to be intertwined with one another, as they seem to have a significant correlation (Keller, 1993). The theoretical terms included in the brand equity model may have different positions and differentiate from each other, but they have shown an immense dependence (ibid). As Cho et al., (2015) claims brand image to be distinct from the other concepts, the authors yet assert brand personality to be a subcategory
Literature Review

of brand image. According to Aaker (1997), the concept of brand personality is functioned as a foundation for the consumer’s perception of a brand, and therefore will have a resulting effect on the brand’s image (Aaker, 1997). While the current study defines brand image as the consumer’s perceptions and feelings towards a brand (Cho et al., 2015), the personality traits of a brand may reflect upon the brand’s image, thus showing a dependent relationship between the two concepts of brand personality and brand image. Therefore, the next upcoming section in the literature review part will include a review of the brand personality dimensions in order to examine how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relate to the multidimensional view of the consumer’s self-concept (Sirgy, 1982).

2.4 Consumer and Brand Personality

While previous scholars have taken the perspective to question, from a conceptual angle, whether personalities may be applied to brands, and if brands are potential to convey personalities (See e.g., Capelli & Jolibert, 2009; Caprara et al., 2001; Huang et al., 2012), Aaker (1997) established a conceptual framework of the brand personality construct by identifying a number of five dimensions used to describe the personality of human beings, and found the developed personality traits to be applicable to brands. Aaker’s (1997) framework have been used and replicated by a vast of consumer researchers directed by the utilization of measurable methods (See e.g., Aaker, 1997; Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Johar et al., 2005; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012), and not in a qualitative manner in which this thesis intend to conduct, particularly semi-structured interviews.

The recognized model of Aaker (1997) consist of five brand personality traits such as, sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Aaker (1997) also included fifteen facets related to the respective traits. Aaker (1997) defined the concept of brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (p. 347). While Keller (1993) claims that brand personality have the tendency to serve a self-expressive and symbolic function, Aaker (1997) continues with the reason for Keller’s (1993) declaration is due to consumers who frequently infuse brands with human personalities as they relate to their own selves. Consumers often build their self-concept in relation to the characteristics of the preferred brands to consume (Aaker, 1997).

In Aaker’s (1997) research, the author attempted to explain that although human and brand personality share the similar conceptualization, there are still differing aspects of how human
and brand personality are constructed. For instance, human personality traits are gathered on the foundation of an individual’s attitudes and beliefs, their behavior as well as physical and demographic traits. In contrast to human personality traits, the perceptions of brand personality traits may be impacted by the consumer’s direct or indirect contact with the brand. Brand personality traits are associated, or rather dependent; by the individuals associated with the brand in which, according to Aaker (1997), are the employees or the CEO of the company, brand’s users, and also perhaps the brand’s product endorsers. These associations with a brand may also influence how individuals assess and consume the brand. Thus, based on whom the brand choses to associate with can have a direct, or indirect, impact on the consumer evaluation of the brand. When consumer personality and brand personality become intertwined, this relationship enables consumers to express themselves through the act of consuming the brand they wish to reflect upon their self-concept (Aaker, 1997).

2.5 Literature Conclusion
The survey of literature in this paper was structured based on the themes in which this chapter has highlighted. As the aim of this paper is to examine the role of luxury fashion brands by understanding how it relates to the consumer’s self-concept, the first part of the literature review was initiated with the theory of self-concept. This section provided an understanding of the notion, how it has been viewed, and how it has been approached differently in terms of brand consumption. While providing contradiction as well as congruency in the stream of literature, one of the aspects in which several researchers agrees upon is the view of scholars considering the term as highly diffuse and fragmented (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk 1988; Elliot & Wattanusuwan, 1998; Sirgy, 1982). The consumer’s self-concept is regarded as an active, on-going process, which individuals continue to develop. Hence, it continues to be viewed as fragmented, diffuse, and incoherent (Belk, 1988). Elliot & Wattanusuwan (1998) claimed this is due to feeling some lack of meaning in a consumer’s life, which is achieved, and aided, through the act of consumption. Finally, the stream of literature has also shown how research has treated the consumer’s self-concept as one single variable where scholars most frequently consider ‘the actual self’ as the consumer’s self-concept, which was identified as a major gap as the consumption of luxury fashion brands may have a role that relates to more perspectives than the former mentioned. Hence, as the consumer’s self is conceptualized as a multidimensional perspective (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Sirgy, 1982), this chapter further provided an illustration of the four identified angles of the self-concept highlighting what each dimensions of ‘the Self’ entail.
When examining the literature of the consumer’s self-concept, a vast of discussions elucidating the brand’s image in relation to consumption was identified. The section further provided different definitions of the concept, an understanding of its influencers as well as how crucial its image is in the process of consumption. This paper identified different definitions of brand image whereas the current study will adapt upon the definition describing brand image as “the perceptions and feelings towards a brand” (Cho et al., 2015, p. 28). Furthermore, while Gardner & Levy (1955) stated brand image to be the most crucial aspect in the choice of consumption for consumers, other researchers determined congruency between the brand’s image and consumer’s self-image to be a motivating factor for choosing a specific and pertinent brand. However, this yet leaves the author of this thesis questioned to which perspective of the consumer’s self-concept it relates to, and how it actually relates to the self-concept of consumers. Thus showing the prominence to include brand image in the theoretical framework for this paper.

Ultimately, the literature review of brand personality showed the term to have an immense dependence of brand image where it was identified to be a subcategory of brand image (Cho et al., 2015). The literature discussion emphasized how brand personality operates as a foundation for the consumer’s perception of a brand. Hence, brand personality suggests having an influencing impact on the brand’s image (Aaker, 1997). As this influencing relationship was identified in the literature, it was vital to conclude the literature survey with an overview of the brand personality concept in order to further support the researcher in gaining insights to how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relate to the consumer’s self-concept. The review of literature showed brand personality to be developed by Aaker (1997) who found that human personality traits could as well be applied to brands.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Based on what has been concluded from the literature review in the previous section, the author has illustrated a conceptual model (See Figure 2) that will operate as a theoretical apparatus throughout the paper. Therefore, this section demonstrates how the author intends to apply the theoretical framework to the current research. As the aim of this thesis is to strengthen the self-concept theory by investigating the role that luxury fashion brands have in the consumer’s self-concept, the two identified research questions will lead the current author to achieve the purpose by examining how luxury fashion brands relate, and contribute, to the consumers’ self-concept.
To begin with, when examining the self-concept of consumers in regards to brand consumption, previous studies (See e.g., Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Fournier, 1998; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Giovannini et al., 2015) have most frequently considered the consumer’s self-concept as one dimension being ‘the actual self’, which refers to how a person actually perceives the self (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012). Hence, researchers have disregarded that there is a multidimensional perspective of viewing the self-concept (Sirgy, 1982), which appears to be the main identified research gap in this paper. The theoretical framework for this dissertation will thus examine the self-concept of consumers from the four perspectives emphasized in the paper of Sirgy (1982) and Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012), namely the: actual self, ideal self, social self, and ideal social self. This will be achieved by conducting ten semi-structured interviews with young consumers in the ages of 24-30. Furthermore, the current dissertation takes the stand of a constructionist ontological perspective by applying a scientific position to subjectively interpret the empirical findings of this paper.

Moreover, when it comes to the conceptualization of brand image, the literature review suggests the term to have a significant impact on the choice of consumption in regards to brands. While Gardner & Levy (1955) concluded the notion of brand image to be the most crucial aspect in an individual’s selection when consuming brands, Amatulli & Guido (2011) found the motivation for consumption to stand in the congruency between the image of the brand and the consumer self. The current researcher intends to apply this concept by investigating the consumers’ image of luxury fashion brands as well as the importance of brand image. The author will additionally consider whether congruency between brand image and the consumer’s self-concept is of significance in order to further contribute to the conceptualization of brand image and theory of self-concept.

As summarized in the previous section, the literature review further emphasized brand personality to be in dependence of brand image where the personality of a brand was identified to be a subcategory of the brand’s image (Cho et al., 2015). In this sense, the concepts of brand image and brand personality may not only assist in examining how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relate to the consumers’ self-concept, but also provide deeper insights by strengthening researchers’ theory of congruency between the brand and the self-concept of consumers.
In regards to the literature review of the current thesis, the stream of research in respective themes of literature has provided the author with insights, and guidance, enabling to develop a tentative framework for this paper (See Figure 2). The framework elucidates how the consumption of luxury fashion brands is directly connected to the self-concept, which further illustrates the multidimensional perspectives of ‘the Self’ (Sirgy, 1982), in order to examine how the consumption of such brands relate to the consumer self. Ultimately, the model further highlights how the different motives of self are dependent on brand image. The framework of brand personality was not included in the tentative research model as it was merely utilized to assist the author in the data collection method for the purpose to reach findings to answer the research questions developed in this paper.

![Figure 2: Tentative Research Model](image-url)
3. Research Design

This chapter illustrates the methodological approach to how the aim of this paper will be achieved in detail. This section is initiated by discussing the research problem, purpose and contribution as well as it further justifies the scientific perspective of this paper. A demonstration of the method of data collection and analysis will be provided. Ultimately, this chapter is concluded with the research criteria and ethical reflections.

3.1 Research Problem, Purpose and Contribution

Given the identified research gaps, the role in which luxury fashion brands have in regards to the consumer’s self-concept is yet unclear. The aim of this paper is therefore to examine the role luxury brands have in the consumer’s self-concept by considering the context of fashion. The aim of this paper will be achieved by the guidance of the two identified research questions:

- How do young consumers relate to their self-concept when consuming luxury fashion brands?
- How does the consumption of luxury fashion brands contribute to the consumer’s self-concept?

Based on the theoretical insights, a few research gaps were identified. First, the self-concept theory have shown to be merely treated from one perspective, as the ‘actual self’, when studying the consumption of brands (Sirgy, 1982). The paper of Sirgy (1982) and Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012), highlight how an individual’s self-concept can be viewed from a multidimensional perspective. Researchers have seemed to disregard the different dimensions of the consumer’s self-concept when examining the consumption of brands, and thus not provided a deeper analysis of how such consumption practice relate, and contributes, to an individual’s self-concept (Berthon et al., 2009; Dubois & Duquesne, 1993; Giovannini et al., 2015; Miller & Mills, 2012).

According to Berthon et al., (2009), it is of more significance to comprehend the role of luxury brands rather than to define its attributes as the function will accordingly provide an understanding of its characteristics. The context of fashion was not merely chosen due to interest, but also based on the fact that although the market for luxury fashion brands is
surpassing those of other categories (Miller & Mills, 2012), this area have yet remained under analyzed in the sense of qualitative data (Berthon et al., 2009; Dubois & Duquesne, 1993).

This study will therefore attempt to contribute with knowledge to the self-concept theory by regarding the different dimensions of ‘the Self’ (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Sirgy 1982). The current paper will hence provide a deeper understanding of how luxury fashion brands relate to the consumer’s self-concept. This will be achieved through a qualitative approach by conducting ten semi-structured interviews with young consumers in the ages of 24-30. In order to fulfill the criteria of research, the author will provide an understanding of the approach to how the aim was achieved by explaining and justifying the method for this paper in the following subsections.

3.2 Scientific Perspective
Based on the aforementioned research aim, the applied research approach will be of qualitative manner as the intended thought of the qualitative method is not to attain findings resulting in a scale of measurements regarding this relationship, but to gain a deeper understanding of the current research phenomena.

According to Flick (2009) and Bryman & Bell (2011), when findings are to be elaborated in words by the respondents, and are in need of deeper insights rather than measurements, the method indicates upon qualitative characteristics. Also, as the researcher seek to provide a theoretical explanation of how luxury fashion brands relate to the consumer’s self-concept, the author of this paper will aim to allow the respondents to elaborate freely about the role of luxury fashion brands. Therefore, the conversations held with ten different consumers will be conducted as open-ended and semi-structured interviews.

In regards to the research paradigm, the current dissertation takes the stand of a constructionist ontological perspective, which is concerned with the reality and nature of what social entities are; in particular, it regards the existence and the relationship between the society and people (Bryman & Bell, 2011). From this perspective, the reality is seen as subjective to where knowledge cannot be demonstrated in one single truth (ibid). According to Bryman & Bell (2011), constructionism helps people to understand the social world based on the experiences and perceptions of individuals, which is what the current paper aims to
reach. The findings will hence be based on the experiences and perceptions of individuals who consume luxury fashion brands.

This study will further build upon an interpretivist epistemology, which implicates that meaning rather than facts are taken into consideration (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). This view attempts to grasp the actions of individuals, and their perception and interpretation of their experience in the social world (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). The chosen interpretivist approach allows the author of this study to capture meanings rather than settling on one single truth as the paper revolves around consumers with a diverse individualities in regards to the consumption of luxury fashion brands. According to Hudson & Ozanne, (1988), when researching from a interpretive perspective, a researcher ought to consider the understanding of a specific subject matter more as a process rather than an end product. Thus for an interpretivist, the primary goal of research is grasping the behavior of individuals and not predicting it (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

3.3 Method of Data Collection
In order to collect data for the purpose of this paper, in-depth interviews were considered to be the appropriate qualitative approach. According to Bryman & Bell (2011), qualitative methods have the nature of being sensitive, interactive as well as direct. As the author of this thesis wish to gain an in-depth understanding regarding the perception and experience of individuals who consume luxury fashion brands, a method of qualitative manner using in-depth interviews to examine the aforementioned aspects was concluded as the most suitable approach for this thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Yin, 2009).

As in-depth interviews can be structured in different ways (Bryman & Bell, 2011), this study will conduct semi-structured interviews to collect the empirical findings for this paper. For instance, semi-structured interviews creates open conversations where the respondent may speak freely about the subject, and subsequently allows the interviewer to ask follow-up questions, which is of importance if the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding about the research topic in question (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The semi-structured interviews were approached by using an interview guide created to aid in the process of identifying questions in relation to the topics used in the literature review
section. The interview guide helped the author of this dissertation to encapsulate the subject areas reflected in the literature in which the writer hoped to apprehend.

In the process of developing the interview guide, the author strived to form the questions according to what McCracken (1988) denotes as grand-tour questions, which entails the questions to be non-directive as well as stimulating enough for the respondents to provide answers. Ultimately, the author of this dissertation was cautious about forming “why” questions due to the tendency of factual answers. These types of questions may cause feelings of prejudgment and defensive responses (Thompson et al., 1989), therefore the author was more focused on approaching questions that begins with “how” and “what” in order to achieve the purpose of the current paper (Yin, 2009).

3.3.1 Sampling
As the study revolved around examining the role of luxury fashion brands in Swedish young consumer’s self-concept, it was necessary to gather data from primary sources (Bryman & Bell, 2011), which entailed respondents who consume luxury brands within the context of fashion. According to Hackley (2003), the sampling for research ought not to be based on random sampling, but rather theoretically or systematically informed.

Based on one of the research gaps, Giovannini et al., (2015) found more and more young individuals to consume luxury fashion brands although it is frequently associated with high-income consumers who belong to the upper class, and are usually considered to be an older generation. This was found to be an interesting, and prominence, aspect to relate the consumption of luxury fashion brands to young consumer’s self-concept due to the tendency of young consumers who actively create their self-concept in regards to consumption (Giovannini et al., 2015).

Therefore, the chosen respondents were consumers found in the range between the ages of 24–30. Within qualitative research, the sampling is most frequently founded on purposive and convenience criteria (Flick, 2009). This was due to the timeframe of this thesis. Ten respondents who consume luxury fashion brands were chosen amongst the author’s social network in order to conduct the semi-structured interviews. As the respondents for this sampling wished for the author not to expose their real names, the participants were given fictitious names in the current paper in order to remain anonymous.
Furthermore, the interviews were held in various settings. The majority of the interviews took place at non-crowded coffee shops, the home of the author as well as the home of a few respondents. The settings were quiet and peaceful for the purpose of reducing any distractions. As all participants were within the social network of the author, the home settings functioned well in conducting the interviews, and were not considered a limitation to the findings. The time length of the interviews varied depending on the respondent in question. However, all interviews took in between 30-50 minutes. The time frame gave the respondents time to reflect, and answer freely as well as enabling the author to ask follow-up questions, or to clear up any emerging question marks if necessary.

In order to provide a decent overview of the respondents’ profile, the author have illustrated a table presenting an overview of the chosen respondents’ profile, including their fictitious names, gender, age, residence, and occupational background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fictitious Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Occupational Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Overview of Respondent’s Profile

3.4 Method of Data Analysis
The interviews conducted in this thesis were recorded with audio where each participant was informed about the choice to remain anonymous prior to recording the interviews. The findings were transcribed, and listened to, as the interpretation of any recorded data is found to be a crucial step in research (Flick, 2009). In order to make sense, analyze, and interpret the collected data, a thematic analysis was performed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach of analyzing the data was determined as it enables, and guides, the author to achieve the aim of this paper through the relevant theoretical themes (ibid). Therefore, the themes within the
gathered data were identified in theoretical topics based on the literature review, which played a guiding role in forming the interview questions in the current paper.

In this study, the existing literature of the self-concept theory, brand image, and brand personality helped to address the developed questions in the interview guide (See Appendix 1). The interview guide provides an instance of how the questions have been operationalized in relation to the theoretical part of this paper. This was done in order to create an interview conversation that was relevant to achieve the aim of this dissertation. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), there are six phases when analyzing the data in themes. These steps contain: 1) familiarizing yourself with your data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. In order to offer an understanding of what a thematic analysis entails, the figure below provides an instance of how the collected data was treated in the process of thematically analyzing the data in this paper.

Figure 3: Thematic Analysis

In the first phase, the author began to immerse in the data by listening to the gathered empirical material twice prior to the process of transcribing the information. When transcribing the data, the text from the recorded interviews were separately coded for each respondent by using numeric codes as suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006) in order to enhance the facilitation of searching for themes involved in the third phase. When searching for themes, the author collected the codes together in order to identify the themes within the gathered material. The themes were initially identified in the literature review provided in
chapter two. After completing the process of transcribing the ten conducted interviews, the author found new themes emerging from the transcribed data, which is presented in next upcoming chapter (Findings & Analysis).

Additionally, the themes were reviewed in order to decide upon what topics to include in terms of relevancy for the purpose of this paper. Phase five enabled the author to define and name the identified themes to provide an understanding of what each topic have discussed. The final step allowed the author to produce the empirical findings in order to achieve the purpose of this paper by answering the research questions developed from the problem discussion. Ultimately, the process of transcribing the total of ten interviews took about eight hours consisting of 189 pages of transcribed empirical data.

3.5 Research Criteria
When conducting an academic research, one of the main challenges is to assure the trustworthiness of the paper (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). In order to provide quality of a research paper, the writing author ought to be reflective by evaluating research from a critical angle in relation to the theoretical and empirical evidence of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Declaring the credibility of this study, the trustworthiness is composed by four criteria: dependability, transferability, credibility, and conformability (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

- **Dependability.** The first criteria deals with the author’s responsibility to provide information to the reader regarding the logic in the research process as well as providing traceable and documented data. This was assured by offering a table including the profile of respondents. The author also recorded the interviews, and provided the reader with quotes from the conversations, which were copied from the transcribed interviews.

- **Transferability.** The second criteria entail the author to emphasize the degree of similarity between the current paper and previous research. This idea does not concern replication of previous research but is more revolved around whether similarity can be found in other research contexts. As studies revolving the consumption of luxury brands have been approached in different contexts, the current aim to examine how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relates to the consumer’s self-concept may be transferable.
Research Design

- **Credibility.** The third criteria regard the trustworthiness of the interpretations and findings in which seek to ensure that the study examines what is actually intended. In order to ensure this criterion, the author first strived to enhance the familiarity with the research topic by finding robust research gaps to proclaim credibility. The researcher then performed the study in line with the principles of conducting a qualitative method. The findings were further transparent as the author illustrated the viewpoint of respondents in the findings and analysis chapter.

- **Conformability.** The fourth criteria refer to connecting findings and interpretations of the data in ways that facilitate the understanding for readers. To assure conformability, the current dissertation takes the stand of a constructionist ontological perspective, which is concerned with the reality and nature of what social entities are. In particular, it regards the existence and the relationship between the society and people. The perspective of a constructionist helps researchers to understand the social world based on the experiences and perceptions of individuals. Therefore, the collected data was presented in a way that ensures credibility and facilitates the understanding of how the data is interpreted by justifying the descriptive method of this research.

3.6 Ethical Reflections

As this paper intends to examine the role of luxury fashion brands in consumers’ self-concept with a qualitative approach, it is of significance to consider the ethical aspects, which may influence the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Flick, 2009). In order to fulfill the requirements regarding ethical considerations in research, the ethical reflections are treated based on four principles (Flick, 2009). First, as the method of this paper involved semi-structured interviews with ten respondents, the information requirement was achieved by openly informing respective participant about the intentions of this thesis as well as the method for the data collection. Second, regarding the consent requirement, four out of ten respondents allowed the researcher to record the interviews with audio given the reason to facilitate the process of transcribing and interpreting the empirical findings for the researcher. Third, when it comes to research, the author has obligations regarding the issue of confidentiality. These obligations were managed by ensuring anonymity, and confidential information to be secure. Ultimately, the fourth principle regards the requirement of use where each respondent was informed that the only information provided in this paper will be, and has been, quotes from the data collected to serve the purpose of this thesis.
3.7 Chapter Summary
As the objective of this chapter was the desire to provide an understanding for the reader of how the research process has been carried, and to what degree it is reliable, the researcher summarized the research design chapter by providing an overview of the current paper’s method. The author thus developed a table (See Table 2) with the purpose to summarize the different approaches as well as the choices made in this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Approach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Sources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Criteria</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethical Reflections</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Summary of Research Design
4. Findings & Analysis

This chapter presents the empirical data gathered from the interviews conducted for this thesis. The findings will be illustrated in quotes for the purpose of providing examples and clarity. This section will further analyze the gathered data in relation to the theoretical framework in which this paper has applied.

4.1 Introduction

The findings were collected from ten semi-structured interviews. With the assistance of the interview guide (See Appendix 1), the author was able to make sense of the data by using the approach to thematically analyze the findings, which was found to be a process containing six phases (See Figure 3). The findings will therefore be divided in subsections based on theoretical themes formed from the interview guide, and decomposed in relation to the identified codes from the thematic analysis. The themes presented in this chapter begin with the consumption of luxury fashion brands, which introduces the respondents’ consumption patterns. The theoretical theme of self-concept is structured around four identified codes, which entails: influential aspects on the self, striving aspects of the self, expressive aspects of the self, and finally the content of meaning. Furthermore, the conceptualization of brand image is decomposed in two codes from the thematic analysis, namely the significance of brand image as well as the relationship between brand image and self-image. The concluding theoretical theme of this chapter introduces the concept of brand personality.

4.2 The Consumption of Luxury Fashion Brands

All ten conducted interviews were initiated with this introductory theme containing general questions regarding the consumption of luxury fashion brands where all respondents were given the chance to speak about the luxury brands they consume, their favorite brand, what they like most about the brand, and the occurrence of their consumption patterns. As all participants consume luxury fashion brands, the frequency did vary between the respondents. While the majority was found to consume such brands quite seldom, few actually consumed luxury brands on a regular basis. As this paper examines the consumption of luxury fashion brands, the respondents were asked to mention their favorite brand for reference during the interview. The data presented two luxury fashion brands that were favored the most, namely Chanel and Louis Vuitton.
Findings & Analysis

As this section was regarded as an introductory theme, the questions aimed to grasp the participants’ consumption patterns. Based on the table provided below (See Table 3), the information presents the respondents’ favorite brands in which they chose to refer to during the interview and the frequency of consuming fashion brands per year. As this paper attempts to study the role of luxury fashion brands, one of the research questions was to examine how the consumption of such brands relates to the consumer’s self-concept. The next section will thus elucidate the findings between the consumption of luxury fashion brands and the consumer’s self-concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fictitious Name of Respondent</th>
<th>Favorite Brand</th>
<th>Consumption frequency /year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>Louis Vuitton</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Versace</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>Givenchy</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Louis Vuitton</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Louis Vuitton</td>
<td>10-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Ralph Lauren</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Christian Dior</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Patterns of Consumption

4.3 Self-Concept

4.3.1 Influential Aspects on the Self

An individual’s self-concept can be viewed from a multidimensional perspective (Sirgy, 1982). Based on the theoretical framework in the current paper, four perspectives were identified: actual self, ideal self, social self, and the ideal social self. In order to examine how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relate to the consumer’s self-concept, the participants were asked about how they feel when using their favorite brand, and how the utilization of such brands makes them feel about themselves. According to Escalas & Bettman (2005), brands are considered to operate as a tool for an individual’s self-concept where it can increase the consumer’s self-esteem as well as shape, differentiate, claim, and express the individual self. The consumption of luxury fashion brands does not merely indicate upon positive emotions but also showed to increase the self-confidence of each participant (See Table 4).
“I feel more confident when wearing that brand. I don’t know. I think it might be subconsciously because you know that luxury brands, for instance Louis Vuitton, are supposed to have quality goods that are more expensive, exclusive, and better in quality in general.”

Elsa, 27

The gathered data may relate to the findings of Giovannini et al., (2015) who found self-esteem to be the motivating factor for the consumption of luxury fashion brands. This might further be connected to the paper of Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998) where the scholars imply consumers in the marketplace to be vulnerable by what is referred to as ‘dilemmas of the self’. As the authors claim these dilemmas to be caused by the feeling of personal meaningless (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998), the literature therefore suggest ‘the Self’ to be in continuous development, and actively shaped, partially through the consumption of brands which may enable the individual to become more satisfied with its self-concept. Hence, consumer researchers have extensively viewed the consumer’s self-concept to be fragmented and diffuse (See e.g., Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk, 1988; Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Sirgy, 1982). By connecting the findings to the literature in the current paper, the data indicate the consumption of luxury fashion brands to have a significant influence on how an individual actually perceives the self in a positive manner, which tends to support one of the dimensions referred to as ‘the actual self’ (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Sirgy, 1982).

“I feel timeless, classy, elegant, and futuristic. You know, to me there is nothing higher than Chanel in the fashion world. So... to use a piece of that brand and not feel like “all that” is crazy. It can change a lot.”

Maria, 26

“It never fails to make me feel good, fly and look great. It’s like the confidence booster I mentioned. It increases the way you feel about yourself, and I think it is the luxurious feeling. Even if you wear a brand you don’t know of but you know it costs much, I think automatically you feel like what you’re wearing.”

Brandon, 24

Both examples provided above highlight how the consumption of luxury fashion brands enhances an individual’s feelings towards ‘the actual self’ by acting like a confidence booster for the respondents. Table 4 provides an overview of how the utilization of such brands makes
the respondents feel, and whether it operates as a confidence booster to how they actually perceive themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Identified Feelings</th>
<th>Confidence Booster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>&quot;Timeless, classy, elegant, futuristic, all that&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>&quot;Elegant, good, prettier, happy, increased self esteem&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>&quot;Better, happier&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>&quot;Happiness, lyrical, established, arrived&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>&quot;More confident me&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>&quot;Wonderful, great, feminine, classy&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>&quot;Happiness, investing in my self&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>&quot;Fresh&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>&quot;Accomplished&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>&quot;Completes my presentation&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Perceptions and Feelings towards ‘the Self’

4.3.2 Striving Aspects of the Self

When it comes to the other perspective of an individual’s self-concept, which deals with how one would like to perceive the self, the consumption of luxury fashion brands revealed a strong connection to this dimension. In particular, the data shows that the utilization of such luxury brands were motivated by what Sirgy (1982) and Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012) refer to as the ideal self. Although the majority of respondents confirmed this motive of self, three respondents (Maria, 26; Sara, 26; Adriana, 26) were in particular stressing this aspect.

Interestingly, as consumer researchers (See e.g., Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Ellis et al., 2011; Escalas & Bettman, 2005) believe the self-concept of consumers to be rapidly changing, this view has further implied that consumers do not fully possess an accomplished ‘self’. The findings regarding the dimension of the ideal self do not seem to fully support this perspective as a fragmented consumer. For instance, two participants (Sara, 26; Adriana, 26) stated that luxury fashion brands made them feel established and accomplished in terms of their individual self-concept.

“It makes me feel like I’ve accomplished things I wanted to accomplish with my self.”

Adriana, 26
“It says a lot about the person you want to become when you’re older. It is very aspiring, whether you are younger or older.”

Sara, 26

The participant (Sara, 26) further expressed the luxury fashion brands, in particular referring to her favorite brand Chanel, to have an unattainable image that an individual always want to be part of, whether the person already consumes the brand or not as she referred to her experience and perception prior to consuming luxury fashion brands as well as after. By claiming it to have an unattainable image, she (Sara, 26) tried to explain this by asserting that the consumption of a luxury fashion brand, such as Chanel, has always been one of her life goals. Now that the participant has consumed the brand, she still claimed that it might be an image to strive for, and not necessarily an image the individual already possess, but rather desires to achieve, or become. According to Sirgy (1982), the dimension of the ideal self has also been referred to as the ‘desired self’, which may be connected to the perspective of Sara, 26. This view can therefore be considered as a self-concept to strive for (Sirgy, 1982), which was also demonstrated, and supported, by the respondents.

Interestingly, another interviewee (Maria, 26) confirmed this perspective by declaring how each time she looks at her consumed items; she is reminded of her future vision. Similar to Sara (26), Maria (26) also tended to view the consumption of luxury fashion brands to be one of her life goals. As the respondent currently has the ability to consume luxury fashion brands, she (Maria, 26) feels like she has achieved something that is connected to an aspect of her future self.

“I have always viewed Chanel as a vision of the future. To me, luxury fashion brands in general are very aspirational. It is something you would want to reach. That’s why when I consumed my first Chanel for instance, I felt like I achieved something. I hope this makes sense.”

Maria, 26

When asked about the consumption of such brands, the respondent (Maria, 26) further elaborated about a memory to why luxury fashion brands might be connected to the future. Interestingly, when the participant (Maria, 26) was younger, she felt like she could disappear to another world, or another time era as fashion, according to the respondent, can take a person to different dimensions.
“It is art. It can make you travel. I guess it has always taken me to different time eras (laughs). I admire it. That is the beauty of fashion. I feel like it has helped me to push forward and just strive after what I want in life, and in myself. That’s why I believe I associate the consumption of luxury fashion brands, such as Chanel, with the future.”

Maria, 26

According to Escalas & Bettman (2005), brands have the tendency to assist consumers in achieving objectives that are strived by ‘the Self’. This shows to go in line with the findings above as well as with the research of Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012) and Sirgy (1982) by regarding that the different perspectives of an individuals’ self-concept are triggered due to what the motive is with the consumers’ consumption practice. Sirgy (1982) demonstrated this by stating that when it comes to the various aspects of the self-concept, different types of situations have the tendency to influence the choice of which part of self to express. When a person decides upon which image of self to present in a social situation, the use of luxury fashion brands in this case, is one means of doing so (ibid). However, the findings show the consumption of such brands to be more associated with how the respondents would like to perceive ‘the Self’ in order to gain some kind of internal satisfaction rather than the motive to express something externally. Another interesting aspect was when a participant (Maria, 26) divulged how luxury fashion brands can be viewed as something to strive for, the participant brought up fast fashion chains, such as H&M and Zara, as an instance by expressing that even though she also consumes fast fashion brands, it could not make her feel the same way due to not experiencing those striving aspects in which luxury fashion brands provide.

4.3.3 Expressive Aspects of the Self

As the consumption of brands is considered to contain symbolic aspects for consumers who wish to communicate certain parts of themselves (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Ferreira & Scaraboto, 2015; Lee & Workman, 2015), the empirical findings showed the expressive parts of the self to be connected to the two dimensions of an individual’s self-concept: the ‘social self’ and the ‘ideal social self’. However, the consumption of luxury fashion brands was more connected to the former dimension rather than the latter. Merely one case (Adriana, 26) highlighted a direct connection to the ‘ideal social self’. Additionally, the respondents were asked to articulate how they perceive the utilization of luxury fashion brands to present them to other people. As all participants perceived luxury fashion brands to influence the way other
people perceive them in a positive way, such brands seemed to, on the contrary, also make other people perceive them in a negative manner. For instance, one respondent (Elsa, 27) communicated how a person’s image can be viewed in a negative way depending on to what extent luxury fashion brands are being utilized.

“If you see someone only using luxury fashion brands then it might feel like that person thinks it is better than everyone else. Luxury brands…I think it can vary from person to person how I view it like. If there’s a person who has a personality that likes to show off, likes to have power and just use luxury brands, it can give me negative signals. These luxury brands can work in a way for another person to show that they are better than everyone else.”

Elsa, 27

Another respondent (Jake, 30) also mentioned that luxury fashion brands might have a negative impact on what Sirgy (1982) and Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012) refer to as the ‘social self’. However, as Elsa (27) stated that it depends upon an individual’s personality, how it acts, and what its motives are with the consumption of luxury fashion brands, Jake (30) felt it to be dependent on the social circumstances as to where a person is in terms of location, and whom the individual find itself to be around.

“Maybe snobbish, someone who wants to speak with the brand he is wearing...
I don’t know what other people see and feel but probably that. I mean, among the middle class, maybe they would think: that jacket costs just as much as my salary.”

Jake, 30

These findings reveal how the ‘social self’ can relate to visible consumption, mostly called conspicuous consumption (Sirgy, 1982), which goes in line with the explanation of how brands can act as a statement for individuals by expressing ‘we are what we have’ or simply show an indication of how people live (Kwon & Mattila, 2015).

Furthermore, the empirical data show that the dimension of the ‘social self’ to be highly influenced by the knowledge of luxury fashion brands. While one respondent (Brandon, 24) stated that how others perceive an individual who consume luxury fashion brands, depends on
peoples’ knowledge of such brands, another respondent (Maria, 26) perceived that it further depends on whether someone values luxury fashion brands.

“There are people who don’t really care at all. These people don’t know the value, or even something I would know about such brands. But there are people who are more fashion conscious, and are aware of what such brands entail. So it depends who I meet when wearing the brand. But I have interesting stories regarding this.”

Maria, 26

The respondent (Maria, 26) provided an example where she experienced people to perceive her differently depending on where she is, which was found similar to the perception of Jake (30). Therefore, the social self shows to be highly influenced by the social circumstances, which supports the theory of the dimension regarding the ‘social self’ (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2012; Schenk & Holman, 1980; Sirgy, 1982).

4.3.4 Content of Meaning

According to Arnould & Thompson (2005), consumers actively shape their self-concept with symbolic resources, brands in this case, from the marketplace. These resources are asserted to contain laden meaning and value to the consumers (ibid). When the respondents were asked about what they like most about their favorite brand, the data presented various findings that could vary from superficial to meaning loaded reasons. While all of the respondents felt their favorite brand to have some sort of meaning to them, two respondents (Jake, 30; Brandon, 24) experienced their relationship with the brand to be rather superficial than deep, even though their statements showed certain content of meaning.

“Not really. When it comes to consumption, it has its meaning in a way but it’s more superficial than deep to me.”

Jake, 30

However, when another respondent expressed what she likes most about her favorite brand, the participant claimed her appreciation to the brand.

“Chanel has always been what it is and that is the luxury of luxury, the quality of quality. They would go to the other side of the world to acquire the perfect leather for their bags, or the best form of iron to create the chains to the
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sara, 26

The consumption of luxury fashion brands shows to contain some sort of meaning to respective participants. However, the level of meaning seemed to vary between the respondents. An interesting aspect was in regards to two respondents (Brandon, 24; Jake, 30) who initially did not express the content of meaning but after communicating about the utilization of such brands, some sort of meaning was confirmed, which may be interpreted and explained as laden meaning (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

4.4 Brand Image
4.4.1 The Significance of Brand Image
The empirical data for this section were interpreted to support the findings of Gardner & Levy (1955) where the scholars found consumers’ image of a brand to be the most crucial aspect of their consumption choice of brand. The majority of respondents perceived brand image to be one of the most important aspects in terms of consumption. However, an interesting aspect showed that brand image was more crucial when it came to the consumption of luxury fashion brands rather than other consumer categories of fashion brands.

“Well, it has to have an image that I like and that I would want to represent. I mean, I think when it comes to luxury fashion brands, it does not make sense to buy a brand you don’t like the image of because I wouldn’t want to spend so much money on something that I don’t like the image of. I think it’s more important when it comes to luxury brands than cheaper fast fashion brands. I wouldn’t care as much because you know what you get for the amount of money you pay.”

Jessica, 29

According to Ismail & Spinelli (2012), several factors may contribute to the development of brand image being the brand users, experiences with the brand, product attributes as well as the brand’s marketing activities. The participants confirmed this as the sources to their
perception of brand image were gained mostly through different types of brand users, marketing activities and brand communications such as advertisement for instance, and product attributes. However, experiences with the brand were not uttered as a source regarding their perception of brand image although an experience have shown to be crucial when it comes to how an individual perceives a brand, and its image (Brakus et al., 2009). Thus, based on the findings, this may vary depending on whether the brand is considered to be luxurious or not.

Kashif et al., (2015) claimed brand loyalty to be a probable outcome if the associations towards a brand’s image turns out positive. A positive brand image may create a higher probability of creating a more robust loyalty towards a brand, however in this paper, a positive brand image was more connected to the willingness of purchase and the reflection of self rather the enhancing the consumers’ loyalty to a brand.

4.4.2 Relationship Between Brand and Self Image
Several scholars have found the connection between brand image and self-image to be, not only of importance, but also a motivating factor for the choice of brand consumption (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). In a similar context, the paper of Amatulli & Guido (2011) attempted to determine the intentions of consumers for purchasing luxury fashion brands, and identified congruency between the image of the brand and consumer to be the motivation for their choice of consumption. The empirical findings for this current paper tend to support the theory of congruency as all respondents experienced some sort of, what Escalas & Bettman (2005) refer to as, self-brand connection. Interestingly, as the consumer’s self-concept can be viewed from a multidimensional perspective (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Sirgy, 1982), one may wonder where the congruency may be identified, which previous researchers have not taken into consideration.

The outcome of the semi-structured interviews assisted the author of this study to identify that congruency may be connected to two dimensions of the self-concept, namely the ‘actual self” and ‘ideal self’. However, when consuming luxury fashion brands, the congruency between brand image and the respondents’ self-concept showed to be mostly connected to the perspective of the ‘ideal self” than the other dimension. The reasoning behind this shows to be
dealing with a function of luxury fashion brands that tends to be aspirational. Such brands cultivate in having striving aspects where the respondents desire to find congruency.

“It doesn’t necessarily have to be in congruency with who I actually perceive myself to be; it can also form a person. It can be related to whom I want to be perceived as. That’s what’s so great about fashion. You can form the person you want to become, or be perceived as. So maybe not so very important that there’s a congruency between the brand’s image and who I perceive myself to be, but important that it is in congruent with some part of myself.”

Brandon, 24

4.5 Brand Personality and the ‘Self’
In regards to the empirical findings, the data emphasized the conceptualizations of brand image and brand personality to be significantly intertwined with each other. According to Cho et al., (2015), brand personality was claimed to be a subcategory of brand image where the conceptual terms share an immense dependence, and impact on one another. As the aim of this paper was to relate the consumers’ self-concept to the consumption of luxury fashion brands, the findings interestingly elucidated how the brand personality was merely connected to the ‘actual self’.

“Umm. Yes, we are probably both caring, feminine, soft, and charming. I would say most of the things I see in the brand, I see in myself. It might be a little strange how I talk about a brand as a person (laughs), but fun and interesting at the same time.”

Maria, 26

“Yes, I guess I would say a little bit of everything. I would say I see similarities in all the traits I mentioned but I am not sure to what extent.”

Jessica, 29

When all respondents communicated about the personality of their favorite brand, each participant infused the brands with human personalities (Aaker, 1997) as they connected the traits of such brands to how they perceive themselves. These findings show that, even though, the concepts of brand image and brand personality tend to be intertwined, the self-concept of consumers relate differently to respective construct of brand image and personality.
5. Discussion & Critical Reflections

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the role in which luxury brands have in the consumer’s self-concept by considering the context of fashion. In order to achieve the aim of this paper, the author was guided by two research questions developed from the problematization provided in the introduction chapter. As the first research question aimed to answer how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relate to young consumers’ self-concept, the second question dealt with discovering how the consumption of luxury fashion brands further contribute to the consumer’s self-concept. In order to provide empirical findings that would assist in answering the two research questions, the author of this paper used a qualitative approach by conducting ten semi-structured interviews with young individuals who consume luxury fashion brands.

To begin with, the findings from the previous chapter show how luxury fashion brands have influential aspects on the consumers’ self-concept. The practice of consuming luxury fashion brands, or rather the possession of such brands, influenced the participants’ self-concept in a significant, and positive way. Luxury brands displayed a tendency to enhance the way the respondents felt about themselves where it was found to increase their confidence when utilizing such fashion brands. In this sense, luxury fashion brands appeared to operate as a confidence booster to the dimension of the ‘actual self’, which refers to how an individual actually perceives the self (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Sirgy, 1982).

Consumer researchers have throughout decades viewed the consumer’s self-concept as fragmented (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Ellis et al., 2011). The findings for this paper have illustrated how the fragmentation of consumers’ self-concept is more identified in what Sirgy (1982) refers to as the ‘actual self’ rather than the ‘ideal self’. While luxury fashion brands tend to enhance the consumer’s perception of the self, it can be claimed that the ‘actual self’ may be considered as diffuse. However, in terms of the ‘ideal self’, the findings did not indicate upon a fragmented self, but rather an accomplished and established self, which did not fully support the findings of Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998) from the ideal perspective of the consumer’s self-concept. Hence, the consumption of luxury fashion brands influences the ‘ideal self’ where it provides an established perception of the self in which could not be considered and viewed as fragmented. This aspect further shows
how the self-concept of consumers has merely been treated from one perspective, which is referred to as the ‘actual self’, and additionally strengthens the prominence of this paper.

Furthermore, luxury fashion brands showed to have a significant impact on the consumer’s self-concept where it entailed to possess aspirational aspects. Such brands can therefore be regarded as highly motivating for consumers who wish to consume luxury fashion brands. Based on the findings, prior to owning luxury fashion brands, it was found that the majority of respondents have always had the desire to make such purchases. The consumption of luxury fashion brands could thus be considered as an objective to achieve the consumers’ perspective of the ‘ideal self’. However, as each respondent currently consume luxury fashion brands, the participants indicated to have achieved the dimension of the ‘ideal self’. In this sense, the consumption of luxury fashion brands may not merely be considered as entailing an aspirational function, but also facilitate in achieving that part of self – the ‘ideal self’ (Sirgy, 1982).

Researchers have previously argued that brands contain expressive functions for individuals who wish to communicate certain aspects of ‘the Self’ (See e.g., Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Ferreira & Scaraboto, 2015; Lee & Workman, 2015). The empirical findings supported these claims by highlighting the perspectives of the ‘social self’ and the ‘ideal social self’ (Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., 2012; Sirgy 1982). However, a more robust connection to the ‘ideal social self’ was identified in the practice of consuming luxury fashion brands. For instance, when individuals want to be perceived in a certain way related to a social situation, luxury fashion brands could assist in achieving such desired perception. What was explicated to be more interesting was the fact that none of the respondents showed the expressive aspects of luxury fashion brands to be the motivation for such consumption. Therefore, the communicative parts of the self were not identified as exceedingly important in terms of the role luxury fashion brands have in the consumer’s self-concept. The findings showed that both dimensions could be related to their consumption patterns, but did not tend to be part of the function in which luxury fashion brands fill and contribute to.

The literature illustrates how Gardner & Levy (1955) identified brand image to be the most crucial aspect when an individual consumes a specific brand. The findings could not directly support whether brand image tend to be the most crucial part of their purchase. However, the image of a brand was found to be of high significance when selecting a brand.
What was unexpected from the findings was the modification of the tentative research model that was provided in the literature review. As the tentative model was considered to be the theoretical apparatus for this paper, the empirical findings offered a new model that demonstrates how the consumption of luxury fashion brands relates, and contributes, to the consumer’s self concept. To provide more clarity, the current author displays both models below to demonstrate the unexpected changes. First of is the tentative research model (See Figure 4) which was modified based on what the empirical findings for this paper offered.

![Tentative Research Model](image)

**Figure 4: Tentative Research Model**

The proposed research model below (See Figure 5) shows the new insights provided from the empirical data. The new model shows brand image to be more connected to the ‘ideal self’, and brand personality to be closer related to the ‘actual self’ of the consumer’s self-concept. This may be explained due to the relationship between the brand and the self. In other words, the data suggest luxury fashion brands to have an unattainable, and aspirational image whereas brand personality shows to be more congruent with personality traits that treats, and relates to, the dimension of the ‘actual self’. Therefore, the findings suggest a new, and theoretically improved research model (See Figure 5).
Figure 5: Proposed Research Model
6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine the role of luxury fashion brands in the self-concept of young Swedish consumers. This purpose was initially developed as the market for consuming luxury brands, particularly the context of fashion, has found to surpass that of other consumer categories (Miller & Mills, 2012). Given the growth figures, the market of luxury brands have yet remained under analyzed in the sense of qualitative research in particular (Berthon et al., 2009; Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). The context of this paper provided the author with space to further investigate such consumption practices.

Consumer research has previously investigated the connection between the consumption of luxury fashion brands and the consumer’s self-concept (See e.g., Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Giovannini et al., 2015). However, as the self-concept of consumers have merely been treated as one dimension, the ‘actual self’, Aguirre-Rodriguez et al., (2012) and Sirgy (1982) identified how the self-concept can be viewed from a multidimensional perspective, which showed how the theory of self-concept has been disregarded by past scholars. This enabled the author of the current paper to develop two research questions to achieve the aim of this paper. The emerged research questions were as followed:

1) How do young consumers relate to their self-concept when consuming luxury fashion brands? 2) How does the consumption of luxury fashion brands contribute to the consumer’s self-concept?

In order to fulfill the aim of this thesis, the author used a qualitative approach to interview ten individuals between the ages of 24-30 who consume luxury fashion brands. Based on the empirical findings, the current study found the consumption of luxury fashion brands to relate to two dimensions in particular, namely the ‘actual self’ and the ‘ideal self’. The consumption of such brands tends to contribute to both dimensions. Luxury fashion brands appeared to function as a confidence booster for the perspective of the ‘actual self’ whereas such brands also emphasized a striving, and motivating role to achieve the ‘ideal self’ of consumers.

In terms of the theoretical contribution of this thesis, the current paper illustrates how brand image was more connected to the ‘ideal self’ whereas brand personality showed a closer relationship to the ‘actual self’ of consumers. As Gardner & Levy (1955) identified brand
image to be the most crucial aspect when an individual consumes a pertinent brand, the findings could not directly support whether brand image tend to be the most crucial part of their purchase. However, the data found brand image to be of great importance when selecting a brand. The unexpected findings of this paper were that the empirical data showed brand image to be more connected to the ‘ideal self’, and brand personality to be closer linked to the ‘actual self’. This can be explained due to the congruent relationship between the brand and the consumer’s self-concept. In other words, the findings suggest luxury fashion brands to have an unattainable, and aspirational image, and thus connected to the dimension of the ‘ideal self’, whereas brand personality showed more alliance with the consumer’s personality traits that treats, relates, and contributes to, the dimension of the ‘actual self’.
7. Limitations & Future Research

Although this dissertation has contributed with new insights regarding the role of luxury fashion brands in the self-concept of consumers, there are certain limitations to be illustrated, and perhaps further investigated. To begin with, the current paper consisted of ten participants and was limited to merely consider Swedish consumers. This limitation can be further examined by regarding other cultures in which may differentiate the role of luxury fashion brands in the consumer’s self-concept. As a qualitative method was conducted, the sample size for such approach is considered smaller than what a quantitative method would have provided. Therefore, if the researcher desires to generalize the results to the population of interest with a larger sample size, quantitative research may be suggested.

As this thesis aimed to examine the self-concept of young consumers, the sampling of this paper was further limited to the ages of 24-30. Due to interest and further contribution, future research may hence consider an older generation who has consumed luxury fashion brands for a longer period of time. Moreover, future research may investigate the consumption of such brands in social situations by further emphasizing the social aspects of the consumer’s self-concept in which the empirical findings of this paper tended to exclude. Hence, the findings regarding the role of luxury fashion brands may differentiate in social circumstances. Ultimately, as luxury fashion brands showed to entail an important, and influential, role in the self-concept of consumers, it might be interesting to examine whether brand loyalty can be developed towards such brands due to its imperative function.
Reference List


Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Name of Respondent:
Age:
Gender:
Residence:
Occupational Background:

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**CONSUMPTION OF LUXURY FASHION BRANDS**

1. Can you mention some of the luxury fashion brands you consume?
2. Which one is your favorite?
3. What do you like most about the brand you just mentioned?

**SELF CONCEPT**

4. How do you feel when using your favorite brand?
5. How does the consumption of such brands make you feel about yourself?
6. How do you perceive that this brand would present you to other people?
7. What does the brand symbolize to you?
8. Do you feel like the brand has a meaning to you? If yes, in what way is this brand meaningful to you?

**BRAND IMAGE**

9. How would you describe your image of the brand?
10. What are the sources to your perception of the brand’s image?
11. How crucial is the brand’s image when it comes to your choice of consumption?
12. How significant is it for the brand’s image to be in congruency with who you perceive yourself to be?

**BRAND PERSONALITY**

13. How would you describe the personality of this brand?
14. Do you see a similarity between the characteristics of the brand and your own? If yes, what personality characteristics would it be?
Appendix 2 – Interview Questions in Swedish

Concentration of Luxury Fashion Brands
1. Kan du nämna några fashion lyxvarumärken som du konsumerar?
2. Vilken är din favorit?
3. Vad gillar du mest med varumärket du just nämnde?

Self Concept
4. Hur känner du dig när du använder din favorit varumärke?
5. Hur får konsumtionen av sådana varumärken dig att känna om dig själv?
6. Hur tror du att detta varumärke skulle presentera dig för andra människor?
7. Vad symboliserar varumärket för dig?
8. Har varumärket en mening för dig? Om ja, på vilket sätt är varumärket meningsfullt för dig?

Brand Image
9. Hur skulle du beskriva din bild av varumärket?
10. Vad har du för källor till din uppfattning om varumärkets bild?
11. Hur viktig är varumärkets bild när det rör ditt val av konsumtion?
12. Hur grundläggande är det för varumärkets bild att vara överens med vem du uppfattar dig att vara?

Brand Personality
13. Hur skulle du beskriva varumärkets personlighet?
14. Ser du en likhet mellan varumärkets egenskaper och dina egna? Om ja, vilka personlighetsegenskaper skulle det vara?