LUXURY FASHION BRAND -
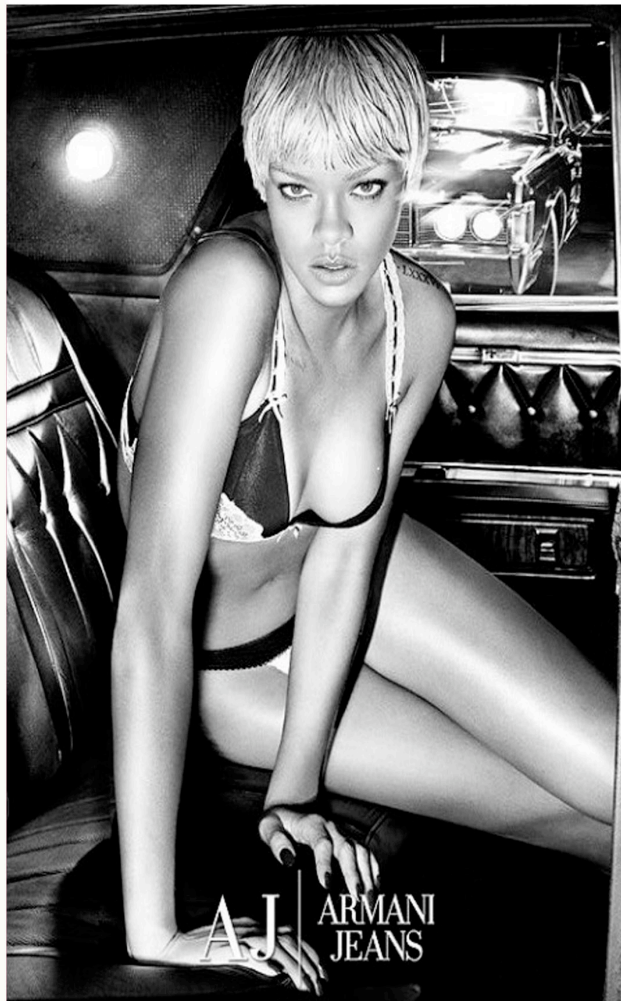
INFLUENCE ON STUDENT PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Fashion is a billion-dollar industry employing millions of people around the world. Due to the democratization of that volatile industry coupled with the economic recession, luxury fashion brands have struggle to hold their ground against the rise of high street brands like Zara, H&M and the flood of knockoffs worldwide.

Good looking, well-dressed and rich young like Mark Zuckenburg, Cristiano Ronaldo, etc. add to the pressure put on young consumers about their appearance by the media.

The objective of this thesis was to investigate the influence of luxury fashion brands on young consumer's, namely young students, purchase behaviour. The investigation was also designed to elucidate the factors that help the luxury fashion remain profitable despite the economic downturn. Luxury fashion brands are assumed to have an influential impact on appearance obsessed millennium youngsters and students who purchase luxury goods for many reasons, which have been emphasized in this thesis.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for this thesis. A critical review of existing brand and fashion-related literature, brand-related studies and research articles and an analysis on the topics with emphasis on luxury fashion brands and consumer buying behaviour constitute the source of secondary data for this thesis. An online survey targeting young students constitutes the source of primary data. Luxury fashion with a stress on clothing and accessories would be the case in order to narrow the study scope. The original research area planned for this study was too wide and complex, however, the thesis was still able to identify key factors that might determine the influence of brand selection on young consumer's (specifically that of students) buying decisions. The research also enables the unfolding of brand loyalty in terms of being either emotional (unconscious) or attitudinal (conscious).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

INTRODUCTION

"Most brands that are called luxury brands today are not true luxury brands. In the 90s, at Gucci we made luxury quite accessible. The globalization of fashion and luxury means you now find the same luxury brands in every city. The stores look the same and the products are the same. It is still a very good quality product but it is now readily available to everyone. It's a kind of mass luxury".   -Tom Ford, 2007

Our everyday life is almost set by the buying process rhythm, which is a combination of mental and physical activities that finally leads to a purchase. Thus it is interesting to study the connection within "what we buy" and "why we buy it". In this scenario, brands play a leading role in customer decision-making.

Today, brands not only represent the name or the symbol of a specific product or company they also achieve cult-like status among a brand's most faithful consumers. There is an existing connection, an invisible bridge, between consumers and brands such that when consumers purchase any product (or utilize any service) their final choice is so often influenced by brands.

A major purpose of this thesis was to closely investigate the concept of branding, meaning *what a brand is*, and *what brand does* and to investigate branding as a factor of influence in a buyers decision making and purchase process. In today's global economy many changes have happened in consumer behaviour and those changes have led to the vast majority of consumers to look for new landmarks: they became more economical, more responsible and more demanding (M. Egol, A. Andrew Clyde and K. Rangan 2010). This situation has been a leading factor behind the flood of private label, high street brands as substitutes for luxury- and well-known brands. However despite the shrinking of consumer buying power, consumers in general and particularly youngsters (students) with very limited buying power are still willing to buy luxury fashion brands thus keeping the luxury fashion industry profitable whilst others industries are struggling financially.

1 BRAND

1.1 Definition and concept of brand

The word *brand* originates from the Norse word *Branrd* meaning to burn (S.S Kaptan, S. Pandey 2010). The concept of brand was thus born from the necessity and desire of ancient craftsmen and farmers to distinguish their products, properties and livestock from others by marking it with a sign. In the field of marketing, brands originated in the nineteenth century with the advent of package goods (M. Sadhna, 2009, p.2). Sign, logo, symbol or the combination of these became the "sine qua non" of that strive for differentiation and pre-eminence. Brand, logo and product are easily mistaken as the same thing. According to Doyle (1989, p.78) "a product is a means by which the customer´s needs are met or solved, whereas the brand gives value to the customer that goes beyond the product's actual benefit". A plethora of definitions (Table. 1) of the term *brand* exists, reflecting the multiplicity of connotations affiliated to the term in a consumer´s mind. However, all the definitions agree on the ability of brands to create value for the customer that surpasses its functional appeal.

Hart and Murphy (1983, p.3) give a more inclusive definition by referring to it as "a synthesis of physical, rational, emotional and aesthetics elements, which comprise the core product, the brand name, the advertising, the promotion, the packaging as well as the overall presentation". According to Sadhna (2009) the practise of *branding* started in the 1950´s when the manufacturer Mildred Pierce recognised the developing relationships that customers were building with their brands at the social, anthropological and psychological level inspiring others manufacturers to associates others values such as youthfulness, luxury, fun, etc., with their products.

Table. 1. A collection of definitions of branding from various sources.

S. No	Definition	Source
1.	*The consumer´s idea of a product*	David Ogilvy
2.	*A brand is an important asset of a company, its products or services and its marketing strategy. Often the brand will have a familiar logo associated with it as its icon. When you see this logo (such as in Nike shoes) you think of the brand and the entire package of value and the promises it carries…*	John Marriotti President and CEO, The Enterprise Group
3.	*In marketing brand is a word a term, symbol or design, or a combination of two or more of these, used to identify a product or service of a seller, thus differentiating the product or service from others.*	Encyclopedia Americana
4.	*A brand is the proprietary visual, emotional, national, cultural image that you associate with a company or a product.*	Charles R. Pettis III (Brand Solutions)

Clifton et al (2003) argued that despite being an intangible asset brand is priceless to companies thus company's most important and sustainable asset. For example, a company such as Coca-Cola would not be nearly as successful were it not for the high value obtained through its brand name (Gustafson T, Chabot B, 2007).

In order to better highlight the concept of brand, to offer benchmarking ideas, and consequently to emphasize the role of brand and all its attributes (logo, design, etc.), images of goods from three iconic and emblematic luxury fashion houses Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Burberry are displayed below (picture 3). These three brands embody prestige, glamour,

culture, distinctive design and history thus illustrate what a brand is supposed to be: a trusted guide and help to customer for product selection. Furthermore, the aforementioned brands were categorized as luxury fashion brands due to their reputation and heritage of fashion houses primarily making goods for royalty, elites and the wealthiest of the world. This close relation with top tiers customers somehow works as a certificate of quality to the products of these brands. The three brands top the list of the ten most powerful luxury brands (fashionista, 2011) of the world and Top 100 brands in the world (Interbrand, best global brands, October 2011). The cultural aspect is reflected by the country of origin of the brands being respectively Italy, France and England, which are known as hotbeds of fashion, they will naturally show difference in style, design and aesthetics.

Furthermore a brand owner, especially those operating in luxury fashion through the strategic and genius choice of a specific colour (e.g. red and green for Gucci, dark brown and beige for Louis Vuitton), an easily recognizable, trust arising and glamorous logo (), distinctive and specific fabric (the brown checks of Burberry) as illustrated in picture. 1 would make a greater impact on their wealthy consumer. The impact of the aforementioned elements is vital in the sense that is facilitating consumers decision making in this fast pace world where time is a precious commodity.

Picture 1. Luxury fashion brand accessories Gucci (a), Louis Vuitton (b) and Burberry (b) (Source: gucci.com, louisvuitton.com, burberry.com).

The comparison visually illustrates how each brand is distinguished from the others one by its logo and particular design in spite of the similarity of the products functionality; this leaves no space for confusion in consumer´s mind. Therefore, buyers' decision in front of these items is determinate exclusively by choosing between three logos, or in a better extensive way, between three brands.

Businesses and scholars alike have recognized that successful brand is at the core of every productive and profitable business. Therefore effort and time is spent by academics to fully grasp the concepts surrounding brand and make it understandable, and easily exploitable by companies. A brief overview of some brand concepts have been undertaken in order to ease the understanding the influence of brand on consumers when purchasing luxury fashion.

1.2 Brand awareness and image

Based on the simple assumption that in order to seek something and buy it a consumer has to first be aware of it. Rossiter and Percy (1987) describe awareness of brand as the genesis of the brand communication process and the vital first step in building the bundle of associations, which are attached to the brand in memory (Stokes 1985). Following the logic of Stokes (1985) of brand connection to memory to create an attitude toward it, Aker (1991) sees the brand conceptualized as a node in one's memory which allows other information about the brand to be anchored to it (Aaker 1991b,Keller 1993; Holden 1993; Holden & Lutz 1992). Thus brand awareness can be referred to "as the level of knowledge and the type of attitude customers or potential customers have towards a brand or a product (Keller, 1993)". The level of knowledge and type of attitude are crucial in creating and feeding emotions and memories (positive or negative) in customers' minds for a specific brand. The aforementioned process is also known in the field of marketing as the Hierarchy of Effects model (Fig. 1), which is a term, that was first used by Palda (1966) in responding to the advertising effectiveness work of Ladvige and Steiner (1961).
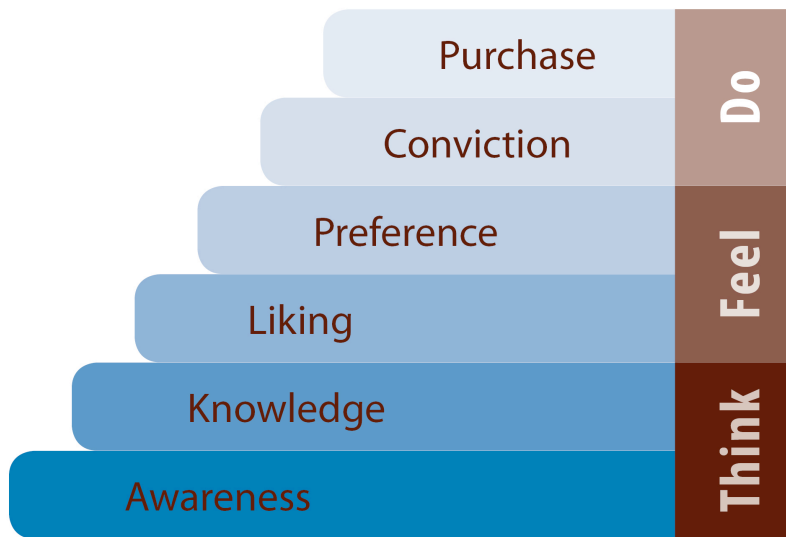
Figure 1. Hierarchy Effects model (Source: www.marketingsavant.com).

Ultimately, achieving successful brand awareness means that a brand is well known and easily recognizable.   Brand awareness plays a crucial role in differentiating one product from other similar products (T. Gustafson, B. Chabot.), thus important for company because differentiation is one of the three competitive strategic approaches developed by M. E Porter (1980) that companies can choose in order to achieve and maintain competitive advantage over their competitors. Pepall et al (2005) described three types of product differentiation: (1) Simple: based on a variety of characteristics, (2) Horizontal: based on a single characteristic but consumers are not clear on quality and (3) Vertical: based on a single characteristic and consumers are clear on its quality.

1.3 Brand Confusion

The opposite concept of brand awareness, and therefore its biggest threat, is brand confusion. De Pelsmacker (2001, 82-84) explained that brand confusion could be caused by several factors that can be classified in four main categories: *product*, *message*, *campaign* and *consumers* characteristics. The copy of a branded product with all of its attributes represents

the most blatant threat to any industry. The fraudulent practice of counterfeiting branded products is the profitable business of low profile companies that utilize brand confusion as a strategy to make a mark in the market. These manufacturers use similar brand names; logos, design, packaging and all possible brand features in order to confuse and mislead the consumer to purchase their product instead of branded ones. A good example of this is *Adidos* a sportswear company that imitates the German sportswear giant Adidas (picture 2).

Picture 2. Adidas vs. Adidos and Dolce&Gabbana vs. Dico & Gomez (source: www.adidas.com, www.dolcegabbana.com, D&C and adidos taken by the author from clothes stores windows in Utrera, Seville, Spain.)

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1.4 Brand Equity and Loyalty

"*Brand equity is a set of assets linked to a brand´s name and symbol the adds to the value provided by a product to a firm and/or that firm´s customer* " (Aaker 1996, 7).

In 2011 Louis Vuitton occupied the 26th in the BrandZ Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands chart and its brand value was worth $24.312 million (Millward B, 2011). Brand value can be discussed in terms of brand equity. And in order to create equity, brand awareness research is

the key. According to Keller (2003) brand " equity can be thought of as the "added value" endowed to a product in the thoughts, words, and actions of consumers ". Further, the added value is largely determined by four key elements: *brand awareness, brand attributes* and *associations, perceived quality*, and *brand loyalty* which are ultimately derived in the marketplace from the words and actions of consumers who decide with their purchases, based on whatever factors they deem important, which brands have more equity than other brands (Keller. K.L, and Lehman D.R, 2003).

Figure 2. Components of brand equity (Source: www. qualtrics.com).

Aaker (1991) suggested that brand associations, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other proprietary brand assets (e.g., patents) underlie brand equity. All these characteristics of brand put together represent the backbone of luxury fashion industry success, which is built on the good perception consumers have of their products.

Brand loyalty is described by the business dictionary as "the extent of the faithfulness of consumers to a particular brand, expressed through the repeated purchase, irrespective of the marketing pressure generated by the competing brands (Daye. D, VanAuken B, 2011)". But According to Bloemer and Kasper (1995), based on earlier work of Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) on brand loyalty underpinning it in terms of both attitudinal and behavioural aspects: *"brand loyalty implies that consumers bind themselves to products or services as a result of a deep-seated commitment* (Morgan and Hunt 1994)". To exemplify this point, they rendered a distinction between repeat purchases and actual brand loyalty.

Another important element in brand loyalty or consumers commitments to a brand is consumer affiliation to the brand country of origin. These affiliations and perceptions can bear a negative or a positive tone for the consumers in term of loyalty building. The country of origin reflects inner values to the brand. For example, Louis Vuitton, Cartier and Hermes being French and Gucci, Armani, Prada Italian are bearing different meaning to consumers. The French ones may awake in customers mind; chic, etiquette, sophistication, and all other things France can be connected with whilst the second ones Italian savoir faire like precise craftsmanship, tradition in design, etc. (Okonkwo U, 2007, p 2).

The loyalty for these major luxury fashion houses or brands such as Gucci, Salvatore Ferragamo, Emilio Pucci, Yves Saint Laurent, etc., were featured worldwide and show cased by royalties, celebrities and Hollywood. For example the famous American actress Marilyn Monroe (right side of picture 3.1) loved excessively the works of the Italian designer Pucci that she asked to be buried in one of his dress (Stoykov .L, 2009).

Celebrities endorsing fashion brands is known as celebrity endorsement. Celebrity endorsement of luxury fashion is hardly a new phenomenon for it has been around for several centuries. The first person to use this effective and powerful marketing tool is the British born tailor Charles Worth, the man to who is accredited the fathering of *haute couture* in Paris in the nineteenth century (Diana de Marty, 1980). Charles Worth understood the importance of linking celebrities to brands, even before this was recognized as an important marketing communications tool. To promote his fashion house, La Maison Worth, he sought a high society lady and an influencer of the court fashions, Princess Von Metternich, wife of the then Austria's ambassador to France and close friend of Napoleon's wife Empress Eugenie (U. Okonkwo, 2006)".
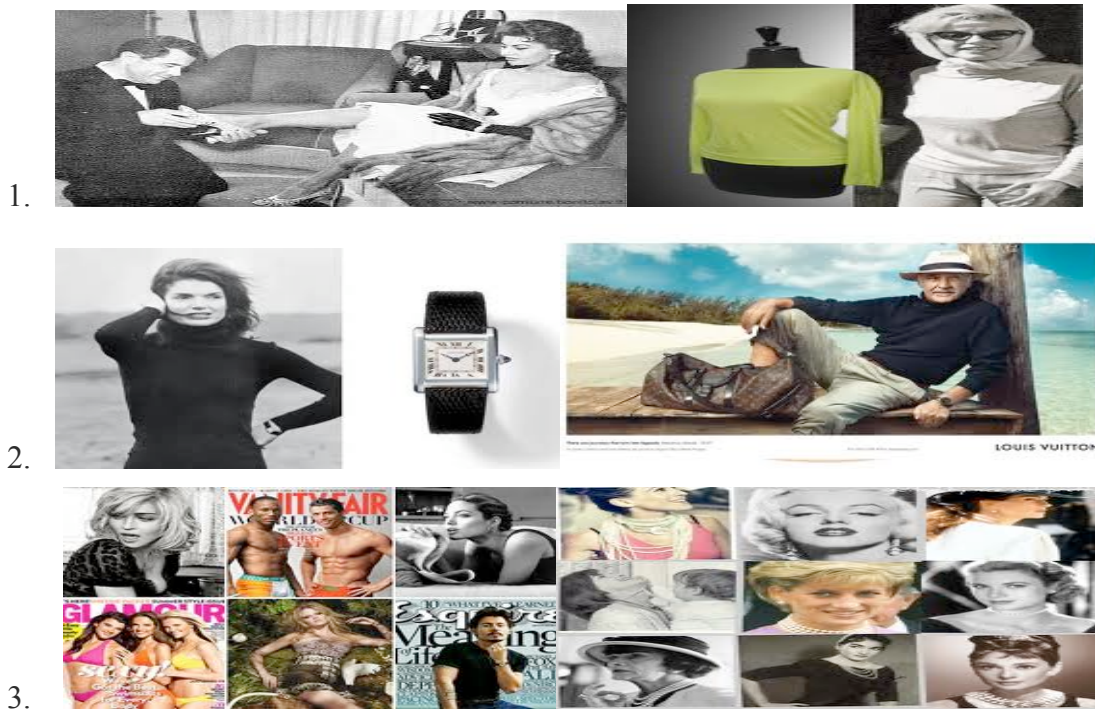
Picture 3. Movie stars, royalties and celebrities endorsing luxury brands (Source: 1. www.pucci.com, 2.www. cartier.com &www. louisvuitton.com, 3. www.vanityfair.com).

The practice is nowadays rooted in the fashion industry as a mean to attract, guide, control and win consumers mind and heart. Therefore hiring en vogue or in the air of Time celebrities (picture 4) to endorse brands through advertising and other means of marketing by luxury fashion brands remains a largely used tool in the hand of fashion managers despite the fact that it has become more costly an less exclusive.

Picture 4. The actress Uma Thurman and the Footballer David Beckham, respectively, posing for Louis Vuitton and Armani two (2) luxury fashion brands. (Source: thejetsetgirls.blogspot.com, www. armani.com).

In order to keep and strengthen their relationships with their loyal and faithful customers, companies and brands owners have understood the importance of reward and gifts. Thus, different schemes have been drafted and are used by companies to serve this purpose. However the common thing is that they are all based on the amount of money spent by the customers during a certain period of time. When it comes to luxury store retailing, properly rewarding a customer who spends $200,000 a year could be a easy task, but, how is it when it comes to those dedicated shoppers who spend upwards of $1 million a year? "It takes more than diamond points – this kind of shopper requires sincere eloquence. It's a high-class, and at times bewitching, problem (Daye. D, VanAuken B, 2011)". The hustle is to design a loyalty reward scheme the rich luxury consumer will finds of real value (VanAuken B, 2011).

To remedy some fashion house relies on special events (figure 5) such as philanthropic gala with political personalities or celebrities as main guests or/and an invitation-only evening with a top designer.

Picture 5. Event organized by Cartier for its rich customer in the growing Asian market (source: brandingstrategyinsider.com).

The picture above shows a special event organized by Cartier, the French luxury brand, for its customers in the Asian market. The picture reveals a special shopping atmosphere offered. This special shopping condition includes a well-dressed doorman in a spirit and style of a five star hotel, a sommelier to refresh with champagne female customers caring Louis Vuitton´s accessories.

1.5 Brand connection to emotion

The "advanced MRI science has proven that humans are overwhelmingly emotion-based decision makers, and neurobiologists have found emotional reactions to brand-related stimuli are processed 80-percent faster than cognitive reactions (Beyer A.M, 2011)". The question now is: What does that mean to the fashion industry, especially the luxury segment? Beyer (2011) assumed that" if a brand doesn't engage it customers on a deeply personal and emotional level it risks losing not only their interest, but also their loyalty in the long term". In today's fashion world, loyalty is the glue that propels brands from being one-time larks to lifelong must-haves.

Emotions are something everyone can relate to—be good, bad or indifferent. And although "brands" may not bring to mind emotions, the truth is the two are actually very closely linked. Which person doesn´t remember the emotion when holding in their hands their first iPod, first shirt, skirt, dress, pants, belt, or watch from one most coveted fashion brands?

The marketing consulting firm Gallup has developed a set of rating scales that efficiently and reliably measure four critically important emotional states. Together, these states represent the strength of the emotional connection existing between a customer and a brand: "***Confidence*** in the brand's promise, belief in its ***Integrity***, ***Pride*** in being a customer, and ***Passion*** for the brand (McEwen W.J, 2005)". Thus the customer-brand relationship in the fashion industry and especially the luxury segment goes far beyond fashion houses attempt to satisfy customer´s basic need to cover itself with a garment, to an experience which seeks to cover and touch all the senses of the customers.

2 The Fashion Industry

2.1 Definition and Brief History of fashion industry

Tracing back to the origin of mankind according to the Bible in the book of Genesis when the LORD GOD: " *Unto Adam and also to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them* (Segond L, 2007) " to hide they new discovered nudity. Ever since, "for centuries individuals or societies have used clothes and other body adornment as a form of nonverbal communication to indicate occupation, rank, gender, sexual availability, locality, class, wealth and group affiliation (Thomas P.W& Thomas G)".

The Merriam-Webster´s dictionary described "*fashion*" which is derived from the Middle English word " facioun—shape, manner" "as a common style especially of dress during a particular period of time or among a certain group (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)". Thomas discussed that fashion exists in many areas of life, not only in the way we dress and look (accessories, jewellery, hairstyles, cosmetics, body art, etc.) but also "in many other areas such as food, home furnishings, and even our ways of thinking, however, most often dress becomes the focus when fashion arises as a topic of discussion, and the discussion frequently centres on clothing of people (Thomas P.W& Thomas G)". The claim is backed by Okonkwo (2007) who stated that: as far back to the Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman Empires, fashion was a key social element that reflected the society through apparel, accessories and cosmetics". Thus the history of fashion is the one of humanity, diverse, colorful, incorporating cultural elements ever evolving according to the aspirations of change of mankind. However fashion as known today with designers having the upper hand and dictating the trends and evolutions of styles started with Charles Frederick Worth (1826-1895, picture 6) move to Paris in 1845(Diana de Marty, 1980, p.2).

Picture 6. Portrait of Charles Worth (1826-1895) and some of his work. (Source: metmuseum.org)

Many authors remember this period with Charles Worth as the "*Beginning of couture*". According to Okonkwo (2006) fashion evolution can be break down into five periods, which are respectively:

1. Early 20th century: 1900s, 1910s
2. Between the wars: 1920s, 1930s
3. Mid 20th century: 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s
4. Late 20th century: 1980s, 1990s
5. 21st century

Throughout it progress in time the fashion industry got segmented, diversified and modernized in order to adapt with the volatility of its consumers tastes. This constant changes in consumers taste is the outcome of the socio-cultural pressure that consumers constantly face.

2.2 Fashion industry segmentation

Segmentation in a strategic perspective signifies: "the classification of customer groups that react in a different way from other groups to competitive offerings (Holmberg .J and Öhnfeldt. R, 2010). According to Kotler (2008), the major segmentation variables are: geographic

(according to region), demographic, psychographic and behavioural. Demographic are the most common bases for segmenting the market; through demographic segmentation any market or industry can be divided into groups based on variables such as age, gender, income, occupation, education, religion and nationality.

Fashion is constructed like a pyramid made of five segments (Easey, 2009). At the top of the pyramid is, *Haute couture* and at the bottom *mass retailing* (Tungate, 2008).

Figure. 3. Fashion industry segmentation. (Own adaptation from Easy 2009)

Haute couture is the most expensive and most exclusive of the segments (made up of a handful of companies, which produce custom-made clothing for the world's wealthiest individuals) then the luxury segment which is a step down in terms of quality and price, but still serves a wealthy clientele follow by affordable luxury which targets "aspirational" or premium brands consumers (not rich enough to afford luxury brands but will accept lower-priced alternatives such as Zara). Then come mainstream brands which goal is mass appeal (sacrifice exclusivity for popularity e.g. H&M). Finally discount brands that cater to low-income consumers.

The term "*Haute Couture*" is French, meaning "high" or "elegant" while "*Couture* " literally means "sewing," but has come to indicate the business of designing, creating, and selling custom-mad fashion to a few; today only 2,000 women in the world buy couture clothes (Sherman, 2006). Europe and North America used to be the main market for this segment of

fashion but being in a declining lifecycle in those markets it has expanded in new markets such as India, China, Brazil and the Middle East where wealth is growing and appetite for luxury is ferocious (Williams. B, 2012). Giorgio Armani, Tom Ford, Steve McQueen (picture 7), Stella McCarthy, are the names of some designers operating in that niche.

Though couture garments no longer tend to make a profit for the designer because of the extreme expense involved, couture still exists to "create an aura of glamour and strengthen the brand, by being a window into the creative process, a starting point for the designer's ready-to-wear, accessories and perfumes collections which are the segments providing the couture houses with cash flow and capital (Williams. B, 2012)".

Picture 7. Paris Fashion Week (Oct 12, 2011), *Alexander* MC Queen SS 2012. (Source: www.hautecouture.com)

Segmentation or classification is a necessity for anyone investigating or analysing fashion due to the complexity of fashion as an industry and the huge amounts of brands available to consumers in the world.

2.3 Luxury fashion

In the last two decades, the luxury fashion industry has generated much interest and discussions among academics and managers since it has became a consolidated economic sector in the late 1990s (Truong, McColl & Kitchen, 2009).

"LVMH, a French group which owns 60 brands, including Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, various lucrative champagnes and Bulgari, an upmarket jeweller, boasts that its sales have risen by 13% in the first half of this year, to €10.3 billion ($14.4 billion). Analysts reckon that LVMH's profit margins for its luxury brands are a healthy 40% or so—twice as high as some of its rivals."

-The Economist, October 1st 2011.

This stability in term of revenue and cash flow by luxury fashion houses is due to their growing opportunities in new markets and the propensity shown by South Americans, Asian and Middle East new rich for their products.

According to Bain & Co, a leading consulting company specialized on the sector: "the 2009 global luxury revenues amounted to 153 Billion euros, an estimate based on the sum of the revenues of 200 companies and brands, which can be called luxury (J.N. Kapferer et al 2010)".

Phau and Prendergast (2000) point out that whilst l*uxury* is a subjective concept, "luxury brands compete on the ability to evoke exclusivity and perceived quality". Whilst, Dall´Olmo et al (2004) argued that consumers of luxury goods are pull by the status symbols that the possession of those goods is believed to transferred to them. Whilst competitive value remains important, price is not the prime issue for consumers attracted by status symbols. This is a key difference between the mass consumer group who purchase what is called a FMCG (fast moving commodity good), and the minority population who purchase luxury goods (Table 2). "While the brand and its associations may influence a FMCG´s consumer, they will usually give priority to functionality and price, conversely, purchasers of luxury goods are influenced

primarily by brand and status, while functionality is assumed (Dall'Olmo F. Riley, Lomax W &Blunden. A, 2004)".

The *Rarity principle, which* induces that: **"**the prestige of the brand gets eroded, if too many people own it (Dubois and Paternault, 1995; Kapferer, 1998)" is another concept related to luxury brands. It creates a paradox for luxury brand management (Roux and Floch, 1996): "the company needs to maximize its profits but can never sell or standardize too much". Hence, luxury brands managers have to be able have to maintain their dream value and avoid the risk of commoditization, "luxury brands must be desired by all, consumed only by the happy few" (Kapferer, 1997).

Luxury fashion companies target a relatively small, high disposable income group of consumers (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). And because of their high prices, luxury brands must not only deliver the best possible products but also "extensively" customize them in order to prove how customer focused they are" (Kapferer, 1997). Consequently, personal relationships with customers, forged at the point of sale, and after sale services become more than important in the luxury fashion goods sector (Dall'Olmo Riley and Lacroix, 2000). Finally, an essential component of luxury brands equity is therefore their desirability and inaccessibility (Roux, 1991; Kapferer, 1998).

Luxury brands have often been associated with the core competences of creativity, exclusivity, craftsmanship, precision, high quality, innovation and premium pricing which in the case of most luxury fashion brands is justified. "These product attributes give the consumers the satisfaction of not only owning expensive items but also the extra-added psychological benefits like esteem and prestige (Kapferer, 1997)".

This description of the luxury fashion industry could have been a perfect one without the multiple challenges it faces such as the change in consumer perception of luxury in old Europe, increase of digital shopping, growing interest in environmental issues by consumers of emergent economies (these consumers provides most revenues of luxury fashion brands), raw materials concerns ("blood diamonds", etc.) and others conundrums that Angela Ahrendts, the boss of Burberry, calls *democratic luxury* (The Economist, 1.11.2011).

Table. 2. Comparison of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and Luxury Goods Characteristics. Adapted from: Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley, Wendy Lomax & Angela Blunden, 2004, *Dove vs. Dior*. Australasian Marketing Journal 12 (3), p.42.

FMCG	LUXURY GOODS
Address a mass market (Dibb et al., 2001)	Target a niche market (Phau & Prendergast, 2000)
Mass distribution (Dibb et al., 2001)	Exclusive distribution (Kapferer, 1997)
Functionality (Vickers & Renand, 2003)	Symbolism (Vickers & Renand, 2003)
Purchase transaction (Grönroos, 1994)	After-care service (Dall'Olmo Riley & Lacroix, 2000)
Price focus (Nueno & Quelch, 1998)	Status focus (Nueno & Quelch, 1998)
DMP can range from routinized or low involvement to high involvement	Craftsmanship (Kapferer, 1998)
	Founder's heritage (Kapferer, 1998)
	DMP always a high involvement purchase signifying extensive information search thorough DMP.

2.4 Luxury fashion brands and their consumers

Despite the rise of new designers from other parts of the world like Japan, USA, New Zealand, the luxury fashion industry remains dominated by European fashion houses. A quick look at Table 3, where are listed some of the world most known luxury fashion brands indicated the hegemony of countries such as France, Italy and England in luxury business, being the countries of origin of most luxury houses and designers. No wonder that the fashion week in the capitals of these countries set the trend for annual fashion world. The USA, however with the rise of designers such as Marc Jacob, Tom Ford and Vivienne Westwood are slowly closing the gap on their Europeans colleagues.

According to Mansharamani et al (2010) many luxury consumers are part of an affluent, global élite that is increasingly educated and concerned about social and environmental issues. These consumers use luxury products as a symbol of success. However, the definition of success – and the way it is perceived by others – is changing. Many successful people now want the brands they use to reflect their concerns and aspirations for a better world.

SRI Consulting Business Intelligence places luxury consumers in three groups according to what luxury means to them (Mansharamani A, Khanna.S):

1. *Luxury is functional*:

"These consumers tend to buy luxury products for their superior functionality and quality. Consumers in this segment, the largest of the three, tend to be older and wealthier and are willing to spend more money to buy things that will last and have enduring value. They conduct extensive pre-purchase research, making logical decision rather than emotional or impulsive.

2. *Luxury is a reward*:

"These consumers tend to be younger than the first group but older than the third. They use luxury goods as a status symbol to made a statement: "*I have made it*". They are motivated by their desire to be successful and demonstrate this to others.

3. Luxury is indulgence:

"This group is the smallest of the three and tends to include younger consumers and slightly more males than the other two groups. Their purpose for luxury goods is to lavish themselves in self-indulgence. They enjoy luxury for the way it makes them feel, therefore have a more emotional approach to purchases".

There is a shift of paradigm in luxury consumers (rise of environment consciousness, ethics, etc.) appreciation of luxury. In recent years luxury consumers have reflected a change in perceptions and attitudes towards luxury brands. People are more interested to products (and brands) made in accordance with social and eco-responsibility rules or coming of fair trade (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Virtual channels become more and more attractive (Yeoman, 2011) and a new concept of luxury fashion good is emerging where usual occasions and seasons are less binding. Somehow, "post-modern consumers also love to build their fashion personality by combining products and brands that could better express themselves (Savelli, 2011)". All these changes have affected fashion consumers buying decision-making process.

Table. 3.   Luxury Fashion Brands index. Adapted from: Uche Okonkwo (2007). *Luxury Fashion Brandings: Trends, tactics, techniques*, p.46 (online). Palgrave Macmillan.

Brand	Year	Founder	Country
Guerlain	1828	Pierre. F. Guerlain	France
Hermés	1837	Thierry Hermés	France
Loewe	1846	Enrique Loewe	Spain
Cartier	1847	Louis.F. Cartier	France
Bally	1851	Carl.F. Bally	Switzerland
Louis Vuitton	1854	Louis Vuitton	France
La Maison Worth	1858	Charles.F.Worth	France
Burberry	1856	Thomas Burberry	England
Lancel	1876	A. & A Lancel	France
Cerrutti	1881	Cerrutti Brothers	Italy
Bvlgari	1884	Sotiros Vulgaris	Italy
Fendi	1897	Adele.C. Fendi	Italy
E. Zegna	1910	Ermenigilo Zegna	Italy
Chanel	1910	G.Coco. Chanel	France
Prada	1913	Maria Prada	Italy
Balenciaga	1919	C. Balenciaga	Spain
Gucci	1921	Guccio. Gucci	Italy
Hugo Boss	1923	Hugo Boss	Germany
Nina Ricci	1932	Nina Ricci	France
Christian Dior	1947	Christian Dior	France
Pucci	1948	Emilio Pucci	Italy
Max Mara	1951	Achille Maramotti	Italy
Givenchy	1952	Albert de Givenchy	France
Yves St. Laurent	1962	Yves.St. Laurent	France
Paul Smith	1970	Paul. Smith	England
Yoghi Yamamoto	1972	Yoghi Yamamoto	Japan
Giorgio Armani	1974	Giorgio Armani	Italy
Helmut Lang	1977	Helmut Lang	Austria
Gianni Versace	1978	Gianni Versace	Italy
Elie Saab	1982	Elie Saab	Lebanon
Marc Jacobs	1984	Marc Jacobs	USA
Alexander McQueen	1994	Alexander McQueen	England
Tom Ford	2006	Tom Ford	USA

3 UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER CHOICE OF BRANDS

3.1 The power of brand name

Labeaga et al, (2007) argues that the brand name is what influences consumers' overall quality perceptions of the product. The brand name is one of the most powerful sources of identity. There is power in the name of every brand due to the fact that it is the way the consumer value it. According to the "The Economist magazine" 1988 was "The year of the brand". Because in 1988 just four brands were sold for US$50billion, such incredible payments for "names" were a reflection of the value placed on the brands in terms of long-term profit expectancy (Temporal. P, 1999).

Carl Jung in his work on brands gives a psychological tone to the power of brands name on consumer by connecting this effect to the four functions of the mind: *thinking, sensation, feeling and intuition (Temporal. P, 1999)*. Brands name influence on consumer buying decision is referred as the "power of brand names". Thus, "consumer buying decisions to buy is influenced by brand names in any of the above ways, which are connected to one function of the mind, or through combinations of them, sometimes with tremendous persuasive appeal". Brands are also successful because people prefer them to ordinary products. In addition to the psychological factors already mentioned, brands give consumers the means whereby they can make choices and judgments thus reduce the risk of failure in purchase. (Temporal.P,1999).

More than a mere name, the power of the brand name is also closely linked to the identity of it´s creator. This is better perceived in the top tier of the fashion industry. For example, inspired by its creator, Yves Saint Laurent's brand identity is that of a feminine, self-assured and strong-minded 30-year-old woman. In this fashion, "the "*YSL*" brand celebrates the beauty of body, charm, surrender to romance which is flavoured with a hint of ostentatious indecency. This relationship between a brand and its creator can last far beyond the death of its creator. Kapferer (1998; p.86) described it as follow: **"**The golden rule, therefore, is never to compromise on the brand's set of values or its deeply rooted identity trait. The brand is a living memory (of the founder)."

3.2 Clothing choice criteria

Being different in taste, value, aspirations and expectations for fashion every consumer is naturally assumed to have a different set of criteria when choosing clothes. Davis et al, defined clothing choice criteria as "the intrinsic (inherent to the product) and extrinsic (product-related, but not part of the physical product) product attributes that associated with desired benefits or incurred costs as consumers make buying decision among clothing alternatives (Davis, 1985, Hatch and Roberts, 1985, Eckman et al., 1990, Hawkins et al., 1995, Forney et al., 1999)".

Table 4. Summary of Findings from 21 Studies of Clothing Choice Criteria. Adapted from: Eckman, M., Damhorst, M.L. and Kadolph, S.J. (1990) "Toward a model of the in-store purchase decision process: consumer use of criteria for evaluating women's apparel", Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, Vol. 8 (2), pp.13-22.

Extrinsic criteria	Intrinsic criteria
Price	**Product composition**
Brand	Style
Country of origin	Colour / Design
Store; Store image	Fabric
Coordination with wardrobe	Appearance
Salesperson's evaluation	Fibre content
Department in store	**Product performance**
Approval of others	Care
Warranty	Fit / Sizing
	Durability
	Comfort
	Safety
	Colourfastness
	Quality
	Construction / Workmanship
	Physical
	Fabric
	Sex (gender) appropriateness.

However, "since the critical characteristics of apparel can always determine its ultimate purchase acceptance or rejection by consumers (Sproles, 1979), the criteria that consumers use in clothing purchase decisions have long been regarded as an important issue for investigation in many previous consumer behavioural studies". Eckman et al. (1990) have summarized the criteria that influence consumers' evaluation of apparel products in 21 clothing related studies from 1971 to 1988 into 35 extrinsic and 52 intrinsic attributes (Table 4)

3.3 Buyer decision-making process - a general overview

The human is on a daily basis engaged in a consuming prey; it consumes things of daily use, buys these necessities and object of its desire according to its preference and buying power. From the moment that need or want is acknowledged to the point is satisfied, consumer goes through a long and complex process that researchers in the field of consumer behaviour have named decision making process (DMP). What it buys, how it buys, where and when it buys, etc.; depends on its perception, self concept, social and cultural background, age, family cycle, attitude, beliefs, etc., and many other factors that are both internal and external to every individual.

According to Reason (1990), decision-making can be regarded as "the mental processes (cognitive process) resulting in the selection of a course of action among several alternative scenarios thus every single decision making process produces an output, which can either be an action or an opinion of choice (Reason, 1990)".

Human performance in decision terms has been the subject of active research from various and interesting perspectives. For example, Kahneman et al (200) argued that: "from a psychological perspective, it is necessary to examine individual decisions in the context of a set of needs, preferences whilst in a cognitive perspective, the decision making process must be regarded as a continuous process integrated in the interaction with the environment". Yet, at another level, it might be regarded as a problem solving activity, which is terminated when

a satisfactory solution is reached. Therefore purchase decision-making can be assumed to be a reasoning or emotional process which can be rational or irrational.

The Engell-Kollatt model in figure 4 below is probably the most cited model on consumer decision-making and it describes how the consumer arrives at point of purchase. According to the authors of the model consumers are engaged through all stages during the process and in every purchase. However, "the model is not linear in that sense that in more routine purchases, customers can skip or reverse some of the stages. Left side on the model are the stages in the consumer decision-making process, and the corresponding right side are the internal psychological processes the consumer experiences along the way.

Figure 4. Consumer Decision making Process (jeffreytalagic.com).

Another way to look at consumer decision-making is through the level of involvement the consumer has in the decision. A common way consumer theorists have classified it, is into high- and low-involvement purchases. However, the level of involvement in the buying process in any case deeply depends on the person, the purchased items, the time and place of purchase.

3.4 Decision making process for luxury fashion brand

The DMP (decision Making process) structure and process for luxury fashion consumers do not differ from the consumer of FCMG. In spite of the fact that the values, emotions, perception, needs, expectations of the consumers involved in this case may differ. This difference is mainly due to the level of involvement, which in turn is due to the high price set of the goods involved. According to Easey (2009), "it would be useful to break the larger decision down into several separate decisions that collectively comprise the buy or no buy decision". For instance fashion consumers must decide the following matters: How to find out about new styles? What style, color and size to buy? Where to buy? How to pay? When to buy? How many items to buy? Will any accessories need to be purchased? Whether to shop alone or accompanied? Which sales assistant to approach for help? What to do if the product is unsatisfactory?

Pinheiro (2008) argued that one of the principal drivers of consumer behavior towards fashion apparel is the dominance of social interactions, so the involvement of consumers in fashion products depends not only on their own perceptions but also on peers' response to their personality and change proneness. The relation between clothes and identity is perceived by the consumers from the perspective of their values generated in various social interactions. Some consumers get involved in exhibiting fashion and lifestyle as an aesthetic way of presenting their personality, hence, clothing become an opportunity for these consumers to communicate a new order of their identity. Bianci (2002) recognized both a cognitive and affective incentives in the process. Throughout, consumer decision on buying fashion apparel is also governed by the price sensitivity factor to a large extent at the exception of consumers buying only prestigious brands, which are assumed to have sustainable incomes.

3.5 Young Consumer's Decision-making

The growing phenomenon of globalization, multiculturalism, development of social networks sites have triggered and encouraged young people of different nationalities from all over the World to move, live, study and at the extreme settle in a foreign country, communicating with new numerical technologies and intermixing with each other. For young Europeans students for example this internationalization and possibility to move all over the world to study, gain experience, learn new things is made possible by bilateral Universities agreements and program financed by the European Union such as Erasmus (*European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, see picture 8*).

Picture 8. Young students from all over the world doing their Erasmus exchange in Germany (Source: young-germany.de).

This common drive for mobility by young students coupled with their high exposure to the same mass media such as MTV, advertisements billboards and others social networks from which they get their influences give them a sense of unity, same shared values, same tribe spirit which is extroverted in their taste for fashion and way of dressing up. Simoes et al. (2008) referred to this young generation by the term " millennial generation". Millennials have

been intertwined with the Internet. The Internet has a profound influence in their views of communication (Russell, 2002). Having used these technologies since childhood, most of Millennials have become accustomed to depending on their laptops, cell phones, instant messaging, e-mail, the web, and interactive media in almost all aspects of their lives (Hawkins 2001). This life-style influences the patterns of consumption that are typical of this generation, as depicted on Figure 4 and Table 5.
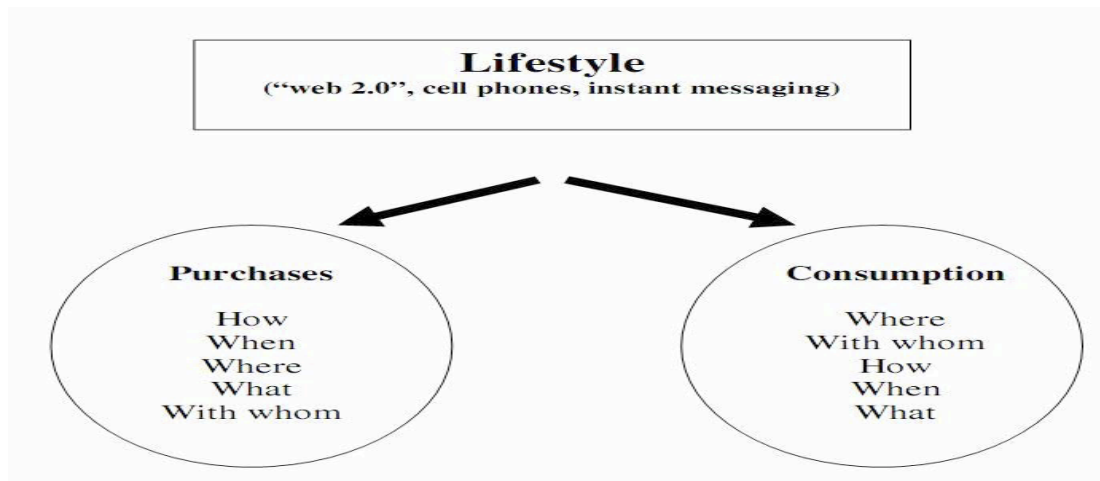

Figure 5. Young people lifestyle and patterns of consumption. (Hawkins, D.I., Best, R.J., Coney, K.A., 2001,Consumer behaviour, 8th edition, New York, U.S.A.: McGraw-Hill, p. 436)

Table 5. Lifestyle of "Millennials" according to McMahon and Pospsil (2005).

Information Connectedness	Ubiquitous rapid information access, as an integral part of their lives
Multitasking	Millennials perceive themselves as having a need of coordinating several aspects of their lives at once
Focus on Immediacy	This generation manifests a general low tolerance to delays, due to their experiences with fast internet access and powerful personal computers

Most studies analysing consumer behaviour have fundamentally focused on adults (Engel, Blackwell and Kollat, 1978; Davis, 1976) and their findings have generally not been transferable to young people. More research on young consumer behavior is therefore necessary, as argued by various authors (e.g., Darian, 1998; Hogg et al., 1998). Young people and student's consumption and purchase patterns are relevant issues for marketers and policy makers due to the size of their demographics and because they represent and symbolize the future. McNeal (1999), from a financial point of view, recognized the importance of the behaviour of young people given their significant spending despite their dependence on government's grants or parental financial aids from the perspective that they frequently represent the pioneers of new social and consumption trends. It is also important to mention the increasing autonomy of these individuals' purchase decisions, as well as young people's influence in the purchase decisions of others (Lackman and Lanasa, 1993, Armstrong and Kotler, 2000).

Authors such as Hite and Hite (1994) highlight the link between the age of consumers and the concept of loyalty has a bearing on the importance of analyzing this group, because according to them "when a firm gains a young consumer who is loyal to the brand, they will remain loyal for a long period of time, if not all of his or her lifetime". For example as Loudon and Della Bitta (1995) stated, more of the 30% of the brand used by adult women are the same they used when they were young.

The simple model of consumer behaviour, proposed by Kotler (2000) in figure five reveals several aspects related to stimuli and consumer decision process as integrated, "this

framework unfold the consuming behaviour of young students as the result of the interplay between marketing and other stimuli, buyer's own characteristics, and the cognitive/affective aspects related to the decision process (Simoes et al. 2008)".

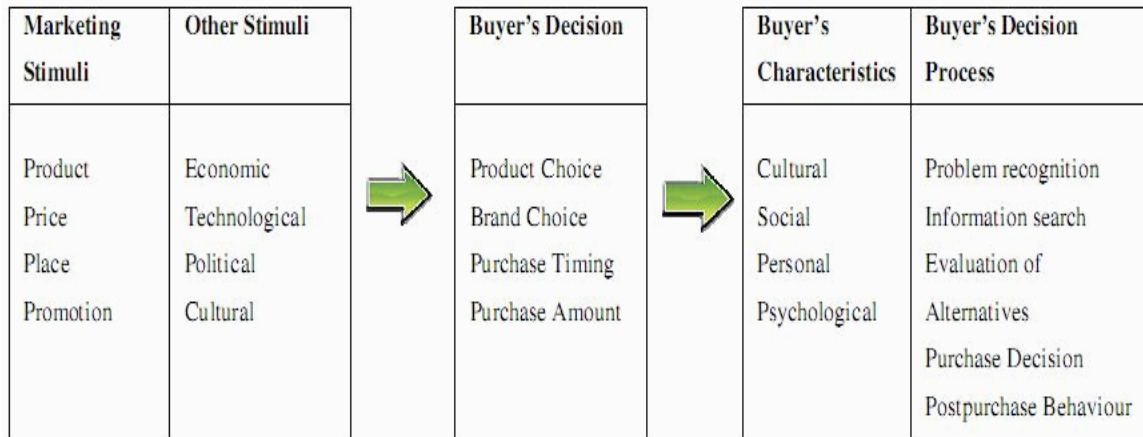| Marketing Stimuli	Other Stimuli		Buyer's Decision		Buyer's Characteristics	Buyer's Decision Process
Product	Economic		Product Choice		Cultural	Problem recognition
Price	Technological		Brand Choice		Social	Information search
Place	Political		Purchase Timing		Personal	Evaluation of
Promotion	Cultural		Purchase Amount		Psychological	Alternatives
						Purchase Decision
						Postpurchase Behaviour

Figure. 6- A theoretical model of buyer behaviour (Kotler, P., 2000, Marketing management, Millennium edition, U.S.A.: Prentice-Hall, p. 161.)

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Methodology

This chapter gives an insight of the research process, which includes the research method and possible collateral opportunities attached to it, defines the research objective and finally laydown its designs. Furthermore, the approach selected for the study will be justified. The choice of qualitative and quantitative research method for this thesis will be presented including the advantages and the disadvantages of both methods.

4.1.1 Research Process

Following illustration shows the steps of the research process conducted in this thesis:

Define the problem or opportunity ➡ state the research objective ➡ develop a research design ➡ prepare for data collection➡ collect the data➡ analyse the data ➡ present the research report.
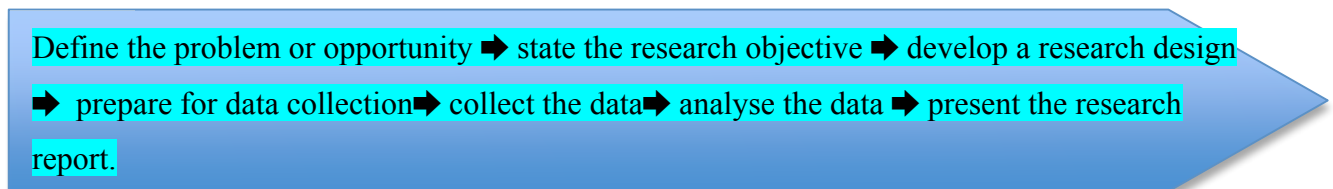
Figure 7. Research process (Shao, 2002, p.37).

4.1.2 Problem or Opportunity definition

Many studies have suggested that people buying luxury products do so not only because of the luxury brand's distinguished design and superior quality, according to Baugh and Davis (1989) and Solomon and Rabolt (2004) consumers also purchase luxury brands because they can confer a perceived higher social status to their owner. Although, the extra value luxury products can confer on their owner has been well examined, there is a lack of close studies on

young students between the ages of 17-30. The objective of this study therefore was to find out the reasons behind students' purchase and preference for luxury fashion branded products over cheaper main street fashion or knockoffs and to understand youngsters DMP and attitudes towards luxury fashion. Therefore the main research questions for the current study is: In the list of fashion brand comprising luxury, premium and main streets fashion brands, what are the respondents favourite(s) brand(s)? How long have they used their favourite(s) fashion brand(s), have they ever bought the knockoff of their favourite(s) brand(s) and if not, why?

The problem of this thesis is thus defined as following: Due to increased competition, clouds of uncertainty in economic and financial realms and democratization of fashion; most luxury and premium brands have extended their prestigious brands in booming Asian and South American markets to make more profits; main streets fashion brands and knockoffs have invaded their European and North-American stronghold. However, the luxury fashion goods sector has proven to be resilient and even outperforming most other FMCG areas during the economic recession, but company like Inditex (mother company of Zara) and H&M for example have respectively used the opportunity to step into the market of luxury fashion with brands such as Zara or H&M (collection by Karl Lagerfeld or Sonya Rykiel) which appeal to young people being rich or not.

The problem definition has led to the research question: Why do consumers (students in this study) prefer to buy a well –known or luxury fashion brands instead of knockoffs or technically speaking cheaper generically branded identical goods even having tight financial conditions?

4.1.3 Research objective

After the description of the problem and the aim of the study, following objectives have been determined:

1. To identify the role fashion plays in respondents life
2. To investigate what constitutes a brand and further brand loyalty
3. To give insight into the psychological influences fashion has on respondents
4. Investigate and determine respondents loyalty to their luxury and premium fashion brands
5. Unfold respondents attitudes towards luxury fashion brands and their perceptions of the brands
6. Identify the reason behind respondent's negative attitude towards knockoffs.

Taking in considerations that most of the academics and theoretical sources used in the literature review are from the 90s, the research throughout the survey (conducted on youngsters of the 21st century) findings gives an opportunity to unfold the perceptions of two different generations on brand, fashion and luxury fashion.

4.1.4 Research design

The research design is built around primary and secondary data. "*Secondary data is the data that have been already collected by and readily available from other sources and or for some other purpose than the research project at hand (Burns and Bush, p.134)*".

As such, it is quickly obtainable though it requires a great deal of time to assemble, analyse and use as backing up evidence of any study, research or thesis. Thus the thesis has centred on different sources of academic literature on branding, fashion, and consumer buyer behaviour such as books, journals, newspaper articles, electronic databases and the Internet. The secondary data served as a direction giver to the researcher in his task of primary data collection in a manner that it made it easier to identify key issues. " Primary data refers to the information that is developed or gathered by the researcher specifically for the research project at hand (Burns and Bush, p.134)". Academics suggest that there is a choice to be made between quantitative and qualitative research method, however practical research design

implements both elements, because both elements are complementary (Baker, 1991, p.32).

It can be difficult, and sometimes unnecessary, to distinguish the *qualitative* or *quantitative* approach. Description can for instance be reached through both methods. Thus, a distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods can complicate more than it elucidates (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). The main part of today's research, are somewhere in between these two extreme points. (Patel & Davidson, 2003).

For this study a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research is chosen. Quantitative data is obtained via a common survey referring to luxury fashion brands. The questionnaire or survey is based on the non-probability sampling methods, the researcher justify this choice by the fact that the method is less time consuming and free. Therefore a survey was designed on survey monkey surveymonkey.com then sent to students who are the author's own friends Facebook wall. The problem with this procedure is that it does not provide in-depth information about people´s attitudes, motivation and behaviours at the moment they issue the purchase.

4.2 Research limitations

The survey scope was limited due to several reasons, one of which is the limited number of respondents 100 (imposed by the survey site, because the analysis 300 answers has designed by the author would have be sanctioned by payment) which is not sufficient to make a general assumption on a topic such as fashion (requires bigger population) which is subjective and a matter of taste. No respondents were 17 of age or under. This segment is important to understand younger student attitudes and behaviour towards fashion and luxury for young student at high school are showing a great interest in fashion due to the high pressure they are under from their pairs and the media through exposure to role model. It can be assumed that both younger and more mature students are interested in fashion and have experienced luxury fashion considering they involvement in taking the survey.

The survey could not also reflect all the reasons why students were buying luxurious brands despite their low income, reasons that could have been linked to their upbringing, family influence, social network, etc. This could not be discussed further due to the limited word count of this work. Blind test could not also be conducted as planned by the author to further unfold the emotion driven choice and perception of sample population (young students) on luxury fashion brands, due to the fact that the author was residing abroad (in Utrera a small town close to Seville in the Spanish region of Andalucía).

The aim with a survey is often to gather information about a representative selection of the population. The gathered information will then be used in order to describe results that are representative for the entire population. This sort of study might be the source of some evident problems. The selection must be representative for the population. It is important to carry out a thorough analysis in order to decide which characteristics of the population that are going to be representative in the selection. When formulating the questions the process must secure that the questions mean the same to all the respondents. (Bell, 2006).

5 FINDINGS

The survey is an online survey designed on the free survey site: www.surveymonkey.com. Its comprised 17 questions, which were, send to students (young in their early 20s and late 30s) friends of the author. The questions were developed in order to find out the sample population inclination towards fashion, perceptions on branded fashion and attitudes towards knockoffs.
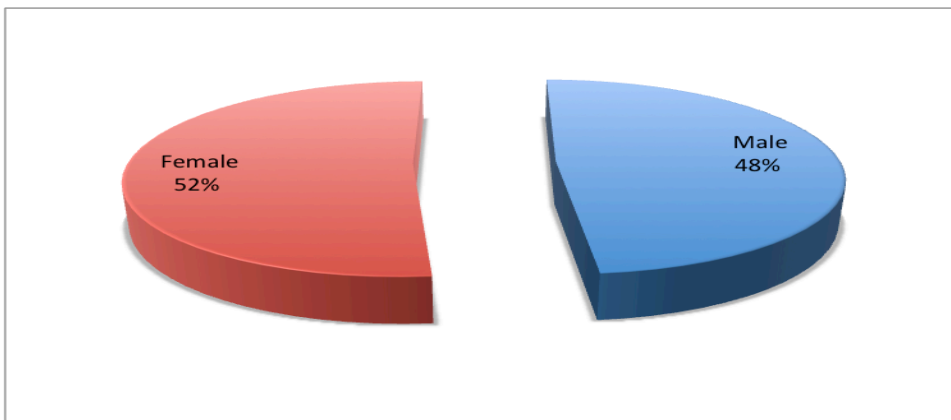

 Figure 8. Question 1: What is your gender?

The population of the survey is made of 52% of female and 48% of male for 100 respondents to the survey. Thus both male and female students are equally interested in fashion matters.
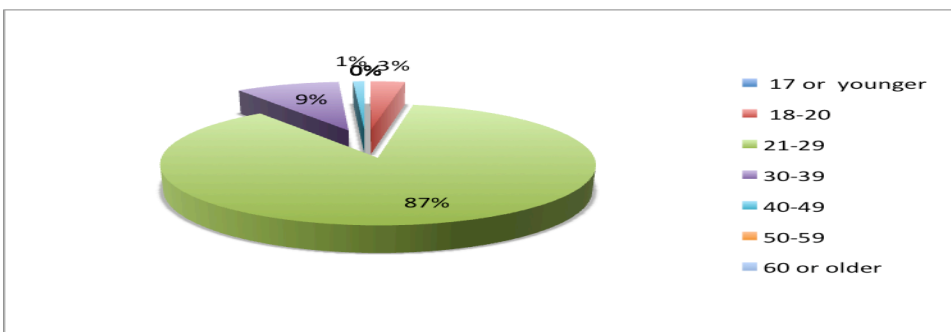

Figure 9. Question 2: Which category below includes your age?

Most respondents (87%) were aged between 21-29 years. The second largest group (9%) was a category in their early 30´s to 39 years, followed by (3%) between 18 and 20 years. Only a slim 1% was between 40-49years. No one was 17 or younger neither 60 nor older.
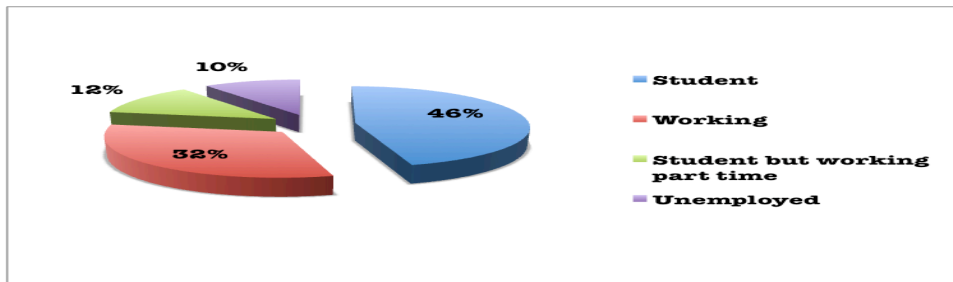

Figure 10. Question 3: What is your current situation?

46% of the respondents were students whereas 32% were holding a job. Another 12 % indicated to be full time student having a side job while the 12% remaining respondents were unemployed.
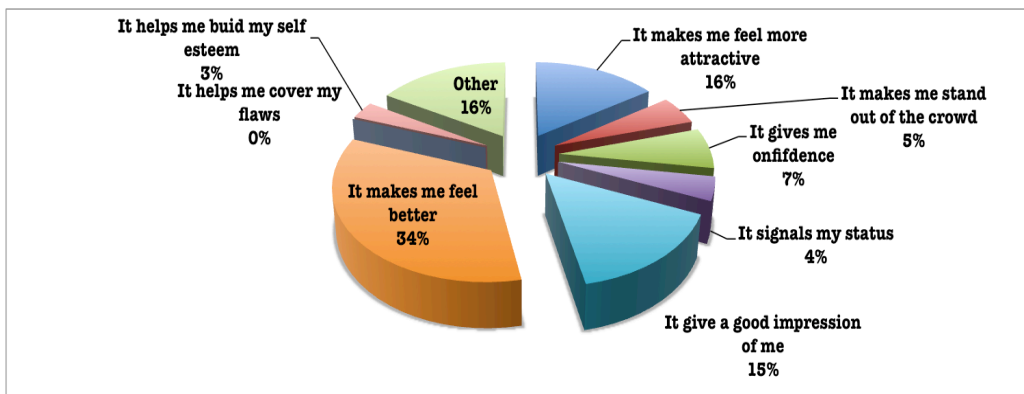

Figure 11. Question 4. For which of the following reasons if any, do you buy fashion (clothes, shoes, accessories)?

Students were primarily buying fashion goods to feel better (34%), while 16% claim to buy the goods to feel more attractive and another 15% to give a good impression of them. Sixteen per cent (16%) of respondents were buying for other reasons that are not provided. Whereas

Seven per cent (7%) buy fashion to feel confident followed by 5% who those wanting to stand out of in the crowd 5% and 4% of respondents make purchases as a means to signal their status 4%. Finally 3% of respondents buy fashion items did it to help build their self-esteem. No respondents suggested buying fashion items as a means to and none to cover their flaws.
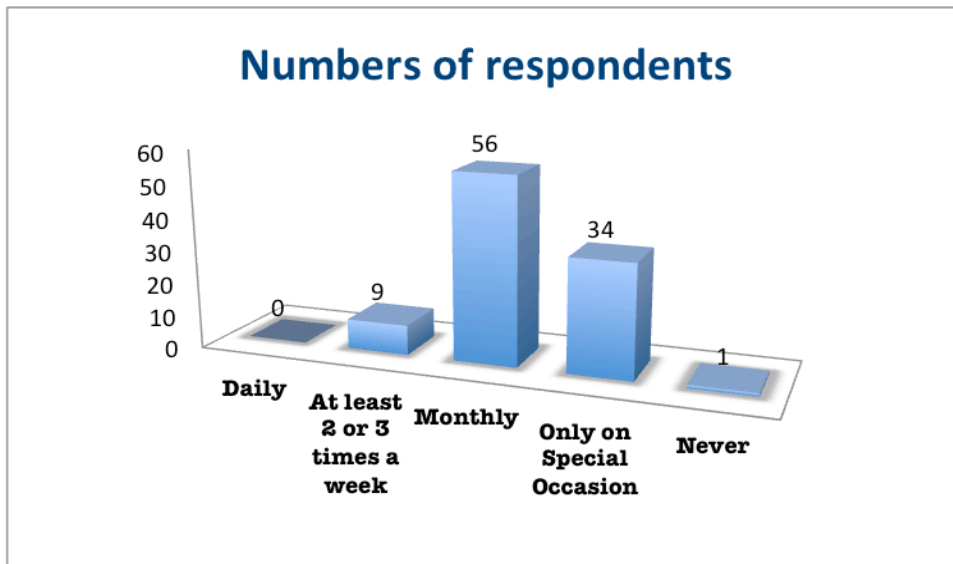

Figure 12. Question 5: How often do you buy fashion (clothes, shoes, accessories)?

The majority of the students which is more than half of the respondents (56%) bought fashion on the monthly base. 34% bought fashion items on special occasions and 9% more frequently 2 or 3 times a week.
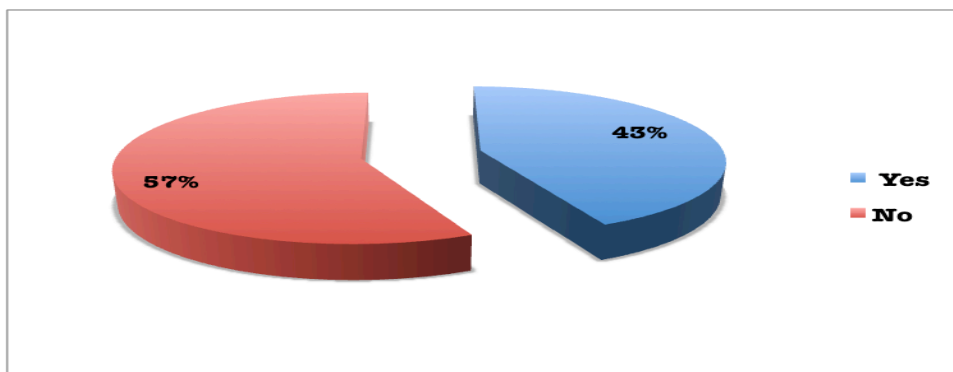
Figure 13. Question 6: Do you have a distinctive favourite fashion brand?

57% indicated having a favourite fashion brand whereas the 43% others no.
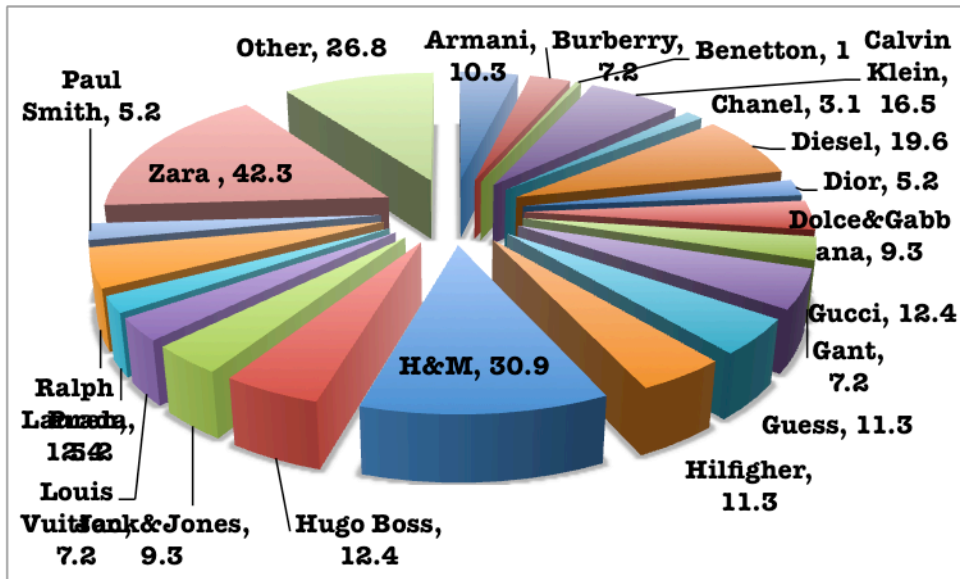
Figure 14. Question 7: Which one of the following ones would you consider your favourite brand?

Zara and H&M, which are classified as high street brand, were the favourite brand of the respondents with respectively 42,5% and 30.9%. However premium brands such Diesel (19,6%), Hilfiger (11,3%) Calvin Klein (16,5%) and Ralph Lauren (12,5%) came as second. Gucci (12,4%), Hugo Boss (12,4%) and Dolce&Gabbana (9,3%) were the only luxury brands to score high.
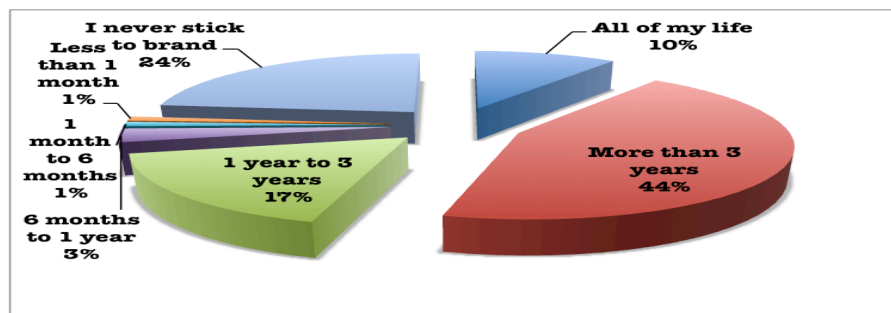
Figure 15. Question 8: How long have you been using your favourite brand?

Almost the half (44%) has been using their favourite brands for a period of more than five years. The second largest group (24%) never stuck to brand followed by 17% who have using for one to three years. Finally 10% have using for almost all of their life whereas a minority of 5% has been using it for a period of time going from one month to one year.
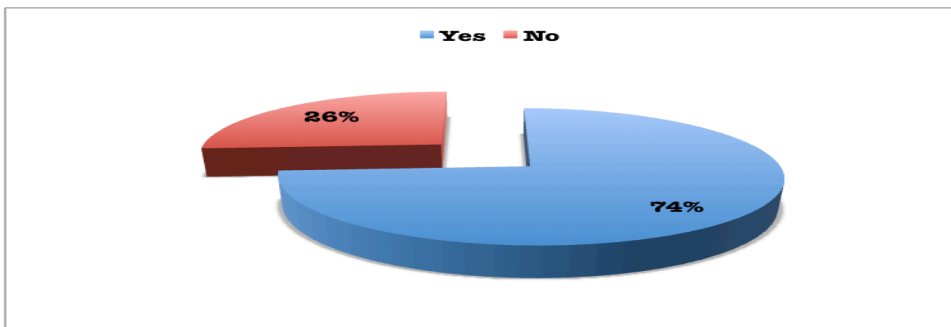
Figure 16: Question 9: Have you ever bought luxury fashion brands?

74% indicated buying luxury products whilst 26% never experienced.
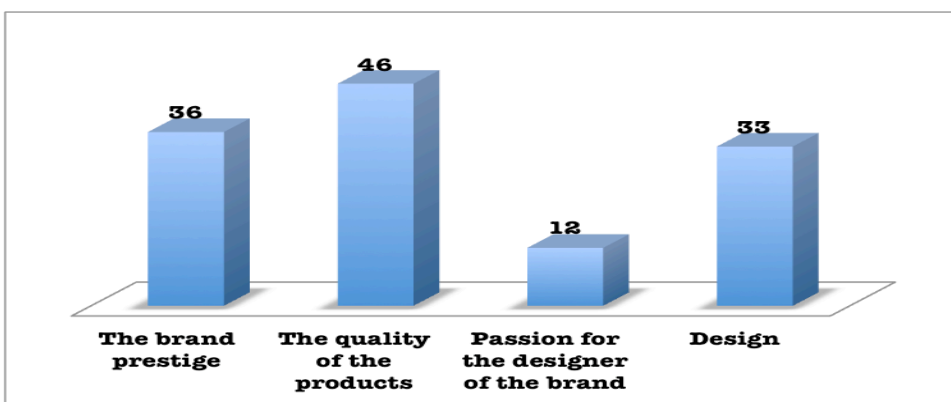
Figure 17. Question 10: Which of the following reasons helped you in the buying decision?

The vast majority was buying luxury fashion respectively for the quality of the products (46%), the brand prestige (36%) and the design (33%). A minority of 12% sided for the passion of the brand main designer.
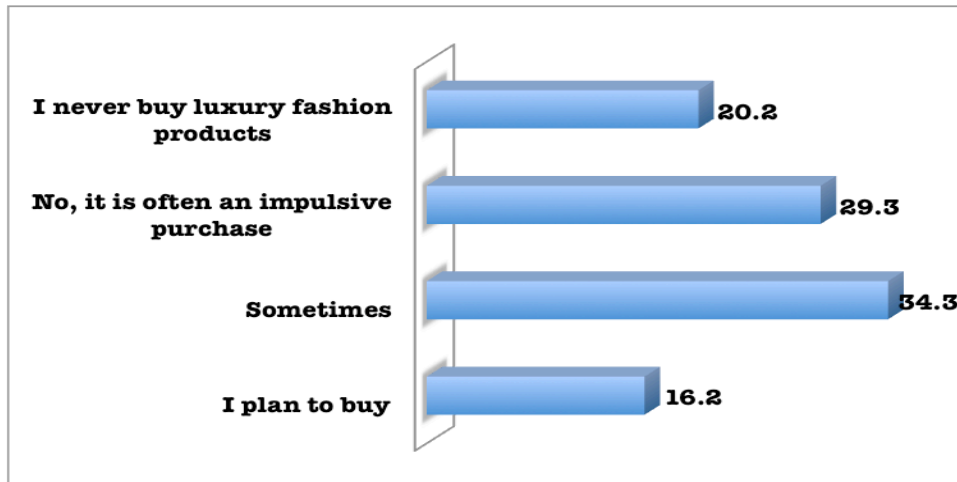
Figure 18. Question 11: Do you intend to buy luxury fashion before going to a store?

Only 16, 2% of the respondents plan beforehand the purchase of luxury fashion before entering the store, whereas 34, 5% does it at time and 29, 3% claiming it to be impulsive. The last 20 indicated never purchasing.
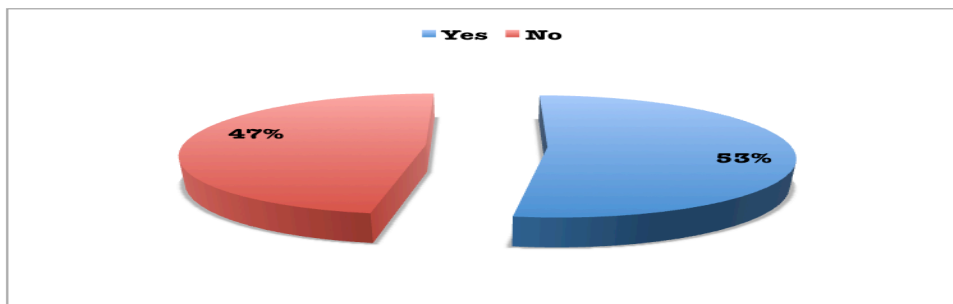
Figure 19. Question 12: Do you believe that luxury fashion brands have better value for money than other fashion brands?

53% of the respondents believed that luxury fashion brands offer better value for money whilst 47% are not convinced of it.
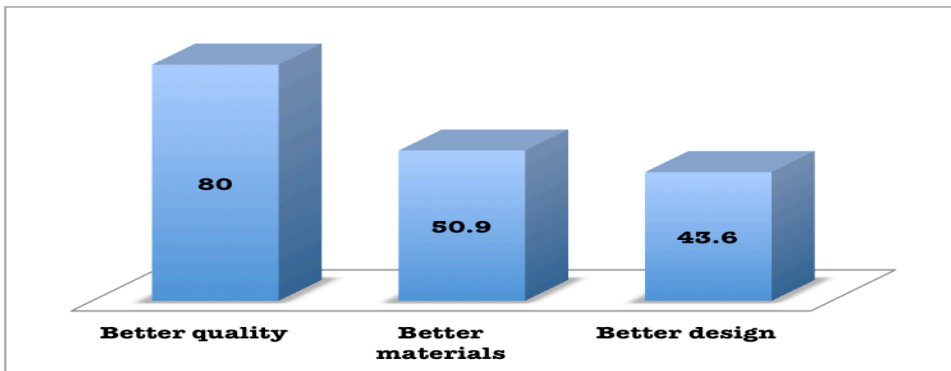
Figure 20. Question 13: If yes, what makes you think so?

The majority of respondents 44 from 100 believe that quality is what differentiates luxury fashion brand from others whereas 28 swear in better materials and the rest in better design.
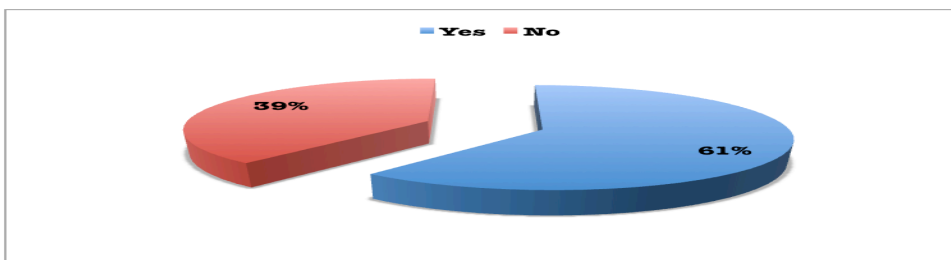
Figure 21. Question 14: Do you think that people with low income for e.g. students should buy luxury fashion brands?

61% of the respondents estimate that low incomes should go for luxury fashion brands against 39% against it.

Figure 22. Question 15: Which of these reasons, if any, do you think make people with low income (e.g. students) purchase luxury fashion brands?

The majority of students 51% and 50% indicate that the desire to show off, feel rich and important influence low income purchase of luxury fashion. 27% argued brand victim and12% snobbism.
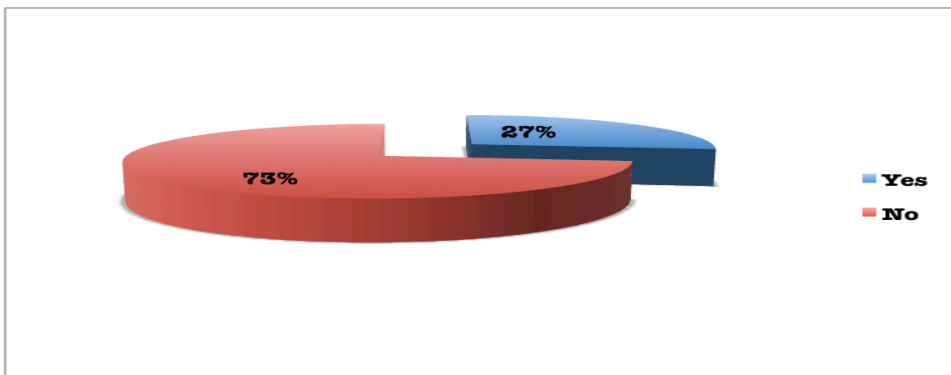
Figure 23. Question 16: Have you ever bought the knockoff of your favourite brand?

Students in their vast majority (73%) have not boughs their favourites luxury fashion brands knockoffs whereas 27% have tried them.
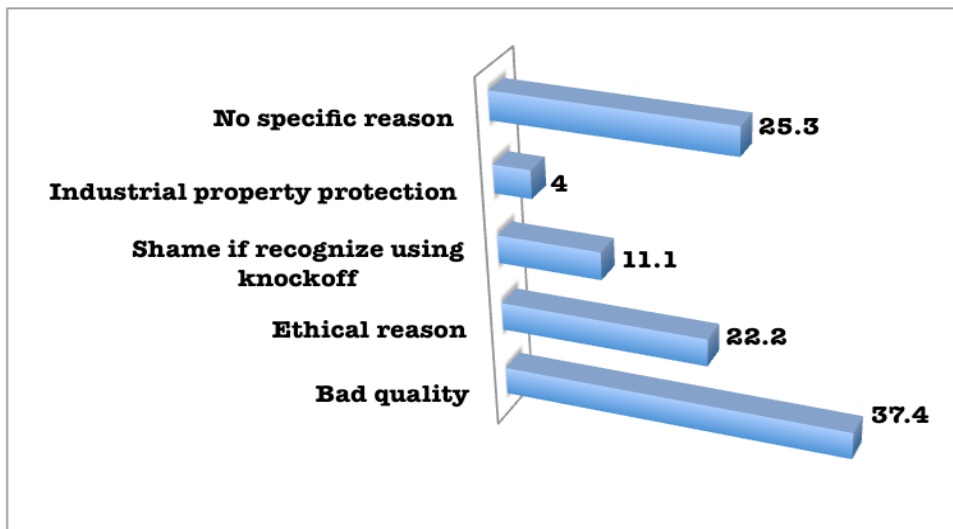
Figure 24. Question 17: What are the reasons why you would never buy luxury brands knockoffs?

Bad quality (37,4%) is the main reason for students negative attitude towards knockoffs followed by ethical reason (22,2%), fear of losing face and finally industrial property protection (4%). 22,5% would not buy knockoffs for other reasons not elucidated here.

6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The compiled data collected from the consumer studies and short summarizes of the chosen theories. This data is applied on the theoretical framework in order to focus on the purpose of this study. In contrast to earlier chapters of the study, this chapter contains plain facts, but also personal reflections.

Assumption 1

As a consequence of the economic crisis both value for money and price has become a major determinant-influencing consumer buying behaviour. Consumers and specially students with low income are thus, more likely to buy high street fashion brands than luxurious ones.

Despite the economic and financial crisis the luxury fashion industry balance sheet and coming years previsions according to the *Fashion and Luxury Insight 2011* (Todesco. F, 2011) remained positive showing signs of recovery and increasing sales. However for fashion consumers who are students or students with a part time job, which age ranges between 20-39 years the preference of purchase goes to high street fashion brands (question 7) which quality and design is not far from upper tier luxury fashion brands still twice or thrice cheaper than them. Thus confirming that price and value for money is the main determinant-influencing consumer particularly students buying behaviour in time like this. The results of question (7) clearly show that students fancy more the alternatives to high end luxury brands like Zara or H&M despite they acknowledgment of high end luxury fashion being better value for money (question 12) or of better quality (question 13), thus emphasizing the importance of the price factor over quality for this segment in their purchase decision.

Responses to question 14 further emphasize the importance of price as 61% states that low-income people like them should not purchase luxury fashion brands due to their elevated prices. Purchase frequency may also enhance the importance of price, as heavy shoppers purchase fashion at a rate of two (2) to three (3) times a week, however the majority buys fashion items monthly (question 5).

Importantly this challenges Aaker´s (1991, p.8) notion that "a consumer is willing to pay a premium price for quality". On the one hand 74% of students (question 9) tried or bought at some point of their student´s life luxury fashion brands although the vast majority (question 14) thought that they should not purchase them, on the other hand and in spite of their financial restrain and weak buying power students are still onerous towards knockoffs because they are perceived to have poor quality, unethical and exposing to shame (question 17). High street fashion brands consequently appear to be the best alternative for quality and price.

This connotes that consumers in general and students in particular are not willing to pay a premium price for luxury fashion brands, as the price difference is too big and unbearable for their wallet.

Assumption 2

A purchase towards fashion particularly luxury fashion is among other factors an attempt, an opportunity for communicating a new order or identity of a person. Buying and wearing the wrong fashion brands lead to the opposite effect of feeling uncomfortable, sparking to a loss of self-confidence. Hence the involvement towards fashion purchase tends to be high.

Young people and students are more interested in being distinctive and feeling better 34% through fashion. They use fashion to give a good impression of themselves 15% and to attract and get the attention of the opposite sex 16% (question 4). All these are hints for the growing importance convey to physical appearance, attractiveness and well being in this millennium. Nevertheless a slim fraction of students will use luxury fashion and fashion in general to boost confidence 7%, stand out 5% and communicate their status or achievements 4% (question 4). 50% attest planning or considering before hand at certain level the purchase of luxury fashion before setting their feet in a store (question 11), giving evidence to the assumption that involvement in the decision making process is high despite the 29, 3% respondents who claims acting on their feeling of the moment question (11).

Assumption 3

Due to the increasing democratization of fashion, brands switching tends to be high.
Indeed students like to try new brands as 24% claimed to never stick to a specific brand. However students do build preference and swear loyalty to fashion brands, particularly luxurious ones based on their ability to deliver quality, prestige and respect.

Loyalty for fashion brands among young students lasted up to more than 3 years (question 8). Additionally some students 10% (question 8) claim to have used their favourite brands for almost all of their life thus confirming Hite and Hite (1994) assumption that a "consumer gained at the young age remains for a long period of time if not all the life time".

Another important finding is the confirmation of the existence of brand loyalty. This becomes obvious when comparing the outcomes of question 6, 8 and 16. When asking students to select their favourite brands, Zara and H&M received the highest vote number (respondents were able to tick more than 1 brand, question 7.). This situation is explained by the squeezed buying power of the respondents and the affordance of the high scoring brands mentioned. Nevertheless, luxury fashion brands such as Gucci, Hugo Boss, Dolce&Gabbana, Louis Vuitton, etc., with their combined scores of almost 50% reflects the meaning and loyalty that students have towards luxury fashion brands.

These preferences are likely to be the results of effective brand awareness, strong brand equity and a positive brand image. Latter relates to the image of a status symbol consumers often aspire to. The strong brand equity is measured through:

a. High perceived quality (question 10 and 13)
b. Better value for money (question 12)
c. Strong brand loyalty (question 8)

According to Aaker (1991,p.39) "brand loyalty is a measure to the attachment that a customer has to a brand". This definition however does not automatically imply the purchase of any

item belonging to the brand. And as such consumers can in fact be loyal to be a brand without ever experienced it before (the emotional relation of consumer and brand).

CONCLUSION

The luxury segment has been resilient to economic and financial downturn. Luxury fashion in particular and the prestigious brands making the industry have proved their ability to adapt to circumstances and changing economical paradigm by expanding to emergent markets and through extension of their brands in order to attract, cater the need and fulfil the desire of new types of customers. Premium and high street fashion brands have recognized the opportunities within the upper tier luxury market consequently many have established their own luxury lines and brands. In the face of young people (e.g. students), consumers with restricted purchasing power; the brands have focused on offering good value for money with a strategy based on following the trends, designs and at some extent copying the model of "haute couture" designers.

According to the primary data students have adopted these premium and high street brands while still purchasing more expensive luxurious brands time-to-time depending on their financial condition of the moment. The aim, then, of this thesis was to identify how high street and premium fashion brands achieve this market segment loyalty, with a particular focus on branding, in order to provide more expensive luxurious brands with possible recommendations on how to reach more effectively young students.

The study revealed that students and consumers are characterized by limited capacity and bereft time to acquire extensive product information despite the huge amount of time they spend in front of their computers. Thus, for the sake of minimizing cognitive effort and complexity in decision-making, they adopt a selective strategy and form a choice set of brands that will receive a steady consideration for purchase. Consequently it becomes primordial for

luxury marketer to get their brands into this choice array by interrupting consumer automatic problem solving process.

Like the cosmetic industry, the fashion industry is subject to the dictatorship of advertisement that creates awareness by delivering mostly unachievable beauty and good appearance images to young people. This strategy seems to work in financial point of view because it drives up sales, as consumers aspire to those beauty, fashion and style ideals. Upper tier luxury fashion brands should focus on attaching a psychological meaning to their brand such as " self-expression" which is one of the main reasons why fashion are actually purchased (question 4). For Aaker (2006, p. 207), argued, " consumers will perceive those stimuli that cater to their needs both psychological and emotional, than those which do not".

Price however plays an important role in consumers' buyer behaviour, regardless of their status for three reasons. Firstly because it can provide a functional sustainable advantage in terms of image, differentiation and symbolism as consumers tend to associate high prices with high and better quality. Secondly, it helps to position brand as good value for money in consumer mind thus enhances brand equity. Finally it reduces buying frequency which is prejudicial to brand survival financially talking. Students, however, are buying high street fashion brands as a compromise between quality and price due to those brands improve quality and integrated elements in design and model of upper- tier luxury fashion.

It is therefore suggested that prestigious luxury fashion brands start seriously to consider creating extension of their existing brands, that will be, dedicated to youngers consumers taking in consideration their limited income. Nowadays, consumers in general no longer simply buy product that rely solely on value for money for they buy self-expression, ethical values, personalities and deeply embedded aspirations like " a better world for all".

Brands are no longer "lifeless, manipulated artefacts" but "living entities with personalities that act as an extension to the self, offering aesthetics identity, meaning and structure to life (Ballantyne et al, 2005)". Therefore the prestigious luxury fashion brands should connect with

youngsters by focusing on interacting with them via emotionally charged images that they will connect and identify to as they presumably affect consumer behaviour much better. "Symbolic metaphorical advertising which elicits an emotional, intuitive response has the potential to tap into the deepest, most enduring substance of human psycho (Batey, 2008, p. 212).

The buyer behaviour patterns identified in this thesis for young students can to some extent apply to other industries as well. Consumers in most purchase situations rely on familiar and accessible brands with a high probability to purchase the brands they have experienced or heard of in the past.

If the author were engaged in the process of writing this thesis again more emphasis would be put to elucidate specific brand characteristics and elements that differentiate high street brands such as Zara and H&M from more luxurious brands like Gucci or Guess. What especially influenced survey respondents brand classification, recognition and choice? Was money the only motivator behind respondents' large choice of high street brands as their favourite or other consideration that could not be elucidated here? Also an attempt would have been made to find out the strongest indicators for brand quality as 80% of all respondents specify that quality was an important actor in their perception of luxury fashion. However it has been proved that brand perception, image and equity play an important role in the decision making process within fashion industry.

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1. What is your gender?

Male ❍   Female❍

2. Which category includes your age

17 or younger ❍   18- 20❍   21-29❍   30- 39❍

 40- 49 ❍   50- 59❍   60 or older ❍

3. What is your current situation?

Student ❍   Working ❍   Student but part-time working❍   Unemployed ❍

 4. **For which of the following reasons if any, do you buy fashion (clothes, shoes, accessories)**

It makes me feel better ❍   It helps me build my self-esteem❍   It helps me cover my flaws ❍
It makes me feel more attractive ❍   It makes me stand out of the crowd ❍
 It gives me confidence ❍   It signals my status ❍   It gives good impression of me ❍
Others ❍

 5. **How often do you buy fashion (clothes, shoes, accessories)?**

Daily ❍   At least 2 or 3 times a week❍   Monthly❍ Only on special occasion❍ Never❍

 6. **Do you have a distinct fashion brand?**

Yes❍   No ❍

7. Which one of the following one(s) would you consider your favourite brand?

Zara ❍ H&M❍ Ralph Lauren❍ Hugo Boss ❍ Hilfiger ❍   Guess ❍   Gucci ❍

Gant ❍   D&G ❍   Dior ❍   Diesel ❍   Tiger of Sweden ❍   Chanel❍   C&K❍

Armani ❍   Benetton ❍   Burberry ❍   Paul Smith ❍   Jack&Jones ❍

8. How long have you been using your favourite brand(s)

All of my life ❍   Less than 1 month ❍   1 month to 6 months ❍

6months to 1 year ❍   1 year to 3 years ❍   More Than 3 years ❍

Never stick to brand ❍

9. Have your ever bought a luxury fashion brands?

 Yes❍   No ❍

10. If yes, what of the following reasons helped you in the buying decision?

 The brand prestige ❍   The quality of the products ❍
 Passion for the designer of the brands ❍   Design, colour, fabrics ❍

11. Do you intend to buy luxury fashion before going to a store?

 I plan to buy ❍   Sometimes ❍
 No, it is often an impulsive purchase❍   I never buy luxury fashion products ❍

12.Do you believe that luxury fashion brands have the better value for money than

other fashion brands

Yes ○   No ○

13. If yes, what make you think so?

Better quality ○   Better materials ○   Better design ○

14. Do you think that people with low income for example students should buy luxury fashion brands?

Yes ○   No ○

15. Which of these reasons do you think push low-income people (e.g. students) to buy luxury fashion brands?

Desire to show off ○   Desire to feel rich and important ○   Snobbism ○
Brand victim ○

16. Have you ever bought the knockoff (copy) of your favourite brand?

Yes ○   No ○

17. What are the reasons why you would never buy luxury brands knockoffs?

No specific reason ○   Industrial property protection ○   Bad Quality ○
Ethical Reasons ○   Shame if recognize using knockoffs ○

Ethical Approval Form: Human Research Projects

This form must be completed for each piece of research activity whether conducted
by academic staff, graduate students or undergraduates.
The completed form must be approved by the designated authority
within the Faculty/Institute.

Name of applicant	Jean Justin Akpi

University of Lincoln	Faculty: Business & Law
	Department:
Position in the University	Student
Role in relation to research	Researcher

Project title

LUXURY FASHION BRAND INFLUENCE ON STUDENT PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

Brief description of project with approximate start and completion dates

The Project started on 21st September 2011 and will be completed by 22 March 2012.
The main objective was to investigate Luxury fashion brands influence on student purchase behaviour and provide recommendations to Luxury fashion companies how to better cater to this segment with limited financial income but important as future customers.

Principal investigator or supervisor, including phone number and e-mail address

Name: Krystal Sirota, E-mail address: krystal.sirota@metropolia.fi   Phone no.: +358401562794

Other researchers or student investigators

No

Type/number of subjects involved and how de-briefing will be carried out

The subjects involved are fashion, branding and consumer behavior.

Location(s) at which project is to be carried out

The project will be carry out in Helsinki, Finland and Utrera, Spain.

The ethical issues involved and how they are to be addressed, including
 a risk assessment of the project based on the vulnerability of participants

the extent to which it is likely to be harmful and whether there will be significant
discomfort.

This dissertation does not harm anyone nor they will be no discomfort.

Note: This will normally cover such issues as whether the risks/adverse effects associated with the project have been identified and dealt with, whether the benefits of the research outweigh the risks, whether the information and consent arrangements are adequate, and whether the level of any inducements to participate are appropriate.

Signature of applicant

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE READ THE UNIVERSITY`S ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITH HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS

Signed by the lead applicant (with date)

----

then print name

Approval

Does this research require the approval of an external body?

Yes/No

If so, which body?

Signed on behalf of the Faculty/Institute Research Committee (with date)