Is luxury just a female thing? The role of gender in luxury brand consumption

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Despite the fact that the functional value of luxury brands is usually not significantly higher than those of non-luxury brands, luxury brands can achieve significant price premiums in the market over non-luxury brands. Additionally, in a majority of markets and product categories, the price for female luxury brands is significantly higher compared to their male counterparts. These differences might result from a higher perceived symbolic and social value of such luxury brands that have traditionally been more important for women than for men. Two experimental studies and one survey study in three product categories (i.e., clothing, perfumes, and wristwatches) in the Western culture show that, overall, women have a more positive attitude toward and a higher purchase intention of luxury brands versus non-luxury brands than men. Additionally, for female consumers, luxury brands provide more uniqueness, status and hedonic value than non-luxury brands. Important implications for marketing theory and practice can be derived. Marketers should use uniqueness claims in their advertising copy and differentiate in their product designs between male and female target groups.

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1. Introduction

While the global market for luxury brands faced a temporary decline of 8% in sales revenues to 153 billion Euros in 2009 (Bain & Company, 2009), the recent downturn in economy did not affect the big names of the luxury brands industry. Brands such as Louis Vuitton, Hermès, and Chanel increased their sales despite the recession (Forbes, 2009). As compared to the general downturn of sales of up to 31% in 2009, the sales decline of luxury brands is comparably low (Handelsblatt, 2010). Analysts base their reasoning on the growing claim for luxury brands in emerging markets and on the crisis-proof demand in Western nations. Interestingly, the demand for prominent logos on products has remained stable or even increased during the recession (Nunes, Drèze, & Han, 2010).

Brand consumption, and specifically luxury brand consumption, allows consumers both to express themselves (i.e., value-expressive function) and to present themselves (i.e., social-adjutive function) in front of others (e.g., Dubois & Duquesne, 1993; Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009). Grossman and Shapiro (1988) define luxury goods as goods that people use to show prestige and status while the difference in functional utility over other goods is largely negligible. A luxury brand can be thought of as “the most selective in its distribution; the most image-driven; ... and the most expensive” (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009, p. 313). The perceived degree of luxury, however, varies with product category. A luxury brand may be, for instance, associated with the higher end of luxury in one product category, and with the lower end of luxury in another product category (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). As an example, consumers might perceive Burberry more as a luxury brand for apparel and leather goods than for perfumes. Premium pricing strategies as well as strong quality cues are among the most important defining characteristics of luxury brands (Keller, 2009). Interestingly, prices for female luxury brands are in most cases significantly higher than for male luxury brands. As Table 1 shows, a Boss Black suit for men costs around 400 Euros (retail prices in the German market), while that for women costs around 510 Euros, a difference of more than 25%. Table 1 shows additional examples in the product domains of perfumes, leather goods, and watches that show a similar pattern. The market, however, also provides (a few) examples of brands (e.g., Rolex watches), where the male product is more expensive than the female product. Nevertheless, the question arises why prices for female luxury brands usually are significantly higher than prices for male luxury brands. Does a gender effect exist?

Research on gender differences in consumption generally states that the different life orientations of men and women influence their consumer behavior. While men strongly follow agentic goals, that are, life goals directed toward task-oriented thinking and performance-motivated acting, women more strongly follow communal goals, that are, life goals directed toward social and emotional relationships with others (e.g., Meyers-Levy, 1988; Prakash, 1992). Research, however, has also recognized the fact that gender roles...
are becoming increasingly blurred. More precisely, research on the dynamics of sex typing shows that women possess more male traits and that it is more accepted for men to adopt female traits than vice versa (for an overview please refer to Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, & Lueptow, 2001). Twenge (1997), for instance, shows that keeping the degree of masculinity in Western cultures constant, the degree of femininity has increased over the years. Still, gender roles are deeply anchored in society, and one could expect that the price premiums for female luxury brands compared to male luxury brands results from the stronger social orientation of women.

While some studies shed light into luxury brand consumption, they have neglected the role of gender in this context. Traditionally, marketing research on luxury goods and brands concentrates on income and cultural aspects while men generally show an individualistic character of autonomy and independence (Prakash, 1992). Beyond that, price can emphasize a product's or a brand's prestige and social value as primary drivers for luxury brand consumption. 

Kapferer (2010) believes that mating dominates today's society. People tend to marry later and thus they have both more funds for self-pleasure and more time searching for potential partners. Evolutionary and socio-cultural theories of mate selection posit gender differences in that men and women use different cues to select their mates for successful reproduction. These cues differ for both sexes as historically, the selection criteria for reproductive investment have been different for females and males (De Block & Dewitte, 2007). Women typically use earning power and status as cues to evaluate the reproductive value of a man. Griskevicius et al. (2007) find empirical evidence for the relationship between mating motives and men's conspicuous consumption. Men are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption than women to show economic achievement and eventually attract a potential mate. In contrast to that, the reproductive success of women is less straightforward. More specifically, men evaluate women based on their physical attractiveness thus relying on indirect cues such as beauty. Interestingly, research shows that these evaluative cues are not a phenomenon specific to a certain culture but universal (Buss, 1989).

Research in social psychology documents that women's physical attractiveness plays an important role in social behavior. Different studies show that men are more responsive to women's physical appearance than the other way around (Feingold, 1990). Thus, men evaluate women based on how good-looking they are. Obviously, a person's attractiveness mainly depends on individual preferences. Specific physical criteria (e.g., facial features or waist-to-hip ratio) exist which serve as general indicators for beauty. Most importantly, the perception of beauty also involves the overall picture of a person that includes clothing and fashion (Singh, 1993).

While men predominantly consume conspicuously and thus use luxury products and brands to visually portray economic achievement and accomplishment (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004), to women other aspects of luxury brand consumption seem to be more important. Wiedmann et al. (2009) report that women value a multitude of aspects when purchasing luxury brands. More specifically, female consumers dominate segments that represent quality, uniqueness and social value as primary drivers for luxury brand consumption. As women are more responsive to different kinds of values which luxury brands confer to their owners, they should have a more positive attitude toward luxury brands than men. This proposition should be especially true with regard to product categories that help to express the self and present one's identity such as fashion including accessories, watches, and perfumes (e.g., Amaldoss and Jain, 2005):

**H1.** Women have a more positive attitude toward luxury brands than men.

Research finds that some consumers use the price of a product as an indicator for product quality (Snyder & DeBono, 1985). Beyond that, price can emphasize a product's or a brand's prestige

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### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product category</th>
<th>Brand and product</th>
<th>Price (in Euros) for male product</th>
<th>Price (in Euros) for female product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Boss Black suit</td>
<td>399 (standard suit)</td>
<td>508 (standard suit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burberry coat</td>
<td>595 (peacoat)</td>
<td>1,495 (peacoat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strenesse Gabriele Strehle suit</td>
<td>429–599 (standard suit)</td>
<td>748–928 (standard suit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfumes</td>
<td>Davidoff Cool Water</td>
<td>45 (size: 75 ml)</td>
<td>45 (size: 50 ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dolce &amp; Gabbana Light Blue</td>
<td>55 (size: 75 ml)</td>
<td>59 (size: 50 ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Givenchy Very Irresistible</td>
<td>50 (size: 50 ml)</td>
<td>63 (size: 50 ml)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallets</td>
<td>Armani (wallet, leather with logo)</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Furla (wallet, veal leather)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prada</td>
<td>230 (1 M0204-UZF)</td>
<td>295 (1 M0176-UZF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches</td>
<td>Burberry</td>
<td>325 (Check watch)</td>
<td>395 (Check watch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ebel</td>
<td>1640 (Classic Gent)</td>
<td>2160 (Classic Lady)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Longines</td>
<td>1490 (Master Collection)</td>
<td>1990 (Master Collection)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
more uniqueness, status, and hedonic value to consumers than non-luxury brands. Thus, the study examines whether luxury brands deliver higher value than non-luxury brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Vigneron and Johnson (2004) propose five different types of value luxury brands can provide to consumers: conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, hedonic value, and extended self value. Wiedmann et al. (2009) derive four dimensions of consumer perceived brand value. Among these are financial, functional, individual, and social aspects of luxury value. Drawing on both frameworks, this study investigates a selection of three non-functional personal value perceptions of luxury brand consumption that are often associated with luxury brands. Thus, the study examines whether luxury brands deliver more uniqueness, status, and hedonic value to consumers than non-luxury brands. Further, following the reasoning provided above, a gender effect is proposed between brand exclusivity and the value dimensions:

H2. For women a stronger relationship exists between the perceived exclusivity of a brand and (a) the attitude toward the brand as well as (b) the purchase intention of the brand than for men.

The theory of uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977) posits that individuals develop a need to differentiate themselves from others in situations where they perceive too much similarity in their social environments. In doing so, individuals feel their self-perceived uniqueness threatened and reclaim their uniqueness by intended self-distinguishing behaviors. Snyder and DeBono (1985) suggest that consumers who find themselves in such a situation strongly value material possessions because material possession attachment implies less social risk than other means of self-expression. Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) derive the concept of consumer’s need for uniqueness based on the theory of uniqueness. A consumer’s need for uniqueness is “the trait of pursuing differentness relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one’s self-image and social image” (p. 52). The need for uniqueness, however, varies with culture. While Western cultures are more individualistic, Eastern cultures are more collectivistic (e.g., Hofstede, 2001). This study investigates consumers in a Western culture, and thus, the following reasoning might not apply for individuals in Eastern cultures.

Traditionally, scarcity relates inversely to preference. More significantly, research asserts that consumers prefer rare and exclusive brands over brands that are available to the mass of consumers (Verhallen & Robben, 1994). As luxury brands are both exclusive and rare in a way that they traditionally involve high financial efforts, a consumer’s need for uniqueness (CNFU) should have a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived exclusivity and brand preference:

H3. The higher a consumer’s CNFU, the stronger the relationship between the perceived exclusivity of a brand and (a) the attitude toward the brand and (b) the purchase intention of the brand.

Luxury brands are usually better in delivering subjective intangible benefits to consumers beyond their functional benefits than non-luxury brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Vigneron and Johnson (2004) propose five different types of value luxury brands can provide to consumers: conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, hedonic value, and extended self value. Wiedmann et al. (2009) derive four dimensions of consumer perceived brand value. Among these are financial, functional, individual, and social aspects of luxury value. Drawing on both frameworks, this study investigates a selection of three non-functional personal value perceptions of luxury brand consumption that are often associated with luxury brands. Thus, the study examines whether luxury brands deliver more uniqueness, status, and hedonic value to consumers than non-luxury brands. Further, following the reasoning provided above, a gender effect is proposed between brand exclusivity and the value dimensions:

H4. For women a stronger relationship exists between the exclusivity of a brand and the perceived (a) uniqueness value, (b) status value, and (c) hedonic value than for men.

Research in consumer behavior has long recognized the fact that individuals consume certain products in order to enhance and communicate their identities (Belk, 1988). According to Vickers and Renand (2003), consumers use luxury goods as symbols of individual and social identity. In doing so, the consumption of luxury goods can associate the consumer with a desired group or role (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Individuals particularly use brands and brand consumption as cues for their identification process (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). Thus, research on the driving role of self-enhancement in a consumer’s affinity toward a brand (e.g., Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Wong, 2009) as well as that on consumer-company identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) would suggest a brand’s perceived uniqueness and status value as antecedents to consumer-brand identification. Additionally, research ascribes emotions an important role in the construction of consumption-based identities (e.g., Laverie, Kleine, & Schultz Kleine, 2002), and thus, a brand’s perceived hedonic value should foster identification processes. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H5. The higher the perceived (a) uniqueness value, (b) status value, and (c) hedonic value, the higher the consumer’s identification with a brand.

Due to its potential as one of the most important drivers of economic company success, extant literature exists on consumer brand loyalty as well as its antecedents (e.g., Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). The study by Stokburger-Sauer (2010) provides empirical evidence for a strong connection between identification and loyalty. Following this, this study proposes:

H6. The higher a consumer’s identification with a brand, the higher his or her brand loyalty.

3. Study 1

The purpose of study 1 is to test H1 which suggests that women have a more positive attitude toward luxury brands than men.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Pretest

To select an adequate luxury brand for study 1, a pretest with fifty-four respondents (55.3% female, average age = 25.7) is conducted. Research suggests that Armani is one of the luxury brands with the highest unaided awareness (Dubois & Paternault, 1995), and the results of the pretest show that women as well as men perceive the brand “Giorgio Armani” as neutral to both genders. Additionally, results show that fashion as a product category is not gender-specific. Thus, the main study includes the luxury brand “Giorgio Armani” as stimulus in the fashion domain. The pretest further ensures a proper questionnaire design and proper formulation of questions.

3.1.2. Participants and design

A total of 557 respondents (52.1% females) participated in the online study. The average age of respondents is 27.4 years and 51.5% are students. German consumers were selected as study participants since Germany's distribution of roles between the genders is fairly average for a Western culture society. In Hofstede’s (2001) MAS (masculinity)-dimension, Germany has a value of 66, which is
similar to that of the U.S. (MAS = 62) and the U.K. (MAS = 66), but higher to Denmark (MAS = 16) and lower to Austria (MAS = 79) (with the latter indicating a greater gap between the values of men and women). Participants responded to an actual black-and-white Giorgio Armani advertisement as a stimulus for luxury brands. The copy with the female model shows a woman's back view with the woman standing with her hands on her hips leaning against a wall. She is holding a striped handbag in her right hand and is wearing a long dress with loose straps on her back. The copy with the male model shows a man's front view with a man standing on a staircase having his left leg on the upper step. He is wearing a suit with a striped jacket, as well as a tie and shirt with dark triangles. Respondents randomly received one of the two different ads (male vs. female model).

3.1.3. Procedure and measures

First, study participants answered questions with regard to their product category (fashion) involvement and their attitudes toward the brand (Giorgio Armani; A_pre). In terms of pre-existing attitudes (A_pre), research suggests to include these in order to control for individual differences in brand evaluations (Shine, Park, & Wyer, 2007). Then, they were exposed to the randomly assigned advertisement for 15 s. After inspecting the ad, they answered questions concerning attitude toward the ad (A_ad) and attitude toward the brand (A_post). Finally, participants responded to some socio-demographic questions.

The work by Stayman and Bartra (1991), as well as Meyers-Levy and Peracchio (1995) provides the basis for scale items to assess respondents’ attitude toward the brand. A five-point semantic differential scale with six items measures attitude toward the brand (e.g., The brand “Giorgio Armani” is boring/interesting; M = 3.7, α = .86). Four items measure attitude toward the ad (e.g., The ad is unappealing/appealing; M = 2.8, α = .83) using five-point semantic differential scale based on Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957) as well as Baker and Churchill (1977). The study by Zaichkowsky (1985) provides the basis for measuring product category involvement using three items and a five-point semantic differential scale. A binary variable serves to measure gender (0 = male, 1 = female).

3.2. Results and discussion of study 1

The results of a series of ANOVAs using A_post as the dependent and gender as independent variable with A_ad, A_pre, and product category involvement as covariates are the following. Gender has a significant effect on A_post (F(1, 531) = 5.26, p < .05) with mean values for women being higher than those for men (M_men = 3.7, M_women = 3.5). Not surprisingly, A_ad (F(1, 531) = 41.86, p < .01), A_pre (F(1, 531) = 1.091.29, p < .01), and product category involvement (F(1, 531) = 5.73, p < .05) all show significant effects on A_post.

Results reveal significant differences in the attitudinal marketing response of women and men in this study context. In line with H1, the women in study 1 have a more positive attitude toward the luxury brand than the men in study 1.

4. Study 2

The purpose of study 2 is to test H2 and H3 that relate to the difference between brand exclusivity (luxury versus non-luxury brand) and brand preference in terms of attitude toward the brand (A_post) and purchase intention (PI). The analysis uses gender as interaction term on this relationship as the results of study 1 show that women have a more positive attitude toward luxury brands than men. In addition, the analysis includes the consumer’s need for uniqueness as relevant variable. Control variables are pre-existing attitudes (A_pre), attitude toward the ad (A_ad) and product category involvement. An additional interaction effect tests the relationship between involvement and brand exclusivity on brand preference.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Pretest

Prior to study 2, two pretests are conducted with each pretest consisting of forty-one respondents (pretest 1: 48.8% females, average age = 24.3, pretest 2: 43.9% females, average age = 23.8). The pretests’ objectives are to select adequate stimuli for this study. The first pretest involves ten brands in five different product categories (i.e., one luxury and one non-luxury brand for each product category). One item (“I know brand X”) assesses respondents’ brand awareness and four items measure perceived brand exclusivity. Of the latter four, two items measure perceived brand exclusivity (“From my point of view, brand X is a luxury brand” and “In comparison to brand Y, brand X is a luxury brand”). The brand luxury index provides the basis for the other two items (i.e., “conspicuous vs. invisible” and “elitist vs. popular”) (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). The results of the pretest reveal that the product categories of furniture (i.e., Ligne Rosé vs. IKEA), writing utensils (i.e., Cartridge vs. Pelikan) and cars (i.e., Aston Martin vs. Nissan) need to be dropped due to non-significant results concerning brand exclusivity. Thus, study 2 includes the other two product categories: perfumes (i.e., Dolce & Gabbana vs. s.Oliver) and wristwatches (i.e., Emporio Armani vs. Esprit). The second pretest examines the gender of both the product categories and the brands based on the work by Fugate and Phillips (2010). The results show that respondents perceive Dolce & Gabbana and s.Oliver, as well as Emporio Armani and Esprit as androgynous brands in the selected product categories. Additionally, results show that respondents perceive perfumes as female and wristwatches as male products. While respondents know both the product categories and the brands well, significant differences exist between the first and the second brand in each product category with respect to brand exclusivity.

4.1.2. Participants and design

A total of 350 (44.6% females) undergraduate students from a mid-size German university participated in the online-study. The average age of the respondents is 21.6 years. This study follows a mixed-within-and-between subjects design. The experimental stimuli contain two actual ads of Emporio Armani and Dolce & Gabbana that are used in its original form for the luxury brand treatment and manipulated when serving as stimuli for non-luxury brands. The manipulation of the original ads involves the digital replacement of the logos of Emporio Armani and Dolce & Gabbana with the two logos of the non-luxury brands Esprit and s.Oliver, respectively. Specifically, the stimuli are two half-page black-and-white advertisements. The stimulus for perfumes shows a man and a woman dressed in underwear and tightly embraced with the man kissing the woman’s neck. The lower right-hand corner presents the male and female fragrance bottles. The ad for watches shows two similar watches (a bigger male and a smaller female one) with dark, rectangular clock-faces and metal watchbands. In both ads copies the male and female products are pictured.

4.1.3. Procedure and measures

Each study participant was either treated to the luxury or the non-luxury brand stimulus of the two product domains. The online survey randomly assigned the order of the product categories to avoid order effects. Before each ad stimulus, respondents indicated their product category involvement and attitude toward the brand (A_pre). After each ad stimulus, participants indicated their attitude toward the ad (A_ad) and attitude toward the brand (A_post). Study 2 uses the same scales as study 1 to measure respondents’ A_pre, A_post, A_ad, and product category involvement. Then, respondents indicated their consumer’s need for uniqueness (CNFU) using the scale
developed by Tian et al. (2001) and finally answered some sociodemographic questions. As in study 1, a dichotomous variable measures gender (0 = male, 1 = female). Finally, participants had to imagine the scenario that they had won in a lottery with the prize being a luxury brand of their choice in the relevant product category. They then indicated how likely they would decide for the specific luxury brand if they could choose among other luxury brands also. This lottery task is a proxy to assess brand purchase intention (PI) considering the fact that the study involves a student sample, and thus controlling for financial constraints. Table 2 presents the psychometric properties of the applied scales and their intercorrelations.

### 4.2. Results and discussion of study 2

In order to validate the findings from study 1, study 2 also investigates gender differences concerning attitude toward a luxury brand. As the results show for perfumes, women have more positive attitudes toward luxury brands (A_{bpre} and A_{bpost}) than men (M_{women} = 3.9, M_{men} = 3.5, p < .01 and M_{women} = 4.0, M_{men} = 3.5, p < .01) as well as a higher PI than men (M_{women} = 3.4, M_{men} = 2.7, p < .01). The results for wristwatches are similar: Women have more positive attitudes toward luxury brands (A_{bpre} and A_{bpost}) than men (M_{women} = 3.9, M_{men} = 3.5, p < .01 and M_{women} = 3.3, M_{men} = 3.6, p < .05) as well as a higher PI than men (M_{women} = 2.2, M_{men} = 3.2, p < .01). Therefore, H1 is supported by study 2 also. The regression results test for H2 and H3 reveal different patterns for the two product categories (i.e., perfumes and watches). The regression analysis includes four regressions for each of the two product categories (i.e., perfumes and watches) with A_{bpost} and PI as dependent variables (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permutations</th>
<th>Perfumes</th>
<th>Watches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. CNFU</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Involvement</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A_{bpre}</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A_{bpost}</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. PI</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A_{post}</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The lower triangle shows correlations for the product category of watches. NOTE: The upper triangle shows correlations for the product category of wristwatches; CNFU = consumer’s need for uniqueness, Aad = attitude toward the ad, Abpre = attitude toward the brand before treatment, A_{bpost} = attitude toward the brand after treatment, PI = purchase intention; M = mean, SD = standard deviation, α = Cronbach’s alpha, AVE = average variance extracted.

### 5. Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 reveal that women value luxury brands more than men. Additionally, study 2 shows that in some product categories (i.e., perfumes) a stronger relationship exists between brand exclusivity and attitude toward the brand (A_b) for females. Thus, the purpose of study 3 is to explore why consumers have a more positive attitude toward luxury brands (A_{bpre} and A_{bpost}) than men and whether this effect is stronger for women. Therefore, H3 is supported by study 3 also. In order to validate the findings from study 1, study 3 also investigates gender differences concerning attitude toward a luxury brand. As the results show for perfumes, women have more positive attitudes toward luxury brands (A_{bpre} and A_{bpost}) than men (M_{women} = 3.9, M_{men} = 3.5, p < .01 and M_{women} = 4.0, M_{men} = 3.5, p < .01) as well as a higher PI than men (M_{women} = 3.4, M_{men} = 2.7, p < .01). The results for wristwatches are similar: Women have more positive attitudes toward luxury brands (A_{bpre} and A_{bpost}) than men (M_{women} = 3.9, M_{men} = 3.5, p < .01 and M_{women} = 3.3, M_{men} = 3.6, p < .05) as well as a higher PI than men (M_{women} = 2.2, M_{men} = 3.2, p < .01). Therefore, H1 is supported by study 2 also. The regression results test for H2 and H3 reveal different patterns for the two product categories (i.e., perfumes and watches). The regression analysis includes four regressions for each of the two product categories (i.e., perfumes and watches) with A_{bpost} and PI as dependent variables (see Table 3).

### 5.1. Method

#### 5.1.1. Pretest

A pretest with 15 respondents (40% females, average age = 23.2) ensures proper questionnaire design with minor changes in wording of the questions.
5.1.2. Participants and design
To achieve high external validity, actual buyers of luxury and non-luxury clothing brands were part of the survey which was conducted in Germany. A total of 300 (56.0% females) respondents participated in the study. The average age of respondents is 40.1 years and 42.7% are employees. The genders are not different with respect to their education (t = .06, p > .95), job position (t = .15, p > .88), and monthly income (t = −.67, p > .51). Again, results of a t-test on product category involvement reveal no significant differences between females and males concerning involvement in clothing (M_{female} = 4.1, M_{male} = 3.8, t = 1.40, p > .16). Respondents first indicated the clothing brand that they liked to wear most (i.e., their favorite clothing brand). Then, two independent coders classified these brands into two categories (i.e., luxury brands coded with "1" vs. non-luxury brands coded with "0"). The coding resulted in 99.5% agreement; discussions among the coders and a third researcher resolved disagreements. Overall, 82.3% of all respondents select a non-luxury brand as their favorite brand, while the rest (17.7%) choose a luxury brand. Overall, 82.3% of all respondents select a non-luxury brand as their favorite brand, while the rest (17.7%) choose a luxury brand. Among the coders and a third researcher resolved disagreements. Concerning gender differences, 15.5% of the female and 20.5% of the male respondents name luxury brands as their favorite brands. The two groups (i.e., luxury vs. non-luxury) are not different with respect to their age (t = −.10, p > .92) and gender (t = 1.12, p > .26) but with respect to monthly income (t = 2.74, p < .01).

5.1.3. Procedure and measures
The work by Laurent and Kapferer (1985) and Holt (1998) provides the basis for measuring uniqueness value by three items (e.g., “I pursue individuality through clothing”). The measures for status value (e.g., “My fondness for clothing makes me feel independent and self-sufficient.”) and hedonic value (e.g., “Clothing is an expression of my sensibilities for esthetics and style.”) include two items each which are based on Holt (1998) as well as Schultz Kleine, Kleine, and Allen (1995). Five items developed by Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, Sen, and Bauer (2007) measure consumer-brand identification (e.g., “Brand X and I have a lot in common.”) and two items adapted from the study by Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel (2004) measure consumer brand loyalty (e.g., “I am loyal to brand X.”). Rating scales serve to measure all latent constructs (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) and two dichotomous measures variable measure gender (0 = male, 1 = female) as well as brand exclusivity (0 = non-luxury brand, 1 = luxury brand). Table 4 presents the psychometric properties of the applied scales and their intercorrelations.

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness value</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status value</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonic value</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer-brand identification</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer brand loyalty</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Brand exclusivity
2. Gender
3. Brand exclusivity × gender
4. Uniqueness value
5. Status value
6. Hedonic value
7. Consumer-brand identification
8. Consumer brand loyalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td>−.07</td>
<td>−.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>.16 **</td>
<td>.21 **</td>
<td>−.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>.14 **</td>
<td>.14 **</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.62 **</td>
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<td>.61 **</td>
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<td>.16 **</td>
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<tr>
<td>.16 **</td>
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<td>−.04</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.37 **</td>
<td>.33 **</td>
<td>.49 **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, α = Cronbach’s alpha, AVE = average variance extracted.
* Significant at p < .05 (two-tailed).
** Significant at p < .01 (two-tailed).

5.2. Results and discussion of study 3
To evaluate H4 to H6, the study applies SEM using LISREL 8.7. The model is established without any restrictions and the global fits are satisfactory: Satorra Bentler adjusted-χ² = 471.31, degrees of freedom = 106, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .942, Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .927, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = .926. Although the value for Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation is slightly higher than the acceptable threshold of 0.10 (RMSEA = .107), research suggests to not rely on a fit index in isolation, but argues for the interpretation of combinations of indexes (e.g., Hu & Bentler, 1999; McQuitty, 2004). All constructs show discriminant validity using the tests recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Fig. 1 displays the standardized path coefficients.

The model provides strong support for the influence of gender on the perceived value dimensions. While brand exclusivity (i.e., if a brand is a luxury brand or not) has no direct effect on value, its interaction with gender has a significant effect on the three value dimensions. More specifically, for females a stronger relationship exists between luxury brands and the perceived uniqueness value (β = .50, p < .01), status value (β = .37, p < .01), and hedonic value (β = .55, p < .01) than for males. Thus, this study supports H4 in the researched context. Furthermore, results show that uniqueness value (β = .34, p < .01) and status value (β = .37, p < .01) strongly relate to consumer-brand identification while hedonic value relates less strongly, but also positively to consumer-brand identification (β = .09, p < .10). Therefore, this study supports H5 in the researched context. Regarding the influence of consumer-brand identification on brand loyalty (H6), results provide strong evidence for this effect (β = .52, p < .001). Overall, the model provides a good explanation for consumer-brand identification (R² = .29) and for brand loyalty (R² = .27), and an acceptable explanation for the three value dimensions (R² from .06 to .14).

6. Discussion
6.1. Summary and implications
The need for research in order to better understand the role of gender on consumer’s response toward luxury brands motivated this paper. As previous literature shows, women are generally described as more interdependent and more concerned with the opinion of others than men (Meyers-Levy, 1988). Evolutionary and socio-cultural theories posit gender differences in conspicuous
consumption behavior. For instance, in a mating context, men are more concerned with the visual portrayal of economic achievement than women (Griskevicius et al., 2007). Women in general, however, attach more importance to their physical appearance (Buss, 1989). In doing so, they use clothing and fashion as a means to support their attractiveness (Singh, 1993). The present research supports these findings and shows that women’s attitude toward luxury brands is more positive than men’s attitude toward luxury brands.

Aside from the clothing context, the results of this study show that women also have more positive attitudes toward luxury brands than men considering the product categories of perfumes and wristwatches. Results, however, are inconsistent when comparing the attitude toward luxury brands and non-luxury brands. While consumers have a stronger positive attitude toward luxury brands than toward non-luxury brands when considering perfumes, the difference in attitudes between luxury and non-luxury brands for wristwatches is not significant. In addition, this research reveals that consumers respond differently when considering the role of gender and need for uniqueness as moderating effects for the relationship between brand exclusivity and purchase intention. While attitude toward the ad and the interaction between brand exclusivity and need for uniqueness show a consistent pattern in terms of their influence on purchase intention, the findings for gender and exclusiveness are less consistent for the two product categories. One reason for these inconsistent results may lie in the product category’s perceived gender. As the pretest revealed, respondents perceive perfumes as female and wristwatches as male products. The stimuli used in study 2 provide another explanation for this inconsistency. Consumers might only perceive minor differences in product quality of non-luxury brand perfumes compared to luxury brand perfumes. For watches, however, consumers might anticipate a bigger difference in product quality between luxury brands and non-luxury brands. This assumption could explain the results with regard to why consumers can have positive attitudes toward both non-luxury and luxury brands while these positive attitudes do not necessarily translate into purchase intention.

Literature shows that consumers associate superior hedonic and symbolic value with luxury brands (e.g., Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). This research, however, reveals that luxury brands do not deliver more value to consumers than non-luxury brands when considering the luxury aspect alone in a gender-neutral product category (i.e., clothing). Only for female consumers, luxury brands provide more uniqueness, status and hedonic value than non-luxury brands. While extant literature focuses on the drivers of purchasing luxury goods, this research also includes outcomes of luxury brand consumption. More specifically, the results show that uniqueness and status value are relevant antecedents of consumer-brand identification. Thus, the perception of specific values which luxury brands can confer, influences the degree to which a consumer perceives similarity between the brand and him-or herself. If a consumer identifies with a brand, this identification manifests in his or her loyalty toward the brand.

To conclude, this research shows that women differ from men in their response toward luxury brands. Overall, in the three product categories studied (i.e., clothing, perfumes, wristwatches), women have more positive attitudes toward luxury brands than men and are thus a valuable target segment. Marketers of luxury brands should be aware that women value a multitude of aspects when purchasing luxury brands as they care more about the quality, uniqueness and social value of luxury products than men (Wiedmann et al., 2009). In line with these findings, the present research reveals that women are also more responsive to the uniqueness, hedonic, and status value of luxury brands. Marketers should thus base their strategies on the values different consumer segments seek from luxury brand consumption in order to increase purchase value. Brand exclusivity alone, however, does not automatically turn luxury brands into more favored ones than non-luxury brands. Therefore, marketers are well advised to take these results with regard to gender and consumer’s need for uniqueness into consideration, and, additionally use uniqueness, status and hedonic claims in their marketing communications. Finally, marketers need to be aware that the product category is of paramount importance for a consumer’s brand response and, in the end, for her purchase intention.

6.2. Limitations and further research

Although this research makes important contributions to the understanding of the role of gender in luxury brand consumption, the study entails several limitations. First, the study only involves respondents from Germany. Results might be different taking other countries and cultures into consideration. Need for uniqueness, might, for instance, be a typical trait of consumers from Western countries while consumers from emerging markets or Eastern cultures might seek other values from luxury brand consumption. Future research should thus explore if the findings of this paper also apply to other geographic (e.g., Kempen van, 2004) and cultural contexts. Second, study 2 uses a pure student sample which causes problems of external validity of results. Although the use of a lottery task

NOTE: * significant at p<.10, * significant at p<.05, ** significant at p<.01.

Fig. 1. Study 3 structural equation modeling results. Note: * significant at p<.10, * significant at p<.05, ** significant at p<.01.
compensates for financial constraints to some degree, the use of this sample might still challenge external validity in the context of luxury brand consumption. Third, this research focuses on certain product categories such as clothing, perfumes, and wristwatches as well as selected brands. Further research should involve additional product categories such as consumer electronics, or include luxury brand services. In such a context, the role of gender would be worth researching. Additionally, future studies could involve stimuli from product presentations of non-luxury brands and use these as a basis for tagging luxury brand logos on them. Finally, future research should also examine if the suggested effects are dependent on the perceived gender of products.

References

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