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**University of Nottingham**

**Motivations for Chinese and Japanese Young Female  
Consumers to Purchase Luxury Fashion Products: A Cross-  
cultural Comparison**

**By**

**Zequn Yu**

**2013**

*A Dissertation Presented in Part Consideration for the Degree of MSc Marketing*

## Abstract

This dissertation aims to answer two main research questions. First, what are the luxury fashion product purchasing motivations of Chinese and Japanese young female consumers? Second, are there any similarities and differences between Chinese and Japanese in their motivations for buying luxury fashion items?

After reviewing the literature, a general framework combined the work of Veblen (1899), Lebenstein (1950), Vigneron and Johnson (1999, 2004), Wiedmann et al (2007) and other authors has been proposed to generalise the motivation themes discovered by the current research. The framework includes four main motivations in the literature: Functional value, Interpersonal/Social effects, Personal/Individual effects, and the financial value of the luxury products. Through the qualitative method, data was collected by the in-depth interview approach from eight Chinese and eight Japanese young female respondents aged from 24 to 35.

The main motivations identified reflect and support the academic theories in the literature. Respondents from Both China and Japan share four common motivations in purchasing luxury fashion product: for luxuries' functional values (quality, uniqueness, durability), social effects (conspicuous consumption, prestige value, social group fit in), personal-oriented motivation (self-identity, Hedonic, Materialistic value) and financial value. Chinese people concerned more about the social effects and the brand reputation of luxury fashion branded items, while Japanese consumers seemed to be motivated stronger by their personal preferences, self-image representing and hedonic values.

Furthermore, the research discovers that Chinese and Japanese consumers have their own specific motives and considerations in purchasing luxuries. Chinese consumers would also be motivated by a desire to obtain better working or business opportunities, gain 'face' and improve relationships with other people, and enrich their lives through luxury consumption. For Japanese consumers, besides the main motivations, they would also consider whether the luxury brand represents their attitudes towards life, the customer services and the raw material of the product.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

In this chapter, firstly a background overview would be provided including the luxury consumption in China and Japan. Secondly, the research aims and objectives would be explained, as well as the justifications of choosing the research topic. The final section describes the detailed structure of the dissertation.

### **1.1 Background Overview**

Despite the economic recession since 2008, with the continuing high sales in emerging economies, the global luxury market has remained notable increases in recent years (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2011). Figures show that in 2012, luxury product sales exceeded \$302 billion globally, with a growth rate of 5% from 2011; the luxury consumers around the world spend more than \$5.8 billion/week on luxury items (King, 2013). The globalisation, wealth-creation, emerging affluent market segments, and the international travel expansion are considered to be the main drivers for this growth (Chow, Fung & Ngo, 2001). Two significant trends in luxury consumers occur in recent years. Firstly, the luxury consumers are no longer limited to the traditional well-off elites in societies, but also including a new base of younger, well-paid, modern, and spendthrift people (Twitchell, 2003). Secondly, there is a shift in the dominant consumers from the Western countries to Asian countries including the relatively mature market such as Japan (Chadha & Husband, 2006), and new fast growing markets like China and India (Tynan, et al., 2010). The Asia is becoming one of the biggest luxury consumption markets in the world. As the Figure 1 displays below, the Japan, China, South Korea, and Hong Kong are among the world's largest luxury sales markets.

Figure 1: Sales of luxury goods within countries/territories



Source: The Economist, 2013

Figure 2: Luxury handbags market by consumer nationality from 1995 to 2012



Source: The Economist, 2013

With the continuing economic growth, as shown in Figure 2, luxury product sales in China are experiencing rapid growth. China is estimated to become the second largest luxury market after the US, reaching \$35 billion with a growth rate of 6%-8% this year (The Economist, 2013). While the wealthier consumers (with annual incomes over 300,000RMB, about \$46,000) would still account for the majority luxury consumption, researches show that the China's upper middle class (with annual incomes between 100,000 and 200,000RMB) would generate a large opportunities for the luxury sector (McKinsey, 2011). In addition, In China, the female market is increasingly receiving



attention as its large proportion in the luxury purchasing (McKinsey, 2011). As their roles in society and families have been gradually changing since the 1980s, the Chinese females are able to receive higher education and becoming more independent (So & Stella, 2012). Their influences in the luxury consumption market are remarkable (So & Stella, 2012). Luxury brands and marketers are beginning to notice the trends and the size of this market, and re-evaluate marketing strategies in order to gain larger market shares (Sin, So, Yau and Kwong, 2001; Li, Li & Kambele, 2012).

As to Japan, consumers from this country are among the world's biggest spenders (McKinsey, 2009). In 2012, sales of luxury goods were \$25 billion, accounting for about 20% of the world luxury sales (McKinsey, 2012). Since the early 1980s, the rapid growing economic (the bubble years till the late 1980s) fuelled their enthusiastic in luxury consumption (McKinsey, 2009), with a 'commonly held view' that goods from Europe would have better quality, and owning European luxury products indicated the status, success and social acceptance (McKinsey, 2009). Even though the economic bubble burst in the 1990s, and Japan experienced nearly 10 years of economic recession, Japanese consumers still have high interests in the luxury branded goods (Chadha & Husband, 2006). It is argued that different from the Western society that luxuries are an indication of wealth, status, success, taste, or uniqueness, in Japan, owning luxury items represents the mainstream, and signifies the middle-class lifestyle (McKinsey, 2009). Figures show that about 94% of Tokyo women in their twenties own a Louis Vuitton piece, 92% own Gucci, 57% own Prada, 51% own Chanel, etc. (Prasso and Brady, 2003).

## **1.2 Research Aims and Objectives**

From a theoretical point of view, in previous studies, scholars like Veblen (1950), Vigneron & Johnson (1999, 2004), Wiedmann et al. (2007) have proposed a number of concepts which influence consumers' perceived values, attitudes and purchasing intentions towards luxury products purchasing. These findings contribute to a general understanding of individuals' motives for luxury consumption. However, either the earliest theories or the further developments were almost all based on the Western countries; little is known about the large and important Asian market (e.g., Japan and China). Buying similar luxury products does not necessarily mean the same purchase

reasons; consumers from different cultures may have different motivations for buying luxury goods, therefore, the Western focused theories of luxury purchase motivations might not be applied to a Chinese or Japanese context, consumers from these countries might have their specific perceptions and reasons towards luxury consumption.

Tynan, et al. (2010) point out that 'the appetite for luxury brands has grown particularly in the emerging Asian market such a China'. From a practical point of view, either the relative mature Japanese market or the emerging Chinese market has provided great opportunities for the luxury brands. In order to maximise the marketing share and compete with competitors, an understanding of the luxury purchasing motivation across China and Japan is important for the luxury fashion industry to develop tailored marketing strategies and better satisfy luxury consumers in these two nations.

This research aims to explore the Chinese and Japanese young female consumers' motivations towards luxury purchasing. More specifically, two research questions are developed:

(1) What are the motivations for young female consumers in China and Japan to purchase luxury fashion products?

(2) Are there any similarities and differences in what motivates consumers in China and Japan to purchase luxury products?

### **1.3 Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation contains five chapters. Firstly, the introduction chapter provides the research background, the research aims and objectives, justifications for the study, and the structure of the whole dissertation.

Chapter 2 presents the previous literature relating to the luxury purchase motivations. It would firstly review the definitions of 'luxury', and indicate how luxury is viewed in this research. Then the theories and literature on motivations for consuming luxuries would be addressed in three parts: the earlier studies, the more recent developments

and extensions, and the specific motivations of Chinese and Japanese consumers examined in the previous literature. The literature gap would be noted as the lack in research-based studies in Asian luxury consumers. Besides, a cross-cultural comparison is also needed in the literature. This chapter concludes with the research questions.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology employed for conducting the research process. It identifies and justifies the interpretivism research paradigm and the qualitative procedure being adopted in gathering data from the in-depth interviewing, with respondents recruited by snowball and purposive sampling. Besides, the methodology chapter also outlines the interview schedules, the ethical considerations, as well as the choice of method to analyse the interview data.

Chapter 4 presents and discuss the findings. This chapter examines the common and distinct motivations of Chinese and Japanese respondents, as well as addressing the connections with the literature body.

The last chapter summarises the whole dissertation, and discusses the theoretical and managerial implications of the research. Finally, research limitations and further research directions are discussed.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

This chapter presents the previous literature relating to the luxury purchase motivations in three sections. The first section provides a general literature background of the luxury consumption. The second section reviews the various definitions of 'luxury' concept. The third section addresses the theories and literature on motivations of consuming luxuries in three parts: the fundamental framework, the more recent developments and extensions, and the specific motivations of Chinese and Japanese consumers examined in the previous literature. The literature gaps will be noted as the lack in research-based studies in Asian luxury consumers and cross-cultural comparisons. This chapter concludes with the research questions.

### **2.1 Background**

The consumption of luxury by the rich has received considerable attention ever since Veblen's (1899) promulgation of the theory of 'conspicuous consumption' (e.g., Mason, 1981; Stanley, 1989; Hirschman, 1990). Historically, luxury products consumption was thought to be the preserve of the upper echelons of society: only the elite had the financial ability to afford luxury products (Allison, 2008). Therefore profligate consumption of luxuries was viewed as being a characteristic of these elite (Allison, 2008). At that time, the consumption habits of the masses, through necessity, were focused far more on survival and respectability than on indulgence (Belleau & Xu, 2006).

With the growth of the middle class and people's average incomes (Fletcher & Melewar, 2001), attitudes towards luxury consumption have changed gradually. The consumption of luxury products is currently perceived positively by many consumers (Dubois, Laurent and Czellar, 2001), and an increasing number of customers are engaging in consuming luxury products. A significant proportion of luxury sales are now made not to the rich but to the middle classes in society.

The topic of luxury is not completely new. Ever since 1990s, the phenomenon of increasing luxury consumption has raised academic interests (e.g., Dubois & Laurent, 1994; Dubois, Laurent & Czellar, 2001; Lu, 2004; Nia & Zaichkowsky, 2000; Nueno &

Quelch, 1998; Riley, Lomax & Blunden, 2004; Summers, Belleau & Xu, 2006, etc. Wiedmann et al., 2007; Tynan et al., 2008). Early research on this topic started from the work of Rea (1834), Veblen (1899) and Keasbey (1903). Their works have built the foundations of theoretical understanding of luxury consumption. In view of the recent tremendous growth of research in the field of luxury consumption, various aspects of luxury consumption have been addressed, for instance, the nature of luxury products (Veblen, 1899; Dubois & Czellar, 2002; Vickers & Renand, 2003; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004); status and conspicuous consumption (Mason, 2001; Trigg, 2001; Shipman, 2004; O’Cass & McEwen, 2004; Truong, Simmons McColl & Kitchen, 2008); counterfeiting (Bian & Veloutsou, 2007); etc. Currently, study of the luxury market is taking a new direction due to the unprecedented demand coming from Asian countries, therefore much recent research focuses on the cross-cultural comparison of perspective, attitudes and motivations towards luxury consumption (Tidwell & Dubois, 1994; Dubois & Laurent, 1996; Dubois & Paternault, 1997; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Dubois, Czellar & Laurent, 2005).

Motivations towards luxury purchasing is an important topic because consumers usually do not purchase luxury products per se, rather, they purchase perceived motive satisfaction or problem solutions (Man & Stella, 2012). In addition, the consumption of luxury products is a phenomenon that spans national boundaries (Tidwell & Dubois, 1994; Dubois & Laurent, 1996; Dubois & Paternault, 1997; Dubois, Czellar & Laurent, 2005). Consumers from different nations purchasing the identical luxury product do not necessarily share the same motivations for the purchase (Allison, 2008). For instance, one customer may generate great pleasure from simply consuming the luxury product, while another might obtain satisfaction due to the sign values of the luxury product, which is the ability of the luxury products to communicate to others of who they are (Tynan, et al., 2008). Differences in motivation for consuming luxury products have been suggested between South-East Asians and Westerners even when the same luxury product is consumed (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

The next section outlines the nature of luxury and reviews the literature on motivation for the consumption of luxury products.

## 2.2 Defining luxury products

Adam Smith classified consumption into four segments: necessary (for life maintenance), basic (for normal growth and prosperity), affluence (are not necessary for growth and prosperity) and luxury (limited supplied, difficult to obtain and/or extremely expensive) (Smith, 1776). This notion emphasizes the material scarcity and high price of luxury (Berthon et al., 2009). However, defining luxury is not easy (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Tynan et al., 2008). It is far more than the material and its attributes (Berthon et al., 2009). The concept of luxury is subjective: different people view luxury differently and it is dependent on the consumers' mood and experiences (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Siebels, 2009). Besides, it also contains social meanings (Zhang & Kim, 2013). In the academic literature, although a wide range of studies have been conducted to explore topics relating to luxury consumption (as illustrated previously), there is still a lack of agreement as to how the concept 'luxury' should be clearly and objectively defined (Tynan et al., 2010; Allison, 2008).

As luxury is a subjective and multidimensional construct, a definition of luxury should not follow a narrow but rather a comprehensive and integrative understanding (Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels, 2007; Tynan, et al., 2010). The concept of 'luxury' comes from the Latin 'luxuria' which means 'extras of life' (Danziger, 2005). 'Luxus', which is the root of 'luxury', means "soft or extravagant living, (over)-indulgence and sumptuousness, luxuriousness, opulence' (Oxford Latin Dictionary, 1992, as cited in Tynan, et al., 2010:1157). In the academic literature, Vigneron and Johnson (1999, 2004) define luxury as the highest level of prestige brands that encompass several physical and psychological values. They are goods that the mere use or display can bring prestige to the owner, apart from the functional utility (Grossman & Sharpiro, 1988; Tynan, et al., 2010). To view in an economic aspect, luxury products are those price/quality relationships is the highest in the market, even though the ratio of functionality/price might be relatively low, the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is comparatively high (Mckingsey, 1990; Nueno & Quelch, 1998; Man & Stella, 2012).

Therefore, luxury products can be described by the nature of their high price, standard and rarity, and are associated with wealth, exclusivity and power (Dubois & Gilles, 1994;

Brun et al., 2008; Shukla, 2011). As non-essential items or services, they contribute to luxurious living by providing an indulgence or convenience beyond the indispensable minimum (Dubois & Gilles, 1994; Brun et al., 2008; Shukla, 2011). Whereas necessities are utilitarian objects that relieve an unpleasant state of discomfort, luxuries are characterized as objects of desire that provide pleasure (Berry, 1994). Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels (2007) note that luxury goods enable consumers to satisfy both psychological and functional needs as the simple use or display of a particular branded product could bring esteem for the owner. Therefore, the psychological benefits can be regarded as the main factor distinguishing luxury from non-luxury products or counterfeits (Arghavan and Zaichkowsky, 2000). Cornell (2002:47) put forward the notion that the key components of luxury include 'a strong element of human involvement', 'limited supply' and the 'recognition of value by others'. Kapferer (1997:253) thinks that 'luxury defines beauty, it is art applied to functional items. Luxury items provide extra pleasure and flatter all senses at once...Luxury is the appendage of the ruling classes'. Consumption of these goods involves purchasing a brand representing value to both the individual and significant others (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Siebels, 2009; Shukla and Purani, 2011; Tynan, et al., 2010). Today, marketers commonly use the word luxury to persuade consumers to purchase products that are more expensive (Tynan et al., 2010).

Luxury brands are considered to 'evoke exclusively, have a well-known brand identity, enjoy high brand awareness and perceived quality, and retain sales levels and customer loyalty' (Husic & Cicic, 2008:231). Tynan et al. (2010:1158) indicate that the term 'luxury brands' identifies 'high quality, expensive and non-essential products and services that are perceived by consumers as rare, exclusive, prestigious, and authentic and that offer high level of symbolic and emotional/hedonic value through customer experiences'. Similarly, Beverland (2004) creates a comprehensive luxury brand model with six dimensions: product integrity, value-driven emergence, culture, history, marketing and endorsement. However, this model is criticised by Moore and Birtwistle (2005), they assert that other details such as uniqueness and price also need to be incorporated in order to build a modern luxury brand. Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001) also identified six dimensions of luxury after conducting both qualitative and quantitative research into attitudes towards luxury. These characteristics of luxury

products are: price, quality, uniqueness, aesthetic, personal history, and superfluosity.

Although luxury brands are characterised by premium quality, recognizable style, heritage of craftsmanship, premium price, uniqueness, and global reputation as mentioned previously, it is generally agreed that 'luxury' defines not a category of products but a conceptual and symbolic dimension (Nuño & Quelch, 1998; Tynan et al., 2010). Consumers buy luxury brands primarily for symbolic reasons to reflect their individual or social goals. The symbolic dimension comprises values that are strongly related to cultural elements or socioeconomic context (Vickers & Renand, 2003; Tynan et al., 2010). Vickers and Renand (2003) recognise luxury goods as symbols of personal and social identity (Tynan et al., 2010). For example, individuals may use these products as a mechanism to transform some elements of an individual's lifestyle. On the other hand, consumers may purchase luxury fashion products to gain the attention of others (Potts, 2007). Vigneron and Johnson (2004) argue that people may purchase luxuries to signal or indicate their wealth and status. At the same time, the extreme expensiveness enhances the value of such an indicator (Bian and Forsythe, 2011). Kapferer and Bastien (2008) also note that luxury has its essential role of reconstructing social stratification (i.e. a social maker). That is, people consider luxury as a key component to define themselves as they wish socially. O'Cass & McEwen (2004) further suggest that consuming luxury brands is a means to achieve prestige and higher social status. This implies that people are seeking social status recognition through consumption of luxury (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996). Luxury goods are part of a new social protocol where one's identity and self-worth are determined by the visible brands worn on the body (Husic and Cicic, 2009).

### **2.3 Motivation towards Luxury Purchasing**

Motivation is what drives a person's behaviour and has explanatory force in terms of what an individual does (Pincus, 2004; Allison, 2008). A motive is conceptualised as 'an unobservable inner force that (a) triggers/drives behaviour, (b) predicates the general nature of the behaviour, and (c) remains influential until the motive has been satisfied' (Quester, Neal, Pettigrew, Grimmer, Davis & Hawkins, 2007; Allison, 2008). Piacentini



and Mailer (2004) illustrate that motives can vary widely from the physiological (e.g. the need for food and shelter, etc.), to more psychological needs (e.g. the need for pleasure, etc.).

This section examines the literature relating to the motivation of luxury consumption. Given that different authors research or discuss the motivations on different bases, times and cultures (e.g., some researchers explore motivations based on the European consumers, while others are based on Asian consumers), the literature is categorised into three parts groups as shown below, which are:

1. Fundamental motivation framework: refer to the Vigneron and Johnson's (1999, 2004) framework of motivations towards luxury consumption (Leibenstein, 1950; Mason, 1981, 1995; Veblen, 1899; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; etc.).
2. Further studies on luxury purchasing motivation: refer to the more recent luxury purchasing motivation models shared across cultures (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Rolf-Seringhaus, 2002; Vickers & Renand, 2003; Chadha & Husband, 2006; Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006; Lai & Chu, 2006; Wiedmann et al, 2007; Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010; etc.).
3. Japanese & Chinese specific motivations: these cultures carry certain specific norms and values which strongly influence luxury purchase motivations (Danziger, 2005; Chadha & Husband, 2006; Thomas, 2007; Hofstede, 2008; etc.).

The literature review, concerning specifically motivations to purchase luxury brands is found amongst general luxury consumption literature. Much of the older literature is fundamental to the topic, and has been used as a base from which more recent literature is created. It is notable that these classifications are not independent from each other, but rather interrelated to influence an individual's luxury purchasing behaviour with different degrees. Although the motivations are interrelated, they remain unique as each holds its own distinctive characteristics and meanings. They are discussed in more depth below.

### **2.3.1 Fundamental motivation framework**

#### **Conspicuous Consumption**

The consumption of luxuries has historically been seen as the preserve of a rich, self-indulgent, and small minority of individuals within society (Husic & Cicic, 2008). The earliest motivation for luxury consumption was discussed by Thorstein Veblen (1899) in his work 'The Theory of the Leisure Class'. Veblen (1899) was writing in a period when extravagance in consumption was increasing rapidly in the US, particularly amongst the 'nouveau riche' (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006). He noted that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, status was viewed as a driving force in society, and that wealth was the primary indicator of status in the society. He pointed out that 'it was not sufficient to possess wealth to acquire status, the wealth needed to be publicised' (Veblen, 1899:5).

The consumption of luxury products was one mechanism for publicising wealth and status. Veblen (1899) described the phenomenon of 'conspicuous consumption': the ostentatious use of goods or services to indicate status to other societal members. The leisure class could obtain satisfaction from other people's reactions and responses to the wealth that they displayed in consuming an expensive product conspicuously (Mason, 1981; Tynan et al., 2010). From this perspective, consumers are strongly motivated for creating/building a favourable social image through luxury purchases. Godey et al., (2012) point out that under the meaning of 'conspicuous consumption' motivation, individuals use luxury brands to achieve two social strategies. Firstly, they use luxuries as 'visible symbols' to show their personal tastes (i.e. social salience); secondly, luxuries products are also 'icons' representing specific social groups, therefore helping them to display or strengthen their membership of these groups (i.e. social identification). On the other hand, Duesenberry (1949) recognises that an increasing in consumption may be necessary to maintain a social distance. Consumers might also purchase and use higher quality goods to join aspirational groups.

Although the notion of 'conspicuous consumption' is based on the U.S. consumer environment in 1900s, it is still relevant today as a starting-point and base for the modern literature on luxury (Corneo & Jeanne, 1997; Dittmar, 1994; O'Cass & Frost, 2002; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004), and might be applied to the Chinese market

which is experiencing the rapid growth period similar to the American market environment during 1900s, upon which Veblen based his observation.

### **Veblen, Snob and Bandwagon Motivations**

The late half of the 1940s was a period of increasing wealth particularly in the US; this was also reflected in a Leibenstein's (1950) influential article, which is still utilized as the basis for many discussions of luxury consumption in the modern context. Liebenstein (1950) further developed Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption and status-seeking behaviour by labelling these as the 'Veblen' effect. He further identified two other effects called 'snob' and 'bandwagon' (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Tynan et al., 2010).

Firstly, as addressed in the above sub-section, the 'Veblen effect' refers to the ostentatious use of goods or services to indicate status to other societal members (Veblen, 1899; Leibenstein, 1950), it implies a 'status motivation' that people try to symbolise their status through consumption. Secondly, 'Snob' buyers are motivated by the exclusivity, rarity and inaccessibility (to the mass) of luxury products (i.e. uniqueness motivation). Consumers are usually motivated to buy luxury products based on wanting to feel superior and unique (Leibenstein, 1950; Mason, 1981, 1995; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Thirdly, on the other hand, 'Bandwagon' effects occur as the individual's motivation to fit in, or conform to the expectation of groups with whom he or she wishes to be associated (i.e. conformist motivation). The 'bandwagon' buyers are motivated to buy luxury products based on their willingness to feel accepted and belongings (Leibenstein, 1950; Mason, 1981, 1995). Leibenstein (1950) notes that the 'Veblen', 'Snob' and 'Bandwagon' motivations are non-functional and rely on luxuries' external effects for utility. The three forms of motivation identified by Leibenstein (1950) came to dominate how motivation for the consumption of luxury products was conceptualized until the 1990s (Shukla and Purani, 2011).

It should be noted that Levy (1959) suggests the notion of 'symbolic interactionism', which is related to luxury consumption. Products are purchased not only for the functional attributes, but also their symbolic meanings, these symbolic attributes would then reflect the characteristics of the purchasers (Levy, 1959). He proposes that the

motivations towards luxury consumption could also be explained in a symbolic interactionism perspective. For example, 'Status motivation' (Veblen, 1899; Keynes, 1936; Leibenstein, 1950) reflects a consumer's desire to symbolise status through consumption. 'Uniqueness motivation' (Leibenstein, 1950) reflects people's willingness to symbolise difference through consumption. 'Conformist motivation' (Duesenberry, 1949; Leibenstein, 1950) reflects one's desire to symbolise social group belonging through consumption.

### **Framework of Interpersonal and Personal Motivations**

In a review of the literature relating to luxury consumption, the concepts of 'Veblen', 'Snob' and 'Bandwagon' effects are developed further by Vigneron and Johnson (1999, 2004), who classified these as interpersonal-oriented motivations. Drawing on the work of Dubois and Laurent (1994), Vigneron and Johnson (1999, 2004) argue that apart from the external influences, there are motives of an alternative 'personal' nature, from within the individual himself/herself. They identify two additional types of motivation for consuming luxuries: namely the 'Perfectionist' and 'Hedonic' luxury purchase motivations (Tynan et al., 2010). The former reflects a consumer's desire to purchase a luxury product for its perceived functional value; and the latter indicates the consumer's desire for the luxury product's perceived hedonic value. Hedonic and perfectionist value can be categorised as personal or independent forms of motivation and are independent from the consumption preferences of others (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004).

- 'Hedonic' means that a consumer is motivated to purchase a luxury product because it produces positive emotions (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).
- 'Perfectionist' refers to that the consumer concerns the quality or design of a luxury product (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

They propose a separation of the interpersonal and personal motivations for luxury consumption and conceptualised five basic categories of perceived values for luxury products accordingly as shown in the following table.

Table 1: a framework of luxury purchasing motivations proposed by Vigneron & Johnson (1999)

Interpersonal & Personal Motivations	Perceived value	Motives
Interpersonal/social-oriented motives	Perceived conspicuous value	'Veblen'
	Perceived unique value	'Snob'
	Perceived social value	'Bandwagon'
Personal-oriented motives	Perceived emotional value	'Hedonic'
	Perceived quality value	'Perfectionism'

Source: Vigneron & Johnson (1999, 2004); Tynan et al. (2010).

The framework/model proposed by Vigneron and Johnson (1999) illustrated above includes the traditional interpersonal/social forms of motivation of luxury consumption: Veblen value, snob value, and bandwagon value. It incorporates both interpersonal and personal motivations, providing a more holistic view than what has been previously conceptualised, which is seen as a significant advance in the academic literature of luxury consumption (Godey et al., 2012).

### 2.3.2 Further Studies on Luxury Purchasing Motivation

In Vigneron and Johnson's (2004) further related empirical research, they change the 'bandwagon' from the interpersonal to the personal to the personal motivation, while the 'perfectionism' is switched to the interpersonal motivation by considering the luxury purchasing behaviour of the global consumers (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004, as cited in Tynan et al., 2010). In addition, a number of researchers enrich the traditional framework of luxury purchasing motivations (e.g., Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Vigeron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Tsai, 2005; Wiedmann, Hennigs & Siebels, 2007). For example, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) are the first researchers to demonstrate that for some consumers, personal orientation (Hedonism and perfectionism) towards luxury brands was more important than the interpersonal orientation (Veblen, Snob and Bandwagon); they are usually motivated by the utilitarian, emotional and symbolic dimensions of a luxury product when making purchasing decisions (Godey et al., 2012). By analysing the data collected from Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific, Tsai (2005) illustrates that personal motivations including self-directed pleasure, self-gift giving, congruity with the internal self, and quality assurance all contribute to consumers' luxury purchase motivations, and influence their repurchase intentions.

Alternatively, Vickers and Renand (2003) suggest another approach to conceptualise consumer perceptions towards luxury goods, which also indicates an alternative framework of consumption motivations (Tynan et al., 2010). They argue that luxury goods satisfy the functional, experiential and symbolic interactive needs for consumers. A consumer's functional need is described as a response to an internally generated need, such as the need to perform a task well or the high quality requirement towards a product (Vickers and Renand, 2003). An experiential need refers to a consumer's desire for sensory pleasure, entertainment, variety and other cognitive stimulation (e.g. beauty) (Vickers and Renand, 2003). A consumer's symbolic interactive need means the product consumed should correspond with a consumer's need for status, membership of a group and enhancement of the self (i.e. extended self) (Vickers and Renand, 2003). Vickers and Renand's (2003) model of luxury consumption perception implies an alternative way to view consumers' motivation of luxury purchase, that individuals could be motivated by the functional value, the experiential pleasure, and the symbolic effects of luxury products. The model provides a different perspective to view the luxury consumption motivations.

Wiedmann et al. (2007) argue that a customer's value perception and the motivations for luxury consumption should not be simply restricted to the social (e.g., exhibiting status, success, distinction, uniqueness, etc.) and personal aspects (e.g., seeking entertainment, pleasure, way of life, etc.), but also depend on the functional and financial utilities of luxury products. They develop and extend the traditional framework (interpersonal and personal motivations) by putting forward a multidimensional model consist of four dimensions: functional, social, individual and financial value dimensions. Functional value means luxury goods' value of usability, quality, longevity and uniqueness. As also explained Vigneron & Johnson (1999, 2004) previously, this dimension indicates that customers would purchase luxuries due to the nature of excellent quality, or try to portray their individuality (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). Secondly, social value refers to the conspicuous (Veblen, 1899) and prestige value of luxury products, implying that consumers might be motivated to buy luxuries in order to show their wealth and social status (Wilcox et al., 2009). Thirdly, individual value (i.e. self-identity value, hedonic value and materialistic value) (Wiedmann et al., 2007) implies that individuals purchase luxury products to realize self-identity or to obtain

emotional/sensory pleasure. Finally, people could also be motivated by the high prices to exhibit their social standing (Bian & Forsythe, 2011). These four dimensions significantly influence consumers' luxury value perception and their motivation consumption on an international level (Wiedmann et al., 2007).

The previous two sub-sections address the classical motivation themes including Veblen (conspicuous consumption), Snob, Bandwagon, hedonic and perfectionism motivations for luxury consumption, as well as further developments in alternatives proposed by other authors such as Vickers & Renand (2003), and Wiedmann et al (2007). However, Chaudhuri & Majumdar (2006) argue that these themes concentrate on how consumers perceive and value luxury products, rather than underlying motives towards their purchasing behaviours. Besides, the previous concepts are generally based on Western-focused research; the traditional framework might not be applied to Asian countries due to substantial cultural differences. The literature argues that national-culture is a very significant and strong influence affecting people's motivations for buying luxuries. For example, Dubois and Duquesne (1993) emphasise that the culture and economic levels play a significant role in the luxury purchasing behaviour. Rolf-Seringhaus (2002) also supports this view by stating that the cultural variables affect individuals' attitudes towards luxuries as much as personal views, noting the importance of considering cultural contribution to an individual's luxury purchasing motivations. In addition, Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels (2007) argue that, apart from interpersonal and personal motives, situational conditions should also be taken into consideration, when trying to investigate consumers' luxury purchasing behaviour. Examples of the situational conditions could be economic, societal and political factors, which are all based on a national context.

Thus, several researchers (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Danziger, 2005; Chadha & Husband, 2006; etc.) propose alternative frameworks relatively compatible to explore the motivations of luxury purchasing in Asian countries and compare the differences and similarities across cultures. The luxury purchasing motivations of Chinese and Japanese consumers are discussed below.

### **2.3.3 Specific motives in Chinese and Japanese Context**

Culture, as Hofstede (1991:5) explained, refers to 'the collective mental programming of the people in an environment'. It contains the commonly shared values, attitudes, roles, beliefs by people in a region and during certain period (Mooji, 2004). Scholars such as Hofstede (1980, 1991) and Triandis (1995) underlined that as one dimension in distinguishing national cultures, the concept of individualism and collectivism could effectively explain the behavioural similarities and differences across different nations. A nation's individualist or collectivist orientation could then influence the types of value that people look for in products and services (Gao and Norton, 2009).

Through the research on cultural influences on luxury consumption, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) argued that while consumers in an individualism-oriented culture might focus on the personal or the hedonic values of the luxury goods, consumers in a collectivism-oriented culture weigh more on the symbolic or the social effects of a luxury product (instead of self-expression, self-indulgence or self-rewarding). Collectivists seek the social representation and prestige through luxury consumption, and they concentrate more on impressing others of their wealth, status, and taste signified by the luxury brands (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Tsai, 2005). Phau and Prendergast (2000) further point out that in collectivist cultures, consumers engage in luxury consumption mainly for the desire of social group acceptance and conformity.

Asian cultures are collectivism-oriented (Hofstede, 1980, 1991), therefore consumers in this culture orientation are primarily or mainly motivated by the social or interpersonal values conveyed by luxury goods (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Simultaneously, the collectivist cultural orientation could explain the immense popularity of luxury products among Asian consumers to some extent. For example, Doctoroff (2005) pointed out that Asian consumers buy luxuries to indicate wealth and status because their culture emphasizes status and socioeconomic hierarchy (Willis, 2006). For example, Countries like China and Japan have the traditions of giving expensive gifts to enhance the relationship building with others and obtain social recognition (Shutte & Ciarlant, 1998; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Chadha & Husband, 2006). In addition, the Confucian values in these cultures such as desire for harmony could provide



explanatory clues in understanding why explains why people purchase luxuries to achieve social acceptance and conformity (Phau and Prendergast, 2000).

### **Motives in a Chinese Context**

In recent years, China is becoming one of the world's top luxury markets (The economist, 2013). Gao and Norton (2009) indicate the important role the Chinese culture has played in the luxury consumption, that consumers are stimulated not only by the product functional values, but also the product meanings attached by their culture (Shutte & Ciarlante, 1998). China is regarded as a collectivistic culture where 'public approval' symbolizes success and wealth (Hofstede 1991; Triandis, 1998; Danziger, 2005; Thomas, 2007). The Confucius' concept of 'Face', which refers to the social status of a person, is a very important concern in Chinese culture and society (especially important to the elders or the people who already have high social status) (So & Stella, 2012). Chadha and Husband (2006) argued that in China, the product consumptions are usually related to the face consciousness, especially for the luxury products that would bring face to individuals. This could explain why Chinese consumers hold the belief that owning luxury branded items could help them maintain social position and prestige (So & Stella, 2012). Although Japanese society is also viewed as collectivism oriented, when comparing to Japanese consumers, Chinese consumers are more concerned with the 'Face' and their consumption decisions are influenced heavily by face (Fujioka, 2006; Li and Su 2006; So & Stella, 2012). Their consumption towards luxury products is regarded more as a mechanism to satisfy social needs, rather than fulfil personal values (e.g., hedonic and perfectionism motivations).

By studying the luxury consumption in Asian countries, Chadha and Husband (2006) proposed a motivation model consists of five phases: (i) subjugation, (ii) start of money, (iii) show-off, (iv) fit in, and (v) way of life. Among these motives, the first four are related to the inter-personal motives, for example the 'show off' refers to that people are competing with each other trying to acquire the symbols of wealth and displaying them in the most conspicuous manner. The last one 'way of life' is connected to the personal motives. From the literature, five motives can be identified as to the luxury purchasing behaviour of Chinese consumers. Firstly, Chinese consumers are motivated to consume luxury products to display their wealth and social status, which relates to

the concept of Veblen effect (Chadha & Husband, 2006; Danziger, 2005; Debnam & Svinos, 2006; Thomas, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010). Secondly, several researchers (Chadha & Husband, 2006; Danziger, 2005; Thomas, 2007) note that the status or image exhibition through the luxury consumption can then help to obtain respect from others, or indicate the powerful social position of the individual, and improving the person's 'Face' accordingly. Improving 'face' could be regarded as a separate motivation, for example, Chinese consumers would purchase luxury products as gifts to other people, they are motivated by an inner desire to improve the 'face' of his/her group or families. Thirdly, a proportion of the middle class consumers can be motivated to buy luxury products not for self-gifting, self-rewarding or self-pleasure; they purchase luxuries for accomplishing professional goals and raising their social status (Debnam & Svinos, 2006). Fourthly, some Chinese consumers buy luxuries to show their personal taste (usually the owners are trying to indicate their naturally good taste towards products consumption) and achieve self-identity. This motivation reflects the consumers' personality and characteristics, rather than social status (Chadha & Husband, 2006; Danziger, 2005; Debnam & Svinos, 2006; Thomas, 2007). Fifthly, price can be an important factor influencing motivations for luxury products purchasing, Chinese consumers are relatively price-conscious, however, they are willing to pay the price premium of luxury brands, as the psychological benefits brought by the consumption of luxuries (Chadha & Husband, 2006; Thomas, 2007). Recently, McKinsey's report on Luxury consumption in China (2011) 'Understanding China's Love for Luxury' further points out that an increasing number of Chinese luxury consumers are exhibiting a noticeable trend shifting away from wealth displaying to a more personal-oriented form of motivations.

### **Motives in a Japanese Context**

Japan is also currently one of the biggest luxury markets in the world by accounting for about 25% of the global luxury goods sales (McKinsey, 2013). The collectivist orientation of the Japanese cultural also influences the consumers' luxury purchasing behaviours (Chadha & Husband, 2006). However, it should be noted that although China and Japan share the same broad underlining culture of collectivism, the Confucian values are viewed and perceived differently to some extent (Yan et al., 2005). Different from the Chinese culture, Japanese culture focuses more on the interpersonal

relationships, group norms and goals, and the social orientations (Yau, 1994; Chadha & Husband, 2006). Tse (1996) pointed out that Japanese people have the social pressures of behaving appropriately in accordance with their social groups. These cultural emphasises influence and shape the Japanese consumers' luxury consumption.

However, Triandis (1995) argued that in each society, there are collectivists and individualists. Apart from the Confucianism, the Japanese culture is also deeply influenced by the Taoism and Buddhism, which suggest individuality and personality (Triandis, 1995). Chadha and Husband (2006) support this view by pointing out that many Japanese consumers today tend to express their individuality through their purchasing decisions. An increasing number of Japanese consumers begin to buy products that reflect their personal identities.

From the previous research, Japanese consumers are mainly motivated by five main luxury purchasing motivations: keeping 'face', social conformity, gift-giving, price and self-pleasing (Brannen, 1992; Yan et al., 2005; Chadha & Husband, 2006, etc.). Firstly similar to the Chinese consumers, Japanese consumers are motivated by the 'Face' in the luxury consumption, as they hope to indicate or maintain their wealth signified by the luxury products (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Secondly, Japanese consumers are motivated by the desire to fit into their social groups. In Japan, one's position in the work or wealth usually indicates his/her place in the hierarchy (Creighton, 1997), and individuals should conform to their socio-economic hierarchy. Therefore, they can be motivated by the desire of the social group fit-in. Wong and Ahuvia (1998:433) mentioned that in this kind of culture, the social pressure of group conformity would lead to that the luxury consumption 'become a must rather than a want'. Furthermore, Gregory and Munch (1996) addressed the significant influences of reference groups in Japanese consumers' public consumption of luxury goods and brand choice. Although reference groups are considered to be influential in other cultures, Japanese people seem to be more strongly affected by views and values from other people (Iwabuchi, 2001; Goy-Yamamoto, 2004). Thirdly, gift-giving tradition also contributes to the luxury consumption to some extent in Japan. Sometimes Japanese consumers purchase luxury goods as gifts in order to obtain repayment for this 'investment' and gain future favours (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Fourthly, Price of luxury goods still plays an important role

as Japanese consumers perceive higher prices could imply the higher quality of products (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Finally, Japanese people are motivated to buy luxury to reward and please themselves (De-Mooij, 2005). All of these motivations would contribute to an individual's luxury consumption behaviours.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter begins with the literature background in the luxury consumption, and reviews the various definitions of the term luxury in the literature, and suggests the definition proposed by Tynan et al. (2010:1158) that 'luxury brands' identifies 'high quality, expensive and non-essential products and services that are perceived by consumers as rare, exclusive, prestigious, and authentic and that offer high level of symbolic and emotional/hedonic value through customer experiences'. After that, the fundamental framework in luxury purchase motivation is introduced. The fundamental framework proposed by Vigneron and Johnson (1999) includes five motives divided into two main dimensions (interpersonal and personal): the conspicuous consumption, uniqueness, group fit in, hedonic and perfectionism. In addition, more recent studies and alternative models toward luxury purchase motivations are explained and discussed. Finally, specific motivations of Chinese consumers and Japanese consumers are addressed in details.

### **2.4.1 Gaps in the literature**

Literature gaps are discovered after reviewing the literature body of luxury purchasing motivations. Firstly, the fundamental and the further development frameworks on motivation are mostly created without the considering the culture differences, thus the motivations based on the Western research may not be applicable to the Asian cultures. Secondly, although recently the academic begins to research Asian consumers' luxury purchase motivations through cross-culture comparison between the Western and Eastern societies, little is known relating to the subtle differences in different Asian countries.

### **2.4.2 Research Questions**

From the literature review and the gaps, the researcher gives rise to two research questions, which are:

(1) What are the motivations for young female consumers in China and Japan to purchase luxury fashion products?

(2) Are there any similarities and differences in what motivates consumers in China and Japan to purchase luxury products?

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

This chapter addresses the methodological context and process used to investigate Japanese and Chinese consumers' perceptions and motivations for purchasing fashion luxury products. Firstly, the research paradigm is selected and reviewed. Then the main research technique of in-depth interview is introduced, followed by considerations for interview implementation, and the pilot test of the interview. Thirdly, the sampling methods are illustrated. After that, the interview schedule is explained step by step. Finally, data collection and analysis are presented. The goal of the methodology is to answer the research questions addressed in the previous chapter: What motivates consumers in Japan and China to purchase fashion luxury products? Are the motivations across these two nations largely similar, or different?

### **3.1. Research paradigm**

Interpretivism and qualitative research approach have been adopted to conduct the present research in order to explore underlying Japanese and Chinese consumers' purchasing motivations for fashion luxury products. In this section, the reasons for utilising the Interpretivism and qualitative research methods will be examined in details.

#### **3.1.1 Justification for using Interpretivist approach**

In general terms, Positivism is based on the belief that there is a single, external and objective reality to any research question regardless of the researcher's beliefs (Carson et al. 1988; Hudson & Ozanne 1988; Easterby, et al., 2004). It attempts to clearly distinguish between facts and value judgments, reasons and feelings, sciences and personal experiences (Carson et al. 2001) by adopting statistical and mathematical techniques to uncover single and objective realities (Carson et al. 2001; Hudson et al. 1988; Gill & Johnson, 2002). The research usually engages in developing and proving hypothesis (Gliner and Morgan, 2009:28).

On the contrary, interpretivists focus upon consider the value systems people use to judge and interact with each other, and believe that the reality is relative and multiple (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach explores and explains the causes, processes, and inter-relationship of social phenomena or human behaviours, and predicts the possible consequences (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Thorpe & Holt, 2008). from an epistemological point of view, while positivists believe that “there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts” (Easterby et al, 2002:28), interpretivists hold the view that the ‘reality’ is not objective or exterior, instead, the knowledge we have about the ‘reality’ is perceived through socially constructed and subjective interpretations (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Carson et al., 2001). The interpretivism method seeks to understand why people perceive things differently (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

Table 2: Summary of the research paradigms

<b>Characteristic of the Positivist and Interpretivist</b>	<b>Positivist view</b>	<b>Interpretive View</b>
<b>Ontology</b>	Person (the researcher) and reality are separate	Person (the researcher) and reality are inseparable (life-world)
<b>Epistemology</b>	Objective reality exists beyond the human mind	Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person’s lived experience
<b>Research objective</b>	Research object has inherent qualities that exist independently of the researcher	Research object is interpreted in light of meaning structure of person’s lived experience.
<b>Beliefs</b>	One truth exists: must be objective	Many truths and realities: different people have different perceptions, needs and experiences
<b>Research methods</b>	Quantitative	Qualitative
<b>What study data is based upon</b>	Measurable outcomes from questionnaire data	Descriptive, explanatory and contextual words of interview data
<b>Study sample</b>	Clear and precise inclusion and exclusion data	Representatives who are able to provide expertise from different points of view

Source: Weaver & Olsen, 2006; Klein & Myers, 1999.

Both of these two approaches have strengths and weaknesses (Saunders et al., 2003), and the choice of the paradigm depends on the research question and purpose. The

Interpretivist research approach is applied in this research for several reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above, the approach explores individuals' personal perceptions, attitudes, or experiences of phenomena (Thorpe and Holt, 2008), which is in accordance with the dissertation's aim of investigating consumers' motivations towards luxury purchasing. Secondly, unlike positivists, interpretivists realise human behaviour is time bound and contextually based (Gill & Johnson, 2002; Patton, 1980), which seems to be more consistent with this dissertation topic. Thirdly, the positivist approach might be inappropriate for this topic as the motivations concluded from the literature review are mostly based on European and North American luxury consumers, so the insights might not be applicable to the Asian consumers, therefore, variables cannot be predetermined. Besides, the author does not have experiences and academic backgrounds of positivist researches, and feels more comfortable and enjoyable in interpretivist research.

In the interpretivist research paradigm, the data are usually obtained subjectively by researchers who attempt to get close to the participants world (Mack et al, 2005). It is believed that in interpretive research, the subjectivity and intuition of both the researchers and respondents cannot be avoided as the information/data come from the researcher's interpretation or understanding of the participants' statements of their experiences and views (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). Therefore, within this research, bias could occur as to address the Chinese and Japanese consumers' motivations towards luxury purchasing. The researcher needs to understand accurately of what the respondents say, and try to encourage the respondents to explain clearly of their views.

Different methodological approaches will use different methods. For example, the positivist research can adopt statistical approaches, experiments, case studies, or questionnaire. The interpretivist approach could use ethnography, case studies, or interviews. The following sections introduce the reasons for applying qualitative research method and in-depth interviews.

### **3.1.2 Justification for using qualitative research method**



Table 3: A comparison of the quantitative and qualitative research

	<b>Quantitative research</b>	<b>Qualitative research</b>
<b>Definition</b>	A quantitative approach is one in which the investigator primarily uses postpositivist claims for developing knowledge (i.e., cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data.	Alternatively, a qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed. with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative. or change oriented) or both. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended. Emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data.
<b>Knowledge claim</b>	Postpositivist assumptions	Constructivist/advocacy/participatory, emancipatory, and interpretive assumptions
<b>Strategy of inquiry</b>	Surveys and Experimental design	Phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative, ethnography, case study, etc.
<b>Sample</b>	Large number of representative cases	Small number of non-representative cases
<b>Objective</b>	To quantify the data and generalize the results from the sample to the population of interest	To gain a qualitative understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations
<b>Research emphasise</b>	Emphasise the facts or reality	Emphasise the subjective intention of the researched groups
<b>Approach</b>	Measuring attitudes, rating behaviour, structured observation, etc.	Field observations, in-depth interview, case studies, etc.
<b>Data collection</b>	Structured: closed-ended questions, predetermined approaches, numeric data	Unstructured: open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data
<b>Data analysis</b>	Statistical	Non-statistical
<b>Outcome</b>	Recommend a final course of action	Develop an initial understanding

Sources: Boodhoo and Purmessur, 2009; Silverman, 2006; Malhotra, 2010; Creswell, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Mack et al, 2005; etc.

Creswell (2003) suggests 3 criteria for considering selecting an approach (e.g., quantitative, qualitative or the mixed research methods): the research problem, the researcher's personal experiences, and the audience (s) for whom the report will be written. Firstly, Creswell (2003) notes that certain types of social research problems match specific approaches. For example, if the research needs to identifying factors affecting an outcome, understanding the predictors of outcomes, or testing a theory or explanation, then the quantitative approach should be a better choice if the variables are pre-determined (Silverman, 2011). On the other hand, qualitative research method can be applied when the important variables are not completely known or identified, or in situations that existing theories do not apply with the particular sample or group under study (Morse, 1991). Besides, if a phenomenon has not been fully investigated or understood, then it merits a qualitative approach to explore possible elements or gain an insight into the situation (Bryman, 2012). Secondly, the researcher's personal training and experiences should also be considered. For example, if the researcher has previous experiences or is trained in technical, scientific writing, statistics, and computer statistical programs, he or she would choose the quantitative research design (Bryman, 2012). Similarly, a person with skills or experiences in qualitative research would tend to choose the qualitative method to conduct the research. Qualitative approaches are considered to allow innovation and flexibility. Finally, researchers should also think about the audience to whom they report the research. The audiences' experiences with quantitative or qualitative methods could shape the decision making. For instance, Creswell (2003) notes that students should consider about the approaches supported by the advisers.

In this dissertation, the qualitative approach is chosen to conduct the research process. In this section, reasons of using the qualitative methods will be detailed examined based on the three criteria above.

Firstly, the research problem of this dissertation is to explore the motivations towards fashion luxury purchasing of Japanese and Chinese consumers. It should be noted that the research question does not directly point to either a quantitative or qualitative

research approach as an especially suitable method (Silverman, 2011). Data from quantitative research (with a large sample base) could provide inferences of motivations, and qualitative research could offer a direct insight into consumers' views and value perceptions towards luxury (Silverman, 2011). They are different aspects of perspectives into a topic and can present different outcomes.

However, different from the quantitative method, the qualitative approach does not rely solely on statistics or figures to draw conclusions. By concentrating on smaller but focused samples rather than large scales, qualitative process aims to generate in-depth thinking by conducting constant dialogues with people in a gradual way (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). Qualitative research requires relevant abilities of researchers such as experiences and sensitivity, to gain useful insights into consumers' behaviour and the underlying motivations in their daily life (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research allows a deep exploration towards consumer perceptions, and further examines the reasons of their behaviours (Bryman & Bell, 2007). As to this dissertation, the research aims to explore the motivations towards luxury purchasing behaviour, which precisely requires a qualitative method for better understanding consumer attitudes towards luxury consumption, the meaning and value of luxury products for consumers, and therefore explore the underlying motivations. The research topic is therefore in consistent with the purpose of conducting qualitative research: 'to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that cause such behaviour' (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

By contrast, quantitative research tends to collect, analyse and interpret data in terms of figures and numerical patterns (Boodhoo and Purmessur, 2009). It usually requires the researcher at least knows something about the variables and then constructs metrics to measure them in the population. Quantitative research 'quantifies and expresses the relationship between variables using effect statistics, such as correlations, relative frequencies, or differences between means' (Hopkins Jr., 2000). In quantitative research, themes and variables are usually already known (Creswell, 2003). However, this research aims to explore the luxury purchasing motivations of Japanese and Chinese consumers, while the variables are not necessarily known or determined (the

purchasing motivations provided in the literature are based on the western consumers, therefore might not be applied to Japan and China).

Therefore, the qualitative process seems to be more appropriate to collect and analyse the data in order to investigate the valid luxury purchase motivations of Japanese and Chinese consumers. The literature review points out that in different nations, consumers may attribute different meanings to luxury products and luxury brand consumption. Using the qualitative method could help to deeply understand the differences.

Secondly, as it is mentioned before, the researcher's personal training and experiences should also be considered (Creswell, 2003). In this study the researcher has previous learning experiences in qualitative research methods, and would be more comfortable and familiar to conduct the research under the qualitative process. Finally, the audiences of this dissertation are also considered. The supervisor of this dissertation also supports the use of qualitative approach.

However, there are also some limitations of adopting the qualitative methods. For instance, difficulties may arise when the time is restricted, the participants are not representative, or in situations that the individual changes his/her mind of unwilling to be interviewed (Miller, 1999). One of the most common problems would be that the participant may not be able or willing to answer the key questions, or provide superficial answers (Merriam, 2002). In order to address these issues and minimize the limitations, researcher could gather related information before the interview, build trusts between the participants during the interview, and try not to ask intensive questions (Merriam, 2002). Simultaneously, it should be noted that in the qualitative research process, the subjectivity and intuition of either the researcher or the participants cannot be avoided (Thorpe & Holt, 2008), which means the data collected could be biased to some extent.

### **3.2. The Choice of Interview**

There are many approaches to conduct the qualitative research such as focus groups, interviews (structured, semi-structured, unstructured), observations, ethnographic, case studies, etc. (Silverman, 2011). The aim of this research is to discover cross-cultural purchasing motives of fashion luxury products. In order to realize the goal and obtain reliable information, in-depth interview is applied in this dissertation. The following section describes the meaning of 'interview' and 'in-depth interview' in the qualitative research, and the reasons for choosing this approach.

Interviews are one of the most common qualitative approaches (Bryman & Bell, 2007). It is based in conversations, with the emphasis on the interviewers asking questions and listening, and the interviewees answering (Bryman & Bell, 2007), which helps the researcher obtain detailed views from the participants (Creswell, 2003). In the interview, the researcher will carefully listens in order to 'hear the meaning' of what is being conveyed (Bryman, 2012). Spradley (1979:8) notes that the purpose of conducting interviews is to make 'cultural inferences', which describe a given social world analysed for cultural themes and patterns (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). With the adoption of interviewing, reliable information can be gained about the luxury purchasing motivations.

The approach of interview allows researchers to gain an insight into participant's personal feelings, views, experiences and perceptions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Hollway and Jefferson (2000) note that 'interview' is most effective when the research aims to gain insights into the individuals' 'subjective understandings'. By asking participants 'why', the researchers are able to observe their behaviour, and obtain the meaning explained in the respondent's own words that underlies the behaviour (Silverman, 2011).

By contrast, some other approaches of qualitative methods could be unsuitable for this research purpose. For example, ethnomethodology, where the researcher needs to engage in the participants' everyday life through different ways such as conversations and observations (Thorpe & Holt, 2008), seems to be difficult to achieve in this research considering geographical distances and time constraints. In addition, Bryman (2012)

point out researchers often choose interviews over ethnographic methods when the research topics do not centre on particular settings but aims to establish common patterns or themes between particular types of respondents. Besides, participating in 'everyday life' within two different cultures (Japan and China) could be difficult even for very experienced researchers. Therefore, the 'interview' method seems to be more appropriate to this research.

There would also be limitations in choosing the interview method. For example, respondents may avoid answering certain questions, or provide answers that are not what she really thinks (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In order to minimise these limitations, the questions setting, the environment and atmosphere during interview, the attitudes of the interviewer should all be carefully considered (Siverman, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In addition, the researcher should have the ability to react quickly, be professional and objective, and sometimes ask more questions according to situations (Siverman, 2011). Besides, for researchers, it takes much time to carry out interviews and analyse transcripts.

Within the interview (focus groups and in-depth one-to-one interview), the format chosen for this motivation research is the 'in-depth' interview. An in-depth interview is 'an unstructured, direct, personal interview in which a single respondent is probed by a highly skilled interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on a topic' (Malhotra, 2010:185). There are several reasons for choosing this approach. Firstly, with the topic of luxury goods purchasing, where interviewees may limit their disclosure as a fear of judgement by others, the one-to-one in-depth interview seems to be a better format to minimize the fear and cross influences between participants rather than in a group setting (Silverman, 2011). Besides, as the researcher is currently in the UK, while participants are either located in China or Japan, it would be difficult to gather all the respondents (8 from each nation, 2 focus groups) together in a certain time. Therefore, considering about the research topic itself, the time efficiency and objective constraints, the in-depth interview is more suitable.

The research will imply standardized, open-ended interviews: The same open-ended questions are asked to all interviewees; this approach facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared. As the geographical constraints, the telephone or computer-assisted online interview may also be chosen.

### **3.3 Pilot Interview**

In-depth interviews usually require high interview skills of the research such as flexibility (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As the researcher does not have previous experiences, several pilot interviews will be conducted to obtain some knowledge and experiences in understanding the way that the participants are likely to respond to the questions. Besides, the researcher could also adjust the interview questions more appropriately. Therefore, the researcher could to conduct the subsequent interviews more effectively and efficiently (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Silverman, 2011).

Two pilot interviews would be conducted: one participant from Japan and another from China. In order to realise some improvement in the subsequent interview process, after the pilot interview, participants will be invited to offer suggestions relating to how they feel about the research questions, whether the researcher behaves and asks question properly, and their advices on better form the questions and the interview schedule. In addition, the pilot interviews would be recorded to assist review and making adjustment to the interview process.

### **3.4 Participants**

#### **3.4.1 Sampling Design**

Defined as “the method, criteria and procedures used to select subjects for study” (Lunsford and Lunsford, 1995:106), sampling is generally conducted to permit the detailed study of part, rather than the whole, of a population (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). There are two types of sampling: probability and nonprobability sampling (Coyne, 1997). The former refers to that the subjects are selected at random in order to avoid selection bias, and the latter means the participants are not chosen randomly. It is

usually criticized as the samples chosen might potentially be less able to represent the whole population (Lunsford and Lunsford, 1995).

The research aims to discover motivations towards fashion luxury consumption of Japanese and Chinese young female consumers, the researcher would then solely focus on selecting representatives from these two targeting groups. Participants are selected based on the researcher's personal contacts and networks (e.g., classmates, Japanese language session teachers, friends in China, etc.). In addition, as the research topic explores the luxury purchasing motivations, interview participants are carefully selected considering the income level (or family income level), exposure to fashion luxury brands, and whether the person has purchased luxury goods before.

Therefore, the non-probability sampling is appropriate, considering the research question and aim, the population scale and resource limitations. Methods of non-probability sampling available are convenience sampling, snowball sampling, purposive sampling, and quota sampling (Coyne, 1997). This research would apply snowball and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling means the first respondent is a friend, and then samples are extended to the friend's other friends (Coyne, 1997). In addition, purposive sampling refers to that the researcher chooses the samples based on who they think would be appropriate for the study (Coyne, 1997). The technique of purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants based on preselected criteria that are relevant to the research question (Coyne, 1997).

#### **3.4.2 Respondents Demographics**

Eight Chinese young females and eight Japanese young females aged from 24 to 35 were interviewed; the researcher was therefore able to collect relative valuable and sufficient data. Firstly, the participants were born in China or Japan, and lived in their own country for a considerable part of their lives, and still lived there currently. Secondly, majority of the respondents were from big cities, such as from Shanghai or Beijing of China, and Tokyo or Osaka of Japan. Thirdly, respondents' educational levels were almost all Bachelor degrees or above, and most of them were currently working. The demographic data describes the respondents are displayed in the Table 4. As for the



privacy protection reasons and participant comfort, no names were recorded within the interview; instead, the interviewees were named with numbers as shown below.

Table 4: Demographics of the respondents

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education Level</b>
<b>Chinese 1</b>	F	24	Chinese	Shanghai	Working at the bank	Master degree
<b>C2</b>	F	25	Chinese	Shanghai	Small business owner	Bachelor degree
<b>C3</b>	F	26	Chinese	Shenzhen	Secretary	Bachelor degree
<b>C4</b>	F	27	Chinese	Shanghai	Accountant	Master degree
<b>C5</b>	F	29	Chinese	Shanghai	Sales person	Master degree
<b>C6</b>	F	30	Chinese	Beijing	Film Director	Master degree
<b>C7</b>	F	31	Chinese	Shanghai	Bank teller	Master degree
<b>C8</b>	F	33	Chinese	Beijing	Working at the advertising media	Bachelor degree
<b>Japanese 1</b>	F	25	Japanese	Tokyo	Working at an international company	Master degree
<b>J2</b>	F	26	Japanese	Tokyo	Used to Working at NGO	Bachelor degree
<b>J3</b>	F	27	Japanese	Kanagawa	System analyst	Master degree
<b>J4</b>	F	28	Japanese	Kyoto	Working at travelling agencies	Master degree
<b>J5</b>	F	29	Japanese	Osaka	Department manager	Bachelor degree
<b>J6</b>	F	30	Japanese	Tokyo	Working at a finance company	Master degree
<b>J7</b>	F	31	Japanese	Osaka	Used to work at NGO	PHD
<b>J8</b>	F	35	Japanese	Tokyo	Language teacher	Bachelor degree

The samples of respondents were selected for several reasons. Firstly, narrowing the demographics to females aged from 24 to 35 reduced heterogeneity in the data, as males and a different age group could have different purchasing behaviours and motivations for luxury purchasing. Secondly, having respondents born and living in their own countries allowed the participants to offer the researcher with raw information and data that truly and reliably reflects consumers' perceptions and motives towards luxury fashion goods in China and Japan. Thirdly, participants interviewed were almost all from big cities in each nation (Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen in China, and Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Kanagawa in Japan), this is because luxury fashion brands usually distribute largely in big cities, which means that all respondents had similar or close levels of getting familiar and access to luxury fashion brands. Fourthly,

similar educational degrees lead to similar income levels to some extent in each country; therefore, the ability to purchase luxury fashion products might be similar as well. Setting constraints in choosing samples could reduce heterogeneity in data, help to understand certain group's luxury purchasing behaviours more deeply, and make it easier for the cross-culture comparison. Besides, as the young generation accounts for a large proportion in luxury fashion products consumption in Asian countries, the exploration of their motives would bring benefits for luxury fashion brands in developing marketing strategies. Limitations as to the samples chosen would be discussed later in the conclusion chapter.

### **3.5 Interview schedule**

All interviews were recorded for further reviews. The interviewer started with asking general questions such as 'do you enjoy shopping?', 'can you tell me your luxury purchasing experiences?' to build trust with the interviewees (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). The researcher then directed the conversations gradually to the luxury fashion purchasing, asked open-ended questions, and encouraged the respondent to talk freely. The interview schedule included the following steps.

The interviews started with warm-up conversations with the respondents. The researcher firstly told the participant that there were no right or wrong answers, they were free to use any thoughts and comments on the topic, and they were free to leave the interview at any time they desired.

Secondly, the researcher gradually guided the conversation topic to the luxury purchasing. The participants were encouraged to talk about their luxury fashion branded items purchasing experiences, hopefully the luxury goods perceptions could be brought to the participants' minds. During this period, the researcher asked the respondents their experiences and the brands they were familiar with, as well as described their views towards these brands. How participants viewed and considered about certain brands could indicate their inner perceptions towards luxury brands to some extent.

Thirdly, the interviewer explored participants' views about the differences between luxury products and standard normal products, or in their views, what distinguished the luxury and normal products. Further exploration aims to investigate what benefits they feel they might get from purchasing a luxury product instead of a standard one. This could help the researcher gain insights into the reasons that they bought luxury fashion items.

Fourthly, the country of the participants began to be brought into the conversation. Participants were asked whether their friends and families purchased luxury fashion items, how their friends viewed about their luxury consumptions, if there were any luxury brands more famous than others in their country and the reasons for that. The participants were also asked about whether they were influenced by the majorities' preferences in choosing luxury brands in their countries. These questions could help the researcher gain some insights about the social groups' influences on the participants' luxury consumption behaviours.

Fifthly, the researcher presented the respondents with the motivations summarised from the literature. The participants were asked to say whether each motivation would be either a strong or weaker feeling for them. Then they were invited to describe the reasons and make comments on how they thought about other motivations.

Sixthly, the interviewer drew out the motivations of luxury purchasing. During this time, the researcher asked the participants' views towards fake luxury products; asked if they bought fake luxury products before, and the reasons of purchasing. Fake luxury fashion products present an issue to the brand buyers and the satisfaction of their motives. The way they viewed fakes might help reveal their own motives from another perspective.

### **3.6 Data Capture**

The data collected from the interview was recorded in two forms: through a simple hand writing recording, and a taped audio recording of the interview. Then the researcher translated and transcribed the recorded conversations into text in order for reviewing and further analysis. These methods produced raw data for the researcher.

### **3.7 Data analysing technique**

Transcriptions were divided into two separate documents by countries. Silverman (2011) notes that in dealing with respondent's answers to open-ended questions, one good method is 'to treat the respondents' answers as describing some external reality (e.g. facts, events) or internal experience (e.g. feelings, meanings)' (Silverman, 2011:238). This approach contains elements of positivism (facts) and 'experience', which could ensure the accuracy and validity of the interpretations to some extent by 'securing a fit' between the researcher's interpretations and some external reality (Silverman, 2011:238). The data collected would be coded into similar themes, and these themes would then be interpreted and compared to luxury purchasing motivations from the literature.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In summary, in order to explore and compare the luxury fashion product purchasing motivations of Chinese and Japanese young consumers, the interpretivism research paradigm and the qualitative procedure are adopted in gathering data from the in-depth interviewing, with eight Chinese and eight Japanese respondents recruited by snowball and purposive sampling. Besides, the interpretivism is mainly adopted in coding and theming the factors that affect respondents' luxury purchasing motivations.

## **Chapter 4 Research Findings and Discussions**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Sufficient data was gathered after interviewing eight Chinese respondents and eight Japanese respondents in exploring their motivations towards luxury purchasing. The data collected was coded, and the information was classified into different categories relating to the research topic. The findings and discussions are presented in this chapter by three sections addressing the similarities and differences in luxury purchasing motivations across China and Japan. The first section illustrates the main/common luxury purchasing motivations shared by respondents from the two nations. These common motivations are: perceived functional values, interpersonal effects, personal effects, and the financial values. The second and the third sections refer to the specific motivations of Chinese and Japanese respondents discovered within this research data.

### **4.2 Common Motivations of Chinese and Japanese respondents**

#### **4.2.1 Functional oriented motivation**

Both respondents from China and Japan emphasise the importance of the functional value when they purchased the luxury fashion branded items. Wiedmann et al (2007) argued that luxury consumers can be motivated by the functional attributes of luxury products such as the good quality, the longevity, design and the uniqueness.

#### **Quality and Durability**

Almost all participants from both countries emphasised that, when they purchased luxury fashion branded goods, quality and durability were important considerations as luxury goods are of excellent quality and could be used longer. As Chinese respondent 1 and Japanese respondent 4 answered when asked about the reasons why purchasing luxury fashion goods:

*'Quality, good quality means it can be used longer, compared to spend the similar amount of money buying many different items of normal products, I prefer spending this amount of money buying one or two luxury good, I can use it longer because of the good quality'. (Chinese respondent 1)*

*'Good quality. When I decide to buy one luxury fashion product, I would think carefully about the decision, and plan to use it for a long time...because I spend much money on it, and I would certainly take good care of it'. (Chinese respondent 6)*

*'I don't really buy cheap stuff because they do not last long and they are usually not good. If I need to buy things like a handbag or clothes, I prefer to buy with better design, higher quality and longer using period. Higher prices equal to higher quality to some extent, which is why sometimes I prefer luxury things'. (Japanese respondent 4)*

Almost half of the Chinese respondents mentioned that luxury fashion brands could last longer than the normal high street fashion brands, therefore, when they purchased certain items from luxury brands, the intangible value from the high brand reputation could help extend the using period of the item.

*'New and normal brands may just be popular for a short time, and then the values of their products would depreciate. However many luxury brands have long history and strong image reputation, therefore they would last longer than normal brands. The prices of luxury fashion brands increase every year, I think many people in China buy luxury fashion products such as a Chanel handbag for that they think the brand would last longer, and what they purchase would have a long-time value' (Chinese respondent 5)*

Similarly, Japanese respondents also mentioned their concerns towards the quality value. Most of them indicate that high price of luxury fashion items could imply good quality, and therefore they could use the items for a relatively longer period. These views relate to the concept of 'perceived quality' value of luxury in the literature body, that consumers would associate luxury items with an excellent quality (Dubois & Laurent 1994, 1996; Wiedmann et al., 2007). In Vegneron and Johnson's (1999) proposed luxury purchasing motivation model, the 'perfectionism' also addresses that consumers could be motivated by the perceived high quality of luxury goods.

### **Style and Design**

Both Chinese and Japanese respondents believed that luxury fashion branded products are of superior style, sense of fashion, or classic design. They mentioned 'Fashion and style', 'Classic', 'Design', 'Talented designer' regarding to their motives of buying luxury

fashion products. Chinese respondent 5 thought that 'some luxury brands are creating art'. Two Japanese respondents also referred luxury goods as being 'aesthetic'.

*'My favourite brand is McQueen, I appreciate the design of clothes, handbags, scarves and accessories. They are very beautiful and have a strong sense of personality. Although the prices are usually very high, I would still purchase things from McQueen because I like the design very much'. (Chinese respondent 8)*

*'I think luxury fashion brands are usually of excellent design and style, therefore they might look better on me than other products, and therefore I would be more confident'. (Japanese respondent 2)*

*'Many normal brands would imitate products from luxury brands, although they might look similar, it would still be different when wearing them, products from Prada, Dior, Chanel or other luxury brands are usually more stylish, classic and beautiful'. (Japanese respondent 8)*

These statements in viewing luxury fashion branded items show that both Chinese and Japanese respondents in the research value highly of the 'style' and 'design' feature of luxury fashion products. Besides, some Japanese respondents said luxury goods could usually 'match many clothes', 'be used for work or other occasions', showing their considerations of usability towards luxury purchasing.

Wiedmann et al (2007) incorporate the usability value in the functional-oriented motivation as one driver that influences consumers' decisions towards luxury purchasing. It is argued that usability combines both the product's features and the individual's needs (Wiedmann et al., 2007), therefore, objective values of the product's physical functions and subjective evaluations attached by individuals both contribute to the 'usability' value. With regards to the Respondents' views, both Chinese and Japanese consumers expect the luxury items could be stylish, last long time and be used in many occasions.

### **Uniqueness and Exclusivity**

Some Chinese and Japanese respondents talked about the uniqueness of luxury fashion products. Uniqueness refers to the fact that as the high prices, only a few consumers can get access to these high-end products (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). This feature makes

them feel unique and exclusive. As Japanese respondent 5 said, *'Unlike other brands, luxury brands won't engage in mass production, they usually are of limited amounts...not everyone could have them'*. This view represents consumers' desire to be unique and exclusive. Through the consumption of luxury branded goods, which cannot be accessed by everyone, their desire could be realised and satisfied.

#### **4.2.2 Social/Interpersonal-oriented motivation**

The second main theme 'Social motivation' conveys that Chinese and Japanese respondents were motivated by the interpersonal effects brought by consuming luxury fashion branded products. The focus of this theme is how other people are going to think or react to a luxury product (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). As reviewed in literature, there are generally four aspects of interpersonal effects of luxury products: status and wealth displaying (Veblen, 1899; Leibenstein, 1950; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999), Prestige value motivation (Wiedmann et al., 2007), Uniqueness/distance from others motivation (Leibenstein, 1950; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999), and social group fit in (Leibenstein, 1950; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). From Table 2 & 3, it can be seen that Chinese and Japanese respondents share three common effects in interpersonal motivation: Conspicuous Consumption, prestige value and social group conformity. Chinese respondents had one distinct motive of 'uniqueness', that they sometimes tried to use the luxury fashion branded items to distance from other people.

#### **Conspicuous Consumption**

Owning luxury products could signify the respondent's relatively high status, wealth or success to others (Veblen, 1899). Chinese respondents used statements like 'indicating high social status', 'showing to others that I am wealthy and can afford this brand', 'Flaunting', 'success symbols', etc. and Japanese respondents mentioned 'showing that I can take good care of myself', 'showing off wealth' to describe the purchasing motives.

*'I think wearing luxury fashion branded items could help to present a person's taste, status and wealth. I believe that most people would not spend 10,000 RMB (about £1,000) or 20,000 RMB to buy a handbag or a dress, she must have a certain level of economic ability, or her family has social status or wealth. Therefore, in my view people who wear luxuries must be rich, or have high social status. Otherwise who would spend 10,000 RMB to purchase a handbag?' (Chinese respondent 6)*



*'I don't believe wearing luxury means I have higher social status or I am wealthy, but other people would think so. I think sometimes people want to show to others that they have brand stuff, like showing they are wealthy, successful, and could take good care of themselves'. (Japanese respondent 3)*

Although respondents from both nations agreed that 'showing off' was one important motive in purchasing luxuries, there were still few differences in their views. For example, most Chinese respondents emphasised that people wanted to show they had high status and good families, while only one Japanese interviewee talked about the 'status' displaying, and no one mentioned about "good family". Besides, Japanese respondents generally held the view that 'showing off' was just one reason that motivated consumers to buy luxuries, while most Chinese respondents believed that many Chinese consumers were motivated mainly because of the luxuries' ability to indicating wealth and status:

*'I think many people in China would only care about whether the brand is popular or well-known, they follow the trend of buying famous luxury clothes and handbags, in order to let people know that they have money and can afford things from this brand'. (Chinese respondent 2)*

*'Some of my friends may purchase luxury fashion products to show off, but it can only be one reason, cannot be the only reason'. (Japanese respondent 1)*

This finding supports the view in the literature that publicising wealth and status is one important motivation that drives consumers' luxury purchasing behaviours. Both Chinese and Japanese respondents' concentration on the conspicuous consumption can be explained by their underlying culture orientation examine in the literature review chapter. It is argued that as Asian cultures are mainly collectivism-oriented (Hofstede, 1980, 1991), therefore consumers in this culture orientation are primarily or mainly motivated by the social or interpersonal values conveyed by luxury goods (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). As Asian cultures emphasises the status and socioeconomic hierarchy, therefore, Asian consumers are motivated to buy luxuries as these items' ability to indicate one's wealth level and social ability (Doctoroff, 2005).

### **Prestige Value**

Consumers could be motivated by the high brand awareness and reputation of luxury fashion products (Wiedmann et al., 2007). They believed that luxury products could help them to create and enhance image to others such as wealth, success, taste, fashion, etc. Besides, people may want to get attention from other people by wearing luxury products. For instance, respondents from both countries said they were motivated by luxuries' 'brand image', 'reputation', 'ability to indicate good taste, impress others and get attention', 'brand recognition', 'high grade', etc.

*'I used to buy a handbag from Louis Vuitton, in China, it's popular and everybody knows it. In fact, I think I bought it just because it's Louis Vuitton, I want to have a handbag from this brand, I feel confident having it'. (Chinese respondent 4)*

*'Of course products of luxury brands are usually of good quality, but compared to middle-range or better products, the quality might be similar, only the brand image and reputation might not be that strong...For me, I buy luxury fashion products mostly because of the fame of the brand, I feel confident wearing them'. (Chinese respondent 6)*

*'Brand, brand image, it will bring more satisfaction when it comes to brand'. (Japanese respondent 5)*

### **Social Group Conformity**

Participants from both China and Japan mentioned that the intention of 'social group fit in' was one influential factor in their purchasing behaviour. Chinese respondents indicated that their luxury purchasing decisions sometimes resulted as the influences from their friends and colleagues, such as 'wanting to have discussion topic with friends', 'following the trend', or guilt around 'have-nots':

*'One of my friends has a pair of shoes from Chanel, then I would want shoes from Chanel as well. I mean, I know I would be influenced if most of my friends buy items from Celine, Prada, LV, Gucci, etc'. (Chinese respondent 7)*

*'When I am alone, I don't care whether I wear luxury stuff or not, but when I go out with friends or in social occasions, I would wear products from luxury brands, I could discuss with my friends about luxuries'. (Chinese respondent 4)*

These views towards luxury consumption imply the respondents' desire to behave in accordance with the social groups they are currently in, or on a broader perspective, to behave correspondingly to the general social trends. These are linked to Leibenstein's (1950) proposed term 'bandwagon effect': consumers desire certain product in order to follow others in their reference group who already own the product (Tynan et al., 2010). This implies that consumers are motivated to purchase luxury goods to fit into current or upper societal groups (Leibenstein, 1950; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2007). In addition, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) argued that in collectivist cultures such as China and Japan, people generally believe it is important to conform to their social groups. Therefore, if a group view luxury consumption as proper, individual members would try to keep up with the consumption patterns of the group by generating similar purchasing behaviours. However, although both Chinese and Japanese respondents addressed the influences of their social groups, the degree of conformity seemed to be different. Japanese, on the other hand, concentrated more on 'pressure to fit into a group'. Iwabuchi (2001) notes that group affiliation is very important in Japanese society. If one group 'prescribes' that owning luxuries are as socially proper, then the members would almost have to follow the 'prescription' (Iwabuchi, 2001; Goy-Yamamoto, 2004). This could be acknowledged from the following statement:

*'Sometimes there is pressure to get into a group. Owning products from a brand seems to be a way to fit into the group, because if you have items of certain luxury brands, it means that you are fashionable and maybe wealthy, people in this group might feel you are one of them. If you are already in a group that consuming luxury fashion branded goods, then there is pressure to buy more'. (Japanese respondent 6)*

It should be mentioned that while most Chinese respondents had similar views towards 'group fit in' effect, Japanese respondents tended to split their views of either concerning much towards group conformity, or not caring at all. As Japanese respondent 4 and 1 expressed:

*'Many Japanese people want to look like the same like anybody else in the group, but at the same time have some differences. The differences should not be too distant...if you are too different, people in the group would think that you are no longer one of them'. (Japanese respondent 4)*

*'To me, I never think in that way. I just consider whether I like it and if I can afford it. I do not want to be viewed as any certain kind of people...I do not want to follow what they are buying'.  
(Japanese respondent 1)*

These distinct views indicate that some of the Japanese respondents consider fitting into social groups very importantly, and their desires to conform to the groups would strongly drive their luxury purchasing behaviours. On the other hand, some Japanese are more self-oriented and consider group fitting in as less important. The different views towards group conformity of Japanese consumers support Chadha and Husbang's (2006) argument that many Japanese consumers today tend to express their individuality through their purchasing decisions.

#### **Uniqueness (distance from other people) & Superiority**

Some Chinese respondents were motivated by the uniqueness character of luxury products. As the high prices of luxuries, only a few people could get access to these products. Consumers were motivated as the luxuries' ability to help them keep distance or 'distinguish' from other people. For example, Chinese respondent 8 expressed that she would feel 'having things that is unique and special', that made her feel different from others. Furthermore, two respondents *mentioned* that luxury goods could make them feel superior through comparison, that they felt they had what others could not have.

*'I can afford these products, but other may not'. (Chinese respondent 5)*

This indicates that some Chinese respondents have the desire to be different from others; therefore, they may be motivated by the perceived uniqueness and exclusivity values of luxury fashion branded goods. This supports the 'snob' motivation concept, as Tynan et al (2010) note that people want to be different, unique, and distinct from the masses. 'Snob' buyers are motivated by the exclusivity, rarity and inaccessibility (to the mass) of luxury products (i.e. uniqueness motivation). Consumers are usually motivated to buy luxury products based on wanting to feel superior and unique (Leibenstein, 1950; Mason, 1981, 1995; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

### **4.2.3 Individual/Personal-oriented motivation**

Individual value (i.e. self-identity value, hedonic value and materialistic value) (Wiedmann et al., 2007; Tynan et al., 2010; etc.) implies that people purchase luxury products to achieve self-identity or to obtain emotional pleasure. This section demonstrates respondents' individual/personal-oriented motivation when purchasing luxury fashion products. The focus of this theme is how the respondents will think and feel from purchasing a luxury fashion item. As Wiedmann et al (2007) summarised, there are generally three aspects in the personal-oriented motivation: Self-identity, Hedonic (Self-pleasing, self-rewarding, self-satisfaction), and materialistic value. According to the data collected, both Chinese and Japanese respondents were influenced by these aspects.

#### **Image creation & Self-identity**

When deciding purchasing certain luxury fashion items, some Chinese respondents and most Japanese respondents emphasised that the ability of the brands or the products to express their personal style and desired image was very important. For example, some Chinese interviewees talked about the 'Refinement and Elegance' and 'Personal taste'. Similarly, Japanese interviewees indicated the 'Brand concept' (e.g. feminine, independent, elegant, romantic, lady, etc.), 'Personal image building', and 'Personal taste' in purchasing. They cared about whether the brand or the product could represent themselves and their attitudes of life. They expected the luxury fashion products could help to build and enhance the self-image.

*'My favourite luxury fashion brand is Chanel. I like the design of its products, and the brand history...the clothes, handbags, and accessories are so elegant...I think the products also have a little sense of masculine, which feels independent and brave...In my view, Chanel represents noble, classic, and self-cultivation. I feel confident when I wear Chanel, it represents my attitudes towards being a woman'. (Chinese respondent 1)*

*'For Kate Spade, I like the design of its products, for me, they look pretty, feminine, but very independent'. (Japanese respondent 3)*

These views imply that respondents would be driven by an inner motivation that they want to use the products to express who they are, and how they perceive themselves. Wiedman et al (2007) draw the value of self-identity in influencing individuals'

purchasing in luxury goods. Consumers would use luxury brands to indicate, support, and improve their own identity (Holt 1995; Vigneron and Johnson 2004).

### **Hedonic (Self-pleasing, self-rewarding, self-satisfaction)**

Almost all the participants from China and Japan point out that one significant motive for purchasing luxury fashion products is to reward and please themselves. They mentioned the reasons of 'Feel', 'Pleasure seeking' and 'self-gifting/rewarding' to buy luxuries, noting that they could obtain pleasure, happiness and satisfaction through consumption. As Chinese respondent 7 said:

*'I bought a handbag from Mulberry for myself as a New Year gift for my hard working last year'.  
(Chinese respondent 7)*

This means that respondents are also motivated by a desire to please themselves through the consumption of luxury goods, as these products may carry emotional values and could offer sensory happiness for individuals, apart from their physical or functional usability (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2007; Tynan et al., 2010, etc.).

### **Materialistic Value**

Most participants felt satisfaction/positive emotions though owning luxury fashion products. Chinese respondents referred to 'feel happy and satisfied', while Japanese participants talked about 'luxury lifestyle', 'enjoying', etc. These phrases indicate that respondents could gain emotional benefits from the luxury and the feeling of owning items. These are attributed to the materialistic value brought by owning luxuries. Wiedmann et al (2007) point out that the concept of materialism contains the meaning of individuals' satisfaction through luxury possessions and acquisition.

#### **4.2.4 Financial value-oriented motivation**

Most Chinese respondents held the view that the high price of luxury fashion products contained the intangible value of the brand reputation and awareness. Therefore, when they were willing to pay high prices for luxury items, what they actually paid was the intangible value implied in the product. As Chinese respondent 6 expressed:

*'I think the 'price' and the 'brand' distinguish the high-end fashion and normal products. The brand reputation and awareness lead to the high price of products...I mean, if middle range brands (e.g. Radley) raise the price of a handbag to 10,000 RMB (about 1,000 pounds), I think it would generally become a luxury brand'. (Chinese respondent 6)*

Furthermore, when asking about whether they would choose a popular luxury fashion brand such as LV, Gucci, or less popular luxury fashion brand such as Mulberry, Celine in China, assuming their preference to each product was same, or they might personally like the product from less famous brand more, almost all the Chinese participant interviewed in this research answered they would prefer the item of the popular brand as 'it worth the price more'. This indicates that the respondents valued higher of the intangible benefits brought by the brand.

As to Japanese respondents, although they agreed that high brand awareness and reputation could be the reasons of high prices, most of them concerned more about the quality, design, and whether the product fitted their personal taste:

*'I prefer stuff from less well-known luxury fashion brands...I buy clothes that are really expensive, but I don't really buy famous brand stuff. For me, I will not buy things just because of its brand, I don't like that thinking'. (Japanese respondent 1)*

*'I used to be more concerned about brands; I wanted to have clothes, shoes, or handbags from this brand, or that brand. I wanted to own stuff from very popular brands. However, now I am more into quality and product itself, if I like the design of certain luxury product, and it looks good on me, as long as I can afford it, I don't care it is a famous luxury brand or not'. (Japanese respondent 8)*

These views imply that respondents would associate the positive link between the price and the quality of a certain product. Wiedmann et al (2007) and Tynan et al (2010) address the term 'price value', or the perceived financial value, as referring to that many consumers would perceive that the high prices of the luxury goods could accordingly mean that there products are of high quality as well. Therefore, consumers could be motivated by the high prices of luxury branded items as they perceive that the high prices indicate the excellent quality.

To summarise, these four main themes play the role as the basic and central influences to a consumer's luxury purchasing motivations. The discussion above shows that both Chinese and Japanese respondents *were* motivated to buy luxuries for the themes identified in the literature body, which are: (1) attracted by the functional value, (2) achieving desired social/interpersonal effects, (c) realising desired personal effects, and (4) driven by the financial value. It is noticeable that for the main themes, although there are no obvious differences between the Chinese and Japanese respondents, they might perceive the same concept or theme in different ways. Besides, the level of influence could also be different; for example, Chinese respondents seemed to be motivated more by the social effects, while most Japanese respondents were mainly motivated by their personal desires. The specific themes of respondents from each country would be examined in following sections.

### **4.3 Specific themes/motivations of Chinese respondents**

Firstly, almost all of the Chinese respondents considered that wearing luxury items could make the, look more professional, high grade, reliable, and successful. They would wear luxury fashion branded clothes, shoes, handbags in workplaces, believing this could lead to better business or working opportunities. As Chinese respondent 2 expressed:

*'I do not consider myself as a rich woman, for me, it is not that easy to purchase whatever handbags or dresses I like...but sometimes I would still buy myself some luxury fashion branded stuff, because (1) I need to keep or remain at the same or similar level with my colleagues and clients, this would promote the communications and relationships with them; (2) I think wearing luxury fashion branded items could make me look professional, reliable, and confident, which could bring me opportunities in the work'. (Chinese respondent 2)*

As mentioned before in the literature review, Debnam & Svinos (2006) pointed out that a proportion of the middle class consumers in China can be motivated to buy luxury products to accomplish professional goals and lifting their social status. This specific theme matches the study in the literature.



Secondly, Chadha and Husband (2006) also note that Chinese consumers would purchase luxury products as gifts to others, as being motivated by an inner desire to improve his or her 'face'. However, in this research finding, *most* Chinese respondent thought that luxury products made effective gifts not only for her own 'face', but also the function of the luxury product to effectively improve the relationship with others.

Thirdly, amongst the eight Chinese respondents, three of them mentioned the effects of the luxury products had on improving their relationships with others. Owning the luxury fashion branded goods might cause others to wish to be friends with them, as Chinese participant 6 said *'when I began to buy and use handbags from Prada, Gucci, Burberry, Dior and other luxury brands, I have more friends than before...they think I have good taste or I am rich'*. This theme has not been addressed in the previous literature in exploring Chinese consumers' motivations towards luxury purchasing.

Fourthly, half of the Chinese respondents talked about reasons relating to 'lifestyle enrichment' of luxury fashion product consumption. They believed that consuming luxuries improved the quality of their living standard. This theme has not been addressed in the literature as well.

#### **4.4 Specific themes/motivations of Japanese respondents**

Firstly, most Japanese respondents appreciated the concepts or the spirits contained by certain brand, and were motivated to purchase stuff from the brand as its ability to express their attitudes towards life. Besides, most of them noted they did not want to follow 'short-term trends', as designs of luxuries were usually classic and lasted longer, they would then be motivated to purchase them. This theme could be classified as the individual/personal-oriented motivation. Secondly, some Japanese participants mentioned that they might be motivated to buy luxury products because of the good customer services and in-store experiences. When Japanese respondent 7 described her previous shopping experience, *'when I am shopping at the luxury fashion brand shops, customer services are very important factor'*. Thirdly, when answering the question about making a decision to buy a luxury fashion product (e.g., a Dior handbag), two of the eight Japanese respondents said they also considered the raw material of the

product: 'if the material is of good quality and worth the price', and 'if the material is sustainable'.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The main themes identified reflect and support the academic theories in the literature relating to luxury consumption. From comparing and contrasting the common and other themes and motivations towards luxury purchasing of Chinese and Japanese respondents, it can be seen that the young females from the two countries share some similarities in their reasons to purchase luxury fashion products, such as for luxuries' functional values (quality, uniqueness, durability), social effects (conspicuous consumption, prestige value, social group fit in), personal-oriented motivation (self-identity, Hedonic, Materialistic value) and financial value. However, it is obvious that Chinese people concerned more about the social effects (whether the product could show their taste, indicate their status and wealth) and the brand reputation of luxury fashion branded items, while Japanese consumers seemed to be motivated stronger by their personal preferences, self-image representing and hedonic values. Besides, some Japanese respondents considered social groups to be very important, therefore, group conformity could be one important social motivation for Japanese people.

Furthermore, Chinese and Japanese consumers have their own specific motives and considerations in purchasing luxuries. Chinese consumers would also be motivated by a desire to obtain better working or business opportunities, gain 'face' and improve relationships with other people, and enrich their lives through luxury consumption. For Japanese consumers, besides the main motivations, they would also consider whether the luxury brand represents their attitudes towards life, the customer services and the raw material of the product.

## **Chapter 5 Conclusion and Implications**

The Asian market is becoming increasingly important and attractive for the luxury sector. For the topic relating to motivations of luxury consumption, the literature review chapter discovered the gaps existing for research-based luxury purchasing of Asian consumers. Besides, the previous literature did not draw much attention on cross-culture comparisons. This dissertation tries to fill the gap in this field by investigating and comparing the luxury fashion products purchasing motivations of Chinese and Japanese young female consumers. With a qualitative methodological approach, the in-depth interview data collection method, and the thematic analysis technique, the researcher arrived at main and other specific themes relating to the Chinese and Japanese purchasing motivations of luxury fashion goods. Themes were categorised and generalised into different groups of motivations concluded from the literature body, similarities and differences between the two countries were then addressed in the finding chapter. This chapter would provide an overall conclusion of the research findings, identify the theoretical and managerial implications of the research, outline the limitations, and discuss about the future research directions.

### **5.1 Overall Conclusion**

Through a qualitative method and in-depth interview, the research found both similarities and differences between Chinese and Japanese relating to luxury fashion products purchasing motivations. The four 'main themes' represent similarities, and the 'other themes' specific motives for consumers from each nation. However, it is noticeable that even similar themes/motivations could have subtle differences. The similarities and differences are discussed and summarised as follows:

**Functional-oriented motivation:** Chinese and Japanese consumers are motivated to purchase luxury fashion products as the excellent quality, longevity and durability, the style and design, and the unique attributes of luxury fashion branded items. While Chinese respondents perceive the 'durability' as the long-lasting of the luxury brands, Japanese consumers concentrate more on the product itself and qualities. Besides, Japanese consumers could be motivated by the 'usability' of the luxury fashion items as they mentioned that these items could usually match many other clothes, and could be used either for work or other occasions.

**Social/Interpersonal-oriented motivation:** Chinese and Japanese consumers are motivated to buy luxury fashion goods as these products' abilities to influence the way the individual is perceived or viewed by other people. Three common aspects in this category are shared by both Chinese and Japanese consumers: conspicuous consumption of displaying wealth and success, prestige value or the brand reputation, and the group conformity motives. Among these three aspects, Chinese consumers are more strongly motivated by the attention they gain from status and wealth displaying, while Japanese consumers emphasise the influences of their willingness to fit into social groups. Both of them are motivated by the high brand reputation of luxuries. Besides, Chinese consumers are also motivated by the perceived luxuries' ability to make them feel superior, unique, confident and different through the comparison with other people.

**Individual/Personal-oriented motivation:** In this category, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury fashion items for the values and effects these goods could bring to themselves, they are self-directed to purchase luxuries and no external audience is needed. The Chinese and Japanese consumers are both motivated by self-identity expressed by purchasing luxury fashion goods, the hedonic/emotional satisfaction they can obtain from purchases (self-pleasing, self-rewarding, and self-satisfaction), and the materialistic value.

**Finance value-oriented motivation:** Chinese and Japanese respondents' views towards the product value represented by the high prices are of slight difference. Although respondents from both country agree that the high price of a certain luxury fashion branded item contains the tangible (quality, design, usability, feature, etc.) and intangible (brand reputation, awareness, history, etc.), Chinese consumers seem to focus more on the brand reputation and awareness, while Japanese consumers believe the quality, design, and usability are more important for them.

**Specific motivations for Chinese:** Chinese consumers can be motivated by other specific themes when purchasing luxuries. Firstly, many Chinese respondents believe that the luxury goods could help them look more professional, high grade, reliable and successful, which may bring them better working opportunities. Secondly, they would also be motivated by a desire to gain 'face' and improve relationships with other people. Finally, some consumers view luxury fashion products as means to improve their living standard.

**Specific motivations for Japanese:** For Japanese consumers, besides the main motivations, they would also consider whether the luxury brand represents their attitudes towards life, the customer services and the in-store experiences, and whether the raw material of certain luxury product is of good quality and sustainability.

## **5.2 Implications**

### **5.2.1 Theoretical Implications**

Findings based on the data within the research would have some implications for the theories relating to the Chinese and Japanese luxury fashion product purchasing motivations, or broaden area of the luxury consumption literature body.

The dissertation provides some supporting research findings and extra information for the literature. The main motivations discovered validate the functional value, social and individual effects, and financial value of luxuries branded items, which are consumers' main concerns towards luxury purchasing. For the specific luxury purchase motivations of Chinese and Japanese consumers, this dissertation provides research-based findings and discussions, instead of using empirical results from the literature to extrapolate motivations to fit into these two cultures. Although most of the themes (such as functional value, conspicuous consumption, uniqueness, group conformity, personal effects, financial effects/values, 'face', gift, etc.), whether specific or shared by both countries, are already addressed in the literature body, some other themes might not be so common in the previous studies (such as the relationship improvement). Therefore, the findings could support Chinese and Japanese cultural-specific motivations, providing more information and variables for further academic qualitative and quantitative research in these two countries.

In addition, as to the cross-cultural comparison, the research proves the necessity to consider about the cultural and social influences upon consumers' perception and motivations towards luxury purchasing. For example, Chinese and Japanese luxury consumers are influenced by the same motivation theme, the degrees of the impact on each group could be different. Furthermore, although this research chooses the specific 'Luxury fashion products' category and the participants of 'young professional females', consumers' perceptions towards the same theme could vary across these two countries.

### **5.2.2 Managerial/Practical implications**

The Asia is among the important markets for luxury fashion brands, by exploring the Chinese and Japanese young females' luxury fashion product purchasing motivations, luxury fashion brands are able to gain insights into consumers' views, perceptions, behaviours and motivations. Besides, the research data also provide some market information for luxury fashion companies to use in the environmental analysis, and adjust specific marketing strategies tailored to each market segment (the Chinese young female market, and the Japanese young female market).

In addition, the cross-cultural nature of the dissertation presents the similarities and differences in luxury purchase motivations between the two nations. The common themes from Chinese and Japanese data indicate that luxury fashion companies could firstly set similar marketing strategy on a general level, and then adjust the strategies to a more customised and specific level, according to the differences. When deciding specific marketing strategies, luxury fashion brands should consider the cultural and social influences on consumers' purchasing motivations. For example, the findings illustrate that Chinese consumers are strongly motivated by social/interpersonal effects of luxury fashion items, while the Japanese consumers may focus more on group conformity and personal effects. These imply that luxury fashion organisations could promote and strengthen the social/interpersonal effects of luxuries in their marketing strategies in China, and emphasise the personal value of luxuries in the Japanese market. However, comparing the previous studies and this research data on Chinese consumer luxury purchase motivation, it is noticeable that Chinese young females begin to shift their attention from luxuries' social effects to individual effects. Luxury fashion brands should notice and predict the future changes in consumers' perception and motivations, in order to form and develop competitive strategies.

### **5.3 Limitations**

As indicated before, how the data gathered and interpreted could lead to bias in findings. Besides, constraints pre-set before conducting the research may also cause the differences between literature and the findings of this research. Firstly, the motivations explored are limited to Chinese and Japanese consumers; they cannot represent luxury fashion purchasing motivations of consumers from other countries. Secondly, the respondents chosen in this research are females with relatively higher educational degrees aging from

24 to 35, and they are mainly living in big cities where luxury fashion brands distribute widely. The constraints would lead to the consequence that the data and the findings may not reflect the accurate luxury fashion purchasing motivations of all the Chinese and Japanese consumers. For example, males from the similar generation, females from the elder generation, consumers living in middle or small cities, consumers with lower education could have different perspectives and purchase motivations of luxury fashion items.

Thirdly, as the 'luxury fashion brand/product' type is selected, the information and the data gathered are accordingly focused on this category, rather than the general luxury products. Respondents' views, perspectives and motivations may vary according to different types of luxury items. Therefore, while fundamental motivations could be generalised to different types of luxury products, specific motivations might not be perfectly applied to other luxury product types, such as luxury automobiles.

## **5.5 Further Research**

This research aims to investigate and compare luxury fashion products purchase motivations of Chinese and Japanese young females, some directions of further research would be addressed in this section.

Firstly, as different groups could have different perceptions and motivations towards luxury purchasing, the participants in the research could be from other consumers, for example, consumers from other age groups, males, people with relatively lower educational levels, university students, Chinese and Japanese who live in other countries, etc. This would provide a comprehensive base for motivation exploration of a specific country. Secondly, other particular luxury category such as luxury automobile, jewellery, cosmetics and watches could be research areas to see if there are any specific themes relevant to certain particular category. Thirdly, researchers could also compare the luxury perceptions and purchasing motivations of consumers in Asian and Western cultures (e.g., Chinese and British consumers, Japanese and American consumers, Chinese/Japanese and Chinese/Japanese overseas residents, Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese, etc.). The cross-cultural comparisons could provide valuable contributions to both academic fields and practical luxury industry. Fourthly, further researches could also be conducted in other fast

growing Asian markets such as South Korea and India. This could also contribute to the luxury consumption research both academically and practically. Finally, as mentioned before, most of the previous literature and studies were based on the Western societies, theories of consumer perceptions and motivations might not be applied to the Asian societies, this is among the reasons why this dissertation chooses the qualitative method: to discover the common and specific motivations of Chinese and Japanese consumers. The findings verify most of the luxury purchasing motivations in the literature, as well as discover some unique motivations in both countries. Combined with the previous studies, researchers could conduct quantitative studies to explore their relative weight in larger base population.



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## Appendix 1

Date: 29 July 2013

The researcher: Lucy (L)

Participant: Penny

Time: 20:00 pm

Duration: 48 minutes

L: This research topic aims at exploring Chinese and Japanese young female consumers' luxury fashion purchase motivations. Generally, I would like to know why people at your age buy luxury fashion goods such as clothes, shoes, handbags, and accessories from brands like Prada, Chanel, Gucci, etc. You are free to say anything you want to say.

P: All right.

L: So, do you buy luxury fashion goods? Can you tell me some examples? Like...what brands, what categories...?

P: Er...yes, I have handbags from YSL, scarves from McQueen, shoes from Chanel, Balenciaga, Ferragamo, Tod's, a card holder from Prada, and a necklace from Chanel.

P: And dresses from Balenciaga.

L: Ok. So, can you tell me your last purchase? Like when, where, and situations like you plan you buy or not?

P: A month ago, I bought a pair of shoes of Chanel in Shanghai. Well I planned to buy a pair of shoes from luxury brands before I went shopping, and when I shopped in the stores, I saw the shoes, and I like them very much. However, my size was out of stock by the first time I tried this pair. Then two weeks later, I went to the Chanel again, finding that they had my size, and then I bought it.

P: Kind of like planning to buy a pair of shoes and I wanted to have products from

Chanel.

L: When you decided to buy things from Chanel, did you kind of treat the shoes from Chanel as a gift sending to yourself? Like for example, you worked really hard, you might want to reward yourself?

P: No, I did not think about that. For me, I needed shoes, I wanted to but stuff from Chanel. So when I went to shopping, I saw them, and decided to buy.

L: Ok. What does the word 'luxury' mean to you? Do you think what it is and what it is not?

P: For me personally, I buy luxury mainly for its quality, good looking, and a sense of design. Therefore, for me, I think luxury means taste and design. I can wear clothes from luxury brands longer, they look very nice.

P: Besides, I think the main differences between the luxury fashion products and normal products such as similar dresses and handbags are that they are of different qualities, and you could wear luxury dresses longer, and the sizes and shapes would always be the same, if you take good care if them.

L: What does your friends and family think about your purchasing luxury? Do most of your friends/family buy luxury fashion goods as well?

L: I mean, many of your friends buy luxury stuff, or just some of them?

P: Half of my friends would buy luxuries. Not all of them.

L: So when you buy some luxury goods, or that your friends buy some, will your guys discuss about that?

P: Well, if me or my friends buy luxuries and wear them out, we will certainly discuss about that. We would share information about the brands, if there are some discounts,

if they look nice, something about that.

L: Do you have a favourite luxury fashion brand?

P: Chanel.

L: Can you describe why you like this brand?

P: I am also a huge fan for McQueen, a part from Chanel, it is my favourite brand, I appreciate the design of clothes, handbags, scarves and accessories. It is very beautiful and has a strong sense of personality. Although the prices of items from this brand are usually very high, I would still purchase.

L: How about Chanel? How do you view about it?

P: Well, I think Chanel represents noble and classical.

L: Would you considering wearing Chanel represents an attitude towards life? Or a taste? Like self-expressing?

L: For example, you consider Chanel as noble and classical, and these attributes are what you feel important to you.

P: Yes, kind of, but for me the most important thing is Chanel's design, when I wear clothes or handbags from Chanel, I feels very confident.

L: Would you consider that wearing products from Chanel implies that this person is quite rich or has high status in society?

P: Yes, I would think so, if it is not fake. Products of Chanel are usually very expensive, if a person owns handbags or other stuff from Chanel, let's say these products are not fake, I would consider that this person has high salaries, or she is from a rich family.

P: In Shanghai, more and more people have handbags from Chanel, but less people

wear clothes from this brand, those clothes are really, really expensive. I think owning a Chanel handbag is not a big deal now, but if you are wearing a Chanel dress, I would think 'oh she earns a lot'.

P: But many people today are wearing fake items, it's really hard to tell.

L: You like Chanel and McQueen, how do you keep up with these brands? Will you discuss with your friends about the latest new arrivals?

P: Yes, one of my friends purchase luxury a lot, like crazy, she always updates the luxury news to me, and I am also interested in these.

L: Ok. For you, what are the differences between luxury fashion goods and normal products?

L: For example, products from these brands also have good quality; they also look nice, like Ted Baker?

P: I think the major differences are the quality and design. Many high street fashion brands would copy or design similar types of products from luxury brands. They may look similar, but when you wear them, there would be differences. Besides, I would get tired of a normal handbag in one year's time, but luxury handbags could be used in a longer time period like 2 to 3 years. In addition, the prices would of course be quite different.

L: Some middle -upper brands also provide products with good quality and design, what are the differences between these products and the luxuries, except from prices?

P: Brand. Brand culture, brand history. New brands are less well-known and with shorter brand history. When one person buys things from normal or new brands, other people would not pay attention to her, because it is just a normal or new brand, not many people know the brand. Well-known luxury brands build their brand images for so many years, people trust these brands.

P: Besides, Branded products really have better designs.

L: In your personal view, what benefits or satisfaction come from buying and using luxury fashion products, for example, a Prada handbag, instead of a normal handbag?

L: why you are willing to spend higher prices?

P: Well, firstly, quality is at least ensured, and I can use it longer. I would rather spend more money to buy luxury products because I can use them longer. This is my purchasing habits. Besides, I would be more confident and happy. Thirdly, as my friends also buy luxury products, if we purchase things from the same luxury brands, I would feel that we have similar tastes, and we could have more common topics in conversations.

L: Well are there any special luxury fashion brands more famous than other brands in your country?

P: CHANEL, DIOR, LV, PRADA, BURBERRY, GUCCI, Hermes, these kinds of well-known brands

L: Can you tell me your views about these brands? Why do you think these brands are especially famous in your country?

P: These brands are normally the ones that have high awareness and acceptance in my country. I don't really like some of them such as LV and GUCCI, I think they do not look nice, I don't appreciate the design. I think most of their consumers in my country are those people rich but with lower educational levels. People buying LV handbags as they are expensive and could be recognised easily. Owning these branded things could show to others they are rich; they can afford LV and GUCCI, not because they really like these designs.

P: Although I value more on the quality and design of products, I still care about 'brand', I think wearing branded clothes, handbags, shoe could make me feel more

confident.

L: Will you consider that people want to follow the trends in in society as to the luxury purchasing?

P: yes, sometimes.

L: Does this phenomena influence your choice in selecting luxury brands?

L: for example, Chanel is very popular, and Celine might not be so well-known, you are about the spend similar amount of money on purchasing one handbag either from Chanel or Celine, you like both the two handbags, maybe like the one from Celine more, which one would you decide to buy?

P: ...I don't know, maybe I would choose the handbag from Celine. Because Chanel is so well-known, if I buy one, I am afraid that people would think it is fake. Besides, as many people are now buying handbags from Chanel, I do not want to purchase the same products, it's meaningless.

L: how about other people in your country? Which one you think they would choose?

P: definitely the one from the more well-known brand. But for me, I prefer brands attached with personality.

L: What do you think are the negative things associated with being a luxury consumer?

L: such as costing too much?

P: Maybe people would group you as a luxury seeker; I don't like to be classified. Besides, costing too much money, and buying luxury could cause a kind of psychological change that you may want to compare or compete with other people who also buy luxury goods.



L: all right. Can you tell me your opinion towards counterfeits? For example, a fake LV handbag with high imitation and also good quality.

P: I think buying fake luxuries is non-sense and meaningless. If my friends don't know it's fake and they ask me about the price, I don't know how to answer them, it is awkward. If I cannot afford a real one, I would buy a similar one from a normal brand, not the fake one.

L: So why do you think there are still so many people buy fake luxuries?

P: Could be many reasons. Sometimes people do not know this brand, they may buy the fake by accident. Or in most situations, they could not afford the real luxuries, but they hope others think they can afford.

L: In the literature of luxury consumption motivations, researchers identify several motivations, such as displaying wealth and status, social group fit in, showing uniqueness as some people cannot afford these products, self-pleasing and self-gifting, quality, which you think values more important for you?

P: for me, quality and self-satisfaction are the most important, social group and uniqueness are next; the least important are social status.

L: How about people with similar ages as you in your country?

P: Oh, I think social status and group fit in are the most important reasons for them to buy luxuries, quality and self-pleasing are also very important, then the uniqueness.

L: How about self-expressing and self-identity?

P: For me, self-expressing is quite important.

L: any things you want to add towards your views and motivations of luxury fashion products purchasing?

P: No, I think I have expressed all my ideas, haha.

L: all right, thank you very much for you time, I appreciate that.

P: No problem! If you have any other questions to ask me, just contact me.

L: Ok! Thank you!!!

## Appendix 2

### Data classification and analysis worksheets

Tables below illustrate each country's luxury fashion purchase motivation themes. They portray main/significant themes and other themes of China and Japan. The 'main themes' were emerged from valid groups of codes mentioned or emphasised by five or more respondents in each group of participants. The 'other themes' replenish the 'main themes' for each culture. Chinese and Japanese data both identify four same themes of the luxury fashion products purchasing motivations: functional motivation, social/interpersonal motivation, personal motivation and financial motivation.

Table 5: Thematic Analysis of Chinese Respondent Data

Main Themes			
Stage 1: Capturing Initial Codes (described from five or more people) – direct quotation	Stage 2: Grouping (Interpret these codes into relevant concepts)	Stage 3: Creating Themes (relating to luxury consumption motivations)	Stage 4: Developing into Generalised Themes
Quality Uniqueness and Exclusivity Fashion and Style Classic Some luxury brands are creating art The concepts of brand (independence, feminine, elegant, etc.) Design/Talented designer Durability & Longevity	1: <i>Quality</i> : respondents purchase luxury fashion branded products because of the high quality and the relative perfection 2: <i>Uniqueness/exclusivity</i> : respondents purchase these items as the prices lead to that only a few consumers could get access to these products 3: <i>Design</i> : respondents are motivated by the unique, excellent, or classic design of the luxury product 4: <i>Longevity</i> : respondents believe that luxury products could last longer not only because of the quality but also the classic style	Perceived functional value	<b>Functional-oriented motivation</b> - <i>Quality (Perfectionism)</i> - <i>Uniqueness</i> - <i>Reliability</i> - <i>Durability</i>
Indicating relatively high social status Showing to others that I am wealthy and can afford this brand Flaunting/ Show off Success symbol Good family Brand image Brand awareness Brand reputation High grade Indicating good taste Jealousy of others/Enviably Make the consumer feel superiority of taste and status Because it's popular and everybody knows it/ Recognised I hope people know that I am wearing luxury items	5: <i>Status and Wealth</i> : owning luxury products could signify the respondent's relatively high social status, wealth, or success to others (whether earned by herself or inherited) 6: <i>Brand image/reputation</i> : the respondent is motivated by the high brand image and reputation; Besides, branding activities such as celebrity effects, advertising, and marketing have created a strong brand image for luxury fashion brands 7: <i>Image creation &amp; enhancement</i> : luxury products could help the consumer to create and enhance image to others, such as wealth, success, taste, fashion, etc. 8: <i>Superiority</i> (through comparison): luxury fashion products could help the consumer feel superior, different and confident from other people, as she feels that she has what others could not have 9: <i>Attention</i> : the respondent wants to get attention from/impress other people	Perceived Interpersonal Effect  Societal group influences	<b>Social/Interpersonal-oriented motivation</b> - <i>Conspicuous Consumption (status and wealth displaying)</i> - <i>Prestige value motivation</i>  - <i>Uniqueness motivation (distance from other people)</i> - <i>Social group fit in</i>

Wearing items from this brand make me feel confident Distinguish from others Impress other people/ Getting attention Following the trends Influenced by friends/colleagues Wanting to have discussion topics with friends Guilt around 'have-nots'	by wearing luxury products  10: <i>Social group fit in</i> : the consumer wants to fit into current or upper societal groups  11: <i>Group classification</i> : wearing luxury brands could classify the respondent into a socio-economic group		
Confidence Refinement and Elegant Personal taste Pleasure Satisfaction Self-rewarding/Self-gifting Satisfaction through consumption Positive feelings from ownership	12: <i>Self-identity</i> : the respondent thinks that the design and the brand concepts could represent herself  13: <i>Self-pleasing/self-gifting/self-rewarding</i> : the respondent could obtain pleasure and satisfaction through the consumption of luxury fashion goods  14: <i>Satisfaction through owning</i> : the consumer could gain positive emotions through owning luxury products	Perceived Personal Effect	<b>Individual/Personal-oriented Motivation</b> - <i>Self-identity</i> - <i>Hedonic (Self-pleasing, self-gifting/rewarding, self-satisfaction, etc.)</i> - <i>Materialistic value</i>
High price Price – worth the price as the high reputation of the brand	15: <i>Product value</i> : respondents think that high price of luxury fashion products means that the high value, as the brand high reputation imply the intangible value	Perceived financial value	<i>Financial value-oriented motivation</i>
<b>Other Themes</b>			
<b>Stage 1: Capturing initial codes</b>	<b>Stage 2: Grouping</b>	<b>Stage 3: Creating Themes</b>	<b>Stage 4: Developing into Generalised Themes</b>
For work/business purposes Wearing in working occasions Business opportunities	16: <i>Working purpose</i> : the luxury goods could make the respondent look more professional, high grade, reliable, success, etc. Which may lead to better business or working opportunities	Perceived interpersonal effects	<i>Interpersonal-oriented motivation</i>
Gifts Gaining 'Face' when giving as a gift to other people	17: <i>Gifts</i> : luxury fashion branded products make effective gifts, and can effectively promote the relationship with others	Perceived interpersonal effects	<i>Interpersonal/Social-oriented motivation</i>
Relationships	18: <i>Relationship</i> : owning the luxury fashion goods may cause others to wish to be friends with the consumer	Perceived Interpersonal effects	<i>Interpersonal/Social-oriented motivation</i>
Lifestyle enrichment	19: <i>Lifestyle enrichment</i> : the respondent believes that owning luxury fashion branded products improves the quality of her living standard	Perceived personal effects	<i>Personal-oriented motivation</i>

Table 6: Thematic Analysis of Japanese Respondent Data

Stage 1: Capturing Initial Codes	Stage 2: Grouping	Stage 3: Creating Themes	Stage 4: Developing into Generalised Themes	
Quality Match many clothes (e.g., like a handbag) ‘They have a lot of shoes and clothes that you can use for work or other occasions’ Uniqueness & Exclusive Longevity & Durability Style & Design Classic Aesthetic Confident: ‘because they might look better on me than other products’	1: <i>Quality</i> : respondents purchase luxury fashion branded products because of the relatively excellent quality 2: <i>Usability/utility</i> : the luxury fashion branded products could perform different functions 3: <i>Uniqueness/exclusivity</i> : as the high price, only a few consumers can get access to the items 4: <i>Durability/Longevity</i> : the luxury products last longer as the good quality 5: <i>Style &amp; Design</i> : respondents believe that luxury fashion branded products are of superior style, fashionable or classic design	Perceived functional value	<b>Functional-oriented motivation</b> - <i>Quality (Perfectionism)</i> - <i>Usability</i> - <i>Uniqueness</i> - <i>Durability</i>	
Success symbol Showing that I can take good care of myself Displaying/showing off wealth Getting attention Brand reputation Brand image Brand history Luxury fashion product recognition Showing to others that I have a good taste To fit in social groups	6: <i>Wealth and Success</i> : owning luxury products could signify the respondent’s wealth and success, show that the respondent can take good care of herself, but not necessarily high social status 7: <i>Brand image/reputation</i> : the respondent is motivated by the high brand image and reputation; Besides, branding activities such as celebrity effects, advertising, and marketing have created a strong brand image for luxury fashion brands 8: <i>Image creation &amp; enhancement</i> : luxury products could help the consumer to create and enhance image to others 9: <i>Attention</i> : the respondent wants to get attention from/impress other people by wearing luxury products 10: <i>Social group fit in</i> : the consumer wants to fit into current societal groups	Perceived Interpersonal Effect	<b>Social/Interpersonal-oriented motivation</b> - <i>Conspicuous Consumption</i> - <i>Prestige value motivation</i> - <i>Social group fit in</i>	
Brand concept (e.g., feminine, independent, classic, elegant, romantic, lady, etc.) Personal appearance Personal image building Self-identity Personal taste	Confidence Feel Pleasure seeking Self-rewarding Self-gifting Satisfaction Comfort Luxury lifestyle Positive feelings from ownership Enjoying excellent products	11: <i>Image creation</i> : the respondent thinks that the brand or the product could help her express personal style and desired image 12: <i>Self-pleasing/self-gifting/self-rewarding</i> : the respondent could obtain pleasure, confidence, satisfaction through the consumption of luxury fashion goods; luxury items can bring emotionally pleasure for consumers 13: <i>Satisfaction through owning</i> : the consumer could gain positive emotions through owning luxury products	Perceived Personal Effect	<b>Individual/Personal-oriented Motivation</b> - <i>Self-identity</i> - <i>Hedonic (Self-pleasing, self-gifting/rewarding, self-satisfaction, etc.)</i> - <i>Materialistic value</i>
High price Price – means it has good quality	14: <i>Product value</i> : respondents think that high price of luxury fashion products means that the value and the quality of the items are high	Perceived financial value	<i>Financial value-oriented motivation</i>	
<b>Other Themes</b>				
<b>Stage 1: Capturing initial codes</b>	<b>Stage 2: Grouping</b>	<b>Stage 3: Creating Themes</b>	<b>Stage 4: Developing into Generalised Themes</b>	
Representing a way/attitude of life: elegant, feminine, independent, etc. Don’t follow short-term fashion trends	15: A way of life: respondent think purchasing the luxury fashion items could represent her way and attitudes of life	Perceived personal effect	Individual/personal-oriented motivation (self-identity)	

Customer service/After purchase services Experiences	16: Services: the respondent also care about the customer services and the in-store experiences	Perceived personal effect	Individual/personal-oriented motivation (Hedonic)
The raw material	17: Material: if the material is of good quality, and if it is sustainable	Perceived functional effect	Functional value-oriented motivation