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Attachment in Marketing: An Exploratory Study of the Role of Social Media in the Creation of an Emotional Bond Between Luxury Fashion Brands and Consumers

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to understand the role of social media in the creation of an emotional bond between consumers and luxury fashion brands along with the ways to create, maintain or enhance the bond. The influence of consumers' interest in and use of social media to their attachment with luxury brands is also aimed to be pointed.

Considering the subjective nature of personal feelings and its influence on the research, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were employed. By using purposive sampling technique in order to obtain data that will answer the research questions, twelve luxury brand followers were chosen to take part in the interviews.

This study supports and confirms certain characteristics of attachment, social media and luxury brands pointed in the literature review. It also discovers the emotional aspects emerged through following luxury brands' social media accounts. Getting closer with the brand was found to be the main effect of following a luxury brand rather than an emotional bond. This was the result of getting to know the brand more and realizing that the luxury brand cares about their consumers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The first chapter outlines the reasons, objectives and structure of this research which examines the creation of an emotional bond through social media channels by luxury fashion brands. The chapter starts with explaining the reasons and interests that leads the researcher to choose this specific topic. Next, the aim and scope of the study is provided. The chapter finishes with a structure of the research in order to make the study easier to follow by readers.

1.1. Reasons and Interests towards the Research Topic

The main aim of this dissertation is to understand whether if luxury fashion brands can create attachment with their consumers of followers by using social network sites which is one of the social media channels. Attachment is an emotion-laden bond that connects consumers to brands (Park et al., 2010) and is critical in consumer behaviour as it might predict loyalty, purchase intentions of the brand and positive word-of-mouth (WOM), which increases company financial performance (Batra et al., 2012; Park et al., 2010; Bian and Forsythe, 2012). Emotional bonding matters for luxury goods as it is one way for consumers to carry symbolic meanings and link those meanings to their own identity (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). The consumption of luxury brands is a hedonic consumption that symbolize economic power, taste of fashion and other symbolic values for consumers (Tynan et al, 2010; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Since consumers can express their ideal images by fashion (Thompson and Haytko, 1997) and it is assumed that emotional attachment occurs when consumers use products to define themselves (Malär et al., 2011), the concept of being obsessed with luxury fashion brands is quite consistent with the concept of emotional brand attachment that will be discussed in this study.

Meanwhile, today social media is being used by consumers not only to connect with one another, but also to connect with brands (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). With a platform where users can express preferences, interests and networks, brands can easily create an identity that consumers can link to. Thus, it needs to be a part of luxury fashion brands' marketing mix also, even though they

preserve much more prestige than other brands. However, luxury is reserved to an elite and social media is free for everyone to engage and interact with brands. Therefore, for luxury brands social media creates a risk of losing their mystery and uniqueness in customers' eyes. However, despite the fact that luxury brands' identities are based on exclusivity (Phau and Prendergast, 2000), according to Abrams Research, with over 75 percent of wealthy Internet users actively using social media, it is now beyond the question of whether luxury brands should use it or not. Thus, the differences between the characteristics of social media and luxury brands (Okonkwo, 2009) may require different strategies to overcome. As luxury fashion brands carry the message that consumers want to be linked with, following them through social media may also help consumers to maintain their ideal status or image. However, no study has investigated if luxury fashion brand can build, maintain or increase an emotional bond through social media usage. Thus, it is worth study to find out if attachment is one of the outcomes of social media usage by luxury fashion brands who serve to a niche market.

This certain topic is of interest to the researcher, who has a high interest in fashion as a customer, primarily because of the desire to build a career in the luxury fashion industry. Secondarily, being an active fashion customer which can even be seen as obsession, made the researcher a passionate follower in social media. However, luxury brands appeal to luxury shoppers, a niche market with small number of audience and competitors. This leads these brands to use a different marketing strategy toward their customers. Hence, understanding and learning the outcomes of using social media usage which is taking over the marketing world in depth from a consumer perspective will provide a useful insight for the researcher regarding her future career.

1.2. Aims and Scopes

Given that there was a lack of focus on emotional attachment as an outcome, the aim of this dissertation is to find out the ability of social network sites in creating an emotion-laden bond between luxury fashion brands and their consumers. Thus, this study will focus on these research objectives:

1. To find out if luxury fashion brands can create an emotional attachment through social network sites

2. To gain insight into how brands can create emotional attachment through social media

3. To understand if the consumers' interest in and use of social media affect the level of an emotional attachment.

Since there was no previous research about this specific topic to follow, an inductive approach is chosen, which makes the research exploratory. Semi-structured interviews were employed, hoping to gain insight about consumers' deep feelings. Also, documents from the brands' social network accounts that the participants were asked to brought to the interviews were analysed. Thus, qualitative method was chosen regarding the subjectivity of feelings.

The participants of this research were twelve European followers from the generation Y. Generation Y was chosen because of the fact that they are the ones who use social media the most (Nielsen, 2012). There was not a limitation for the participants to be shoppers of their chosen brand to also understand if purchasing was a necessity for an attachment with the brand. Purposive sampling was applied.

1.3. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is consisted of seven chapter except from this one: literature review; methodology; findings; discussion; conclusions; managerial implications and further investigations. In chapter 2, existing literature is discussed and reviewed. The chapter comprises 3 main parts which are

emotional attachment, social media as a marketing tool and luxury brands and consumption in general. Emotional attachment as a concept, including its role in consumer behaviour and its relationship with consumers' self-concept is described in order to provide the foundation and basis for the study. Next, social media in general and as a marketing tool is explained, focusing on social network sites to explain the link between attachment and social media usage. Finally, the dimensions of luxury goods and its consumption is analysed to explore the ability of luxury brands to create an emotional bond through social network sites.

In chapter 3, the methodology that is adopted in this study is discussed. This chapter considers the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions among with the justification of the choice of qualitative method. Employing semi-structure interview and documents will then be explained. Afterwards, the data collection procedure which involves sample, semi-structured interviews and documents are described to give readers a whole picture of the research process.

In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, the data collected from the participants are analysed. Findings provided from the semi-structured interviews and documents are shown. These findings are then discussed in chapter 5.

The chapter 6 is the conclusion that will answer the research questions. After explaining the managerial implications found in the data in chapter 7, further investigations will be provided that will bring the readers to the end of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to accomplish to critically analyse the literature related to emotional attachment, review the existing literature on the role of social media in marketing and understand the literature related to the luxury market, its features and application on social media.

The chapter contains three parts: attachment, social media and luxury brands. In order to lay the foundation of this research, attachment will be discussed first as it is crucial to acknowledge the concept of attachment itself before understanding its relationship with social media and luxury brands.

2.2. Attachment

2.2.1. What is an attachment?

The foundation of the study of emotional attachment was conducted by Bowlby (1979) in the light of family-infant relationships. According to him, an attachment is the attraction that one individual has for another, and it is a form of the social behaviour that results in a person attaining and retaining proximity to some other preferred individual. It is an emotion-laden bond including another person or a specific object (Bowlby, 1979). Attachment has been described by various researchers. Schultz et al. (1989) construe it as a person-material possession association and suggest that it represents the degree of perceived linkage between an individual and an object. They also suggest that attachment is reflected in individuation, integration and temporal orientation and is an intersection or joining of the individual and the object. Ball and Tasaki (1992) described attachment as the extent to which an object is owned or used by an individual to maintain his or her self-concept. Thus, it can be concluded that attachment plays a significant role in people's lives and even shape their behaviour (Fehr and Russell 1991).

Individuals interact with thousands of people, products or brands in their lives. However, there is always a best friend, a special person or a favourite item of clothing, toy, place etc. The objects people are emotionally attached to are few in number and have a significant place in people's lives. The reason for that is that an attachment with an object develops over time and to a degree based on interactions between the individual and the attachment object (Baldwin et al., 1996). Ball and Tasaki (1992) suggested that as attachment and length of ownership increase, so should the emotional significance of the object. Just like memories, forming the base of a bond in a friendship. A person does not become significant in someone's life without the experiences that made him or her realise that they belong together, and those experiences come with time. However, Ball and Tasaki (1992) emphasized that attachment is more than memories; it is strongly related to emotional significance, but should be differentiated from it when the object reflects the self.

According to Bowlby (1979), the formation of the bond that indicates attachment can be described as falling in love. Researchers focusing on love have suggested various structures or categories of love. For example, Fehr (1988) have identified 68 features of love in her study. Aron and Westbay (1996) extended this study by showing that the features of the prototype of love have dimensional structure; Passion, Intimacy and Commitment. They also stated that people show individual differences in the emphasis of their personal prototype of love. Features of the prototype of love that they have found is important as they appear to be strong indicators of how one thinks about love. Thus, because some people use the word "love" loosely and merely mean they have meaning in their lives, using their study will help this study to understand the importance of trying to find out the participants' deeper feelings towards luxury fashion brands by asking them more questions that will help them talk about their feelings unconsciously.

2.2.2. Attachment in Consumer Behaviour

The feeling of love does not have to be romantic in order to influence people's decisions. It can be friendship, family or in a marketing concept, a consumer can be attached emotionally to a brand

(Albert et al., 2008; Belk, 1988; Kleine et al., 1993; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005). Brand love, defined by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006), is a mode of satisfaction. Some satisfied consumers develop a passionate emotional attachment to a brand. Obviously, as the degree of emotional attachment to a person differs from another, individuals attach emotionally to only certain brands (Thomson et al., 2005). Brand love includes different cognitions, feelings, sense of connectedness and behaviours such as frequent interactions or resource investment in its core phenomena (Batra et al., 2012). It is more than a simple brand affect (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Just as people can like many other people but love only few of them, consumers can be affected by many brands but love few of them which precludes negative feelings such as dislike or hate (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Meanwhile, according to Batra et al. (2012) brand love is never claimed to be unconditional and brands are usually loved because they are the best available. They also found that consumers are not concerned with what they can do for the brand, but with what it can do for them. While Albert et al. (2008) suggest that functional quality and the ability of the brand to make the consumer feel good were associated with lower levels of love, Batra et al. (2012) reveal them as positive components. So, it can be assumed that both functional and hedonic aspects of a brand can form a foundation of love.

In this study, love is mentioned as an emotion to be felt for either opposite sex, family, friends or brands. However, Batra et al. (2012) criticized prior research about brand love for two reasons. First, they argued that brand love is a phenomenon that needs to be built separately from interpersonal love on an understanding of how consumers experience it. They studied brand love as another kind of love which has different features than romantic, parental or compassionate love and suggested that theories of interpersonal love cannot be applied to brand love. Rather than applying interpersonal love theories, they considered the antecedents of brand love prototype as great quality. Despite agreeing that these are all different kind of love types, regarding how selfish people are in nature, the base of all types of love should be coming from one dimension which is self-concept. In this study, love is described as the feeling that one feels to an object which is perceived

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to represent the self-concept (Malär et al., 2011). People do not even start a relationship with an individual if they do not see that person fitting in their self-concept. People are selfish in nature and cannot be attached to something that doesn't provide them with needed benefits (Shaver et al., 1987). Therefore, when it comes to feelings and relationships, people only think about how the attachment object will display the self and this will be the same whether it is a brand, a toy or an individual.

As a second criticism, Batra et al. (2012) distinguished brand love emotion and brand love relationship. Consumers mentioned emotion of love less than other emotions such as happiness or anxiety in their study. That led them to suggest that brand love is a long-term relationship between the brand and the consumer that involves cognitive, behavioural and affective experiences. This is also agreed by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) while comparing a short-term outcome, satisfaction, and brand love. Still, it is agreed that brand love can be considerably more intense than simple liking (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Thomson et al. (2005) labelled the feelings that consumers can feel toward a brand as Affection, Passion and Commitment. Meanwhile, Batra et al. (2012) identified ten components of brand love including high quality, strongly held values, intrinsic rewards, self-identity, positive affect, passionate desire, emotional bond, willingness to invest, frequent use and length of use.

The concept of being attached to a brand emotionally matters to consumer behaviour as it might predict their commitment to the brand and their willingness to make financial sacrifices in order to maintain it (Batra et al., 2012; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005). In other words, it is assumed that consumers who are attached to a brand stay loyal to it and are usually ready to pay a price premium which results with an increase of company financial performance (Batra et al., 2012; Park et al., 2010). Researchers also add purchase intentions (Bian and Forsythe, 2012), positive WOM and resistance to negative information to attachment's outcomes for companies Batra et al., 2012). The feelings that a customer has toward a brand have the potential to differentiate one brand from

another (Malär et al., 2011) which can lead emotional attachment to be considered as a measure of marketing effectiveness.

In a marketing context, brand attachment is more likely to be confused with brand attitude. Researchers studied the difference between both (Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). Thomson et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of the difference between brand attitude and attachment by mentioning that individuals might have a positive attitude toward a brand without having had any experience with it. Their findings show that while brand attitude predicts purchase behaviour, brand attachment predicts actual behaviour and intentions of consumers to use significant resources such as time, money and reputation. In conclusion, "attachment is correlated with but logically precedes attitude" (Schultz et al., 1989 pp.361).

2.2.3. Attachment and the Self

According to Albert et al. (2008), love is a process whereby the self expands to new persons who later become included in the self. Additionally, consumer researchers have suggested that possessions play a role in maintaining and supporting the self-concept (Aron et al., 2005; Belk, 1988; Schultz et al., 1989). As an example, Aron et al. (2005) suggested that people have drivers that motivates them to include others into their conception of self. In a marketing context, these others are brands. Once an object or a brand is chosen to define the consumer's self, the consumer may tend to show greater efforts to maintain the object in addition to more protective behaviours (Ball and Tasaki, 2001). In conclusion, it is assumed that when consumers use products to define themselves or purchase brands to express their self-concept (Aaker, 1999; Belk 1988) emotional attachment may occur (Malär et al., 2011) and the more a brand reflects the consumer's self or is a part of it, the stronger is the emotional attachment (Aron et al., 2005; Park et al., 2010).

Malär et al. (2011) extended the relationship between self-concept and emotional attachment by comparing the impact of consumers' actual and ideal selves on emotional brand attachment. Their findings show that actual self-congruence plays a bigger role in developing an attachment than ideal.

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However, this may be different for hedonic and symbolic products such as luxury fashion brands that is used to express personal identity, goals and interests (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). In addition to play a role in the differentiation of self from another, attachment is involved in the integration of self with others (Schultz et al., 1989). Since people are social creatures and need to interact with others at some point, it makes sense that one develop strong attachments to things which reflect valued relationships, memories of others both from past and future (Schultz et al., 1989).

If attached objects are the ones which are a part of the self, individuals may own some possessions which are attached stronger than others (Schultz et al., 1989). As an example, it is more likely that an individual relates the phone that he uses personally more than a washing machine which is only been bought for its utilitarian benefits. Thus, while there is a strong attachment towards the phone which is being used as a symbol of the individual's personality, weak attachment may occur towards the washing machine. This difference can also be seen in the individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Schultz et al., 1989). However, little emphasis was put by Schultz et al. (1989) on the strength of emotional attachment to brands regarding if they are high or low involvement products. In addition, little emphasis was put on whether if the attachment to hedonic products is the same as the attachment to utilitarian products. Meanwhile, if attachment objects of hedonic products are most likely to be displayed constantly (Schultz et al., 1989), it is reasonable to assume that people would be attached to products which are symbolic more than they are attached to products which are utilitarian.

Thomson et al. (2005) mention that emotional attachment is often beyond one's control, hence it is more relevant to the realm of emotions than it is to the realm of cognition. This is consistent with their one finding which shows that brands in the strong emotional attachment condition are more likely to be symbolically or hedonically related and which are chosen not by their utilitarian features but by their self-relevance. Moreover, these brands are often high-involvement products (Thomson et al., 2005) that requires careful consideration or financial sacrifices. If cognition was playing a role

in the decision making process of these brands, a more rational option could be chosen regarding their prices usefulness. However, as people cannot control who they love, they cannot control what brand they choose if they are emotionally attached.

One way to create a brand identity which consumers can link to their self-concept is by the use of social media. Regarding its ability of reaching thousands of people with a few keystrokes, managers have the chance of harnessing it for the benefit of the organization. Most companies are already using these social network sites which enables users to create profiles and share personal information to create brand identity. Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest that creating communities of individuals that share the similar desires, providing exclusivity or supporting causes that are important to consumers, helps to shape consumers' discussions. Regarding this suggestion that companies can influence the conversations that consumers have with each other (Mangold and Faulds, 2009), the question coming to mind is whether if they can also create feelings toward their brands by using social media. Given that the profiles in social media consist of users' images, friends and lists of interests and preferences; it would not be surprising if individuals link some profiles to their self and be attached to them. Therefore, it is assumed in this research that social media can be an opportunity for companies to create an emotional bond between their brand and consumers. In order to analyse this assumption, social media in general and its use as a marketing tool will be discussed in the next part of this chapter

2.3. Social Media

2.3.1.   The Dimensions of Social Media

Social media consist of online applications and is a platform where individuals and communities share, create or discuss contents that are generated by users themselves (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Trusov et al., 2009). In this study, social media is accepted as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation of User Generated Content-as described by Kaplan and Heanlein (2009). In other words, users are now

able to interact and collaborate with each other via social media dialogues as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, rather than viewing the content passively.

There are various types of social media even though Kaplan and Heanlein (2010) mention that there is no agreed typology about it. Some of different social media sites are differentiated as social networking (Facebook, Myspace), social bookmarking (Digg), commerce communities (Ebay), video-sharing (Youtube, Vine), picture-sharing (Instagram, Pinterest), music-sharing (last.fm), professional networking (Linkedin), blogging, microblogging (Twitter), collaborative projects (Wikipedia), forums-social communities, location-specific information (Foursquare), virtual game worlds (World of Warcraft) and virtual game worlds (Second Life) (Fischer and Reuber, 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Kietzmann et al (2011) identify seven blocks that social media involves which include identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. They also added that none of today's social media sites focus solely on one function. For instance, Facebook enables many functions such as conversations, sharing, relationships and identity.

In a marketing context, social media is a consumer generated media that "describes a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities and issues" (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004, p.2). Moreover, now it has various impacts on a firm's marketing success. By using social media as a marketing tool companies can influence various aspects of consumer behaviour such as awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behaviour and post-purchase evaluation (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). For instance, 36% of consumers thought more positively about brands which have blogs (Kim and Ko, 2012). Another example, as suggested by Chen et al. (2011) and Henning-Thurau et al. (2010), online word-of-mouth has a significant influence on purchase behaviour and according to DEI Worldwide (2008), 45% of consumers who have visited social media to get information are engaged with online word-of-mouth. While social

media enables companies to talk to their customers, it also enables customers to talk to one another- as they already are doing by word-of-mouth communication. However, Mangold and Faulds (2009) underpin the important difference between the two as social media has a dangerous power of having the ability to tell thousands of people unlike word-of-mouth. In addition, Trainor et al. (2012) concluded that social media usage enhances customer relationship performance of a firm. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that social media is set of goals that companies should be active and take care of (Kaplan and Heanlein, 2010).

Social media is also a multidimensional channel that can fulfill business purposes such as branding, customer services, retailing and client networks. Not only communicating in social life, but also communicating with customers have changed significantly after the increasing usage of social media (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). As cited in Kaplan and Heanlein (2010), according to Forrester Research, 75% of Internet surfers used social media in the second quarter of 2008. Nevertheless, although its principle role is communications, it has evolved beyond the communications function and become a real world which users- who are also consumers- can also congregate and connect with each other independently, hence making them "kings" (Okonkwo, 2009).

Along with being an interaction and information tool, social media is also a business tool. It is a consumer-to-consumer (C2C) e-marketplace where users can sell to or buy from their contacts (Han and Windsor, 2011) hence giving users multiple roles such as buyer and seller. As cited in Fetherstonhaugh (2010), OgilvyOne found out that 49% of sellers are seeing social media as integral to their sales success. One key factor of this success is being seen as interpersonal trust by researchers (Clemons et al., 2007; Han et al., 2011). In addition to trust, Han and Windsor (2011) add perceived emotional, social, price and performance values as indicators of online shopping.

2.3.1 The Power Provided From Social Media to Consumers

Nowadays, it is so easy for one person to freely share his/her thoughts, experiences, pictures, videos etc. with thousands of other people via social media channels. Moreover, people started

communicating with each other about products and companies (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). This feature of social media brings challenges for marketers such as loss of control over the information available for consumers (Kaplan and Heanlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Companies no longer have the power to dictate the content, frequency or timing of communications and information about themselves (Kaplan and Heanlein, 2010; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). That power has shifted from companies to consumers, giving companies a new role as mere observers (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Communication about brands happens whether the company wants it or not. An obvious example for this can be given by mentioning how United Airlines suffered from one simple Youtube video Dave Carroll posted when his guitar was broken during a flight. Within 4 days of the video being posted online, United Airlines' stock price fell 10% (Chris, 2009). However, this damage is not dependent on only social media. The fact that United Airlines did not respond or decline Caroll's demands played a huge role in this crisis.

Social media may have an influence on companies who do not even use it as a marketing tool because it is not only starting to become the main source of information, it is also believed to be true by most consumers (Kaplan and Heanlein, 2010). This feature require companies to be careful as there are loyal and satisfied customers as well as disappointed ones who may be active social media users. Kietzmann et al. (2011) suggest to firms the 4 Cs that can be developed for monitoring and controlling social media: cognize, congruity, curate and chase. These 4 Cs include understanding the firm's social media landscape, knowing the main influencers, being consistent with the goals of the firm in social media activities and knowing who will represent the firm online.

Social media also provide some benefits for companies. As their use increases, firms have the ability to perform integrated marketing activities with less effort and costs (Kim and Ko, 2012). These activities include reaching many consumers- both potential and existing- and increasing customer engagement (Kaplan and Heanlein, 2010) or early discovery of customer needs (Agnihotri et al., 2012). For instance, after Dave Carroll's post that was mentioned before, Taylor Guitars who were

mentioned in the video used the opportunity and offered him two guitars along with posting another video about the accident. The video had 562,777 views in two minutes and gave the popularity Taylor Guitars has today.

2.3.2. Social Network Sites

According to Nielsen (2012), social networking is a global phenomenon that has grown rapidly, especially with the emergence of mobile social network applications. They mentioned that people continue to spend more time on social networks than any other category of sites. Social network sites allow users to build a profile and network of friends for social or professional interaction (Trusov et al., 2009). Moreover, regarding the broad options, they have been divided by some researchers into utilitarian and hedonic social networking sites (Rosen and Sherman, 2006; Van der Heijden, 2004). In these kind of social media networks users can personalize their accounts, use images, show lists of interests and preferences or their links to other profiles. These create a foundation of a link that can be realized by the consumer about a brand when given that the effect of mere virtual presence has a role in a small issue such as brand like even when consumers think they have common with the brand's supporters (Naylor et al., 2012).

As they provide functions which can allow a consumer to find similarities with a brand that can be linked to the self-concept, this research will focus solely on social network sites that enables sharing, conversations, relationships and groups. Thus, social networking and picture sharing sites will be the main focus. Given that luxury brands are more an identity and a culture (Okonkwo, 2009) and consumers can represent ideal images by using fashion (Thompson and Haytko, 1997), followers may find a relation between those brands and themselves through these channels. Yet, the followers on social media networks only indicate how popular a person or a brand is, not how many people actually read the posts (Kietzmann, 2011). As cited in Naylor et al. (2012), according to Lake (2011), even the large number of likes does not necessarily translate into meaningful outcomes. In other words, following a luxury fashion brand on a particular social network does not always mean they

love the brand. Even if they do, given that one required characteristic of luxury brands is having a global reputation (Nueno and Quelch, 1998), it is unknown if consumers start following a brand after awareness, purchase or attachment as it is assumed that they already know the brand. Also, it is not known whether if social media has a marketing role in creating an emotional bond between brands and consumers.

Before starting to analyse the role of social network sites in creating an emotional bond, the dimensions of luxury goods should be understood. Thus, the next part will examine luxury brands in social network sites after providing the dimensions of luxury brands and their meanings for consumers.

2.4. Luxury Brands

2.4.1.   The Concept of Luxury

Despite the fact that today consumers are exposed to more information about brands and products with internet, hence becoming smarter about their purchase decisions, one thing it could not change is consumers' desire to add to their wardrobes and make-up bags with luxury brands. According to Schumpeter (2014), the number of luxury consumers has more than tripled in under 20 years to around 330m people. Spending has risen at a similar rate, to be estimated €217 billion ($300 billion) in 2013. This phenomenal rating and its marketing challenges made luxury brands a topic to be examined and studied for practitioners and marketers constantly.

Marketing academics are examining luxury in different ways. It is suggested by some researchers that luxury goods are something which is unnecessary for daily living (Berry, 1994; Sekora, 1977; Vickers and Renand, 2003). For instance, Vickers and Renand (2003) defined luxury as an obsession. On the other hand, for Hung et al. (2011) they are carefully crafted, unique and conspicuous products. In their study, Dubois and Czellar (2002) suggested that prestige and luxury are different concepts that needs to be understood. Luxury concerns comfort and beauty whereas prestige is a sign of achievement. This makes sense regarding that according to Nueno and Quelch (1998), only

20% of luxury sales were men's product. The worldwide concept of linking beauty with woman and prestige with men may play a role in this sales ratio. They also stated that prestige is considered as positive evaluations while luxury can be seen negative, especially when it is too ostentatious. That explains the reason why luxury brands are not always linked to real achievement. However Hung et al. (2011) found out that social influence is an antecedent of luxury purchase intentions along with impact of self and vanity and people who pursue status via achievement will tend to purchase luxury brands because of their symbolic value more than those who emphasize physical appearance- even for collectivist cultures.

Vigneron and Johnson (1999) proposed five dimensions of luxury goods that play a role in luxury consumers' decision-making process; perceived consciousness, perceived uniqueness, perceived quality, perceived extended self and perceived hedonism. Regarding the last two personal-oriented perceptions and considering that an emotional bond is made through a self-link (Malar et al., 2011), it makes sense to say that consumers may develop an attachment toward luxury brands which they include to their extended selves. Researchers (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) suggested that consumers may link the symbolic meaning of a luxury to their own identity. Moreover, not only real luxury customers, but also people who cannot afford luxury often try to enhance their self-concept by using fake products. Hung et al. (2011) suggested that the appeal of luxury goods come from their perceived premium quality, recognizable style or limited accessibility. It is also suggested that these features signify emotional, experiential or symbolic values (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). Since people use possessions to identify their inner self to the external world (Belk, 1988), is it not surprising that people want to send signals of their economic power, taste of fashion or other symbolic values linked to luxury by owning them. As cited in Hung et al. (2011), Berthon et al. (2009) mentioned that these symbolic values are used to extend one's self. Hence, regarding the assumptions mentioned in previous chapters, it is reasonable to say that those values provide a foundation of possible feelings such as love toward luxury brands.Luxury consumption involves purchasing a product that represent value to both the individual and significant others (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). "…luxury goods are

symbols of personal and social identity, i.e. their principle value is psychological and their consumption is dependent upon personal, social and individual cues" (Vickers and Renand, 2003 pp.465). In other words, the desire to purchase a luxury product is likely to increase when consumers find a consistency between the brand and their beliefs (Bian and Forsythe, 2012).

The consumption of luxury brands may be important for individuals who seek social representation and status with the intention of becoming conspicuous (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Truong et al., 2008; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). For instance, a consumer who carries a Louis Vuitton (LV) bag may purchase that product just to enhance her self-image, to express her taste or to show that she can reach that exclusive product which is not attainable by everyone because of the expensive price. This is supported by the statement that if the luxury product is consumed visibly, the interpersonal influences on buying decision will be greater (Vickers and Renand, 2003). Considering LV again, the brand has different product lines and some of them don't include the brand logo visibly hence leading some customers not to choose it.

The key components of luxury are premium quality and limited supply (Nueno and Quelch, 1998) or recognition of value by others (Cornell, 2002). Additionally, it is linked to beauty, comfort and a sumptuous lifestyle (Dubois and Czellar, 2002). "Luxury defines beauty; it is art applied to functional items. "They offer more than mere objects: they provide reference of good taste" (Kapferer, 1997 pp.253). This quotation agrees with Vigneron and Johnson (2004) who describe luxury goods as goods that satisfy psychological needs by bringing esteem on the owner, along with functional needs. Although luxury brands also satisfy utilitarian needs according to these suggestions, it is not a rational choice to pay a premium price to a product which serves the basic functions of that product category. "Luxury brands are those whose ratio of functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high" (Nueno and Qeulch, 1998). While the utilitarian value is essential for luxury goods as well as non-luxury goods, the symbolic or hedonic values are the key factors playing role in the differentiation between brands (Tynan et al., 2010).

Therefore, it is reasonable to say that luxury consumption is a hedonic consumption of products for their symbolic or emotional values rather than utilitarian values (Berry, 1994; Dubois and Czellar, 2002; Okonkwo, 2009; Tynan et al., 2010).

2.4.2. Luxury in Social Network Sites

Researchers agreed on the assumption that classical marketing is not the best option for luxury brands (Bastien and Kapferer, 2009; Tynan et al., 2010; Vickers and Renand, 2003). In their study to understand the difference between non-luxury and luxury goods in a marketing concept, Vickers and Renand (2003) found out that despite both of them have the basis of functional, experiential and interactional symbolic dimensions, the mix of these components are totally different. Tynan et al. (2010) studied the co-creation of luxury brands and suggested that the marketing of luxury goods requires the customer to perceive sufficient value in the luxury good to compensate for the high price charged.

As mentioned in the previous section, because luxury consumption is a hedonic consumption which is related to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of product use (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982), in a platform where people express preferences or interests and creates an identity seems like the best fit for the marketing of luxury brands. However, since a luxury brand' competition relies on the ability to evoke exclusivity (Phau and Prendergast, 2000), it is still being argued being available on a platform which is free and open to everyone would damage their brand identity (Okonkwo, 2009). Although it is found that attachment predicts actual behaviour (Park et al., 2010), this may be opposite for luxury brands when they utilize social media. The reason for this is that attachment was seem to only be a positive relationship in Park et al.'s (2010) research. Luxury brands may gain enemies by making themselves available to everyone through social media. Truong et al. (2008) suggested that extending a luxury brand into new markets may be dangerous in terms of the status consumers perceive from the brand. Another concern was raised from Okonkwo (2009) which is the paradox regarding that internet has a role in raising the sales and luxury brands usually

maintain a limited supply. Besides, he emphasized the importance of human senses in selling luxury goods and mentioned the lack of physical contact with the goods along with human contact with the sellers. Thus, he suggested that the entrance to internet will likely lead to anxiety from the brand and disappointment from the consumer. However, Tynan et al. (2010) mentioned the importance of interactions with high status individuals as a differentiator and source of value. Kim and Ko (2012) also mentioned that social media is can build friendly attention, affection and stimulate desire for luxury rather than threaten it. In fact, the luxury report survey showed that 25% of consumers engage with luxury brands on social media sites (Hammerson, 2013). This figure rises to 39% for 18 to 25-year-olds, and to 36% for 26 to 35-year-olds- which shows that luxury market has adapted to the new world of internet.

One reason for the adoption of the internet may be the fact that the products what people call luxury have changed with the concept of "luxury democratisation" (Troung et al., 2008; Vickers and Renand, 2003) which involves making luxury goods more affordable. Similar to this argument, Alleres (1990) proposed a three level hierarchy for luxury goods which starts with accessible, continues with intermediate and ends with accessible luxury. In other words, it would only be assumed that social media could damage exclusivity of the highest level of luxury goods.

One type of luxury goods that carries many features of attachment is luxury fashion brands. Consumers use fashion to express certain ideals and images that are salient to their identity and describe idealized images of beauty (Thomspon and Haytko, 1997). This may be the reason if a consumer is attached to a luxury fashion brand; combining the ideal image and ideal status and expressing them through fashion and luxury respectively. Then, because social media is used to show interests, preferences and networks as mentioned in the previous sections, consumers may think following a luxury fashion brand will enhance the images and status they are trying to express by using the same brand. Thus, in the present study it will be the researched if luxury fashion brands can build an emotional bond through social network sites.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the concept of attachment, social media and luxury brands respectively. It is suggested in the literature review that attachment is most likely to occur when consumers include a brand into their selves. The concept of extending self to include something or someone, on the other hand, involves finding shared or desired values. Meanwhile, social network sites are discussed to give the opportunity of creating an identity to the brands by enabling expressing interests and preferences. However, no research was found to study if social media can create an attachment. The focus was on awareness, e-WOM and purchase intentions. Therefore, this study will focus on the emotional aspects of following a luxury brand given that luxury consumption are discussed to have hedonic reasons which carry the desire to symbolize values, thus representing self.

Next chapter will explain the methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the main objectives of the research is systematically discussed again as they guide the methodology. After pointing the gaps and research questions, it is continued with explaining the research paradigm and how the research is conducted, where the epistemological assumptions of the research and the justification of the choice of qualitative method is described. Then, the representation of data analysis which are semi-structured interviews and documents is depicted. Finally, the data analysis procedure is presented and discussed.

3.2. Research Objectives

The existing literature on emotional attachment which is discussed in the previous chapter, suggests that an emotional bond occurs when consumers use products to define their self-concept. It is also underpinned in the literature review chapter that social media is a platform where preferences and interests are shown and people can express themselves through social network sites. Thus, given that luxury fashion brands carry the message that consumers want to be linked with, following them through social media may also help consumers to maintain their ideal status or image. However, no study has investigated if luxury fashion brand can build, maintain or increase an emotional bond through social media usage. By investigating luxury brand followers, social media's role in an attachment is aimed to be answered.

The relationship between social media activities and customers equity or purchase intention have been studied. Yet, there is no study that links social media activities with emotional bond. This study aimed to fill this gap by comparing consumers' social media use and their attachment level to a luxury brand through social media. Previous researches regarding the measure of the strength of emotional attachment to brands also include low involvement products unlike luxury fashion brands. Furthermore, it is found that actual self has the greatest impact on emotional attachment. However, it may be different for hedonic and symbolic products such as luxury fashion brands.

It has been observed that there are many researches on emotional brand attachment. However, it was seem to only be a positive relationship on those researches. In fact, there are also negative feelings such as hate, fear or disappointment and it is a fact that some consumers see luxury brands as a show-off. Luxury brands may also gain enmities by making themselves available to everyone through social media. Therefore, it is aimed to reach the deeper feelings about brands with the help of open-ended questions.

Considering the gaps above, the research aim is to explore if luxury fashion brands can create an emotional bond through the usage of social network sites. The following research questions are created to achieve the goal:

1. To find out if luxury fashion brands can create an emotional attachment through social network sites

2. If so, to gain insight into how brands create emotional attachment through social media

3. To understand if the consumers' interest in and use of social media affect the level of an emotional attachment.

3.3. Choice of Research Paradigm

The choices researchers make about paradigms reflect the beliefs of researchers and shape the research strategies that they will use (Esterberg, 2002). This is why, it is important to understand ontological and epistemological assumptions the researcher employs that represent her beliefs about the nature of reality and the ways in which people create the knowledge. Ontology is concerned with the essence of phenomena and the nature of their existence (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In other words, the question answered under ontology is what the reality is. It can be objectivism which believes that reality is independent from human consciousness and action, or subjectivism which believes that reality is socially constructed by social actors (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

On the other hand, epistomology is concerned with the question of what is regarded as acceptable knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It answers the question "how do we know what we know?" (Deshpande, 1983). Interpretivism is chosen as a view of knowledge regarding the fact that this study examines intimate feelings such as emotional attachment. People experience emotional events differently from each other. Thus, it is distinct due to subjectivity and people having different backgrounds. Also, except from the fact that people use social media in different ways from each other, they also perceive luxury brands in different ways. While some of them see it as a symbol of power, some people see it as a snob value that is nothing but showing-off. Furthermore, it is believed that the researcher's personality, education, socioeconomic situation and perception of luxury influence the process of data collection and the analysis of data. This reflection will be provided at the end of the analysis part in order to help readers to understand the production of meanings. To understand this decision better, the two paradigms, positivism and interpretivism, will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.3.1. Positivism

Positivism is a tradition that aims to discover laws that can be used to predict human behaviour (Bryman and Bell, 2011) in order to control it and create a perfect society (Esterberg, 2002). These laws are time and context-free generalizations and can be applied to large number of phenomena, people, settings or time (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In this tradition that assumes that a single reality exists independently of what individuals perceive, the social reality is seen as discoverable and inherently knowable and positivists believe that human behaviour can be explained by a cause that precedes the behaviour (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The social reality is thus attempted to be explained by the methods of the natural sciences (Esterberg, 2002; Thorpe and Holt, 2008). For instance, it is believed that the responses given in a laboratory experiment will be similar to how subjects behave in their natural settings (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Since positivism is based upon rationality and universality (Thorpe and Holt, 2008), the data collection is generated by propositions that can be tested (Bryman and Bell, 2011) and the research of the social phenomena is value-free and objective (Deshpande, 1983; Esterberg, 2002). This tradition looks at the knowledge from an experiential perspective (Deshpande, 1983), put human senses to the foundation of knowledge, thus are saying; "We know because of our abilities to sense the phenomena" (Deshpande, 1983 pp.102). However, in order to avoid the subjective basis of experience, that truth is accepted by the method of verification (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). In other words, the findings are only reliable when they are repeatedly verified. While in positivism knowledge is created by deductive logic, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), it is arrived through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for those laws. Therefore, they concluded that positivism includes both elements of deductive and inductive approach. In conclusion, positivist approach is best for discovering relationships among variables or in another words, cause and effects (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

3.3.2. Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a tradition which is a contrasting epistemology to positivism that relies on the view that social sciences is fundamentally different than natural sciences (Bryman, 2012). For this tradition, the study of social world requires a different approach relying on the assumption that social reality is not independent from social actors but created by them (Esterberg, 2002). It is assumed that subjective meanings are developed by individuals and as a result of different individual perspectives, multiple realities exist (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). It therefore relies on the interpretation of the research subject's point of views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2009). "There is no reality apart from how individuals construct it, and so the main research task is to interpret those constructions" (Esterberg, 2002 pp.16).

The aim for interpretivism is to make sense of the meanings others have about the world (Creswell, 2009). Unlike positivism which tries to explain the social reality, interpretivist researchers focus on

understanding it (Bryman, 2012; Esterberg, 2002). Although they accept that senses are one source of knowledge, they added mind as a creator (Deshpande, 1983). The social reality is interpreted by another human being, researcher, and he is also a part of the social reality as a result of interacting with participants (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Matthews and Ross, 2010). This requires what Weber called as *verstehen;* ability to see the situation through participants' eyes (Deshpande, 1983). Yet, in the same way as how the historical and cultural settings of the participants shape their attachment of meanings in their worlds, the researcher's background also shape their interpretation (Creswell, 2009). In this sense, because researchers' findings are what they think their research subject is doing, they can never know for certain if they captured the real viewpoints of the subjects.

3.4. Research Strategy

Qualitative research method was chosen regarding the subjectivity of the research topic which involves feelings. In this part, the justification of employing qualitative method will be considered after explaining both research strategies, starting with quantitative research strategy.

3.4.1. Quantitative Research Strategy

Quantitative research is a research strategy that emphasizes quantification and that entails a deductive approach (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Its epistemological orientation relies on positivism; that is accepting the norms of natural science thus viewing social reality as an external, objective reality (Bryman, 2012). Thus, the features discussed under positivism can all be applied to quantitative research. Researchers are more concerned with saying why things are the way they are rather than merely describe it (Bryman and Bell, 2011). For this reason, objective methods that are closed to the researcher's interpretation such as surveys, structured interviews and experiments are being used (Creswell, 2009). They are mostly statistical, controlled by the researcher or concerned with the researcher's point of view (Bryman, 2012). By adopting a scientific method, quantitative researchers focus on testing and verifying theories (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Along with testing, they generalize the findings and make claims about the population being studied (Creswell, 2009). As

a result of that, what is crucial in quantitative research is whether or not the measures are reliable and valid and the findings are replicable (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). However, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), quantitative research is ignoring the meanings of events to individuals who interpret the world around them. A researcher doing quantitative research can never be sure if the participants' answers relate to their everyday lives.

3.4.2. Qualitative Research Strategy

Qualitative research rejects the similarity between social and natural sciences relying on the fact that atoms or molecules cannot create meanings about their environment whereas people do (Bryman, 2012) and accepts the interpretivist worldview which views human behaviour as a product of how people interpret their world (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Deshpande, 1983). Thus, rather than using laboratory experiments or using surveys, qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the natural setting of the issue which is being studied (Creswell, 2009). The focus in qualitative research is kept on understanding the meaning that the participants, not the researcher, hold about the issue (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2009). Therefore, close involvement and face-to-face interaction is desired such as in-depth interviews or observations (Bryman, 2012). Documents and audio or visual materials are used and open to researcher's interpretation (Creswell, 2009). Also, the emphasis is also on words rather than numbers in collection and analysis of data (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

According to Bryman (2012), the most obvious differences between qualitative research and quantitative research are being; inductive rather than deductive, interpretivist epistemological position rather than positivist and constructionist ontological position rather than objectivist. Deshpande (1983) also strictly discriminated the two strategies by mentioning that while quantitative methods have been developed for the task of verifying or confirming and should be used when testing theories, qualitative methods were developed for the task of discovering and should be used when generating theories. However, this is a very oversimplified assumption and

researchers such as Silverman (1993) mentioned that qualitative data can also be used for testing theories (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.4.3. Choice of Research Strategy

There are several reasons why qualitative research strategy is chosen in this study. First of all, it is more suited to the questions being raised such as "can" and "how" as mentioned by Silverman (2020). Secondly, trying to describe deep and intimate feelings such as emotional attachments in some quantitative measure could limit the findings that the study wanted to achieve. It seemed important to find out participants' concepts with some detail. Being an interpretivist also required choosing a qualitative method because of the fact that there is no place for subjectivism in quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). Besides, this study examines whether social media does build an emotional bond with the consumers that desires rich and deep data from participants about their feelings. Rather than beginning with the assumption that it does and then testing it, this study is looking for an answer through investigating participants' language.

3.5. Data Collection

3.5.1. Sample

The aim was to find individuals where the process of attachment which is being studied is most likely to occur (Silverman, 2010). Twenty generation Y men and women consumers who follow brands through social network sites were recruited for the study in Nottingham. Purposive sampling was used in order to obtain the greatest information being looked for to answer the research questions (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Esterberg, 2002). The research questions could not be answered with participants who were not followers. Generation Y was chosen given that 80% of them log in to social media daily (Macleod, 2013), spend time online more than any other age group (Nielsen, 2012) and also according to a survey by American Express Business Insights, have the highest spending growth on luxury goods (emarketer, 2012). Followers from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were chosen as according to the Drapers poll of 2,000 consumers, these three social

network sites were found to be an important way to engage with luxury brands, with 73% using

Facebook, 28.5% on Twitter and 9.2% on Instagram (Hammerson, 2013). Thus, the participants were

chosen based on two criteria: (1) participants had to be between the ages of eighteen and thirty

four; and (2) participants had to be followers of a luxury fashion brand in at least one of the social

network sites selected. One constraint was the fact that people had different perceptions about

luxury. Also, the participants were more likely women rather than men. Finding men who are into

fashion along with following a fashion brand was problematic. In conclusion, 8 women and 4 men

were employed in the study.

3.5.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews in general, as viewed by Esterberg (2002), is a form of relationship between two

individuals who come together and try to create a meaning about a specific topic by the production

of talk. They are one of the main data collection methods used in qualitative research as "The

expressive power of language provides the most important resource for accounts" (Hammersley and

Atkinson, 1995 pp.126). It is a conversation with a purpose, where one-the interviewer- tries to

obtain knowledge about the others-the participant- world (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). There are several

types of interviews, including structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Esterberg, 2002; Thorpe

and Holt, 2008) and can be done face-to-face or through telephone and e-mail. However, only semi-

structured or unstructured interviews are employed by qualitative research (Bryman, 2012).

Otherwise, the interview will only reflects the researcher's concerns. For this reason, face-to-face

semi-structured interviews was chosen in this study to collect detailed and in-depth data from

participants about their feelings.

Semi-structured interviews, or in-depth interviews, are used to explore a topic in detail and focus on

the aim of allowing the interviewees to express their opinions, ideas or feelings in their own words

(Esterberg, 2002). People's experiences, behaviour and understandings are the main interest while

the focus is on both the content of the conversation and the words the participants use while

expressing themselves during these interviews (Matthew and Ross, 2010). The researcher usually has a list of questions as an interview guide, yet, in order to understand the point of view of the participant about the research topic, some degree of control over the interview is given to the participants by open-ended questions (Thorpe and Holt, 2008). Regarding this, it is hardly surprising that participants' responses shape the interview and the structure vary across participants (Esterberg, 2002). For instance, questions that are not included in the guide may be asked in several interviews in one research (Bryman, 2012). In other words, the interviewer is the "research tool" because of the fact that she can develop new questions within the interview itself (Matthew and Ross, 2010).

A researcher cannot observe everything such as feelings, intentions and how people attach meanings to things around their world (Patton, 2002). Asking participants about them is the only feasible way of finding out about them in a qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Thus, since this study is trying to dive into customers' feelings towards luxury brands, in-depth interviews were seemed appropriate in order to understand the topic from their perspectives rather than our own (Esterberg, 2002). The question "Tell me about how you use social media?" and "How important are your accounts for you?" were asked to understand consumers' interest in and use of social media sites. Later, it was linked with consumers' behaviour of following a luxury brand. In order to find out the event and the whether if consumers were attached to the brand before social media, consumers were asked their history with the brand and how they started following it. Also, as this study also focused on negative feelings, the situations that could make consumers stop following was asked. Finally, hoping to get signals from the feeling love, the question "What do you think had changed after you start following?" was asked.

Twelve interviews were conducted in Nottingham. Participants were encouraged to talk about their feelings and experiences through open-ended questions, and the ordering of further questions was

determined by their responses. Participants were also asked to bring three posts that they found interesting. These images provided a meaningful context for the discussion (Bryman, 2012).

3.5.3. Documents

Documents are described as "written records about people and things that are generated through the process of living" (Matthew and Ross, 2010 pp.277). Unlike interviews, the data is not produced by the researcher or the participant but it is out there waiting to be discovered and analysed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Along with the content of the document, the focus is also on why and how it has been produced in a particular form and context. Documents can contain various forms of data such as diaries, letters, newspapers, corporate records and magazines followed by videos, audiotapes, websites or photographs (Esterberg, 2002). They enable the researcher to obtain the meaning of the language and words in a text (Creswell, 2009). This, as mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2011) requires considerable interpretive skills. As cited in Bryman and Bell (2011), Atkinson and Coffey (2004) pointed that documents need to be analysed with keeping the fact in mind that they are produced with distinctive purposes and thus form a separate reality. In this study the focus was on media accounts which consist mainly of photographs or electronic texts as the research questions were about social media. As suggested by Esterberg (2002), media accounts may be useful to understand how people- or in this case, luxury fashion brands- are represented in public discourse with an easy access.

Documents used in this researched are consisted of the posts that participants were asked to bring. This is consistent with Bryman and Bell's (2011) suggestion that visual data plays an important role in constituting an organization's ideal image and identity. All posts from the participants were analysed in order to answer the question "how" if luxury fashion brands were building an emotional bond with the customers.

3.6. Data Analysis

A simple content analysis which is looking for themes is conducted in this research. Thorpe and Holt (2008) described content analysis as referring to the analysis of the contents of any written or non-written document that are quantified objectively. However, in a qualitative research, the researcher focuses more on the underlying meanings of texts and conducts an interpretive analysis by also focusing on the way in which things are expressed (Esterberg, 2002). The documents that have been subject to content analysis have a wide range including advertisements, reports, letters, e-mails, newspapers, websites or photographs. In this research, the documents included interview transcripts that were transcribed by the researcher after all were conducted among with posts and objects that participants brought. The aim was searching for themes by looking for the presence of words to understand their meanings and relationships to each other (Matthew and Ross, 2010). In other words, as Spiggle (1994) suggests the meanings of consumers' experiences for them and how those meanings cohere and form patterns were tried to grasped in order to identify and frame themes.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter started with explaining the research aim and questions which focused on the role of social network sites in the creation of an emotional bond between consumers and luxury fashion brands. It continued with describing the choice of methodology employed in the research. This section then discussed the epistemological assumptions and justified the choice of qualitative research. After that, sampling, the choice of semi-structured interviews and documents were provided. The data analysis procedure was finally explained.

The following chapter will present the findings obtained from semi-structured interviews and documents analysed.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the posts that luxury fashion followers brought as asked. The data was analysed to find out if there is a creation of an emotional bond through social media. The interviews were consisted of two parts: social network site usage and the chosen luxury fashion brand. Thus, this chapter starts with analysing social media usage in general. Following the brand on social network sites in general is explained in the next part. After explaining the situations that could make the consumers stop following the brand, reasons to follow the brand is shown followed by the effects of following the brand.

The last part of the interviews was the participants explaining why they brought the specific three posts they were asked. Thus, the next part those posts are analysed. Finally, how following the brand represents the participants selves were discussed. The chapter finished with the discussion of the exclusivity of luxury fashion brands while being on social media which is open and free to everyone. Themes are found for every parts, which will be provided and described under them.

4.2 Using Social Media

As it is discussed in the literature review chapter, social media is a platform where people can gain a whole range of information. Moreover, social network sites which is one kind of social media give the opportunity to people to express their interests and preferences with others. In this research, the first part of the interviews was about how they were using their social network accounts. All the participants reported using Facebook and Instagram on a daily basis. The participants were all checking Facebook and Instagram throughout the day and spending an average of one hour per day. Besides, it was observed that Facebook and Instagram were both being used since they started being popular. The average for Facebook was 7 years while for Instagram it was 3 years. Eight out of

twelve people mentioned twitter as well, however, some of them mentioned that they weren't even using it and only had an account because of the fact that it was popular.

4.2.1 Interacting and Keeping Up to Date with People

It was found out that one reason for all participants using social network sites was to interact and keep up to date with people, which included family or friends living abroad, acquaintances who they don't interact in daily live or know what people are doing from past and present life. In other words, participants were using social media to maintain their relationships with their family or friends. One participant mentioned that he was using Facebook mostly for Messenger that enables him to send messages to his friends. Also, following news or trends was also mentioned. This means that social media was also seen as a platform to learn the news in order to adjust themselves to the world. These two themes can be seen from the following examples:

"If there is a new technology brief or something else, I learn it from there." (CN, 23, Male)

"I don't know what I would do without Facebook now because for example, you get so much information from Facebook, about everything. Like that's how I find about the latest news or what is my family or friends are up to." (MI, 23, Female)

"It is pretty important. My Facebook is very important because I have lived in several places and I have a lot of friends outside of Turkey and the States, so I have to be in touch with them and I use Facebook for it." (MK, 24, Female)

4.2.2 Storing up Memories

Another theme which is to store up memories was mentioned by seven participants. Three of these participants even mentioned that they use their accounts as a diary and sometimes check their old posts to see how they have evolved as a person. One mentioned *"For example, when I see my old post I just feel the same as I felt when I posted it"* (EI, 20, Female). This quotation shows that the participant was posting posts consistent with her feelings. Moreover, this means that her posts were

carrying meanings that were important in her life as she later mentioned that she could see and remember the critical moments in her life. It was observed that one reason participants care about their accounts was the fact that they have all their connections, photos and interests saved in those accounts. One participant replied *"It is impossible for you to hold too much information in your limited working memory so umm, after certain amount of time it would be very difficult for someone to remember, sadly, for example all of their friends."* This quote underpinned the importance of social network accounts as storage of memory.

4.2.3 Representing Self

The last theme found in the part of social media usage was to represent self. Half of the participants mentioned that social media was a platform where they represent their selves by their posts. This is consistent with the literature review mentioning social network sites as a platform to personalize their accounts. Participants were seeing their social network accounts as their personality on a digital world. One even mentioned that his Facebook account was only representing his "*best parts"* *(*CN, 23, Male). In a case of one interview, the participant told that she loved writing in general, "*I write a lot so when I want to express myself- I use Facebook to say something."* (DM, 23, Female). Another participant even mentioned that he wasn't posting about himself because he didn't want people to judge his posts and himself differently than how he intended to represent by sharing that post. He mentioned, "*If I post something up and it means something to me, then someone else can look at it and can judge it the wrong way. So I just rather not post"* (CN, 23, Male). The quote implies that he was thinking that by the posts he shares, he gives permission to other to interpret his personality. Thus, the research illustrates that people were sharing contents which were relevant to their mood or opinions. The following quotation can illustrate:

"If I post a song it means something for me but no one else would know what it means so they cannot understand the symbolization. I post things that represents how I feel at that moment." (VL, 25, Female)

4.3 Reasons for Following a Luxury Brand

Vivienne Westwood, Tory Burch, Michael Kors, Chloe, Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren and Burberry for clothing; Tiffany and Cartier for jewellery; and Coco de Mer for lingerie brands were mentioned. Not surprisingly, all of the participants were following the brand on Facebook. Half of the participants were also using Instagram. This was consistent with the findings that Facebook and Instagram were the most popular social network sites among the participants. Twitter was only mentioned by one who even was not checking the site when he had a notification. The initial responses about the chosen brands varied from each other. While most of the participants told that they like the brand's style, five of the participants immediately mentioned that they love the brand. In these participants' cases, an emotional bond was observed as they were linking the brands' values to their ideal life style and personality throughout the interview. As the followings exemplify:

"Just because I am deeply in love with that brand… I don't know why I have this feeling that Tiffany=ring for weddings…. I find weddings important, it is a huge part of me." (IZ, 25, Female)

"I really really, really love the brand… I think Vivienne is not about fitting it, it is about standing out… If loads of people started wearing it, I wouldn't like it… I don't like following the crowd, I do the opposite." (CN, 23, Male)

However, it was found out that these participants were all loving the brand before following on social media. Moreover, that was the reason for most of them to follow the brand. The desire to be kept up to date was the theme found under this part.

4.3.1   To Keep Up to Date With My Brand

The drivers of the theme being updated by the brand were finding the style of the brand similar to self's, wanting styling ideas, being interested in the product range, wanting to be aware of current trends, purchasing and working in a fashion related job. The desire of being kept up to date by the brand is mentioned by all of the participants except from one. The only participant who hadn't

mentioned was not a buyer and saw the concept of luxury consumption as arrogant and fake. She mentioned the following:

"To be honest I don't like to be associated with any kind of luxury brands because I feel like it is too, especially with a brand like Louis Vuitton, arrogant in a sense and it feels fake…. I feel like it is a show-off and also I have so many friends carrying those bags while people are starving out there." (VL, 25, Female)

As mentioned above, it was found out that participants all knew and liked the chosen brand before starting to follow on social network sites. Some of them always wanted something from the brand, started after purchasing or saw a product that they liked. All participants were following the brand that they found its style similar to their own. One participant mentioned: "*I really like their style because it goes with me." (*LL, 23, Male). Thus, his aim was getting style ideas from the brand by following it on social network sites. This was found as the main reason for wanting to be updated.

Four out of twelve participants were following the brand because they were working in fashion related jobs or doing a research about the brand, hence had to keep in touch with the brand. It was also mentioned by three participants that they were interested in a general product range and the brand was based on that product range. Most of the participants told that it was the place to check before making a purchasing decision and to be informed about the latest collections and trends. As the followings exemplify:

"So I could keep up to date with the new stuff coming out. So that I knew when I want to buy something, I knew that is the place where I want to be keep updated." (DM, 23, Female)

"I also wanted to see what they are designing, whether if they are changing their designs or not. Because as I said I find their style so similar to mine…. I am never going to give up on shopping. So it keeps me updated." (MK, 24, Female)

"I start following it because maybe there would be some kind of ways, like let's say I couldn't directly get Ralph Lauren, you can still get some good ideas and replicate them. Kind of copy and buy it from another brand." (LL, 23, Male)

4.3.2   Curiosity for Different and Interesting Content

Most of the positive views towards the brands' social media accounts was emerging through the "different and interesting content" of the posts. These contents' mutual features that was mentioned by six participants were "not being just about product range" and "not being on the face." It was found out that even the four participants who were following the brand because of their research or fashion related job kept following the brand because of the different and interesting content of the posts. Also, the participant who saw the luxury consumption meaningless told that after seeing their posts, she found out that Louis Vuitton was creating more than fashion such as charity events and she formed a respect to the company. She replied:

*"I felt curious when I saw some of their posts because I wanted to find out what more they are doing." (*VL, 25, Female)

An evidence for this theme was the posts that the participants brought to the interviews. It was observed that all posts consumers brought were consistent with the values they thought the brand was representing. The pictures that represent the symbolic values were chosen, being mostly about content that was not about products. Additionally, the participants who brought product pictures liked the posts because of the fact that they were carrying the message of the values. The examples can be found in the following quotes:

"I really like this because of the chain across the jacket; that is the thing I want on my suits." (CN, 23, Male)

"I think this post really shows what Cartier is, like royal. Cartier is meant to be royal, an iconic brand that represents royalty and all that kind of things." (MI, 23, Female)

"The bag doesn't look cheap, it looks classy and expensive that can be worn for night outs." (SG, 23, Female)

4.4 Following the Luxury Brand

4.4.1 If They Appear on My News Feed

It was observed that all of the participants were just checking their brand's posts if they appear on their news feed. Only two of the participants were making an effort and specifically checking the brand's account. While they had no common reason, one of them told that Ralph Lauren was making him feel included although he was a skinny guy and checking the page to get new ideas about his style. The other participant was making an effort for following the brand as she saw the brand's owner as a role model and wanted to see everything she does next. She mentioned, "*I will spend some time going through them (posts) because they are just pretty and I feel like she is so empowering*" (DM, 23, Female). Except from these two participants, there was no deep relationship found between the consumers and the brand through social network sites.

Most of the participants were thinking that posting luxury products on their personal accounts could be seen as a show-off by others. They told that they wouldn't mind if they were posting a picture of themselves wearing the brand, yet they added that they wouldn't mention the brand name on the post. The research also couldn't find any correlation between an attachment towards the brand and liking or commenting on its post. The participants were liking the posts if they find the content interesting. This could be either product in the picture, the style or an article.

However, the most outstanding response for the best thing about following the brand was being able to see the collections, the sale times or to get new style ideas. This was mentioned by four of the participants. Others all mentioned things that represents the values which was also represented by the brand according to the participants. For example, one participant who liked Vivienne Westwood because of them being out of ordinary replied, "*Just the different stuff, some of them are*

*crazy, Vivienne is a crazy, crazy woman" (*CN, 23, Male). Or another participant who was interested in jewellery and think Cartier was an elegant brand replied, *"When they do put up a photo, for example they put a picture, it was like a statement necklace, I thought it was like from the royal collection. Seeing posts like that, when I see those I am like "ok, now, this is kind of stuff that I want to see" because that is the kind of stuff that I am interested in"* (MI, 23, Female).

4.5 Effects of Following the Brand

In order to find out the role of social media in the creation of a positive emotional bond between the brand and the consumer, the focus was on the words that would explain feelings that give a sign of a bond such as love. However, the themes found in this research were; more knowledge and different and interesting content.

4.5.1   Got to Know the Brand, Collections and Trends

Awareness, in previous studies, is seen as one of the outcomes of using social media as a marketing tool (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). This study reveals this situation as well. The first thing almost every participant mentioned was that they got familiar with the brands' style and collections. This was not surprising regarding that wanting to keep up to date with the brands' collections was the only theme found in the "reasons for following the brand" part. The following transcription summaries this theme:

"I felt like I gained information more about who is wearing it, different styles, sort of what the brand stands for now, their culture and their style as well. Because before I just thought it was much more limited than it is." (MW, 24, Male)

One negative feeling was mentioned under this theme by a participant. The participant, who mentioned that he loved the brand, told that after he saw the collections for Chinese market, it ruined the brand's image and quality in his mind. However, he also added, "*it definitely changed how much I love the brand; it didn't change the fact that I do love the brand."* (CN, 23, Male). Thus, the

researcher interpreted that social media only changed the level of the feeling love instead of creating or removing it. In regards to the topic of gaining knowledge about the whole collections, he mentioned the following:

"*..You know if you go to a store you only see a few nice things but on Facebook you pretty much see everything. It is like a catalogue. So you get to see unnecessary things too.*" (CN, 23, Male)

The concept of love towards the brand which indicates a positive emotional bond was mentioned under this theme three times. One participant was following the brand Tiffany as she was in love with the brand because she linked the brand with wedding rings and wanted to get married one day. She told that after she found out that Tiffany had more range of jewellery rather than only wedding rings, she started loving the brand more. However, it shows that love was not created by social media. Once again, social media only increased its level by informing the participant that she could buy from the brand without the necessity of marriage. Similarly, the second participant told that she studied fashion design and was using the brand for inspiration. For the question "why do you keep following", she answered "*because I love the brand.*" (CV, 26, Female). She told that she was amazed with the designs that she saw in the shop and decided following which showed that after seeing other designs through social media, the feeling of love was enhanced.

In opposite, for the third participant, love was created through social media after she saw the whole product range and "*learnt love their shoes more than any other products they have*" (DM, 23, Female). More importantly, she told that she made a little research about the brand's owner and that was when she fell in love with the brand and its owner- when she related the owner's life story to her life story. As she mentioned:

"*Running this empire by herself, having a show in New York Fashion Week, doing it all by herself… I relate to that because my friends have always wanted me to do it and I am actually really interested in it. She is someone I would want to be like one day.*" (DM, 23, Female)

As the transcription above underpins, the feeling of love appeared after the participant linked the story of the brand to her self-concept. She later mentioned that she saw the social network account as a lifestyle account rather than a promotion account and added that she was following the brand for inspiration and motivation for her life.

4.5.2 My Brand Cares About Me

Four out of six participants mentioned that the fact that their chosen luxury fashion brands were posting not only about products but other things such as fashion news, artistic images or even posts about models similar to their demographics made them feel closer the brand. As it can be summarized by these following quotes:

"It makes me feel like they care about me, because if they pay attention to their social media pages I feel like they care about their customers, not just their products." (SG, 23, Female)

"But when you go to their instagram account it is more like a friend of you posting what she is wearing, they care more about connecting with you on instagram" (MK, 24, Female).

One participant brought a post of Tory Burch adding the final touch to a product herself and told that the post gave her the feeling that Tory Burch cares about her products, her instagram account and her customers all together. She mentioned, "*It makes it more personal. People will immediately think: she cares. At the end of the day luxury brands take so much money from you and you want to know that they at least care" (*DM,23, Female). Same participant explained her feelings about her third post as, "*Even though it relates to every single girl, it makes me feel special because I can relate to it. It is so personal" (*DM, 23, Female).

The only negative feeling emerging through the posts that emphasized care was mentioned by a participant who thought Cartier wasn't using social media good enough and *"posting meaningless pictures"* that were not about the products. She told that seeing products was her aim to follow

them and even when they were posting products, they weren't posting their best products and use backgrounds which were not as classy as the brand itself. She mentioned:

"So for example there is one which says "discover Cartier's world" and there is a link to watch how they do their watches. I don't really want to know how they make it, to be honest. I am interested in the product, I am not interested in the process. Show me the product." (MI, 23, Female)

Surprisingly, the participant who owns the quote above and who was disappointed with the brand after seeing those posts also mentioned, *" If I ignore Facebook, let's pretend like it's not there, and I still feel the same way."* (MI, 23, Female). This answer enhanced the interpretation that social media has no role in creating or damaging the feelings which were raised for a luxury brand.

4.6 Situations That Could Stop Consumers Following the Brand

Unlike previous researches about the concept of emotional attachment with a brand, this research was also interested in the negative feelings towards the brand that could be awakened by its social network accounts. While only one participant couldn't find any situations that could make her stop following her chosen brand, other answers were showing variety. For instance, five participants mentioned that **if the brand started losing its values** that the participant wanted to be associated with, they would stop following the brand. *"Yes, if it started following the trends or lost how eccentric it is. I adore that because it is kind of historical and it is really kind of image that I like to have on me"* (CN, 23, Male).

Another answer was **starting to post too much**. This involved seeing the brand too much and getting irritated by it:

"If my news feed started being only Cartier, and posts that I am not interested in..." (MI, 23, Female).

"Do it politely, do it in an elegant way, keep it classy and keep people interested in you." (DM, 23, Female)

The last theme under this part was **posting irrelevant content** that was not about the brand nor fashion in general. This theme can be best shown by these two quotes:

"*I would feel like 'you are a fashion brand, what are you talking about?' I am following them because I like their clothes and I would like them to stay on that line- just fashion.*" (MK, 24, Female)

"*They sometimes share so many irrelevant posts, just food pictures! I mean, cookie picture, yes soft colours but I don't have to see them on my home page. I am not following you to see cookie pictures. After a while if it becomes so much, you may miss the important posts and decide to unfollow them.*" (SG, 23, Female)

4.7 My Luxury Brand Represents my Personality

As it is suggested by Thomson and Haytko (1997), consumers use fashion to express certain ideals and images that are salient to their identity. An independent theme that emerged from the interviews verified this assumptipon. All participants were thinking when they wear the brand it would represent the values that are the reasons they follow, wear or like the brand. They were all following a brand which has the values that they would like to be associated with. All participants answered with values such as simplicity, being different or elegance that were relevant to how they want to express their selves as a person. For example, one reason for a participant to follow the brand is because the celebrities related to self are wearing that brand. An example for this is the following quote:

"*It is a strong brand. It feels like even the whole floral print resonates my personality.*" (DM, 23, Female)

The transcriptions above show that some participants were using the accounts of their chosen brand because they wanted to be able to carry those values by wearing the brand's products. One interviewee mentioned that "*Chloe is classy feminine- but not classy as Dolce-Gabbana- and since I am not that classy, I like to see what I want to be*" (MK, 24, Female). Another participant was

thinking that Cartier was classy and sophisticated and she added that she thought like that about her personality.

Only one participant mentioned the aim of expressing self as a person by following the brand through social network sites. However, unlike most participants, he was seeing his social network accounts as a digital world that people represent their selves. Or as opposite, when she was asked how she was feeling about following the brand now, she replied immediately that she didn't want to be associated with a luxury brand. That showed that for her following a brand through a social network site meant expressing herself to others.

The brand not screaming its name on its products was mentioned by four out of twelve participants. They all mentioned that they don't post or wear products that scream the brand name because they found it as showing-off.

4.8 I am Exclusive Because I am Buying

Unlike the assumption that being on a platform that is open to everyone would not fit luxury brands' identity (Okonkwo, 2009), this research indicated that consumers were still feeling exclusive when they thought about the brand. None of the participants agreed the assumption that being on social media was making them or the brand less exclusive. Moreover, one participant mentioned that following the brand on a social network site helped her *"to receive emails and be in the loop"* (CV, 26, Female). Another participant told that following the brand on a social network site already meant that the consumer was exclusive as the style of the brand was so different than every other brands. Other examples for this perception can be found in the following transcriptions:

"That is the whole point of a luxury brand. When a luxury brand does it people feel it is just for them, that is my perception. I know in the back of my mind it is meant for everybody, it still makes me feel special." (DM, 23, Female)

*"I would say it makes the clothes less exclusive but not the brand really. It is quite normal that brands are on social media." (*MW, 24, Male)

One of the participants mentioned that the exclusivity was in the store when you go for purchasing it because that was the place not everyone could go. She was thinking that everyone should have the opportunity to follow a brand, get some ideas. She added that social media was good for luxury brands as they could reach potential consumers such as students who were aiming to buy products when they start earning themselves like herself. A signal for an emotional attachment was found in this case as she was the one whose views had changed for worse but still she was willing to buy herself a product from Cartier with her money one day. This was interpreted as a strong emotional bond which social media could not ruined.

There was no signal of following the luxury fashion brand through a social network site to belong to a higher status. Participants were feeling exclusive only when they wear the luxury products, not because they were following the brand. Only one participant mentioned belonging to a certain status by following the brand. Yet, she mentioned, "*As long as you are not purchasing it, it does not put you in a higher status to be fair. But as I am also purchasing this brand, and following them, it makes me feel like oh yes, I am following them I am buying from them, so that matches.*" (SG, 23, Female). This quotation underpinned that merely following was not enough for people to belong in a higher status. In fact, it was revealed that purchasing from the brand had a role as providing exclusivity which being on social media could not decrease. Five out of twelve participants mentioned that they weren't feeling less exclusive just because of the fact that they were actually purchasing from the brand. As the followings exemplified:

"I think that I like Ralph Lauren because I know that I can afford it. Because if I couldn't afford it I would be discouraged to follow them. So it does not make me feel less exclusive." (LL, 23, Male)

*"In my head I know that I am exclusive because I know most of the people following Chloe do not really buy anything from them." (*MK, 24, Female)

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided the findings observed from the interviews that had aimed to find out if luxury fashion brands could create an emotional bond through social network sites. The general social media usage was also presented through these interviews. Why participants started following the brand, what had changed after, the relation to their selves, the brands' exclusivity were explained. In addition, negative feelings that could occur by social network usage by the brands were aimed to be found out.

The next chapter will discuss the link between social media usage by luxury fashion brands and the attachment between the brands and the consumers.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the main findings observed from semi-structured interviews among with the documents that were brought by the participants. The findings were consistent with the existing attachment literature. However, no link was found between the creation of an emotional bond and social media usage of luxury fashion brands. The themes found regarding the outcomes of luxury fashion brands' social network accounts were more knowledge and curiosity for more different and interesting content.

This chapter discusses whether if luxury fashion brands can create an emotional bond through social network sites. Firstly, the attachment between consumers and luxury fashion brands will be discussed. Then, the role of social network sites in the creation of the attachment will be elaborated. Finally, the effects of the consumers' social media usage will be discussed.

5.2 The Role of Social Media in Attachment

The study suggests that, rather than creating it, social media's role is to mediate to maintain the existing attachment between consumers and luxury brands. It is observed in this study that luxury consumers are already attached to the brands before they even start following them through social media. Even though they haven't mentioned the word "love" in their interviews, all participants showed evidences of different levels of brand love. This may be because unlike hundred year old luxury brands which have already reached global reputation (Nueno and Quelch, 1998), social network sites such as Facebook and Instagram have been in consumers' life for only couple of years. There was an absence of the signals of bond creation since most of the participants were buyers before social media and the way they expressed their feelings about the purchasing event revealed signs of a high level of attachment. The best examples for this are the followings:

"I was waiting to grow up to buy from them because they do not make teenage things, it is more a woman brand. I was 19, so I started going to their store. I found only that bracelet affordable so I bought it and loved it." (MK, 24, Female)

"We do not have their store in Ankara so I went to their store in Istanbul couple of times to buy the bag but they never had it. One day I was lucky and they had it so I bought it, and I still can remember how happy I was!" (EI, 20, Female)

"I just remember going back to London, picking it up. It was like a baby, it was really special to me." (CN, 23, Male)

Further, the role of these social network sites in an attachment is maintaining, enhancing or reducing the level of it. While there are no evidences from the situations that can reduce the level of an attachment, there are evidences from the other two situations. The reasons why consumers are following the luxury brands are consistent with their social media usage in general. As they were using social media to maintain the relationships with their family, friends or with the world news in general, they were following the brand to maintain their relationship with the luxury brand. Also, consumers tend to follow the brands that carry the values that they would like to see on themselves, in order to get ideas about how to do it. Therefore, they all had a desire to keep in touch with the brand constantly, which is one of the core values of brand love (Batra et al., 2012). Their reason to follow the brand was maintaining the relationship, thus remaining included in that luxury word.

"You always want to know what Tory Burch is doing next." (DM, 23, Female)

"…even if I am not going to buy, I want to be kept up to date. I will definitely keep following because as I am evolving with the brand. I want to see where it is going." (CV, 27, Female)

The situations for enhancing the level of an attachment includes getting to know the brand, feeling that they care and increased level of relating the brand to the self as is it suggested by Aron et al. (2005) and Park et al. (2010). An example that can be given to this situation is the case of an

interview where the participant relates Tory Burch's success story to her life. She made a statement that *"When I did a little research about her, I found out that she is this entrepreneur. That's when it made more sense for me to follow her, that's when I fell in love with her- when I could relate to her... She is someone I would want to be like one day"* (DM, 23, Female). Consumers' level of attachment with a luxury brand was increasing also when they realize that they can carry those values in their daily lives. As illustrated by the following quote:

"...the models that they post are at my age and they have the style that I want to have. When you see that on a person that you feel close to, it definitely makes you feel closer with the brand." (MK, 24, Female)

However, one thing that social media cannot do is breaking the emotional bond between consumer and the brand. Even if they have bad experiences with a luxury brand regarding the information coming through social media, consumers tend to feel the same towards the brand. The participants who mentioned that they were disappointed after seeing posts from the brands that are not consistent with its values were agreeing on the idea that *"All the products still sit under the umbrella of all those values" (*CN, 20, Male)*. This may be because attachment is more relevant to the realm of emotions rather than the realm of cognition (Thomson et al., 2005). As people avoid to see the bad sides of a loved person in an interpersonal relationship, they also avoid these bad experiences they have with the brands' social network accounts and pretend that it is not important- or even convince themselves that it is normal. *"Maybe it was like a reality check; it is still business, not just fashion"* (CN, 23, Male). Therefore, as opposed to Batra et al. (2012), this study suggests that brand love has the same antecedents as interpersonal love.

5.3 Ways to Maintain Attachment

The study shows that maintaining an attachment with a luxury brand is mostly about emphasizing the values that the brand represents with the posts, especially with the ones that are not related to products or the brand. The relationship participants had with the brands varied, however, most of

them mentioned that the best part of following the brand was seeing different and interesting content from the posts. Consumers like to see posts which send messages which they can relate themselves to. Since they are already following the brand that they are attached to, they are expecting to see posts which are consistent with values that they want to carry. For example, a participant who put love in the centre of her life told about Tiffany that "*They are not only concentrated on their products. They post some stories about love, how love inspired things or other jewelleries*" (IZ, 25, Female). This is the reason that all participants had different reasons for choosing their specific posts; they all had different personalities and wanted to carry different values. Meanwhile, posting new collections also have a role to maintain the existing attachment as the study verifies that purchasing and information acquisition are outcomes of social media activities for luxury brands as Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggests. Consumers are also using brands' social media accounts as a catalogue when they want to buy something.

5.3 Luxury Brands, Social Media and the Self

This study suggests that following a luxury brand is another way for consumers to express their taste of fashion, economic power and other symbolic values which can also be represented by owning luxury brands (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). In other words, it is assumed in this study that social media usage and the attachment to a luxury brand. With fashion, people can represent their ideal images with the values that can be shown without saying such as being different, elegant, classy or young (Thomson and Haytko, 1997). On the other hand, there are social network profiles and activities as another option to express one's preferences, interests and identity in a digital world. However, there is no evidence that consumers' interest in social media effects the level of an attachment. While some attached participants who did not care about their accounts, some of them just saw the sites as the reflection of their identity and diary.

As people tend to care about what they wear to send the right messages, they also care about the image they are reflecting on social networking sites. Therefore, their activities are expressing only

certain parts of their identity which are the parts that they want others to see. This can be seen from a participant's statement: *"It represents the best parts of me"* (CN, 23, Male). While representing self is not found as one of the reasons, unconsciously it may also be effecting consumers' decisions to follow a luxury brand as the participants never tend to specifically check the brands' accounts. Consumers were following a luxury brand in order to keep up to date, however, not making any effort for it. It is possible that they are thinking that since they are all checking their social network accounts throughout the day, they assume that they will see if there is a new post from the brand. Still, most of the participants were thinking that following the brand represents the same values as wearing it. This indicates some probabilities for expressing those values also through following the brand through social network sites.

"I wouldn't follow this brand in public if its owner was someone like Kim Kardashian. I have to respect the designer as well as the brand because at the end of the day, their style is also my style." (EI, 20, Female)

"I think less about how people see it but more about how I want to express myself. It is more an internal thing rather than an external thing." (CN, 23, Male)

"It says that I am buying from this brand and this make me feel powerful because I feel like belong to a higher status." (SG, 23, Female)

The study also assumes that ideal-self congruence has an impact on emotional attachment as Malar et al. (2011) suggests. However, there was a lack of evidence from the assumption that the actual self-congruence plays a bigger role than ideal. In fact, sentences similar to "*I would love to wear things like this when I am out" (*MK, 24, Female) were mentioned more than the statements that indicate that the style was the participants' current style. As the followings also exemplify:

"*I hope one day I will be engaged with a Tiffany ring."* (IZ, 25, Female)

*"I like to see the models they are posting, they are too skinny like me and I want to be a model one day." (*LL, 23, Male)

Consumers may mention that a luxury brand's style and values represents their identity, however, unless a consumer can afford the brand continuously, with today's various range of affordable brands', one does not need a luxury brand to represent certain values. The potential reason behind this is the urge to own something that is not accessible for just anybody and feel better about them. As in the case of using a luxury product, consumers tend to put themselves to a higher status than other followers who are not buyers just because they are also purchasing from the brand. Even though most of the participants were not constant buyers, having the experience of buying and using a luxury product to represent a value were making them feel exclusive. Therefore, they were not concern with the fact that everybody could follow the brand. Their main concern was being in the circle of the exclusive people who can wear it. One participant mentioned that *"The brand nearly crashed before, their clothes went into the lower class. If that happened again, I do not think I would follow or wear it anymore."* (MW, 24, Male). The desire to exclusivity thus plays the biggest role in the attachment to luxury fashion brands. Not being concern with the exclusivity because of other followers who are not buyers may be because of the fact that social media has taken its place in consumers' life with the emergence of mobile social network applications (Nielsen, 2012). "*It is a quite normal thing to do to be and follow on social media"* (DC, 29, Male). It is sensible to think that luxury brands also have the right to use this popular tool. In fact, if a brand does not have a social network account, it should be considered as not following the trends with its global use.

5.4 Brand Love

The study verifies that brand love is not unconditional (Batra et al., 2012; Shaver et al., 1987) as consumers were only concern with the brands' contribution to represent their ideal image to public and not concerned about their contribution to the brand. Only contribution consumers make to

luxury brands was posting the product if it represents an important occasion or tagging the people who they think will like the product in a comment to the brand's post. This attitude is consistent with consumers' general social media usage as their posts are mostly the things that they would like people to see rather than posting about themselves. The following quotations exemplify both findings:

"I post if I find something important, interesting or hilarious that I want other people to see." (DC, 29, Male)

"If I would comment, I would mention a friend of mine because I would think of her clothes, think she would like it and I would want her to see it." (MK, 24, Female)

Other than these, consumers are not concern with posting about, liking a post from or commenting on a post from the brand. In fact, most of them had negative attitude towards mentioning a luxury brand name on their posts, or even wear a product that *"screams the brands name"*, which verifies Nueno and Quelch's (1998) suggestion that luxury brands may receive negative judgements when it is too ostentatious. One participant mentioned that *"they are really active as a company, not just in terms of creating fashion and I appreciate that. I respect them more now."* (VL, 24, Female). This is consistent with the finding that consumers use social media to represent themselves since they think people will judge them by looking at their social network accounts. Yet, they had no problem with carrying and representing the brands' values by wearing their products, following them or even being in a picture with their products. The only time it is mentioned as showing-off is when the consumer purposely write the brands name to the caption, thus making it ostentatious. Posting all about luxury products are seen as showing-off by consumers, even if it is the brand itself who is posting it. *"As bad as it is that is how I judge people as well. If someone did that I would be talking badly about them"* (DM, 23, Female). However, this shows that consumers are not following a luxury brand only for keep up to date with the collections and trends. The underlying reason is to express

themselves to others on social media. They may not want to admit this since they care about people's judgements about them.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings observed from the interviews, aiming to discover the role of social media in the creation of an emotional bond between luxury brands and their customers.

The study suggested that social media did not have a role in bond creation, however, it helped to maintain the bond that was created before the relationship through social network sites. Moreover, by creating an identity for the brand, social network sites helped consumers to find values that made them relate the brand to themselves more. Thus, social media had the role to enhance the level of the attachment. In contrast, finding opposite values that consumers are not happy with had no impact on the level of the attachment. Consumers tended to either avoid or found reasons for the posts that send the wrong messages. Also, the consistency between following a brand on social network sites and the general usage of these sites were found in this study. Keeping up to date was found as the main theme to follow a luxury brand. Consumers were using their accounts mainly to maintain their relationships with the world, and the same applied for following a luxury brand. However, it is suggested that consumers' had an underlying reason which is expressing personalities through social media as consumers had negative attitude towards seeing only product posts. Still, posting new collections and messages consistent with the brands' values were found to be the ways to maintain the attachment to the brand. No correlation was found between consumers' interest in social media and the level of attachment. It is also proved in the study that by owning or even following luxury brands consumers were sending signals of symbolic values that they carry in themselves.

The next chapter will conclude the observations from the study, including summary of key findings, suggestions for future work, limitations and recommendations for the luxury industry, social media marketers and consumers.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation has aimed to find out if social media has a role in the creation of an emotional bond that leads to an attachment between consumers and luxury fashion brands. In order to aim this goal, consumers' social media usage along with their relationship with the brand in general and through social media was investigated. Thus, the effects of following a brand though social network sites was considered.

In the literature review, in order to provide a foundation for the study, the concept and dimensions of attachment was discussed, followed by its role in consumer behaviour and self-representation. Social media in consumer behaviour and considering their nature of expressing personalities, social network sites' role in self representation were also outlined. Finally, the concept of luxury goods, including their symbolic values and the risk of receiving public approbation was discussed.

Hoping to understand consumers' deep emotions and feelings about their chosen brand, semi-structured interviews were employed. Also, documents were collected from participants in order to find out the dimensions hidden in the posts that may create a bond. The interviews consisted from 12 interviewees who were luxury fashion brand followers in any of the social network sites. Therefore, purposive sampling technique was used, hoping to build trust and make consumers talk about their feelings in order to obtain relevant data.

This chapter concludes the observations from the study. The key findings are presented first, which is followed by the recommendations for the luxury industry, social media marketers and consumers. Finally, the limitations and possible further research are considered.

6.2 Key Findings

This study suggests that social media has no role in the creation of an attachment between consumers and luxury brands. Rather, it is a useful marketing tool for brands to maintain the

emotional bond that was created with the strategy that relies on the bases of seduction. It is found out that consumers express the reasons to follow the brands as keeping in touch with them, however, they are not putting any efforts to check the pages. Since consumers are found to be using their social network accounts to represent their selves, this study suggests that although consumers do not want to admit or unconsciously do it, representing self to others plays a significant role in the behaviour of following a luxury brand.

Further, the study claims that consumers tend to pay attentions to contents which send the messages of their desired values. This even increase the level of the bond. Also, purchasing is found to be an important outcome of social media activities as consumers see them as an online catalogue. Lastly, consumers do not care if the luxury brand is on social media as they think exclusivity is about owning luxury products. Therefore, the study suggests that consumers' interest in and use of social media has no impact on the level of attachment.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations

The study provides various implications and recommendations for the luxury industry, social media marketers and even consumers.

The luxury industry should mainly be concerned with the maintenance of the values they are representing. Although this is a global business, expending the brands' collections to new markets which will not be consistent with the old ones just for more sales may end up with a decrease of the emotional bond. This is because consumers use the luxury brands to send messages of certain values that they think is similar to their personality. They choose a brand that carries values consistent with their own values and if they feel like they cannot send the same messages anymore, they may tend to stop wearing the brand. Along with values, luxury brands should be careful about making themselves reachable to more markets. Luxury consumers are people who aim to belong in a niche market. The potential reason behind this is the urge to own something that is not accessible for just anybody, so if they have a luxury product, they feel better about themselves. This is found to be the

whole point of wearing, and even following a luxury fashion brand. In other words, practitioners can avoid radical and big changes in their collections.

The most important benefit that social media marketers gain from this study is to understand the importance of representing the values of the brand on their accounts as representing self was the secret theme for reasons to follow a luxury fashion brand. However, this should be done by posts that people can relate themselves to rather than emphasizing the brand name too much. Also, social media marketers can consider the frequency of their posts. If the social network account of a brand starts irritating people with irrelevant, too many posts and posts that fail to express the brand's identity well enough or represents the wrong values, people may tend to unfollow the brand. This will not result with the removal of the emotional bond if there is one, however, it will reduce the level of awareness of their collections and trends that may result with decreased sales.

It should not be forgotten that keeping up to date with the brand is found to be the main reason to follow the brand. Therefore, social marketers should balance the content of the posts and give the priority to inform the consumers about their new collections. While posting product or backstage pictures, social media marketers can emphasize on "care". Consumers like to see that the brand they include into their selves at least care about them, not only their money. Therefore, engaging with consumers, posting pictures that focus on the care given to the products and the service may result with increased level of attachment between luxury fashion brands and their consumers.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

It is crucial to understand the limitations of the study first in order to consider a future research. The study suggests that social media has no role in the creation of an attachment, yet, it helps to maintain the relationship between consumers and luxury fashion brands. However, the participants

were all buyers in this study, which means there were missing point of views that could be gained from followers who were not buyers.

The study shows that the fact that luxury brands are on social media does not make the consumers feel exclusive or less exclusive because they are already experiencing it in the store, which are only available for buyers. The concept of making consumers feel exclusive is in the store rather than social network accounts. Luxury brands create an aura of exclusivity and a statement "you are not good enough for this brand" in their stores. Therefore, consumers who cannot afford to buy from those brands tend not to enter these stores because of the fear of losing self-esteem.

Before luxury brands entered social media, only people who visit those stores had an actual relationship with the brands as they were the ones who were aimed at the marketing campaigns. Therefore, people who cannot afford luxury may not have a deep relationship with the brands that can be maintained, enhanced or reduced. With the era of social media marketing, luxury brands had the chance to engage with consumers who may want to at least copy its style and desire to one day afford that brand. For this reason, for non-buyers, following a luxury brand on social media may create different feelings that can create an emotional bond. Further research might need to address this problem and use participants who are not buyers. With the help of both buyer and non-buyer point of views, great opportunities for luxury brands may occur to understand how to use their social network site accounts better.

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-Hello, thank you for participating in my research for my dissertation. I am conducting a research that is investigating if social media has a role in emotional bond creation. I will ask you about your personal social media usage and feelings toward your chosen luxury brand. Your answers will be rape-recorded but the data you will provide me will definitely be confidential. Are you giving permission for recording?

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me whenever you want please!

PART I

- Can you tell me about how you use your social network accounts?

CN: *Just for talking to friends and organizing events, I try not to use it too much cause then I will give all of my information. That is it.*

- Talking to friends and organizing events?

CN: *Yes and looking at photos and stuff.*

- Which social media are you using for these?

CN: *Facebook, Twitter, I used twitter for industry stuff. For following people in technology business. Ah and I use vine.*

- So are you using Twitter for gaining information?

CN: *Yes definitely, if there is a new technology brief or something else. It is like job relevant stuff but my personal things are only on Facebook.*

-For how long have you been using them?

CN: *I don't know, I started using Facebook right when it started. Like 2007 or 2008.*

-How much time are you spending on these social media accounts?

CN: *Less than I used to. Probably like an hour or an hour and a half in total. I check them little and often.*

-How important are your accounts for you?

CN: *Pretty important. It was supposed to be the job stuff, for example twitter is obviously important for what I want to do. Then Facebook is pretty important because it is just how you represent yourself in a digital world. Employers look at it all the time so I keep everything quite muted as well.*

-You must think your profile represents you then?

CN: *Almost. It represents the best parts of me.*

-Why best parts?

CN: *Because I think when people will look at my profile they are looking at my identity in a sense.*

-How often do u post then?

CN: *Very rarely. I don't post a lot of stuff.*

-Why?

CN: *Because people can think a lot of things like- if I see something on a piece of paper I could interpret it differently than what it is actually written for. If I post something up and it means something to me then someone else can look at it and can judge it the wrong way. So I just rather not post. I comment on things, I get a lot of news on my Facebook as well. For example there was this caption "Cameron called Putin Hitler" and this guy wrote something really bad about it and I replied to that. But beyond that I don't really post much. Apart from writing things to my friends' walls.*

-So what kind of content do you post?

CN: *Usually videos. Things on Youtube, just funny relevants and stuff. I just think people will like them and I share them.*

-Do you post about yourself at all?

Very very rarely. I think I am a real person, if you want to talk to me don't look at my fb profile, come and talk to me.

PART II

-Which luxury brand do you follow from you social media accounts?

CN: *Vivienne Westwood.*

-Why that brand?

CN: *I really really really like the brand. I used to sell suits. In suiting u get different types: work suits are not very fashionable but only traditional, Italian suits that image men kind of slim. And I like that a lot that Vivienne is almost anti-fashion and takes that kind of English eccentric image and plays with shapes and patterns.. I am more of a fan of different cuts she puts into clothes. It is very interesting. And it is very traditional English thing. I bought a very nice suit and it has a very English cut and it fits very nicely. It stands out a lot I think.*

-Why do you like English cuts this much?

CN: *Because it is different, it is very different. I think Vivienne is not about fitting in, it is about standing out.*

-With what words would you describe the brand?

CN: Different, English, eccentric, glamorous.

-I see that you mentioned different couple of times.

CN: *Yes. I am really weird about this. If loads of people start wearing Vivienne I wouldn't like it. I like it because no one else tends to wear it, especially guys. I saw a guy wearing my shirt and I was so offended. I was like "Take that shirt off right now!" It is my thing, I don't like following the crowd, I do the opposite. It is really arrogant but it is just how I feel.*

-Have you ever purchased from that brand?

CN: *Yes. Loads.*

-Can you tell me the most important one?

CN: *There is two actually, in my first year of university, I started got into fashion because I used to work in Selfridges so I started following fashion. We had an end of first year ball and I really wanted to get a really nice suit. I got an "ok" suit but I wanted a really nice shirt. I just remember going back*

to London, picking it up. It was like a baby, it was really special to me. It was a really nice shirt. And the second one was for my graduation one of the presents I got was a 1500 pounds suit and I remember trying it out and now it is my favourite suit that I wear in special occasions.

-Are you planning to buy more?

CN: *Yes, yes. Loads.*

-Ok, and from which social media are you following them?

CN: *Facebook*

-Do you spend much time for the brand on social media?

CN: *See, the things they post appear on my feed. When I see it, I don't actively check it every day, but when it turns up I look it up and go through the photos like relevant stuff, like new collections. So I can say only half an hour 40 minutes.*

-How did you end up following it on social media?

CN: *I know about the brand because I used to work in Selfridges, there was a lot of exposure to brand culture. You have to know about it basically. I started to get closer to fashion because of that. I started to really like that, it is really expensive, so I didn't like loads but I was like "oh this is nice." So I got into it, started following and then bought it.*

-Why did you decide to follow also on social media though?

CN: *Because it just looks really different. It is a reflection of your personality. I think fashion is about reflecting who you are.*

-So do you think when people see that you follow Vivienne, they will think you are different?

CN: *Yes, partly. I think less about how people see it but more about how I want to express myself. It is more an internal thing rather than an external thing. It is expressing how I am as a person. It comes from a really internal place. You are right it does play a part, I wear it because it is different. But I don't care about what others see about me on Facebook. For me it is just an expression of who I am rather than how I want people to see me.*

-So you thought that if you follow it on social media it would express yourself.

CN: *I follow it for information as well. I mean like I said, if I wear it people will think oh yes this is nice. But that is how in a sense how people see me in association with the brand.*

-And do you want to be associated?

CN: *Yes absolutely. Me following on Facebook, I don't really think people will see it. Maybe it may appear on their timeline. But having said that it is more for-I follow on Facebook just to look at the collections, the trends and so on.*

-Do you think anything had changed after you started following?

CN: *Yes. In a lot of western fashion brands like Burberry, Channel, Vivienne… those are the brands that I realized that they directly changed the way they target fashion consumers. Obviously trends change but they definitely made a lot of stuff for the Chinese market. I don't like the way they are doing it, it looks horrible. It is just disgusting. They still make a lot of nice things that I want but- you know if you go to a store you only see a few nice things but on Facebook you pretty much see*

everything. It is like a catalogue. So you get to see a lot of unnecessary things too. If you are targeting a certain market- because there are different trends in different markets that is a fact- but you almost like ruin the imaginary or the quality in your mind. I always thought Vivienne was different, it was English, and the quality was really like and stuff like that. But then you start getting shoes that have like toes which are horrible. It took away a bit.

-Why do you keep following then?

CN: *Because I still do like it. The simple stuff they do is still lovely, I still really really like that and I like simple stuff. If it is really overly colourful I wouldn't like it. But they still do classical things. Not classical but kind of like simple.*

-So you still love the brand as much as you used to before social media?

CN: *Yes. It definitely changed how much I love the brand, it didn't change the fact that I do love the brand. Maybe it was a reality check, I was like "ok, it is still business not just fashion". It definitely changed a little bit. But they still retain something it is just the additional stuff that they produce, it takes a little bit but it doesn't change necessarily.*

-And you still associate the values or representations you mentioned earlier with the brands?

CN: *Yes. Absolutely. All those words, all the products still sit under the umbrella of all those words. Some of the stuff you can still like and some of them you cannot. I used to like more of it, now I like a little less of the whole range, but that doesn't mean I don't love the brand.*

-Do you still think when you wear it, it represents the same values?

CN: *Absolutely.*

-How do you feel about that brand now?

CN: *Strongly. Because I think it doesn't follow the crowd, it is a trend setter and I feel really strong about that kind of attitude. Not following the crowd and having your own personality, that is a really personal quality. To associate that with a brand comes with a really strong connections because it is a very deep feeling. So, I do feel quite strongly about Vivienne. As I said I was like "that is my shirt". I do really really love the brand. I don't live and die for it but it is a big part of my identity.*

-What do you like most about following this brand that you really love?

CN: *Just the different stuff like, some of them are crazy, Vivienne is a crazy crazy woman. Even the models or the make ups are very different and interesting.*

-Are the posts representing this?

CN: *Yes. A lot of their posts is about fashion and the things they do. But there is also other stuff like just about their marketing stuff which are not based on products like the second picture I showed to you. Or backstage pictures which are also different regarding their make ups. Even when they post pictures like that they are different.*

-So they are only showing different styles or contents in their posts and you like this.

CN: *Yes. I think if they post about other things it is just very fake. Obviously fashion is a lifestyle. When they say "oh I care about saving the fishes" you go like "no you don't care, you just want my money" and it is fine, I am just fine with that. Just make me good stuff and I will buy it. I don't expect them to be concerned about other stuff. I don't think a brand can represents love or peace. It is what*

it is. It is not a shame. Vivienne is crazy, different, weird, and wonderful and that's all it is. You cannot say I am an environmentalist or save Irak by wearing a brand. So it is unnecessary I think.

-Can you imagine any situation that can make you stop following them?

CN: *Yes, if it started following trends or lost how eccentric it is. I adore that because it is kind of historical as well and it is really kind of image that I like to have on me. So if it stopped how it was and changed, I wouldn't like it anymore.*

-Would you stop purchasing as well?

CN: *Yes.*

-Is there anything missing, that you would like to see?

CN: *I don't know. I like the business itself as well I think it is interesting. I would like to see the design process, images of backstage or how they draw designs, all the cuts and stuff. I think that is interesting. I don't know I am very satisfied with their account now.*

-Do you still feel exclusive?

CN: *Yes and no. I don't feel exclusive because I follow it. Like I said it is a brand that not everyone follows, it is something eccentric and niche. The brand itself is kind of exclusive if you like it and buy it. You are kind of weird if you like it. That is exclusive which is nice. But I don't feel like that because I follow it on Facebook.*

-Ok, do you feel less exclusive?

CN: *Not really because it is not the same sense like Channel or anything like that that is exclusive because it is expensive. It is expensive but it is more about the style because it is very different and you have to have a different taste to like it. That is why it is exclusive rather than being worldwide and expensive.*

PART III

1st post (A celebrity wearing one a design from the brand)

-Why did you choose this post?

CN: *I really like this because it is the chain across the jacket; that is the thing I want on my suits. Because it is so different. I really like that. He has the brown buttons as well as you can see. It just looks very different and eccentric. Also quite classical. I don't like the stripes on the shoulder but I think it is the whole point. It stands out a lot. It is just different.*

-Would you like to wear it?

CN: *Absolutely. From heart.*

2nd post (Vivienne Westwood herself with two other models, wearing her designs):

-Why did you choose this post?

CN: *it is a pic with the current models. If you look at the background, it is dark. The room is very almost like British or French European style. It is very eccentric. She is just crazy. I don't necessarily like the outfit but I like the guys outfit, it is very black, very dark, it is very un-trend. The girl is a little bit naked but that is kind of masculine suiting I think and is very cool. With oversized hats as well, it is*

very very different. Except it is also very classy as well. It symbolizes the style of the brand. Vivienne and her brand is very crucial, her designs and everything.

3^{rd post} (One of the brand's models on a catwalk stage):

-Why did you choose this post?

CN: *Again it is very dark, very simple and it is experimental in the sense of the jacket, it is short, on the waist. The trousers are short but loose, they kind of regular fit sort of style. There is curves on the outside as well. It is also casual because he doesn't have the socks on and open button shirt on. It is very cool I think. It says I do what I want.*

-And does this design represent the values of this brand?

CN: *Yes because they are all different, high quality and eccentric. You don't stand out because it is ugly, you stand out because it is different but still nice.*

-I would like to thank you for your time and taking part in my research once again.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE POSTS TO THEIR SELVES

Participant	Values of the Brand	Self	Reasons to Choose the Posts
VL, 25, Female	Elegant, sophisticated, simple colour and style	Doesn't want to be associated with any luxury brands, seeing it as showing off	1st: Liked the artistic photography 2nd: Interested in learning what biggest people in fashion world are doing 3rd: Liked the guy and that the picture was black and white
CN, 23, Male	Different, eccentric, standing out	Doesn't want to follow the crowd	1st: Liked the product on a celebrity because it was different 2nd: Liked that the whole picture was eccentric with every aspects 3rd: Liked the different style on the brand's model
MI, 23, Female	Classy, smart, sophisticated, elegant	Into jewellery, wants to be classy	1st: The most striking post. It represents royalty. 2nd: Found them elegant. Also looks real, simple but at the same time elegant
MK, 24, Female	Classy and feminine but not too much, clean, summer	Thinks she is not too classy or feminine	1st: It is realistic. Free on vacation, summer, relaxing 2nd: It looks like me. 3rd: The fashion side of Chloe. Still, simple and use neutral colours.
MW, 24, Male	Clean cut, relevant, British, fashionable	Follows celebrates as a role model who are relevant at the time, do not like brand name screaming on products	1st: Kate Moss and Cara Delavigne are two relevant models that everyone loves 2nd: Most iconic product. Liked to see the process. 3rd: It is a Brisith musician that is so relevant right now. Everyone loves him and he is wearing the brand.
CV, 26, Female	Sexy, wild	Wants to be a lingerie designer, wants to look sexy	1st: happy that the brand is getting more popular 2nd: it is nice that the brand is being appreciated 3rd: liked the prints and would love to own them
LL, 23, Male	Traditional American look, manly	Wants to be a model and to have a style that represents old times such as 50s-90s	1st: liked the sweater, has the 90s look. 2nd: The body language. Power, wealth 3rd: would like to wear it. mentioned that all three posts are different times' style
DM, 23, Female	Strong, independent, successful, colourful, young, girly, fun	Wants to be a fashion designer, so into colourful and young things, do not like brand name screaming on products	1st: She looks like she controls the place. Wanted to read the article of this post 2nd: She cares about her products 3rd: represents a young personality
DC, 29, Male	English, tidy, original, stylish	Don't want to dress like everyone else but don't want to be outrages at the same time	1st: the style is cool and different 2nd: would like to wear it. it is smart 3rd: liked the models style. would like to look like it
IZ, 25,	Love, marriage,	Wants to be married,	1st: They are picturing love and everything starts

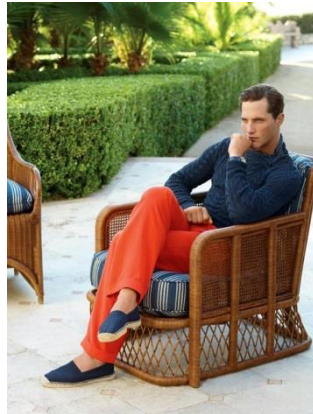|			
Female	relationships	believes in the power of love more than anything, has a simple style	with love. 2nd: Bringing jewellery to everyone. Simple and unique 3rd: Being simple is more elegant
SG, 23, Female	One of the leader brands in the industry	Don't like brand name screaming, likes the status she is gaining from luxury brands	1st: I was aware of the fashion week by Facebook 2nd: The designer's background and style is also important 3rd: it is stylish and look posh. Looks classy and expensive
EI, 20, Female	Stylish, classy but young, sportive at the same time	Don't like to wear too girly. Likes the status she is gaining by luxury products	1st: liked the dress on the model. Planning to buy it as it is sportive but appropriate for night outs 2nd: her favourite product of the brand. like that it is simple but everyone knows it is Michael Kors 3rd: like the girls' style. especially the boots are definitely my style

CN, 23, Male

MI, 23, Female

DM, 23, Female

LL, 23, Male

EI, 20, Female