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TAILORING LUXURY RETAIL STRATEGIES

Exploring Consumer Needs in the Swedish Market

Master's thesis in Management and Economics of Innovation

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Abstract

As consumer heterogeneity grows, firms in the Swedish luxury industry face increasing challenges in responding to the distinct preferences of emerging generational cohorts, particularly Generation Z, while retaining the loyalty of traditional consumers such as Generation X. Due to the conservative nature of the luxury sector, characterized by institutional inertia and resistance to change, response to shifts in the industry is often slow and cautious. Existing research on generational differences in luxury consumption has largely focused on international markets, leaving the Swedish context underexplored. This study investigates how Generation X and Generation Z consumers in Sweden perceive luxury, what motivates their luxury purchases, and how they navigate the luxury customer journey. Drawing on 24 exploratory and 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews, the findings reveal that Generation X views luxury through a product-centric lens, emphasizing quality, durability, and heritage. In contrast, Generation Z consumers perceive luxury more aesthetically and symbolically, often associating it with peer validation, indulgence, and as a sustainable alternative to fast fashion. The study identifies clear differences in generational customer journey behaviors, with Generation Z favoring digital engagement and seamless transitions across channels, while Generation X values physical experiences and longer-term relationships. A distinctly Swedish perspective also emerged, such as understatement and Scandinavian aesthetic. Based on these insights, the study proposes three strategic focus areas for luxury firms: Locally tailored assortment, Personalizing for loyalty, and Seamless customer journeys. Together, these provide a roadmap for shifting from traditional luxury strategies to a more customer-centric approach that aligns with generationally diverse expectations of luxury.

Keywords: luxury, conservative industry, generational cohorts, customer journey, luxury strategy

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1 Introduction

In an increasingly volatile and ambiguous world, organizations must continuously sense and adapt to changes in their external environment. Strategic management is no longer a static exercise of long-term planning; rather, it is a continuous process of interpreting and responding to evolving conditions (Grant, 2021). As Grant (2021) highlights, strategy today encompasses two key dimensions: positioning for the present and adapting to the future. In a world where the pace of change is increasing, these two dimensions are diverging more than ever, challenging the efficacy of one-size-fits-all strategies. This argument is echoed by Johnson et al. (2017), who argue that organizations in dynamic conditions must develop strategies in anticipation of future developments, not just on historical conditions.

A challenge in strategic management is the increasing heterogeneity of the consumer landscape (Wind, 2008). According to a study by Lobaugh et al. (2019), consumers today span a wider range of values, lifestyles, and preferences, making it more difficult for companies to address their needs with uniform offerings. A historical example of this challenge is the British motorcycle brand BSA's failure to respond to shifting consumer preferences and competition from Japanese manufacturers, demonstrating how a lack of strategic adaptation can erode market positions (Grant, 2021).

Navigating changing market conditions is a challenge for all firms, but it tends to be especially difficult in mature and conservative industries (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Weinert, 2023). Firms in these conservative industries are often characterized by institutional inertia, stable organizational routines, and a strong reliance on established customer relationships, which can hinder flexibility and innovation (Huang et al., 2013). Combined with an increasingly heterogeneous

customer base, this suggests that firms in conservative industries may face difficulties in adjusting their offerings and effectively serving multiple customer segments simultaneously (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In conservative industries, even small shifts can have significant consequences, requiring a more cautious and deliberate approach (Hannan & Freeman, 1984).

The luxury industry is considered an extreme example of a conservative and mature industry due to its strong reliance on core values such as heritage, exclusivity and craftsmanship, which constrain the pace and nature of strategy change (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Kapferer & Bastien (2009) state that unlike other industries, where innovation is often embraced as a competitive necessity, luxury firms must innovate cautiously to avoid diluting their core values.

A strategic dilemma in the luxury industry today involves having to cater to multiple, distinct customer segments (Tanos & Konstantos, 2024; D'Arpizio et al., 2025), especially as consumers become more heterogeneous (Wind, 2008; Lobaugh et al., 2019). This challenge is not unique to the luxury industry, as it is also evident in sectors such as the automotive industry, which must serve two segments: established customers loyal to combustion engines and emerging consumers demanding electric vehicles (Kalmbach et al., 2011). However, in the case of luxury, a generational divide can be observed (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019). Luxury firms operate in a unique space where preferences are often formed at a young age and tend to remain relatively stable over time (Kapferer, 1998). Although younger generations may not be the primary purchasers today, their influence on cultural trends and brand preferences is significant, making them essential for luxury firms to stay competitive in an evolving market landscape (Kapferer, 1998). Additionally, Generation Z (born 1996-2015) has experienced a threefold increase in luxury spending over the past five years (2019-2024), highlighting a significantly greater growth potential compared to Generation X (born 1965-1980), whose spending has remained stagnant during the same period (D'Arpizio et al., 2025). Generation Z also enters the luxury market earlier,

typically around age 15, compared to 18 to 20 for older generations (D'Arpizio et al., 2023). Despite these trends, younger generations, particularly Generation Z, remain underrepresented in academic research on luxury consumption. Existing studies have largely centered on Baby Boomers (Kim, 2019; Hauck & Stanford, 2007; Eastman & Liu, 2012), Generation X (Foulkes, 2016; Kim, 2019; Shukla, 2008; Hauck & Stanford, 2007; Eastman & Liu, 2012), and Millennials (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019; Foulkes, 2016; Erdogmus et al., 2021; Kim, 2019; Eastman & Liu, 2012).

Furthermore, research on luxury consumption remains heavily focused on large international markets such as the United States (Tafani et al., 2024; Yu & Sapp, 2019), China (Chernov & Gura, 2024; Yu & Sapp, 2019), India (Graf Dijon von Monteton et al., 2025; Shahid & Paul, 2021), France (Tafani et al., 2024) and Italy (Brun & Castelli, 2013). Little attention has been paid to the Swedish luxury market, which presents a particularly compelling case for studying luxury consumption due to its unique cultural context. Deeply rooted in the egalitarian norm of 'jantelagen', which emphasizes humility and conformity, the Swedish context stands in stark contrast to the superfluosity and status signalling typically associated with luxury (Savage, 2019). Paradoxically, however, Sweden has a higher luxury revenue per capita than many of the world's traditionally dominant luxury markets, including France, Italy, the United States, and China (Statista, 2025). This contradiction indicates that luxury in Sweden is perceived and consumed in unique ways, offering a valuable context for examining how generational preferences can influence the strategic decisions of established luxury firms.

1.1 Problem Statement

The foundation of any successful strategy lies in delivering value to the customer. As Grant (2021) notes, a central aspect of strategic management is understanding customer needs and preferences, as this insight directly informs competitive advantage. By analyzing how to serve customer demands, businesses can identify

key success factors within their industry (Slater & Narver, 1998; Woodruff, 1997). This becomes especially relevant in the luxury sector, where customer expectations are high and the very notion of luxury is subjective and evolving (Turunen, 2018; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

As the luxury landscape evolves, the growing influence of Generation Z alongside the established purchasing power of Generation X presents both an opportunity and a challenge (D'Arpizio et al., 2025). Many luxury firms struggle to strike a balance between attracting younger consumers while maintaining the loyalty of older, more traditional buyers (Ko et al., 2019). Understanding these generational dynamics is therefore critical to developing strategies that appeal across customer segments without compromising the trust and credibility often associated with luxury (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Ko et al., 2019).

The decision to focus on Generation Z and Generation X was made to provide a clear comparison between two distinct and influential consumer groups. While Generation X has long been a key demographic in the luxury sector, Generation Z is emerging as a powerful force in shaping the future of luxury (D'Arpizio et al., 2025). The generational definitions used in this study are presented in Table 1.

Generation	Year
Silent Generation	1928–45
Baby Boomers	1946–64
Generation X	1965–80
Generation Y	1981–95
Generation Z	1996–2015
Generation Alpha	2016–present

Table 1: Definitions of generations according to D'Arpizio et al. (2025).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to increase the knowledge of how established firms in the Swedish luxury industry can tailor their strategies to meet the needs of different generational customer segments.

1.3 Research Questions

Luxury is not a fixed concept with a universally agreed-upon definition. Rather, it is an evolving concept that can vary greatly depending on the individual (Mortelmans, 2005; Cristini et al., 2017). What one person considers luxurious may not be viewed the same way by another, as the notion of luxury is deeply personal and subjective. Given this, it is crucial to examine how different generations perceive luxury in their own terms. This understanding will enable luxury firms to tailor their strategies to resonate with the perceptions of luxury held by each generation, ensuring their approach is aligned with customers' expectations. This leads to the following research question:

1. How do Generation X and Generation Z perceive the concept of luxury?

Understanding how different generations perceive luxury is only part of the equation; it is equally important to examine *why* they seek out luxury in the first place, particularly since luxury consumption often defies traditional economic logic. Traditionally, economic theory assumes that individuals are rational and seek the most cost-effective alternatives (Law of demand) (Marshall, 1890). However, this logic does not apply to luxury, as the drivers behind luxury purchases extend beyond mere functionality and value. Luxury products are often driven by factors such as status, exclusivity, and emotional connection, which are not captured by traditional supply and demand models (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). The Veblen effect, for example, suggests that luxury consumption operates according to different dynamics, where higher prices can actually increase demand due to the desire for social distinction (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996). To

explore the motives driving luxury consumption across generations, the following research question has been formulated:

2. What are the motives behind luxury purchases for Generation X and Generation Z?

However, understanding what drives luxury purchases is not complete without considering *how* these purchases are made, as the interaction between consumers and luxury plays a critical role in shaping the overall experience. The customer journey, from initial awareness to post-purchase loyalty, is especially important in the luxury sector, where emotional value, brand storytelling, and personalized service are often as significant as the product itself (Dubois et al., 2001). As luxury consumption increasingly spans both physical and digital environments, it becomes essential to examine how consumers navigate various touchpoints and what they expect from them. To explore how different generational cohorts interact with luxury throughout their customer journey, the following research question will be explored:

3. What does the luxury customer journey look like for Generation X and Generation Z?

By comparing generational perceptions of luxury, underlying purchase motivations, and customer journey preferences, this study will generate insights into what luxury consumption patterns look like across generations. These insights will contribute to academic literature by addressing gaps in research on Swedish luxury consumption, while also offering practical value to luxury firms. The findings will serve as a foundation for strategic recommendations, helping firms tailor their offerings and customer experiences to better align with the expectations of both established and emerging consumer segments.

1.4 Delimitations

The study exclusively examines luxury personal goods, including categories such as apparel, beauty, leather, watches, jewelry and shoes (D'Arpizio et al., 2025). However, the overall luxury market includes additional sectors such as automobiles, hospitality, fine wines and spirits, gourmet food, high-end furniture, fine art, private jets, and yachts (D'Arpizio et al., 2025) which fall outside the scope of this study.

2 Theoretical Background

The theoretical background lays the foundation for the empirical analysis and discussion. It is organized into five sections. The first section examines strategic challenges in conservative industries, providing context for the luxury sector. The second explores the generational cohorts Generation X and Z to give an understanding of what might influence their responses in the study. The third reviews the customer journey, both generally and within luxury consumption, forming a basis for analyzing generational touchpoint preferences. The fourth discusses definitions and typologies of luxury, considering cultural and digital influences. The final section investigates motivations for luxury consumption, identifying key drivers of non-essential purchasing behavior.

2.1 Strategic Challenges in Conservative Industries

Covin and Slevin (1989) introduced a strategic positioning spectrum that distinguishes between entrepreneurial and conservative firms. Organizations with a conservative strategic position are typically risk-averse, non-innovative, and reactive, often innovating only in response to immediate threats (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Miller & Friesen, 1982). Miller and Friesen (1982) classified such firms as “defenders,” while Mintzberg (1973) referred to them as “adaptive.”

Although the authors describe conservatism at the firm level, certain industries can display such characteristics more broadly and systematically. Conservative industries have been described as institutionally inert (Hannan & Freeman, 1984), path-dependent (Dolata, 2009), or highly regulated (Streeck & Thelen, 2009) and marked by high entry barriers (Bain, 1956), mobility barriers (Caves & Porter, 1977), and isolating mechanisms (Lippmann & Rumelt, 1982). Such structural conditions constrain the strategic flexibility of individual firms, often compelling even otherwise adaptive organizations to adopt conservative positions (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). As a result, industries characterized by these systemic traits

tend to preserve long-standing practices and traditions, fostering an environment resistant to change and innovation (Huang et al., 2013).

In the luxury industry, institutional conservatism is deeply embedded in core attributes such as exclusivity, craftsmanship, and heritage (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). These qualities serve as strategic assets that differentiate luxury firms but also act as constraints by fostering organizational routines and belief systems resistant to rapid change, thus reinforcing the kind of inertia described by Hannan & Freeman (1984). As a result, luxury firms exemplify the broader dilemma faced by firms in other conservative industries: they are structurally and cognitively constrained precisely as external environments demand increasing agility and responsiveness (Wind, 2008). This tension is further amplified by the rising heterogeneity among consumers, particularly in emerging generational cohorts like Generation Z, who differ markedly in their values, motives, and channel preferences (Lobaugh et al., 2019; Wind, 2008). This misalignment intensifies in luxury, where Kapferer & Bastien (2009) argue that innovation must be cautious to preserve brand heritage and exclusivity. The theoretical tension, then, lies in the fact that luxury firms must simultaneously maintain continuity and experiment with generationally relevant touchpoints and narratives.

2.1.1 Changing Consumer Perceptions and Motives

One strategic challenge for firms in conservative industries lies in understanding and responding to changing customer perceptions of value (Woodruff, 1997). As markets evolve, so too do the meanings that customers assign to products, services, and brands (Ko et al., 2019). Verganti (2009) refers to this as a shift in “product meaning,” arguing that innovation often stems from new interpretations of what a product represents to users. This is echoed by Ravasi and Rindova (2008), who emphasize that the value of products is determined by how they are interpreted by consumers, subjecting them to reinterpretation over time, particularly in response to lifestyle and generational shifts.

Firms that have historically succeeded based on stable and widely accepted perceptions of value may find it difficult to recognize and respond to emerging meanings. According to Tripsas and Gavetti (2000), such firms often develop strong cognitive frames or “mental models” that shape how they interpret their environment. Stable strategies and assumptions have been fundamental in creating competitive advantages that often characterize conservative industries, such as high entry barriers (Bain, 1956), mobility barriers (Caves & Porter, 1977), and isolating mechanisms (Lippmann & Rumelt, 1982). However, these can become obstructive for strategic reorientation, especially when fundamental perceptions of value shift (Grimm & Smith, 1997).

In addition to shifting perceptions, firms in conservative industries also face the challenge of responding to evolving consumer motives, the *why* behind purchases. Research has shown that consumption is not driven solely by functional or economic utility, but also by emotional, social, and symbolic considerations (Sheth, et al., 1991; Holt, 1995). These motives can shift over time as broader societal values and lifestyles change. Holt (1995), for instance, illustrates how consumption practices are closely tied to identity, culture, and personal expression.

Firms often struggle to adapt when market demands begin to favor new performance dimensions or value criteria that differ from those their existing models were built to serve (Christensen & Rosenbloom, 1995). This misalignment can be exacerbated by established assumptions and routines that shape how decision-makers interpret environmental signals (Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). Over time, such misalignment can reduce a firm's competitive relevance, as customers turn to alternatives that better reflect their values and lifestyles (Verganti, 2009; Schmitt, 1999).

A frequently cited example of how shifting consumer perceptions and motives have disrupted a conservative industry is the transformation of the automotive

sector in response to the growing demand for sustainable mobility (Deloitte, 2024). For decades, traditional automakers operated within a stable framework focused on performance, engineering reliability, and brand legacy; factors closely aligned with conventional value perceptions in the industry (Wells & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). However, as environmental awareness and ethical consumption gained traction, consumers began placing greater value on sustainability, energy efficiency, and innovation (Bohnsack et al., 2014). This shift challenged the dominance of incumbent firms whose strategic assumptions were rooted in combustion engine technologies. In contrast, entrants like Tesla were able to capitalize on new consumer motives by offering electric vehicles that symbolized technological progress, environmental responsibility, and social status (Verganti, 2009; Bohnsack et al., 2014). The strategic inertia of many incumbents, reinforced by legacy assets and internal belief systems, delayed their response, leading to a temporary erosion of competitive position and the need for major strategic reorientation (Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000).

2.1.2 Digital Transformation Within the Customer Journey

In conservative industries, companies face significant strategic challenges in responding to the evolving customer journey (Harvard Business Review, 2024). It is becoming more dynamic, fragmented, and unpredictable, which complicates efforts for organizations to engage with customers effectively across a growing number of touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As the rise of omnichannel environments continues, where consumers fluidly transition between online platforms, mobile apps, social media, and in-person interactions, firms are under pressure to create seamless and integrated experiences (Verhoef et al., 2021). However, companies in conservative industries struggle to translate this into practice, particularly when digital and physical channels are disconnected or managed in silos (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

One reason digital transformation poses a particular challenge in conservative industries is the firms' strong reliance on tradition, established practices, and high-touch service models (Westerman et al., 2014a). Westerman et al. (2014a)

emphasize that high-touch, relationship-driven service models often slow down the shift to digital because they are perceived as being incompatible with automation and digital interfaces. Complementing this, Kane et al. (2015) argues that less digitally mature firms, often found in conservative industries, tend to adopt digital tools reactively and in isolated parts of the organization. They further state that these fragmented efforts often fail to enhance the overall customer journey and may even create inconsistencies across channels. In contrast, digitally mature firms integrate technology across functions with a clear strategic vision, enabling them to deliver a seamless, personalized, and consistent customer journey across all channels (Kane et al., 2015). Thus, successful digital transformation of the customer journey relies not on technology alone, but on a clear, customer-centered strategy (Kane et al., 2015).

A notable example of successful digital transformation in a conservative industry is Burberry (Westerman et al., 2014b). In 2006, Burberry was struggling to keep pace with the rapid digital development in the luxury industry. Faced with competitors targeting baby boomers, Burberry shifted to focus on millennials, requiring a transformation of its customer journey with an emphasis on digital channels. The company hired a dynamic marketing team that mirrored this new demographic and reallocated a significant portion of its budget to digital platforms, moving away from traditional advertising methods. What made Burberry's digital transformation successful, according to Westerman et al. (2014b), was the fact that the transformation was implemented across various parts of the organization, influencing the customer journey from multiple touchpoints. Changes were made in marketing, retail environments, fashion shows, internal IT systems, and customer analytics, all of which worked together to create a cohesive and innovative brand experience. As a result, Burberry was recognized as one of the top ten most innovative retail companies globally by Fast Company in 2013 and 2014 (Westerman et al., 2014b). However, despite the success of its digital transformation during these years, Burberry now faces new challenges related to its brand identity. The company is struggling to clearly define

and strengthen its brand, leading to inconsistent messaging and stagnated sales growth (Simpson, 2024).

2.2 Generational Cohorts

Generational cohorts play an important role in consumer research by providing a clear segmentation of individuals that have been shaped by distinct historical, technological, and social contexts, especially in their adolescent years (Beldona et al., 2009; Hung et al., 2007). Mannheim's *Theory of Generations* (1952) suggests that individuals who grow up during the same historical period develop shared perspectives and behaviors due to their common socialization experiences. Howe and Strauss (2007) echo this, arguing that generations are better understood through their shared experiences rather than just simple age groups.

However, the validity of generational distinctions has been debated. Critics argue that consumer behaviors may be more influenced by lifecycle effects; the idea that spending and preferences change as people age rather than because they belong to a particular generation (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Additionally, socioeconomic factors, such as income level, education, and geographic location, often play a more significant role in shaping consumption patterns than generational membership alone (Costanza et al., 2012).

Despite these critiques, generational analysis remains a strategically valuable tool in consumer research, particularly for understanding future trends and segmenting markets (Parment, 2013). From a strategic perspective, generational segmentation helps firms identify current customer preferences as well as position themselves for future relevance (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). According to Francis and Hoefel (2018), in an increasingly connected world, generational differences may even surpass traditional socioeconomic factors in shaping consumer behavior. These differences influence how companies position themselves in the market, the channels they prioritize, and the values they choose to emphasize (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Howe and Strauss (2007) reinforce that generational cohorts serve as a valuable tool for forecasting future trends, as they tend to follow consistent historical patterns. They stress that rather than examining today's 40-year-olds to understand the characteristics of that age group in 20 years, one should instead study today's 20-year-olds, as they will shape the future landscape. This sentiment is echoed by Kapferer (1998) and Francis and Hoefel (2018), who highlight that younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, have emerged as powerful cultural influencers whose expectations are reshaping how people of all ages relate to brands, thereby compelling companies to respond accordingly.

2.2.1 Generation X

Generation X, typically defined as individuals born between 1965 and 1980 (D'Arpizio et al., 2025), is characterized by pragmatism and value-consciousness in their consumption behaviors (Ritchie, 1995; Lissita & Kol, 2016). Their cautious approach is shaped by economic uncertainty and a strong desire to spend money wisely, making them highly selective and knowledgeable consumers (Miller, 1993; Mamey, 1993). Despite their initial skepticism of digital technologies, Generation X has demonstrated notable adaptability, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasingly engaging in consistent digital consumption while maintaining a critical stance toward new platforms and advertising (Boada et al., 2024). Generation X was the first generation to regularly use new technologies like computers and mobile phones in daily life. As a result, they are more inclined to learn and use new technology than previous generations. However, they are naturally skeptical and are not as experimental with their technology and internet use as younger generations (Tolani et al., 2020).

Generation X is characterized by a necessity-driven approach to consumption, making thoughtful and informed purchase decisions (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). The generation is less inclined to engage in impulsive & superfluous spending, instead making considered choices based on practical needs and functionality (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Generation X consumers seek a clear understanding of a product's

features and, more importantly, why those features are functionally necessary (Himmel, 2008). Setiasih & Soemartono (2017) also stress that Generation X places strong emphasis on the practical usefulness of products that fulfill specific needs, rather than being driven by symbols or status. This product-centric mindset is also reflected in the purchase motives of Generation X, who are more often guided by utilitarian values such as functionality and practicality, in contrast to younger generations who tend to prioritize hedonistic motivations (Boada et al., 2024).

Research indicates that Generation X values long-term relationships and is highly committed to the brands they choose, a trait that has been linked to their preference for stability in an ever-changing world (Rosário & Casaca, 2025). They are known for their strong sense of brand loyalty, a characteristic that has been linked to their preference for products and services that meet their specific needs and expectations (Pavlic et al., 2021). In addition, they are more likely to make purchases from traditional physical stores rather than online platforms, making in-store satisfaction a significant driver of their brand loyalty (Rosário & Casaca, 2025). While technology has undeniably shaped the lives of Generation X, they were raised before the digital age took hold. In contrast to younger, digitally native generations who are often influenced by online marketing and may switch products based on digital stimuli, Generation X prefers physical channels, both in regards to marketing and purchasing (Pavlic et al., 2021; Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Further, Pavlic et al. (2021) stress that Generation X's repurchasing behaviors are largely driven by past experiences, and they feel a strong sense of trust in the brands they choose.

2.2.2 Generation Z

Generation Z, typically defined as those born between 1996 to 2015 (D'Arpizio et al., 2025), is the first cohort to grow up fully immersed in the digital age (Smith, 2019). Their constant exposure to digital technology from an early age has shaped their behaviors, expectations, and interactions with firms in fundamentally new

ways. They consume digital content at a higher rate than any previous generation, spending up to 11 hours daily across devices engaging with media, social platforms, and branded content (Adobe, 2018).

As digital natives, Generation Z frequently relies on the internet as a primary source of information to guide decision-making and purchasing behavior. They navigate seamlessly across various digital platforms, such as websites, apps, and social media, each contributing to the online ecosystem that shapes their experiences and interactions (McKinsey, 2024). As a result, the cohort is characterized by a deep reliance on the digital world and a stronger trust in technology compared to previous generations (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014). At the same time, this constant information exposure has enhanced their ability to filter and assess content rapidly, making them more selective and efficient in identifying what is personally relevant (Turner, 2015). They not only engage with communities centered around shared interests but also increasingly use the platform as an augmented tool for traditional search, discovering products and brands (McKinsey, 2024; Enohnyaket et al., 2024). Djarova and Bowes (2021) even found that Generation Z consumers are more likely to trust user-generated content and peer reviews than traditional advertising. Digital platforms also enable new forms of communication and engagement through storytelling, which is increasingly important for capturing the attention of Generation Z (Zhang et al., 2023). However, this constant exposure to digitalization has had unintended consequences, such as contributing to Generation Z's shorter attention span of 8 seconds and as well as reduced patience, making it more challenging to capture and sustain their engagement (Berkup, 2014; Cagnin & Nicholas, 2022; Boger, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted society on a large scale, and its impact on Generation Z, who experienced it during adolescence, has left lasting effects that will likely continue to shape their behaviors (Deloitte, 2022). This is supported by Strauss and Howe (1991) who emphasize the enduring influence of adolescent

experiences on individuals, meaning the pandemic's effects on Generation Z are likely to be more profound than on Generation X, who lived through it at a later stage in life. One example of the shifts during the pandemic took place in people's shopping habits, as evidenced by the significant surge in e-commerce, which saw a 68% revenue increase, according to the annual Swedish e-commerce report (PostNord, 2024). While the shift toward online shopping is likely to remain, firms will need to focus on integrating e-commerce into the overall customer experience (Gramling et al., 2021). They further state that it is not just about developing the best website, it is also about addressing people's social needs, such as the desire to feel part of a community. The longing for post-pandemic social interaction is expected to drive consumers, including Generation Z, back to physical stores in search of richer, more engaging experiences that cannot be replicated online (Gramling et al., 2021).

Sustainability and climate change issues have emerged as defining concerns for Generation Z, influencing their values and consumption patterns more significantly than previous generations (Williams & Hodges, 2022; McKinsey, 2024). Generation Z consumers not only prioritize ethical products and brands that align with their values, but they also embrace second-hand fashion as a sustainable alternative, seeking to balance both environmental responsibility and personal style (Reichheld et al., 2023; McKinsey, 2024). Despite their commitment to sustainability, Generation Z's demand for unique, affordable, and ever-changing styles has fueled the rise of fast-fashion giants like Shein (Thomas et al., 2024; Xiao & Moss, 2021). At the same time, the popularity of clothing hauls on social media further underscores their complex and contradictory relationship with fashion (Hilton & Hatami, 2023).

2.3 Customer Journey

The customer journey has traditionally been understood as a sequence of stages through which a consumer progresses, often represented as a purchase funnel. One of the most widely recognized models is AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire,

Action), shown in Figure 1, which outlines the consumer's progression from initial awareness of a product to the final purchase decision. This model has long been a cornerstone in advertising and marketing, helping firms strategize consumer engagement at each stage with the assumption that customers follow a linear decision-making path (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).



Figure 1: AIDA model by Lewis, E. S. E. (1898)

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) present a more cyclical view of the customer journey, presented in Figure 2, building on the traditional models while simplifying the process into three key stages: (I) pre-purchase, which includes need recognition, consideration, and search; (II) purchase, involving choice, ordering, and payment; and (III) post-purchase, which encompasses consumption, usage, engagement, and service requests. This simplified framework eliminates the consideration stage as a separate element, focusing instead on the holistic process of customer interaction with a brand across all stages (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

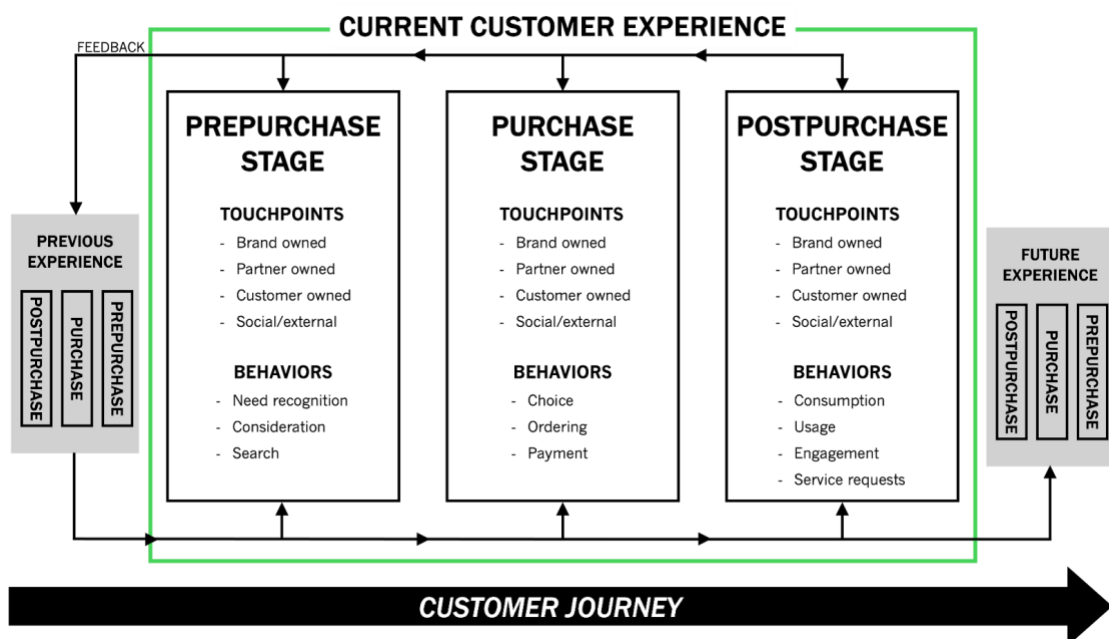


Figure 2: Customer journey by Lemon & Verhoef (2016)

Touchpoints are interactions between consumers and firms that shape the overall customer experience (Saviolo, 2018). They include interactions where consumers actively engage with the business, as well as situations where consumers receive information or influence from the firm without direct involvement (Neslin et al., 2006; Baxendale et al., 2015). With the rise of digital technology and a broad range of communication channels, touchpoints now extend beyond just brand-consumer interactions to include exchanges between customers and third-party stakeholders, such as retailers, or even peer-to-peer interactions (Court et al., 2009; Baxendale et al., 2015). This broader view highlights that touchpoints now encompass a wide range of experiences, including product usage, online reviews, social media interactions, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Saviolo, 2018). While some touchpoints, like advertisements or a company website, are directly controlled by the firm, others, such as consumer reviews or influencer endorsements, are outside the organization's direct influence but still significantly impact customer perceptions (Baxendale et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2015).

Saviolo (2018) divides touchpoints into physical, digital, and human in Figure 3. Human touchpoints encompass all direct and indirect person-to-person interactions in the customer journey, including conversations with sales associates, customer service representatives, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Digital touchpoints represent the entire online ecosystem where customers engage with businesses through for example websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, and digital product reviews. Physical touchpoints involve tangible, in-person experiences such as store environments, product trials, and events. These three interconnected touchpoint categories work together to create a signature customer experience throughout the purchase journey (Saviolo, 2018). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) highlight that technological advancements are blurring the lines between digital and physical touchpoints, further emphasizing the importance of cohesion across all touchpoints.



Figure 3: Touchpoints by Saviolo (2018)

In Sweden, digital touchpoints are an important part of the shopping experience across most product categories, with more than 90% of consumers engaging with online platforms at some stage of their purchase journey (Grönlund et al., 2024). However, physical stores remain highly relevant, as Swedish shoppers generally prefer in-person shopping over online-only retailers, although preferences for digital and physical touchpoints vary by product type (Grönlund et al., 2024). For everyday essentials like groceries and personal care items, only 2% to 5% of consumers primarily buy these products online (Grönlund et al., 2024). In contrast, for larger, less frequent purchases, consumers rely on digital channels throughout the entire buying process. The luxury industry is a prime example of such an industry where the combination of digital and physical touchpoints is particularly pronounced.

According to the 2024 Consumer Sentiment Report by Boston Consulting Group (Grönlund et al., 2024), shown in Figure 4, 97% of Swedish consumers engage with some type of online touchpoint during the luxury goods purchase process. They use online platforms to explore products, gather inspiration, compare prices, and read reviews before making a final decision. Despite strong online engagement, physical stores continue to be crucial for Swedish luxury consumers, with the two thirds choosing a physical store and only a third choosing an online-only option.

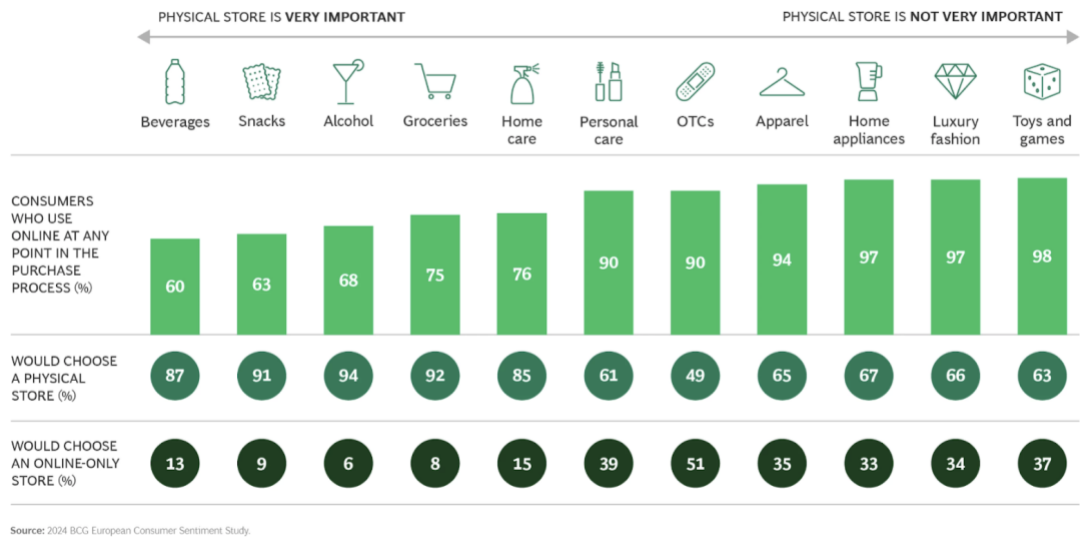


Figure 4: Preferences of Swedish consumers for digital vs. physical touchpoints (Grönlund et al., 2024)

2.3.1 Proposed Framework

For this study, we propose a customer journey framework divided into three stages: engagement, purchase, and post-purchase, each encompassing both digital and physical touchpoints. The framework is illustrated in Figure 5. This framework is inspired by the customer journey outlined by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) in Figure 2 and touchpoints proposed by Saviolo (2018) in Figure 3. The different phases of our framework are defined as the following:

- 1. Engagement:** The customer is in an environment where they are exposed to or interacting with luxury-related content, products, or services, but a purchase is not directly possible.
- 2. Moment of purchase:** The customer is in an environment where they can complete a transaction (either physically or digitally), even if they do not intend to do so at the moment.
- 3. Post-purchase:** As soon as the customer performs a transaction, the customer moves into the post-purchase stage. This means that they will

be able to interact with the firm for future service of the purchased product, loyalty programs, and members-only events.

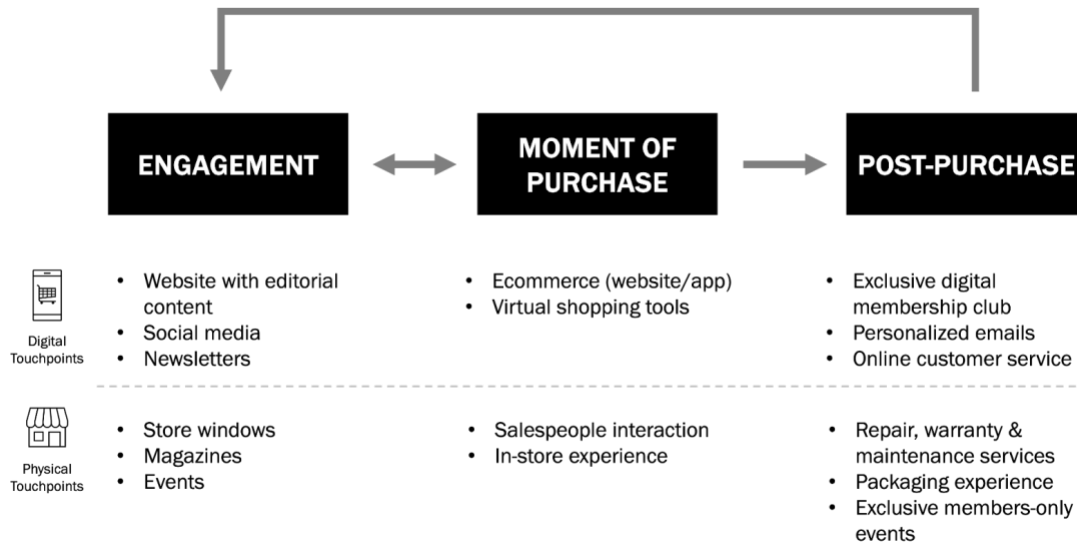


Figure 5: Illustration of our proposed customer journey framework

Customers may move between the engagement and purchase stages without completing a transaction, as the framework is based on setting rather than intent. However, once a transaction is completed, the customer moves into the post-purchase stage for that product and brand. The customer may then move into the engagement and purchase stage for other products and brands.

The engagement stage is often considered the first phase of the customer journey, encompassing all interactions with a brand or product before a purchase is possible (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Karadag and Erdogmus (2020) describe this phase as including processes such as influence and need recognition, evaluation of alternatives, and decision-making. While our definition of the engagement stage includes these behaviors, it is specifically characterized by occurring in a context where the customer is exposed to a brand or product but cannot complete a transaction. This could involve browsing in a showroom without checkout options or encountering brand content through social media or advertising.

While all models are structured differently, some form of purchase stage consistently follows the engagement stage(s) in the customer journey. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) define this stage as involving choice, ordering, and payment, while Court et al. (2009) describe the moment of purchase as the point at which a consumer ultimately chooses a product. In our framework, the purchase stage encompasses all activities that occur in a setting where the customer is able to complete a transaction, either digitally or physically, regardless of their intention to do so. This could include a physical store or an online webshop.

The post-purchase stage follows the completion of a transaction and includes activities such as consumption, usage, engagement, and service requests (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). According to Court et al. (2009), the experiences formed during this stage shape the customer's expectations and influence their future customer journeys. Moreover, the post-purchase stage often includes efforts that foster customer loyalty, such as personalized communication and retention strategies (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). One effective retention strategy outlined by Gao et al. (2022) is establishing lock-in effects, which are situations where a customer becomes dependent on a specific product, service, or vendor, making it emotionally or physically difficult to switch to an alternative. In this study, the post-purchase stage is defined as beginning immediately after the customer completes a transaction and includes opportunities for ongoing interaction with the firm, such as accessing product-related services, participating in loyalty programs, or attending members-only events.

Furthermore, customer journey touchpoints are categorized into digital and physical interactions, following a structure similar to the framework proposed by Saviolo (2018). To simplify this model, human interactions are integrated into the physical category, consolidating the classification into two overarching touchpoint types. By structuring the customer journey into these three stages and organizing touchpoints into digital and physical categories, as illustrated in Figure 5, this framework offers a clear approach to analyzing customer experiences.

2.3.2 Customer Journey in Luxury

A defining characteristic of the luxury customer journey is the extended research phase (Grönlund et al., 2024). Given the typically high price points and perceived risk associated with luxury purchases, consumers often spend considerable time evaluating options, comparing brands, and seeking validation before committing (Uluturk & Asan, 2024). Research suggests that luxury consumers may engage with multiple information sources, such as brand websites, online reviews, social media, and in-store visits over an extended period before a decision is made (Saviolo, 2018). Although a small number of luxury consumers make impulse purchases on the same day they discover a product, the vast majority (89%) follow a more thoughtful decision-making process, providing brands with opportunities to influence the customer journey (Vogue Business, 2023).

In the moment of purchase phase of the luxury customer journey, customer service is a pivotal element that shapes the overall consumer experience (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Sales associates in luxury settings are expected to deliver personalized, high-touch service, demonstrating deep product knowledge and the ability to anticipate and fulfill individual client needs (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). To deliver the high-quality, personalized service expected in luxury retail, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) emphasize that continuous sales training is essential for a luxury firm's personnel. The value of luxury extends beyond the product itself to encompass the entire customer experience, which is why luxury brands place significant emphasis on their physical retail spaces as key sources of value creation (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

The post-purchase phase in luxury retail is an extension of the customer journey, where brands solidify relationships and foster long-term loyalty through exceptional service and personalized engagement (Tanos & Konstantos, 2024; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Unlike mass-market retail, where the brand's role often diminishes after the transaction, luxury brands view the post-purchase

experience as an opportunity to reaffirm their exclusivity and deepen the emotional bond with the customer (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). This phase is characterized by high-touch aftercare services such as personal follow-ups, exclusive clienteling, repair and maintenance offerings, and loyalty rewards (Tanos & Konstantos, 2024). By maintaining contact luxury brands ensure that the customer journey does not end at the point of sale but evolves into an ongoing, relationship-driven experience that reinforces brand prestige and trust. An example of initiatives driven by luxury brands in the post-purchase phase is “Chanel et moi” program, which offers a five-year warranty and restoration services, which not only addresses customer concerns about product longevity but also reinforces the brand’s prestige by framing luxury as an enduring commitment rather than a one-time transaction (Chanel, 2025).

2.4 Luxury in Literature

Luxury is a concept that has been widely discussed in academic literature, yet no universally accepted definition exists. Scholars have attempted to define and explain luxury through various lenses, highlighting its characteristics, levels, and cultural implications (Kapferer, 1997; Allèrès, 1991; Dubois et al., 2001). Despite these efforts, luxury remains a complex concept, with perceptions of what constitutes luxury fluctuating over time (Mortelmans, 2005; Cristini et al., 2017).

The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines luxury as something comforting, expensive, beautiful, pleasant, and unnecessary for daily life. Similarly, the Swedish dictionary SAOB (Svenska Akademiens Ordbok) (n.d.) describes luxury in terms of extravagance, abundance, excessive comfort, and superfluousness, reinforcing the idea that luxury is not essential for normal living but rather serves as an indulgence. These definitions highlight the inherent exclusivity and desirability of luxury, which have long been central to its conceptualization.

2.4.1 Characteristics of Luxury

What constitutes a luxury product for one person may be perceived as ordinary or inaccessible by another. (Kapferer, 1997). Despite differences in defining characteristics of luxury, Dubois et al. (2001) have identified six key attributes commonly associated with luxury: high quality, price, scarcity, aesthetics, heritage, and superfluousness. Through content analysis of in-depth interviews, Dubois et al. (2001) uncovered these attributes, which are explained in Table 2. While other definitions and characteristics of luxury exist in literature (Keller, 2009; Heine, 2012), the characteristics proposed by Dubois et al. (2001) have been identified as most relevant and comprehensive for the purposes of this study.

<i>Excellent quality</i>	High-end items are characterized by superior materials, considerable craftsmanship with remarkable attention to detail. When people invest in luxury, they are not just buying an object, but experiencing a standard of excellence that makes them feel special and distinguished.
<i>Very high price</i>	Many people perceive the high price of luxury goods or services as a natural outcome of their exceptional quality. Consequently, a high price is often considered an intrinsic characteristic of luxury.
<i>Scarcity & uniqueness</i>	Luxury is linked to scarcity, limited in distribution and is not mass-produced. The concept of selectivity and exclusivity is central, as luxury items are available only in limited quantities, making them rare and unique.
<i>Aesthetics & poly sensuality</i>	Luxury products engage multiple senses, offering not just visual beauty but also appealing to touch, smell, taste, and sound, resulting in a hedonic experience. The aesthetic dimension extends beyond the product itself and also includes where it is displayed and the people who use it.
<i>Ancestral heritage & personal history</i>	Long history, traditions and story-telling are important to be perceived as luxurious. The deep connection to history and heritage creates a sense of authenticity and timelessness.
<i>Superfluosness</i>	Luxury products are not essential for survival. Instead of serving functional purposes, their value comes from other factors, such as the status or the personal satisfaction.

Table 2: Summary of characteristics of luxury according to Dubois et al. (2001)

From the qualitative study by Dubois et al. (2001) these characteristics emerged as commonly associated with luxury. However, it is not necessary for a product to exhibit all these characteristics to be classified as luxury (Dubois et al., 2001). Some luxury brands may prioritize specific characteristics, such as excellent quality, craftsmanship, or heritage, depending on the brand's positioning and the nature of the product (Brun & Castelli, 2013). Individuals may also place importance on certain characteristics based on their personal perceptions of luxury (Shukla, 2012).

2.4.2 Levels of Luxury

In exploring the concept of luxury, various classifications have been proposed to distinguish between different types of luxury goods. De Barnier et al. (2012) highlight the division of luxury into accessible, intermediate, and inaccessible levels as shown in Figure 6, a division that was originally developed by Allèrès (1991). However, there are several other categorizations of luxury that contribute to the complexity of defining it (Kapferer, 1997; Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). The introduction of lower-end product categories by intermediate and inaccessible luxury brands further complicates the definition of luxury (Patrick & Prokopec, 2015).

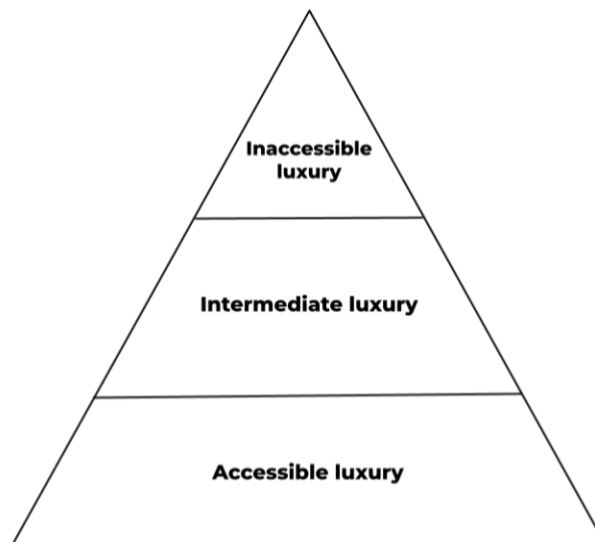


Figure 6: Levels of luxury according to Allèrès (1991) and De Barnier et al. (2012)

Inaccessible luxury refers to the highest level of luxury, where products are extremely exclusive and expensive (Allèrès, 1991). She goes on to explain that these items are often one-of-a-kind, such as custom-made designer clothes or rare jewelry. Only a small group of very wealthy people can afford products from these brands. The focus is not just on high quality, but also on the prestige and uniqueness that comes with owning such items (Allèrès, 1991).

Intermediate luxury refers to products that maintain a high level of quality, craftsmanship, and exclusivity, but are more accessible than the items found in inaccessible luxury (Allèrès, 1991). Examples of brands commonly associated with intermediate luxury include Louis Vuitton, Burberry, and Bulgari. These brands produce items in larger quantities and distribute them more widely through retail stores and online platforms, making them accessible to a broader customer base (Allèrès, 1991).

Accessible luxury represents a market segment that bridges the gap between premium products and traditional luxury goods, catering to middle class consumers (Allèrès, 1991; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). The category provides consumers with the opportunity to experience a taste of luxury at a more attainable price point. The category is often characterized by entry-level items from established luxury brands such as Coach, Hugo Boss and Michael Kors (Allèrès, 1991).

While certain brands are commonly associated with a particular tier, it is important to recognize that luxury brand portfolios may span multiple levels and that the purpose of these frameworks is to categorize products, not brands (De Barnier et al., 2012). For example, Yves Saint Laurent's haute couture collections fall within inaccessible luxury, whereas its mass-produced products, such as perfumes and cosmetics, align with the accessible luxury category (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Rather than being rigidly defined tiers, these levels exist along a spectrum, with products positioned according to their exclusivity, accessibility, and price.

2.4.3 Cultural Impact on Luxury

Luxury consumption is deeply embedded in cultural values, shaping both the perception and purchasing behavior of consumers (Kastakanis & Voyer, 2014; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Kapferer & Bastien, (2009) demonstrate this by comparing two culturally different nations; France and China. In France, luxury is

primarily associated with high quality and prestige, reflecting an appreciation of craftsmanship, heritage and exclusivity. In China, luxury is instead strongly linked to fashion trends and social visibility, where a high price serves as a key indicator of status.

While the levels of luxury defined by Allèrès (1991) are widely recognized and a simple way to categorize luxury items, it is important to note that these levels have limitations, as they heavily depend on the individual and their cultural context. For example, a watch priced below \$5,000 may be considered intermediate luxury in France, while in the Middle East, it might not even qualify as accessible luxury (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Similarly, in Sweden, consumers may perceive luxury goods differently, influenced by the country's unique cultural characteristics that shape how luxury is perceived and consumed.

The principle of lagom, which emphasizes balance and moderation, is deeply ingrained in Swedish society and significantly shapes their approach to luxury consumption (Parikh, 2025). On a personal level, lagom represents a philosophy of avoiding extremes, where the pursuit of excess is avoided in favor of harmony and balance (Parikh, 2025). As previously noted, one of the key attributes associated with luxury, as defined by Dubois et al. (2001), is superfluousness, which stands in contrast to the Swedish cultural value of lagom. Closely related to lagom is the concept of 'Jantelagen', a social norm in Scandinavian societies that discourages individual excess and promotes collective humility (Sandemose, 1933). Jantelagen fosters an egalitarian mindset, emphasizing that no one should think of themselves as superior to others.

Sustainability is another aspect that is heavily ingrained into Swedish culture (Halkier, 2004). Sweden has established itself as a global leader in sustainability, consistently ranking among the top environmentally responsible nations (Robeco, 2024). For many years, sustainability and luxury were seen as contradictory because luxury was associated with excess, while sustainability focused on

minimizing environmental impact (Hennigs et al., 2013). Despite challenges, like the dominance of fast fashion and overconsumption, luxury firms can encourage sustainable consumption by promoting high-quality, timeless products that last longer (Joy et al., 2012). Sustainability is a fundamental part of the national identity where consumers place sustainability at the core of their purchasing decisions (Halkier, 2004). Two-thirds (66%) expressed that they are making a conscious effort to cut down on their consumption and embrace a more minimalistic approach (Grönlund et al., 2024). For Swedish consumers in the luxury market, 52% of respondents frequently or always consider sustainability when making a luxury purchase, which is the highest proportion compared to other consumption categories such as personal care, home appliances, or groceries (Grönlund et al., 2024). However, despite this high awareness, only 20% are willing to pay a premium for luxury items that are considered green products (Grönlund et al., 2024).

2.4.4 Digital Impact on Luxury

The luxury industry faces the challenge of increased accessibility and exposure through the internet (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Online platforms enable anyone to access almost anything from anywhere, contributing to the so-called democratization of luxury (Henigs et al., 2012). As outlined in chapter 2.4.1, luxury is defined by scarcity and uniqueness (Dubois et al., 2001), requiring luxury firms to navigate the challenge of maintaining these attributes in a digital landscape that promotes accessibility. This challenge is often referred to as the “Internet Dilemma” (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), which describes luxury firms’ struggle to maintain exclusivity while responding to the growing expectations of digitally native consumers.

Luxury firms employ several strategies to maintain exclusivity online, including premium pricing (Wang, 2021), long waiting lists (Roll, 2020), and strictly controlling distribution channels (Kennedy, 2024). Hermès exemplifies these tactics by upholding its reputation as an inaccessible luxury brand. However,

despite such efforts, constant online exposure risks diluting the perceived rarity and uniqueness of luxury products (Henigs et al., 2012).

Kapferer and Bastien (2009) emphasize the importance of personal interaction between luxury salespersons and customers, arguing that this relationship is often lost in one-way communication tools such as websites. Social media introduces two-way communication, allowing luxury firms to foster a sense of community and deeper relationships with consumers. However, social media's open and participatory nature presents both opportunities and risks for luxury firms. Because unpaid content created by social media users is outside a firm's control, luxury products often appear in contexts that the firm itself has not curated (Jin, 2012). One such example is reviews, where Blal and Sturman (2014) found that a high volume of reviews negatively impacted the sense of rarity, while Park et al. (2018) suggested that continuous interaction decreases psychological distance, potentially diminishing consumers' perception of luxury value.

2.5 Motives for Luxury Consumption

Many frameworks have been proposed to explain the underlying motives behind luxury consumption (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019; Hudders, 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Miller & Mills, 2012; Berthon et al., 2009; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2019) suggest one framework of categorizing motives behind luxury consumption by dividing the motives into product-centric and consumer-centric. The product-centric view focuses on the various attributes inherent in the product itself (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Berthon et al. (2009) describe it as a functional dimension, highlighting the physical and tangible characteristics that distinguish luxury products from others. The consumer-centric view focuses on the relationship between consumers and luxury products, emphasizing how these products serve as tools for self expression, emotional satisfaction, and social signaling (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019).

Another view is presented by Hudders (2012) who identifies two motives for luxury consumption: expressive and impressive motives. Expressive motives refer to luxury consumption driven by what it can signal about owners to others, such as wealth, status, or personality characteristics (Hudders, 2012). Impressive motives, on the other hand, consist of emotional and functional dimensions, where consumers purchase luxury items to reward themselves or for their excellent quality (Hudders, 2012).

A third view comes from Wiedmann et al. (2009), who identify four key dimensions influencing luxury consumption: financial, functional, social, and individual. They further suggest that although all these dimensions influence luxury purchasing decisions, their importance differs based on the consumer. The functional, social, and individual values align with previous literature on luxury consumption motives. Nevertheless, the financial value stands out as a more distinct motive, addressing the direct monetary aspects of luxury consumption, such as price, resale cost, discount, and investment (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2019) highlight a similar finding that many consumers engage in luxury consumption as a form of long term investment. Achieving this requires an understanding of the social and financial value of current luxury products and how these factors shift over time, aiming to predict which brands or products are likely to be in demand in the future.

After reviewing the existing literature on the various motives behind luxury consumption, it is clear that there are multiple ways to categorize and understand these motives. Given the importance of motives in comparing generational luxury consumption in this thesis, three key categories will be defined and discussed, which are highlighted in Table 3.

Motives	Concepts presented in literature
<i>Product-centric</i>	Functional dimension: quality, features & durability (Hudders, 2012)
	Old luxe (Miller & Mills, 2012)
	Functional value: physical attributes (Berthon et al., 2009)
	Functional value: usability, quality, uniqueness (Wiedmann et al., 2009)
<i>Social</i>	Expressive: identity, uniqueness, conformity (Hudders, 2012)
	Luxury as a social marker (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009)
	Consumer centric: conveying social status (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019)
	Symbolic value (Berthon et al., 2009)
	Social value: conspicuousness, prestige (Wiedmann et al., 2009)
	Signaling effects of consumption: Veblen, bandwagon, and snob (Leibenstein, 1950)
<i>Hedonic</i>	Experiential value: individual subjective value (Berthon et al., 2009)
	Expressive: uniqueness & identity (Hudders, 2012)
	Luxury for oneself (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009)
	Consumer centric: engaging in self-transformation & escaping into/with luxury brands (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver , 2019)
	Caretaking & escaping (Banister et al., 2020)
	Individual value: self identity, hedonic, materialistic (Wiedmann et al., 2009)

Table 3: Motives for luxury from literature

2.5.1 Product-Centric

The studies on luxury consumption that focus on tangible and functional aspects have been grouped into a broader category called product-centric motives. These studies highlight that consumers are attracted to luxury goods for their superior characteristics and unique attributes that distinguish them from more conventional alternatives (Hudders, 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Central to this view is the belief that luxury products often have a strong physical dimension, with key factors such as craftsmanship, high-quality materials, and durability playing a crucial role in their appeal (Wiedmann et al., 2009). This product-centric motive is closely tied to the excellent quality characteristic highlighted in chapter 2.4.1. The relationship between perception and motives is further strengthened by Kapferer (1997), who argues that consumers' definitions and perceptions of luxury significantly influence their purchasing decisions.

The framework proposed by Wiedmann et al. (2009) splits the functional reasons for luxury consumption into three dimensions; usability, quality and uniqueness. Usability refers to the product's fundamental purpose and how well it fulfills that intended function. Quality emphasizes the superior craftsmanship and materials that distinguish it from other alternatives, thereby contributing to its luxurious appeal. Thirdly, uniqueness underscores the exclusivity and rarity of the product, often through limited availability which enhances a consumer's desires for it. Hudders (2012) similarly highlights the functional dimension of luxury purchases, identifying it as a motive within the impressive category. Her research shows that excellent quality, exceptional features, and durability are key factors in driving luxury brand purchases (Hudders, 2012).

The utilitarian value of luxury is often associated with 'old luxury', a time when luxury was purchased for its high-quality, exclusive products that emphasized craftsmanship and functionality (Miller & Mills, 2012). Their perspective aligns with Wiedmann et al. (2009), Hudders (2012) and Berthon et al (2009) in

recognizing tangible attributes and exceptional product quality as key drivers of luxury consumption.

Kapferer and Bastien (2009), on the other hand, oppose the belief that luxury brands are bought for their functional qualities. They argue that functional qualities distinguish luxury products from less luxurious alternatives but the true motives behind luxury consumption can only be social and personal factors, two motives that will be further explored in chapters 2.5.2 and 2.5.3.

2.5.2 Social

Several studies have explored the social motives behind luxury consumption, emphasizing that individuals often purchase luxury items to signal status and gain social recognition (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Hudders, 2012; Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory provides a foundation for understanding these behaviors, suggesting that individuals evaluate their status and possessions relative to others in an effort to seek social validation. Unlike mass-market goods, luxury products often maintain high prices and limited accessibility (Dubois et al., 2001) to preserve exclusivity, reinforcing their role as powerful tools for social signaling (Truong et al., 2009). Research by Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2019) further demonstrates how luxury consumers engage in upward comparisons, aspiring to emulate those of higher social status by using luxury goods as a means of gaining access to perceived superiority.

Three key concepts explain social motives behind luxury consumption: the Veblen effect, the snob effect, and the bandwagon effect. These effects illustrate how luxury consumption serves both differentiation and assimilation motives, as described by Leibenstein (1950).

Unlike traditional economic models, which assume demand decreases with rising prices (Marshall, 1890), Bagwell and Bernheim (1996) argue that in the luxury market, higher prices can serve as a social marker of exclusivity, making

consumers more inclined to purchase premium goods, a phenomenon called the Veblen effect. Bagwell and Bernheim (1996) explain that Veblen consumers perceive expensive goods as more desirable precisely because of their cost. This behavior is rooted in the concept of conspicuous consumption, where displaying wealth and status becomes more effective as prices rise.

Some consumers motivate their luxury consumption through exclusivity and rarity, a phenomenon known as the snob effect, first conceptualized by Leibenstein (1950). These individuals seek rare and unattainable luxury goods, believing that scarcity enhances desirability (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). The snob effect reflects two types of differentiation: vertical, where luxury goods signal superior social status (Ordabayeva and Chandon, 2011), and horizontal, which expresses individuality without implying superiority (Bellezza et al., 2014). Given luxury's association with status (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), vertical differentiation is often the dominant driver of consumption.

In contrast to the snob effect, the bandwagon effect (Leibenstein, 1950) reflects luxury consumption driven by the desire to assimilate. This phenomenon occurs when individuals adopt behaviors or consumption patterns primarily because others do, rather than due to personal preference or product attributes. In the luxury context, the bandwagon effect leads consumers to purchase high-end goods to align with perceived social norms and gain acceptance within desirable groups (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). Unlike snob consumers, who seek exclusivity, Truong et al. (2009) argue that bandwagon consumers are motivated by the need for social belonging. Gentina et al. (2016) note that social pressure and fear of missing out can drive consumers to purchase luxury goods, even when they might not have initially been inclined to do so, emphasizing the increased number of bandwagon consumers in the digital age.

2.5.3 Hedonic

In addition to product-centric and social motives, luxury consumption can be driven by hedonic motives. These motives are rooted in the emotional and personal aspects of luxury, often emphasizing indulgence, escapism, and self-identity (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Kapferer and Bastien (2009) argue that for a purchase to be considered luxury rather than simple snobbery, there must be a hedonic and personal motive driving the decision.

Luxury consumption often serves as a means of escapism offering individuals a temporary retreat from everyday life (Banister et al., 2020). This escapism can be achieved through consumption of luxury goods (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). According to Seo & Buchanan-Oliver (2019) luxury firms facilitate escapism in two distinct ways. First, they offer a form of escape, where consumers engage with marketing materials, such as advertisements and fashion magazines, to imagine themselves in a more glamorous world. This aligns with Banister et al. (2020), who emphasize that escapism through luxury consumption is not merely about acquiring expensive products but also involves an element of imagination and fantasy. Second, luxury goods, like designer handbags, function as tangible symbols of this escapism (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). By owning and using these products, consumers feel that they are participating in exclusive social groups they aspire to be part of, reinforcing their sense of belonging to a higher social status (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). This form of escapism mirrors the upward social comparison discussed in 2.5.2 where luxury consumption becomes a tool to signal association with aspirational lifestyles.

Beyond escapism, hedonic luxury consumption is closely linked to self-expression and identity formation. According to Wiedmann et al. (2009), luxury consumers often select products and brands that align with their self-image, using those products to reflect or enhance their identity. This is evident for luxury goods, where products not only serve as a means of self-expression but also help

individuals shape and refine their identity (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Seo & Buchanan-Oliver (2019) expand on this idea by demonstrating how luxury consumption is linked to self-identity. They emphasize how consumers develop emotional bonds with specific luxury firms, incorporating the firms' identity into their own personal identity.

One dimension of indulgence is self-gift giving, where consumers justify luxury purchases as rewards for personal achievements or significant life events (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Hudders, 2012). The studies analyzed different factors as motives behind luxury consumption, with one factor highlighting self-gift giving, where consumers perceive luxury purchases as personal rewards to mark important achievements or life events. The most strongly supported statement within this factor, "Purchasing luxury brands can be seen as giving myself gifts to celebrate an occasion that I believe significant to me", underscores how luxury consumption is often tied to personal milestones and self-recognition (Wiedmann et al., 2009).

3 Methodology

This study was conducted using a qualitative strategy. According to Bell et al. (2022), a qualitative approach is appropriate when the aim is to understand and interpret the world through the perspectives of others, rather than to uncover objective truths. Bell et al. (2022) also stress the importance of examining behavior within specific contexts. Given this study's focus on luxury consumption patterns among generational cohorts in Sweden, a qualitative design was deemed suitable for generating deep, contextualized insights into individual perceptions and motivations.

The qualitative approach aligns with the exploratory nature of the study, which aims to capture the subjective experiences of Generation Z and Generation X consumers. Since perceptions of luxury are inherently personal and culturally influenced, a qualitative method allows for a deeper understanding of how individuals perceive luxury, what motivates their luxury purchases, and what their customer journey looks like. By engaging directly with participants through in-depth interviews, the study aims to uncover behaviors that would be difficult to quantify or predict using a standardized, quantitative approach.

The overall research process is illustrated in Figure 7. The study began with a literature review to establish a theoretical foundation and identify key concepts. This was followed by a two-phase data collection process: an initial exploratory phase of semi-structured interviews to guide the development of relevant themes, and a subsequent in-depth phase of semi-structured interviews with Swedish Generation Z and Generation X consumers. The collected data was then clustered and analyzed to uncover patterns and insights. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of generational consumer behavior in the Swedish luxury market and offer guidance for luxury firms seeking to tailor their strategies to the distinct needs and preferences of each segment.

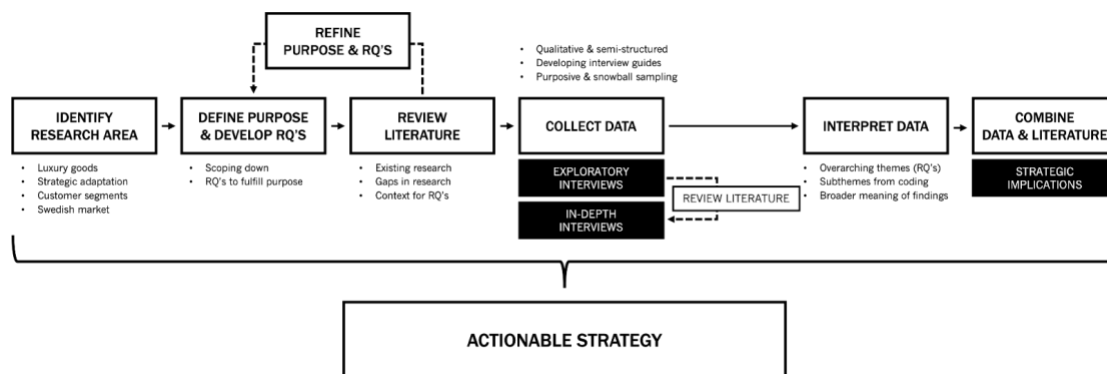


Figure 7: Visual representation of the research process

3.1 Literature review

The literature review provides the theoretical foundation for the study, serving as a background for the analysis and discussion of the empirical findings. It identifies key concepts and theoretical frameworks in current literature relevant to our research questions (Bell et al., 2022). A narrative review was chosen for its flexibility and suitability in synthesizing broad themes and identifying patterns across conservative industries, generational cohorts, customer journeys, and luxury (Bell et al., 2022).

The literature review draws primarily on peer-reviewed academic literature accessed through Chalmers Library and Google Scholar. Early in the process, key authors and researchers prominent in the luxury field were identified (Kapferer, Bastien, Vigneron, Lemon, Verhoef, Wiedmann and Dubois), serving as entry points into the academic discourse. Their work guided the selection of additional sources by highlighting influential publications and recurring themes within the field. The review was also supplemented by industry reports and articles from reputable consulting firms, such as McKinsey & Co, Bain & Company, Boston Consulting Group, to ensure that the data and market trends considered were current and relevant.

3.2 Data Collection

Bell et al. (2022) outline various qualitative data collection methods, including interviews, focus groups, and observation. This study relied on qualitative interviews with 34 luxury goods customers, conducted in two phases: 24 exploratory interviews and 10 in-depth interviews. All interviews were semi-structured, allowing respondents to express their perspectives freely while encouraging follow-up questions to clarify and expand on key topics. According to Bryman et al. (2005), qualitative interviews allow for a focused exploration of relevant issues while reducing ambiguity and misunderstandings through interactive dialogue, thereby improving the quality of the collected interview data.

Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative interviews yield richer, more nuanced insights by avoiding predefined response categories (Bryman et al., 2005). They can be unstructured or semi-structured, with the latter offering a balance between flexibility and comparability (Bryman et al., 2005). This study adopted a semi-structured format, using an interview guide while allowing deviations when necessary. Furthermore, qualitative interviews are especially effective in exploring perceptions, attitudes, and motivations, making them well-suited for investigating generational perceptions and patterns of luxury consumption (Bell et al., 2022).

Purposive sampling was used in both phases to ensure that participants had relevant experience with luxury consumption, specifically within the Swedish market. Since the criteria for participating in the study was to belong to either Generation X or Z and having purchased a luxury good within the past year, this sampling strategy was seen as appropriate to include only relevant participants. Convenience sampling was utilized in the exploratory phase due to its suitability to pilot- and exploratory contexts (Golzar et al., 2022). These non-probability techniques allowed the researchers to target individuals who could offer insights aligned with the study's objectives (Bell et al., 2022). Efforts were also made to ensure gender diversity, and in both the exploratory and in-depth phases,

participants were nearly evenly split between men and women to ensure that differences in their responses could not be attributed to gender. Sampling strategies and settings varied slightly between the two phases and are described in more detail in chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

To ensure the study was ethically conducted, this research adhered to the ethical principles outlined by Diener and Crandall (1978), which emphasize avoidance of harm, informed consent, the right to privacy, and the avoidance of deception. Before conducting interviews, participants were provided with clear information about the purpose of the study and what their participation would entail, such as recordings and transcriptions. This was done to ensure informed consent and minimize deception. To safeguard participant privacy, age was the only personal data collected, which was collected for the sole purpose of ensuring participants met the criteria of the study. Furthermore, participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time, particularly if they felt that the questions became too personal. Confidentiality was also strictly maintained throughout the research process. All participants remained anonymous in the final report, with responses assigned coded identifiers. Any collected personal information was securely stored and destroyed upon the completion of the project to prevent unauthorized access or misuse.

3.2.1 Exploratory Phase

Twenty-four semi-structured exploratory interviews with a low level of structure were conducted to identify key areas to explore in the literature review and in-depth interviews. The exploratory interviews lasted between 5-15 minutes and relied on the established method of exploratory interviewing proposed by Blomqvist and Hallin (2014). They suggest that an exploratory approach is useful when the research topic is not yet fully defined, allowing for open-ended exploration. Given the limited prior research on luxury consumption in Sweden, these interviews helped identify contextually relevant themes to ensure the in-depth interviews were tailored to the Swedish market. Additionally, this phase

allowed for unexpected themes to emerge that had not yet been identified in the literature review, including the cultural and digital impact on luxury.

The interviews took place outside of a large luxury department store in Gothenburg, engaging with customers as they entered or exited the store. This approach ensured that participants had an interest in luxury goods and, in some cases, had just made a purchase. Conducting interviews on-site also enabled respondents to reflect on their recent shopping experiences.

As the participants were approached outside one of Sweden's largest luxury department stores, we employed convenience sampling, a commonly applied method in qualitative business research (Brewis, 2014). This approach aligns with MacNealy's (1999) definition of convenience sampling as a technique where researchers go to public locations and ask passers-by to participate, which accurately describes our procedure. While this method is sometimes criticized for its potential bias and limited generalizability (Mackey & Gass, 2005), it offers several practical advantages. In our case, convenience sampling was particularly well-suited for the exploratory phase of the study, as well as for our aim of capturing perceptions and attitudes toward luxury consumption. This aligns with the conditions under which Golzar et al. (2022) suggest the method is appropriate, namely a) when the goal is to explore people's perceptions and attitudes, and b) when conducting a pilot test. Bell et al. (2022) also highlight that field interviews in natural settings, such as retail environments, can provide authentic insights by capturing real-time consumer behaviors and motivations. Exploratory interviews continued until thematic saturation was reached, meaning no new significant insights emerged from additional interviews (Bell et al., 2022).

The interview guide (see Appendix A for the full guide) covered four main themes: *demographics, perceptions of luxury, motives for luxury consumption, and customer journey*. The demographic section ensured participants met the study criteria; belonging to either Generation X or Z and having purchased a luxury good within

the past year. The remaining themes were directly aligned with the research questions.

3.2.2 In-Depth Phase

Following the exploratory phase, a more detailed interview guide was developed for the in-depth interviews (see Appendix B for the full guide), incorporating insights from both the initial interviews and the literature review. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted, five with individuals belonging to Generation X and five belonging to Generation Z. The in-depth interviews were between 45-90 minutes long. Each interview concluded with a doorknob question to prompt participants to express personal opinions on key issues (Bell et al., 2022). By introducing this question spontaneously at the end of the interview, we aimed to capture spontaneous reflections or thoughts that may have emerged during the interview. The doorknob question was: “If you were advising a Swedish luxury department store, what key changes or improvements would you recommend, and why?”

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to explore key topics more thoroughly and gain deeper insights into the research questions, beyond what was possible in the exploratory phase. One interview was conducted on Microsoft Teams, while the remaining nine were held in a quiet room to minimize disturbances. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using software, with prior consent from participants.

For this phase, purposive sampling was applied to select participants who could offer detailed insights into luxury consumption within Generation Z and Generation X. Participants were primarily recruited through targeted outreach via social networks, and in two cases, snowball sampling was used, where initial participants recommended others who fit the study criteria and could provide relevant perspectives (Bell et al., 2022). Once again, the saturation principle

proposed by Bell et al. (2022) was used, and interviews were conducted until no new insights emerged.

3.3 Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed using transcription software, a method recognized by Bell et al. (2022) as beneficial in qualitative research. Using a transcription software was chosen primarily for its efficiency, allowing us to manage a large set of qualitative data within the limited timeframe of the thesis project. While the software-generated transcripts were not perfect, they were sufficiently accurate to support a thorough review and analysis. The transcriptions captured the essential content and meaning of each interview, enabling us to identify patterns and recurring themes across generations without the need for extensive manual transcription.

To analyze the empirical material, a thematic analysis approach loosely inspired by the Gioia methodology was used (Gioia et al., 2012). The process is visualized in Figure 8, illustrating the progression from raw data to overarching themes. This structured process enabled us to systematically examine the qualitative data by first identifying recurring patterns and concepts in the interviews. The interview data was then grouped into sub-themes that captured similarities across responses. In the final step, we synthesized these sub-themes into overarching aggregate dimensions to reveal the broader themes emerging from the data.

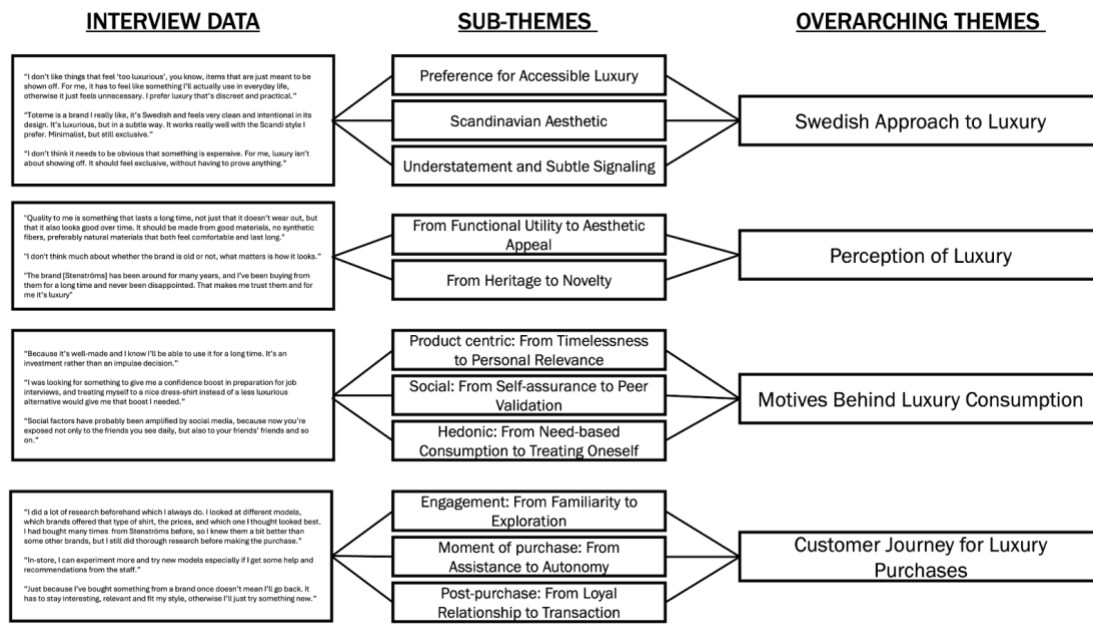


Figure 8: Structure of the data analysis and how the overarching themes emerged.

The analysis began with the generation of sub-themes, grounded in the interviewees' own words and descriptions. These sub-themes were subsequently organized into larger, overarching themes that reflected conceptual patterns in how luxury was perceived, the motives behind consumption, and preferred customer journeys. Although the development of these overarching themes was guided by the research questions, attention was also given to emergent patterns, most notably the recurring narrative of the Swedish context, which was carefully preserved throughout the analysis. In line with the Gioia approach, a progression was followed from descriptive sub-themes to broader theoretical categorization, resulting in four aggregate dimensions: (1) Swedish approach to luxury, (2) perceptions of luxury, (3) motives behind luxury consumption, and (4) customer journey touchpoints.

After key themes had been identified from the interview data, the literature was revisited to assess whether the findings aligned with or challenged existing theories within these areas. Through this process, recurring patterns were

validated, generational patterns were identified, and it was evaluated whether the Swedish market deviated from or followed trends observed in other researched markets.

To illustrate the data analysis process, the sub-theme *Scandinavian aesthetic* serves as an example. During the initial phase, the raw interview data was analyzed and a pattern of participants positively talking Swedish or Scandinavian brands was found. Several interviewees described brands like Toteme, Filippa K, and Tiger of Sweden as embodying a clean, minimalist, and intentional design that aligns with their personal style and values:

“Tiger has always worked for me, I know I can trust the fit and the style. It’s classic, not too bold, but it always feels right. I don’t have to overthink it, it just works.”

“Toteme is a brand I really like, it’s Swedish and feels very clean and intentional in its design. It’s luxurious, but in a subtle way. It works really well with the Scandi style I prefer. Minimalist, but still exclusive.”

“I think we’re pretty proud of Swedish and Scandinavian brands. They feel like part of our identity, and I think us Swedes tend to buy more of them, maybe even without realizing it.”

These insights were grouped into the sub-theme *Scandinavian aesthetic*, as they collectively reflected a culturally embedded view of luxury centered around simplicity, functionality, and brand familiarity. In the next stage of analysis, this sub-theme was clustered together with other sub-themes, which together formed the overarching theme, *Swedish approach to luxury*. This theme contributed to addressing our research questions by highlighting how cultural context shapes generational perceptions and preferences within luxury consumption. The findings were further validated against existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of cultural values in shaping luxury consumption patterns.

3.4 Methodological Discussion

This study employed a qualitative, interview-based approach to explore how Generation Z and Generation X in Sweden perceive and engage with luxury goods. This design was selected because qualitative methods are particularly suited to uncovering complex social phenomena, such as meaning-making consumer behaviors that are not easily quantifiable (Bryman et al., 2005). However, as Bell et al. (2022) emphasize, qualitative research is inherently shaped by the researchers' decisions, and it is therefore essential to critically discuss how methodological choices influence the scope and implications of the findings.

The qualitative approach allowed us to collect nuanced and contextually grounded insights that would be difficult to elicit through quantitative methods. Bryman et al. (2005) argue that qualitative interviews are particularly effective for studying phenomena that involve personal interpretation, identity, and emotion, all of which are central to luxury consumption. However, the approach is not without criticism. Qualitative research has been critiqued for its limited generalizability, interpretive subjectivity, and difficulty in replicating findings (Bell et al., 2022). These are valid concerns, but they should be weighed against the goals of the study. Our purpose was not to produce findings that could be generalized statistically across all consumers, but to supply rich, exploratory insights that can inform strategy and future research.

A central concept in qualitative research is transferability, which refers to the extent to which findings can be applied to other settings or groups (Bell et al., 2022). A potential limitation to the transferability of this study is its geographic focus. All data was collected in Gothenburg, Sweden's second-largest city. Although Gothenburg has a diverse population and a developed luxury infrastructure, it cannot capture the full socioeconomic and cultural diversity of Sweden. This raises concerns about whether the findings are relevant to other regional or rural contexts.

However, as Mouselli and Massoud (2018) argue, expanding the geographic scope of qualitative studies does not always increase their relevance. In fact, doing so can introduce additional layers of complexity that obscure rather than clarify the focus of the research. In our case, broadening the sample to include multiple cities could have made it more difficult to isolate generational differences, as regional factors might have introduced confounding variables. Additionally, while all interviewees currently reside in Gothenburg, 6 in-depth participants (4 from Generation X and 2 from Generation Z) originated from other regions in Sweden, suggesting that some variation in geographic background was captured. During the interviews, it was noted that two participants were not originally from Sweden. However, since they had lived in Sweden since their late teens and early twenties, this was not considered to skew the result, rather, it was seen as a way to gain first-hand insight into the Swedish context of luxury compared to other countries.

Moreover, the initial exploratory interviews were conducted at one of Sweden's largest luxury department stores. While this setting does not provide a statistically representative sample, it serves as a relevant site for engaging a diverse luxury consumer base. In line with Strauss & Corbin (1990), the relevance of a sampling site in qualitative research lies in its capacity to illuminate the phenomena under study, not in its representativeness per se. A smaller or more exclusive luxury store might have produced a more homogeneous sample, but the department store allowed for greater variation in consumer profiles, thereby enhancing the transferability of our findings to other established luxury firms operating in Sweden.

Another important methodological consideration is sampling strategy, especially in relation to selection bias. This study employed non-probability sampling in order to reach people with knowledge about the area. However, non-probability sampling has been criticised since it could introduce some bias into the result, as it doesn't represent the entire population (Mouselli & Massoud, 2018). However,

in qualitative research, the aim is not to achieve statistical representativeness but to select participants who can provide information-rich cases (Patton, 1990). As Bell et al. (2022) note, such sampling enhances credibility, the qualitative parallel of internal validity, by ensuring that those interviewed have relevant experiences and insights.

To this end, we used homogeneous purposive sampling, targeting individuals from two generational cohorts who had purchased luxury goods within the past year. This approach aligns with Rai and Thapa's (2023) view that non-probability sampling is not a methodological flaw but a purposeful strategy to access depth over breadth. Tongco (2007) supports this, arguing that purposive sampling improves the internal validity of qualitative studies when participant selection is clearly justified. Furthermore, Coyne (1997) emphasizes that all qualitative sampling is inherently purposive, but warns that researchers must be transparent about how participants are selected and for what purpose. In our case, the criteria were not only appropriate but essential for ensuring the data's relevance to our research questions.

4 Results & Analysis

The purpose of this study is to increase the knowledge of how established firms in the Swedish luxury industry can tailor their strategies to meet the needs of different generational customer segments. To lay the foundation for this, luxury consumers from Generation X and Generation Z have been interviewed to explore how they perceive luxury, what motivates their luxury purchases, and what the luxury customer journey looks like. These insights are essential for developing a strategy that reflects the distinct preferences of each generation.

The results are organized into four overarching themes: (1) Swedish Approach to Luxury (2) Perceptions of Luxury, (3) Motives Behind Luxury Consumption, (4) Customer Journey for Luxury Purchases. Each theme includes sub-themes that provide a nuanced view of how luxury is understood and experienced by the two generational groups.

The research questions guiding this investigation are:

1. How do Generation X and Generation Z perceive the concept of luxury?
2. What are the motives behind luxury purchases for Generation X and Generation Z?
3. What does the luxury customer journey look like for Generation X and Generation Z?

In total, 34 interviews were conducted; 24 exploratory and 10 in-depth with respondents from Generation Z and Generation X. More information about respondents can be found in Appendix C. A brief overview of the findings are summarized in Figure 9.

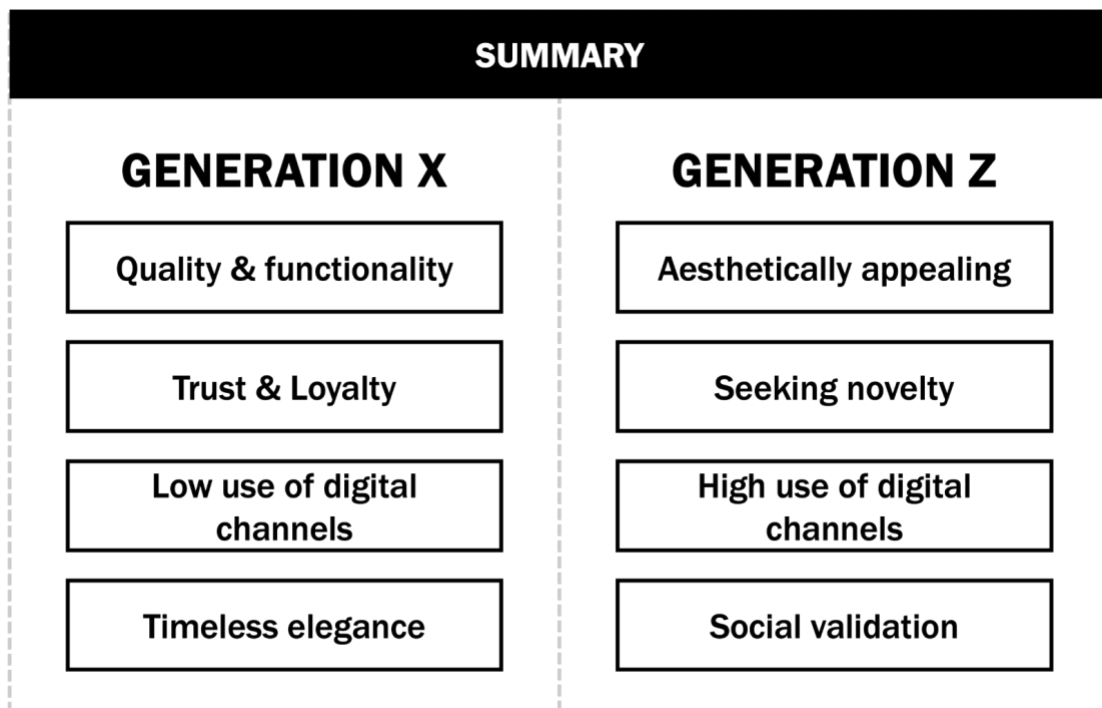


Figure 9: Summary of key findings for Generation X and Generation Z

4.1 Swedish Approach to Luxury

The interviews revealed a distinctly Swedish approach to luxury. Rather than seeking exclusivity or overt status display, respondents from both generations emphasized the importance of accessibility, subtlety, and a preference for Scandinavian brands. These findings suggest that luxury in a Swedish context is often understated and shaped by cultural values.

4.1.1 Preference for Accessible Luxury

During the exploratory interviews, 4 out of 24 interviewees expressed a preference for accessible luxury that can be used day-to-day, without being prompted about the price point or accessibility. This encouraged us to dig deeper into this preference in the in-depth interviews and explicitly ask about what level of luxury they preferred and prioritized when making a luxury purchase. Out of the 10 in-depth interviews, 7 expressed a clear preference for accessible luxury by using words like “everyday life”, “attainable”, and “not be afraid to use it”. The

other 3 didn't express a clear preference for either accessible or inaccessible luxury.

"I don't like things that feel 'too luxurious', you know, items that are just meant to be shown off. For me, it has to feel like something I'll actually use in everyday life, otherwise it just feels unnecessary. I prefer luxury that's discreet and practical."

Generation X, Exploratory (1)

"I want to choose products that make me feel good, not just because they're stylish or trendy. They have to reflect who I am, my identity and style, and what I want to express. It's not just about the item or brand being luxurious, it's about how it makes me feel."

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

"I buy luxury products that I can use in my everyday life without being afraid to actually wear them."

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

These quotes indicate that accessible luxury is a preferred position on the luxury spectrum for Swedish customers, and that luxury is something that should be used, not displayed as if in a museum. Rather than keeping luxury items hanging in the wardrobe for special occasions, many respondents preferred items they could use and wear regularly without hesitation.

4.1.2 Scandinavian Aesthetic

A preference for Swedish and Scandinavian luxury brands emerged across both generational groups, with 16 out of 34 respondents explicitly mentioning such brands when asked about what brands signify luxury for them. These brands, including Toteme, Tiger of Sweden, Acne, Filippa K, Eton, and Stenströms, were described as reliable, well-made, and aligned with a distinctly Scandinavian aesthetic characterized by neutral colors and minimalism. Rather than viewing

luxury through the lens of global fashion houses, many respondents found luxury in brands that reflected Scandinavian style.

For both Generation Z and Generation X, Swedish luxury brands were not just familiar, they were trusted. The word “quality” was used by 6 out of 24 exploratory respondents to describe these brands, reflecting perceptions of reliability, consistency, and the sense that they “just work.” A Generation X respondent captured this sentiment when speaking about her long-standing loyalty to Tiger of Sweden:

“Tiger has always worked for me, I know I can trust the fit and the style. It’s classic, not too bold, but it always feels right. I don’t have to overthink it, it just works.”

Generation X, Exploratory (22)

This sentiment was mirrored by Generation Z participants as well. One young respondent highlighted the understated elegance of Toteme, noting:

“Toteme is a brand I really like, it’s Swedish and feels very clean and intentional in its design. It’s luxurious, but in a subtle way. It works really well with the Scandi style I prefer. Minimalist, but still exclusive.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (12)

The preference for these brands was not purely aesthetic. One respondent explicitly expressed pride in supporting Swedish or Scandinavian labels, suggesting a deeper cultural identification with local design.

“I think we’re pretty proud of Swedish and Scandinavian brands. They feel like part of our identity, and I think us Swedes tend to buy more of them, maybe even without realizing it.”

Generation Z, In-depth (9)

Altogether, these findings highlight how the respondents prefer Scandinavian designs and associate these with luxury.

4.1.3 Understatement and Subtle Signaling

Across 9 in-depth interviews and 5 exploratory interviews, respondents expressed a preference for understated luxury. While the importance of owning luxury items remained clear, there was a strong aversion to flashy logos or overt displays of wealth. Instead, value was placed on discretion and owning something luxurious that does not need to be loudly and conspicuously signaled.

“I don’t think it needs to be obvious that something is expensive. For me, luxury isn’t about showing off. It should feel exclusive, without having to prove anything.”

Generation X, Exploratory (23)

“I almost feel a bit tired of status showing off. So when I do buy something luxurious, it’s primarily the quality that I value, and I buy it for my own sake, not for others. I think I’ve matured a bit and shifted from focusing only on status to a mix of status and quality.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (18)

“Luxurious jewelry shouldn’t be very large, it should be smaller and simpler.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (15)

This disdain for flashy luxury found in the exploratory interviews was interesting, as it was in line with the Swedish “Jantelagen” mindset. It prompted us to explore it further in the in-depth interviews, where all but one respondent expressed that luxury is not luxurious if it is too obvious. Rather than relying on overt logos, these quotes indicate that Swedish luxury consumers look for luxury items that are quietly luxurious. One Generation Z participant explained:

“Burberry can definitely be luxury, but it really depends on how you wear it and which product it is. If it feels too obvious or too flashy, it kind of loses that feeling. I think it’s more luxurious when it’s subtle, when only some people recognize it.”

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

And a Generation X respondent affirmed his preference for discreet luxury, and added his own observation of what he saw across Sweden when asked about different types of luxury:

“I prefer discreet luxury, and from what I’ve seen, most other Swedes prefer it as well.”

Generation X, In-depth (3)

Across generations, understated luxury was seen as more tasteful, and flashier consumption was dismissed or avoided. Not because it was financially inaccessible, but because it did not align with how luxury is meant to feel in a Swedish context: quiet and intentional.

The cultural emphasis on modesty and understatement was particularly striking to participants with international backgrounds. One respondent, originally from Brazil, reflected on how luxury in Sweden is far more discreet compared to her home country:

“In Brazil, it’s about showing that you have money and luxury is used as a status symbol. Here in Sweden, you’re supposed to know something is luxurious, but not show it off. It’s quieter, more subtle.”

Generation X, In-depth (4)

She noted that Swedish luxury is often so understated that it can be difficult to know what is considered luxurious at all. Referring to the experience of moving to Sweden as an adult, she described it as hard to interpret the local style, adding:

“It really is ‘if you know, you know.’ I’m so glad my children have grown up here so they’ve learned from the start what’s considered luxurious in Sweden since it’s so subtle.”

Generation X, In-depth (4)

A Generation X respondent who grew up in Poland shared a similar reflection:

“In Poland, people are very likely to show that they can afford things. In Sweden, you can tell people want to buy quality, but not in a way that stands out. It’s more low-key here.”

Generation X, In-depth (1)

These reflections stress that the Swedish approach to luxury is not only shaped by purchasing power, but also by cultural norms. In this context, luxury becomes a form of quiet cultural fluency, a subtle language that is not always intuitive to outsiders but learned over time through social exposure. This highlights the importance of aligning retail strategies with cultural belonging and aesthetic literacy.

4.2 Perception of Luxury

The interviews revealed how perceptions of luxury diverge between Generation X and Generation Z, highlighting a generational shift from a functional understanding of luxury to one increasingly centered on aesthetic expression. The empirical findings illustrate how each generation perceives luxury differently which in turn shapes their underlying motives for luxury consumption, which are further explored in chapter 4.3.

4.2.1 From Functional Utility to Aesthetic Appeal

For Generation X respondents, the core perception of luxury revolved around quality. Luxury was perceived not solely in terms of appearance, but in how a

product felt, how it performed, and, above all, how well it endured over time. Quality was described in various ways, but 14 out of 16 Generation X respondents explained it as something that endures both functionally and aesthetically over time. All Generation X respondents in the in-depth interviews emphasized high-quality materials as a key factor contributing to a product's overall quality. One respondent described it as follows:

"Quality to me is something that lasts a long time, not just that it doesn't wear out, but that it also looks good over time. It should be made from good materials, no synthetic fibers, preferably natural materials that both feel comfortable and last long."

Generation X, In-depth (4)

In addition to quality, functionality was mentioned as a central characteristic of luxury by 7 out of 16 Generation X respondents, reflecting their practical approach towards luxury. Products should not only appear luxurious but must perform well and serve a clear purpose. One respondent exemplified this through a preference for Eton shirts, explaining that the choice of this particular brand was based on practical attributes such as fit and comfort.

"I have owned shirts from them [Eton] before, and I know both the fit and comfort are excellent. They maintain their shape over time, and I particularly appreciate how easily and practically the shirt can be adjusted from slim fit to regular fit, something the salesperson showed me."

Generation X, In-depth (3)

Another respondent highlighted functionality in skincare, justifying the purchase of Dior face cream not by its prestige or branding, but because of its functionality.

"I struggle with eczema and had previously tried many less expensive creams, but none of them worked effectively. When I switched to this Dior cream, I noticed an

immediate difference, it simply does what it's supposed to, so I see no reason to change. I also appreciate that the ingredients are high-quality and gentle on my sensitive skin."

Generation X, In-depth (5)

While Generation Z respondents also valued tangible aspects such as quality and functionality, they did not emphasize these attributes to the same extent as Generation X. Only 3 out of 18 Generation Z respondents mentioned functionality when describing luxury, compared to 7 out of 16 Generation X respondents. Instead, Generation Z's perception of luxury was largely centered on aesthetics and the broader experience surrounding the product. For many, luxury was not solely defined by the product itself, but also by its visual presentation and packaging. This aesthetic view of luxury was expressed by 11 out of 18 Generation Z respondents. The following quotes exemplify the importance of the aesthetic dimension and the surrounding context of the luxury experience.

"It was simply the one that looked the best and had the style I was going for. I looked at less expensive options, but none of them had the same look, and in the end the style mattered more to me than the price or the brand."

Generation Z, In-depth (9)

"Packaging is the number one thing that makes a product luxurious, it has to come in a beautiful package. The brand matters too, of course, but it's really the appearance that makes it feel luxurious. The product needs to have that luxury look."

Generation Z, Exploratory (2)

"When you open it, there's nice wrapping, maybe a little card, it's that extra service and feeling they can charge more for. It becomes a full package."

Generation Z, Exploratory (17)

Among Generation X, price in itself was not seen as a symbol of status. Instead, it was justified when linked to superior quality and performance, an explanation given by 4 out of 5 Generation X participants in the in-depth interviews. As one respondent reflected in relation to luxury skincare:

"You end up paying a premium but it's worth it when the product actually works. It's not about the brand or the price tag itself, but about the fact that you've found something that truly delivers on what it promises."

Generation X, In-depth (5)

Thus, for Generation X respondents, price acted as a signal of quality, not as a statement of prestige. In contrast, 12 out of 18 Generation Z respondents directly associated a high price with the perception of luxury. A high price was interpreted as a signal of exclusivity, status, and belonging to a certain lifestyle. One Generation Z respondent explained:

"A high price tag gives an imagined sense of value even if the product isn't necessarily better in terms of quality."

Generation Z, In-depth (9)

Another Generation Z respondent linked the high price of luxury goods to their long-term value on the second-hand market. The potential to resell these items at a high price was described as a key factor that contributes to their sense of luxury and distinguishes them from non-luxury products.

"Part of what makes it luxury is that you can resell it and it still holds value. You could buy a Hermès bag today and sell it ten years later for even more than you paid."

Generation Z, Exploratory (18)

4.2.2 From Heritage to Novelty

For Generation X, brand heritage emerged as an influential aspect of how luxury is perceived. Among the Generation X respondents in the in-depth interviews, 4 out of 5 valued brands with a long-standing reputation for quality, timeless design, and craftsmanship, viewing these attributes as signals of trust and consistent quality. One of these respondents highlighted how a brand's heritage and long-term personal experience reinforce their perception of luxury.

"The brand [Stenströms] has been around for many years, and I've been buying from them for a long time and never been disappointed. That makes me trust them and for me it's luxury"

Generation X, In-depth (3)

Another Generation X respondent identified Burberry as a symbol of luxury, highlighting the brand's strong heritage with its iconic check print.

"For me, Burberry represents luxury because of its strong heritage, their iconic checkered design has remained consistent over the years which reflects both tradition and timeless style"

Generation X, In-depth (2)

On the other hand, only 3 out of 18 respondents from Generation Z associated luxury with brand heritage. Although some acknowledged a brand's history as interesting or valuable, it was not described as a key factor influencing their choice of luxury brands. When asked whether or not a brand had to be old to be considered luxury, a Generation Z respondent said:

"I don't think much about whether the brand is old or not, what matters is how it looks."

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

Among Generation Z, 10 out of 16 participants expressed an openness to trying new luxury brands, as long as they came recommended or had received positive reviews online. These quotes indicate that brand heritage is not necessarily seen as a characteristic of luxury; rather, it is often perceived or reinforced through luxurious communication and branding.

"I came across a new brand for luxury workout clothes that I'd never heard of before, but I kept seeing it on social media where several influencers, unsponsored I think, praised their products. After a few months, I actually ended up ordering from them."

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

"I am open to trying new luxury brands. For example, if you [a friend] have a nice shirt from a brand I haven't heard of before, I'll probably check out their website later to see what they offer."

Generation Z, Exploratory (18)

"I'm here today for the opening of a new brand's store. Even though they're new, they've managed to attract me and my friends through smart collaborations and strong marketing."

Generation Z, Exploratory (14)

Luxury goods were perceived to be non-essential, and that their basic purpose could be fulfilled by items at lower price. This view was expressed by 8 Generation X respondents and 7 Generation Z participants.

"It [luxury] could be something you absolutely don't need or something you do need, but you choose an alternative that you just think is a little bit better."

Generation X, In-depth (5)

"Luxury isn't always something I need, but something I want and can treat myself to."

Generation X, In-depth (2)

4 out of 5 in-depth Generation Z interviewees also associated traditional luxury with a sense of superfluosity, and this perception was reflected upon and thoughtfully questioned. One in-depth interviewee explored this idea by referring to what he called mainstream luxury, describing it as "unnecessary and boastful"

"The value doesn't lie in the product itself, but in the eyes of the observer. It's like art, not based on anything real."

Generation Z, In-depth (8)

Rather than outright rejecting the superfluosity often associated with luxury, he used it as a starting point to reflect on what luxury means to him personally. In his view, luxury should be about longevity and reusability, products designed to endure, not just for the original owner, but across multiple users and lifecycles. As someone who primarily shops second-hand, durability and lasting quality were essential criteria in his understanding of what truly defines a luxury product. This perspective adds nuance to Generation Z's view of luxury, suggesting that while traditional notions of excess are being questioned, luxury is also increasingly interpreted as something responsible, long-lasting, and connected to sustainability.

"When I choose to purchase from a luxury brand, I want it to be a conscious decision. That's why I only choose brands and products that last. Sometimes it's hard to justify an expensive purchase, but if it's a more sustainable choice in the long run, then the higher up-front cost can be worth it."

Generation Z, In-depth (8)

While this more critical perspective was expressed by one specific Generation Z respondent, 3 other participants in the generational cohort also placed greater emphasis on sustainability when describing luxury. One Generation Z respondent reflected on the pressure to choose sustainable fashion over fast fashion and expressed that the luxury market offers a broader selection of high-quality, more environmentally responsible options.

“Sometimes I feel pressure to avoid fast fashion, especially with the rise of brands like Shein. That’s why luxury feels like a more responsible choice, if I invest in something I can wear for many years, it feels more worth it.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

4.3 Motives Behind Luxury Consumption

This chapter explores the primary drivers behind luxury consumption among Generation X and Z in three sub-themes. While each theme was mentioned across generations, it was clear that Generation X participants primarily consumed luxury due to the superior quality and timelessness, whereas Generation Z respondents tended to value luxury as a source of joy, identity, and social validation.

4.3.1 Product-Centric: From Timelessness to Personal Relevance

Participants from both cohorts, 14 out of 16 Generation X respondents and 9 out of 18 Generation Z respondents, motivated luxury purchases as a type of investment. However, for Generation X, this investment was primarily focused on the functional, timeless, and durable qualities of luxury, with the intention of using the product themselves over an extended period. In contrast, Generation Z respondents were more likely to view luxury as a financial investment, emphasizing the importance of maintaining product quality for potential resale. When asked, “What is the primary reason for choosing luxury products, as opposed to less luxurious alternatives?”, three respondents explained:

“Because it’s well-made and I know I’ll be able to use it for a long time. It’s an investment rather than an impulse decision.”

Generation X, Exploratory (21)

“I can keep it for a very, very long time, and it will still keep its quality.”

Generation X, Exploratory (6)

“It will last longer and I see it as an investment.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (12)

“You can sell it second-hand at a later time and there will still be a high value in the product.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (17)

Beyond physical durability, 6 exploratory and 3 in-depth participants highlighted the importance of enduring style. Among 6 Generation X respondents in particular, timelessness in design was viewed as an extension of functionality. It was not seen merely as an aesthetic preference, but rather as a defining feature that contributes to an item’s long-term relevance.

“I make sure to buy timeless pieces. At least if it’s something I want to last for a long time.”

Generation X, In-depth (5)

“I want it to be classic and timeless when I buy a luxury product.”

Generation X, In-depth (2)

“I buy very few clothes, but when I do, I try to avoid things that are trendy right now. I want to make sure I’ll be able to use it for the coming years. To be able to keep it in my closet and take it out whenever, since it’ll always be in style.”

Generation X, Exploratory (6)

In contrast, Generation Z participants rarely spoke about timelessness in isolation. While respondents did value style, with all 5 in-depth respondents explicitly talking about personal style, their primary motive for purchasing luxury leaned more towards personal relevance in the moment, rather than longevity of appearance.

“I really want to take care of myself and choose things that make me feel good and fit my identity and style. I want to combine functionality with items that look good and make me feel good.”

Generation Z, In-depth (9)

“I guess I tend to choose things that are trendy right now but within a timeless style, if you know what I mean? For example, right now I’m looking for a suit, which is timeless, but in an oversized style, since it’s trendy.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

Although sustainability was not deeply discussed in the exploratory interviews, only briefly mentioned by 1 Generation X and 1 Generation Z participant, it emerged more clearly in the in-depth interviews with 3 Generation Z participants. Their reflections on the motives behind luxury consumption echoed perspectives already introduced in chapter 4.2.2, where these Generation Z respondents redefined luxury as socially conscious and sustainable. The idea that luxury’s premium can be justified through longevity and reusability strengthens a broader Generation Z narrative: that luxury consumption can offer an ethical counterpoint to fast fashion.

“Sometimes it’s hard to justify an expensive purchase, but if it’s a more sustainable choice in the long run, then the higher up-front cost can be worth it.”

Generation Z, In-depth (8)

“Sometimes I feel pressure to avoid fast fashion, especially with the rise of brands like Shein. That’s why luxury feels like a more responsible choice, if I invest in something I can wear for many years, it feels more worth it.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

4.3.2 Social: From Self-Assurance to Peer Validation

While both generations acknowledged the influence of others in their luxury consumption, 11 out of 18 Generation Z respondents placed significantly more emphasis on the social visibility of their purchases, particularly through digital platforms, compared to only 5 out of 16 Generation X respondents mentioning social influence as a motive for purchasing luxury.

For Generation Z, social influence plays a central role in shaping luxury consumption. All Generation Z in-depth and 5 exploratory respondents described how their purchasing decisions are shaped by input from friends, family, and social media.

“On social media, you see products that look luxurious because influencers and celebrities are wearing them, but then you realize it’s not actually a luxury brand, yet you still associate the product with luxury. Less luxurious products can feel luxurious on social media.”

Generation Z, In-depth (9)

“The feeling of having bought the ‘right’ brand, a brand many of my friends also have. It gives a sort of validation.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

“Not about function, but... status. Like, how the brand is perceived by the public.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (3)

“Social factors have probably been amplified by social media, because now you’re exposed not only to the friends you see daily, but also to your friends’ friends and so on.”

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

“I really like that brand since my friends use it.”

Generation Z, In-depth (20)

Beyond aspirational role models, 6 Generation Z respondents also described seeking advice and confirmation from their immediate social circle when considering a purchase. This indirect social validation was framed as a form of reassurance; trusting others’ taste helped reinforce their own decisions:

“I do quite a lot of research... but I really value my mom’s and sister’s opinions.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

“Often it’s an item from a brand my friends have spoken highly of. I know they have good taste, and I trust their judgment.”

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

In contrast, 5 out of 16 Generation X respondents described a more subtle and selective experience of social influence. While they acknowledged being shaped by their social context, they tended to emphasize personal experience and self-assurance over external validation. Social feedback was appreciated but not actively sought out:

“Do I ask around among friends or so...? No, I think I turn more inward and ask myself what I like.”

Generation X, Exploratory (5)

Rather than digital exposure, Generation X referenced influence from close, long-standing relationships, particularly partners and family members. Their consumption habits were not necessarily disconnected from social input, but the influence was more stable and localized:

“You’re influenced by your social circles.”

Generation X, Exploratory (8)

“I’ve received a lot of compliments.”

Generation X, Exploratory (6)

While peer validation and social exposure played a key role in shaping the luxury preferences of the respondents, they were also closely tied to deeper identity-related motives. Beyond seeking approval, consumers used luxury as a way to navigate the tension between belonging and individuality. A dual desire was expressed by 7 Generation Z respondents: to belong to aspirational social circles while also subtly carving out a unique identity. This generational cohort used luxury as a social tool, not necessarily to stand out, but to signal affiliation with a certain lifestyle or group:

“I guess I want to belong to a certain group of people... and my clothes and furniture should reflect that.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (14)

Yet this drive to belong was tempered by a caution not to blend in completely. Instead of overt rebellion or full conformity, Generation Z sought a curated individuality within socially accepted boundaries:

“I prefer not to buy trendy products that everyone else has (like Chimis or Lanvin shoes). But at the same time, I wouldn’t buy something no one has, like a pink striped shirt, instead I’d probably buy a classic blue one. I never chase trends. I

don't want to have the same items as my friends, but I also don't want to stand out too much."

Generation Z, In-depth (7)

"Nowadays I actually feel the opposite. If close friends, colleagues or family have a product, I usually don't want to buy the same one. I'd rather be more unique. It could still be the same brand if I like it, but very rarely the exact same item."

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

Four respondents described a desire to stand out, but only just enough. Being too unique risked social dissonance; instead, uniqueness was framed within accepted aesthetic codes. This was reflected in a preference for styles that were discreet but signaled taste to those "in the know":

"It can't be too unique... subtlety can also be unique."

Generation Z, Exploratory (12)

"Either you got it or you don't"

Generation Z, In-depth (7)

This logic of "quiet luxury" spoke to the social capital of subtle differentiation: being able to express uniqueness in a way that resonated with peers who understood the code. It was not about loud branding, but about the right cut, material, or brand; things that communicated taste without screaming status. As such, Generation Z did not seek total individuality, but rather differentiation within a shared value system.

In contrast, five Generation X respondents appeared less driven by peer comparison and more by internalized standards. While there was still influence from one's social environment, such as workplace norms, their motivations were more rooted in self-assurance:

"If I want something, I want it."

Generation X, Exploratory (11)

"My colleagues usually wear suits, so that influences me indirectly. You want to look proper and fit in, but I don't buy something just because someone else has it."

Generation X, Exploratory (21)

"I want to look like others, but a little better. I prefer when few others have the same luxury product."

Generation X, In-depth (3)

It's important to note that while both generations mentioned aspects of peer affirmation and social status when discussing motives behind luxury purchases, this was by far much more prominent among Generation Z participants, indicating that social validation is a major driving force behind luxury consumption.

4.3.3 Hedonic: From Need-Based Consumption to Treating Oneself

For many respondents, the value of a luxury purchase was not only the object itself but also the emotions it evoked and the experience surrounding it. While both generations expressed hedonic value in some form, Generation Z articulated these motives to a larger extent.

Among Generation Z, 7 out of 18 participants lifted the idea of luxury consumption as a form of self-reward; a way to celebrate milestones, lift one's mood, or simply feel deserving of something special. The only exploratory participants to express this sense of indulgence, without being prompted to do so, were 2 Generation Z respondents, leading us to want to dig deeper into this in the in-depth interviews. All Generation Z answered a clear "yes" without having to think when asked if they'd bought luxury for this hedonic purpose. Rather than being strictly needs-

based, luxury consumption was framed by these respondents as an emotional act tied to joy, self-expression, and meaningful moments.

“I was looking for something to give me a confidence boost in preparation for job interviews, and treating myself to a nice dress-shirt instead of a less luxurious alternative would give me that boost I needed.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

It can be on occasions when I’ve accomplished something I’m proud of. I’m planning to make a bigger luxury purchase when I graduate. I also got a nice luxury bag when I finished high school.”

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

“If I’m feeling good and have the time, I might treat myself to something of better quality than I originally intended, and buy a luxury item I’ve been thinking about for a while.”

Generation Z, In-depth (9)

In contrast, Generation X participants rarely described luxury consumption as an emotional reward. While 2 in-depth participants acknowledged that luxury could be about rewarding oneself or feeling good, these sentiments were less central and more conflicted. Some respondents even distanced themselves from emotional consumption altogether, emphasizing practicality or downplaying the happiness that luxury might bring. When asked whether they had ever bought a luxury item to reward themselves, 2 Generation X respondents replied:

“You buy expensive goods because you can, because you want to treat yourself. But even so, it doesn’t make you happy.”

Generation X, In-depth (4)

“No, I mainly buy due to necessity, like if I need a new blazer to update my wardrobe.”

Generation X, In-depth (3)

Closely linked to the idea of treating oneself is the emphasis placed on the experience surrounding luxury consumption, especially by Generation Z. While emotional rewards and self-celebration often motivated the purchase itself, it was the experience, how the luxury moment felt, that amplified the sense of indulgence and made the consumption memorable and justified. For Generation Z, a key motive for luxury consumption was the desire for immersion, for something to feel special and memorable. Out of 18 respondents, 10 expressed that a luxury purchase should be an 'event' or 'experience' rather than a transaction, indicating that they value the atmosphere and sense of occasion as much as the item they leave with.

“I also think you want some kind of physical element for it to feel luxurious. A luxury purchase should be an event, an experience. Not just an errand.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

“Moonswatch. I had thought about it and looked at it a lot. The timing was right in Milan and it was available in-store [...] it was really cool afterward to open the box and put it on.”

Generation Z, In-depth (7)

“It's the extra service and experience that they can charge more for. It becomes like a whole package when you buy it.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (18)

“If you're shopping at NK, you might as well visit the store and buy it physically. It's really fun to just walk around, and getting the NK bag is a bonus too.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (14)

“I love walking around NK if I have the time.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (15)

While 4 out of 16 Generation X participants communicated an appreciation for a refined store environment, this was not a primary driver behind their luxury purchases. The motive was more commonly tied to functionality, product quality, or long-term use. Experiences seemed to enhance the purchase, but were not central to justifying the cost or decision, and Generation X consumers tended to frame positive experiences as supporting factors; useful and appreciated, but not the reason behind the luxury purchase. However, one Generation X exploratory participant did highlight the fact that he chose a luxury firm because of the personnel’s expertise, leading to a better purchase.

“I think it’s professional here, the salespeople make it easy to find the right things.

You get really good help.”

Generation X, Exploratory (1)

This reflects a more utilitarian mindset where the experience is a bonus rather than a primary motive. Appreciation for service and environment was expressed, but it was more functional (e.g., “good service = better product outcome”) rather than hedonic.

4.4 Customer Journey for Luxury Purchases

This section examines generational differences along the luxury customer journey. Generation Z, as digital natives, are used to navigating online environments, a pattern especially visible in the engagement phase, where they conduct extensive research before making a purchase. In contrast, Generation X places strong emphasis on customer service at the moment of purchase, particularly for luxury items. While Generation Z expects a seamless experience across both online and physical channels, Generation X prefers in-store

interactions rooted in trust and personal guidance. Post-purchase, Generation X tends to remain loyal to brands that meet expectations, whereas Generation Z is more selective and harder to retain.

4.4.1 Engagement: From Familiarity to Exploration

Generation Z respondents had a habit of doing extensive research before making a purchase, a behavior that intensified when it came to more expensive products such as luxury items, as expressed by 13 out of 16 respondents. Even when respondents were already familiar with a brand, they rarely purchased without first revisiting product reviews and comparing alternatives, a theme explored in more detail during the in-depth interviews.

“I usually spend quite a bit of time comparing different options, especially when it’s a more expensive purchase. I like to really look into what I’m buying, often by checking different websites and reading reviews.”

Generation Z, In-depth (8)

“I did a lot of research beforehand which I always do. I looked at different models, which brands offered that type of shirt, the prices, and which one I thought looked best. I had bought many times from Stenströms before, so I knew them a bit better than some other brands, but I still did thorough research before making the purchase.”

Generation Z, In-depth (7)

For Generation Z respondents, social media played a central role in the engagement phase of the luxury customer journey and was mentioned in some form in all 18 Generation Z interviews. Inspiration emerged through visual content and influencer recommendations on social media, shaping Generation Z respondents’ preferences long before any purchase decision is made. Among Generation Z respondents, 7 out of 18 described passively encountering luxury products via social media and gradually developing an interest in them. The visual

repetition of a product, particularly when shared by influencers or peers, increased its perceived desirability and familiarity.

"I came across a new brand for luxury workout clothes that I'd never heard of before, but I kept seeing it on social media where several influencers, unsponsored I think, praised their products. After a few months, I actually ended up ordering from them."

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

"I saw it on TikTok several times. I didn't know the brand, but it kind of stuck with me. Eventually, I felt like I had to try it."

Generation Z, Exploratory (13)

In contrast, Generation X respondents actively distanced themselves from using social media as a source of inspiration. A majority of respondents, 14 out of 16, stated that they rarely conduct online research and instead tend to rely on the same trusted brands, especially when it comes to luxury purchases. Inspiration stemmed from more traditional sources such as fashion magazines, both digital and printed, personal recommendations, in-store displays, or brand websites.

"I find most of my inspiration in Italian Vogue. Sometimes I also check my favorite brands' websites to see what's new. I don't like Swedish fashion magazines as much, but one time I saw a bag from Marc O'Polo in one, and I went out and bought it right away."

Generation X, In-depth (1)

4.4.2 Moment of Purchase: From Assistance to Autonomy

Although Generation Z are digital natives and highly accustomed to online shopping, many respondents expressed that luxury purchases still require a physical store experience, with 12 out of 18 mentioning the importance of the physical environment. While convenience and accessibility drove their online

habits for most product categories, luxury was consumed differently since it carries a sense of occasion, investment, and reward, making the store visit part of the emotional experience.

“When I buy something luxurious, it’s not because I need it, it’s because I want to treat myself. And then I also want to enjoy the experience of going into a store.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

A significant majority of Generation Z respondents, 14 out of 18, described adopting a hybrid shopping approach where they began by browsing online for inspiration, compared models and prices, and narrowed down their options, but finalized the purchase in-store. This behavior was tied to the desire to see the product in person or try out the size and fit before committing to a more expensive purchase. This hybrid approach was also used in the opposite direction, browsing in-store to get a feel of the product and then finalizing the purchase online, often because of price comparisons online.

“Even though I already owned shirts from the brand, I still wanted to try that specific model in-store.”

Generation Z, In-depth (7)

“If it is available in-store, I would prefer to get it there”

Generation Z, Exploratory (3)

“I view it as showrooming. Walking around and browsing in stores and then ordering it online where I get some peace and quiet.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (17)

For Generation X, a strong preference for physical stores emerged in the interviews, with 13 out of 16 respondents reporting that they made all of their luxury purchases in-store. Respondents often described in-store shopping as

more reliable and personal particularly when it came to luxury purchases. 2 out of 5 in-depth Generation X respondents explicitly expressed a hesitation toward online luxury shopping, citing past negative experiences such as complicated returns and uncertainty about sizing or product quality.

“I prefer going into a store. I’ve had too many bad experiences ordering online, things not fitting, needing to send them back. It becomes too much of a hassle.”

Generation X, In-depth (4)

“I ordered clothes online years ago, but it didn’t go well, you have no idea what you’re going to get. It might not look like you expected or fit properly. It can be such a flop that you just end up laughing at it. That’s why I stick to physical stores.”

Generation X, In-depth (5)

One Generation X respondent highlighted the importance of physical stores as a setting for guidance and discovery. He explained that he preferred shopping in-store because it gave him the opportunity to receive personal assistance from staff, which in turn made him more comfortable trying new brands. In contrast, when shopping online, he only bought from brands and models he was already familiar with. This indicates a broader pattern among Generation X, where trust in expert service enables greater openness to new purchases, something they are far less likely to risk in the digital space.

“I mostly shop online for brands and products I already know, because I’m sure about the sizing. But in-store, I can experiment more and try new models especially if I get some help and recommendations from the staff.”

Generation X, In-depth (3)

For Generation X, customer service plays a central and often decisive role in the moment of purchase for a luxury product. Out of 5 in-depth Generation X

respondents, 4 emphasized that a knowledgeable and attentive sales assistant could make the difference between walking away and committing to a purchase.

“I need that physical touchpoint [customer service], I want to try the products and get confirmation from the staff.”

Generation X, In-depth (2)

“The customer service was really good, and that’s something I truly value. I want to be able to ask questions and get help, like when they showed me how to adjust a slim-fit shirt into a custom fit convinced me to buy the shirt.”

Generation X, In-depth (3)

One Generation X respondent illustrated how customer service plays a defining role in distinguishing a luxury purchase from a more ordinary shopping experience.

“The whole experience is different when it comes to a luxury purchase, it’s about building a relationship with the salesperson and feeling exclusive and appreciated. It’s calm, you get to try things on, you get help. You’re treated as an individual, not just one in the crowd.”

Generation X, In-depth (4)

In contrast, all Generation Z in-depth interviewees tended to view customer service as a supporting element, helpful but not decisive. While a friendly and respectful interaction contributed to a positive overall experience, it did not necessarily influence the purchase decision. Based on the in-depth interviews, all Generation Z respondents expressed a preference for sales staff who act as supportive hosts rather than active advisors.

“When I buy things for myself, I rarely trust the sales assistants, I want to evaluate the fit and look myself. People have such different styles, so I’d rather just have someone who’s nice, relaxed, and not too pushy.”

Generation Z, In-depth (7)

4.4.3 Post-Purchase: From Loyal Relationship to Transaction

For Generation Z, the post-purchase relationship is largely transactional. Respondents from this generational cohort indicated that they are accustomed to switching between brands, which means companies must actively invest in maintaining their loyalty through continued relevance and engagement.

“Just because I’ve bought something from a brand once doesn’t mean I’ll go back. It has to stay interesting, relevant and fit my style, otherwise I’ll just try something new.”

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

“There is so much mass-information out there, that anything that isn’t targeted specifically to me gets filtered out. Even discounts get thrown in the bin immediately if they’re not relevant to my specific needs or situation.”

Generation Z, In-depth (10)

Generation X respondents, on the other hand, often described loyalty as a natural outcome of a positive purchase experience. Their connection to a brand deepened when the product met the expectations and when the brand offered opportunities for continued engagement.

“The Dior cream just does what it’s supposed to, and I don’t see any reason to look for another one, that’s why I keep going back to it.”

Generation X, In-depth (5)

7 Generation X respondents described attending members-only events, which they highlighted as positive and relationship-building experiences that contributed to their loyalty to a brand. While these respondents had enjoyed them, there was a clear desire for events that felt more accessible and relevant, rather than overtly exclusive. Respondents appreciated practical inspiration, such as styling sessions with outfit ideas suited for everyday life, as well as wellness and lifestyle activities.

“I really enjoy members-only events and would love to attend them more often, but it’s hard to fit them into a busy schedule with kids. When they’re held around 5 in the afternoon, I usually can’t make it because I need to pick up my children.”

Generation X, In-depth (1)

“I’ve attended several styling events, which I really appreciate, especially the ones hosted by my favorite brands that offer tips and outfit ideas I can actually wear to work.”

Generation X, In-depth (3)

“I believe in those kinds of events like small fashion shows. Not the super fancy kind with high heels and expensive bags, but something more down-to-earth. It helps when they show how to wear the clothes, because things can look boring just hanging on a rack. I prefer when they show how you can style the same blouse in different ways for everyday use.”

Generation X, In-depth (5)

“I went to a yoga event once, it was fun to do an activity like that, especially since I now associate events like those with the brand.”

Generation X, In-depth (2)

In contrast, Generation Z respondents rarely mentioned attending members-only events, which may reflect the fact that such activities are not typically targeted

toward their age group or shopping behavior. However, 4 Generation Z participants did mention they have attended events such as store openings that included goodie bags.

“I’ve never really been to a members-only event, but I’ve been to a few store openings, mostly because they had goodie bags or special offers. I’ve also been invited to pre-sales, and those I usually attend.”

Generation Z, In-depth (6)

“I’m here today for the opening of a new brand’s store. Even though they’re new, they’ve managed to attract me and my friends through smart collaborations and strong marketing.”

Generation Z, Exploratory (14)

5 Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the study's findings in relation to the three research questions and the theoretical background. At the end of each sub-chapter, a visual summary is provided (Figure 10, Figure 11, and Figure 12) to highlight the key insights. The final chapter synthesizes the findings across all research questions, aiming to address the overall purpose of the study and outline managerial implications.

5.1 Generational Perceptions of Luxury

As stated in the theoretical background, luxury is characterized by several dimensions, including quality, price, scarcity, aesthetics, heritage, and superfluousness (Dubois et al., 2001). The empirical findings confirm the presence of many of these dimensions while revealing generational differences in how the dimensions are interpreted. Notably, the attribute of scarcity was largely absent from respondents' perceptions, regardless of generation. Instead, other dimensions took precedence, albeit with diverging emphasis across generational cohorts. The consistent absence of scarcity across both generations is quite notable. While this may reflect the Swedish cultural resistance to exclusivity, deeply rooted in the norm of Jantelagen (Sandemose, 1933), it may also signify the democratization of luxury more broadly, a sentiment echoed by Henigs et al. (2012).

Among Generation X respondents, luxury was predominantly perceived through the lens of excellent quality, particularly functionality and longevity. While other dimensions such as brand heritage and high price were acknowledged, they were often interpreted in utilitarian terms. Heritage, for example, was valued not for its symbolic or historical meaning, as traditionally emphasized in the literature (Dubois et al., 2001; Kapferer, 1997), but rather as a signal of trustworthiness and product performance over time. Similarly, a high price was seen as justified

primarily when it reflected superior materials, durability, or craftsmanship; not as a marker of status or exclusivity. This emphasis on quality as a function of long-term utility resonates strongly with the theoretical characterizations of Generation X as pragmatic, value-conscious consumers (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Himmel, 2008). Rather than seeking products that are excessive or superfluous, which is central to Dubois et al.'s (2001) definition of luxury, Generation X respondents prioritized practical usefulness, aligning with broader generational tendencies toward cautious and necessity driven consumption, which is highlighted by Miller (1993) and Ritchie (1995). The empirical findings therefore challenge the prevailing academic assumption that luxury is inherently non-functional or symbolic. Instead, they suggest that for Swedish Generation X consumers, luxury is appreciated precisely because it performs well and endures, reflecting their utilitarian orientation and brand loyalty grounded in trust and reliability (Pavlic et al., 2021; Rosário & Casaca, 2025). This reinterpretation of luxury may also be influenced by broader Swedish cultural values such as *lagom*, which promotes balance and moderation over extravagance (Parikh, 2025), and *Jantelagen*, which discourages overt displays of superiority (Sandemose, 1933).

Generation Z, on the other hand, articulated a more socially constructed view of luxury and perceived it by its aesthetic appeal. While aesthetics is one of the six characteristics Dubois et al. (2001) propose, the findings demonstrate an interesting shift in how luxury has gone from intrinsic product quality to extrinsic validation. Many Generation Z respondents described luxury as something "recognized" or "validated" as luxurious by peers, influencers, or broader cultural narratives. This suggests that for Generation Z, luxury is not only consumed but also performed, aligning with Morra et al. (2017), who note the growing emotional and symbolic engagement enabled by digital interaction. High price remained a relevant characteristic for Generation Z, yet unlike Generation X, Generation Z did not equate high price with high quality. Instead, price was seen as a reflection of exclusivity, status, and belonging to a certain lifestyle. So while many of the

characteristics of Dubois et al. (2012)'s model were discussed by both generations, the interpretations and justifications for these attributes varied.

Theoretical perspectives suggest that Generation Z is uniquely driven by sustainability concerns, actively seeking out ethical brands, second-hand options, and durable products to align consumption with personal values (Williams & Hodges, 2022; McKinsey, 2024). Our empirical findings align with this framing. Generation Z respondents critically reflected on traditional luxury's perceived superfluousness, expressing a desire for longevity and reusability in luxury purchases. One participant articulated that "*the value doesn't lie in the product itself, but in the eyes of the observer,*" highlighting a shift from status-driven consumption to a more conscious, personal interpretation of luxury. This aligns with Reichheld et al. (2023), who emphasize the generation's preference for sustainable alternatives like second-hand fashion. While theory notes the paradoxical rise of fast fashion among Generation Z (Thomas et al., 2024), our findings illustrate a growing awareness of this contradiction. Some respondents positioned luxury as a sustainable counterpoint to fast fashion, noting that its higher quality and longer lifespan can justify its cost. These reflections suggest that, for many Generation Z consumers, luxury is not inherently at odds with sustainability, instead, it is being redefined through the lens of environmental responsibility.

Based on the empirical data, Generation Z and Generation X perceive luxury goods differently. For Generation X, luxury is primarily perceived by its higher quality compared to non-luxury items, and while high-price and brand heritage are often attributes of luxury, Generation X views these as an indication of higher quality. Generation Z on the other hand primarily perceives luxury goods as something aesthetically pleasing and promoted by aspirational figures, both in real life and social media. Luxury goods are also, according to Generation Z, inherently more sustainable than non-luxurious alternatives. This shift forces established luxury

firms to not just reimagine marketing strategies, but what the concept of luxury actually *is* and what it means to offer luxury goods.

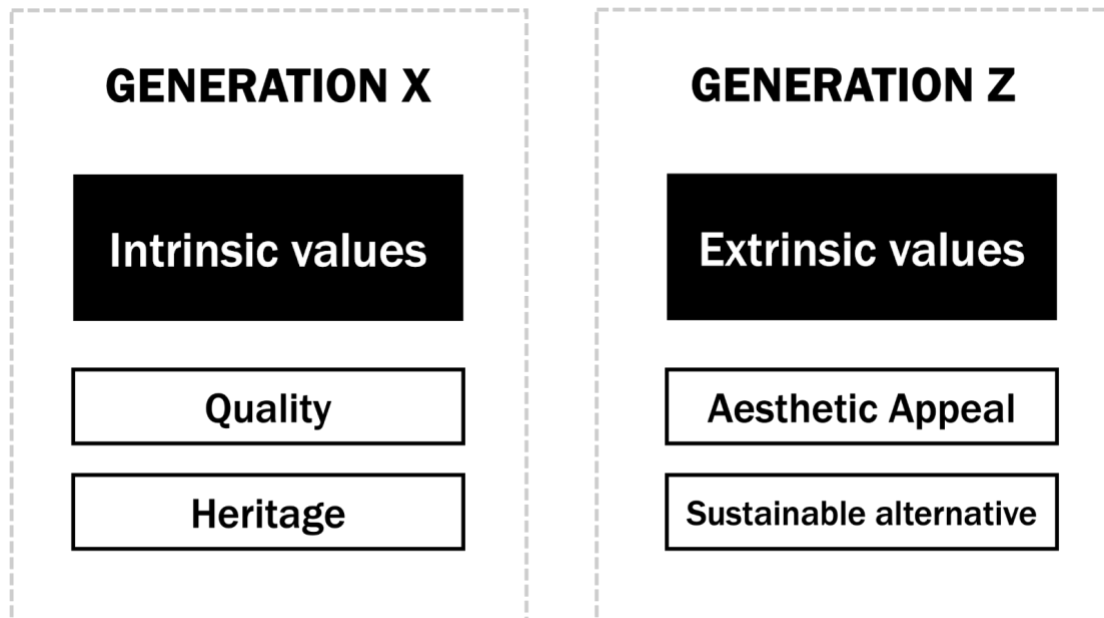


Figure 10: Summary of generational perceptions of luxury

5.2 Generational Motives for Luxury Consumption

Based on the empirical findings, the motives for purchasing luxury aligned closely with how each generation perceives luxury. This relationship between definition and motives is consistent with Kapferer's (1997) argument, which suggests that consumers' definitions and perceptions of luxury significantly influence their purchasing decisions.

The product-centric motives for luxury consumption are discussed by several authors using different terminologies. Wiedmann et al. (2009) identify three key dimensions: quality, usability, and uniqueness. Similarly, Hudders (2012) emphasizes the functional dimensions of luxury, including quality, features, and durability, while Miller and Mills (2012) refer to 'old luxury', which is associated with high quality, exclusivity, and craftsmanship. These product-centric motives are strongly supported by our empirical findings, particularly within Generation X, where respondents consistently highlighted these attributes as primary drivers of their luxury consumption. Specifically, Generation X emphasized the

importance of functional, long-lasting products, a pattern that aligns with the motives described by Hudders (2012), Miller and Mills (2012), and Wiedmann et al. (2009).

However, the empirical findings challenge the view of Kapferer & Bastien (2009), who argue that luxury brands are not primarily purchased for their functional qualities. According to them, while functional attributes may differentiate luxury products from less luxurious alternatives, the true motives behind luxury consumption are more closely tied to social and personal factors. Our data suggests that for Generation X, functional and practical considerations are indeed key drivers, contradicting Kapferer & Bastien's assertion that luxury consumption is mainly motivated by social and personal motives.

Wiedmann et al. (2009) identify financial value as one of several key dimensions that drive luxury consumption, alongside functional, individual, and social value. Within this framework, luxury products can be perceived as “investments” either through their durability and long-term utility or through their potential for financial return. Our findings show that both Generation X and Generation Z respondents described luxury purchases as a form of investment, yet their underlying motives differed notably. For Generation X, the notion of investment was closely linked to product longevity and functional performance, reflecting a utilitarian interpretation aligned with the traditional luxury paradigm centered on quality and enduring value (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). In contrast, Generation Z participants more frequently framed investment in terms of resale potential. This suggests a shift in financial value perception: from personal use over time to potential future exchange value. While the traditional literature often positions high price as a marker of exclusivity or symbolic value (Kapferer, 1997; Dubois et al., 2001), our findings indicate that for younger consumers, price also signals an opportunity for financial return.

Several researchers have examined the social motives behind luxury consumption (Hudders, 2012; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Leibenstein, 1950). Notably, the Veblen effect (Leibenstein, 1950), explains that certain products do not follow traditional supply and demand models but are instead influenced by social factors, such as status and perceived exclusivity. In our empirical findings, Generation X acknowledged being influenced by the social aspects of luxury consumption but to a much lesser extent than Generation Z. Generation X did not prioritize these factors to the same degree as Generation Z, who were more strongly motivated by social validation and belonging.

The snob effect, as defined by Leibenstein (1950), is a concept where individuals seek rare and unattainable luxury goods, believing that scarcity enhances desirability. While this exact definition was not fully confirmed by our empirical data, respondents from both generations emphasized a desire for subtle vertical differentiation, where luxury goods signal superior social status (Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011). However, this desire for differentiation was framed within a uniquely Swedish perspective, influenced by Jantelagen (Sandemose, 1933), which discourages overt displays of superiority. Rather than seeking to stand out dramatically, respondents preferred subtle differentiation. As one respondent put it, *"I want to look like others, but a little better."* This subtlety is a unique take on the snob effect, where status signaling exists but is tempered by the cultural expectation to remain understated.

In contrast to the snob effect, the bandwagon effect (Leibenstein, 1950) reflects luxury consumption driven by the desire to assimilate. The bandwagon effect plays a significant role in the luxury context (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). In luxury consumption, the bandwagon effect leads consumers to purchase high-end goods in order to align with perceived social norms and gain acceptance within desirable groups (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). This aligns with the broader trend observed in our empirical data, where Generation Z respondents consistently

expressed being influenced by social media, which defines trends and can elevate certain brands to luxury status. As aspirational lifestyles are displayed on social media to primarily Generation Z, their behavior can be seen as an example of Leibenstein's (1950) bandwagon effect. This is further strengthened by Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2019) who demonstrate how luxury consumers engage in upward comparisons, aspiring to emulate those of higher social status by using luxury goods as a means of gaining access to perceived superiority. As highlighted in the theory, Gentina et al. (2016) also discuss how the bandwagon effect has been amplified with the increasing use of digital platforms. This phenomenon was further supported by the empirical data, where several Generation Z respondents frequently described how their purchasing decisions are shaped not only by personal preferences but also by an expanding range of social circles, including input from friends, extended social networks, and influencers.

Hedonic motives, which are rooted in the emotional and personal aspects of luxury, often emphasize indulgence, escapism, and self-identity (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Wiedmann et al., 2009). However, the concept of escapism, defined by Banister et al. (2020) as using luxury for a temporary retreat from everyday life, was barely supported by the empirical data. Respondents did not highlight luxury items, such as designer handbags, as symbols of escapism (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Instead, respondents from Generation Z emphasized a new form of escapism, where the focus shifts from material ownership to following aspirational figures, aligning with the idea that engaging with these lifestyles allows consumers to feel part of exclusive social groups and reinforces a sense of belonging to a higher status (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019).

As for indulgence and self-identity, the latter was rarely mentioned. One dimension of indulgence is self-gift giving, where consumers justify luxury purchases as rewards for personal achievements or significant life events (Wiedmann et al., 2009). This aligns with the empirical data from Generation Z,

who expressed luxury purchases as a form of self-reward with several respondents noting that luxury consumption was a way to "unna sig" (treat oneself) for a specific event or occasion. In contrast, Generation X respondents rarely emphasized hedonic or indulgent motives. Their approach to luxury was more restrained and pragmatic, primarily driven by functional needs and long-term value rather than emotional or symbolic rewards. This is consistent with prior studies describing Generation X as necessity-driven, value-conscious consumers who make thoughtful, utilitarian purchase decisions based on practicality and product performance (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Ritchie, 1995).

To summarize the motives behind luxury consumption for Generation Z and Generation X, these motives are closely tied to their perceptions of luxury. Generation X is primarily driven by product-centric motives, placing emphasis on the functionality and practicality of luxury items, which challenges the view of Kapferer & Bastien (2009). In contrast, Generation Z's motives for luxury consumption are more strongly driven by social factors, with a clear desire for social validation and belonging, both in digital spaces and real-world social contexts. Additionally, Generation Z expressed a preference for a new form of escapism, one that requires luxury brands to engage in compelling storytelling that evokes aspirational lifestyles.

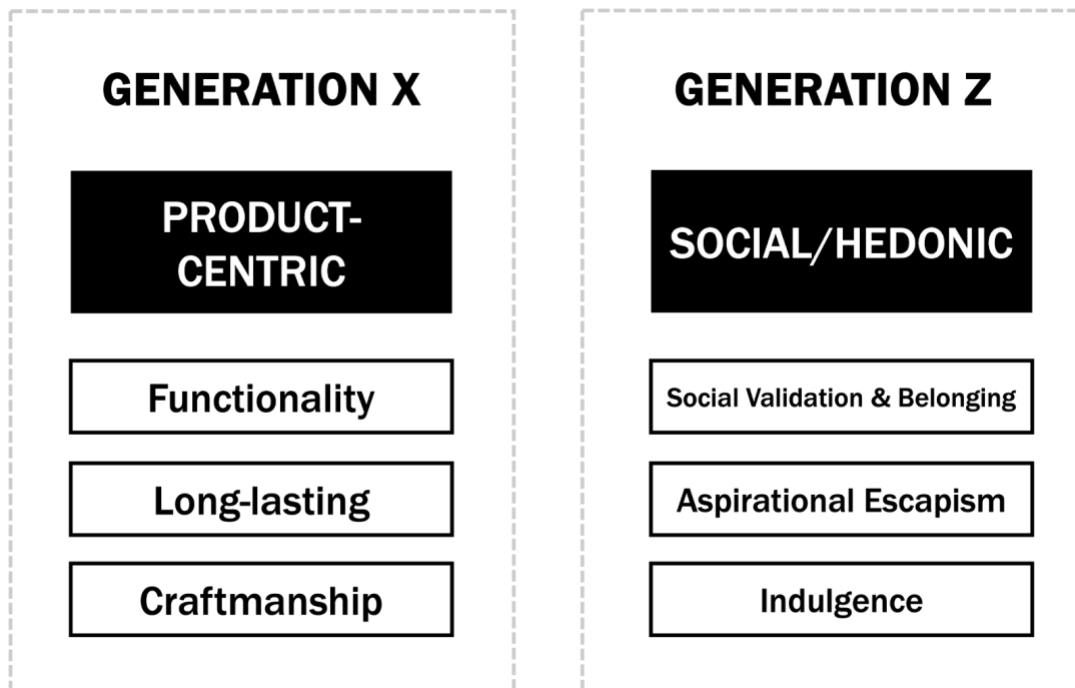


Figure 11: Summary of generational motives for luxury consumption

5.3 Generational Customer Journey for Luxury Purchases

Taking inspiration from Lemon & Verhoef's (2016) customer journey framework, the first phase, defined as pre-purchase, aligns with our definition of engagement, which includes research and exploration. Generation Z, having grown up as digital natives, is highly comfortable navigating seamlessly across various digital platforms (McKinsey, 2024). This digital fluency, combined with their ability to rapidly filter relevant information, likely contributes to our findings that show that Generation Z often engages in extensive research before making a luxury purchase. As discussed in the literature, digital platforms are crucial for Generation Z, serving not only as search engines and tools for product exploration, but also as spaces for engagement within communities (McKinsey, 2024; Enohnyaket et al., 2024). Our data supports this, with all Generation Z respondents indicating they rely on digital platforms for social validation before making a purchase, highlighting the need for luxury brands to respond to this behavior. In contrast, Generation X did not talk about social media to the same

extent; instead, they relied on familiar, previously used brands, resulting in a shorter engagement phase and a lower inclination to explore new options. This behavior aligns with existing research highlighting Generation X's strong brand loyalty and preference for traditional channels (Rosário & Casaca, 2025). This difference underscores how Generation Z's digital use and brand exploration contrast with Generation X's more traditional, brand-loyal approach in the engagement phase.

As digital natives, Generation Z actively seeks out stories that resonate with their personal values and aspirations (Zhang et al., 2023). Social media, as discussed in the theory, plays a crucial role in this dynamic landscape, serving as a powerful platform for engaging & connecting with Generation Z (Zhang et al., 2023; Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014; McKinsey, 2024; Enohnyaket et al., 2024). The empirical data further supports this, showing that Generation Z's desire for personalized experiences and storytelling is central to their engagement with luxury brands. Several respondents emphasized how they look for content that feels tailored to their individual preferences, with a strong desire for brands to speak directly to their values and interests. As consumer expectations evolve, luxury brands must leverage their strength in storytelling, but with a more personalized approach that resonates with the values and aspirations of Generation Z, as also emphasized by Zhang et al. (2023). This means moving beyond traditional channels and embracing new, digital spaces where Generation Z spends their time.

According to our adaptation of Lemon & Verhoef's (2016) framework, the purchase phase includes activities related to choice, ordering, and payment, and can occur either in a physical store or through digital e-commerce platforms. The empirical findings show that Generation X clearly prefers to purchase luxury products in physical stores, aligning with Pavlic et al. (2021), who highlight this generation's overall preference for physical channels in both purchasing and marketing contexts. In contrast, theoretical perspectives emphasize that

Generation Z primarily shops online (McKinsey, 2024), a view not entirely supported by our data. Instead, many Generation Z luxury consumers demonstrated flexibility, purchasing luxury goods both online and offline, indicating that their behavior is not strictly limited to one channel. This flexibility can be understood in light of Gramling et al. (2021), who argue that the pandemic may have intensified the desire for physical interactions, prompting younger consumers to seek both online and in-store experiences. Furthermore, Generation Z showed a strong preference for the shopping experience, which includes not only the store visit but also the packaging and bag, reflecting their desire for an elevated and immersive experience across all touchpoints. This aligns with Saviolo's (2018) view on the importance of integrating touchpoints seamlessly. However, it also highlights the strategic challenges identified by Verhoef et al. (2021), who emphasize the need for brands to combine digital and physical touchpoints effectively, rather than treating them in silos.

One of the most emphasized factors in theory during the purchase phase for luxury products is the importance of customer service, particularly the role of professional sales personnel and positive treatment (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). According to Kapferer and Bastien (2009), the personal advice provided by sales staff is crucial in the luxury sector, highlighting the need for continuous training of sales personnel. Our empirical data supports this, but only within Generation X, where respondents noted that sales personnel played a significant role in their purchase decisions, sometimes even being the deciding factor. In contrast, Generation Z appreciated good treatment from personnel, but was much less dependent on advice from sales staff. This difference could stem from the extensive research Generation Z conducts prior to purchase, making them more self-reliant and less in need of sales guidance.

After completing a transaction, the customer moves into the post purchase phase, according to our adapted framework by Lemon & Verhoef (2016). Court et al. (2009) suggest that the experiences formed during this stage significantly

influence loyalty and future customer journeys. As discussed in theory, Generation X tends to exhibit strong brand loyalty (Rosário & Casaca, 2025), which aligns with our empirical findings, where several Generation X respondents expressed a willingness to return to a brand as long as they were satisfied with the product. The repurchasing behaviors of Generation X, as observed in the empirical data, align with the general traits of this generation being highly loyal (Rosário & Casaca, 2025) and with the theory that their repurchasing decisions are largely influenced by positive brand experiences and a strong sense of trust in the brands they select (Pavlic et al., 2021). This contrasts with Generation Z, who are more challenging to capture and retain (Berkup, 2014), a finding confirmed in our empirical data. Generation Z is accustomed to switching between brands, requiring companies to continually invest in maintaining their engagement by ensuring relevance and ongoing connection. As one respondent put it, *“Just because I’ve bought something from a brand once doesn’t mean I’ll go back. It has to stay interesting, relevant, and fit my style; otherwise, I’ll just try something new.”* This highlights the dynamic nature of Generation Z’s loyalty, where brand relevance is crucial for continued engagement.

Various activities can be implemented during the post-purchase phase to retain customers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Our empirical data reveals that Generation X highly values members-only events as a means of maintaining loyalty. However, their preference leans towards events that feel accessible and relevant, rather than those that are overly exclusive or fashion-forward. In contrast, Generation Z did not emphasize events to the same extent. Instead, they highlighted the importance of personalized offerings, which reflects their expectation for tailored experiences. This preference could be a result of Generation Z’s ability to quickly filter out irrelevant information and offerings that are not specifically customized to their preferences (Turner, 2015). This underscores the importance for firms to focus on personalization to keep Generation Z engaged and satisfied.

To summarize what the customer journey looks like, Generation X and Generation Z vary across all phases. Generation Z spends more time on research, using digital platforms to explore and validate brands, while Generation X prefers sticking to familiar brands, resulting in a shorter engagement phase. During the purchase phase, Generation X values personalized customer service and sales advice, whereas Generation Z is more independent, relying on their research. Although Generation Z is often associated with online shopping, they demonstrate flexibility, shopping both online and offline. In the post-purchase phase, Generation X shows stronger brand loyalty, while Generation Z is more prone to switch brands, requiring ongoing personalization and relevance from luxury firms.

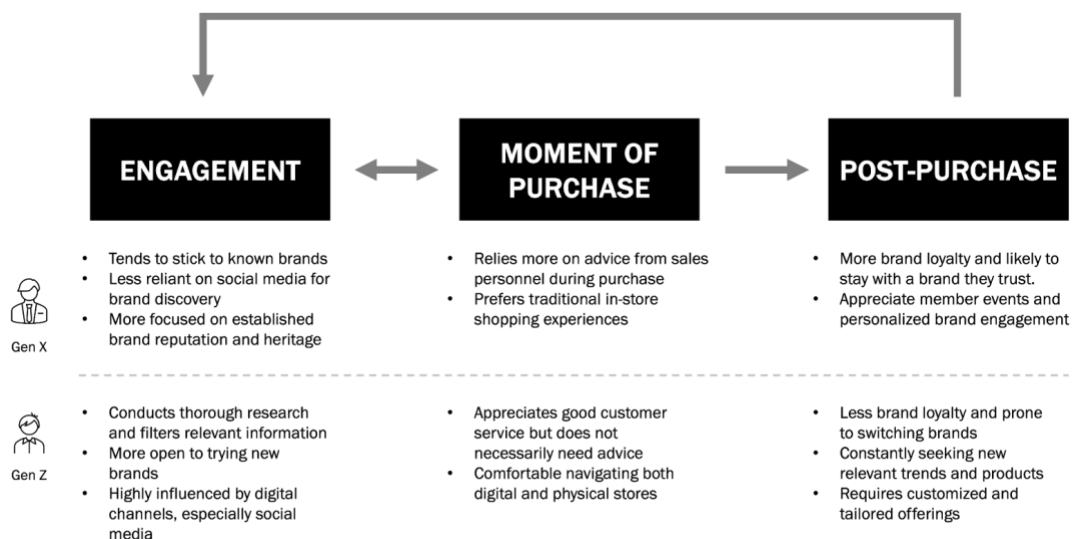


Figure 12: Summary of generational customer journey for luxury purchases

5.4 Strategic Synthesis

A key strategic challenge for firms in conservative industries lies in recognizing and responding to shifts in how customers assign value to products, a process described by Woodruff (1997) as changes in customer *value perception*, and by Verganti (2009) as shifts in product *meaning*. Our findings illustrate how these shifts play out across generational lines in the luxury industry, revealing that what constitutes “luxury” is no longer static. For Generation X, luxury remains tied to

traditional dimensions of value, such as excellent quality and brand heritage, reflecting stable mental models aligned with long-standing industry assumptions (Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). However, among Generation Z, luxury is increasingly perceived by aesthetic appeal and sustainability. This aligns with Ravasi and Rindova's (2008) view that products derive value not from intrinsic attributes alone, but from consumer interpretations shaped by lifestyle and cultural change. Academic literature on luxury in Sweden has yet to fully capture these emerging dynamics, and this thesis contributes to laying a foundation for reimagined strategic directions for established luxury firms navigating this generational shift.

Christensen and Rosenbloom (1995) argue that when market demands evolve, firms in conservative industries risk misalignment between their strategic models and new value criteria. Our findings support this, as Generation Z respondents perceived luxury through its visual appeal and resale potential, criteria that diverged from Generation X perceptions like quality or heritage. While Generation X viewed high prices as justified by quality and performance, Generation Z frequently interpreted high prices as symbolic of exclusivity or long-term investment, even in the absence of superior functionality. This reinforces the notion that meanings evolve, and that firms must be able to detect and respond to such changes in real time to remain competitive (Verganti, 2009; Schmitt, 1999).

The discussion has focused on the three research questions guiding this study, but the implications of the research extend beyond these questions. To fully achieve the purpose, these findings need to be placed in a strategic context. This will enable established Swedish luxury firms to use the findings to tailor their strategies to meet the needs of generational customer segments.

One of the primary research gaps this thesis aims to fill is with respect to the Swedish market. As presented in the theoretical background, luxury consumption is deeply rooted in cultural values (Kastakanis & Voyer, 2014), highlighting the importance for an established luxury firm operating in Sweden to respond to

Swedish preferences. The interviews found that there is a Swedish perception of luxury centered around accessible luxury, Scandinavian aesthetics, and understatement. These findings are supported by the literature, which emphasize “Jantelagen” (Sandemose, 1933) and “lagom” (Parikh, 2025) as foundational for Swedish culture. The finding that Swedish consumers tend to prefer Scandinavian brands further aligns with the arguments of Wiedmann et al. (2009) and Seo & Buchanan-Oliver (2019), who emphasize that luxury consumers often choose products and brands that reflect their identity. These studies also highlight how consumers can develop strong emotional bonds with specific brands that resonate with their values and cultural background. Based on this, a strategic area for established luxury firms in Sweden has been identified as offering a *locally tailored assortment*. This area doesn’t require any major organizational change, which can otherwise be a strategic challenge for organizations in conservative industries, such as luxury (Huang et al., 2013).

Another suggested strategic area is *personalizing for loyalty*. This rests on the basis of shortened attention spans and increased ability for Generation Z to filter out anything that is not deemed relevant as presented in the literature (Turner, 2015). The findings of this study echo this, with Generation Z respondents emphasizing personalized offerings and tailored experience to even consider remaining loyal to a brand or firm. And while this suggestion is primarily targeted at responding to the changing requirements of Generation Z, it can be beneficial for fostering loyalty among Generation X customers as well. Allowing customers to build and curate a shopping experience personalized to them could create lock-in effects, which the literature highlights as an effective way of retaining customers and building loyalty (Gao et al., 2022).

A third strategic area identified in this study is implementing a *seamless customer journey*. The theoretical background points to the growing importance of omnichannel strategies in the luxury sector, especially as digital and physical touchpoints increasingly intertwine (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Hennigs et al.,

2012). According to our empirical findings, Generation Z tend to mindlessly shift between online and offline channels and between pre-purchase and the purchase stage, meaning that a seamless customer journey that is consistent across all touchpoints is an important step in attracting potential Generation Z customers. The findings also show that Generation X and Z tend to have conflicting views on to what extent they use digital channels, how much help they want from sales personnel and what each phase in their customer journeys look like overall. This highlights a need for luxury firms to be adaptive and flexible to the needs of each generation, which conflicts with what literature says about firms in conservative industries; that they tend to be inherently inflexible (Huang et al., 2013).

6 Managerial Implications

To ensure that this thesis contributes with practical and actionable insights, three key strategic themes have been identified based on our research: *Locally tailored assortment*, *Personalizing for loyalty*, and *Seamless customer journey*. These themes serve as a foundation for recommending strategic actions tailored to established firms operating within the Swedish luxury industry. Each theme addresses specific generational needs and market characteristics that emerged from the data, making the recommendations both targeted and relevant. The strategic actions are summarized in Figure 13.



Figure 13: Summary of strategic actions

The first theme, *Locally tailored assortment*, stems from the finding that Swedish consumers, across both Generation X and Generation Z, demonstrate a strong preference for Scandinavian design and aesthetics, often valuing understatement and accessible luxury. For established luxury firms in Sweden, aligning their assortment with these preferences not only meets local demand but also reinforces brand authenticity and offers a culturally rooted experience for international visitors.

The second theme, *Personalizing for loyalty*, addresses the growing challenge of consumer attention in an oversaturated information landscape. Generation Z in particular has developed an increased ability to filter out generic communication. Unlike the more loyal Generation X, Generation Z expects highly personalized and relevant offerings. Luxury firms must therefore focus on individualized marketing

and curated experiences to build relevance and foster long-term relationships with this audience.

The third theme, *Seamless customer journey*, highlights the importance of providing a consistent and integrated experience across all phases, touchpoints, and channels, even if the customer journey differs between generations. Generation Z, for instance, exhibits fluid and non-linear shopping behaviors, such as browsing for new items in-store with friends one day and purchasing vintage items online the next. This cross-channel behavior underscores the need for luxury brands to deliver a seamless and connected experience, regardless of platform or context. It also highlights the importance of keeping physical stores, and not solely focusing on digital touchpoints, as some literature focused on Generation Z suggests.

In the following section, each theme is presented alongside its strategic focus and specific actions that luxury firms can implement to strengthen their competitiveness in the Swedish market.

6.1 Locally Tailored Assortment

Strategic focus: Offer an assortment catered to Swedish preferences.

- *Scandinavian and local assortment:* Prioritize Scandinavian brands that reflect regional aesthetic and authenticity. These brands align with cultural values shared across both generations and help reinforce luxury retailers as a trusted source for high-quality Scandinavian brands.
- *Accessible Luxury Positioning:* The assortment should emphasize high-quality products that combine premium craftsmanship with everyday usability. This aligns closely with Generation X's demand for functional and long-lasting items that offer clear value. At the same time, it remains relevant for Generation Z, who are drawn to products that convey a strong aesthetic and align with the image of a desirable brand.

- *Brand Collaborations:* For Generation Z, the perception of luxury is increasingly defined by how a brand communicates its identity and gains social validation, often through aspirational figures, digital presence, and peer recognition. Collaborating with emerging brands that embody this modern form of luxury can help established luxury firms remain relevant to younger consumers.

Partnerships and collaborations can also create valuable synergies, allowing brands to amplify each other's image and reach new customer segments. For instance, Generation X may be more inclined to try new brands when they are endorsed by a well-established heritage brand, as the association conveys a sense of quality and credibility.

- *Sustainability as a Luxury Narrative:* Today's luxury assortment should also reflect growing expectations around responsible consumption, particularly from Generation Z. This generation increasingly views luxury as a sustainable alternative to fast fashion, valuing goods that are made to last and manufactured in a socially and ecologically sustainable way. By promoting narratives around durability, timeless design, and investment pieces, luxury firms can position themselves as both aspirational and aligned with principles of sustainable consumption.

6.2 Personalizing for Loyalty

Strategic focus: Build loyalty and relevance by tailoring communication, experiences, and offerings to generational preferences.

- *Scenario messaging & promotions:* Develop tailored messaging anchored in relatable scenarios and real-life occasions specific to each generation. These contextualized campaigns help drive relevance and purchase intent. This messaging appeals to the needs-based shopping behavior of Generation X, and the "treat yourself"-mindset of Generation Z.

- Generation Z: “What to wear to your first job” “Treat yourself after graduation”
 - Generation X: “Your essential spring wardrobe” “How to style a white shirt in 2025”
- *Style profiles*: Offer tools that help customers identify their personal style that can then be leveraged by luxury firms to support a more engaging and personalized shopping journey.
- *Personalized communication*: Use customer data to move beyond mass communication and deliver personalized ads, promotions, and event invitations. As Generation Z tends to filter out generic content, tailored messaging is essential to capture their attention and build lasting brand relationships. Luxury brands should not be afraid to serve separate customer segments differently, as doing so enables targeted communication that resonates more deeply with the unique preferences and behaviors of each segment.

6.3 Seamless Customer Journey

Strategic focus: Offer a cohesive luxury experience across all customer journey phases, touchpoints, and channels, while adapting to generational behaviors and preferences.

- *Omnichannel consistency*: Integrate online and offline systems to enable features like “buy online, pick up in-store,” consistent packaging, and personalized in-store recommendations based on online browsing. This allows Generation Z to move fluidly across channels while enjoying tailored experiences, and ensures Generation X receives the trusted, high-quality service they expect. By eliminating distinctions between digital and physical touchpoints, luxury brands can create a seamless and cohesive journey that elevates the overall experience for both generations.

A unified content strategy and visual identity should also be implemented across platforms, ensuring consistent tone, visuals, and messaging from social media to in-store signage. This reinforces brand identity, helps Generation Z feel cohesion across touchpoints, and builds trust with Generation X by delivering a familiar, high-quality experience everywhere.

- *Adaptive customer service:* Train staff to recognize and respond to different customer segments, such as generational preferences. This allows Generation Z customers to browse freely, perhaps only guided to pieces they've found in advance, whereas Generation X can be assisted by staff expertise when searching for items. This training also helps cater to many more customer journey preferences.

To support this approach, integrate quick feedback tools (e.g., biannual surveys) that gather input on service style and satisfaction. This allows continuous refinement of customer service. To boost feedback, offer incentives such as loyalty points or prize draws.

- *Simplified research:* Implement features that help guide customers in their purchases. For Generation Z, that means items that have been socially validated. Examples of this can include badges for “Most Popular This Month”, “Trending with [insert aspirational figure]”, or “Popular as Graduation Gift”. It is important this is done discreetly, as it may otherwise scare off Generation X customers. For Generation X buyers, badges focusing on heritage, functionality, and picks from trusted figures would be appropriate. This could be “Luxury for Everyday”, “Staff Pick: Trusted Quality”, “Timeless Investment”. This ensures both generations find the selection process intuitive and reassuring.

7 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to increase the knowledge of how established firms in the Swedish luxury industry can tailor their strategies to meet the needs of different generational customer segments. By examining how luxury consumers belonging to two generational cohorts, Generation X and Z, perceive luxury, what motivates their purchasing decisions, and what their luxury customer journey looks like, the study aimed to generate insights that can inform strategic actions for established firms in the Swedish luxury industry to remain relevant in the future without alienating existing customers.

Our findings reveal distinctly different perceptions, motivations, and behaviors between the cohorts. Generation X primarily perceives luxury through physical attributes, such as excellent quality, utility, and longevity, viewing high prices and brand heritage as justified outcomes of superior standards. In contrast, Generation Z perceives luxury as aesthetically driven and a sustainable alternative, often linked to aspirational lifestyles. These differing perceptions shape their motives: Generation X is driven by functionality and long-term value, while Generation Z seeks social validation, escapism, and indulgence. The customer journey also diverges: Generation Z engages heavily in the research phase using digital tools, while Generation X favors familiar brands. At the point of purchase, Generation X values personal service and advice, whereas Generation Z prefers autonomy and minimal staff interaction. Post-purchase, Generation X exhibits stronger brand loyalty, while Generation Z demands continuous relevance and personalization.

Importantly, a distinctly Swedish approach to luxury emerged across both generational groups. Rather than associating luxury with exclusivity or status, Swedish consumers emphasized accessibility, authenticity, and alignment with local values. Respondents from both generations expressed a preference for Scandinavian brands and an understated aesthetic that reflects cultural ideals of

practicality and modesty. This national context suggests that in Sweden, luxury is often shaped less by global status symbols and more by subtle, culturally resonant expressions of quality and identity.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of generational luxury consumption by addressing two gaps in the existing literature: the lack of research focused on the Swedish luxury market and the underrepresentation of Generation Z. Our findings indicate that several established theoretical frameworks, such as the customer journey model by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), the defining characteristics of luxury outlined by Dubois et al. (2001), and various motive-based perspectives (Leibenstein, 1950; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Hudders, 2012; Berthon et al., 2009), remain applicable within the Swedish context. However, Sweden's unique cultural characteristics significantly influence how luxury is interpreted and expressed, setting it apart from other markets.

This research also contributes to a deeper understanding of Generation Z's role in the evolving luxury landscape. While previous studies have primarily focused on Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, our findings demonstrate that Generation Z is actively redefining the meaning of luxury through its digital fluency, desire for personalization, and a more fragmented and non-linear customer journey that spans multiple digital and physical touchpoints. These insights extend existing theories of luxury consumption by incorporating the emerging values and behaviors of this influential cohort. Although Generation Z may not yet represent the primary consumer base, their growing purchasing power and cultural influence make them a crucial segment for luxury firms to understand in order to remain competitive in the future.

As Generation Z continues to shape the future of luxury consumption, the Swedish luxury landscape will need to evolve accordingly. While there will always be a market for traditional luxury rooted in heritage and craftsmanship, established firms must rethink aspects of their strategy to meet the expectations of this

emerging cohort. The rise of Generation Z opens the door for new entrants that are created with Generation Z in mind from the outset. This shift represents both a challenge and an opportunity: incumbents must innovate without compromising their identity, while recognizing that the historical emphasis on heritage alone may no longer be sufficient. In turn, this traditional industry is likely to become more dynamic and competitive, leading to an accelerated evolution of what luxury means in the Swedish context.

While this study provides valuable insight into generational preferences within the Swedish luxury market, there are several broader limitations that merit consideration. First, the use of generational categories, Generation X and Generation Z, as the basis for analysis introduces a degree of generalization. Although generational cohorts provide a helpful framework for understanding broad behavioral patterns, they do not account for the full spectrum of individual variation. Factors such as income, personal values, and prior exposure to luxury significantly shape consumer behavior, often in ways that transcend generational boundaries. As such, future research could benefit from a more granular segmentation, combining generational analysis with lifestyle-based profiles to develop even more targeted strategic insights. It is also important to recognize that the meaning and appeal of luxury are not fixed but constantly evolving. Cultural trends, economic developments, and technological innovations all play a role in shaping consumer expectations. What Generation Z values today may shift as this cohort matures or as societal values change. Similarly, Generation X's current focus on practicality and quality may evolve in response to new consumption patterns or shifts in retail experiences. Future research should take a longitudinal perspective, revisiting generational attitudes over time to examine how these perceptions develop and how luxury firms might adapt their strategies accordingly.

Anchoring this study within the context of a specific and traditional luxury department store likely attracts a consumer base that is already engaged with or

loyal to traditional forms of luxury. This may skew perceptions of luxury toward more established norms and away from emerging or alternative luxury formats, such as digital-first or experience-based brands. Future research could extend this work by exploring generational attitudes toward luxury in other contexts, such as luxury experiences, online luxury platforms, or second-hand luxury.

This thesis provides a generational lens through which luxury retailers can rethink strategy creation and change. The key to sustained relevance lies in an organization's ability to continuously learn from its customers, adapt its offerings, and maintain a coherent brand identity across an increasingly fragmented and multichannel market. While the study is focused on Sweden, the strategic principles uncovered here offer valuable insights for luxury firms navigating generational shifts in consumer behavior more broadly.

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9 Appendix

9.1 Appendix A: Exploratory interview guide

Presentera oss

- Examensarbete på Chalmers inom Industriell Ekonomi där vi undersöker skillnader vid lyxkonsumtion bland generationer i samarbete med NK
- Informera om anonymitet samt fråga om inspelning är okej med syfte för transkribering

Demografi

- Vilket år föddes du?
- Vad är din främsta sysselsättning?

Finns inga rätt eller fel svar. Vi kommer fråga frågor om lyxkonsumtion och där vill vi att dina svar ska utgå från din definition av lyx. Vi tänkte därför börja med att fråga hur du definierar lyx och vilka attribut du associerar med en lyxprodukt?

Definition av lyx

- Ge ett exempel på en lyxvara du nyligen köpte.
- Vad var det som kändes lyxigt med varan?
- Kan du säga tre märken som du tycker representerar lyx?
- Varför då?
- Tycker du att något märke eller produkt saknas på NK?

Motiv bakom lyxköp

- Vad är din främsta anledning till varför du köper en lyxprodukt?
- Produktens attribut, för att dina vänner har mycket lyx (sociala), eller mer personliga skäl?
- Hur påverkar dina vänner/familj/kollegor dina köp av lyxvaror? Har de egna lyxvaror?

Kundresa

- Gjorde du någon research innan du köpte din senaste lyxprodukt?
- Exempelvis provade i butik, jämförde priser, läste recensioner?
- Vad tyckte du om upplevelsen vid ditt köp idag?
- Har du utnyttjat en tjänst i samband med eller efter ett köp av en lyxvara?
 - Ex skräddare, skomakare, gravering, garanti, lämna tillbaka, osv.
- Har du tidigare köpt en lyxprodukt från en annan fysisk butik eller online än NK?
 - Om JA: Varför inte på NK den gången?

Avslutande frågor

- Om du skulle rekommendera NK att göra en förändring, vad skulle det vara?
- Är det något annat du skulle vilja dela med dig av inom detta ämne?
- Avslutningsvis, hade du kunnat tänka dig att medverka på ett längre intervju vid ett senare tillfälle?

9.2 Appendix B: In-depth interview guide

Hej och välkommen till intervjun! Stort tack för att du deltar. Vårt examensarbete handlar om att identifiera hur olika generationer definierar lyxvaror, varför de köper lyxvaror och i vilka kanaler de hittar inspiration för sina lyxköp. Denna intervju kommer så klart att vara helt anonym, men går det bra om vi spelar in ljudet för att kunna gå tillbaka till dina svar senare?

Innan vi börjar vill vi att du ska veta att det är dina åsikter och definitioner som spelar roll, så vi vill verkligen höra det första du tänker på när du hör frågan. Det finns inga rätt eller fel svar.

Då sätter vi igång!

Demografi

1. Hade du kunnat börja med att introducera dig själv?
 - a. Vilket år föddes du?
 - b. Vad är din främsta inkomstkälla?
 - c. Vad är dina intressen?
2. Hur ser dina shoppingvanor ut, utöver det du måste köpa som matvaror och dylikt?
 - a. Vilka butiker brukar du besöka?
 1. Varför?
 - b. Handlar du någonsin online?
 1. Varför?

Definition av lyx

1. Vilka attribut associerar du med en lyxvara?
 - a. Kan du ge oss något exempel på en lyxvara du har köpt det senaste året?
 - b. Vad var det som kändes lyxigt med den produkten?

- c. Förutom de fysiska attributen, var det något annat som kändes lyxigt med varan?
 - d. Tycker du att du identifierar dig med varumärkets identitet?
2. Hur har din definition av lyx förändrats över tid?
 - a. Hur tror du att yngre/äldre definierar lyxvaror?
 - b. Tror du att de skiljer sig mycket mellan olika generationer?
 - c. Vilka aspekter av lyx tror du är viktigast för yngre vs äldre konsumenter?
 3. Kan du nämna ett märke som du tycker representerar lyx?
 - a. Vad gör det märket unikt? Hur skulle du beskriva märkets personlighet?
 4. Tycker du att det finns olika typer av lyx? Vilka då?
 - a. Hur skiljer sig typerna åt?
 5. Hur exponeras du till lyxvaror idag?
 - a. Tycker du att det skiljer sig från när du var yngre?
 6. Har digitaliseringen förändrat din syn på lyx?
 - a. Tycker du att en lyxupplevelse kan vara helt digital, eller krävs det en fysisk interaktion?
 - b. Om du köper en lyxvara online, vad behöver finnas för att det ska kännas lika exklusivt som i butik?
 - c. Finns det något med att gå in i en fysisk lyxbutik som du aldrig skulle kunna få online?
 7. Hur tycker du att svensk kultur påverkar lyxkonsumtionen i Sverige?
 - a. Hur tror du svenskars definition och syn på lyx skiljer sig från resten av världen?
 8. Har du någonsin köpt en lyxvara second hand?
 - a. Varför/varför inte?

Motiv bakom lyxkonsumtion

9. Vad är den främsta anledningen till att du köpte din senaste lyxprodukt istället för ett mindre lyxigt alternativ?

- a. Hur skiljer sig dina förväntningar på en lyxvara jämfört med ett mindre lyxigt alternativ?
10. Vad är kvalitet för dig? (Product-centric)
- a. Varför är det viktigt?
 - b. Tror du att du betalar en premie för att du köper ett visst märke? Eller kan kostnaden direkt härledas till produktens kvalitet? Kan du utveckla?
11. Har du någonsin köpt en lyxprodukt för att unna dig eller belöna dig själv? (Hedonic)
- a. Kan du ge ett exempel på ett sådant köp och vid vilket tillfälle det skedde?
 - b. Hur fick det dig att känna dig, både före och efter köpet?
12. När du köper en lyxvara, väljer du den för att andra har den eller föredrar du att ingen annan har den? (Social/hedonic)
- a. Föredrar du att en lyxvara skall vara traditionell och tidlös eller trendig och unik. Varför?
 - b. Tänk tillbaka på sist du bar en lyxprodukt. Hur känner du dig när du bär en lyxprodukt? Påverkar det din självbild, eller hur du uppfattas av andra?
13. Hur påverkar sociala faktorer (vänner/familj/kollegor) dina beslut att köpa lyxprodukter? (Social)
- a. Pratar du någonsin med dina vänner om märken eller produkter du köpt/vill köpa?
 - b. Märker du när dina vänner har på sig en lyxigare vara eller har lyxigare möbler hemma?
 - c. Tror du att dina vänner märker när du har på dig en lyxigare vara jämfört med en mindre lyxig vara?
14. Köper du någonsin lyxvaror som en present till någon annan? (Social)
- a. Till vem?
 - b. Varför köper du lyx till andra?
 - c. Hur går du tillväga för att hitta på vad du ska köpa i present?

- d. Tycker du att det är lätt eller svårt att hitta på vad du ska köpa i present?

Kanaler vid lyxköp

- 15. Tänk på ditt senaste lyxköp (produkt) (customer journey)
 - a. Vilka interaktioner med varumärket/produkter hade du *innan* genomförandet av köpet?
 - b. Fanns det något som fick dig att tveka innan du genomförde köpet?
 - c. Vad för typ av research gjorde du *innan* köpet? Hur jämförde du olika alternativ?
 - d. Påverkades ditt köp av någon rekommendation, reklam, recension eller influenser?
 - e. Var köpte du produkten, online eller fysisk butik? Varför valde du den kanalen?
 - f. Hur upplevde du själva köpupplevelsen? Var det något speciellt i butiken, kundservicen eller miljön som förstärkte känslan av lyx?
 - g. Vad för typer av tjänster hade varit av värde *efter* köpet?
 - h. Vad skulle få dig att återvända till samma varumärke för ett nytt köp?
- 16. Var hittar du inspiration till dina lyxköp?
 - a. Vilka kanaler är viktiga inspirationskällor för dig?
 - b. Vilka kanaler är viktiga källor för dig när du fattar ditt slutgiltiga köpbeslut?
- 17. Brukar du vilja titta på eller testa en lyxvara i butik?
 - a. Brukar du prata med personalen i butiken när du gör ett lyxköp?
- 18. När du sen köper den, brukar du köpa den i butik eller online?
 - a. Kan du minnas ett lyxköp du gjorde online? Varför beställde du den istället för att köpa den i butik?
- 19. Om du inte längre vill ha produkten, hur skulle du gå tillväga för att sälja vidare den? Finns det något som hindrar dig?

20. Har du någonsin använt en tjänst i samband med eller efter ditt lyxköp?
Exempelvis reparation, sy upp något, gravera...
21. Har du någonsin varit på medlemsevenemang hos en lyxbutik?
- Vad minns du mest från det evenemanget?
22. Kan du berätta om några utmaningar du upplevt vid ett lyxköp? (Pain-points, ideas for improvement)
- Finns det något som har fått dig att undvika ett lyxvarumärke?
 - Har du någonsin blivit besviken på en lyxprodukt? Vad var det som inte levde upp till förväntningarna?
 - Vad tycker du skiljer upplevelsen åt vid ett lyxköp och ett "vanligt" köp?
 - Är det något du tycker är bättre vid ett "vanligt" köp?

Avslutande tankar

- Hur tror du att lyxmärken och butiker borde arbeta för att attrahera dig och dina vänner?
- Hur borde de arbeta för att attrahera folk från den andra generationen?
- Om du var strategichef för NK, vad är det första du skulle göra för att göra NK mer attraktivt för fler kunder?
 - Varför?

9.3 Appendix C: Interviewees

Exploratory interviews				
ID	Gender	Generation	Age	Occupation
1	Male	Gen X	1974	Work
2	Female	Gen Z	2005	Student & Work
3	Male	Gen Z	2004	Work
4	Male	Gen Z	2005	Work
5	Female	Gen X	1965	Work
6	Female	Gen X	1966	Work
7	Female	Gen X	1965	Work
8	Male	Gen X	1980	Work
9	Female	Gen Z	2003	Student
10	Female	Gen Z	2003	Student
11	Female	Gen X	1975	Work
12	Female	Gen Z	2002	Student
13	Female	Gen Z	2008	Student
14	Female	Gen Z	2008	Student
15	Female	Gen Z	2008	Student
16	Female	Gen Z	2008	Student
17	Female	Gen Z	2002	Student

18	Female	Gen Z	2002	Student
19	Male	Gen X	1968	Work
20	Male	Gen Z	2012	Student
21	Male	Gen X	1971	Work
22	Male	Gen X	1969	Work
23	Male	Gen X	1976	Work
24	Female	Gen X	1966	Work

In-depth interviews				
ID	Gender	Generation	Age	Occupation
1	Female	Gen X	1976	Architect
2	Female	Gen X	1965	Bank
3	Male	Gen X	1965	Debt collection
4	Female	Gen X	1967	City planner architect
5	Female	Gen X	1966	Entrepreneur
6	Female	Gen Z	1998	Student
7	Male	Gen Z	2000	Student & internship
8	Male	Gen Z	1999	Politician
9	Female	Gen Z	2000	Student
10	Female	Gen Z	1999	Student

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