To be or not to be?
- A study of Luxury Consumption

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Preface

I would like to start to say thank you for those store managers that I interviewed for my research, without you I would not be able to go through with my research.

I would also like to thank my supervisor Olof Holm who has helped my through my whole thesis process. He has been very helpful and big source of inspiration.

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Abstract
The fashion industry is today one of the most interesting, exciting and fast-moving industries in the world. On the streets we can see people wearing all kind of brands, both fast fashion brands and luxury brands. Some people mix different brands, while some people stick to either fast fashion or luxury brands. Today people wear different brands to express their personal style but also social and class relationships.

The purpose of this study is to find out why some consumers prefer to purchase luxury brands instead of fast fashion and what added value is given to them so they choose luxury. It also deals with what kind of people purchase luxury brands and if there are any differences. To succeed with this study I have therefore made a qualitative study where interviews were made with several store managers at luxury brand stores in central Stockholm and observations.

I found from this research that the consumers of luxury brands purchase luxury because of the quality that they receive and the service. The consumers are very quality conscious and believe it is more sustainable to purchase something that has good quality than buying something that is cheap with poor quality. They also choose luxury brands because of expertise from the personnel, and personal contact between the store assistants and the consumer. Consumers purchase a whole concept when they choose luxury. They choose luxury because of the experience they receive that cannot be given at fast fashion stores.

I also found from this research that there is a mixture of consumers who purchase luxury brands. There is all kind of consumers, everything from upper class, brat wannabes, and middle class, younger consumers to old grand parents. Some purchase luxury brands for the quality and some for the status it gives them.

Besides of why consumers choose luxury brands and what consumers who actually purchase I found that consumer of luxury brands have changed in the past ten years. It used to be only upper class but more and more luxury brands have widen their target group by offering products that are less expensive so more people can afford it, but still in the frame of what is luxury.

**Key definitions:** Fast fashion, luxury brands, upper class, brat wannabes, and social class.
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1. Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with an introduction to the chosen subject. The background leads to a problem discussion, which in turn leads to the formulation of the problem and then the purpose of this thesis. This chapter also brings up delimitations and key definitions that I believe can help the readers understand my thesis better.

1.1 Background

The fashion industry is today one of the most interesting, exciting and fast-moving industries in the world. Many people agree on that fashion began once upon a time in Paris, which later turned to New York, Milan and London. For many people it is important to be up to date and to know what is “in” and what is “out” and who designs what. In different stores we can see long queues in front of fitting rooms and people drooling outside window displays. We can also see people with branded handbags slung over their arms and even fake branded handbags.

On the streets we can see people wearing all kind of brands, both fast fashion brands and luxury brands. Some people mix different brands, while some people stick to either fast fashion or luxury brands. The difference between those two industries can many times be hard to notice, but something that all people know is that collections are pretty much the same. All brands wants to sell the latest but what differ the most is the price of the products and the quality.

Fast fashion industry nowadays has grown rapidly and is bigger now than ever and competition is going up fast globally among fast fashion brands that sells trendy apparel products at reasonable prices. Today fast fashion brands do not only compete with other fast fashion brands but they also compete with luxury brands. Furthermore, fast fashion brands are one of luxury brands biggest threats. Fast fashion can be defined as clothing collection that are based on latest trends that are presented on different fashion weeks in different cities. These collections are then designed and manufactured quicker than luxury brands collections and they are also produced in an affordable way, in order to allow ordinary consumer to take advantage of recent clothing styles at a lower price. Lead-time for fast fashion companies are

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1 Tungate, Mark, *Fashion Brands: Branding Style from Armani to Zara*, 2008
significantly shorter than for luxury brands and can sometimes be as short as six weeks\(^3\), which therefore leads to that fast fashion are out faster on the market with new collections than luxury brands. Examples of fast fashion companies can be H&M, Zara, Forever 21, and Gina tricot.

Luxury brands can be defined, as brands were the majority of its products are luxury goods. It can also consist different luxury brands whose name is connected with luxury, high price or high quality. It has been said that luxury goods have high income elasticity of demand, in other words it means that when people become more wealthier they tend buy more and more of expensive goods. Luxury brands strive to be more unique and offer good quality rather than being a trendsetter and they also strive to have loyal customers that rely on them\(^4\). Examples of luxury brands can be Luis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana etc.

There is no rule who should purchase what, but something that is obvious is that ordinary people who are middle class people tend to buy more fast fashion and upper class tend to purchase luxury goods, and the reason can be a money issue. This statement is nothing that is 100% certain but it is just a statement from my point of view. Like mentioned above, people who have more money tend to purchase more expensive goods. For people with less money then fast fashion is a good solution, fashionable clothes to reasonable prices. We cannot forget that there are also consumers who tend mix both fast fashion and luxury and who does that, is still a question.

### 1.2 Problem discussion

A topic that has been discussed a lot is how fast fashion companies “copy” luxury brands collection and with their short lead times they are out quicker on the market than luxury brands. Fast fashion brands can sometimes be out on the market several months before luxury brands. By the time all these luxury brands come out on the market, consumer is already wearing the same style as their collection but in a cheaper version and maybe not the same quality. It has been discussed whether this is a benefit for fast fashion brands, and not benefitting luxury brands. Do luxury brands loose their consumers to the fast fashion industry? Or are their consumers too loyal that they are willing to wait for their collections?

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\(^3\) Barnes, Dr Liz, Lea- Greenwood Ms Gaynor, *Fashion Marketing and Management*, 2006

From a previous research that I have done about this topic I found some very interesting answers what luxury brands thought about this situation with fast fashion copying their styles and are out on the market quicker. After interviewing some luxury brands in Copenhagen, they all claimed that they have very loyal consumers and that they are willing to wait for their collection and also that they did not believe that their consumer would purchase from a fast fashion company.5

But this time, with this thesis I want to go even deeper into this topic and do a research to find answers why consumers actually choose to put so much money on luxury brands. Why they choose exclusive brands instead of fast fashion. I want to examine and analyze what is it that luxury brands give the consumers that fast fashion brands cannot give them? What kind of added value is given to them for them to purchase from a luxury brand instead from a fast fashion brand? Why are they willing to wait so much longer for luxury brands to come out with their collections? I also want to examine what kind of people actually purchase luxury and why. Is there any difference? Are their consumers’ upper class or people who tries to be upper class? Do people purchase luxury because it gives them status? I want to understand why they prefer luxury brands instead of fast fashion and what value and principles control their consumption.

The reason why I want to examine this topic is because I have always been curious and interested in the luxury market. I have always wondered who actually buy these things and why do they. Who are these people? Why do they want to spend so much money on something that might get out of fashion in a year? And why does not my family or all people purchase luxury brand? I certainly know it is a money question, but that is not all. Every family can buy luxury goods, some families might need to save money a couple of months or years while some people do not even have to think before pulling out their VISA card. I have always thought that consumers of luxury brands are upper class, but am I wrong? Maybe it was like that years ago and today in 21st century it has changed?

For this thesis I chose to interview store managers instead of consumers due to that I believe store managers are easier to get hold off and easier to get them to stand up for an interview. Consumers are mostly busy with their shopping and on the run and do not have time for interviews. Store managers on the other hand, are people who have big knowledge and see all

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5 Adolfsson, Patel, Habte Selassie & Strömberg, Luxury brands Vs. Fast Fashion, 2009
kind of people in their stores and can watch their consumers’ behavior. Nevertheless, I have noticed that many theses have been written in this topic but they are mostly based on consumers’ perspective and not from store managers’ perspective. Therefore I chose to interview store managers to bring some new aspects and knowledge on to this topic and I believe that a lot of important and helpful information can be received from store managers.

Many of my friends or close family knows that when I meet new people for the first time, I usually observe them quietly to see what kind of people they are and then I friendly join them. This is nothing that shows or something that is noticeably. I have lately discovered myself observing different kind of people, not only new people I meet but also all kind of people that I see on streets, clubs, stores etc. This is nothing I plan but it is just something I do without noticing. I like to observe their behavior in different situations.

Earlier this semester I were in my hometown Stockholm and on a Saturday night my friend had her birthday party and we decided to go out clubbing. We decided to go to a club called Sturecompagniet, a club that is known for the most legendary club of all clubs in Stockholm. It can many times be hard to get in due to its strict dress code and age limits. It has been known as a club where lots of upper class or brat wannabes go to and you usually need to be on a list to get in. However, this night I was on the list and I could let my friends in.

Inside the club there were all kind of people, upper class, brat wannabes and normal middleclass people etc. I could clearly see who were what by the way they behaved and acted. That night I did not only observe what kind of people was there but also what people were wearing. It was some big differences between middle class people and brat wannabes. In my own company I would not say that any of us were wearing expensive clothes from any luxury brand. Many of us were probably wearing something from a fast fashion brand and maybe one of the girls had a Guess bag or something but that was it. I could see many middle class people wearing the same fast fashion brand as us, brands such as; Gina Tricot, MQ and H&M. But the upper class people and brat wannabes on the other hand, were wearing really nice suits from brands probably such as Hugo Boss, Armani or a shirt from an exclusive brand like Stenströms or Eton.

My only wonder were during that night that most of the people there were nice dressed but what differed was the price and I wonder why some people chose to put so much money on a
suit or a shirt? Was it because it gave them status in certain social groups? Or do they purchase that specific brand for the fit it gives them? Fashion is something that changes all the time, season to season. Something that is “in” today might not be that in four months. It was clear that these people were fashion conscious and I cannot imagine that they would wear the same spring collection next spring. So why do we want to spend so much money on something we cannot wear next year because then it might be out of fashion?

This is something I have been wondering a lot when I see girls walking around with a Louis Vuitton bag or a guy wearing a Rolex watch. Why do they want to put so much money on one brand? Why are they not buying a house instead? So with this thesis I hope to find answers to my questions and my thoughts and speculations.

1.3 The problem
Given these thoughts above I will therefore try to answer these questions:

- What added value do luxury brands give to their consumers so that they choose luxury instead of fast fashion?
- What kind of consumers purchase luxury brand according to store managers at different luxury stores in Stockholm? And are there any differences between the consumers?

1.4 Purpose
The purpose with this thesis is to examine and analyze, and also understand what added value luxury brands give to their consumers so they choose luxury brands instead of fast fashion. The purpose is also to examine and understand what type of people that actually purchase luxury goods and if there is any difference between the consumers.

1.5 Delimitations
In this research I have chosen to study the luxury market in general. I have chosen to look from companies’ perspective due to that I believe store managers are the ones that have the best view of consumers’ behavior than any other. They are the ones that meet consumers everyday and help them with their shopping and at the same time watch and observe their behavior. Store managers are also the ones that can easily see what kind of people who purchase their products and the difference between them.
My goal is to interview store managers at different luxury brands in central Stockholm. I chose Stockholm because it is the capital of Sweden and there are more luxury stores located there than in other cities in Sweden, which makes it easier for me to get hold of store managers and interview them. My goal is interview as many as I can to get answers that I need to answer my research questions for this thesis. When I feel that I do not receive anything new from the luxury stores I will stop doing further interviews, and use the information that I received.

1.6 Key definitions
In the following chapter I have chosen to explain some vocabulary that I believe is very important for this thesis and also for my readers to understand my thesis better.

1.6.1 Fast fashion
Fast fashion can be defined as clothing collection that are based on the most up to date fashion trends presented at fashion weeks in different fashion cities such as, Paris, Milan, New York, London. These trends and collections are designed and manufactured fast, and in a reasonably priced way, to allow ordinary consumers to take advantage of present clothing trends at a lower price⁶.

1.6.2 Luxury brands
A luxury brand is a brand where a major part of its products are luxury goods. It can also be certain brands whose names are connected with luxury, high price, or high quality⁷.

1.6.3 Upper class
Upper class is the group of people who are at the top of a social hierarchy. People do not become upper class; they are born in an upper class family. High education and money is something that defines upper class, but also tradition and their kindness. Upper class people usually associate with the same kind of people and in the same groups, and they usually have a big social network. They are known to own or work a family business, play golf, travel to exclusive places and drink expensive wines⁸.

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⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxury_good
⁸ Popova, Susanna, Överklass: En bok om klass och identitet, 2007
1.6.4 Brat wannabes
Brat wannabes are people who try to live like upper class people. They are not born in an upper class society with old tradition and family businesses. They might have gained their economical situation during the years and are as economical independent as upper class, but yet they are not upper class. These people tend to show off what they own and they love to tell how much things cost, and they do not have the same self-confidence as upper class people.

1.6.5 Social class
Today the term social class is usually used to describe the general rank of people in a society. People who are in the same social class are approximately equal in terms of their social standing in the community. They work in the similar occupations and normally they tend to have similar lifestyles by the benefit of their income levels and common tastes. They also tend to socialize with one another and share values and ideas regarding how life should be lived\(^9\).

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2. Theoretical Points of Departure

In the following chapter I present the theories I will use when I develop my hypotheses and analyze the results. I want to give the readers an understanding in my research topic and together with these relevant theories I will later on answer my research questions.

2.1 Luxury consumption

In normal cases a luxury good is defined as a product, which demand increases, more than proportioned when the income for a society increases. Luxury goods have a high-income elasticity, which means that the demand is depended on the income. Furthermore, this means that people purchase more luxury goods at high business activity when they receive more money to spend\textsuperscript{10}.

There are luxury goods that are a little more exclusive than others and they are called Veblen goods, which means that they have a positive elasticity. The higher price the seller put, the bigger the demand gets. This is called Veblen effect, and it is a theory that is against all economic theories about the demand that decreases when the price is increasing. An example of a product that keeps selling even though the price is increasing is perfume. Handbags are other examples of typical Veblen goods and Louis Vuitton is a brand that is known to have a positive elasticity. These bags cost between 4000 SEK to 100 000 SEK if not more. This is theory is very interesting for this thesis, since the thesis deals with luxury consumption were all products are Veblen goods. So why do some consumer have such desire for these luxury goods? An American sociological professor, Juliet Schor has studied this phenomenon. In the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century she came out with the book “The overspent American”. The book deals with Americans relation to money and consumption and her theories are inspired by Veblen’s theory about conspicuous consumption, which this thesis will deal with later on. However, these theories can also be applied in Swedes consumption behavior. In other words we can see clearly that products that give people status have started to go up in the class hierarchy and they start to compare their lifestyle to people with way more money than themselves\textsuperscript{11}, and according to O’Cass & McEwen they claim that luxury goods are aimed to targets groups that

\textsuperscript{10} Andersson & Tran, Orsakar lyxväskor fjärliar i magen?- motiven bakom köpet av en lyxväskan. 2010

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
either want to show their wealth, rise their ego or show their status. This statement is very fascinating and it will be interesting to see if it really is true and if the interviewed store managers of this thesis agree.

2.2 Luxury brands

Luxury brands are all about being unique and individual, rather than focusing on being trendy and a trendsetter. It is important for luxury brands to stay true to their brands and look at their consumers and what is important for them. Consumers of luxury brands are the ones that are looking for unique products, high quality, and craftsmanship and good fabrics. A big differences between luxury brands and fast fashion is that luxury brands have iconic products that carries the brand values and comes back reinvented from season to season.

Arnold, a former buyer at Dior discusses the relationship between luxury brands and trends and states that luxury brands should not be trendsetters like mentioned above, but if they did a trendsetting piece it would be fantastic but it should not be the aim for luxury brands. He also discusses that luxury brand stores environment is completely different compared to fast fashion. They offer different service and follow up their consumers in a way that fast fashion brands do not. Their consumers are also very loyal and appreciate the experience of shopping and wearing luxury brands. To consumers it is very important to experience the best feeling on the highest level when entering a luxury store.

For luxury brands it is important for them to follow their instinct and have a good eye for fashion and esthetics, and to keep consumers still interested in the brand by regularly reinventions. However, at the same time it is important to keep the heritage in mind to not lose the brands identity, because it is a strength to live up to the heritage because that is exactly what the consumers of the brand dreams about.

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13 [http://business.globaltimes.cn](http://business.globaltimes.cn)
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid
2.3 Luxury brands attributes

A luxury brand is not only a status symbol for consumers to brag about how wealthy they are or tries to be, and nor it is product with only an extremely high price. For a luxury good to be called luxury it has to share the following character features\textsuperscript{17}:

**Quality:**
The brand name’s products should associate with the best quality, everything from the cheapest item to the most expensive one.

**Handcraft:**
The luxury product should have a heritage that is spread through handcraft so it makes sense with creators’ ordinary basic ideas that were from the beginning.

**Easy recognizable:**
Luxury products should be easy to recognize when it come to what brand name it belongs to and so on.

**Limited production:**
The products that are produced should be limited so that the exclusive feeling remains.

**Right marketing:**
The marketing for luxury products should be created in a way so its created emotional attraction for consumers and also so its reflects the remarkable quality that the products have.

**Association:**
The brand name should be able to associates with the original designer who actually gave the brand its character.

**Uniqueness:**
Each luxury product should be unique so that the exclusivity keeps living.

\textsuperscript{17} Rathsmann & Rey, *Lyxkonsumtion- En god affär gör alla*, 2007
2.4 Consumers of luxury goods

So what kind of people actually purchases luxury goods and why do they spend so much money on these products? Consumers of luxury brands are people that have a demand that they want luxury brands to communicate to them through a more sophisticated marketing, such as one-to-one marketing or marketing intimacy. They also want brands to give them service that have high value and offer unique products. The whole experience of purchasing luxury goods is very valuable to the consumers and that is one of the biggest reasons they choose luxury brands. Consumers buy luxury brands for the experience they receive.18

According to Solomon et al consumers of luxury consumption can be divided into two main categories. The first one is the consumer who purchases luxury goods because of its quality, esthetics and because of the service that is given when purchasing luxury brands. Then we have the consumer who purchases luxury goods for what is symbolizes and the consumer sees these luxury brands as a way to express her/his principles and values and status. These consumers can be described as consumers who brag; they purchase luxury brands to show their social status. Thorstein Veblen was the first one to study this kind of consumption where consumers consume due to the reason to just consume. According to Veblen the major part of the products we consume is only to distinguish ourselves from others or to create jealousy to others by showing our wealth and power. Veblen created the term conspicuous consumption that can be defined as people’s desire to provide prominent visible evidence of their ability to afford luxury goods.19 Veblen states that spending money and consume in an outstanding way and by bragging is a way for people to establish their social position. In other words, Veblens means that the rich upper class people spend time on conspicuous consumption to secure their position in the social hierarchy, whereas the lower class people watch and try to imitate the higher classes. Consumption therefore follows according to Veblen a social comparative process.20 This statement is quite interesting for the thesis. Could this be a reason to why consumers choose luxury brands?

George Simmel, a German sociologist, has studied this phenomenon about this comparative social phenomenon and he calls it the “trickle down” theory. This theory deals with upper class people showing their status by consuming luxury goods from exclusive brands. This

18 www.nucifora.com/
19 Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, Consumer Behavior: A European Perspective, 2002
kind of consumption creates jealousy and huge desires for lower class people. Lower class people strive in different ways to copy higher classes\textsuperscript{21}. The consumption pattern in the society is obviously spread from up to down in the hierarchy, from upper class to lower classes. The lower classes want to be like upper class and therefore purchase same products. This in turn also means that the upper class that do not want to identify themselves with lower classes must then consume and identify themselves with new products and brands\textsuperscript{22}.

The most common and natural development for all luxury goods is that they first get introduced to upper class and then sooner or later they will make an entrance along with lower classes. To avoid damage for the brand’s image because of reduced exclusivity, luxury brands must try to be watchful and always strive to keep the glamour, fascination and the dream and desire that is surrounded by its brand name\textsuperscript{23}.

\textbf{2.5 Conspicuous consumption}

So what is exactly conspicuous consumption? A normal business model focuses on the demand and the supply of the products. Consumption of rare and unique products or eye-catching products increases the symbolic image and it considers being more valuable to the consumer\textsuperscript{24}. Conspicuous consumption is a powerful driving force when it comes to motivating people to consumption in today’s society. This kind of consumption is a way to show and express others your success and welfare, but also to express status for different reasons. Consumption becomes a tool to gather status in the society and a receipt that the consumer so to speak can afford different expensive products. Products are then chosen to symbolize that lifestyle and the identity we want to identify us with, and these people can then impress others\textsuperscript{25}.

Conspicuous consumption can exist in two different ways, the first one is when a consumer purchase products that has a brand name that gives a lot of status by others in the society, and the other one is when a consumer indulges himself or herself with some extra things such as

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\textsuperscript{22} Husz, O., Lagerkvist, A., \textit{Konsumtionens motsägelse. En inledning}, 1997
\textsuperscript{23} Danziger, P. \textit{Let them eat cake: marketing luxury to the masses as well as the masses}, 2005
\textsuperscript{24} Solomon, Bamossy & Askergaard, \textit{Consumer behavior: A European Perspective}, 2006
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid
\end{flushleft}
live at an exclusive hotel or an exclusive spa. The most important thing is for the consumer to exclude from other consumers and be special, and for the consumer to have a different status so that he or she can communicate the symbolic products\textsuperscript{26}.

However, the theory behind conspicuous consumption can be very complex and difficult to use in today’s society, due to that higher social classes consciously purchase products that back in the days considered belonging to low class people. One example of that kind of product can be jeans. Today everybody wear jeans no matter what class you belong to, upper class or middle class. On the other hand, even in jeans we can see a hierarchy. There are cheap jeans sold on the market from fast fashion brands or other brands, but there are also designer jeans out on the market that are expensive and these are for consumers that are wealthy and can afford it. High price is considered to be more attractive for consumers and create a bigger demand while low price products are less demanded\textsuperscript{27}.

### 2.6 Consumption, identity and social class

It is important to have the right knowledge about how people consume and what motivate them to understand how consumers use a certain fashion item to express their identity or social class. Fashion is a complex process and it affects consumers in different ways, both with inner and external factors. The external factors are about pressure from others and inner factors can be how willing the consumer wishes to be fashion conscious. Depended on what a person think and believe is important he/she will create different images of fashion in different perspectives.

Many psychological factors can give us explanation to what motivate individuals to be fashion conscious. A desire to create variation, express creativity or to be unique is different motives that can have a big importance for an individual, but something that is important to remember is that that desire is only made in what fashion that is acceptable in the society. Consumers commonly use fashion that is neutral to satisfy the needs they have. Neutral fashion is fashion that is not too extreme, and also fashion that is created through different combination of a personal touch. Solomon means that there are two different personalities. One that is easily influenced by other social surroundings and the other one that is less influenced. Those consumers that have a bigger need to adjust to the environment and social

\textsuperscript{26} Solomon, Bamossy & Askergaard, \textit{Consumer behavior: A European Perspective}, 2006

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
surroundings feel that the brand of the clothes have a bigger value, while consumers who are less affected and influenced appreciate more the clothes functional attribute. This is a theory that is very relevant to this thesis, because it deals with why consumers purchase luxury brands and if there are any differences between the different consumers.

2.7 Fashion to express social and class relationships?

Today the economical truth in the western world is all about consumption and unfortunately consumption is a way for us consumers to identify the world and ourselves. How we then choose to express our identity and possession depends on the interest, time and money. For different stores to succeed in their business they need to carefully follow consumers’ choices, and advertising agencies try with help of different sales concepts lead people to choices of certain products.

People have been so influenced by media and advertisements that they consume more than ever. Out of the choices we make from different products and services we use different codes to signal possession and this has been way more visible these days. These codes, conscious or unconscious created, it can be seen everywhere, in the food we eat, how we live or decorate our homes, what we read, what music we listen to, how we dress, what places we travel to and what car we drive etc.

When a person chooses clothes, accessories, food, a car or even a travel destination it is not about a choice of his or her taste of that specific thing. Instead it is about following a pattern that is connected to habit, class habit or occupation status. This pattern is connected to the distinction between the clean, legitimacy of taste, and what is popular. It is said that people choose a certain style to express themselves and their personal style but according to Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist it is not exactly true but that instead it is more likely to express social and class relationships. This statement is very important to the topic of this thesis because the thesis brings up social and class relationships and it can be interesting to develop and discuss further more as a reason for why consumer purchase luxury.

29 Bond, Cay, Kläder som kultur och personligt uttryck, 2002
30 Ibid.
31 Albinsson, Kunderugardrugious & Mileros, En studie om sju unga kvinnors konsumtion av handväskor, 2008.
32 Måanson, Per, Moderna samhällsteorier- Traditioner, riktningar, teoretiker, 2003
A research about upper class consumption in Sweden has been made several times and in those studies we can see clearly that the brand they choose is a part of upper class marking and possession. An upper class person chooses a Hugo Boss coat, jacket and suit, a shirt from Stenströms, a tie from Armani and leisurewear from brands such as Gant, Pringle and Levis. However, we cannot forget that there are not only upper class people who purchase from these brands; other fashion conscious people purchase from the same segment. Something that differs them apart is that upper class chooses clothes with a higher price range and brands that emanate elegance and prestige. For an example, fashion conscious and trendy people choose Levis, Dockers and Ralph Lauren on their free time, while upper class chooses Gant and Stenströms. The choice of clothes and fashion is not only a result of a passive influence; fashion is an active expression to mark our position in social areas. Fashion also has a purpose on physical areas, such as at work, on the street, or in a circle of friends. People use symbols or the magic many brands express, which later mark possession to certain taste and styles in front of others. 

2.8 Susanna Popova- Upper class

Susanna Popova is a Swedish journalist who has written the famous book Överklass, a book about class and identity. In this book she has interviewed ten Swedish upper class people in the age between 30-70, and these people explain how it is to live like upper class and what they think about ordinary middle class.

They all states that upper class is all about assurance and confidence, social network, education, and financial independent. Family history means everything to upper class. It explains who you are, your life and your mothering. Upper class people are known to be wealthy but the interviewed explains that you do not talk about money if you are upper class it is already obvious. Money is nothing you are proud of and it is nothing you show off with. In fact you do not even say you are upper class, you just are. According to the interviewed it takes about three generations to become an upper class, but it can take longer time and also shorter. As an upper class you know how to show politeness and have good table manners. They can afford the lifestyle they are living which most people cannot. They also said that

33 Månson, Per, Moderna samhällsteorier- Traditioner, riktningar, teoretiker, 2003
anyone can change their complexional but as soon as someone starts talking or walk you can see where that person is from\textsuperscript{34}.

One of the interviewed upper class explained how she could tell if someone was middle class. She said that usually, not all middle class but most of them have a vanity case full with make up from cheaper brands that are bought at H&M for an example. If you are an upper class you first of all normally do not have much at all and secondly the things you have are extremely expensive. She quoted Timberlands slogan: “More quality than you may ever need”, and by that she meant that you buy what you need in the best quality that you can ever find. Middle class people tend to buy a lot and it does not matter if it is good quality or not\textsuperscript{35}.

Another person explains the differences between people with money. He stated that first we have people whom recently become rich, who collected money in a short period of time. They like to show off what they own and that they have money and can afford it. These people tend to buy for example Gucci sandals or Louis Vuitton bags or Burberry, brands that have big logos that show. Whereas the more established upper class people who always have had money tend to buy from Hermés or a suit from Götrich, brands with logos that are more discreet. From the time they were a children they have learnt where to go shopping and whenever they go shopping they shop for the best quality they can ever find\textsuperscript{36}.

\textsuperscript{34} Popova, Susanna, "Överklass: En bok om klass och identitet", 2007, p. 49
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, p. 63
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, p. 139
3. Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss what method I used for my study and how I justify the choice of them. Thereafter, I discuss and explain how I collected my data that is important and necessary to answer my purpose and my research questions.

3.1 Research strategies

A research strategy can be an explorative, hypothetical or a descriptive character and what strategy is used is determined by the thesis problem and the purpose of the thesis.

An explorative strategy is a deeper study or discussion of specific happenings due to the lack of exact and current knowledge of the particular issue. The purpose with an explorative study is to gather as much information as possible of the appropriate problem, and as a result a research of this ability normally lays groundwork for further research\(^{37}\). Descriptive research or statistical research provides data about the population or universal being studies, but it can only describe “who, where, when and how” of a situation, and not what cost it. These kinds of research are mostly very detailed and comprehensive\(^{38}\). Hypothetical strategy aims to involve possible way of explaining a situation which as not yet been shown to be true. It is important though that there are enough information and knowledge in that specific topic or area so that from the theory one can deduce assumption about the relationship in the reality\(^{39}\).

In this thesis, an explorative research strategy is used, due to the reason to give the readers basic knowledge and understanding of the problem area.

3.2 Quantitative and qualitative research methods

Quantitative and qualitative methods tend to sound similar but there are some differences. Quantitative research for an example is more concerned with measuring, analyzing and describing data while qualitative research focus more on explaining and understanding collected information\(^{40}\). A deeper explanation of quantitative research is that the research is a numerical variable that is expressed in numbers and it is about calculating and deciding the value of figures. It is normally questions that are comparable to how many? How much? And

\(^{37}\) Patel & Davidsson, Forskningsmetoder- Att planera, genomföra och rapportera en undersökning, 2003

\(^{38}\) Ibid

\(^{39}\) Ibid

\(^{40}\) Ibid
to what point are asked? While in qualitative research the researcher attempts to analyze and becomes aware of why and how something occurs. The purpose of this kind of research is to achieve a deeper knowledge compared to a quantitative research where the achieved knowledge is more divided. Therefore, since these two methods differ, a choice as to be made in the beginning of planning a thesis, whether it should be based quantitative and qualitative research. The problem statement and the purpose of the thesis determine the choice of which research method that will be used.

In this thesis a qualitative research has been used on the grounds that it describes and explains what value consumers believe they receive when purchasing from luxury brands and also explain what kind of consumers consume luxury goods. The research focuses on consumers in general, rather than focusing on numeric variables.

3.3 Different types of data
Besides from the characteristics quantitative and qualitative methods, it is important to remember as a researcher that there is a difference between primary data and secondary data.

3.3.1 Primary data
In primary data collection, the researcher collect the data by using different methods such as questionnaires, interviews, mail interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups, observation etc. The main thing when using primary data is that the data that is collected and the research is unique to the researcher and until it get published, no one has access to it. The benefit when using primary data is that the information that is collected is adapted to the research problem and that the information is fresh and new.

3.3.2 Secondary data
Secondary data is data that has already been collected for some purpose other than specific marketing research need. The data may be positioned within the company, which is called internal data and comprises such information as sales invoices, advertising/media costs, distribution data and precious market research reports. Secondary data can also be positioned

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41 Patel & Davidsson, Forskningsmetoder- Att planera, genomföra och rapportera en undersökning, 2003
42 Ibid
43 http://brent.tvu.ac.uk/dissguide/hm1u3/hm1u3text3.htm
44 John R, Webb, Understanding and Designing Marketing Research, 1992
outside the organizations limitations, which is called external data and may include government publications, syndicated research, trade/professional association reports etc\textsuperscript{45}.

This thesis is composed of both primary data and secondary data. Primary data is used since interviews have been made with store managers at different luxury brand stores. And secondary data have been used in the theoretical points of departures of references such as relevant literatures, Internet, and articles that I have found on the Internet, other thesis reports, all in the topic of luxury consumption and also consumer behavior.

3.4 Data collection methods

There is several different data collection method that a researcher can use to approach the aimed population. These methods differ from each other and from every situation that comes across in practice. The most suitable data collection method should be chosen before turning to the targeted respondents. Therefore, brief descriptions of data collection methods are presented below.

3.4.1 Focus groups

A focus group is a useful research tool resulting in interactive interviews, in other words, interviews that affect each other. A group of persons who have something in common such as age, sex, experience, or have the knowledge about the subject are gathered for a limited period of time to discuss a specific topic\textsuperscript{46}.

3.4.2 Interviews

Interviews are excellent data collection method when it comes to qualitative researches. Through interviews one can gather information through the questions that are asked. During an interview, the interviewer directly confronts the respondent with questions. Nowadays, interviews can be made differently, in such as: telephone interviews, online interviews, and personal interviews\textsuperscript{47}. The advantages with using interviews as a method of investigation are the low falling off and also the ability to ask more complex questions that require explanations. This method is known to be very flexible but there are some disadvantages as well. First of all, the time aspect that is required takes a lot of effort, and second of all the fact

\textsuperscript{45} John R, Webb, \textit{Understanding and Designing marketing Research}, 1992
\textsuperscript{46} http://www.skane.se/upload/Webbplatser/Utvecklingscentrum/dokument/fokusgrupper_memeologen.doc
\textsuperscript{47} Patel & Davidsson, \textit{Forskningsmetoder- Att planera, genomföra och rapportera en undersökning}, 2003
that the respondents do not experience anonymity, which may affect the potential answers of weak subjects. Thirdly, the behavior of the interviewer can affect the respondents to answer in a certain way.

3.4.3 Observations
Observation is about classified watching. An observation is something we have watched and taken notes from, either during the observation or afterwards. This method is about a researcher who is in a situation that is relevant for the study and register behavior from different people. The results we receive from an observation are qualitative.

3.4.4 Choice of method
In this thesis I have used interviews as a data collection method. As mentioned in the introduction I chose to interview store managers at chosen luxury brand stores because I believe store managers are the ones that have the best view of consumers’ behavior than any other. They are the ones that meet consumers everyday and watch and observe their behavior. They can also see the difference between their consumers, the difference of what kind of people who shop their products. I chose to not interview consumers first of all due to lack of time. To interview consumer requires more time than I had for this master thesis due to that it can many times be hard to get hold of consumers who actually want to stand up for an interview. Consumers are mostly busy with their shopping or on the run, which can turn to insufficient answers, or answers that consumers just say to get rid of the interview and continue shopping. I felt that appointed interviews with store managers that meet consumer everyday and that have a whole picture of consumers’ behavior was the best and accurate method. Consumers seems to have a loyal relationship to their favorite brands and therefore also the store managers who help them in the stores. This in turn then leads to that store managers know a lot about their consumers and where I as researcher can find answers for my study.

The interviews that were made with store managers for different luxury brands were made more like conversations rather than interviews were I asked questions and the respondents answered. I decided to ask questions to the store managers at chosen luxury brands stores and

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48 Wallén, Göran, *Vetenskapligteori och forskningsmetodik*, 1996
discuss together with them about the topic. The interviews were held at different luxury brands stores in central Stockholm and four open questions were asked and I discussed together with the store managers to find answers for this thesis research questions. The ambition was to interview, as many luxury brands as I felt was necessary. When I felt that I did not receive anything that the previous brands already said I choose to not make any more interviews since the utility was already maximized.

I also used observation as a method to collect data and the observations were made of consumers in different luxury stores in central Stockholm. I walked around in different stores and observed consumers shopping behavior in luxury consumption and I also observed what kind of people who purchase luxury products and if there were any differences between them.

3.5 Choice of luxury stores and store managers
The luxury brands that I chose to interview are all different luxury brands located in central Stockholm on well-known streets. The stores that I chose to have my interviews at are chosen after what I believed is luxury brands. I had to call and ask for permission before coming to the stores because many brands did not allow students interviewing them. This took a lot of time since it was hard to reach the store managers because they were many times in meetings or at business trips, but after a couple of days of constantly chasing them by phone calls I managed to get permission at a couple of luxury brand stores. The store managers that I had my interviews with were all familiar with the luxury world and have had been working for quite a long time either in the same store or at different luxury brand stores. They all preferred to be anonymous so their name are fictitious. A short description of the chosen store and store managers are shown below.

3.5.1 Mulberry
The first store that was interviewed was Mulberry at Birger Jarlsgatan. Mulberry is an English luxury company that was founded in 1971 and is well known world wide for its craftsmanship and quality. The brand’s main goods is an extensive line of luxury fashion bags for both women and men that are a combination of stylish, stand-out design with the finest leathers and detailing\(^\text{50}\). The store manager that I interviewed has worked for a quite a while in the

\(^{50}\) http://www.mulberrygroupplc.com/homepage.asp
same store and is well aware of what kind of consumers that comes to the store and their behavior. I have chosen to call the store manager Anna.

### 3.5.2 Hermès
The second store was Hermès at NK on Hamngatan. Hermès is a French high fashion brand that is specializing in leather, ready-to-wear, perfumery, lifestyle accessories, and luxury goods. The brand was founded in 1837 in Paris and is well known in the fashion world, and its products are considered to be high-status due to their reputation, craftsmanship and price. Many people recognize the brand by its logo of a Duc carriage with horse. The store manager at Hermès store has also worked for a couple of years and is well aware of their consumers and consumers’ behavior towards luxury consumption. I have chosen to call the store manager Sophie.

### 3.5.3 Burberry
The third store to get interviewed was Burberry for ladies at NK on Hamngatan. Burberry was founded in 1856 by Thomas Burberry and is a British luxury fashion brand that manufactures clothing, fragrance, and fashion accessories. The brand is well known in the fashion world by other fashion brands but also consumers by its distinctive tartan pattern that is used in many items. The store manager for the Burberry store at NK have been working for more than five years and is well aware of their consumers and I chose to call her Lisa.

### 3.5.4 Bottega Veneta
Michele Taddei and Renzo Zengiro in Italy founded Bottega Veneta in 1966 and Gucci Group purchased it in 2001. The brand is an Italian brand and is known for its leather products. The name Bottega Veneta means “Venetian atelier” and the brand first begun to produce artisanal leather goods. Bottega Vineta artisans developed a unique leather-weaving technique called intrecciato that remains a signature of the brand. The store manager for Bottega Veneta has been working for the same store a couple of years and before that she had been working for Gucci in Italy and some other luxury stores. She had a lot of knowledge about the luxury world and about the different brands. I chose to call her Molly.

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3.5.5 NK Man

NK Man is a part of NK (Nordiska Kompaniet), a department store that is located in Stockholm. The company was founded in Stockholm in 1902 through two companies K.M Lundberg and Joseph Leja. The man who was responsible for the joining was Josef Sachs and he wanted to establish a department store that would offer the same kind of service that was offered in stores in London and Paris\textsuperscript{54}. Today in NK there are several different kind of brands, mostly expensive luxury brands, but also brands that are in a bit lower price range such as Acne, Sand, and Boomerang. NK Man is for men that have high expectations of service and quality. NK Man offers brands such as Armani, Paul Smith, Eton, Hugo, Burberry, Boss Black, Canali and many more. The store manager at NK Man have been working at NK department store for over 15 years at different brands and is well aware of what consumers that comes shopping and about their behavior. I chose to call him Benjamin.

\textsuperscript{54} http://nk.se/sv/nk-stockholm/om-nk/
4. Empirical basis

In this chapter I present my empirical basis that is based on the answers from my interviews and observations that later will be the basis for the analysis. The questions that were asked during the interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

4.1 What kind of consumer shop at your store? And is there any difference between them?

4.1.1 Mulberry

According to Anna, the store manager at Mulberry, there is a mixture of consumers. There are both younger consumers but also older, but mostly people that are in their adult life and older. She states that the older ones tend to buy the more classical bags with more neutral color like black, brown, white, beige and so on, while the younger ones tend to buy bags that are a little bit more hip and colorful. Anna also claims that most of their consumers are people with money otherwise she did not believe they would come and spend 10000 SEK on one bag. On the other hand, there are some consumers, mostly younger who actually save money to purchase one Mulberry bag. But overall Anna says it is more upper class consumers with money who do not think about the price, but she can see clearly when a consumer is not an upper class, because these consumers do not think about the price at all, whereas for an example a younger consumer who have saved money to buy that particular bag cares about the price.

The consumers they have are very loyal consumers who come back frequently because they are happy with their products but they also have new consumers who just recently discovered Mulberry and after purchasing something they become very loyal. Anna also explains that their consumers are mostly people who are working who needs a nice and good looking but also a bag that has a good quality that can last for many years. However, there are also younger students who buy bags when they are in school and after school they take it with them when they start working. Since Mulberry sell leather bags, the bags become nicer by the time. In other words, the bags look much better after a couple of years.
4.1.2 Hermés
Sophie at Hermés explains that at Hermés there are all kind of people shopping, everything from younger consumers to old grandparents. Many people believe that Hermés is very snobbish but they actually have all kind of consumers, people who save money to buy that particular item or people who just buy without thinking about the price. Hermés have their famous Birkin Bags that cost 70000 SEK and more and Sophie explained that these bags are mostly purchased buy upper class people who can afford it and do not think about the price. The ones that have the money see this as an investment and they have them for a very long time and therefore also buy insurance for the bag. The upper class consumers do not show that they have money, they can easily come to a store with old sneakers and look around, but what they then pick out to buy and how they act and how they do not even bother the price is something that tells that they are upper class according to Sophie. They know what they want and they do not mind what it costs. Younger consumers who just buy Hermés for its sake, just to own something that is from an exclusive brand do not buy a bag from Hermés. They buy scarves, perfumes, jewelry and so on, items that are not too expensive.

4.1.3 Burberry
When talking to Lisa at the Burberry store she also thought it was a mixture of consumers, everything from young girls to older women to grandmothers. She could see a little difference between the consumers, the older ones seemed to have at most times more money then the younger ones. Lisa explained that there was not only upper class people who purchased at store but also middle class. It can be many times hard to see the difference but she has many times observed the difference by the way upper class talk, act and behave. Like Anna and Sophie mentioned upper class consumers are the ones that do not care about the price, but about the actual product and this is something Lisa agrees on.

4.1.4 Bottega Veneta
Molly at Bottega Veneta agrees on previous luxury brand stores that there are mixtures of consumers. Their consumers are all in different ages, young teenagers to old consumers. Molly explains that Bottega Veneta is a classic brand that has many products that are classical with not many details on them and they are very discreet. Very classical consumers mostly purchase these classical products and then they have some items that are a little more hip and trendy and those are bought buy younger consumers. Over all their products are expensive and their bags can cost around 15000-20000 SEK and the consumers who mostly purchase
them are people with money like upper class. But then on the other hand, Bottega Veneta sell bracelets that cost around 1200-1500 SEK and Molly states that these bracelets can be bought by anyone, so for her to say what kind of consumers that purchase their products is hard. She also explained that it is hard to judge by looking and observing how wealthy a person is. Some people can come to the store nice dressed and some can come in with old sneakers and sweatpants and yet buy an extremely expensive bag, but overall since it is an exclusive and expensive brand most consumers are consumers with lots of money.

4.1.5 NK Man
Benjamin at NK Man explains that their consumers are males in the ages 16-70, but most of the consumers are in the age 25-50. He also explained that he had hard time to see if the consumers were upper class or not. He figured that is a mixture with all kind of people, both middle class and upper class. He also claims that today it is hard to see who has money or not. Years ago there were only people with money that went shopping at NK, but today it is a total mixture.

4.2 Why do you think your consumers prefer to shop luxury brands? And what added value is given to them so they choose to go to you instead of fast fashion?

4.2.1 Mulberry
Anna at Mulberry believes that their consumers choose their brand because of the quality that Mulberry offer. Their consumers know that if they spend 10000 or 50000 SEK on one bag they know it will last for many years, and since mentioned above, leather bags are bags that become nicer by years so consumers know that it will last for a long time. Anna claims that she thinks that their consumers prefer to go to an exclusive brand and spend more money on something they know will last rather than going to H&M and buy a bag that might last two years, if your lucky. The consumers know what they get when they spend so much money on one item. Anna also explains that the younger ones might purchase Mulberry or other luxury brands because it looks kind of cool to own one bag that comes from a luxury brand. A bag that they can show off to their friends, and this is something she said she could recognize herself and her friends, whereas the older ones and grown ups buy luxury brands because of the quality they receive. The last thing Anna said was that she believes their consumers choose Mulberry in front of others is that their brand can be seen as a more discreet luxury brand compared to many other luxury brands.
4.2.2 Hermés
Sophie at Hermés agrees on what Anna said about that quality is one of the reasons why consumers purchase luxury goods. She thinks that their consumers buy at Hermés for the quality that Hermés offer that cannot be offered from a fast fashion brand. Sophie also says that who does not want to buy or own an item from an exclusive brand? She believes that all people would like to own something luxury. Sophie also claims that consumers do not only buy it for the quality but also for the status it gives consumer by owning a luxury item. It can be status from friends or other social networks, especially for younger to middle age consumers.

4.2.3 Burberry
Lisa at Burberry believes that many of their consumer get affected by media, fashion magazines and what celebrities wear and that they later try to purchase the same products and that that is a reason why they purchase luxury brands. Anna and Sophie all agreed on that quality is something that makes the consumers choose luxury in front of fast fashion and this is something Lisa agrees on. Burberry offers different fabrics that fast fashion cannot offer with the low prices they have, fabrics such as cashmere and silk. These fabrics make the brand very exclusive and the quality of the products is very high compared to fast fashion. Lisa also claims that the consumers demand more when it comes to luxury brands and by that she means from the store managers and the brand in general. The consumers want more focus on them and they like the help they receive in the store that many fast fashion cannot give them. The consumers also like the whole experience they have at luxury brands and this is something Lisa believes is an important value for consumers.

4.2.4 Bottega Veneta
Molly at Bottega Veneta agrees to some extent of what previous store managers think about why consumers purchase luxury brands. Molly explain that of course quality matters to consumers and that they know what kind of quality they will receive from luxury compared to fast fashion. Molly also says that when it comes to Bottega Veneta, the brand is a very discreet brand as mentioned above and the logo is very discreet and the consumers that buy Bottega Veneta are consumers that might have a very good self-esteem and do not need to show off with a bag that screams luxury as many other brands. They rather buy the bag for its attribute or because it is nice looking. But over all about why consumers buy luxury brands, Molly believes that consumers who buy luxury buy a whole concept. A concept where quality
is included, but not only that but also extraordinary service that is given in the store, personal help, expertise in their products, knowledge in fashion and what is “in” now and what is upcoming, and good contacts with consumers. These things matter for consumers that buy luxury brands that cannot be given in fast fashion stores. These added values are the reason why consumers choose to go to luxury brands.

4.2.5 NK Man
Benjamin believes that their consumer buy luxury brands because of the service that is given at most luxury brands, but also the quality that all of the other store managers have mentioned. He also believes that the complete experience of purchasing at luxury brands is an added value that cannot be given at fast fashion. The way the personnel meet their consumers is very important and something that matters the most for consumer, and second is the service that is given and of course the quality of their clothes.

4.3 What do you think control consumers choice to purchase luxury brands? Any specific values or principles?

4.3.1 Mulberry
Once again Anna speaks about the quality as a main reason to why and what controls consumers choices to purchase luxury brands. She explains that they have had consumers who have bought one leather bag 20 years ago and are so satisfied with the bag that they come back and buy another one. Anna claims that their consumers are very quality-conscious and this is something she believes control consumers choices. Another thing she explained was that many brands have had demonstrations outside the stores about killing animals to make bags, but Mulberry do not kill animals to make bags but instead they take the leather that is left over after taking the meat which make them a little more special and this can be a reason why consumers choose them. Some consumers have different values and principals and some of them might believe in animal rights and then they chooses Mulberry instead of other brands and that can be something that control their behavior and choices.

4.3.2 Hermés
Sophie at Hermés could not say something specific that she thought the consumers got controlled by when purchasing luxury brands, but she did agree with Anna that quality is something that controls the consumers when it comes to luxury goods. Their consumers are
also quality-conscious like consumers at Mulberry, and they like to have nice and good-looking things but at the same time they want something with good quality that is sustainable and can last for a longer time.

4.3.3 Burberry
Lisa could not give any specific reasons of what controls consumers choices but like mentioned above they get affected by media, magazines and celebrities. The consumers like to be up to date and they know that Burberry is an old brand and are known for their trench coats. Consumers also like the fact that the brand knows their products. However, like the other two stores the consumers at Burberry is very conscious about the quality and knows that they receive a better quality from Burberry than fast fashion. The consumers want to buy something that they can have for a longer time then just a few months. The products they purchase have to be sustainable. On the other hand, the younger consumers tend to buy from Burberry just because it is Burberry. They want to buy an exclusive brand just to show off in front of others. These consumers are not quality-conscious as the older consumers.

4.3.4 Bottega Veneta
Molly believes that the quality controls many times consumers shopping behavior and that they are very quality-conscious and it is important for them, but there are many other things that controls too. Molly explains that many consumers like what a specific brand stand for and want to be apart of it but some consumers buy a luxury item just because it is luxury. This has to deal a lot with self-esteem; many consumers might buy it to fit in, in certain social groups and friends or some people even buy it because they have seen someone else wear it. Molly explains that older consumers that might be around their 30s and older tend to already have a good self-esteem and do not try to fit as much as younger do. Younger people are growing up and wants to fit in and be one of the popular ones, and these consumers are the ones that buy the products just because it is luxury.

4.3.5 NK Man
Benjamin believes that quality and service is something that controls consumers behavior towards luxury consumption. He do not think that consumers necessarily need to shop luxury but what they are looking for is high quality and high service and that can be found at luxury brands today. NK Man offers clothes that have a very good quality; their shirts can last for 5-
10 years while compared to H&M’s shirts last for one season. Benjamin means that it then is more profitable and sustainable to purchase luxury.

4.4 Do your consumers tend to mix luxury brands and fashion brands?

4.4.1 Mulberry
According to Anna at Mulberry it is very different how their consumer look at other brands and fast fashion, but Anna states that the older consumers in overall are very nice dressed and wear many luxury brands, whereas the younger one tend to mix. She also explains that it is “in” to mix luxury with vintage and also with fast fashion. If someone has an exclusive handbag then it is nice to tone down the outfit with a little bit vintage and fast fashion. This is something that can be seen around younger consumers but over all the upper class tend to stick to a little bit more luxury brands.

4.4.2 Hermés
According to Sophie at Hermés their consumers tend to behave pretty similar to Mulberry. The older consumers that have a lot of money tend to buy only luxury brands because of the quality that it gives them and they are very loyal consumers who usually have been consumers for quite a long time and knows what they receive when purchasing luxury. Sophie also explains how the younger consumers tend to mix with different brands just like Anna explained. They both agree on that it is “in” to mix luxury with vintage and fast fashion today, but this is something that is very common by younger whereas the older and upper class tend to stick to luxury.

4.4.3 Burberry
Like Anna, and Sophie, Lisa agrees on that the consumers mix all kind of brands. They do not only purchase luxury brands but also Vintage and fast fashion. She also explained that they have consumer who might not shop at H&M for an example. Those consumers are upper class consumers and tend to only purchase from exclusive brands. They do not find the quality and the value they are looking for in fast fashion so they tend to stick to luxury, whereas younger mix all kind of brands.
4.4.4 Bottega Veneta

According to Molly their consumers at Bottega Veneta tend to mix all kind of brands, luxury with fast fashion brands, but there some consumers that solely purchase from luxury. According to Molly that is mostly older consumers, the younger ones tend to mix it all kind of brands. Most people mix to find their own personal style. A couple of years ago people who bought luxury did not mix with fast fashion and logos were very important, but today since it is “in” to mix, many people tend to mix and people today would be ashamed to wear one brand top to toe.

4.4.5 NK Man

Benjamin agrees on what previous store managers have said about if consumers mix luxury brands and fast fashion. Their consumers tend to mix with fast fashion. He also claims that men today is very loyal to brands, most men in their 40’s they do not tend to mix often as women. If a man buys a shirt that he is very happy with, he will for sure go back there and buy the same type of shirt again. Men usually stick to the same brand as long as they do not get unhappy or dissatisfied with the brand or the quality. Men are loyal to their favorite brands that they have.

Besides the questions that as asked during the interviews that was made at the five different luxury brands most of the store managers mentioned that there is a big difference of who purchase luxury today and who did it 5-10 years ago. Back in the time luxury was mostly for upper class. Today everyone can purchase luxury, some people might save money for a long time and other just have it. One of the reasons of how everyone can buy luxury brands today is because many luxury brands have widen their target group by producing luxury goods in a bit cheaper price range so more consumers can afford their products, but yet in the frame of what is luxury. Back in the days there were only people with money who could afford luxury.

The store managers even explained that fast fashion brands have another logistics system, which can make them have their collections out faster. However, this is not anything that would not make consumers wait for luxury brands. Consumers are willing to wait for luxury brands collection due to the service and the quality that they offer. It is more valuable to them then to have the latest trends as fast as people who purchase from fast fashion.
5. Observation

From the observation that has been made at different luxury stores in central Stockholm the result of what kind of people who shop is very mixed. Like all store managers that I interviewed said I totally agree with them, there is a mixture of upper class people, middle class, working class, brat wannabes, young teenager and old people. There is a complete mixture. I completely agree with some of the store managers said about the consumers of luxury brands have changed just in 5-10 years. I remember when I was in my teens and my friends and me went to NK and we felt that we did not fit in along with everybody else because there was only upper class at that time. This time, many years later I did not feel the same. I felt that I actually fitted in because it was just a mixture of different people. NK department store had a bigger mixture than Mulberry and Bottega Veneta that was located at Birger Jarlgatan. At those two stores, there were mostly upper class and I could tell by the way they behaved and spoke. Most of them were very nice dressed also with different luxury brands and I could tell by they way they behaved that that they were loyal consumers who have been shopping at those stores before. The consumers in the store had lots of confidence and did not mind the price at all, and they spoke with a nice language. They either shopped for themselves or gifts to others. At NK there were all kind of people and maybe that is because it is a department store where not only luxury stores are located but also brands that are less exclusive and that might attract all consumers to go come to the department store.
6. Analysis

In this chapter I present an analysis of the empirical basis together with the theoretical points of departure. The analysis is based on the previous choices that I have made concerning methodology, in accordance with the statement of the problem and the purpose of the thesis.

6.1 Consumers that shop luxury brands and the differences between them

From the interviews that was made for this thesis it was quite clear that it was a mixture of all kind of people who purchase luxury brands. It was a wide range of consumers, everything from upper class, middle class, and brat wannabes, young teenager consumers to old grandparents. Most of their consumers are people who are working, but there are younger ones that are students and then old grandparents that are retired. However, there were differences between them and what they purchased. All of the interviewed store managers explained that they had all kind of people coming in and they all agreed on that it is quite hard today to judge if a person is upper class or not by looking at what they were wearing. Some consumers walk into the store in old sneakers or in sweatpants and they think that that person might not have much money and then it turns out he/she pick out the most expensive item in the store. It is easier to judge if someone is upper class by the way they behave, act and their confidence and not to forget their carelessness for the price. Like the interviewed upper class say in Popova’s book, it is easy to change your complexional, but as soon someone starts to talk or walk, you can tell where that person is from.55 Anyone can put on nice make up and wear expensive branded clothes, but if you do not have the confidence and the manners as an upper class it is going to shine through.

All interviewed store managers agreed on that upper class people are the ones that do not mind the price at all. They go into a store and look around and pick out what they want. For them it is not important how much it cost, but about the product instead. As written in Popova’s book, upper class are known to be wealthy and can afford to live the lifestyle they are living and money is nothing that they are proud of but it is just what it is, it is nothing you show off with.56 On the other hand younger consumers who purchase luxury brands might have saved money to buy that particular item cares a lot about the price because he/she might

55 Popova, Susanna, Överklass: En bok om klass och identitet, 2007
56 Ibid.
save money for quite a long time to buy a luxury item. For them to purchase an expensive bag is not as obvious as for upper class. Sophie at Hermés explains how expensive their Birkin bags are and that these bags are mostly purchased buy upper class since they are so expensive. Sophie also explains that younger consumers mostly buy scarves, perfumes, and jewelry from Hermés and they only buy it because it is Hermés, to own something from a luxury brands.

Salomon et al explains in *Consumer Behavior: A European Perspective* that there are two kinds of people of who purchase luxury goods; I can after this research say that I agree. They say that the first one is the consumer who purchases luxury goods because of its quality, esthetics and because of the service that is given when shopping. From the result of my interviews, all store managers said that most consumers buy luxury products because of the quality that luxury brands offer that cannot be offered from cheaper brands. The consumers also believe that the service that is given is so valuable to them and that this is another reason to why they choose luxury. On the other hand, there are consumers that Solomon et al think purchases luxury brands for what is symbolizes and that these consumers sees luxury brands as a away to express their status and values and principles. They chose to call them consumers who brag; they purchase luxury brands to show their social status. According to the store managers they believed that there are mostly younger consumers who purchase luxury because it is luxury and to show off in front of friends and other social groups. They believed that the younger ones might buy luxury to get accepted into certain social surroundings and to get status. Molly at Bottega Veneta explained that she believes that younger consumers do not yet have the confidence and self-esteem as older have and they still need to show off because it is still important for them to get accepted and fit in, whereas older have passed that period in their lifetime and now they purchase because of the value it means to them or the products attribute.

There are not only younger consumers who tend to show off and brag, but according to one of the interviewed upper class people who got interviewed by Popova explains that there are differences between people with money. He stated that first we have people whom recently become rich, who collected money in a short period of time. They like to show off what they own and that they have money and can afford it. These people tend to buy for example Gucci sandals or Louis Vuitton bags or Burberry, brands that have big logos that show. Whereas the

58 Ibid.
more established upper class people who always have had money tend to buy from Hermés or a suit from Götrich, brands with logos that are more discreet. 59. This is something I fully agree with. I believe that upper class have always have had money and for them its is nothing new, whereas for those who recently have become rich have the need to show off that they can now afford these expensive things and show the world that they can also live the lifestyle as wealthy upper class people do.

6.2 Why consumers prefer to shop luxury brands instead of fast fashion and what added value is given to them

All the interviewed store managers believe consumers of luxury products are very quality conscious and value quality highly and that that is a reason why consumer prefers luxury instead of fast fashion, because it gives them an added value that cannot be given from fast fashion. Consumers rather spend money on something that they know will last longer and that is sustainable than going to H&M and buy something cheap that might last for a year if you are lucky. Luxury brands offer another type of material or fabrics such as cashmere or silk, those are way more expensive than what other cheaper brands have.

According to upper class people that were interviewed by Popova they say that middle class people tend to have a vanity case full with make up from cheaper brands, and if you are upper class you normally do not own much and the things you actually have are extremely expensive. They believe that you buy what you need in the best quality that you can ever find, it does not matter what it cost as long as it is good quality because in the end it is more sustainable than keep buying cheap things that do not last.60. This is very true and I can say that I agree with them. I also believe that in the end it is more sustainable if you from the beginning buy something with good quality instead of buying something cheap that will last for a short period of time and when it breaks you have to buy another one and another one after that and so on. It is not good for the environment nor is it economical in the longer run.

Some of the interviewed store managers also believe their consumers choose to purchase from luxury brands because of the experience they receive when shopping luxury. An experience that cannot be offered from fast fashion and this can be an added value that consumer prefer.

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59 Popova, Susanna, Överklass: En bok om klass och identitet, 2007
60 Ibid
Consumers buy a whole concept when they shop luxury. A concept where not only quality is included, but also expertise from the personnel, the amazing service that is given and a personal contact between the store assistants and the consumer. This is exactly what my theory brings up, consumers buy luxury for the experience they receive from different brands and they like when brands communicate to them through a more sophisticated marketing such as one-to-one marketing⁶¹, and as Arnold, the former buyer at Dior says, to consumers it is very important to experience the best feeling on the highest level when entering a luxury store⁶². I really believe that consumers appreciated this kind of marketing more and they appreciate the service and the quality that luxury brands offer and that is the biggest reason why choose luxury brands at the first place and the reason why they keep coming back. Some of the store managers even mentioned that consumers see these really expensive luxury brands as an investment and even buy insurance for their luxury goods, it could be for an example a Birkin bag that costs 70000 SEK. This can also be a reason why they choose luxury, because of investments.

Some of the store managers mentioned that another added value could be that they like what the brand stands for, for an example animal rights, or some consumers might like a certain brand because of the look of their products. Like Molly at Bottega Veneta, she explained that Bottega Veneta is a very discreet brand and that most of their consumers like the brand because it is discreet. They like the fact that it does not scream luxury with a big logo like many other luxury brands. Here is good example of the interviewed upper class by Popova. They explain how upper class consumers prefers luxury brands that are more discreet than other brands, because as mentioned that they do not like brands with logos that screams luxury like brands such as Gucci or Louis Vuitton. They prefer more neutral and discreet brands like for an example Hermès or Bottega Veneta⁶³. This could be because they do not want to show that they are upper class and have money since they do not believe in showing off your wealth. This can be another reason why consumer chooses a certain brand over another.

⁶¹ www.nucifora.com/
⁶² Adolfsson, Patel, Habte Selassie & Strömberg, Luxury brands Vs. Fast fashion, 2009
⁶³ Popova, Susanna, Överklass: En bok om klass och identitet, 2007
6.3 Values or principles and other factors that control consumers choices to purchase luxury brands

Salomon et al explains how fashion is a complex process and that it affects consumers in different ways, with both inner and external factors, and the external factors are about pressure from others\textsuperscript{64}. Most of the store managers and even myself can see this theory in younger consumers who tries to impress others with luxury brands. Younger people have the need and desire to get accepted and to fit in around friends and social groups and therefore they purchase luxury brands. They do not purchase it because of the quality it gives them or because of the services that is given but actually because it is luxury. Younger consumer have a bigger need of acceptance than older consumer because they are yet discovering themselves and tries to build up their self-esteem.

Solomon at al also explains that there are two personalities; one that is easily influenced by other social surroundings and the other that is less influenced. Those who are easily influenced have bigger need to adjust to the environment and social surroundings and they feel that the brand of the clothes they wear have a bigger value\textsuperscript{65}. This is quite clear between younger consumers like mentioned above, and people are who are less influenced are people who appreciate more the clothes functional attribute\textsuperscript{66} which we can see around older consumer. Like the respondents states, the older consumers care more about the quality and the products attributes rather than what other people think.

According to Lisa at Burberry, another factors that can influence people could be media, what media write about celebrities. It could be about what they wear, who designed their clothes, or how they live, what they eat and so on. Many consumers might want to be just like them and try to achieve that goal by purchasing the same brand as celebrities do. Bond speaks about that people are so influenced by media and advertisements that we consume more than ever today\textsuperscript{67}. I can say that I agree with Bond, media influence many people not only what to wear but also how to look. Today there are magazines with lots of advertisements with celebrities of the latest fashion and people get inspired to shop after looking at those advertisements.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. p 545
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid. p 545
\textsuperscript{67} Bond, Cay, Kläder som kultur och personligt uttryck, 2002
Therefore, so I fully agree with Lisa that media could influence some consumers when they make their choices when shopping luxury.

Another example can be consumers who recently become wealthy, people who have collected money in a short period of time. As mentioned above they tend to buy luxury brands that scream luxury, brands with big logos just so other people can see that they have money and can afford it, whereas upper class tend to buy more discreet brands.\textsuperscript{68} Brat wannabes have a bigger need to show off because they do not have the same confidence as upper class. They are almost like younger consumers who need to show off in front of their friends, but instead they tend to do this to get status and show people they have money. And according to Andersson & Tran, products that give people status have started to go up in the hierarchy and they start to compare their lifestyle to people with way more money than themselves\textsuperscript{69}. If they ever will have the same lifestyle, as upper class is something that can be discussed for hours, but according to upper class themselves it takes about three generations before you can call yourself an upper class, if you really want to\textsuperscript{70}. According to Sophie at Hermès she believes that some consumers buy luxury because it they think it gives them status and I can say that I in some points agree with her. Many people who I believe do not have enough confidence or self-esteem have a bigger need to get accepted in different social groups. Therefore they need to buy these things so other people can accept them and through that they can gain their confidence.

When I asked the store managers why people chooses to buy luxury brands, some of them answered, who would not like to own one? Everyone wants to have a luxury bag. One of them even compared to herself and to her friends. She stated that she believes every girl want to own a luxury bag. According to George Simmel who has studied the theory “trickle down” where upper class people show their status by consuming luxury goods from exclusive brands, and he believes this kind of consumption creates jealously and huge desires for lower class people. Lower class people strive in different ways to copy higher classes\textsuperscript{71}. The consumption pattern in the society is obviously spread from up to down in the hierarchy, from upper class to lower classes. The lower classes want to be like upper class and therefore

\textsuperscript{68} Popova, Susanna, Överklass: En bok om klass och identitet, 2007
\textsuperscript{69} Andersson & Tran, Orsakar lyxväsor fjärliar i magen? - motiven bakom köpet av en lyxväska, 2010
\textsuperscript{70} Popova, Susanna, Överklass: En bok om klass och identitet, 2007
\textsuperscript{71} Solomon, Bamossy & Askergaard, Consumer behavior: A European Perspective, 2006
purchase same products. This is nothing the store managers assume is true, but they have noticed that it is more and more middle class people purchasing luxury brands compared to how it was only 5-10 years ago. I believe myself that it is more and more middle ordinary people purchasing luxury brands today. When I was in high school it was not that “in” to own luxury branded clothes or bags but today when I look at my younger cousins and their friends they are wearing the latest luxury brands. It has become such a hip to own and wear luxury brands these days so maybe George Simmel is right. Upper class might create jealousy around ordinary people\footnote{Solomon, Bamossy & Askergaard, \textit{Consumer behavior: A European Perspective}, 2006} and maybe we try our best to copy them and try to live a life that we can only dream about.

6.4 Do consumers tend to mix luxury brands and fashion brands?

Like mentioned above, the stores managers believe that back in the days around 5-10 years ago there were only consumers with money who purchased luxury products. This is something they have been observing and I fully agree with them. I have noticing myself that there is a wide mixture of people today who purchase luxury. Nowadays it has become a hip to own luxury products and it is “in” to mix luxury with vintage and fast fashion. I think it is kind of cool that you can mix all these things to create your own personal style. It sort of makes all people fashionable and no one can really feel that they left out or wear the wrong style. Something that is important to mention is that all consumers do not mix. It is mostly younger consumers that mix; older classical upper class consumers tend to stick to only luxury brands due to the quality. Another thing that is worth mentioning is that male consumers are the most loyal consumers. They tend to stick around as long as the brand do not disappoint them, so they might not mix as much as females do. Even if some consumers tend to stick with luxury brands, according to Molly from Bottega Veneta it is important to remember that those consumers do not wear one brand from top to toe. She also stated that consumers used to do a couple of years ago, but today if someone did that people might just laugh.

Some of the store managers talked about that fast fashion brands have another logistic system and that is the reason why they are out faster on the market with their collections than luxury brands. Nevertheless, they believed that this was not anything that would make their consumers choose fast fashion instead. They believe that their consumers are willing to wait
for luxury brands collection due to the service and the quality that they offer. That is more valuable to them then to have the latest collection as fast as people who purchase from fast fashion.

One last thing is that all people cannot afford a Birkin bag for example, but for those who still want to purchase luxury brands but do not really have as much money as wealthy people, many luxury brands have produced products that are a litter cheaper but yet luxury. According to Molly at Bottega Veneta, many luxury brands have widen their target group a little so more consumers can afford their products. She explained that they produce products that are in a bit cheaper price range, but still in the frame of what is luxury otherwise the brand will loose its image of being luxury. Like in my theory Danziger explains that for a luxury brand to avoid damage for the brand’s image because of reduced exclusivity, the luxury brands must try to be watchful and always strive to keep the glamour, fascination and the dream and desire that is surrounded by its brand name, and this is something I fully agree with. I have noticed that a few luxury brands have products that are less expensive and this make more people able to purchase luxury brands which is good I guess, but it wont be special to own a luxury item anymore if all people can buy it. It should be unique and special to own luxury brands but that might disappear in longer run if more and more people consume luxury because the brands produces products that are less expensive.

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73 Danziger, P. *Let them eat cake: marketing luxury to the masses as well as the masses*, 2005
7. Conclusion

In this chapter I present the conclusion I have been able to draw from my research about luxury consumption from store managers point of view, what they believe is the biggest reason consumer chooses luxury instead of fast fashion and which consumers.

From my research I can conclude that consumers of luxury brands are very quality conscious, and quality is the added value consumers get when purchasing luxury brands instead of fast fashion. The quality that luxury brands offer their consumers is something that cannot be offered by fast fashion. Consumers believe that good quality is more sustainable in the longer run than to purchase cheaper things in poor quality. Consumers of luxury brands also believe that the service they receive is an added value that they appreciate. This type of service luxury brands offer is also something that cannot be offered from fast fashion and consumers value that a lot and it makes them want to go back and shop more from luxury. They like the fact that the store assistants spend a lot of time with the consumers and they also like their expertise in the products they sell. This kind of contact between consumers and store assistants is hard to find at fast fashion brands. When consumers purchase luxury brands they buy a whole concept with quality included, expertise in products and personnel contact etc. They buy luxury products because of the experience they receive when shopping.

From my research I also found out that younger consumers tend to mix luxury with fast fashion because today it is “in” to mix luxury with vintage and fast fashion. However it was quite clear that there were mostly younger consumers who tend to mix, whereas the older more classical consumers stick to only luxury brands. Another important thing I found was that consumers are willing to wait for luxury brands collection even though fast fashion is out faster, because they highly value the quality and service they receive from luxury brands and for them that is more important than to have the latest fashion quicker than fast fashion.

In the beginning of my research I was very curious to find out what kind of consumers who actually purchase luxury brands and after this research I really found answers. In the beginning I thought most of the consumers would be upper class people but after my interviews and observation it turned out to be a whole mixture of consumers. Upper class people who are looking for good quality products, younger consumers who purchase luxury
because it is luxury and people who recently become wealthy who try to show their recent status and wealth.

Today luxury brands target group is a lot wider than it was 5-10 years ago and maybe this can be because many luxury brands have widen their price range so that more people can purchase their products, or maybe because luxury consumption creates jealously and huge desires for lower class people and then lower class people strive in different ways to copy higher classes like upper class. I believe in both reasons. I believe that first of all that luxury consumption creates curiosity and desire for people to live like a wealthy person, to be able to afford all you can ever wish for and therefore they copy upper class people. Second of all I believe that more people are able to purchase luxury now when many brands have widen their price range, which makes the target group a lot wider also. Whatever it is, it is what it is and luxury is still going to be something people will always desire for.
8. Recommendation

After this research I have expanded my knowledge about luxury consumption and about class relationships and status among people. I have gained bigger understanding for consumers who purchase luxury brands and the reason why they choose to purchase luxury. Due to time limit I was not able to do a research from consumers’ perspective, which I also think would be interesting to study. All results and answers I found are based on store managers perspective and my observations. I therefore recommend a further research based on consumers’ perspective, their opinion why they choose luxury brands and not fast fashion and what added value they receive. I recommend this because I believe it would be interesting to see if there is any difference and similarities between store managers perfective and consumers’ perfective of what added value they receive and why they chooses luxury.
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Appendix 1

Frågor till personalen i lyxbutikerna i Stockholm:

1. Vad är det för slags kunder som handlar hos er? Är det någon skillnad mellan era kunder? (ålder, sysselsättning, kön, livsstil, status etc)
2. Varför tror ni att era kunder väljer att handla lyxvaror? Vad ger ni dem för mervärde så att de föredrar att gå till er framför t.ex. H & M eller andra fast fashion?
3. Vad tror ni styr kunders val av att handla lyxvaror? (värderingar, principer)
4. Tenderar era kunder att blanda lyx och fast fashion? Eller köper de enbart lyx?

Questions for the store managers at the luxury brand stores in Stockholm:

1. What kind of consumer shop at your store? And is there any difference between them? (Age, occupation, sex, lifestyle, status etc)
2. Why do you think your consumers prefer to shop luxury brands? And what added value is given to them so they choose to go to you instead of H&M or other fast fashion brands?
3. What do you think control consumers choice to purchase luxury brands? Any specific values or principles?
4. Do your consumers tend to mix luxury brands and fashion brands? Or do they only purchase luxury brands?