

Homogeneity in luxury fashion consumption: an exploration of Arab Women

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Key words

Luxury fashion, Value perceptions, Motivations, Arab women

Abstract

Consumer perceptions and consumer motivations are complex and whilst it is acknowledged within literature that heterogeneity exists, homogenous models dominate consumer behaviour research. The primary purpose of this paper is to explore the extent to which Arab women are a homogeneous group of consumers in regard to perceptions and motivations to consume luxury fashion goods. In particular, the paper seeks to present a critical review of luxury consumption frameworks. As part of the research design, Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) prestige seeking behaviour framework was selected as a means for empirical investigation. The study's findings suggest that distinct value perceptions of luxury fashion among Arab females are evident, that is, this group of consumers are homogeneous in terms of prestige seeking behaviour. Homogeneity can be explained by the existence of interpersonal motives for luxury consumption. The findings of the study highlight that Arab women, many of whom wear the abaya 'cloak' when in public, seek to pursue mutual socially conforming consumption behaviours through luxury fashion. The study has both academic and practitioner implications. Firstly, the study contributes to fulfilling a gap in consumer behaviour literature, that being, an understanding of female consumption behaviour regarding luxury goods in the Arab world. Secondly, in terms of practitioner implications, the findings support retail marketing decisions in regard to profiling distinct consumer groups of Arab females, which luxury marketers can target with discrete marketing communications.

1. The Introduction

The Gulf Region is a geographical area that, in general, enjoys a high standard of living, which in turn attracts a good number of high profile luxury brands. Dubai itself is identified as a retail 'hotspot' due to it being the second most international retail city in the world (CBRE 2013) with London being first. In all, Dubai is identified as a centre of gravity, commanding almost 30% of the Middle East luxury market and around 60% of the UAE's luxury market (Bain & Company 2013). Luxury retailers who have a presence in this region include US retailers Bloomingdales, Saks Fifth Avenue, French Department store Galeries Lafayette, UK department store retailer, Harvey Nichols and recently, Fortnum and Mason (Scott, 2014). Further growing interest and evidence of growth of the retail sector in the Middle East includes Louis Vuitton's presence in Lebanon, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE and Saudi Arabia. Likewise, Hermès also has a presence in these same Countries (CPP-Luxury.com 2010). A common form of market entry for Western luxury retailers into the Middle East is via joint venture. To this end, Tiffany and Co, Christian Louboutin, Burberry and Christian Dior have sought strategic partnerships with the Chalhoub Group (Know@Wharton 2012; Church, 2011). Factors contributing to this retail growth include rising disposable incomes, population growth, improved position of women in society, a growing middle class, expatriate wealth and the development of a modern retail infrastructure (Business Monitor International, 2010). As such, various shopping carnivals and events, together with modern shopping malls, has served to stimulate aspirational behaviour and the desire for international luxury brands (Luxury Movement, 2011).

From the above, it is evident there has been a strong invasion of foreign western brands into the Middle East and whilst global luxury brands such as Gucci, Dior and Tiffany, by definition of being global, are recognised throughout the world, brand perceptions and representations may not necessarily be the same for consumers globally. With regards to perceptions of luxury, Shukla and Purani (2012:1417) point out, that value perceptions may be '*highly influential among all cultures and countries. However, their degree of influence may differ dramatically.*' In earlier work Russel and Valenzuela (2005) consider that

different consumer groups have diverse value perceptions and may thus associate different meanings to brands. Likewise Al-Mutaaw (2013) indicates that this is more so across cultures and when cultural differences are more pronounced. Shukla and Purani's (2012) empirical work supports this, wherein they undertook a comparative study between UK and Indian luxury consumers. Their findings identified that consumers in collectivist markets use simpler selection criteria for measuring value of a luxury brand than consumers in individualistic markets. Nevertheless, such a view presents the notion of a homogenous group of consumers, that is, consumers belonging to the same nationality will all have the same value perceptions. This idea is commonly presented within market research. For example, Euromonitor (2013) identifies the Middle East as having a highly brand conscious society with brands that have highly recognisable logos and iconography, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Burberry being those that are the most desirable. This is supported by the Consultancy company, Luxury Movement, who identify young Middle Eastern consumers as predominantly seeking logo driven purchases (Luxury Movement, 2011). Further to this, this view is supported in academic literature. For instance, Church (2011), describes the Middle East as having a tradition of luxury and conspicuous consumption that has deep historical roots. Vel et al (2011) support this as they indicate, signs of extravagance are very clearly present in ancient Arabian history in that their affinity towards exhibiting consumption of luxury goods has been carried down to future generations. They state:

'In order to fit in this society, consumers believe that they should purchase luxurious items, the more expensive the item they wear, the better impression they will give out to others in society.' (Vel et al, 2011:5)

However as Mouillot (2013) points out, wearing the abaya robe potentially provides limited opportunity to engage in conspicuous consumption and for women to differentiate between themselves. Yet this is not wholly true as females can differentiate via luxury accessories such as watches, handbags, shoes, glasses and mobile phones. In this way, Arab women can and do engage in visible consumption through the use of large 'brash' logos (Euromonitor, 2013). As Church (2011) points out, Middle Eastern women wish to buy styles that are often far from the conservative luxury fashion norms that the West prefers. As he states:

'A supersized LVMH handbag with large tassels, gold buckles and logo might turn the nose of any self-respecting, fashion-conscious Frenchwoman, but in places where the handbag is the only conspicuous accessory allowable by culture, or sometimes by law, somehow that form of expression begins to make sense.'

In all, the literature makes the assumption that this group of consumers behave in a homogeneous manner wherein luxury products with ostentatious ornamentation and extra-large logos are especially popular among the label-obsessed consumers (Euromonitor, 2013). These consumers have the purchasing power to engage in luxury consumption. In addition, they are highly likely to consume Western fashion. However as a consequence of their history and culture, compared to the Western consumer, Arab females possess different perceptions of value compared to other cultures, which in turn, is driven by different motivations for luxury consumption, that being consumption that is highly visible. Whilst this is an interesting phenomenon, to date, there exists a scarcity of empirical studies of the Arab female, which empirically tests this assumption. Exploring this contributes to fulfilling the gap in the research.

A number of past academic studies have explored concepts relating to luxury consumption. Studies are various and have focused on consumption behaviour of the affluent in a social context (e.g. Veblen 1899), luxury brand types (Dubois and Duquesne 1993) and the economics of luxury consumption (Corneo and Jeanne 1997; Leibenstein 1950). In addition, a number of cross-cultural studies of luxury consumption have been undertaken (e.g. Dubois and Laurent 1996; Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels 2009; Zhang and Kim 2012 and; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Luxury consumption studies specifically focusing on the Middle East include Al-Mutawa's (2013) work, which explored Muslim female consumers living in Kuwait as consumers of western luxury fashion brands and, in particular, explored meanings they took from luxury brands. Alternatively, Mouillot's (2013) work drew upon a sample of luxury female consumers from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatari to explore luxury purchasing behaviours. Findings from this study conclude that whilst Gulf women can be described as a culturally homogeneous group of consumers, in addition, they can be described as socially homogeneous. The reason for this being, that this group of females derives social status from the fashion brands that they possess. In his study, Mouillot (2013:497) indicates that given their dress is largely hidden by the abaya,

their ability to express individual social positioning is limited hence the need to express social status and power through manufactured objects. However neither of these studies explores the extent to which consumption differences may exist within the same cultural or social group. Whereas there is evidence to suggest that personal differences do exist for this group of Middle East consumers. For example, the blog 'Under the Abaya', written by an American woman living in Saudi Arabia identifies there are many different styles of abaya, which can be segmented into three categories, these being: ultra conservative, over the head abaya; conservative, yet stylish abaya and thirdly; I'm super rich and I want everyone around me to know it abaya (undertheabaya, 2011). In addition, an emerging trend is 'Hijabsters' wherein young females, whilst continuing to respect their faith, embrace elements of modern Western styles to express their individuality. For this group of consumers, being stylish and being devout are not mutually exclusive (Day, 2013; Ayala, 2014). It is within this context that the motivation for this study was identified. In all, Arab females live a hybrid of notions of modesty, class sensibility and identity, informed by religious practices and cultural values yet it is evident that within these constraints, Muslim women are building identities through working around the dress restrictions of their faith. Therefore it is interesting to explore the extent to which an array of value perceptions and motives for luxury fashion consumption exist within this group of consumers who are veiled and therefore seemingly similar on the outside, yet have distinctiveness inside through the symbolic and material sides of luxury fashion consumption.

This research aims to explore the extent to which Arab women are a homogeneous group of consumers in regard to perceptions and motivations to consume luxury fashion goods. In doing so, the objectives of the research are:

- to understand how Arab women perceive luxury and values they attribute to it and;
- to determine the most significant interpersonal and personal motives for the consumption of luxury fashion goods among Arab women;

In achieving the above, the paper firstly, presents a critical review of luxury consumption frameworks. Following this, as part of the research design, Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) prestige seeking behaviour framework is selected as a means for empirical investigation to determine the individual personal and interpersonal motives in purchasing luxury fashion goods.

2. Literature review and Methodology

The term luxury is typically associated with wealth, indulgence, exclusivity and aristocracy (Chevalier & Mazzalovo 2008). Luxury goods are often consumed for their social meaning and display as status symbols (Veblen 1994; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Han et al., 2010) and can be allied to 'dreams' as a consequence of both the emotional and physical qualities of a luxury brand (Kapferer, 2008, 2012). Various research has been undertaken that explores the components of a luxury brand. For example, Phau and Prendergast (2000), identify exclusivity together with a recognisable and unique brand identity, high quality and good customer service. Beverland (2004) presents a model of components of a luxury brand that contribute to the creation of an overall image of the brand as the luxury 'dream', which is so desirable for consumers. Key factors identified and presented in Beverland's model are: history, value driven emergence, culture, marketing, endorsements and product integrity. More recently, Fionda and Moore (2009) further developed Beverland's model to include: design signature. Although demand for luxury goods in the Middle East is already very well-developed, strong growth is further predicted (Euromonitor, 2013). Whilst the luxury goods market is a growth market globally, the Middle East contributes a significant percentage towards this growth (Vel et al., 2011) and as Vet et al. (2011:2) further point out, '*as the Middle East economy grows and retail per capita increases, consumers will be encouraged to devote a significant amount of their disposable income on purchases.*'

Despite the phenomenal global growth of the luxury goods market and increasing consumer knowledge of this industry, together with increased academic interest in the subject of luxury (Brun and Castelli, 2013) the term luxury remains to be thought of as an abstract concept (Kapferer 1998; Stegemann, Denuze; Miller 2007 and; Brun and Castelli, 2013). The reason for this is that it is conceptualised via consumer perceptions and is highly subjective (Phau and Prendergast 2000; Stegemann et al. 2007). In other words, it poses different meanings to different people, which is essentially dependent on mood and past consumer

experiences (Wiedmann et al. 2009). Christodoulides, Michaelidou and Li (2009) and Vigneron and Johnson (1999) also note that perceptions are articulated by socio-economic background, further underlining how luxury is not only personal, but also relative and idiosyncratic and as such, academics have attempted to offer classification schemes that allow identification and analysis of different clusters of luxury consumers (Brun and Castelli, 2013).

In all, various studies have attempted to determine what luxury signifies to the consumer. For example, Dubois and Laurent (1994) captured attitudinal components of luxury through word association in their exploratory study; the outcome was terms such as: quality & good taste but also flashiness & bad taste, thus illustrating the ambivalence of consumer's meaning attached to luxury. More recent work undertaken by Brun and Castelli (2013) identified a specific attitude towards luxury, which was based on the distinction between a view of luxury that is based on its effect on others (conspicuous consumption) and a view in which luxury is personal. An example Brun and Castelli (2013:842) offer to illustrate this is the affluent individual who collects luxury vintage cars but does not broadcast the number of unique cars parked in their garage. The reason being that they consider luxury as a personal pleasure. From the luxury brand's perspective, consumer attitude is important to understand in order that they can effectively respond with the right product or service offering and, also, employ the most effective marketing communications.

With regard to consumer motivations, extant studies have examined key consumer motives for luxury consumption; notably, research by Kapferer (1998) questions the role luxury brands fulfil and why individuals are 'seduced' by them. Another study suggests that luxury goods' consumption motives are based upon interpersonal factors, i.e. "opinions, influences, approval and suggestions of or interaction with others" (Groth and McDaniel 1993: p.13) and/or personal factors which refer to emotions that stimulate the consumption of luxury brands (Vigneron and Johnson 2004). As such, these motives derive from self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci 2000), wherein achieving a state of well being depends upon an individual's ability to satisfy basic psychological needs - identified as being extrinsic or interpersonal (e.g. financial success, social recognition and image/appealing appearance) and intrinsic or personal (e.g. self acceptance). Truong and McColl (2011) suggest that individuals who are motivated by extrinsic need focus on others' perceptions of them with a view to earn praise and rewards. However, they indicate that those who are motivated by intrinsic need do so for the sake of self satisfaction and personal meaning.

More often than not, nevertheless, studies that have examined motives for luxury goods' consumption were constrained to the idea of buying to impress others (Tsai 2005; Han et al. 2010) or to categorise, social aspects being a motive to purchase goods. This has been coined interpersonal motives, wherein a luxury-branded good is viewed as being predominately consumed for its public and social function based on the ego-boosting dimension (Eastman, Robert, Goldsmith, and Flynn 1999). Yet, the emergence of studies of personal-based consumption motives supports the notion that there is a substantially 'private' emotional value gained from luxury consumption (Husic and Cicic 2008; Truong and McColl 2011; Brun and Castelli, 2013).

Whilst these two schools of thought have rarely been examined in synergy via research, one exception is the work undertaken by Vigneron and Johnson (1999) who offers a conceptual framework of prestige-seeking consumer behavior wherein they identify that, with regards to luxury goods and services, both quality and emotional value of the goods represent underlying personal motives. Alternatively, unique value, social conforming value, and conspicuous value are identified as interpersonal motives. Building upon this work, Christodoulides et al. (2009) postulate that although consumers may attempt to exercise all five values in pursuit of luxury goods, they are likely to trade-off the values that are less salient for them for those that are more salient.

Building upon Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) work, a number of researchers have put forth the notion that individuals may consume luxury products to 'define themselves to themselves' (Tsai 2005; Wiedmann et al. 2007; 2009 and; Brun and Castelli, 2013). Accordingly, for the purpose of this research, Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) framework of prestige seeking consumer behavior was adapted in order to integrate the value perception of 'self-identity' and a corresponding motivation of 'self-identifier', referring in particular to Tsai's (2005) call for further study of whether an independent self-construct might be a motive for consumption of luxury goods. The adapted framework is presented in Table 1

below wherein each perceived value perception relates with a corresponding motivation. For instance, consumers who predominantly perceive the quality value of luxury fashion goods are driven by perfectionist motivations. According to the above rationale for extending the model, the new self-identity value is added on and assigned its corresponding motivation, self-identifier. Thus, ascertaining to what extent a particular value perception is the most prominent in consuming luxury fashion goods within the study's target population can enable a classification of motivations according to this typology.

Table 1. Value perceptions and corresponding motivations for the consumption of luxury goods: adapted from Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) framework.

	VALUE PERCEPTION	CORRESPONDING MOTIVATION
<i>INTERPERSONAL MOTIVES</i>	Conspicuous Value	Veblenian/Conspicuous
	Unique Value	Snob
	Social Conforming Value	Bandwagon/Follower
	Emotional Value	Hedonist
<i>PERSONAL MOTIVES</i>	Quality Value	Perfectionist
	<i>Self-identity Value*</i>	<i>Self-identifier*</i>

*Added to Vigneron and Johnson's original (1999) conceptual framework.

In this research, an exploratory study was undertaken adopting a qualitative approach. The sample frame consisted of Arab young females, aged 18-25, who were consumers of luxury fashion goods. This study defines Arab consumers as individuals born and living in the Arab Gulf countries, namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, as these countries, and hence their respective female populations, are widely recognised as sharing Arab consumer characteristics (Atiyyah 1996).

A total of eight in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents who were purposively selected based on the specified sample characteristics. The interview guide involved questions about perceived values and motives in regard to the consumption of luxury fashion goods. To explore respondents perceived values of luxury, the interview proforma was informed by the works of Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001), Dubois, Czellar and Laurent (2005), Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and Kapferer (1998). For motivations, the researchers were guided by the works of Vigneron and Johnson (1999), Husic and Cicic (2008), Christodoulides et al. (2009) and Tsai (2005). For accessibility reasons, subjects for the interviews constituted respondents who were, at the time of data collection, temporarily residing in the UK. Potential candidates were invited to participate through a social networking site, detailing the purpose of the study and the screening criteria. Because of the potential for social desirability bias, where respondents try to create favourable impressions (Zikmund 1991), the need for honesty and the promise of anonymity were emphasised. The use of female interviewers ensured cultural sensitivity and ease of rapport. In order to validate the qualitative outcomes, the final data was relayed back to four of the interviewees for confirmation.

Content analysis was used to identify emergent themes from the interviews. Following this, cluster analysis was used to fulfil the last objective of the research study in order to create targetable market segments on the basis of luxury fashion perceptions and motivations.

3. Findings, Discussion and Conclusion

All eight participants in the in-depth interviews came from affluent backgrounds, displayed high interest in fashion and had studied in cosmopolitan cities. The average age was 23. This description matches that of Sherwood (2000), who describes Arab luxury consumers as 'rich ... educated and well-travelled people'. Based on the respondent's answers, five out of six of the potential facets of luxury as devised by Dubois et al. (2001) were identified in their responses, these being: scarcity and uniqueness, superfluosity, aesthetics and polysensuality, quality and high price.

This finding supports the perceptions of luxury found in literature with the most prominent perception of luxury being superfluosity, whereby the majority imagined luxury to be an excess or an unnecessary comfort. Remarkably, a high number of respondents went on to voluntarily discuss the

modern day obsession with luxury, continually referring to 'societal pressures' that allures people to take out loans to finance luxury goods. In other words, as Coco Chanel highlights "Luxury is the necessity that begins where necessity ends" (Husic and Cicic 2008: p. 235).

Scarcity and uniqueness remained strong perceptions held of luxury, with a particular emphasis on elitism. One respondent said that *'it isn't something that everyone can afford; only me and a minority of people can'*. This mirrors Kapferer's (1998) study, which viewed luxury as elitist, only affordable to a minority and not owned by the masses. Supplementing this perception of elitism, the interviews uncovered how luxury was typically seen as reserved for the educated. One young woman stated

'If you are educated to this level...or if you're working this job....you have to look the part. And people will expect this. [...]They say "Oh my God look at her, what is she wearing? She's a doctor and her bag isn't even designer!'

This finding backs Dubois et al.'s (2005) assertion that luxury is intended for the refined, and education is a key factor to fully appreciating such goods. Finally, none of the respondents alluded to heritage and tradition, which is identified as a common component of a luxury brand (Beverland, 2004; Fionda and Moore, 2009). A reason why this component was not mentioned may be because these consumers were more oriented towards conceptualising luxury as a general notion rather than particularly in relation to brands.

In terms of motivations, the interviews pointed to interpersonal motives as relatively prominent. Although not all respondents claimed to be driven by these motives, they were unanimous in confirming their existence. Two consumers described the analogy of entering designer shops ostentatiously dressed in luxury brands labels and the better treatment experienced, confirming how these who exhibit their wealth are rewarded with superior treatment by society (O' Cass and Frost 2002). Moreover, conspicuous motives expressed were under the theme of impression management. One respondent recalls that

'Back home [Qatar]...luxury means a good home. A big house....that your neighbours can see...that your guests can see'.

Congruent with the elitist perceptions identified, the interviews revealed strong snob motives. For instance, respondents were influenced by the bandwagon effect, although not as apparent as the snob motives, consuming for image portrayal and acceptance into certain prestige groups. One interesting account came from a Saudi Arabian respondent who stated that

'Sometimes you don't want to dress like that, but they want you to. [...]In Saudi, I have to dress for others. My mother forces me to buy things.'

This is indeed what is referred to in describing how status can override intrinsic utility to the extent that people conform in spite of different underlying preferences (Amaldoss and Jain 2005).

The interpersonal motives were also noticeable to the degree that consumers expect the goods to bear visible logos in exchange for their money; this view is consistent with Bourdieu's (1984) opinion that consumers use 'signs' to convey social meaning that is beyond its economic value. In more recent literature, it is also supported by Mouillot (2013) in describing Arab women as 'logophiles', suggesting that through the use of designer logos they adopt an identity that they like. One respondent pointedly summarises these socially-expressive dimensions and public functions of luxury fashion goods in stating that

'wearing certain designer brands is just how they [women] express themselves. I get people asking me all the time why do you dress up when you wear an Abaya [the black cloak], but to me it's what's underneath the Abaya... when it comes off you see these women expressing themselves really differently and it is really interesting'.

The personal motives for consumption, were evident, however they were less outstanding in the interviews. The quality motives were acknowledged in that luxury is seen as enduring and therefore an 'expensive investment'. However, some respondents were dubious that quality on its own could drive consumption; this perspective came out in such responses as

'People do buy things for the design or the quality. It is not the first reason. Quality is not an excuse. If people buy for quality then of course they should only buy one bag every 3 years and not 3 bags every year'.

In addition, hedonistic motives were lightly mentioned. Being fashion-conscious, many referred to the feel-good aspects of luxury fashion products as being main drivers for consumption. This is supported by Rossiter, Percy and Donovan's (1999) work wherein sensory gratification and intellectual stimulation

are motives for luxury consumption. The study also revealed the new dimension of self-identity incorporated in the researchers' conceptual model. In line with Tsai (2005) and Wiedmann et al. (2007; 2009), respondents expressed being driven to consume luxury brands in order to define themselves to themselves rather than to others. Thereby indicating, for some Arab consumers personal motives are relevant to luxury consumption.

Globally labelled 'The Mecca of Materialism', the Middle East, with a population having substantial purchasing power and a high discretionary income, is a steadily booming market for luxury fashion marketers. Arab women form a particularly interesting group of consumers in that they are eagerly following Western luxury fashion trends, yet are nevertheless observed to maintain their own cultural and religious identity.

This study of Arab women's notions in luxury consumption supports some existing findings as well as offers new insights. Research findings indicate a generally positive appreciation of luxury among Arab female consumers that is strongly opposed to the idea that luxury is useless, highlighting the importance of this niche segment to luxury marketers. Specific findings show some congruence with research by Dubois et al. (2001).

In terms of the specific motives for consuming luxury fashion products, consumers were in fact driven to consumption for both personal motives and interpersonal motives. Although the interview findings indicate that, for this group of Arab female luxury consumers, interpersonal motives are more meaningful in their consumption decision. As such, these findings support Moulliot's (2013:499) work wherein he states:

'The obsession to show not only ostentatious brands, but to also insist on the fact that the product is brand new, gives birth to behaviours such as never ever removing labels from shoe soles.'

This is further supported by Al-Mutawa's (2013) study of Kuwaiti women who "act as their own ongoing social circle of advertising for luxury fashion brands" (Al-Mutawa 2013: p.243), where, as he further states, private parties are used as "a form of 'word-of-body' as opposed to word of mouth, since women's brand consumption is displayed on their bodies" (p. 240).

One explanation for the predominance of the interpersonal motives for luxury consumption is identified by Daghestani (2013), who indicates that, within the Arab world, many purchase decisions are taken mutually either by the family unit or a group of friends as oppose to on an individual basis. Indeed family is an integral part of Arab culture. In engaging in luxury consumption, the Arab female is therefore able to maintain her status in her collectivist peer group.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the spectrum of luxury consumer behaviour studies of established ethnic groups (e.g., European, US, Blacks, Hispanics and Chinese) by focusing specifically on the demographic group of Arab female consumers; it presents a conceptualisation of the link between value perceptions and motives in luxury fashion consumption for a niche market segment and a distinct cultural group.

Managerially, the scarcity of studies on luxury consumption in the Middle East posits this study's findings as an insightful value-addition to marketers and retailers of luxury fashion brands. In all, the study contributes to existing work wherein it is established that Arab females largely consist of a homogenous group of consumers who conform to the traditional understanding of luxury consumption, this being that possession of luxury goods is a form of conspicuous consumption.

Luxury consumer research is relatively scant (Truong and McColl 2011) and, in particular, knowledge of luxury consumption within the Gulf Countries is limited. Alexandru (2003) argues that fashion and veiling are not mutually exclusive, but rather coinciding, where their interface emphasises the tension in defining what 'modern' means and whether it is antonymous with the negativity associated with 'traditional'. To address this, the current research explored value perceptions and motivations for luxury fashion consumption among Arab female consumers. Drawing upon a sample of females born in countries across the Arab Gulf, the study examined this current gap in knowledge by developing a framework that tested value perceptions together with personal and impersonal motives for luxury consumption.

All in all, the research makes two key contributions to luxury consumer research. Firstly, the research extends our understanding of Arab women's value perceptions and drivers in luxury goods'

consumption. Secondly, it contributes to the debate surrounding the significance of interpersonal and personal motivations within the luxury consumption domain.

4. Research limitations and direction for further research

The research was limited to a very small number of respondents. In addition, the research was limited to female consumers from affluent backgrounds and therefore cannot be generalisable to all Arab women. Whilst it makes sense within the definition of luxury to explore values and motivations surrounding luxury focusing only on affluent women, this discounts an examination of any aspirational constructs that could potentially be explored if occasional luxury consumers had also been included in the survey. Given that occasional luxury shoppers are estimated to be a growing segment (Silverstein 2011), future research could be expanded to explore this group. A further limitation of the study is that respondents were drawn from a number of Arab Gulf countries; different results might emerge from an exploration of varying cultures within these countries. Therefore, a further recommendation for future research is to expand the study to allow for a more in-depth and specific examination of each of the countries within the Arab Gulf and the wider Middle East, possibly in a comparative study highlighting differences and similarities.

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