

CONSUMERS' EXPERIENCES OF LUXURY - INTERPRETING THE LUXURIOSITY OF A BRAND

PhD Linda Turunen

TODAY'S AGENDA

- Background - Linda, who?
- Why I chose my topic, why luxury?
- What have I done & how?
- What would I do differently?

LINDA LISA MARIA TURUNEN

Education

PhD in Marketing (University of Vaasa, graduated 2015)

Research interest & specialisation

Brand management and consumer behavior, particularly in the contexts of luxury fashion brands and perceived luxuriousness, secondhand luxury markets and upcycling. Sustainability in fashion field.

Lecturing

Lecturer: Marketing communication (University of Vaasa) //
Marketing Basics (Aalto Open University)

Co-lecturer: Consumer Behavior, Retail experience & Fashion //
Fashion Marketing (Aalto)

Working experience

Doctoral student 2010-2015

Insights strategist at Wonder Agency 2015-2016

Project manager at Samuji Circular 2017-2018

Insights strategist at INC 2017-2018

Visiting Lecturer at Aalto 2017-

Postdoc at University of Helsinki 2017-



DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABOUT LUXURY. WHY?

WHAT IS LUXURY FOR FINNISH PEOPLE?

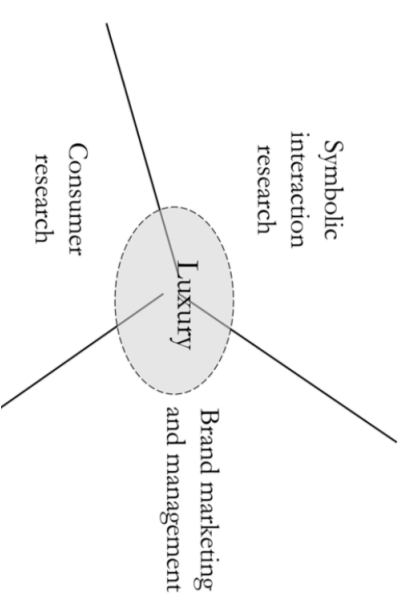
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AIM

What constitutes luxury and how it is determined by consumers?

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

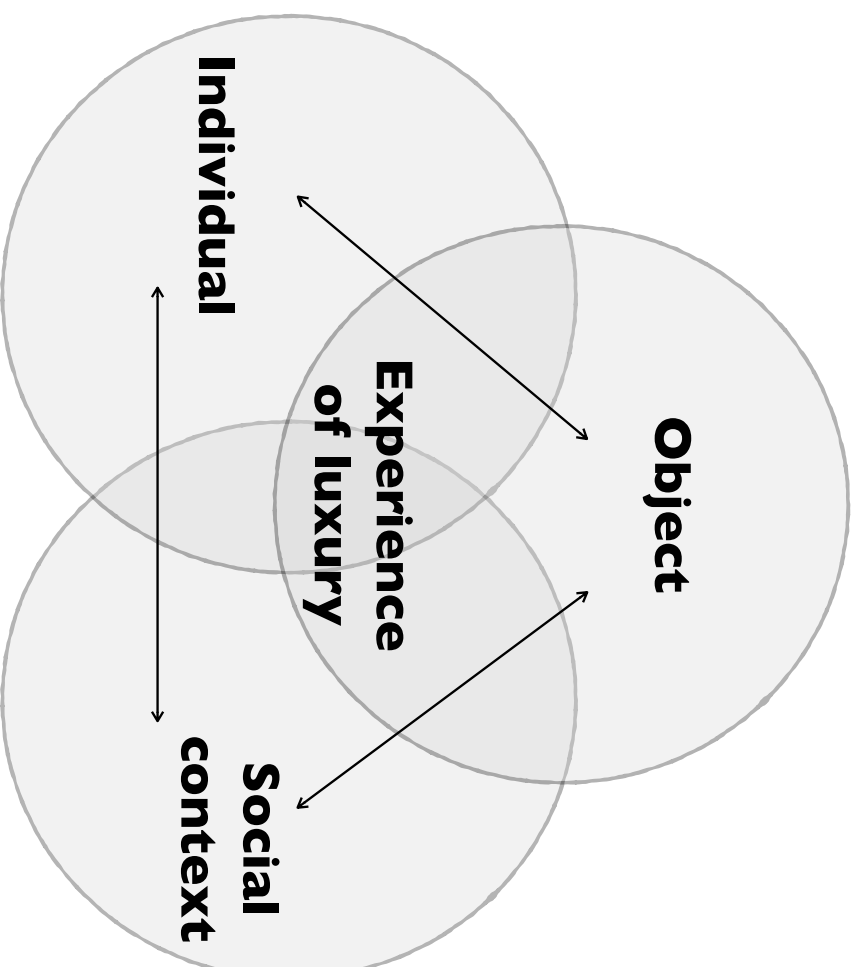
- Consumer perspective, interpretations.
 - Theoretical premises: consumer behaviour & brand management.



- > Since meanings are subject- and context-specific, and constructed in the minds of consumers through interpretation and social interactions, *symbolic interactionism* was found to be the most suitable research approach for this study.
- > The unit of analysis in symbolic interactionism is the individual, and more specifically the individual's meanings, perceptions, and interpretations (Thompson et al. 2013).

Three articles > three qualitative empirical data sets

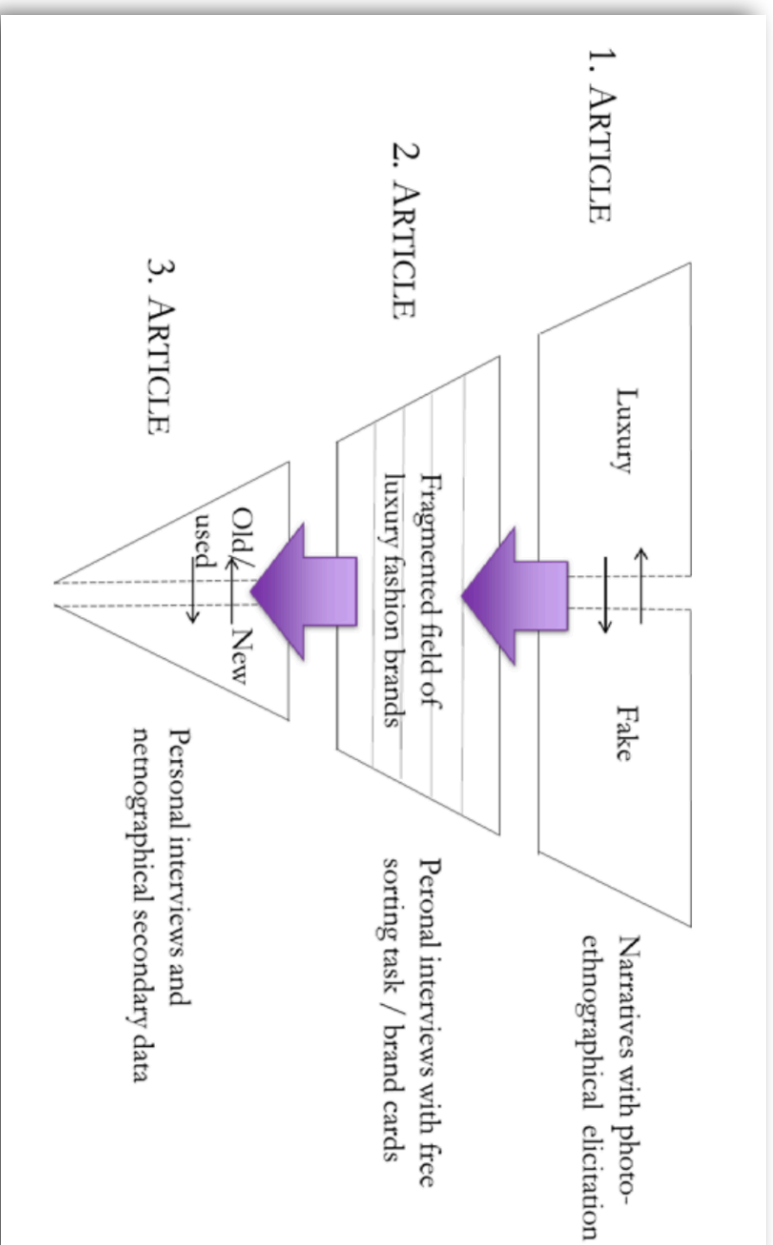
Functional



Experiential

Symbolic

THREE ARTICLES, THREE DATA SETS



Diffusing the boundaries between luxury and counterfeits

Linda Lisa Maria Turunen and Piiro Laaksonen

University of Vaasa, Vaasa, Finland

Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of luxury consumption by comparing the meanings and the attributes of counterfeit branded products and luxury goods.

Design/methodology/approach – This study is an interpretative qualitative research in which the meanings and essence of luxury and counterfeit goods are uncovered by written stories. The photo-ethnographical method was used to generate the stories.

Findings – Consumers regard both luxury goods and counterfeits as being at different levels and of different quality ranging from poor to excellent. Counterfeits possess mainly social meanings, whereas authentic luxury goods may also operate on a personal level. However, consumers do not perceive luxury and counterfeit branded products as counterparts; counterfeits can be regarded as the embodiment of luxury, whereas non-brand products are rather the opposite. Moreover, the existence of authenticity is perceived to be a vital connective and distinctive factor among luxury and counterfeit branded products.

Originality/value – The research aspires to shed light on the essence of counterfeit and luxury goods by comparing them in an effort to gain better understanding of the luxury phenomenon as a whole.

Keywords Research paper, Luxury, Counterfeiting, Meaning, Authenticity, Research

Paper type Research paper

WHAT FASCINATES IN FAKE LUXURY GOODS?

Data collection

- convenience sampling: people with specialised knowledge of an area. The informants were blog writers, fashion-savvy people.
- Young adults between the ages of 18 to 30.
- Photo ethnographical methods to elicit the narratives (13 counterfeit stories, 7 luxury stories)

Data analysis

- content analysis: patterns of speaking about luxury and counterfeit goods and meanings that lie behind them.

PICTURES AS ELICITATION CUES

“(...) **photo-ethnographical methods were used as an elicitation technique to generate stories. When interpreting visible material, informants are believed to reflect their own social realities, which are shaped by social context, cultural conventions and group norms (Schwartz, 1989). The informants interpreted the photographs and wrote a story by drawing from and reflecting their cultural possessions. By this way the multiple realities that are constructed by individuals are revealed.** The epistemological ground ascribes to the interpretive research according to which the knowledge is gained through understanding the subjective meanings and contextual realities, which are shaped by peoples’ interaction with the world.

The pictures were used as an elicitation cues, since **by using visual material it is possible to bring out and convey the hidden thoughts and feelings of consumers** (Zaltman, 1997). (...)”

(Turunen & Laaksonen 2011)

NARRATIVES AS A DATA COLLECTION METHOD

“(…) When the subject of research is delicate, it is easier for individuals to produce a story about a third-person rather than to speak directly of themselves, as third-person narratives make it possible to hide behind the story. In addition, the stories were not considered to be direct reflections of objective truth and reality but merely as cultural stories (Koskinen et al., 2005).”

“(…) Stories cannot arise in a vacuum, and it can be believed that the writer narrates and interprets the photographs by associating them with his/her own life and experiences (Bauer and Jovchelovitch, 2000, p. 68).”

(Turunen & Laaksonen 2011)

WHAT FASCINATES IN FAKE LUXURY GOODS?

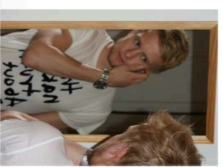
For women:



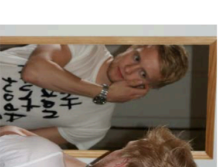
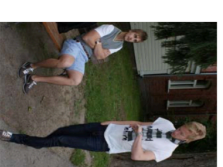
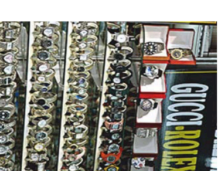
For women:



For men:



For men:



Write a story about these pictures. Use them as reference. I hope that they will inspire you to write about how you interpret the story they tell. There are no right or wrong answers. You can use the pictures in any order you wish. Please write more than 250 words.

Here are a few helpful questions:

What is happening in the pictures?

What kind of a consumer is the protagonist?

What are the people thinking and why?

What led to the situations shown in the pictures?

What will happen next and why?

In your story, describe what kind of a person the protagonist is and the reasons for his/her choices and actions. Think of a title for your story.

Table 1 The stories used as empirical data is titled by the writers

	Female informants (Louis Vuitton bag)	Male informants (Rolex watch)
Pictures of authentic product	<p>Louis Vuitton Speedy (informant no. 2) One of my dreams (informant no. 3) The value of luxury bag (informant no. 4) Luxury brand as extension (informant no. 5) Prestigious dream of luxury (informant no. 7) Luxury? (informant no. 8) Holiday-handbag (informant no. 9) The magic of a bag (informant no. 11) Material (informant no. 12) Do I fit in? (informant no. 13) Faking it (informant no. 14) Souvenir (informant no. 15) A world of trademarked handbags (informant no. 17) Fake (informant no. 18) Self-searching (informant no. 19) Liars – dreams of a better life (informant no. 20)</p>	<p>From Rolex to real richness (informant no. 1) Masculine perspective of luxury (informant no. 6) Social climbing (informant no. 10) Genuinely recognizable (informant no. 16)</p>
Pictures of counterfeit		

IT IS NOT ALL BLACK AND WHITE



Challenging the hierarchical categorization of luxury fashion brands

Linda Lisa Maria Turunen

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics through which consumers structure the heterogeneous field of luxury fashion brands, and to discuss how the distinguishing characteristics become meaningful for consumers. The empirical data was generated through 12 personal interviews, which were elicited with free sorting tasks with brand cards depicting luxury fashion brands. The findings show that luxury fashion brands are categorized in more diverse ways than just by applying brand-related characteristics. Instead, the consumers determine and interpret these characteristics in relation to other brands and reflect them against their personal consumption experiences as well as the social context and time. Thus, the brands were not necessarily organized in hierarchical order (higher – lower degree of luxury). The study extends the understanding of the fragmented luxury fashion field, where previous research has emphasized the product perspective and neglected the consumers' interpretations of what constitutes luxury.

Keywords: luxury brands, meanings, fashion brands, consumers

EMPIRICAL DATA COLLECTION

- **12 personal interviews** with consumers of luxury (fashion) goods
- found by means of “snowball” sampling
- women, age 23-39 years
- elicitation method: **free sorting task** with brand cards (14), representing both traditional, designer-led as well as brands with “taste of luxury”.
- **laddering technique** (Gutman 1982; Reynolds & Gutman 1988) was adopted to uncover what kinds of meanings and consequences consumers attach to differentiating characteristics.



INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Fashion and Brands

Fashion and I as a consumer.

2. Categorization task

Classify these brands into different groups. In each group, place brands that you feel are similar and in some way differ from the brands in the other groups. You may choose how many groups you create.



After the task, shed light on the reasons:

Which criteria did you use to divide the brands?

What are the connecting features inside each group?

How are the groups differentiated?

Imagine a stereotypical user for each group. Describe him/her.

3. Luxury and Brands

Luxury concept and its definition. What is luxury for you?

Central features associated with luxury brands.

The degree of luxury.

CATEGORISING FASHION BRANDS



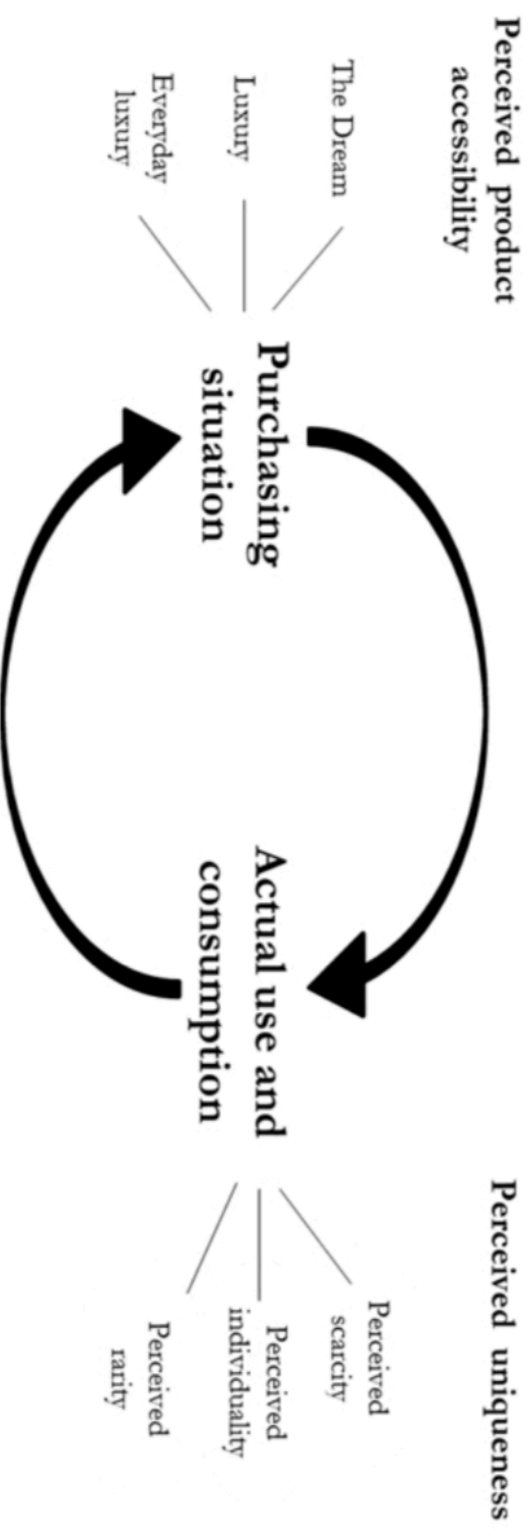
CONTENT ANALYSIS

“(…) The interview data was analyzed by **means of qualitative content analysis** (Belk et al. 2013). The first step was to uncover the **categorizations** applied in each interview when combining and assigning luxury fashion brands into groups. The criteria for making the categorizations were **coded**. Descriptive labels helped with the organization of the information contained in each interview. At this point, the analysis was inductive and the interpretations and perceptions were considered to reflect the *emic* accounts of the data. (See Spiggle 1994.) Following the coding stage, the **differentiating and connecting criteria behind the categorizations were combined into larger characteristics**, which were interpreted on the basis of the theoretical discussion and in relation to the existing research on luxury brands. These elaborations represent the *etic* meanings – **the abstraction of categories**. (Thompson and Haytko 1997: 20.) Finally, the **elaborated characteristics were re-examined** in the light of the interviews in order to pinpoint the interpretations through which informants make sense of the characteristics they associate with luxury brands.”

DIFFERENT WAYS TO MAKE SENSE OF LUXURY FASHION BRANDS

Criteria for categorizations	Connecting and disjunctive characteristics consumers applied		
Age of the brand	"New" luxury	Traditional /iconic	
COO	Italy	France	USA
Aesthetics /design	Fashion oriented	Long history & heritage	
Conspicuousness	Loud luxury	Quiet luxury	
Stylistic consistency	Diffusion brand & parent brand (put in to the same group)	Style of the brand manifested (e.g. "old England", "Parisian", "Sporty")	
Type of brand	Brands with no extensions	Parent brands	Brand extensions
			Other brands

PERCEIVED LEVEL OF LUXURY



Pre-loved luxury: identifying the meanings of second-hand luxury possessions

Linda Lisa Maria Turunen and Hanna Leipämaa-Leskinen

Department of Marketing, University of Vaasa, Vaasa, Finland

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to shed light on the consumption of second-hand luxury brands, identifying the meanings attached to second-hand luxury possessions in the context of fashion and, specifically, in the case of luxury accessories. Prior discussions of luxury consumption and marketing have focused on brand-new luxury goods, thus largely neglecting the emergence of markets for used luxury products.

Design/methodology/approach – The empirical data for this study were generated through interviews with ten Finnish women and through fashion blogs concerning luxury goods that are bought second-hand.

Findings – The findings show that second-hand luxury possessions are characterized by five different meaning themes: Sustainable Choice, Real Deal, Pre-loved Treasure, Risk Investment and Unique Find. The study highlights how consumers are able to achieve luxury experiences even without exclusive service, as the informants attached meanings of luxury to second-hand luxury possessions, especially with regard to the symbolic value and authenticity of the product. However, the meaning of authenticity appears to be a double-edged sword in this context, as consumers may also consider that they are taking a financial as well as reputational risk when acquiring a previously owned luxury item.

Originality/value – This study brings forward novel viewpoints to discussions on luxury brand marketing by connecting the issue with the topical phenomenon of second-hand and luxury consumption. The study suggests important managerial implications for luxury brand marketers.

Keywords Meanings, Luxury, Consumers, Second-hand, Buying behavior

Paper type Research paper

EMPIRICAL DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

- **In-depth interviews** with 10 Finnish women who have bought /possess secondhand (and new) luxury goods
 - Purposeful sampling: blog writers, 25-40 years old, different demographic backgrounds with diverse economic resources, but all of them were interested in fashion apparel and accessories.
- **Netnography**: online discussions concerning luxury good that are bought as second-hand
- **Thematic content analysis**

MEANINGS OF SECOND-HAND LUXURY

1. Second-hand and previously used goods in general

The discussion aimed to uncover the reasoning and attitude towards pre-used goods in general (what, where, why, how).

2. Luxury and second-hand

Tell the story behind the product (regarded as luxury) you have purchased as second-hand.

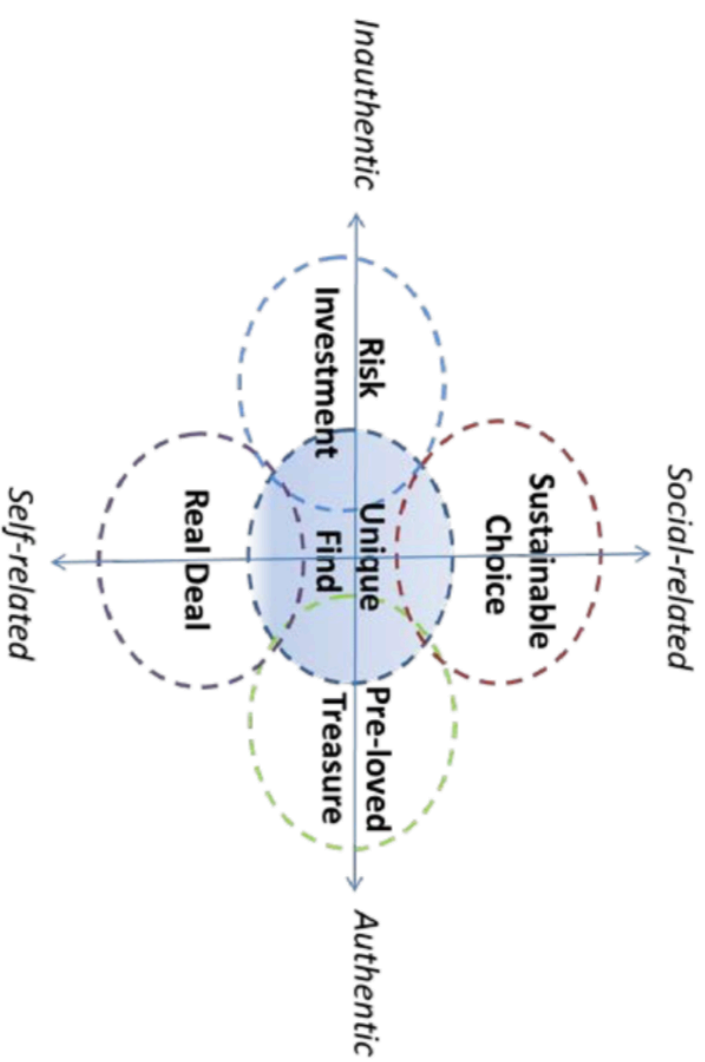
Depending on the story and description, more detailed questions were asked about:


- The product evaluation
- The purchase situation
- The actual use and consumption (symbolic meanings)
- The perceived value of the product
- Pros and cons of buying as second-hand

NETNOGRAPHY

- netnography = ethnography in online context.
- to make sure the saturated themes have covered = triangulation of research data
- can be participatory or just observing (research ethics!)

MEANINGS OF SECOND-HAND LUXURY



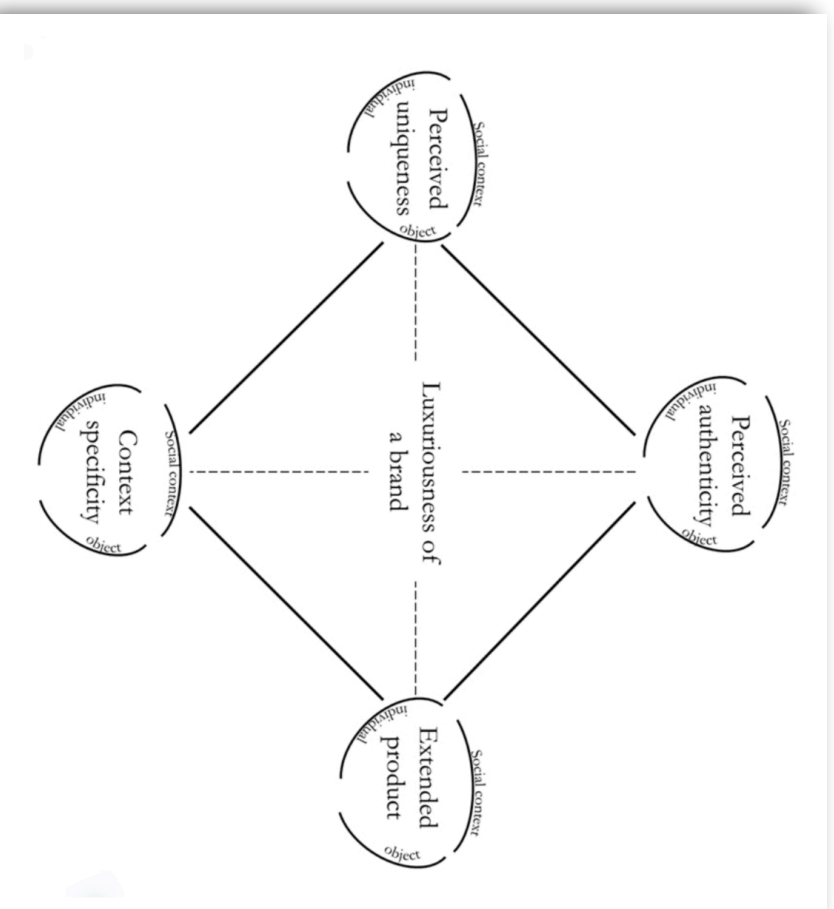


**GREAT. THREE ARTICLES, THREE DATA SETS, THREE
DIFFERENT TOPICS IN THE FIELD OF LUXURY.
WHAT NEXT?**

HOW TO PUT EVERYTHING TOGETHER, CREATE A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION?

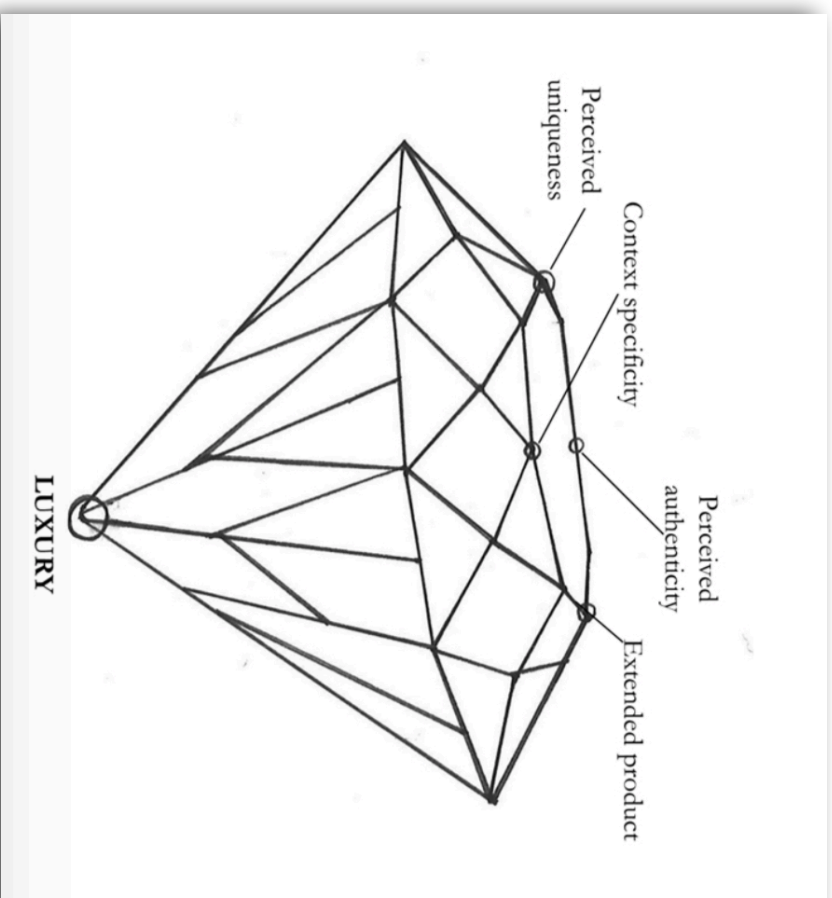
- What connects the articles?
- I went back to all findings of the articles and searched for connecting and differentiating dimensions or factors.
- What can I say about luxury based on these three articles? How can I take the findings into more abstract level?

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION: FINDINGS



The interactive elements through which consumers interpret the luxuriousness of a brand.

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION: FINDINGS



The experience of luxury as a reflection of the interpretations of the interactive elements.

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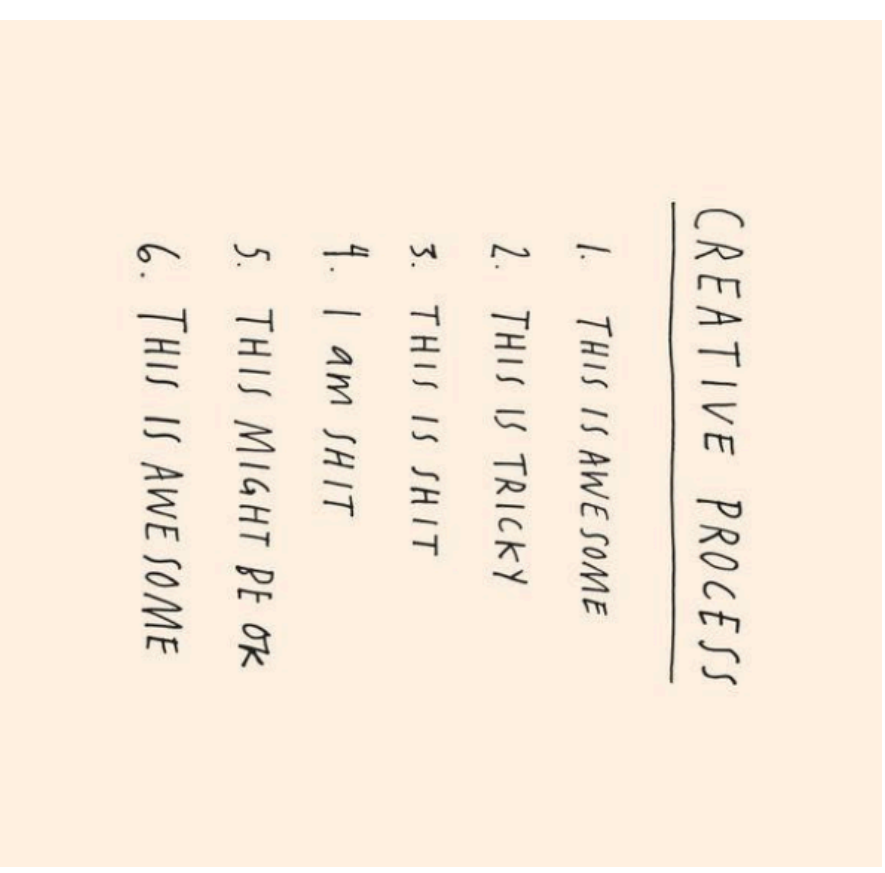
**WHAT DO YOU THINK, WHAT ARE THE WEAKEST POINTS?
WHAT WOULD YOU CRITICISE OR DO DIFFERENTLY?**

WHAT WOULD I DO DIFFERENTLY NOW?

- Choose only one of the topics, not three of them.
 - I had qualitative dissertation - all possibilities to go in-depth, but with too broad & diverse topics, I had challenges to dive deep.
- Plan well first, the process is easier. Be systematic then you don't have to do things many times.
- Collaborate! You will learn through collaborations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- First and foremost, choose topic you are truly fascinated about. Then it is not “work”, but authentic curiosity + you will never stop believing on it when things are at dead-end.
- Be eager to learn & fail. Doctoral thesis is a journey; the written thesis prepares you to researcher career - it is not the final goal, but the learning-journey to become academic.
- Be strategic with publication processes
- Authentic curiosity and empathy is most important characteristic when conducting qualitative interviews.



Thank you.

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