

**School of Marketing**

**Conceptualising Luxury Brand Attachment**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
Curtin University**

**September 2018**

## STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

### Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The findings reported in this research was conducted according to the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The university’s appointed Research Integrity Manager was consulted to examine potential ethical and legal implications prior to administration of the questionnaires. The proposal for this research got the required human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number # RDBS-39-16).

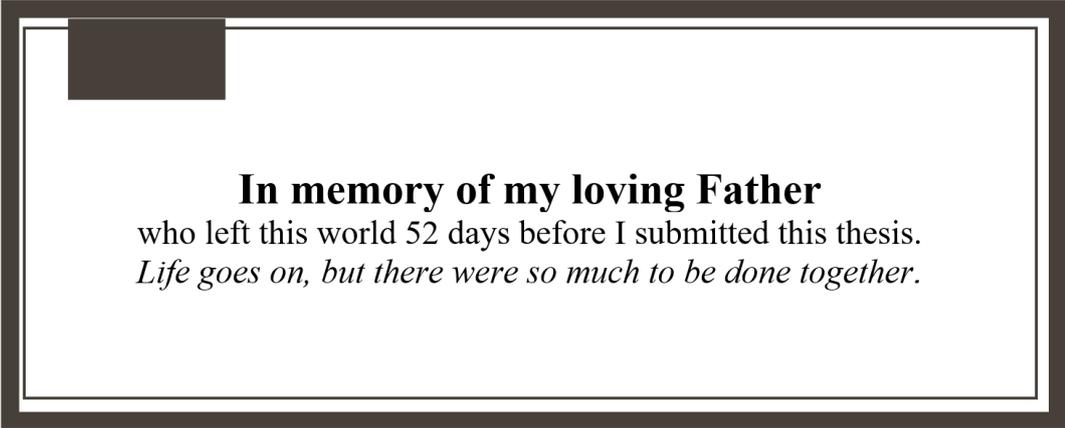


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**Md. Anwar Sadat Shimul**

10 September 2018

## DEDICATION



**In memory of my loving Father**

who left this world 52 days before I submitted this thesis.  
*Life goes on, but there were so much to be done together.*

**I am deeply indebted to my mother and sister  
&  
I am thankful to my wife.**

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Finally, I am grateful to my intimate family members. I always carry the blessings of my grandparents inside my heart. My uncles (*Jettha*, *Borro Kaka*, *Choto Kaka*) and aunts motivated me to pursue PhD. I remember the inspiration from my cousins (*Ripon bhaiya*, *Dipu bhaiya*, *Ashraf bhaiya*) as well. My sincere gratitude to Rubel *bhai* and his parents for providing emotional support to my parents in my absence. I also dearly missed three kids – my daughter (*Ayraa*), nephew (*Wafee*) and niece (*Wareesha*) during my PhD journey. I am nobody without my family. Let our attachment last forever!

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This research aims to (1) develop and validate a scale to measure luxury brand attachment, (2) develop and test a research model for luxury brand attachment, (3) test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment, and (4) test the research model and moderating influence of public self-consciousness across privately and publicly consumed products.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** – This research consists of four studies. The first study involves development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale through five stages following the guideline suggested by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2003). The second study (n = 431) involves the development of a research model for the empirical evaluation of luxury brand attachment through quantitative research. In particular, the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment are examined across two different luxury brands. The third study (n = 291) examines the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. The final study (n = 280) tests the research model and moderating influence for privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. Data were collected from a global panel of luxury consumers. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the IBM SPSS AMOS 24.0 was used to test the hypothesised relationships and proposed model.

**Findings** – The results show a parsimonious 7-item luxury brand attachment scale. The studies confirm that there are major differences among luxury brand attachment, emotional attachments to brands, and brand attitude scales. The results also reveal that consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. In addition, luxury brand attachment has been found to result in consumer advocacy. The moderating influence of public self-consciousness was non-significant. Noteworthy, actual self-congruence had a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for the consumers with low public self-consciousness.

**Implications** – This research results a number of theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment. The development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale fulfils a number of key gaps in the luxury branding literature. Luxury managers can understand the strength of the bond between consumer and luxury brand. They can also identify the highly attached consumers who will not only remain loyal to brand but also advocate the brand to others. Overall, building and maintaining a deep emotional connection between consumer and brand is vital for a long-term profitable customer relationship. The luxury brand attachment scale would be the strategic tool to measure the strength of the consumer-brand connection.

**Originality** – To the best knowledge of this researcher, this is the ‘first’ study to conceptualise luxury brand attachment. Given the lack of empirical research on the area, the luxury brand attachment scale provides an improved measure and better understanding of consumer’s attachment to luxury brands which was not accurately measured by using general attachment scales in past studies. This research further validates the proposed research framework and thus makes unique contribution to the research domain.

**Keywords:** Luxury brand attachment, brand self-congruence, consumer advocacy, public self-consciousness, private/public consumption.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*“Modern luxury is not based on age. Retail premium brands are very difficult to build. Great premium brands take time, based on the **emotional connection** [with the consumer that’s] sustained over the long term, and on shared qualities of great design, materials and craftsmanship as well as constant innovation.”*

Victor Luis  
CEO of the luxury brand Coach  
(Young, 2017)

#### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

##### 1.1.1 Luxury industry trend

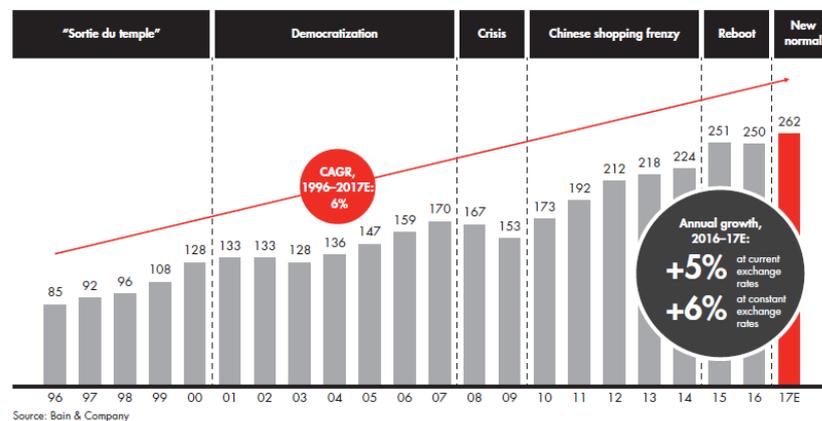
The luxury market study by Bain & Company reports that the worldwide luxury market experienced a 5% growth in 2017, to an estimated US\$1.5 trillion globally (D’Arpizio et al., 2017). The study further notes that the market for personal luxury goods reached a record high with a sales volume of about US\$345 billion. The personal luxury sector is expected to have a 6-8% growth in 2018 (Bain & Co., 2018) as well estimated to reach US\$450 billion by 2025 (van Elven, 2018). However, the performance has been polarised amongst the brands as only 65% luxury brands managed to grow revenue of which only 35% could improve the profitability during the year 2014-2016 (D’Arpizio et al., 2017). The current growth rate is estimated to go down with a negative effect from exchange rate changes (Deloitte, 2018). This sluggish growth rate is recognised as ‘new normal’ and a fundamental shift in the luxury brand market which is anticipated to continue a 2-5% growth through 2020 (Gibbs, 2016). The annual growth of global personal luxury goods market during 1996-2017 is presented in Figure 1.1.

##### 1.1.2. Challenges in the luxury industry

Industry experts attribute the aforementioned slowed growth to the evolving consumer dynamics and preferences, increased competition, economic slowdown, and influx of counterfeit luxury (Bain, 2017). The complexity escalates with the phenomenon that rich consumers are becoming less loyal (Moses, 2013) and luxury brands fail to

segment and target consumers strategically (Briggs, 2016). Market experts suggest luxury brands find strategic ways to generate strong customer engagement (Hsu, 2018) and stay connected with the consumers to combat these challenges (Gomelsky, 2016). The *State of the Luxury Industry Study* in 2017 and 2018, which were conducted amongst more than 600 industry experts, emphasised on new marketing strategies and new ways to engage with the affluent customers (Luxury Daily, 2018; Danziger, 2017). However, the study has not provided any direction how luxury industry can enhance the consumer-brand connection and engagement.

**Figure 1.1: Global personal luxury goods market, 1996-2017 (£ billion) (D'Arpizio et al., 2017).**

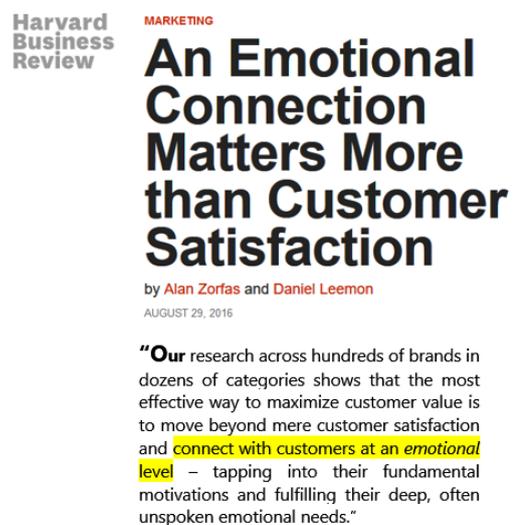


### 1.1.3. From the practitioners' desk

Practitioners in the luxury industry have recently emphasised on building a strong emotional connection between consumer and brand (Canalichio, 2018). The president of the luxury automobile brand Cadillac has referred to his brand's competitive advantage of having a strong emotional connection with the consumers (Naughton, 2018). Advertising campaigns such as Dior's

"The Future is Gold" often reflects the consumers' strong affection for the brand

**Figure 1.2: Significance of emotional connection (Zorfas and Leemon, 2016).**



(Bain, 2016). Numerous research also emphasises on the importance of emotional connection between consumer and brand. For example, research published in the *Harvard Business Review* (Figure 1.2) reinforces the significance of emotional connection (Zorfass and Leemon, 2016). The importance of the consumers' affective bond with brand has been reflected in product design as well. For instance, the 2018 Mercedes-Benz A-Class compact luxury hatchback includes a new media system for making the car 'a mobile assistant' with an expectation that consumers would develop an emotional attachment to the brand (Campbell, 2018). Popular press has also highlighted the importance of emotional connection between luxury consumers and brands. Few snapshots of the industry trend and expert opinion are presented in the Figure 1.3 to 1.6.

**Figure 1.3: CEO emphasises emotional connection (Young, 2017).**



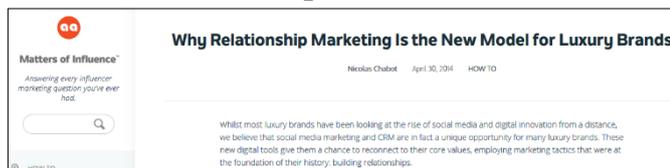
**Figure 1.4: Challenges with market segmentation (Briggs, 2016).**



**Figure 1.5: Connection with young segment (Gomelsky, 2016).**



**Figure 1.6: Importance of consumer brand relationship (Chabot, 2014).**



#### 1.1.4. Consumer brand connection

Consumers' emotional intimacy with luxury brands (e.g., Burberry and Porsche) has been evident in the literature (e.g., Straker and Wrigley, 2016; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). Consumers' emotional attachment to luxury brand has been suggested as the strategic tool for enhancing brand loyalty, combating counterfeit luxury in the competitive luxury market (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2016; So et al., 2013).

Past studies argue that building emotional connection with the consumer is an effective strategy for the brand's long term success (e.g., Park et al., 2006; Schmalz and Orth, 2012). However, there is a lack of research on how luxury brands can build a strong and sustainable bond with the consumers. Extensive literature largely supports that an emotional connection with the consumers creates a positive impact on the brand equity (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Malär et al., 2011). Studies on brand attachment clearly indicate that the consumers' attachment differs between symbolic and functional brands (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005). Therefore, consumers' attachment for luxury brands should not be viewed and treated as same for functional brands.

#### 1.1.5. Luxury brand attachment

Luxury consumers' emotion toward the brands has been evident in the advertising campaigns. For instance, *2015 Be Dior* advertising campaign illustrates a series of printed advertisements in which Jennifer Lawrence preciously holds the Dior handbag (Cichowski, 2015) and the execution of the message shows her passion and connection toward the brand (Figure 1.7). In another study, BMW and Tiffany & Co. have been identified as the top two brands that resonate with the consumers' deepest emotional desire for security, exclusivity, and ideal self-representation (Magids et al., 2015) (Figure 1.8). The conceptualisation of luxury brands has referred to the importance of emotional

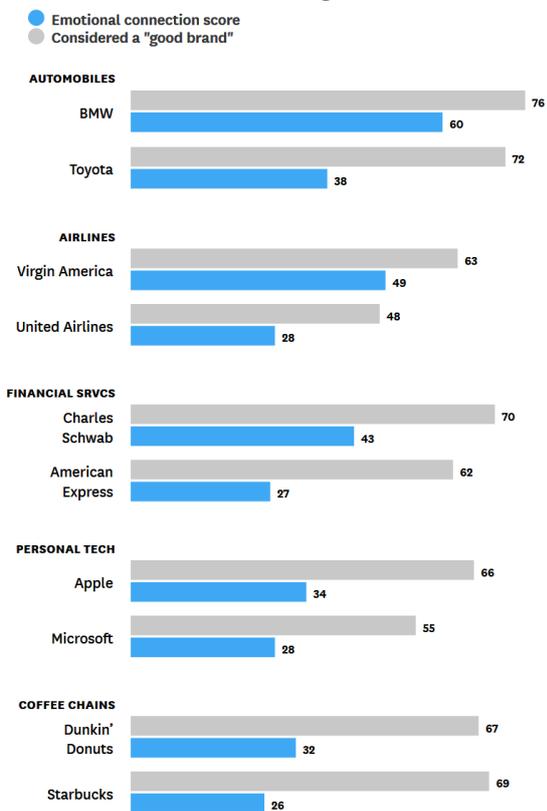


**Figure 1.7: 2015 *Be Dior* advertising campaign (Cichowski, 2015)**

connection and the distinctiveness of the consumers' perceived value within consumer-brand relationship (e.g., Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Unfortunately, previous studies have largely overlooked the unique landscape of luxury perception while measuring the consumers' attachment with luxury brands. In particular, the traits of luxury brands, consumers' perceived benefits and the elicited emotions need to be investigated for a deeper understanding of the luxury brand attachment. Studies mostly utilise the brand attachment (Park et al., 2010) and emotional attachments to brands (Thomson et al., 2005) to measure consumers' luxury brand attachment.

This research posits that the outcome might be limited if emotional brand attachment scale is used within luxury branding context. The speculation has been evident in the study by Kim and Joung (2016) that, against the theoretical expectation, does not find significant relationship between luxury consumers' emotional brand attachment and repurchase intention. Therefore, the application of the existing scales would remain inaccurate and provide limited outcome without incorporating the conceptualisation of luxury brands into the measure. The limitations with generic measures in luxury context have been echoed in recent studies that have called for more accurate measures (e.g., Sung et al., 2015; S et al., 2016). To the researcher's best knowledge, no past research has undertaken effort to understand the dimensions of luxury brand attachment.

**Figure 1.8: BMW ranks #1 in emotional connection score (Magids et al., 2015).**



In addition to the measurement issues, there exists limited research on the predictors, moderators and outcomes of luxury brand attachment. Extant literature on consumers' affective bond to luxury brands has mostly focused around the core concepts of emotional brand attachment and ignored the unique crux of luxury consumer-brand interaction. Many of the present studies are aimed at validating the impact of emotional brand attachment on luxury consumers' brand trust, loyalty, satisfaction, and attitude (e.g., Pourazad and Pare, 2014). Thus, very little is known regarding the impact of consumers' self-image, public image, and self-esteem on their perceived self-congruence for luxury brands. Moreover, extant literature has not yet provided empirical differentiation for the outcomes of luxury brand attachment rather are centred within limited behavioural outcomes. Therefore, it is imperative to re-examine the affluent consumers' long-term emotional connection to luxury brands and then identify the predictors and outcomes of the construct.

Marketing activities often build on the consumers' awareness of a desirable representation in front of others in the society. *'The Now'* – a promotional campaign by Moët & Chandon, one of the LVMH's



**Figure 1.9: Moët & Chandon's 'The Now' campaign (Pirola, 2016).**

wine & spirits brands, reflects the joy and celebration of enthusiast consumers in public atmosphere (Pirola, 2016; Savannah Winters, 2016) (Figure 1.9). Such public display is highly relevant to the consumers' materialism and conspicuous consumption (Richins, 1994; Millan and Mittal, 2017). The aspect of the individual's self-aspect in public display is conceptualised as *public self-consciousness* which has received vast attention in the field of psychology and marketing since 1970s (e.g., Fenigstein et al., 1975; Carver and Glass, 1976; Froming and Carver, 1981; Darvil et al., 1992).

Few studies have examined the impact of public self-consciousness on the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and emotional attachments to brands (e.g., Malär et al., 2011; Kauffmann et al., 2016). It has also been evident in the literature that consuming luxury brands involves consumers' desire for self-

esteem, social recognition, prestige, and signalling status (e.g., Han et al., 2010; Cheah et al., 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). In particular, people with high public self-consciousness are expected to care more for the signalling status through luxury consumption and so public self-consciousness influences the purchase intention for luxury brands. However, the question arises whether consumers' public self-consciousness has any impact on luxury brand attachment. Very little is known whether the consumers' concern for other people's perspectives makes any impact on their (consumers') emotional intimacy with the luxury brands. Until today, no study has provided empirical support to answer whether public self-consciousness moderates the relationship between consumers' self-congruence (actual and ideal) and luxury brand attachment. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between the consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.

There is an increasing consensus that the evaluation and choices for the products often depend on the private versus public context of the consumption (e.g., Cherchye et al., 2013; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998). Studies suggest that consumers are concerned about face saving for publicly consumed products and they tend to be thrifty for privately consumed products (e.g., Lin et al., 2013). Literature refers to the consumers' perceived self-image, brand self-congruence, and social influences in explaining the variance in the consumer behaviour for privately and publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996; Kulviwat et al., 2009). Compared to the vast research on publicly consumed luxury branded products, extant literature provides very limited understanding on how emotion may lead to consumers' attachment with the privately consumed luxury branded products. Few past studies have shed light onto the consumers' emotional aspects relevant to the undergarments purchase and consumption (e.g., Phau et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013). However, until today no study has examined or compared the role of brand self-congruence on luxury brand attachment within private and public nature of consumption. Therefore, this study aims to validate the luxury brand attachment framework for privately consumed luxury branded product and compare the research model across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products.

## **1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research aims to address the following research questions (RQ):

**RQ1:** How to measure consumers' luxury brand attachment?

**RQ2:** What are the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment?

**RQ3:** What variables have direct and indirect influence on luxury brand attachment?

## **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The aforementioned research questions will be addressed by achieving the following four research objectives (RO):

**RO1:** To develop and validate a scale to measure luxury brand attachment.

**RO2:** To develop and test a research framework for luxury brand attachment.

**RO3:** To test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.

**RO4:** To test the research model and moderation effect of PSC across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products.

## **1.4. CORE THEORIES**

A set of theories underpins the hypothesised relationships in this research. The theories are primarily drawn from psychology and marketing literature. The relevance of each theory is discussed in chapter 3. A brief overview of the theories is outlined below –

### **1.4.1. Attachment theory**

Attachment is defined as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (Bowlby, 1979). Attachment has an impact on an individual's development of self-concept and social perspective (Collins and Read, 1990). Building on the attachment theory from the field of psychology, marketing literature defines brand attachment as a long-term and commitment oriented tie between the consumer and the brand (e.g., Esch et al., 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

### **1.4.2. Self-expansion theory**

The process of self-expansion occurs in the intimate relationships in which one person includes another into his/her concept of the self (Aron and Aron, 1986). Marketing studies often argue that consumers' self-expansion to the brands is represented through the matching between the consumer and brand image (e.g., Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Sirgy, 1982). The more congruence is felt, the stronger relationship is built between the consumer and brand (e.g., Reimann and Aron, 2009; Trump and Brucks, 2012).

### **1.4.3. Social identity theory**

Social identity is defined as “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). The self-enhancement aspect of the social identity theory is pertinent to the scope of this study in investigating the relationship amongst consumers' perceived self-congruence, luxury brand attachment, and consumer advocacy. Therefore, it is expected that the social identity theory will explain luxury consumers' attitude and behaviour as well as inter-group communications relevant to the consumer advocacy construct.

#### **1.4.4. Normative theory of altruism**

Human altruism is a purposeful and deliberate action performed toward increasing the welfare of other people (Batson, 1991). The social and personal standard, peoples' learning as well as arousal and affect work as the mechanism behind helping behaviour (e.g., Dovidio and Penner, 2001). Relevant to the scope of this research, the normative theory of altruism state that people consider themselves as a part of the society and therefore they regard the helping behaviour as a social responsibility based on their past experience or present expectations (Berkowitz and Daniels, 1963).

#### **1.4.5. Self-consciousness and aspects of identity**

Self-consciousness is defined as the human tendency of directing attention to self-related aspects either inward or outward (Doherty and Schlenker, 1991). Studies have examined the role of self-consciousness in various contexts and identified the construct as an important predictor of human behaviour (e.g., Scheier, 1976; Scheier et al., 1974). Relevant to the framework of this study, it is expected that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand, would express to others who they would like to be (Markus and Wurf, 1987).

## **1.5. KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITION**

The definition for each key construct is provided in the literature review section (chapter 2). The definition and conceptualisation of luxury brand attachment is discussed with the scale development procedure in chapter 5. Conceptual definitions of the other constructs in the empirical model are derived and adapted from existing literature and outlined in chapter 2. Conceptual definitions for the constructs are outlined below –

### **1.5.1. Luxury brand attachment**

The emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand (Shimul and Phau, 2018).

### **1.5.2. Brand self-congruence**

The conformity between a consumer's self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982).

### **1.5.3. Actual self-congruence**

The matching between a consumer's actual self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982).

### **1.5.4. Ideal self-congruence**

The matching between a consumer's ideal self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982).

### **1.5.5. Consumer advocacy**

Exchanging market information and counselling other consumers so that they have a positive brand experience (Chelmeinski and Coulter, 2011).

### **1.5.6. Public self-consciousness**

An individual's general awareness about him/herself as a social identity (Fenigstein et al., 1975).

### **1.5.7. Privately/publicly consumed products**

Privately consumed products are utilized away from the gaze of others with the possible exception of the user whereas publicly consumed products are those that are seen by others when being used (Bourne, 1957).

### **1.5.8. Luxury consumers**

The consumers who buy and use luxury branded products (Kapferer and Michaut-Denizeau, 2017).

## **1.6. METHODOLOGY**

This research is conducted through six phases. The relevant literature is reviewed in the first phase whereby key constructs relevant to luxury brand attachment are identified and discussed. A research model is proposed and the relationships between the constructs are hypothesised with theoretical underpinning are established in the second phase.

Next, luxury brand attachment scale is developed and validated through five studies in the third phase following the procedure suggested by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2003). The base model and the hypothesised relationships tested in phase four. Then, phase five tests the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. Finally, the base model and the moderating influence of public self-consciousness is tested across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products.

A pre-test was conducted to select the affordable and appropriate luxury brands to be used as the stimuli of this research. A self-administered online survey questionnaire was developed. Established scales were used to measure the constructs except luxury brand attachment which is developed in this research. Measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree”), the measurement items showed satisfactory reliability and validity. An examination on the collinearity statistics did not show any multicollinearity as the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were below 3.0 (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a single factor solution resulted poor fit and therefore common method variance was not a legitimate threat to the validity of this study. The proposed research framework was examined using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with AMOS 24. Anderson and Gerbing’s (1988) two step procedure was followed whereby 1) the measurement model assessed the factor structure, and 2) the structural model tested the hypothesised relationships and assessed the model fit as well. A multi-group analysis was conducted for testing the moderating influence of the public self-consciousness.

## **1.7. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This section provides the scope of the research to achieve the research questions effectively. Specifically, three delimitations have been acknowledged. *First*, the four studies in this research are conducted within the context of accessible/affordable luxury branded products. In this regard, the symbolic values of the brands and products were considered in utilisation of the category throughout the studies. *Second*, the studies in this research are constrained within ready to wear fashion accessories (i.e., jeans, sunglasses, undergarments, and watches) only. *Third*, the majority of the sample in this research belongs to the 18-30 age group. This segment has been recognized by past studies as the most likely demographics to purchase luxury goods and services (e.g., Sarkar, 2017; Hung et al, 2011).

## **1.8. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research results a number of theoretical, methodological and managerial significance in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment.

### **1.8.1. Conceptual significance**

This research conceptualises luxury brand attachment. More specifically, this research develops and validates a scale for measuring luxury brand attachment. Moreover, it examines the predictors, outcomes, and moderating variables for luxury brand attachment within the context of private and public nature of consumption. The conceptual significances of this research are outlined below:

- i. The **development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale** fulfils a number of key gaps in the luxury branding literature (Research objective 1). As mentioned earlier, one of the key limitations with studies in luxury branding research is the lack of an accurate scale to measure luxury brand attachment and researchers have called for more accurate measures (e.g., Sung et al., 2015; S et al., 2016).

- ii. The **use of consumers' actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence** provides a suitable dimension for luxury brand attachment because earlier research in this domain shows that consumers want to upgrade their actual self-image to ideal self-image through the consumption of luxury branded products.
- iii. This research also provides a deeper understanding of **consumer advocacy** within the context of luxury brand attachment. Incorporating consumer advocacy as the key outcome of luxury brand attachment is a new addition into the literature. This research provides a new understanding of consumer advocacy within the context of luxury branding.
- iv. Study 3 of this research is the first study to examine the **moderating influence of public self-consciousness** on the relationship between perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. This research expects that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand, would express to others who they would like to be.
- v. Study 4 of this research is the first study to compare the predictors, outcomes and moderators of luxury brand attachment with the context of **privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products**.

### **1.8.2. Methodological significance**

This research results a number of methodological significances in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment. The methodological significances are outlined below:

- i. The development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale is expected to make the most important methodological significance in this research. This research strictly followed traditional **scale development methods** such as literature review, thesaurus searches

and expert surveys to generate the scale items (Churchill, 1979; Devellis, 2003).

- ii. The incorporation of luxury branding academics, industry experts, and real life consumers have enhanced the **rigour and conceptual reliability** of the construct. In addition, the usage of real-life advertisements as the survey stimuli provides ecological validity of the research. The convergent, discriminate, predictive, and nomological validities were established as well.
- iii. The luxury brand attachment scale has further been **validated** in the chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8 of this research. The contexts of the aforementioned studies ranged across wristwatch (Rolex), sunglasses (Giorgio Armani, D&G), jeans (Giorgio Armani), and undergarments (Giorgio Armani).

### **1.8.3. Managerial significance**

This study will also provide practical insights for luxury brand managers in several ways. The managerial significances of this research are outlined below:

- i. The luxury brand attachment scale will facilitate the managers in **segmenting** the luxury consumers. Luxury managers can understand the strength of the bond between consumer and luxury brand. They can also identify the highly attached consumers who will not only remain loyal to brand but also advocate the brand to others.
- ii. Luxury brand managers can also leverage the attachment in **extending the brand portfolio**. Consumers with high luxury brand attachment are expected to show positive attitude toward the new offerings from the parent brand. Thus, cultivating and nurturing a strong emotional bond with consumers will make a positive impact on the luxury brand's extension success.

- iii. The growth of counterfeit luxury products and popularity of affordable ‘masstige’ and ‘massclusive’ luxury brands have diluted the consumers’ desire for **exclusive** luxury brands. Luxury brand managers should emphasise on building an emotional connection between the consumer and brand to protect and nourish the sense of **exquisiteness** offered by luxury brands.
- iv. Advertising managers can utilise the particular components of the measurement that highly reflect the consumers’ attachment to a particular luxury brand. **Advertising campaigns** may also render the luxury brand attachment by demonstrating storyboard on the inseparable bond between consumer and the luxury brand.
- v. Using the findings of this research, luxury managers can understand how consumers develop bond with luxury brands on the basis of the **perceived brand self-congruence**. In particular, they can investigate which aspect of the self-congruence has stronger impact on the attachment for a particular luxury brand.
- vi. The emotional aspect of luxury brand attachment can be incorporated into the overall **brand experience**. For instance, campaigns such as ‘Burberry kisses’ and ‘Volkswagen's SmileDrive’ emphasise on the consumers’ love, passion, and joy to enhance the intimacy with the brand through interactive experiences (Glaser, 2014).
- vii. Luxury brand managers can identify and target highly attached consumers who will **be willing to pay more for the brand, tend to switch less, get involved in brand-community, and show resilience to negative information about the brand** (Japutra et al., 2014; Xie and Peng, 2009).

Overall, building and maintaining a deep emotional connection between consumer and brand is vital for a long-term profitable customer relationship. The luxury brand

attachment scale would be the strategic tool to measure the strength of the consumer-brand connection.

## **1.9. ORGANISATION**

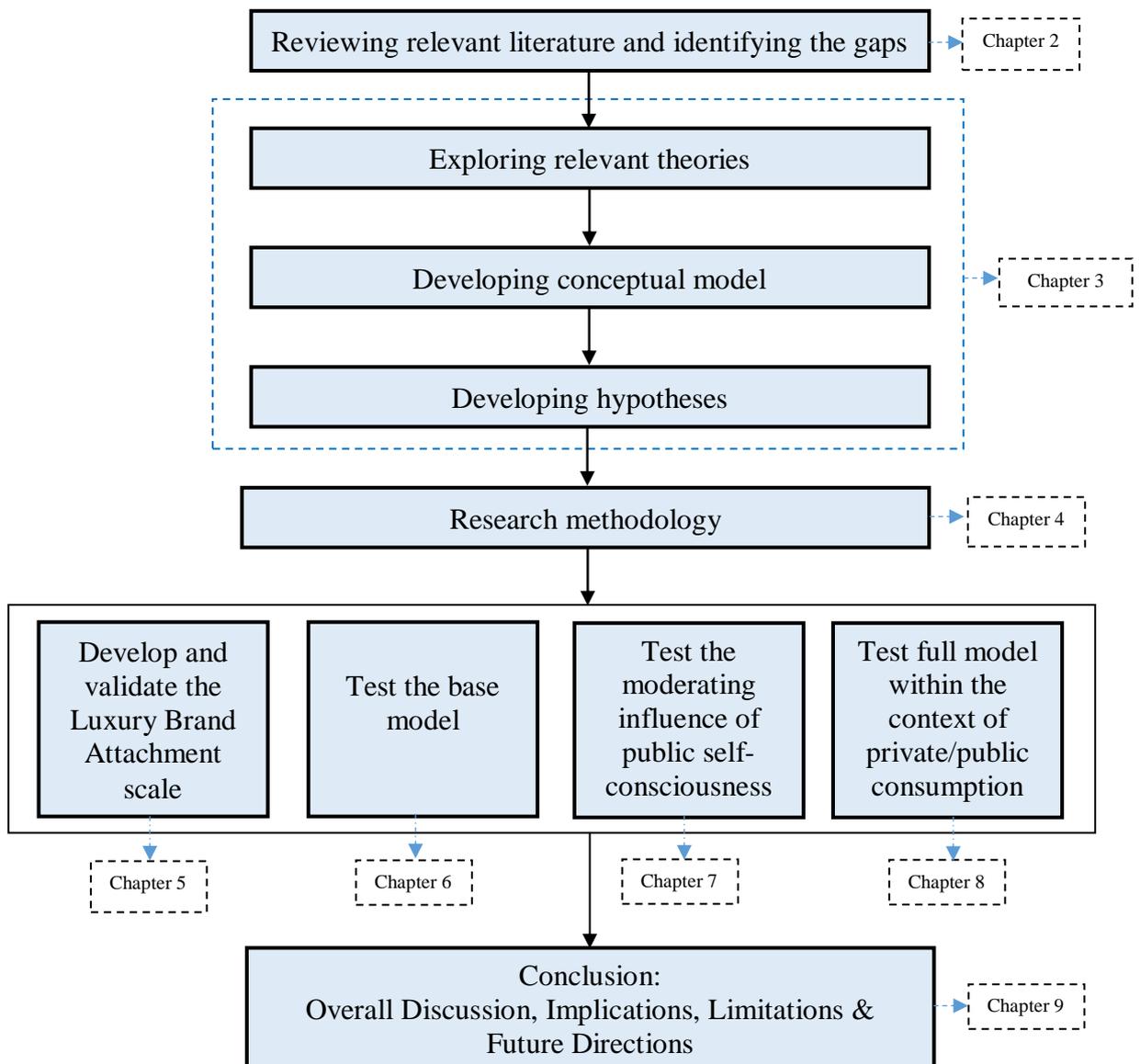
This research is organised into nine chapters:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Relevant literature review
- 3) Theoretical framework and hypotheses development
- 4) Methodology
- 5) Study 1 (Scale development)
- 6) Study 2 (Base model test)
- 7) Study 3 (Moderation test)
- 8) Study 4 (Private and public context of consumption)
- 9) Conclusion

Noteworthy, as specified above, the four chapters (5 to 8) represent the four studies (1 to 4). Each chapter is written as an independent journal article consisting of the following sections: abstract, introduction, relevant literature and hypotheses development, method, results, discussion, and concluding comments. The scale development chapter (Study 1) is currently under review in the *Journal of Brand Management*. An abridged version of chapter 6 (Study 2), chapter 7 (study 3) and chapter 8 (study 4) will be submitted to the *European Journal of Marketing*.

A schematic overview of the research process is presented in Figure 1.10.

**Figure 1.10: Overview of the research process**



## **1.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided an overview of the background of the research, research gaps and objectives, underpinning theories, key concepts, methodology, delimitations and significance of the research. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature for conceptualising the luxury brand attachment. In addition, key research gaps are identified and a set of research objectives is outlined. Chapter 3 revisits the research gaps and objectives as well as discusses the relevant theories that underpins the hypothesised relationships. The research model is also proposed in chapter 3. Next, chapter 4 describes the research methodology undertaken to achieve the research objectives. In particular, the procedure for data collection, data cleaning, sampling, survey design and instruments, measurement scales, scale development procedure, statistical techniques for data analysis and model testing are outlined. Chapter 5 develops and validates the luxury brand attachment scale. Next, chapter 6 tests the base model for luxury brand attachment. The moderating influence of public self-consciousness is examined in chapter 7. Then chapter 8 tests the base model and moderation influence across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. Finally, chapter 9 discusses the contributions of this research and highlights the limitations with future research directions.

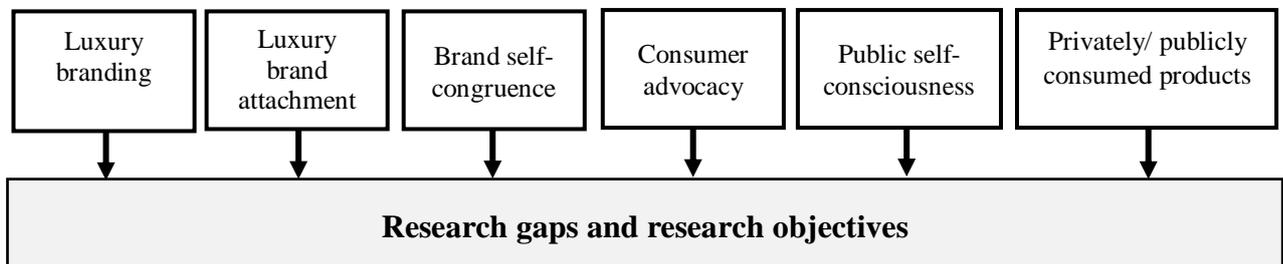
## CHAPTER 2

### RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the scope and objectives of this research. The current chapter aims to review the relevant literature. This chapter primarily consists of six sections. The first section provides a systematic review on luxury brands. In particular, the traits of luxury brands as well as findings from extant literature are summarised. The second section heavily relies on brand attachment literature and attempts to provide a conceptual definition of luxury brand attachment. The third section explores the relevant literature on brand self-congruence. Specifically, this section discusses the relevance of actual and ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment. The fourth section examines consumer advocacy as an outcome of luxury brand attachment. The fifth section is a review on the role of public self-consciousness on consumption and choices. The context of privately and publicly consumed products is examined in the sixth section. Finally, this chapter concludes with an identification of the research gaps which are subsequently linked with the research objectives. An overview of this chapter is presented in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1: An overview of Chapter 2**



## 2.2. LUXURY BRANDING

### 2.2.1. Luxury brands defined

The definition of luxury brand differs due to the diverse socio-cultural context in which consumers evaluate the brand and product category as well as the subjective interpretation of the term ‘luxury’ (e.g., Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2018; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Ko et al., 2017). One stream of research focuses on the necessity of the product and defines luxury as something ‘more than necessary’ (Bearden and Etzel, 1982; Mühlmann, 1975; Reith and Meyer, 2003; Sombart, 1922). By contrast, another group of scholars conceptualises luxury in terms of non-necessity and superfluity (e.g., De Barnier et al. 2006; Dubois et al. 2001; Csaba 2008; Geerts and Veg-Sala, 2011). The notion of ‘rarity principle’ has also been acknowledged in defining the concept of luxury (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). In line with this, Bearden and Etzel (1982) propose that everyone might have the necessity of luxury, but only few people can afford the luxury.

In spite of vast literature on luxury branding, a lack of consensus regarding the definition of luxury brand has been evident in the literature (e.g., Vickers and Renand, 2003; Ko et al., 2017). A summary of the definitions that are widely reflected in the luxury branding literature is presented below:

- Luxury is defined with a set of characteristics or attributes. Luxury is better thought of as a concept, and thus irreducible entirely to the material, although having various material embodiments. There are three dimensions of luxury brands: *Experiential value* (What does the brand mean to the individual?), *Symbolic value* (What does the brand mean to others?); *Functional value* (What physical attributes does the brand possess? What does the brand do?) (Berthon et al., 2009, p. 47-48).
- Luxury brands have ten defining characteristics: 1) premium image 2) aspirational image 3) pleasurable experience 4) brand elements 5) distinctive brand personalities 6) selective distribution 7) premium pricing 8) brand architecture 9) broadly defined competition, and 10) legal protection (Keller, 2009).

- “Luxury is anything that is desirable and more than necessary and ordinary” (Heine, 2012, p.40).
- Luxury brand offers premium products, provides pleasure as a central benefit, and connects with consumers emotionally (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009).
- Luxury branded products as those “whose ratio of functionality to price is low, while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high” (Nueno and Quelch, 1998, p. 61).

### **2.2.2. Traits of luxury brands**

Regardless of the lack of consensus regarding a unique definition, the conceptualisation of luxury brands shares some unique traits such as emotional connection (e.g., Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (O’cass and Frost, 2002; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), and exclusivity, high transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Kim, 2018; Dubois et al, 2001; Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). Extant literature explains the luxury brand consumption from a personal aspect (Dubois and Laurent, 1994), interpersonal aspect (Mason, 1992), and socio-economic and political aspect (e.g., Hennigs et al., 2012). It is suggested that luxury brand consumption boosts consumer’s ego (Eastman et al., 1999) and social recognition (Jiang and Cova, 2012).

Literature also considers high price a key dimension of luxury brands (e.g. McCarthy and Perreault, 1987), but few other studies make a counter argument that a simple price value of a product may not describe the brand as luxury (Jacoby and Olson, 1977). Furthermore, the symbolic value that consumers seek from luxury brands is seen as critical (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). The role of functionality within luxury branding context cannot be ignored as well. Ervynck et al. (2003) interpret functionality as the quality of the products. It has also been apparent that the functional value of luxury brands is prominent though sometime a signalling motivation can be inferred mistakenly (e.g., Han, 2010). Hence, Berger and Ward (2010) and Han (2008) focus on another key characteristic of luxury brands; conspicuousness, which indicates the extent to which a brand is visibly marked by other people. This notion of visibility

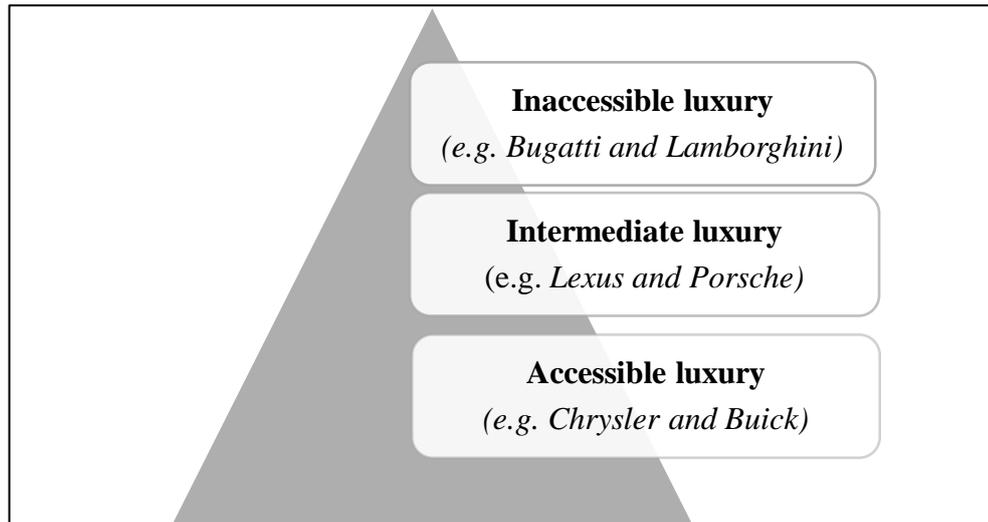
as well as the cognitive and affective bond that connect the brand to the consumers has been defined as brand prominence (Park et al., 2010).

Luxury branding academics utilise several social-psychological theories to explain the consumption of luxury brands. For instance, Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuous consumption has been one of the key underpinning theories for explaining luxury consumption (e.g., Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Christodoulides et al., 2009; Han et al., 2010; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). With a different notion, Berthon et al. (2009), Wiedmann et al. (2007), and Dubois et al. (2001) apply self-concept theory (Sirgy, 1982) and argue that luxury brands help in enhancing the consumers' self-concept as well as achieving the desired social image. Another group of research resorts to the social comparison theory and denotes that social referencing and the construction of one's self are determinants of luxury brand consumption (e.g., Mandel et al., 2006; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the consumers' desire for uniqueness has been reflected through the application of the theory of uniqueness into the domain whereby academics argue that need for uniqueness is the key driver behind luxury consumption (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann, 2013; Bian and Forsythe, 2012).

### **2.2.3. Hierarchy for luxury brands**

The hierarchy pyramid for luxury brand classification suggests the consumer's socio-economic class and purchasing power could provide a segmentation method in which the top level is inaccessible luxury, the mid-level is intermediate luxury and the bottom level is accessible luxury (e.g., Alleres, 1990; De Barnier et al., 2012). Based on the consumer's socio-economic class and purchasing power, Sung et al. (2015) support this classification and provide examples for each category of luxury brands: Godiva and Hilton are accessible luxury, Lexus and Chanel are intermediate luxury, and Rolls-Royce and Bentley are inaccessible luxury (Figure 2.2). However, it should be noted that luxury is not merely a matter of personal taste (Berry, 1994) rather the context of luxury changes according to the social and economic perspectives (Kemp, 1998).

**Figure 2.2: Hierarchy pyramid for luxury brand**



#### **2.2.4. Luxury perception and consumer emotion**

There are several scales for measuring the consumers' luxury perception. Kapferer (1998) proposes a three dimensional 18-item scale for measuring the luxury. The dimensions are: creativity, renown, and elitism. The measurement scale developed by Dubois et al. (2001) consists of 33 items. These items aim to measure consumer values of luxury using the dimensions of extreme quality, high price, scarcity, aesthetics, personal history/competence, superfluity/plenty, mental reservations/conspicuousness, personal distance and uneasiness, involvement: deep interest and pleasure, involvement: sign value, and three other specific item irrelevant to the aforementioned dimensions.

Vigneron and Johnson's (2004) brand luxury index is a five-factor model that includes three nonpersonal-oriented perceptions (conspicuousness, uniqueness, and quality) and two personal-oriented perceptions (hedonism and extended self). Wiedmann et al. (2007) propose a conceptual framework for measuring the consumers' luxury perception. The framework includes four dimensions of luxury perception: financial, functional, individual, and social. Later on Miller and Mills (2012) propose a measurement model for luxury fashion brands. The model included six dimensions namely – brand luxury, brand leadership, brand innovativeness, brand-user fit, brand value, and willingness to pay a premium.

De Barnier et al. (2012) compare three luxury perception scales (i.e., Kapferer, 1998; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Dubois et al., 2001) across accessible luxury (Chanel and Mont Blanc), intermediate luxury (Rolex), and inaccessible luxury (Ferrari and Van Cleef and Arpels) levels. The results from the predictive and convergent validities show that theoretically there is a luxury continuum that reinforces the above discussed three level of luxury products (De Barnier et al., 2012).

Recently, Dogan et al. (2018) have developed and validated a scale for measuring luxury consumption tendency. The 18-item luxury consumption tendency scale consists of five dimensions: uniqueness, expressiveness, symbolic meaning, arbitrary desire, and belonging to an exclusive minority. Besides luxury perception and consumption tendency, there have been studies that developed and validated scales for measuring luxury brand personality (Sung et al., 2015) and luxury brand aspiration (S et al., 2016).

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the motivation behind luxury brand consumption. The symbolic value of luxury brands has been associated with consumer's self-identity in a considerable number of studies (e.g. Holt, 1995; Dittmar, 1994). For instance, Hung et al. (2011) find that experiential and symbolic values influence the purchase intention for luxury brands. Although symbolic and functional value may vary according to consumers' perception (Berthon et al., 2009), consumers around the world buy luxury brands not only for utilitarian values but also for social, symbolic, self-expressive and relational values (Doss and Robinson, 2013; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010). The conceptualization of luxury brand demonstrates that the inherent traits of luxury brands are very unique and the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Emotional benefits sought from luxury brands**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Emotional benefits</b>	<b>Key emotions</b>
<b>Jiang and Cova (2012)</b>	Social: Conformity/status seeking/face saving Personal: Level (brand experience/fashion/adventure), impress other people, fashion consciousness	Conformity Status seeking Face saving Adventure Impressing other people Fashion consciousness
<b>Stegemann et al. (2011)</b>	Symbolic attributes	Symbolic attributes
<b>Tsai (2005)</b>	Personally affective benefits – 1. The product provides hedonic pleasure 2. For the self and serves as a self-giving gift 3. Personally symbolic benefit – the product facilitates the expression of the consumer’s internal self 4. Personally utilitarian benefit – the product matches with the 5. Consumer’s individual attitudes and tastes for quality. Socially affective benefits – 1. Providing hedonic pleasure for the self in which emotional experience is spontaneous and intense, yet self-determined, 2. Serving as a self giving gift that helps to achieve the effects of affect-enhancement and mood-regulation, 3. Facilitating the congruity between brand perception and the consumer’s internal self, and 4. Assuring the product quality to the perfectionist standard set by the target consumers.	Hedonic pleasure Self-congruity
<b>Atwal and Williams (2009)</b>	Pleasurable experience	Pleasurable experience
<b>Aaker (1996)</b>	“Feel-good” factor	Feeling good

<b>Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009)</b>	Promise of pleasure	Promise of pleasure
<b>Howard (2014)</b>	Emotional benefits are often closely linked with self-expressive benefits.	Self-expressive benefits
<b>Michael (2012)</b>	Symbol of success, elegancy	Symbol of success Elegancy
<b>WPP (2013)</b>	Feel-good factors such as “Make me feel more confident” and “Make me feel more attractive”, as well as their identification with brand status	Confidence Attractiveness
<b>Silverstein and Fiske (2003)</b>	Self-help books and talk shows preach the importance of self-fulfillment, self-acceptance, and self-esteem. Consumers believe many new-luxury products will help them manage the stresses in their lives, better leverage their time, and achieve their aspirations.	Mental peace Achieve aspiration
<b>Nelissen and Meijers (2011)</b>	Enhances status and produces benefits in social interactions	Status and benefits in social interactions
<b>Fionda and Moore (2009)</b>	Driving a super car would give a person more prestige	Prestige
<b>Neiger (2014)</b>	"When you get a luxury car, you get luxury service as well. It is a world of difference,"	Distinctiveness
<b>Eastman et al. (1999)</b>	The motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer or symbolize status both to the individual and to surrounding significant.	Status

Fionda and Moore (2009) identify symbolic value as the most prominent driver behind the purchase intention of luxury brand, because consumers want to attain social status and self-esteem through the consumption of luxury brand. This phenomenon is termed as ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed within the luxury brand literature (e.g. O’cass and Frost, 2002; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 1999). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of

the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brand for social status and aspirational values. Luxury brands are also used as a means to enhance the consumers' physical attractiveness and social acceptance (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Netemeyer et al. (1995) categorize such desire as physical vanity and achievement vanity which are basically excessive concerns for physical appearance and personal achievements respectively.

The traits and features of luxury brands have strong power of providing physical and achievement vanity to the consumers (Durvasula et al., 2001). In another study on the investigation of vanity and public self-consciousness, Workman and Lee (2011) find that consumers buy fashion products to show higher physical appearance concern and professional achievement concern. In case of luxury brand consumption, vanity becomes a prevalent motivation for consumers (e.g., Grilo et al., 2011). By accentuating the significance of vanity constructs, Wang and Waller (2006) state that many products including luxury items are associated with consumer vanity through marketing images.

Research on luxury consumer-brand relationships shows the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers' purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). Wang et al. (2010) identify eight motives behind luxury consumption: self-actualization, product quality, social comparison, others' influence, investment for future, gifting, special occasions, and emotional purchasing. In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012).

A summary of selected studies on luxury consumer-brand relationship is presented in the Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Summary of selected studies on luxury consumer brand relationship**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Highlights</b>
<b>Nueno and Quelch (1998)</b>	Mass marketing of luxury	Four circles of managerial guideline are presented for luxury brand success.
<b>Wong and Ahuvia (1998)</b>	Cross-cultural analysis of luxury consumption	Cultural factors in southeast Asian and western cultures are examined within the context of luxury consumption.
<b>Vigneron and Johnson (1999)</b>	Prestige-seeking consumer behaviour	A framework of personal and interpersonal effect on prestige seeking consumer behaviour is developed
<b>Phau and Prendergast (2000)</b>	'Rarity principle' in luxury consumption	Luxury brands must sustain high levels of awareness and tightly controlled brand diffusion to enhance exclusivity to maintain prestige
<b>Vickers and Renand (2003)</b>	Conceptual dimensions	The hierarchy and product positioning for luxury goods are explored.
<b>Vigneron and Johnson (2004)</b>	Luxury perception	A brand luxury index is developed with five-factor model that includes three nonpersonal-oriented perceptions (conspicuousness, uniqueness, and quality) and two personal-oriented perceptions (hedonism and extended self).
<b>Tsai (2005)</b>	Luxury-brand purchase value	Luxury marketing should be geared to meeting the needs of self-directed pleasure, self-gift giving, congruity with internal self and quality assurance for building and strengthening brand loyalty.
<b>Mandel et al. (2006)</b>	Desire for luxury brands	Consumers' purchasing habits are influenced by comparisons with individuals who are wealthier and more successful than themselves
<b>Atwal and Williams (2008)</b>	Luxury brand-related experiences	Luxury brands need to stay in front of luxury consumers through the discovery of new and different ways to give expression to their desires.
<b>Fionda and Moore (2008)</b>	Anatomy of the luxury fashion brand	Nine interrelated key attributes are identified for the luxury fashion brand proposition.
<b>Gistri et al. (2009)</b>	Counterfeit luxury goods	The taxonomy for counterfeit luxury goods are presented.

<b>Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009)</b>	Brand extension	Consumers have more favourable brand extension evaluations of luxury brands (than non-luxury brands) due to the hedonic potential inherent in this concept.
<b>Kapferer and Bastien (2009)</b>	The specificity of luxury management	Examine specificity of luxury brands amongst the realm of masstige, opuluxe, premium, ultra-premium, trading up, hyper-luxury, real or true luxury.
<b>Phau and Teah (2009)</b>	Counterfeit luxury brands	The social and personality factors influence Chinese consumers' attitudes towards counterfeits of luxury brands are examined.
<b>Wiedmann et al. (2009)</b>	Value based segmentation	Luxury consumption is explained with four types of values: financial, function, individual, and social.
<b>Wilcox et al. (2009)</b>	Counterfeit luxury brands	Social motivation influences consumer's desire for counterfeit luxury brands.
<b>Keller (2009)</b>	Challenges and opportunities in managing luxury brands.	10 characteristics of luxury brands are proposed with an understanding brand equity measurement and brand architecture as they relate to growth strategies for luxury brands.
<b>Truong et al. (2010)</b>	Brand aspiration	Extrinsic (intrinsic) aspiration has positive (negative) impact on consumers' preference for luxury brands.
<b>Kim and Ko (2010)</b>	Purchase intention	Impact of social media marketing on luxury consumer brand relationship and purchase intention.
<b>Wang et al. (2010)</b>	Consumption motivation	Eight factors have been identified as the motives behind luxury consumption
<b>Han et al. (2010)</b>	Signalling status with luxury products	The impact of brand prominence (subtle vs loud) is examined among four different segments: patrician, parvenu, proletarian, and poseur.
<b>Liu et al. (2012)</b>	Self-congruence, brand attitude, and brand loyalty	User and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty in luxury brand context
<b>Choo et al. (2012)</b>	Perceived value	The impact of luxury customer value on the brand relationship and behavioural intention is examined.
<b>Zhan and He (2012)</b>	Brand attitude and purchase intention	The role of three personality traits (value consciousness, susceptibility to normative

		influence, and need for uniqueness) on brand attitude is examined.
<b>Cheah et al. (2015)</b>	Brand prominence	The impact of quiet versus loud logos on the consumers' purchase intention for luxury brands.
<b>Han et al. (2017)</b>	Sustainability	Influencing consumers to purchase sustainable luxury fashion products.
<b>Stiehler (2016)</b>	Co-creation	The impact of consumer knowledge on luxury brand co-creation is examined.
<b>Shukla et al. (2016)</b>	Brand commitment	The antecedents and outcomes of luxury brand commitment are investigated.
<b>Kessous et al. (2017)</b>	Gift-giving	The three stages of gift-giving process is examined for luxury brands.
<b>Aliyev et al. (2017)</b>	Brand perception	Luxury brands appeal differently between western and non-western consumers.
<b>Marticotte and Arcand (2017)</b>	Schadenfreude	Schadenfreude influences the purchase intention of counterfeit luxury brands.
<b>Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2017)</b>	Luxury brand desirability	Cross country analysis of the rarity principle within luxury branding context.
<b>Roux et al. (2017)</b>	Luxury values	The role of gender in between luxury drivers and values is examined.
<b>Ahn et al. (2018)</b>	Brand extension	Luxury product to service brand extension with in impact of parent brand on the extended brand.
<b>Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. (2018)</b>	Brand prominence	Impact of two personality traits and two social traits on luxury brand purchase intention is examined with the context of subtle and loud signals.
<b>Kim (2018)</b>	Desire for exclusivity	Luxury consumers' desire for exclusivity and brand attitude is examined.
<b>Prentice and Loureiro (2018)</b>	Customer engagement	Antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement is investigated for luxury brands.

### **2.2.5. Interim summary of luxury branding literature**

The first section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on luxury branding. The following is a summary of the key issues discussed:

- A lack of consensus regarding the definition of luxury brand has been evident in the literature (e.g., Vickers and Renand, 2003; Ko et al., 2017). Keller (2009) defines luxury brands with 10 key characteristics: 1) premium image 2) aspirational image 3) pleasurable experience 4) brand elements 5) distinctive brand personalities 6) selective distribution 7) premium pricing 8) brand architecture 9) broadly defined competition and 10) legal protection.
- The conceptualisation of luxury brands shares some unique traits such as emotional connection (e.g., Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (e.g., O’cass and Frost, 2002; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), and exclusivity, high transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Kim, 2018; Dubois et al, 2001; Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017).
- There are several scales for measuring the consumers’ luxury perception. Kapferer (1998) proposes a three dimensional 18-item scale for measuring the luxury. The dimensions are: creativity, renown, and elitism. The measurement scale developed by Dubois et al. (2001) consists of 33 items. Vigneron and Johnson’s (2004) brand luxury index is a five-factor model that includes three nonpersonal-oriented perceptions (conspicuousness, uniqueness, and quality) and two personal-oriented perceptions (hedonism and extended self).
- The conceptualization of luxury brand demonstrates that the inherent traits of luxury brands are very unique and the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (e.g., Jiang and Cova, 2012; Tsai, 2005).

## 2.3. LUXURY BRAND ATTACHMENT

### 2.3.1. Brand attachment

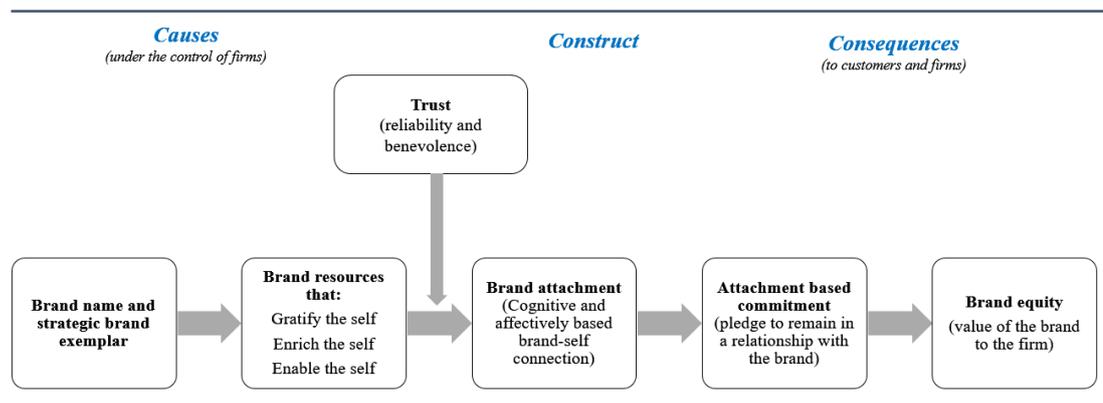
The literature has not provided a definition of luxury brand attachment until now. Therefore, this study adapts and adopts conceptualisation of ‘attachment’ from the field of psychology and marketing. The psychological theories explain attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (e.g., Bowlby, 1979; Hazan and Shaver, 1994). Early research on human attachment reflects both physical proximity and desired security which in turn reduces anxiety (Bischof, 1975; Bretherton, 1985; Heard and Lake, 1986). Moreover, separation protest has been identified as an integral part of affectional bond in which the attachment figure is neither replaceable nor interchangeable with others (Ainsworth, 2006). Building on the key components of attachment theory from the field of psychology, marketing literature defines brand attachment as a long-term and commitment oriented tie between consumer and brand (e.g., Esch et al., 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

The brand attachment literature hinges on four major streams of research. The **first** stream shows that there is a relationship between the consumers’ brand possession and a sense of self (e.g., Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Possession of an object often leads to a sense of self-extension toward the object, as noted by Belk (1988, p.160), “emphasis on material possession...remains high throughout life as we seek to express ourselves of experiences, accomplishments, and other people in our lives, and even create a sense of immortality after death”. Noteworthy, the emotional significance of the possession of an object might be little in case of low attachment, and vice versa (Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Such possession and self-extension generate love, passion, and intimacy toward the brand (e.g., Forunier, 1998; Holt, 2002). Beyond signifying the consumers’ individual selves, brands may also be considered the representation of nations, generations and cultural values worthy of aspiration and respect (Schmitt, 2012; Holt, 2002).

The **second** stream known as Connection-Automaticity-Attachment (CAA) explains brand attachment as the combined outcome of ‘strong self-brand linkages and automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand’ (Park et al., 2006, p. 9). This dual process may be served by the brand with a symbolic representation of an

individual's nostalgic memories about past, places, music or personal milestones (e.g., Snyder, 1991; Oswald, 1999; Kaplan, 1987). An integration of the consumers perceived self is important as well. In particular, consumers may verify their actual self-image by consuming self-congruent brands that reflect who the consumers actually are and what they believe (Lydon et al., 2005). Moreover, a brand can enrich a consumer's perceived self through symbolic internalisation of brand concept – for example, Harley Davidson creates strong brand-self connection by utilising freedom, machismo as well as the ideal selves for the aspiring Harley owners (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Overall, the CAA stream of research argues that brand attachment can be built through a combination of gratifying, enriching or enabling the self (Park et al., 2006). The greater the associative links are, the stronger the brand attachment becomes (Carlston, 1992). Finally, the CAA model proposes trust as the moderator in the relationship between brand self-connection and brand attachment. The authors argue that trust is a key factor to the willingness to maintain a long-term commitment to an object (e.g., Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2002; Esch et al., 2006). A summary of the CAA model is presented in the Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3: Construct, consequences, and causes of brand attachment (Park et al., 2006)**



The **third** stream of research is an advancement of the CAA model by Park et al. (2010), who provide a new conceptual and methodological approach to brand attachment known as Connection-Prominence Attachment Model (CPAM). The authors define brand attachment as the strength of the tie linking the brand and the consumer's perceived self. The CPAM conceptualises brand attachment with two

critical indicators: a) brand-self connection and b) the prominence of brand-related thoughts and feelings. The first indicator refers to the consumer's cognitive and affective connection with the brand through which the consumer develops a sense of oneness with the brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Thomson et al., 2005). According to Park et al. (2010), the second indicator reflects the perceived frequency and fluency of feelings and memories of the brand. Thus, the two indicators together build and enhance the consumer's attachment with the brand.

The **fourth** stream of research pioneered by Thomson et al. (2005) emphasises on the emotional aspects of the attachment and name the construct as emotional attachments to brands. This stream takes the notion from Bowlby's (1979) suggestion that the level of emotional attachment to an object envisages the nature of the person-object interaction. Thomson et al. (2005) take a major shift in the understanding of brand attachment with a sole focus on affective components and ignoring the cognitive counterparts highlighted in other studies (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007). Later on, Malär et al. (2011) validate the construct with identifying consumers' perceived brand self-congruence as the predictor of the consumers' emotional attachments to brands.

### **2.3.2. Drivers of brand attachment**

Past literature indicates that brand attachment in general encompasses rational and emotional perspectives of consumers (e.g., Belaid and Behi, 2011). The rational factors are reflected through the consumers' trust and commitment to the brand (Park et al., 2006; Park et al., 2010; Oliver, 1999; Dick and Basu, 1994) whereas the emotional components are relevant to the consumers' deep feelings for the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Branding literature suggests that the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (e.g., Jiang and Cova, 2012) and consumers' attachment to luxury brands are driven by the emotional factors such as affection, passion, love, connection etc. (Malär et al., 2011). Further studies have used two types of self-congruency to predict brand attachment: actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2017; Japutra et al., 2014).

Malär et al. (2011) examine the role of consumers' self-image and brand image in exploring emotional brand attachment. The study suggests that consumers' self-congruence and product involvement are positively associated with emotional brand attachment. This result is consistent with the finding of Chaplin and John (2005) which concludes that consumer's self-concept is an integral component in creating emotional attachment to the brand. Thus, majority of the previous research have argued that consumers' self-congruence drives emotional brand attachment (e.g. Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005). From a managerial standpoint, MacInnis (2015) suggests that marketers can take pro-active steps to create brand attachment through implementing the 3E model: enticement (experiential), empowerment (functional), and enrichment (symbolic). The author further prescribes that 1) developing brand attachment requires understanding of the world of the target market, and 2) attachment must be nurtured over time.

### **2.3.3. Outcomes of brand attachment**

Studies have argued that brand attachment motivates the consumers to repurchase the product (e.g. Assiouras et al., 2015; Japutra et al., 2014), revisit the website or the store (e.g. Jones et al., 2006) and also to promote the brand to others (e.g. Fedorikhin et al., 2008). From a utilitarian context, Belaid and Behi (2011) argue that when a consumer is attached to a brand, the positive affection toward the brand may lead to a pleasurable and favourable brand evaluation which in turn reinforces brand satisfaction.

Past studies also show that brand attachment positively influences the level of consumer trust in a brand (Dennis et al., 2016; Belaid and Behi, 2011). Consumers believe that the trusted brand would prioritise consumers' expectations if any unforeseen situation arises (e.g., Delgado-Ballester, 2004). Besides, strong brand attachment influences the consumers to ignore the downside of the brand, defend the brand in social networks and thereby prove the sturdy emotional connection to the brand (Japutra et al., 2014; 2018a). Furthermore, consumers with a higher degrees of brand attachment tend to ignore negative information regarding that specific brand and encourage other people to buy it (Xie and Peng, 2009).

A good number of studies have argued that brand attachment makes the consumers brand loyal and creates a positive impact on brand equity (Park et al., 2010; Malär et al., 2011; Assiouras et al., 2015). Literature suggests that loyal customers develop a strong affectionate tie with the brand (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005). Such emotional bond provides the consumers a sense of belongingness, security, and happiness (Ben-Shahar, 2007; Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008) whereby the consumers seek to continue the mutual relationship for a longer period of time (Aksoy et al., 2015). As a result, brand loyalty serves an indicator of the strength of brand attachment (Liu et al., 2012) whereas brand attachment is regarded as one of the key antecedents of brand loyalty (e.g., Amine, 1998; Park et al., 2010; Algesheimer et al., 2005).

In branding literature, consumer advocacy has been researched as an outcome of brand attachment (Kemp et al., 2012). In particular, a strong tie with the brand drives the consumers to share the experience whereby the brand trust, satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy are interrelated (e.g., Roy, 2013; Chang and Chieng, 2006; Fournier, 1998). In addition, past positive experiences strengthen the consumers' affective commitment toward the luxury brands and the consumers demonstrate willingness to advocate the brand (Shukla et al., 2016). With a different viewpoint, Japutra et al. (2014; 2018a; 2018b) have focused on the negative consequences of brand attachment. The authors have shown that highly attached consumers may get involved in trash-talking, schadenfreude and anti-brand actions depending on their corresponding attachment styles.

#### **2.3.4. Measuring brand attachment**

There are several scales for measuring the consumers' attachment to the brands. One of the initial brand attachment scales was developed by Ball and Takasi (1992). However, the focus of the measurement items was not in the connection between consumer and brand, rather they were aimed at reflecting dual facets (private and public self) of the self in the attachment domain. Developed and validated in French language, Lacoeuilhe's (2000) brand attachment scale has been evident in the literature. The 5-item scale measures brand attachment in terms of loyalty, attraction,

closeness, comfort, and pleasure. Thomson et al.'s (2005) emotional attachments to brands scale is a three dimensional 10-item measure that includes affection (affectionate, loved, peaceful, friendly), Connection (attached, bonded, connected), and passion (passionate, delighted, captivated). Park et al. (2010) generated 10-item scales comprising of brand-self connection and prominence components.

### **2.3.5. Luxury brand attachment defined**

The conceptualization of luxury brand demonstrates that the inherent traits of luxury brands are very unique and the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (e.g., Murray, 2016; Tsai, 2005). Thus, it is very clear that there are significant differences between general brand attachment and luxury brand attachment. Past studies have applied the emotional attachments to brands construct in the luxury product category (e.g., Pourazad and Pare, 2014); however, these studies were limited to consumers' brand attachment levels rather than consumers' luxury brand attachment. Scholars have shown that brand attachment is an emotional connection between the consumers and the brands (Radon, 2012). Past studies show that brand attachment could lead to loyalty, repeat purchase and positive word of mouth (e.g., Assiouras et al., 2015). Further, Park et al. (2010) highlight brand-self connection and brand prominence as the two major drivers of brand attachment. It is predicted in this research that luxury brand attachment could have a similar impact on these behavioural measures.

Consumers seek hedonism, conspicuousness, quality and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). In addition, the luxury brand attachment is expected to result consumer's advocacy for that specific brand. Most of the current studies measure brand attachment with the scales developed by Lacoeuilhe (2000) and Thomson et al. (2005). Both of the scales measure brand attachment from a holistic viewpoint and emphasize more on the consumers' affection, passion and connection to the brand.

The distinctiveness of luxury brands clearly indicate that consumers' emotional connection to luxury brand would be very much different and call for a unique measurement tool. Build on this argument and considering the predominant emotion laden connection between consumers and luxury brands, this study defines luxury brand attachment as **“the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand”**.

### **2.3.6. Luxury brand attachment and other similar constructs**

Luxury brand attachment is different from emotional attachments to brands in several ways. First, the conceptualisation of emotional attachments to brands (Thomson et al., 2005) encompasses three major dimensions of emotions (affection, passion, and connection). Although few of these emotions might be applicable for luxury brand attachment, the 10-item measure for emotional attachments to brands does not consider the key traits of luxury brands (e.g. exclusiveness, exquisiteness, status, achievement) that elicit a particular type of emotion (e.g. joy, devotion, pleasure, infatuation).

Second, the desire for proximity maintenance and feeling of separation distress have been extensively emphasised in the attachment literature (Bowlby, 1979). Unfortunately, the emotional attachments to brands scale does not include these two elements. Thus, it limits the researchers and practitioners' ability to accurately measure luxury brand attachment. It has been evident from the literature that luxury brands provide uniqueness and social status to the consumers and thus they show willingness to prolong the relationship (i.e. proximity maintenance) for a continuous achievement (Hung et al., 2011).

In addition, when a luxury brand becomes unavailable it creates a sense of loss (i.e. separation distress) in the consumers' mind (Rindfleisch et al, 2009). Overall, emotional attachments to brands scale does not reflect the luxury consumers' high involvement, strong emotional connection, and perceived exclusivity. A similar argument is applicable for distinguishing luxury brand attachment from brand attachment (Park et al., 2010). Although brand-self connection and brand prominence

are relevant to luxury brand attachment, the scale developed by Park et al. (2010) does not capture above discussed essence of luxury brands. This research acknowledges that luxury brand attachment is related to but conceptually distinct from general brand attachment and emotional attachments to brands.

Several studies distinguish brand attachment from brand attitude, satisfaction and involvement (e.g., Park et al., 2010, Thomson et al., 2005). The conceptualisation of luxury brand attachment assumes similar distinction between the constructs. First, luxury brand attachment develops over the time which is not a requirement for brand attitude (e.g., Park et al., 2010). Second, luxury brand attachment involves consumers' emotional connection to the brand, whereas brand attitude is rather an overall evaluation of the brand. Third, consumers' self-brand congruence has been identified as the predictor of luxury brand attachment, which is not applicable for brand attitude. Fourth, luxury brand attachment results separation distress for the consumers which brand attitude does not upshot. Finally, the effect of luxury brand attachment is stronger than that of brand attitude. Consumers with high luxury brand attachment are expected to stay loyal, advocate the brand to others, and show willingness to pay premium price for the brand. By contrast, brand attitude does not result in any such behavioural intentions (Park et al., 2010; Brakus et al., 2009).

Luxury brand attachment is different from brand satisfaction in two major ways. First, satisfaction is an evaluative judgement (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995), but luxury brand attachment is the emotional bond between consumer and brand. Second, strong brand satisfaction may result an enduring luxury brand attachment, but attachment is not a prerequisite for satisfaction. Finally, luxury brand attachment is not synonymous to involvement. Involvement refers to the consumer's degree of interest or arousal for a given product (Richins and Bloch, 1986) which is conceptually different from luxury brand attachment. A summary of selected studies on brand attachment is presented in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3: Summary of selected studies on brand attachment**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Assiouras et al. (2014)</b>	Greek brands in food industry	Brand authenticity	Purchase intention Pay more Promote
<b>Bahri-Ammari et al. (2016)</b>	Luxury restaurant	Satisfaction Congruence Nostalgic connection Trust	Intention to continue the relationship Proselytism Resistance upwards of the price
<b>Belaid and Behi (2011)</b>	Car battery	N/A	Brand satisfaction Brand trust Brand commitment Loyalty
<b>Bidmon (2017)</b>	Self-selected brand	Brand attachment predisposition	Brand trust Brand loyalty
<b>Bilotti (2011)</b>	Dove, Nike	Self-congruence	Building brand equity Influencing purchase decision
<b>Cheng et al. (2016)</b>	Coffee chain	Brand-self connection Brand prominence	Recommendation Helping customers Providing feedback
<b>Dennis et al. (2016)</b>	Higher education institution	Brand image Brand meaning Brand identity	Satisfaction Trust Commitment Brand equity
<b>Esch et al. (2006)</b>	Athletic shoe and chocolate	Brand satisfaction Brand trust	Current purchase Future purchase
<b>Fedorikhin et al. (2008)</b>	Sneakers, Sunglasses, Barbecue grills	N/A	Brand extensions Purchase intentions Willingness to pay Word-of-mouth Forgiveness
<b>Gillespiea and Noble (2017)</b>	Sales management	Competence Relatedness Autonomy	Efforts towards focal brands
<b>Huber et al. (2018)</b>	Apple, LV, Nespresso, The Body Shop, Toyota,	Self-congruence: Actual, ideal, and ought	Brand loyalty

	Jack Wolfskin, Siemens, and Danone		
<b>Hung (2014)</b>	Car	Brand self-connection Need fulfilment	Brand community identification Consumer loyalty
<b>Hung and Lu (2018)</b>	Car	Autonomous and controlled motivation	Actual brand repurchase Brand WOM behaviour
<b>Hwang and Kandampully (2012)</b>	Fashion brands (Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel, Gap, Zara, etc.)	Self-concept connection	Brand loyalty
<b>Japutra et al. (2014)</b>	Self-selected brand	Self-congruity Experience Responsiveness Perceived quality Trust	Intention to recommend, purchase and revisit; Resilience to negative information; Act of defending
<b>Japutra et al. (2016)</b>	Several brands from electronics (Apple), fashion retailers (Zara), car manufacturers (BMW), airlines (British Airways), food and beverages (Coca-Cola) and so on.	Ideal self-congruence Sensory experience Brand responsiveness CSR belief	Brand loyalty Resilience to negative information
<b>Japutra et al. (2018a)</b>	Self-selected brand	Ideal self-congruence	Compulsive buying External trash-talking
<b>Kaufmann et al. (2017)</b>	Luxury brands	Actual and ideal self-congruence	Purchase intention
<b>Kim and Joung (2016)</b>	Luxury brands	Brand-self congruity	Investment made toward the brand

<b>Lee and Workman (2015)</b>	Fashion brand	Self-expressive brand	Brand loyalty
<b>Levy and Hino (2016)</b>	Bank	Trust Service quality	Brand satisfaction Brand loyalty
<b>Loureiro et al. (2012)</b>	Car	N/A	Brand love
<b>Park et al. (2010)</b>	Quaker Oats Oatmeal, Apple iPod, University	Brand-self connection Brand prominence	Performing difficult behaviours (e.g., promoting, defending, buying, and recommending the brand)
<b>Pourazad and Pare (2014)</b>	Luxury brands	Symbolic benefits Brand image Brand identification Sense of community	Brand passion Positive WOM Purchase intention Pay premium price Devaluation of alternatives
<b>Sarkar et al. (2016)</b>	Hospital	Brand ethicality Empathetic interaction	Safe heaven Brand trust
<b>Schmalz and Orth (2012)</b>	Unethical firm behaviour	N/A	Ethical judgement Emotional ambivalence
<b>Sen et al. (2015)</b>	Self-selected brand	Impression management Brand history Felt security	Brand loyalty Public endorsement
<b>Sheikh and Lim (2015)</b>	Engineering services firm	N/A	Repurchase Brand loyalty
<b>Sierra et al. (2016)</b>	Online game	N/A	Brand tribalism
<b>So et al. (2013)</b>	Luxury fashion brand	Corporate association Corporate activities Corporate values Corporate personalities Functional benefits Symbolic benefits	Brand loyalty
<b>Zhou et al. (2012)</b>	Car club	Brand community commitment	Brand community

<b>Japutra et al. (2018b)</b>	Self-selected brand	N/A	Brand loyalty Trash-talking Schadenfreude Anti-brand actions
<b>Malär et al. (2011)</b>	Self-selected brand	Actual and ideal self-congruence	Brand loyalty Brand equity
<b>Ilicic et al. (2016)</b>	Video games	Self determination Celebrity attachment	N/A

### 2.3.7. Interim summary of luxury brand attachment literature

The second section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on luxury brand attachment. The following is a summary of the key issues discussed:

- The literature has not yet provided a definition of luxury brand attachment until now. Therefore, this study adapts and adopts conceptualisation of ‘attachment’ from the field of psychology and marketing. This research defines luxury brand attachment as “the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand”.
- The brand attachment literature hinges on four major streams of research: 1) brand possession and sense of self, 2) Connection-Automaticity-Attachment (CAA), 3) Connection-Prominence Attachment Model (CPAM), and 4) emotional attachments to brands.
- Brand self-congruence has been identified as the key antecedent of brand attachment (e.g. Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005).
- Brand attachment motivates the consumers to repurchase the product (e.g. Assiouras et al., 2015; Japutra et al., 2014), revisit the website or the store (e.g. Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold, 2006) and also to promote the brand to others (e.g. Fedorikhin, Park, and Thomson, 2008). In addition, consumer advocacy has been researched as an outcome of brand attachment (Kemp et al., 2012).

- Studies on brand attachment clearly indicate that the consumers' attachment differs between symbolic and functional brands (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005). Therefore, consumers' attachment for luxury brands should not be viewed and treated as same for functional brands.
- Luxury brand attachment is conceptually different from emotional attachments to brands, brand attitude, brand satisfaction and involvement.

## **2.4. CONSUMERS' BRAND SELF-CONGRUENCE**

Consumers' brand self-congruence is the conformity between a consumer's self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982). Self-image (also known as self-concept) is defined as "the totality of individual's thought and feelings having reference to himself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). The idea of including objects and component into one's self is dated back to 1920s in the field of Psychology when James (1920, p.177) notes that "in its widest possible sense ... a man's Me is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account". Early research in this domain identifies two types of self-image; actual self-image refers to how people see themselves and ideal self-image explains how people would like to see themselves (e.g., Wylie, 1979; Belch, 1978; Belch and Landon, 1977). The duality dimension of self-concept has later been advanced by Sirgy (1979) who suggests four components of the construct: actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image. While the social self-image (also known as 'looking-glass self' or 'presenting self') denotes how a person thinks other members of the society perceive him/her (Sirgy, 1982), the ideal social self-concept refers to the way a person desires to be perceived by others (Maheshwari, 1974).

Marketing studies utilise brand self-congruence through the application of self-concept and symbolic consumption (e.g., Belk, 1988; Sirgy and Su, 2000). In addition, consumers often hinge on the symbolic meaning of the brand (Lee and Hyman, 2008; Levy, 1959). Symbolic consumption facilitates the consumers in expressing who they are and who they would like to be (Sirgy, 1982). For example, consumption of luxury brands is associated with social status, prestige, and recognition (e.g., O'Cass and Frost, 2002; Vickers and Renand, 2003).

Past studies have found that the influences of the actual and ideal-self are stronger than that of the social and ideal social selves. Perhaps therefore, majority of the marketing studies consider actual and ideal self as the two primary components of self-concept (e.g., Kim and Hyun, 2013; Hosany and Martin, 2012). In this regard, Hosany and Martin (2012) select 23 studies that examined the consumers' self-concept within various settings and contexts. The meta-analysis of these 23 studies show that only

three studies have incorporated social self and ideal social self into the analysis. Thus, the dominance of actual and ideal self-concept into the analysis of consumer behaviour has been evident in the extant literature.

Numerous studies have examined the role of self-concept on consumers and consumption related behaviour, such as – service evaluation (e.g., Ekinci and Riley, 2003), purchases of houses (Malhotra, 1988), store image (Sirgy and Samli, 1985), satisfaction with holiday destinations (Chon, 1992), emotional brand attachment (Malär et al., 2011), brand preference, brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Graeff, 1996), personal aspiration and brand engagement (Rasmus et al., 2017), career anchorage (Ericksen and Sirgy, 1992) and so on. The self-congruence theory postulates that consumption choices are set by the matching between consumers' self-concept and the value-expressive attributes of a brand (Sirgy et al., 1991). Based on this argument, marketing scholars theorize the self-congruence construct in the study of consumer behaviour with the notion that if the brand image or personality matches with a consumer's personality trait, the consumer will prefer that brand (e.g. Boksberger et al., 2011; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Aaker, 1999).

Self-congruence motivates the consumers to process information (Mangleburg et al., 1998) and the consumers often buy self-expressive brands to validate their own image (Aaker, 1996). Thus, the self-congruence explains and predicts difference aspects of consumer behaviour such as brand attitude, product use and ownership, willingness to buy, retail loyalty and so on (e.g., Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy, 1982). With the theoretical underpinning of need for self-esteem and need for self-consistency, Kressmann et al. (2006) provide empirical supports in understanding the role of the consumers' self-congruence on the brand relationship quality and brand loyalty. From the context of advertising effectiveness, Hong and Zinkhan (2012) find that the target audiences' image-congruent appeals are more effective than incongruent appeal for resulting consumers' behavioural intention such as brand preference and repeat purchase. Experiential marketing connects consumers' perceived selves with the brand, provides memorable brand experience, and thus builds emotional attachments to brands (e.g., Schmitt, 2012; Thomson et al., 2005).

Vigolo and Ugolini (2016) point out two methods of measuring consumers' brand self-congruence. The first method, known as the global measurement, requires the respondents rating the congruence as a holistic, gestalt-like construct. Malär et al. (2011) have used this method with scale items such as "the personality of brand X is a mirror image of me (actual self). The second method, known as absolute score method, calculates the congruence from the absolute arithmetic difference between perceived brand personality and the consumer's personality. The smaller the absolute value, the higher the perceived brand self-congruence (e.g., Hosany and Martin, 2012, Park and Lee, 2005). Research shows the predictive power of the global measurement method is stronger than that of the absolute score method (Sirgy et al., 1997). Besides, the absolute score method has been criticised on the ground that it inflates the reliability score and may not reflect the respondents' actual evaluation (Peter et al., 1993). The global measurement method is also preferred with the notion that there are other constructs that conceptualise and measure the relationship between the self and brands. Few well-known constructs are: self-brand connections (Escalas, 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Ball and Tasaki, 1992), brand attachment (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Lacoeyuilhe, 2000), consumer-brand identification (Lam et al, 2013; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), emotional brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005), and customer brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011).

Existing literature largely supports that consumers buy luxury brand to extend their self-image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer's actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty within luxury branding context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010).

The key characteristics of luxury brands such as social status, conspicuousness, hedonic value, and exclusivity provide the consumers a way of sensory gratification which is not offered by non-luxury brands (Gistri et al., 2009). Consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that helps them to obtain the expected image through purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007;

Malär et al., 2011). Consumers' brand self-congruence can enhance their affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009); therefore, it should be incorporated into the brand attachment construct (e.g., Chaplin and John, 2005).

#### **2.4.1. Actual self-congruence**

Literature on brand attachment has widely established the impact of consumers' perceived actual self-congruence on brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). The major streams of research on brand attachment emphasise on the brand possession and sense of self (e.g., Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992), automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand (Park et al., 2006) and emotional connection to the brand (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005; Malär et al., 2011). Thus, the conceptualisation of brand attachment focuses on the incorporation of the brand into the consumers' own self. The sense of oneness generated between the consumer and the brand develops a cognitive connection and in turn results brand attachment (e.g., Park et al., 2010).

Numerous studies have revealed that consumers buy the products that are consistent with their perceived actual self-image (Belch and Landon, 1977, Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy et al., 1997). Underpinned with self-verification motive, Malär et al. (2011) argue that consumers tend to behave in a consistent way of how they see themselves; and therefore, the consumers buy the brands that match their actual self. Furthermore, Malär and her associates (2011) compare the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment and find that the brands with actual self-congruence create higher level attachment.

Studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Fionda and Moore (2009) consider symbolic value as the most prominent driver behind the purchase intention of luxury brand, because consumers want to attain social status and self-esteem through the consumption of luxury brand. This phenomenon is termed as 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed in the luxury branding literature (e.g. O'cass and Frost, 2002; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau

and Prendergast, 2000). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brand for social status and aspirational values.

Luxury brands are also used as a means to enhance the consumers' physical attractiveness and social acceptance (e.g., Durvasula et al., 2001). Netemeyer et al. (1995) categorize such desire as physical vanity and achievement vanity which are basically excessive concerns for physical appearance and personal achievements respectively. By accentuating the significance of vanity constructs, Wang and Waller (2006) state that many products including luxury items are associated with consumer vanity through marketing images. This notion of visibility as well as the cognitive and affective bond that connect the brand to the consumers has been defined as brand prominence (Park et al., 2010). Existing literature highly supports that consumers buy luxury brands that match their personality and brand image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999).

#### **2.4.2. Ideal self-congruence**

Aron and Aron's (1986, 1996) self-expansion model is considered the theoretical foundation for conceptualizing brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). Hong and Zinkan (1995) argue that consumers attempt to attain the ideal state if there is a gap between the perceived actual self-image and ideal self-image. Thus, the ideal self works as a motivational factor and influences consumer behaviour. Several studies have examined the role of ideal self-image in product evaluation and purchase intention. For instance, Hong and Zinkhan (1995) find that ideal self-image is a stronger indicator than actual self-image for predicting consumers' brand preference for different types of products (e.g. shampoos, car, etc.). In a study on consumers' preferences for houses, Malhotra (1988) also shows that the ideal self-image plays more significant role than the actual self-image does. From the context of celebrity-consumer congruence, Choi and Rifon (2012) find ideal self-image has stronger role than actual self-image on consumers' purchase intention. Within the service evaluation context, ideal self-congruence has been identified as an important indicator customer satisfaction and overall attitude (e.g., Ekinici and Riley, 2003).

Ideal self-concept has also been found more relevant to publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996) and conspicuous products (Munson, 1974). Against the theoretical expectation, consumers' ideal self-congruence has been identified as a stronger predictor than actual self-congruence of repurchase intention for non-luxury intimate apparel (Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016). Thwaites and Ferguson (2012) note that luxury brand consumers seek to display the brand name to other members of the society. Such conspicuous consumption is explained with the need for uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin, 1977) which focuses on the consumers' attempt to differentiate themselves from others through material goods (Knight and Kim, 2007; Tian et al., 2001). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that help them to obtain the expected image through purchase and ownership of that specific brand (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As the ideal self-congruence can enhance consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated in the brand attachment construct (Chaplin and John, 2005). Summary of selected studies on consumer brand self-congruence is presented in the Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4: Summary of selected studies on consumer brand self-congruence**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Self-congruence dimension</b>	<b>Outcome variables</b>
<b>Birdwell (1968)</b>	Automobile	Actual self	Brand ownership
<b>Dolich (1969)</b>	Self-selected product/brand	Actual self Ideal self	Product preference
<b>Landon (1974)</b>	Self-selected product/brand	Actual self Ideal self	Purchase intention
<b>Malhotra (1988)</b>	Housing	Actual self Ideal self Social self	Product preference
<b>Sirgy et al. (1997)</b>	Self-selected product/brand	Actual self	Brand attitude Brand preference Product evaluation Purchase intention
<b>Quester et al. (2000)</b>	Self-selected product/brand	Actual self Ideal self	Product evaluation
<b>Litvin and Goh (2002)</b>	Tourism	Actual self Ideal self	Willingness to visit

<b>Ekinci and Riley (2003)</b>	Hospitality	Actual self Ideal self	Brand attitude Purchase intention Satisfaction
<b>Kressmann et al. (2006)</b>	Automobile	Actual self Ideal self	Brand loyalty
<b>Ibrahim and Najjar (2008)</b>	Retailing	Actual self Ideal self	Attitude
<b>Malär et al. (2011)</b>	Self-selected brand	Actual self Ideal self	Brand loyalty Brand equity
<b>Bilotti (2011)</b>	Fashion brand	Actual self Ideal self	Brand equity Purchase intention
<b>Hosany and Martin (2012)</b>	Cruise ship passenger experiences	Actual self Ideal self	Experience Satisfaction
<b>Huber et al. (2017)</b>	Self-selected product/brand	Actual self Ideal self Ought self	Brand loyalty
<b>Japutra et al. (2014)</b>	Self-selected brand	Actual self Ideal self Social self	Intention to recommend, purchase and revisit; Resilience to negative information; Act of defending
<b>Kim and Joung (2016)</b>	Luxury brands	Actual self	Investment made toward the brand
<b>Bahri-Ammari et al. (2016)</b>	Luxury restaurant	Actual self Ideal self	Intention to continue the relationship Proselytism Resistance upwards of the price
<b>Japutra et al (2016)</b>	Self-selected brand	Ideal self	Brand loyalty Resilience to negative information
<b>Kaufmann et al. (2017)</b>	Counterfeit luxury brands	Actual self Ideal self	Emotional attachments to brands
<b>Kumagai and Nagasawa (2017)</b>	Luxury and non-luxury brands	Actual self Ideal self	Brand attitude
<b>Japutra et al. (2018a)</b>	Self-selected brand	Ideal self	Compulsive buying External trash-talking

### **2.4.3. Interim summary of consumer brand self-congruence literature**

The third section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on consumer brand self-congruence. The following is a summary of the key issues discussed:

- Marketing studies utilise brand self-congruence through the application of self-concept and symbolic consumption (e.g., Belk, 1988; Sirgy and Su, 2000).
- Studies on consumers' brand self-congruence have found that the actual and ideal-self effects are stronger than the social and ideal social self-congruence and perhaps therefore, majority of the marketing studies regards actual and ideal self as the two primary components of self-concept (Kim and Hyun, 2012; Hosany and Martin, 2012).
- Numerous studies have examined the role of self-concept on consumer and their consumption related behaviour (e.g., Ekinci and Riley, 2003; Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy and Samli, 1985; Malär et al., 2011; Razmus et al., 2017).
- Existing literature largely supports that consumers buy luxury brand to extend their self-image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999).
- Consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that help them in obtaining the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011).
- Self-congruence can enhance consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009); so, it should be incorporated in the brand attachment construct (Chaplin and John, 2005).

## **2.5. CONSUMER ADVOCACY**

Attachment literature in the field of Psychology argues that commitment is a major construct for understanding the strength and quality of the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1991). Existing literature identifies several behavioural intentions as the outcomes of the consumers' attachment to brands. The widely accepted argument in this regard is that the emotionally attached consumers become brand loyal which in turn creates positive impact on brand equity (e.g. Hwang and Kandampully, 2012; So et al., 2013; Malär et al., 2011). Furthermore, highly attached consumers have been found to develop strong trust and commitment toward the brand (e.g., Belaid and Behi, 2011). In line with this, Park et al. (2009) have noted that brand commitment and commitment related behaviour are the key outcomes of brand attachment whereby consumers aspire to maintain a long-term relationship with the brand. Later on, Park et al. (2010) have broaden the outcomes as the consumers' 'intention to perform difficult behaviour' such as continuously patronising the brand through repurchase, paying more, promoting the brand, defending the brand and so on.

Numerous marketing studies consider brand attachment a key indicator of the consumer-brand relationship quality (Fournier 1998; Fullerton, 2005). Extant studies have demonstrated that brand attachment motivates the consumers to repurchase the product (e.g. Assiouras et al., 2015; Japutra et al., 2014), revisit the website or the store (e.g. Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold, 2006) and also to promote the brand to others (e.g. Fedorikhin, Park, and Thomson, 2008). Besides, strong brand attachment influences the consumers to ignore the downside of the brand, defend the brand in social networks and thereby prove the sturdy emotional connection to the brand (Japutra et al., 2014). Furthermore, consumers with a higher degrees of brand attachment tend to ignore negative information regarding that specific brand and encourage other people to buy it (Xie and Peng, 2009). Overall, the behavioural intentions like positive word of mouth, promoting the brand, defending the brand, and brand community engagement are considered affective reflection of consumer advocacy (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Wallace et al., 2014).

Consumer advocacy refers to exchanging market information and counselling other consumers so that they have a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). In line with previous research, this research argues that consumer advocacy is

relevant to consumers' altruistic tendency to 'promote positive marketplace experiences' (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). Jayasimha and Billore (2016) conceptually differentiate consumer advocacy from customer advocacy with the notion that customer advocacy is a firm-level construct whereas consumer advocacy is the sharing of market information amongst consumers. Theoretically, consumer advocacy differentiates itself from other similar constructs (e.g., word-of-mouth, brand advocacy) with the notion that it encompasses the consumers' willingness to assist others in having a positive brand experience (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Billore, 2016). To some extent, consumer advocacy is similar to the helping behaviour (market mavenism and altruistic helping behaviour) that benefits others in their purchases and consumption (Price et al., 1995; Feick et al., 1995).

Consumer advocacy is more relevant to luxury brands for several reasons. *First*, luxury consumers seek information about the craftsmanship, artisan, and other consumers' memorable experience while evaluating a luxury brand (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). At this point, consumer advocacy plays an important role in luxury consumers' purchase decision. Second, personal source of information has been considered more reliable than the company generated messages in marketing (e.g., Klein et al., 2016).

*Second*, personal source of information has been considered more reliable than the company generated messages in marketing (e.g., Klein et al., 2016). This conception is expected to be more relevant for luxury consumers. *Third*, the affluent consumers tend to switch the brands frequently and cannot be attracted with typical loyalty card or cashback opportunities (Schneider, 2017). To address this, luxury brands can initiate consumer advocacy to and generate trust and credibility from consumers by providing organic and reliable information about the brand.

The nature of luxury brands and its niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. Marketing scholars and industry experts have noted that luxury brands require strong consumer to consumer engagement to be successful in the increasingly competitive and interconnected market (e.g., Chiou and Droge, 2006; Gomelsky, 2016).

Call for advocacy research has been evident in marketing literature (Fournier et al., 2012), but most of the follow up research in luxury branding has focused on online and offline brand advocacy (e.g., Parrott et al., 2015). The limitation with brand advocacy is that it focuses on proactively recruiting new customers and defending the brand against detractors (Wilder, 2015). Numerous studies have examined the luxury consumer-brand interaction within the context of brand trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty (Shukla et al., 2016; Song et al., 2012). However, the nature of luxury brands as well as the niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, while consumers consider buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands, they rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). Such peer recommendations activate over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005).

Academics and industry experts have noted that luxury brands require strong consumer to consumer engagement to be successful in the increasingly competitive and interconnected market (e.g., Chiou and Droge, 2006; Gomelsky, 2016). An investigation into relevant literature suggests that consumer's emotional bond to the brand is a key pre-requisite for advocacy (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wilder, 2015).

A summary of selected studies on consumer advocacy is presented in the Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5: Summary of selected studies on consumer advocacy**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Fullerton (2005)</b>	Retail	Brand satisfaction; Affective commitment; Continuance commitment	N/A
<b>Chelminski and Coulter (2011)</b>	Service encounter	N/A	Voicing Negative word-of- mouth
<b>Jayasimha and Billore (2016)</b>	Service encounter	Altruism Ego	Negative WOM Third party action Voicing
<b>Jayasima and Srivastaba (2017)</b>	Service encounter	Regret Event based disappointment; Agent based disappointment	N/A
<b>Jayasima et al. (2017)</b>	Service encounter	N/A	Community usefulness Brand avoidance
<b>Stokburger-Sauer and Hoyer (2009)</b>	Wine, cloth, car, camera	Product involvement Need for variety	Satisfaction Loyalty Opinion leadership
<b>Shimul and Phau (2018)</b>	Luxury brand	Brand satisfaction Brand loyalty	N/A

### 2.5.1. Interim summary of consumer advocacy literature

The fourth section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on consumer advocacy. The following is a summary of the key issues discussed:

- Consumer advocacy refers to exchanging market information and counselling other consumers so that they have a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011).
- Consumer advocacy differentiates itself from other similar constructs with the notion that it encompasses the consumers' willingness to assist others in having a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Billore, 2016).

- Jayasimha and Billore (2016) conceptually differentiate consumer advocacy from customer advocacy with the notion that customer advocacy is a firm-level construct whereas consumer advocacy is the sharing of market information amongst consumers.
- The nature of luxury brands and its niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. So, luxury brands require strong consumer to consumer engagement to be successful in the increasingly competitive and interconnected market (e.g., Chiou and Droge, 2006; Gomelsky, 2016).
- When consumers consider buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands, they rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). Consumer's emotional bond to the brand is a key pre-requisite for advocacy (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wilder, 2015).

## **2.6. PUBLIC SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS**

Public self-consciousness is an individual's general awareness about him/herself as a social identity (Fenigstein et al., 1975). People with high public self-consciousness engage in social comparison (e.g., Chae, 2017), conform to the social norms and show high need for affiliation, low self-esteem and low risk taking (Tunnel, 1984). They are also anxious about their social impressions and appearances (Scheier, 1980). Thus, they engage more in strategic self-presentations to achieve social approval and evade disapproval (Doherty and Schlenker, 1991). Chae (2014) finds people with high public self-consciousness tend to have a body dissatisfaction. The aspiration of desirable social representation motivates people to consume the goods and experience the services that would facilitate them in achieving ideal social image (Buss, 1980, Fenigstein, 1979).

Studies have investigated the impact of public self-consciousness on choices for clothing, food, intimate apparel, social network behaviour and so on (e.g., Solomon and Schopler, 1982; Bushman, 1993; Lee et al., 2012; Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016). Public self-consciousness influences the relationship between personality traits and self-presentation behaviours (Shim et al., 2008). For example, within the context of social networking site usage (e.g., Facebook), the negative relationship between self-esteem and number of friends is stronger amongst the people with high public self-consciousness (Lee et al., 2012). Referring to the virtual makeover, Chae (2017, p.66) points out that "those who take more selfies, more frequently use social media, have higher public self-consciousness, and have less satisfaction with facial appearance will engage in social comparison with friends or influencers/celebrities". Studies on Facebook users show that an individual's high public self-consciousness results desire for positive social representation and greater social comparison frequency on Facebook (e.g., Lee, 2014; Lee-Won et al., 2014).

Public self-consciousness also has impact on individual's social media communication phenomenon. For example, Hong et al. (2017) find that people with high public self-consciousness frequently get involved in 'giving likes' to other people's posts. Such behaviour reflects the person's desire for and strategies of achieving social approval from others (e.g., Doherty and Schlenker, 1991; Lee-Won et al., 2014). The notion of

social approval has also been found with a stronger gift giving motive from the people with high public self-consciousness (Segev et al., 2013).

High public self-consciousness also affects an individual's reaction to advertising messages (e.g., Kapoor and Munjal, 2017). For example, Snyder and DeBono (1985) find that high self-monitoring individuals are positively influenced by the advertisements that have attractive images and hedonic appeals. This finding is congruent with the purchase of high-end products by the people with high public self-consciousness (Marquis, 1998). In a similar fashion, tourism research on backpack travellers' perceived public self-consciousness finds a positive influence of the construct on the travellers' personal development across cultures (Chen and Huang, 2017).

Few other studies have found the influence of public self-consciousness on aggression and negative emotion (e.g., Rankin et al., 2004; Kinney et al., 2001). In line with this, Lennon et al. (2017) find consumers (in particular female) with high public self-consciousness tend to display anger and misbehaviour likelihood during Black Friday promotion. Studies have also noted that female consumers hold higher level of public self-consciousness than their male counterparts (e.g., Walsh et al., 2017; Tifferet and Herstein, 2012).

Relevant to the context of this research, past studies show that luxury brand consumption is highly associated with the desire of attaining social status and self-esteem (e.g. O'cass and Frost, 2002; Fionda and Moore, 2009). This phenomenon is termed as 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed in the luxury brand literature (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brands for social status and aspirational values. Thus, luxury brands are used as a means of enhancing the consumers' physical attractiveness and social acceptance (e.g., Durvasula et al., 2001). Recent study by Roux et al. (2017) has found positive relationship between public self-consciousness and the refinement dimension of the luxury value. As luxury brands provide both physical and social vanity (Wang and Waller, 2006), it is predicted that

consumers with high public self-consciousness will tend to build and maintain a strong luxury brand attachment.

Does public self-consciousness influence the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and attachment to the brand? To answer this question, Malär et al. (2011) refer to the consumers' self-expression motive and argue that consumers prefer the self-congruent (both for actual and ideal self) brands with an expectation of making a balance between their inner view and public perception that may lead to a higher level of emotional attachment to the brand. The authors find that high (low) public self-consciousness strengthen the relationship between actual (ideal) self-congruence and emotional attachment to the brand. This finding is counter-intuitive because the theoretical expectations suggest that high public self-consciousness leads to conforming the social norm and thus creating a persistent desire for and psychological proximity toward the ideal self-congruent brand (Tunnel, 1984). The plausible reasoning behind the findings of Malär et al. (2011) perhaps lies within the non-luxury context of the study.

Relevant to the framework of this study, it is expected that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand, would express to others who they would like to be (e.g., Markus and Wurf, 1987). Richins (1994) argues that consumers enhance their private and public image by consuming luxury goods that have high reputation, symbolic meaning and conspicuousness. Millan and Mittal (2017) further elaborate that consumption of luxury branded products increases the consumers' self-confidence, reduces social anxiety, and provides desired ideal self-image. The positive relationship among public self-consciousness, materialism and compulsive buying has been evident in the literature (e.g., Xu, 2008; Wong, 1997).

Studies have called for a personality based comparison while taking the public self-consciousness into account (Chae, 2017). Referring back to personality and individual differences, Green et al. (2017) find that public self-consciousness moderates the individuals' reactions to communicating their own experience with social bias. Thus, it might be intuitively postulated that higher level of public self-consciousness would enhance the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. By contrast, it is theoretically expected that the people who build

attachment with an actual self-congruent luxury brand would care less about what other people are thinking of them. Therefore, they would not care much about showcasing themselves to the public. In line with this, this research argues that the consumers' luxury brand attachment driven by actual self-congruence is more relevant to the consumers' high private self-consciousness than high public self-consciousness. Based on this argument, within the context of this study, it is further anticipated that people with low public self-consciousness will care more about their actual self-image and so will have stronger luxury brand attachment than the people with high public self-consciousness do.

A summary of selected studies on the impact of PSC on consumer behaviour is presented in the Table 2.6.

**Table 2.6: Summary of selected studies on the impact of PSC on consumer behaviour**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Highlight</b>
<b>Chae (2017)</b>	Self-presentation and social comparison on social media	PSC has significant positive impact on comparison with friends, influencers and celebrities.
<b>Chen and Huang (2017)</b>	Cross-cultural study on backpackers' personal development	Western backpackers' personal development is related to self-efficacy.
<b>Green et al. (2017)</b>	Expressive autobiographical writing	PSC enhances the emotional impact of expressive writing about experiences with bias
<b>Hong et al. (2017)</b>	"Liking" behaviour on social media	Frequency of giving (receiving) "likes" is positively (negatively) associated with PSC.
<b>Kapoor and Munjal (2017)</b>	Self-consciousness and emotions driving femvertising	PSC positively influences the consumers' attitude towards femvertising.
<b>Lee et al. (2012)</b>	Social compensatory friending on Facebook	PSC has a positive association with number of Facebook friends.
<b>Lee (2014)</b>	Social comparison on social network	A person's social comparison frequency on Facebook is positively PSC.

<b>Lee-Won et al. (2014)</b>	Self-representation on social media	There is a positive relationship between PSC and self-representation
<b>Lennon et al. (2017)</b>	Black Friday misbehaviour	Women with high PSC get involved in Black Friday misbehaviour.
<b>Millan and Mittal (2017)</b>	Status symbolism	People with high PSC tend to prefer status providing clothes.
<b>Roux et al. (2016)</b>	Perceptions of and motives for luxury brand consumption	PSC has a significant positive influence on refinement in luxury consumption
<b>Shim et al. (2008)</b>	Photograph use on social network sites	PSC is positively associated with the higher frequency of activities on Facebook
<b>Shim et al. (2016)</b>	Effect of PSC on positive self-presentation	The negative relationship between interdependent self-construal and positive self-presentation is stronger among people with low PSC
<b>Walsh et al. (2017)</b>	Customer-based corporate reputation	Female consumers have higher PSC than male counterpart within fashion retailing context
<b>Xu (2008)</b>	Materialism	PSC is strongly related to young consumers' compulsive buying tendency and possession defined success.
<b>Bushman (1993)</b>	Preference for brand label	Consumers with high PSC prefer national level brands to private level brands.
<b>Carver and Scheier (1978)</b>	Self-focusing effect of PSC, mirror presence and audience presence	Consumers with PSC attune their self-monitoring regarding a desirable social representation.
<b>Lau-Gesk and Drolet (2008)</b>	Consumer embarrassment during purchase	People with PSC
<b>Malär et al. (2011)</b>	Impact of self-congruence on emotional attachments to brands	PSC moderates the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and emotional attachments to brands.
<b>Tunnel (1984)</b>	Discrepancy between private and public self-consciousness	High PSC leads to conforming the social norm and thus creating a persistent desire for and psychological proximity toward the ideal self-congruent brand.

### **2.6.1. Interim summary of public self-consciousness literature**

The fifth section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on public self-consciousness. The following is a summary of the key issues discussed:

- People with high public self-consciousness are anxious about their social impressions and appearances (Scheier, 1980). Thus, they engage more in strategic self-presentations to achieve social approval and evade disapproval (Doherty and Schlenker, 1991).
- Public self-consciousness is relevant to luxury brand attachment, because luxury brands are used as a means of enhancing the consumers' physical attractiveness and social acceptance (Durvasula et al., 2001).
- Consumption of luxury branded products increases the consumers' self-confidence, reduces social anxiety, and provides desired ideal self-image (Millan and Mittal, 2017).
- The positive relationship among public self-consciousness, materialism and compulsive buying has been evident in the literature (Xu, 2008; Wong, 1997).
- Studies have called for a personality based comparison while taking the public self-consciousness into account (Chae, 2017).
- This research expects that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand, would express to others who they would like to be (e.g., Markus and Wurf, 1987).

## **2.7. PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY CONSUMED LUXURY BRANDED PRODUCTS**

Extant research explains that while publicly consumed products are those that are seen by others when being used, privately consumed products are utilized away from the gaze of others with the possible exception of the user (Bourne, 1957; Kulviwat et al., 2009). The examples of publicly-consumed products are handbag, luggage, shoe etc. (Park et al., 2008) and the examples of privately-consumed products are underwear, perfume and dental products etc. (e.g., Smith, 2007; Graeff, 1996). However, few studies refer to the context of group consumption and suggest that certain products can be consumed both privately and publicly (Cherchye et al., 2013). For instance, a car can be used within both individualistic and collective consumption context (Browning et al., 2013).

Studies within the innovation and adoption context suggest that social influence has a strong impact on the consumers' adoption intention for publicly consumed products (e.g., Kulviwat et al., 2009). For example, a table lamp used inside the household has a very little chance to be seen by outsider. On the other hand, a wrist watch or hand bag is used in front of public and often visible to others. Therefore, the consumers' purchase decision for wrist watch and hand bag is reasonably influenced by public self-consciousness. In line with this, Graeff (1996) further notes that the social visibility of the consumption enhances the impact of social influence on purchase decision. Relevant to the context of this study, a good number of past studies on privately consumed products utilised intimate apparels as the stimulus of the research (e.g., Richards and Sturman, 1977; Hart and Dewsnap, 2001; Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016). The findings of the studies indicate that the experiential consumption of privately consumed luxury branded products is more related to the consumers' inner self rather than the concern for public display (Miller and Mills, 2012; Hume and Mills, 2013).

Past research has also argued that consumers' decisions on private products are influenced by 'what type of persons they are' (actual self) (Schlenker et al., 1996). Referring to the bandwagon and snob effects, Corneo and Jeanne (1997) add that consumers trade off the more intrinsically useful products with the status seeking products to impress the public. Thus, consumers obtain the expected image by

consuming public products which are evaluated favourably by others (e.g., Ratner and Kahn, 2002). While examining the self-concept congruence and consumption context, Dolich (1969, 81) posits that “self-concept congruence with socially consumed products differs from self-concept congruence with privately consumed products”. In particular, consumers have greater sensitivity to ideal self-congruence than actual self-congruence in social situations for publicly consumed products (e.g., Graeff, 1996). Therefore, the assessments of privately consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer’s actual self-image, whereas the evaluations of publicly consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer’s ideal self-image (Dolich, 1969; Ross, 1971; Aaker, 1999).

There is an increasing consensus that the evaluation and choices for the products often depend on the private versus public context of the consumption (e.g., Cherchye et al., 2013; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998). Studies suggest that consumers are concerned about face saving for publicly consumed products and they tend to be thrifty for privately consumed products (e.g., Lin et al., 2013). Literature refers to the consumers’ perceived self-image, brand self-congruence, and social influences in explaining the variance in the consumer behaviour for privately and publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996; Kulviwat et al, 2009). Theoretically, consumers’ perceived brand self-congruence has been considered a key antecedent of brand attachment in the marketing literature (Malär et al., 2011; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Japutra et al., 2014). In practice, the consumers’ actual and ideal self-concepts have often been utilised in brand positioning and advertising messages. For instance, women’s lingerie brand Victoria’s Secret promotes the consumers’ ideal self in its ‘Angel’ campaign, whereas Lane Bryant’s #ImNoAngel campaign encourages the women to be confident with their actual self and thus challenges the mainstream and idealised beauty standards (e.g., McLain, 2017; Rodulfo, 2017).

Compared to the vast research on publicly consumed luxury branded products, extant literature provides very limited understanding on how emotion may lead to consumers’ attachment with the privately consumed luxury branded products. Few past studies have shed light onto the consumers’ emotional aspects relevant to the undergarments purchase and consumption (e.g., Phau et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013).

The functional and emotional aspects of intimate apparels have been evident in past studies (Koff and Benavage, 1998; Østergaard, 1999). Studies largely suggest that intimate luxury branded apparels are of high involvement purchase and are associated with the consumers' self-image and self-esteem (e.g., Hume and Mills, 2013; Ommen et al., 2010). Moreover, an effective and credible marketing strategy should be consistent with the consumers' perceived self-concept, value and personal style (Hume and Mills, 2013). However, until today there is no study that has examined or compared the role of brand self-congruence on luxury brand attachment within private and public nature of consumption.

Extant literature calls for further research on whether actual or ideal brand self-congruence motivates the purchase and consumption of privately consumed products (e.g., Hart and Dewsnap, 2001). Additional research is required for a better understanding of consumer-brand relationship; as the consumers of undergarments often display variety seeking behaviour, marketers need to know how the brand loyalty and commitment be enhanced (Tsarenko and Lo, 2017).

A summary of selected studies on privately and publicly consumed products is presented in the Table 2.7.

**Table 2.7: Summary of selected studies on privately and publicly consumed products**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Highlight</b>
<b>Kulviwat et al. (2009)</b>	Innovation	Social influence has stronger impact on the consumers' adoption intention for publicly consumed products.
<b>Cherchye et al. (2012)</b>	Group consumption	Preference approach implies different testability conclusions for collective consumption models with alternative assumptions on the (public or private) nature of goods.
<b>Dolich (1969)</b>	Brand self-congruence	Self-concept congruence with socially consumed products differs from self-concept congruence with privately consumed products.

<b>Graeff (1996)</b>	Image congruence effect	Consumers have greater sensitivity to ideal self-congruence than actual self-congruence in social situations for publicly consumed products.
<b>Granot et al. (2010)</b>	Brand-driven retail	Female consumers' intimate apparel purchase decision-making incorporates a complex set of interactive components that are brand-driven and simultaneously affect and are affected by the interaction of in-store shopping and retail setting.
<b>Hume and Mills (2013)</b>	Luxury fashion consumption	Consumption of privately consumed luxury branded products is more related to the consumers' inner self rather than the concern for public display
<b>Schlenker et al. (1996)</b>	Consumption decision	Consumer's decisions on private products are influenced by his/her perceived actual self.
<b>Ratner and Kahn (2002)</b>	Candy consumption	Consumers obtain the expected image by consuming public products which are evaluated favourably by others.
<b>Smith (2007)</b>	Inconspicuous consumption	Human cognition and psychological sense of self are inextricably linked to the handling of material culture for privately consumed products.
<b>Vigolo and Ugolini (2016)</b>	Self-congruence	Female consumers' ideal self-congruence has been identified as a stronger predictor than actual self-congruence of repurchase intention for non-luxury intimate apparel
<b>Tsarenko and Strizhakova (2015)</b>	Consumption decision	Hedonic value is more important than store personnel for young female consumers in intimate apparel purchase.
<b>Phau et al. (2015)</b>	Consumption decision	Emotional value had the strongest and most significant effect on purchase intentions of male underwear.

### **2.7.1. Interim summary of the literature on privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products**

The sixth section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. The following is a summary of the key issues discussed:

- Publicly consumed products are those that are seen by others when being used, privately consumed products are utilized away from the gaze of others with the possible exception of the user (Bourne, 1957; Kulviwat et al., 2009).
- There is an increasing consensus that the evaluation and choices for the products often depend on the private versus public context of the consumption (e.g., Cherchye et al., 2013; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998).
- The experiential consumption of privately consumed luxury branded products is more related to the consumers' inner self rather than the concern for public display (Miller and Mills, 2012; Hume and Mills, 2013).
- The assessments of privately consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer's actual self-image, whereas the evaluations of publicly consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer's ideal self-image (Dolich, 1969; Ross, 1971; Aaker, 1999).
- Literature refers to the consumers' perceived self-image, brand self-congruence, and social influences in explaining the variance in the consumer behaviour for privately and publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996; Kulviwat et al, 2009).
- Compared to the vast research on publicly consumed luxury branded products, extant literature provides very limited understanding on how emotion may lead to consumers' attachment with the privately consumed luxury branded products.

## 2.8. RESEARCH GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

The review of the relevant literature identifies six key research gaps regarding luxury brand attachment. The six gaps are outlined below:

1. First, there is a lack of conceptualisation of the luxury brand attachment (*research gap 1*). Empirical studies on consumers' attachment to luxury brands have not considered conceptualising luxury brand attachment as a unique construct (e.g., Kim and Joung, 2016; Kaufmann et al., 2016).
2. Second, there is a lack of specific measure for luxury brand attachment (*research gap 2*). Extant research on consumers' attachment to luxury brands largely relies on the conceptualisation of generic brand attachment scales (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005) which ignore the key traits of luxury brands that elicit a particular type of emotion (e.g. joy, devotion, pleasure, infatuation, separation distress).
3. Third, there is no empirical study on the predictors of luxury brand attachment (*research gap 3*). Few studies that examine consumers' emotional attachments to luxury brands lack theoretical underpinning and weakly identify symbolic benefits, brand image, brand identification, sense of community, luxury brand-self congruity, decision making as the predictors of the attachment (e.g., Pourazad and Pare, 2014; Kim and Joung, 2016; Godey et al., 2013).
4. Fourth, similar to the research gap 3, there is a lack of empirical research on the outcomes of luxury brand attachment (*research gap 4*). Current studies broadly identify brand loyalty, perceived level of investment, brand passion, positive word-of-mouth, (re)purchase intention, paying a premium price, and devaluation of alternatives as the key consequences of consumers' emotional attachment to luxury brands (e.g., Pourazad and Pare, 2014; Kim and Joung, 2016; Godey et al., 2013). However, very little is known about specific outcome of luxury brand attachment within the niche and affluent consumer segment.

5. Fifth, the role of public self-consciousness has not been investigated within the context of self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. The relevance of public self-consciousness to emotional attachments to brands has been evident in the literature (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2016; Malär et al., 2011). However, there is a lack of empirical study on the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment (*research gap 5*).
  
6. Finally, until today no study has examined the effectiveness of luxury brand attachment across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products (*research gap 6*). The review of the relevant literature indicates that the impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment might be different across the consumption context (private and public) of luxury branded products.

## **2.9. RESEARCH QUESTIONS (RQ)**

This research aims to fulfil the aforementioned research gaps by addressing the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How to measure consumers' luxury brand attachment?

**RQ2:** What are the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment?

**RQ3:** What variables have direct and indirect influence on luxury brand attachment?

## **2.10. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES (RO)**

The aforementioned six research gaps will be fulfilled by achieving the following four research objectives in this research:

**RO1:** To develop and validate a scale to measure luxury brand attachment (Fulfil research gap 1 and 2)

**RO2:** To develop and test a research framework for luxury brand attachment (Fulfil research gap 3 and 4).

**RO3:** To test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment (Fulfil research gap 5).

**RO4:** To test the research model and moderation effect of PSC across privately and publicly consumed products (Fulfil research gap 6).

## **2.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter discusses the relevant literature for conceptualising luxury brand attachment. The conceptual understanding of luxury brands is investigated. Then, with an emphasis on the luxury consumer-brand relationship, brand attachment literature has extensively been examined. The review of the literature reveals the distinct affectionate bond between consumers and luxury brands. In addition to lining out the definition of luxury brand attachment, the difference between luxury brand attachment, emotional attachments to brands, and other similar constructs has been established. The relevance of self-congruence to luxury brand attachment has been explored, whereas consumer advocacy has been identified as a relational outcome of luxury brand attachment. The potential influences of public self-consciousness on brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment is considered as well. Finally, the differences of privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products is discussed within the context of luxury brand attachment. Based on the reviewed literature, a set of research gaps, research questions, and research objectives have been identified at the end.

The next chapter proposes a research model to fulfil the research gaps and achieve the research objectives. A set of hypotheses are proposed to test the relationships among the constructs of the research model. In doing so, relevant theories for underpinning the hypotheses are discussed as well.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature relevant to the scope of this research. The current chapter revisits the research gaps and objectives specified in the previous chapter. Thereafter, a research model is proposed to address the research gaps and achieve the objectives. In doing so, a set of hypotheses has been developed with the relevant theoretical constructs. Simultaneously, relevant theories are discussed to support the postulated expectations from the hypotheses. The central construct of the research model is luxury brand attachment, whereas consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence are identified as the predictors and consumer advocacy as the outcome of luxury brand attachment. In addition, the moderating influence of public self-consciousness in between the relationship of actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment is argued. Finally, an investigation on luxury brand attachment within the context of privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products is proposed.

### **3.2. REVISITING RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives identified in the current study are:

***RO1:** To develop and validate a scale to measure luxury brand attachment (Fulfil's research gap 1 and 2)*

RO1 was identified to address the research gaps that there is a lack of conceptualisation and a specific measure for luxury brand attachment. Therefore, this research aims to conceptualise luxury brand attachment through the development and validation of a psychometric scale. More specifically, this research follows the scale development guideline suggested by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2003).

***RO2:** To develop and test a research framework for luxury brand attachment (Fulfil's research gap 3 and 4)*

RO2 was identified to address the research gaps that very little is known about the drivers and outcomes of luxury brand attachment. In particular, the utilisation of luxury brand attachment scale would provide a better and deeper understanding of the relevant constructs. In this research, consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence are identified as the predictors and consumer advocacy as the outcome of luxury brand attachment. Therefore, H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub> are linked to the RO2.

***RO3:** To test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment (Fulfil's research gap 5)*

RO3 was identified to address the research gap that whether consumers' level of public self-consciousness would influence their perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. Therefore, H<sub>4</sub> is linked to the RO3.

***RO4:** To test the research model and moderation effect of PSC across privately and publicly consumed products (Fulfil's research gap 6)*

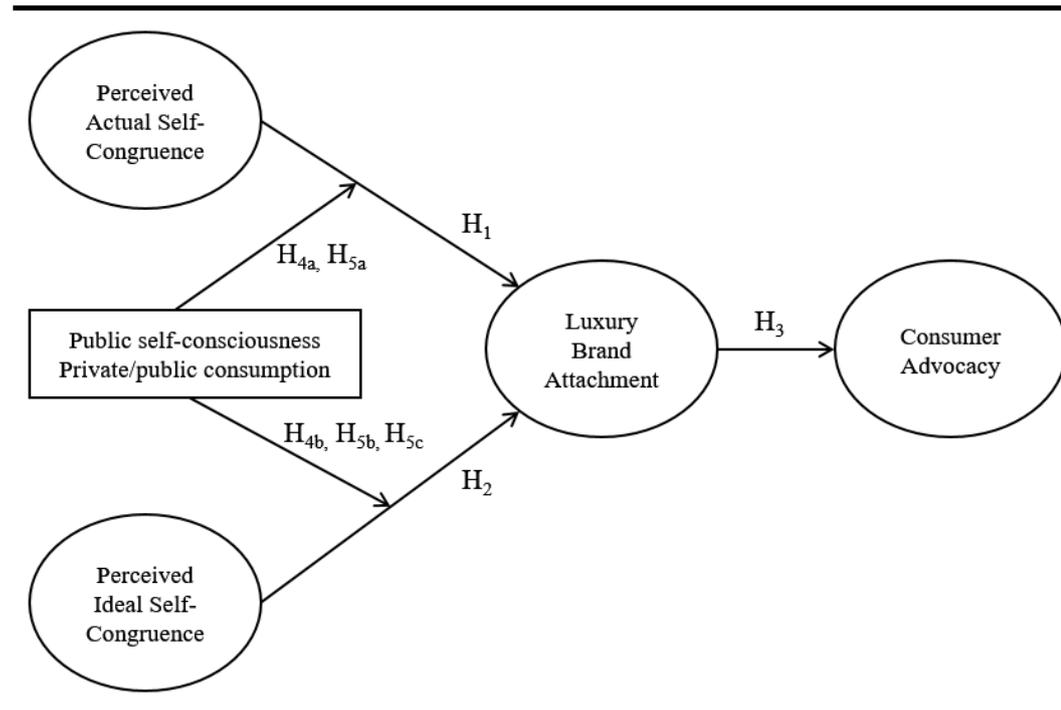
RO4 was identified to address the lack of research on examining the effectiveness of luxury brand attachment across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. Therefore, H<sub>5</sub> is linked to the RO4.

### 3.3. RESEARCH MODEL

The review of the relevant literature in Chapter 2 identifies few key constructs that are pertinent to the understanding of luxury brand attachment. Notable, the impact of perceived brand self-congruence (especially, actual and ideal self-congruence) on luxury brand attachment has been evident. It is also predicted that consumers' luxury brand attachment will lead to consumer advocacy. This research also considers public self-consciousness as a potential moderator in the relationship between consumers' perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. Furthermore, the proposed research model will be tested across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products.

The research model and postulated hypotheses are presented in the Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: Research model (Adapter from Malär et al., 2011)**



The theories that underpin the postulated hypotheses are described in this section. In addition to the fundamental explanation for each theory, the relevance of these theories to the present research has been emphasised in the following sections. A summary of the theories underpinning the hypothesised relationships is presented in the Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Summary of theories underpinning hypothesised relationships**

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Theory</b>
H <sub>1</sub> , H <sub>2</sub>	Attachment theory Self-expansion theory
H <sub>3</sub>	Social identity theory Normative theory of altruism
H <sub>4</sub> , H <sub>5</sub>	Self-consciousness theory

### **3.4. ATTACHMENT THEORY**

Attachment theory has been conceptualised by John Bowlby in the 1950s. Since then it becomes a key paradigm in developmental psychology (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Holmes, 1993). The idea of attachment has also been applied and explained in the areas of social sciences (e.g., Bretherton, 1985; Cassidy and Shaver, 2008). Scholars define attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (Bowlby, 1979). Holmes (1993, p.67) explains the phenomenon of attachment as the state of “when I am close to my loved one I feel good, when I am far away I am anxious, sad or lonely”. The pioneer literature in this area suggests that the primary human attachment relationship is formed between an infant and caregiver in the early stages (i.e. around seven months) of life (Harlow, 1958). The attachment relationship further develops the sense of proximity seeking and separation distress amongst the young children at the later stage of their life (Holmes, 1993).

The primary understanding of attachment theory was largely relevant to biological protection from threats. Bowlby (1973) argues that “attachment relationship has a profound impact on the child's developing personality, and that the nature and quality of this early relationship is largely determined by the caregiver's emotional availability and responsiveness to the child's needs” (Collins and Read, 1990, p.644). Early research on attachment theory builds the notion that human attachment reflects both physical proximity and desired security (e.g., Bischof, 1975; Bretherton, 1985).

Therefore, the role of attachment deemed to be a source of safety and protection which in turn reduces anxiety (Heard and Lake, 1986). An attached relational interaction requires emotional comfort, reliance and ability to deal the negative effect in case of insecure attachments (Holmes, 1993). In line with this, Heard and Lake (1986) further argue that the attachment dynamics do not halt at childhood rather further develop to mature dependence (Fairbairn, 1952) and emotional autonomy (Holmes and Lindley, 1989). Whereas the sense of safety and protection (secure attachment) has been widely acknowledged as the key source of attachment in the early literature, the nature of attachment has been examined through several longitudinal studies (Bowlby, 1969). Ainsworth's (1969) 'strange situation' test added three types of insecure attachments into the domain: insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, and insecure-disorganised (See Ainsworth et al. (1978) for a review).

Research on the style of attachment is rooted in the early work of Ainsworth et al. (1978) on an infant's attachment to his/her mother or any other primary care giver. Ainsworth (2006) notes that an affectionate bond may be developed between any two individuals and the tie may vary depending on the role played by the attachment system and its interaction with other basic behavioural systems. The aspect of different attachment styles has further been examined by Hazan and Shaver (1987) who suggest that the style (e.g., secure or insecure) remains consistent between an individual's infancy and adulthood. The authors also find that human attachment styles are relevant to their working style and interpersonal relationship. Another stream of research has later argued and provided empirical evidence that attachment style can be measured with two key dimensions namely anxiety and avoidance (Collins and Read, 1990; Simpson, 1990; Brennan et al., 1998). The anxiety dimension is relevant to an individual's fear of rejection and abandonment, whereas the avoidance dimension is related to an individual's discomfort with closeness and interdependence (e.g., Brassard et al., 2007; Brennan et al., 1998).

Weiss (1982) highlights three particular patterns and behavioural notions when a person is attached to and interacts with his/her significant others. The first pattern iterates Bowlby's (1979) idea of 'proximity seeking' to a preferred figure. The second pattern is relevant to the conceptualisation of 'secure base' (Ainsworth, 1982) that focuses on the ambience provided by the attachment figure to the attached person. The

final notion known as ‘separation protest’ refers to the enduring nature of the attachment whereby the people react to the loss of or distance from the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1979). The separation protest is an integral part of affectional bond in which the attachment figure is neither replaceable nor interchangeable with others (Ainsworth, 2006). The loss of an attachment figure produces grief, frantic search, consistent recalling of the lost figure, restlessness and despair (e.g., Weiss, 2006).

Attachment has an impact on an individual’s development of self-concept and social perspective (Collins and Read, 1990). In line with this, Wallin (2007, p.61) suggests that “the impact of attachment relationships registers in the interrelated, indeed overlapping domains of the body, the emotions, and the representational world, shaping the stance of the self toward experience in each”. The author further demonstrates that the nature of attachment has impact on the development of various aspect of human self-concepts: the somatic self, emotional self, representational self, reflective self, and mindful self. The particular aspect of selves results as an outcome of the adaptive strategies, relevant thought and feelings, as well as the actions to which the individual’s attachment figure can be attuned and integrated (e.g., Wallin, 2007).

### **3.5. SELF-EXPANSION THEORY**

The process of self-expansion occurs in the intimate relationships in which one person includes another into his/her concept of the self (Aron and Aron, 1986). The origin of self-expansion theory is rooted in the research on human intimacy that received vast attention in the 1980s (e.g., Duck, 1988; Clark and Reis, 1988; Aron and Aron, 1986). Kelley et al. (1983) provide the basis of self-expansion with the notion of mutual dependence, interconnection and reciprocal behaviour reflecting interpersonal intimacy. Later on, Maxwell (1985) provides a measure for closeness of relationship that focuses on mutual intimacy, separation distress, congruence, communication and commitment. To put self-expansion into the context, Aron et al. (1991) refer to Greenwald and Pratkanis’s (1984) collective aspect of self and argue that the sense of self is overlapped in close relationship, whereby the overlapping nature is recognised though the cognitive tendency of including into one’s own self.

People self-expand with a motivation to get resources that would help in achieving some particular goals and provide higher level of efficacy (Aron et al., 2001). When people continue a friendship for a long time, they ignore the downside of the friend (Aron and Fraley, 1999). Tesser et al. (1988) argue that people feel relationship partners' success as their own achievement and take ownership of the accomplishment. Similarly, Gardner et al. (2002, p.240) propose that "if the relationship or group membership is part of an expanded and interdependent self-construal, then the successes of these others, even in self-relevant domains, become less threatening". Self-expansion also reflects the mutual trust and confidence between the partners and strengthens the sense of relational proximity (Aron et al., 2001).

Marketing studies often argue that consumers' self-expansion to the brands is represented through the matching between the consumer and brand image (e.g., Hong and Zinkhan, 2006; Sirgy, 1982). The more congruence are felt, the stronger relationship is built between the consumer and brand (Reimann and Aron, 2009; Trump and Brucks, 2012). However, strong personification of the brand is important to utilise the explanatory power of self-expansion theory in consumer-brand relationship (e.g., Huang and Mitchell, 2014).

The process of self-expansion starts with a comparison of a person's current state (actual self) and desired state (ideal self), and if the person feels that the desired state will improve the person's actual self, he/she will be motivated to self-expand for including others into the current self (Aron and Aron, 1986). Social psychologists propose a self-related motive called 'self-improvement' which is relevant to person's desire for 'self-expansion' and 'self-verification' (Taylor et al., 1995). Few marketing studies on consumer brand attachment (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) utilise these two theories as the motivation behind emotional connection to the brand. However, the major line of work on human attachment argue that the sense safety is the core of attachment and therefore self-expansion motivation is strongly linked with attachment model (e.g. Bowlby, 1969; Shaver and Hazan, 1993). Thus, self-expansion generates intimacy and creates the feeling of understanding, care and the inner-most self-validation for the partners in relationship (Reis and Shaver, 1988).

Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006) argue that self-expansion results an enhanced sense of the self and greater self-efficacy as the expansion helps the person to achieve new skill, knowledge and resources. If the persons expand themselves to others and feel an improved sense of self, they want to prolong the relationship. Such expansion requires investment/allocation of perspectives, resources and characteristics (Aron and Aron, 1986).

Four areas of interest have been identified as the motivational source of self-expansion: physical and social influence, cognitive complexity, social and bodily identity, and an awareness of human's position in the universe (Aron and Aron, 1986). Self-expansion should reward the partner who in turn would be willing to maintain the satisfying and useful relationship for a longer time (Aron et al., 2001). It has been well explained in the past studies that human intimate relationships (e.g., love, affection) are driven by the innate motivation of self-expansion. Based on the aforementioned theoretical underpinning, marketing studies have argued that self-expansion is a key instrument of understanding the consumers' attachment to brands as it reflects the social and psychological nature of the consumers (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2016). Self-expansion might also be considered the underlying human process through which consumers connect themselves to a particular brand (Malär et al., 2011; Kaufmann et al., 2016).

Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer's actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty in luxury brand context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Existing literature supports that consumers buy the luxury brands that match their personality and brand image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Based on these empirical findings and referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** The higher the actual self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

Several studies have examined the role of ideal self-image in product evaluation and purchase intention. For instance, Hong and Zinkhan (1995) find that ideal self-image is a stronger indicator than actual self-image for predicting consumers' brand preference for different types of products (e.g. shampoos, car, etc.). In a study on consumers' preferences for houses, Malhotra (1988) finds that the ideal self-image plays more significant role than the actual self-image does. The key characteristics of luxury brands such as social status, conspicuousness, hedonic value, and exclusivity provide the consumers a way of sensory gratification which is not offered by non-luxury brands (Gistri et al., 2009). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brand that helps them to obtain the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As the ideal self-congruence can enhance the consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated into the analysis of the luxury consumer-brand relationship (Chaplin and John, 2005). Based on these empirical findings and referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** The higher the ideal self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

### **3.6. SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY**

Social identity is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). Since its inception in the 1970s, this is considered a grand theory that explains how people behave as group members in different social situations (e.g., Ellemers and Haslam, 2011). In particular, the differences in feelings, thoughts, and behaviours within the context of 'I vs we' have been examined focusing on impacts on social relations between individuals and groups (Hornsey, 2008).

The basic principles of the social identity theory (SIT) focuses on three key issues: 1) the psychological process behind the differentiation between a person's social identity

and personal identity, 2) the strategies that a person may consider for achieving a positive social identity, and 3) the application of strategies based on the key characteristics of the social structure (e.g., Ellemers and Haslam, 2011). *First*, the psychological process involves social categorisation, social comparison and social identification (Hornsey, 2008). People cluster themselves into groups through social categorisation; the characteristics of the groups are valued and interpreted through social comparison; and, the identities of the groups are perceived and adopted through the social identification process (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Wilkes, 1963; Tajfel, 1974). *Second*, people may gain the positive social identity through three different strategies: individual mobility, social creativity, and social comparison. Individual mobility is an individual level strategy in which people avoid a devalued group and accept a high standard group (Tajfel, 1975). Social creativity refers to the activities through which people emphasise more on the positive (than negative) sides of their social group (e.g., Jackson et al., 1996; Brown, 2000). Social competition is a strategy that group members take to improve the current status of their group (Sherif, 1966). *Finally*, the social identity theory suggests that the perceived characteristics of the prevailing social structure has a strong impact on the aforementioned strategy which may include: permeability, stability, and legitimacy. Ellemers and Haslam (2011) interpret the three strategies as follows: permeability refers to the possibility of a person to work independently in a social system; stability explains the long lasting and stable nature of the group differences; and, legitimacy refers to the moral convictions that regulate people's drive for changes within a group structure.

Social identity theory postulates that people think themselves as a member of a social group and this notion of belongingness influences the individual's intergroup and social behaviour (For a review, see – Hornsey, 2008). The theory also suggests that people in a particular group interact with other members on the basis of their subjective beliefs about the relation rather than the materialistic reliance or benefits (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997). The theory further explores the motivation behind belonging to a group and interacting within the group (Abraham and Hogg, 2004). In particular, cognitive awareness and emotional significance have been emphasized in understanding the people's intention to choose a group membership (Tajfel, 1974). Moreover, the members tend to be concerned about protecting and maintain the image and identity of the group (e.g., Turner and Brown, 1978).

Social psychological theories argue that the social context is important in analyzing the application of social identity theory (Ellemers and Haslam, 2011). The social identification aspect of the SIT has received vast attention in marketing research for investigating consumer behaviour and consumer-brand relationship (e.g., Kleine et al., 1993; Reed 2002). As noted by Lam et al. (2010, p. 130), studies underpinned with the social identity theory show that “members of brand communities engage in collective behaviour, such as rituals, to extol the virtues of their beloved brands and to help other brand identifiers”. Other marketing studies have incorporated the SIT with the idea that social categorization and self-enhancement are the two socio-cognitive processes through which group members assist each other (e.g., Hogg et al., 1995).

The self-enhancement aspect of the social identity theory is pertinent to the scope of this research in investigating the relationship amongst consumers’ perceived self-congruence, luxury brand attachment, and consumer advocacy. Therefore, it is expected that the social identity theory will explain luxury consumers’ attitude and behaviour as well as inter-group communications relevant to the consumer advocacy construct.

### **3.7. NORMATIVE THEORY OF ALTRUISM**

Human altruism is a purposeful and deliberate action performed toward increasing the welfare of other people (Batson, 1991). In doing so, the actor may have conscious or unconscious expectation of reward. Rushton and Sorrentino (1981) categorise the notion of conscious expectation of reward as the altruistic approach and the unconscious expectation of reward as the pseudo-altruistic approach (For a review, see – Feigin et al., 2014). Extant literature suggests that the pseudo-altruistic approach is relevant to the people’s egoistic motivation whereas the altruistic approach is motivated toward self-reward or relief of personal distress (e.g., Baston, 1987; Schwartz, 1993).

Relevant to the scope of this research, the normative theory of altruism states that people consider themselves as a part of the society and therefore they regard the

helping behaviour as a social responsibility based on their past experience or present expectations (Berkowitz and Daniels, 1963). Piliavin et al. (1981) further emphasise that people are willing to help others whom they are dependent on. Such cognitive component of interpersonal relation often aligns with the personal standard of being benevolent to others (Schwartz and Howard, 1982). Graziano and Eisenberg (1997) point out that the individual's perceived self-efficacy and confidence are relevant to the subjective assessment of the altruistic actions. Few studies show that people with high self-esteem, internal locus of control, and self-competence tend to get involved in altruistic behaviour. Besides the social and personal standard, peoples' learning as well as arousal and affect work as the mechanism behind helping behaviour (e.g., Dovidio and Penner, 2001). Arousal and affect have further been identified as the key motivational factors behind altruism and helping behaviour (Dovidio, 1984). In particular, people with positive mood and cognition consider the prospective altruistic behaviour favourably and step out with the action thereby (Clark and Isen, 1982).

Numerous studies have shed light onto the arguments on whether altruistic behaviours involve reciprocity (For a review, see – Gintis et al., 2003). One stream of research argues that people only help those who helped them (Gouldner, 1960). However, this argument is only applicable in case people have the chance of meeting the helper again (Carnevale et al., 1982). Because, in many cases, the 'genuine' altruism delivered to unfamiliar persons does not involve any direct reciprocity (Bykov, 2017). The altruistic concerns for helping other people is often led by the empathetic feelings for other people as well (e.g., Einolf, 2008). Studies widely hold the view that even if the expected reward is not materialistic, people feel a sense of enjoyment through their altruistic activities (e.g., Maslow, 1970).

Relevant to the context of the luxury brand attachment, past studies have examined the luxury consumer-brand interaction within the context of brand trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Shukla et al., 2016; Song et al., 2012). However, as noted in the literature review section earlier, the nature of luxury brands as well as the niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, luxury consumers rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations while buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016).

The activities related to peer recommendations are operationalised through over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). An investigation into relevant literature suggests that consumer's emotional bond to the brand is a key pre-requisite for advocacy (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wilder, 2015). Therefore, based on the aforementioned empirical findings and referring back to the social identity theory and normative theory of altruism, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** The higher the luxury brand attachment, the higher the consumer advocacy.

### **3.8. SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND ASPECTS OF IDENTITY**

Self-consciousness is defined as the human tendency of directing attention to self-related aspects either inward or outward (Doherty and Schlenker, 1991). Based on Duval and Wicklund's (1972) theory of objective self-awareness, Fenigstein et al. (1975) have developed self-consciousness scale and suggested three aspects of the construct: private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness, and social anxiety. The private self-consciousness refers to the individual's inner self and feelings, whereas the public self-consciousness is relevant to the person's awareness of being viewed by others, and the social anxiety is related to the individual's discomfort in front of others (Carver and Glass, 1976). In spite of initial controversy over the three components of self-consciousness (For a review, see – Fenigstein, 1987; Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1987), numerous research provides evidence on the reliability and validity of these sub-factors (e.g., Hope and Heimberg, 1988; Heinemann, 1979; Shepperd and Arkin, 1989).

A number of follow-up studies on Fenigstein et al's (1975) conceptualization of self-consciousness have examined the impact of private and public self-consciousness on people's compliance behavior (e.g., Froming and Carver, 1981; Cheek and Briggs, 1982). Froming and Carver (1981) interpret these two components as the covert aspect of the self (i.e., private self-consciousness) and overt aspect of the self (i.e., public self-consciousness). They further argue that people with high private self-

consciousness depend on their own perceptual experiences than on the external influences (Froming and Carver, 1981).

Literature also suggests that the private (public) self involves the individual's personal (social) identity; and the dominance of the particular identity varies across people often with an attempt of making a balance in between their privately held belief and public expression (e.g., Cheek and Briggs, 1982). In line with this, Darvill et al. (1992) point out that private self-consciousness occasionally induces guilt proneness whereas public self-consciousness results the feeling of shame and embarrassment. In some cases, a person's self-consciousness may generate pressure for an outstanding performance which often reduces the quality of the output (Baumeister, 1984). The phenomenon of impaired cognitive performance resulted by self-consciousness has also been evident in other aspects of life – for example, a high level of self-preoccupation with test anxiety often results higher level of expectation and poor performance (e.g., Winer, 1971; Sarason, 1981). Roybiskie (2001) notes that public self-consciousness is an integral part of a person that is being either appreciated or criticised by others and so the person becomes overly self-conscious with his/her self-presentation to others.

Studies have also examined the role of self-consciousness in various contexts and identified the construct as an important predictor of human behavior (e.g., Scheier, 1975; Fenigstein et al., 1974). Public self-consciousness has been considered a segmentation variable for the products that are consumed in presence of others (e.g., Burnkrant and Page, 1982; Gould and Barak, 1988). In another study, Carver and Scheier (1981) find that people with high public self-consciousness show expression of reactance to a self-imposed threat to their freedom of choice. Thus, the people with high public self-consciousness are more sensitive, than their counterparts, to their desired public image and interpersonal rejection (e.g., Scheier, 1980; Fenigstein, 1979). For instance, people in high public self-consciousness tend to take responsibility of the failure resulted by a group performance (Bennett and Buchanan-Barrow, 1993). Recent studies have examined the role of public self-consciousness on the people's behaviour over social networking sites and have found the construct as a strong indicator of self-presentation behaviour (e.g., Shim et al, 2008; 2016). On the other hand, people with high private self-consciousness are more aware of their inner

aspects of the self which in turn influences their overall perception, attitude, and brand choices (Warrington and Shim, 2000; Beaudoin and Lachance, 2006; Workman and Lee, 2013).

Relevant to the framework of this study, it is expected that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand, would express to others who they would like to be (e.g., Markus and Wurf, 1987). Thus, it is intuitively postulated that higher level of public self-consciousness would enhance the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. By contrast, it is theoretically expected that the people who build attachment with an actual self-congruent luxury brand would care less about what other people are thinking of them. Therefore, they would not care much about showcasing themselves to the public. In line with this, this research argues that the consumers' luxury brand attachment driven by actual self-congruence is more relevant to the consumers' high private self-consciousness than high public self-consciousness. Based on this argument, within the context of this study, it is further anticipated that people with low public self-consciousness will care more about their actual self-image and so will have stronger luxury brand attachment than the people with high public self-consciousness do. Therefore, based on the aforementioned empirical arguments and referring back to the self-consciousness theory, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>4a</sub>:** High (low) public self-consciousness will dilute (enhance) the positive relationship between actual self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.

**H<sub>4b</sub>:** High (low) public self-consciousness will enhance (dilute) the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.

Research has also argued that consumers' decisions on private products are influenced by 'what type of persons they are' (actual self) (Schlenker et al., 1996). Referring to the bandwagon and snob effects, Corneo and Jeanne (1997) conclude that consumers trade off the more intrinsically useful products with the status seeking products to impress the public. Thus, consumers obtain the expected image by consuming public products which are evaluated favourably by others (e.g., Ratner and Kahn, 2002). While examining the self-concept congruence and consumption context, Dolich (1969, 81) notes that "self-concept congruence with socially consumed products

differs from self-concept congruence with privately consumed products”. In particular, consumers have greater sensitivity to ideal self-congruence than actual self-congruence in social situations for publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996). Therefore, the assessments of privately consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer’s actual self-image, whereas the evaluations of publicly consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer’s ideal self-image (e.g., Dolich, 1969; Ross, 1971; Aaker, 1999). Based on the aforementioned arguments, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>5a</sub>:** Actual self-congruence has a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for privately consumed luxury branded products.

**H<sub>5b</sub>:** Ideal self-congruence has a stronger (than actual self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for publicly consumed luxury branded products.

**H<sub>5c</sub>:** Actual self-congruence has a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for privately consumed luxury branded products among the consumers with low public self-consciousness.

A summary of the postulated hypotheses is presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Summary of hypotheses in the research model**

<b>Hypotheses</b>
H <sub>1</sub> : The higher the actual self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.
H <sub>2</sub> : The higher the ideal self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.
H <sub>3</sub> : The higher the luxury brand attachment, the higher the consumer advocacy.
H <sub>4a</sub> : High (low) public self-consciousness will dilute (enhance) the positive relationship between actual self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.
H <sub>4b</sub> : High (low) public self-consciousness will enhance (dilute) the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.
H <sub>5a</sub> : Actual self-congruence has a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for privately consumed luxury branded products.
H <sub>5b</sub> : Ideal self-congruence has a stronger (than actual self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for publicly consumed luxury branded products.
H <sub>5c</sub> : Actual self-congruence has a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for privately consumed luxury branded products among the consumers with low public self-consciousness.

### **3.9. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has revisited the research gaps and objectives specified in the Chapter 2. To fulfil the research gap and achieve the research objective a research model has been proposed with a set of hypotheses. Then relevant theories have been explained to justify the hypothesised relationships. In particular, the relationships among actual/ideal self-congruence, luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy have been postulated. The potential impact of public self-consciousness has been considered as well. Moreover, the context of privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products has been incorporated in the hypotheses. The next chapter discusses the research methodology undertaken to develop the scale and validate the research model for luxury brand attachment.

## CHAPTER 4

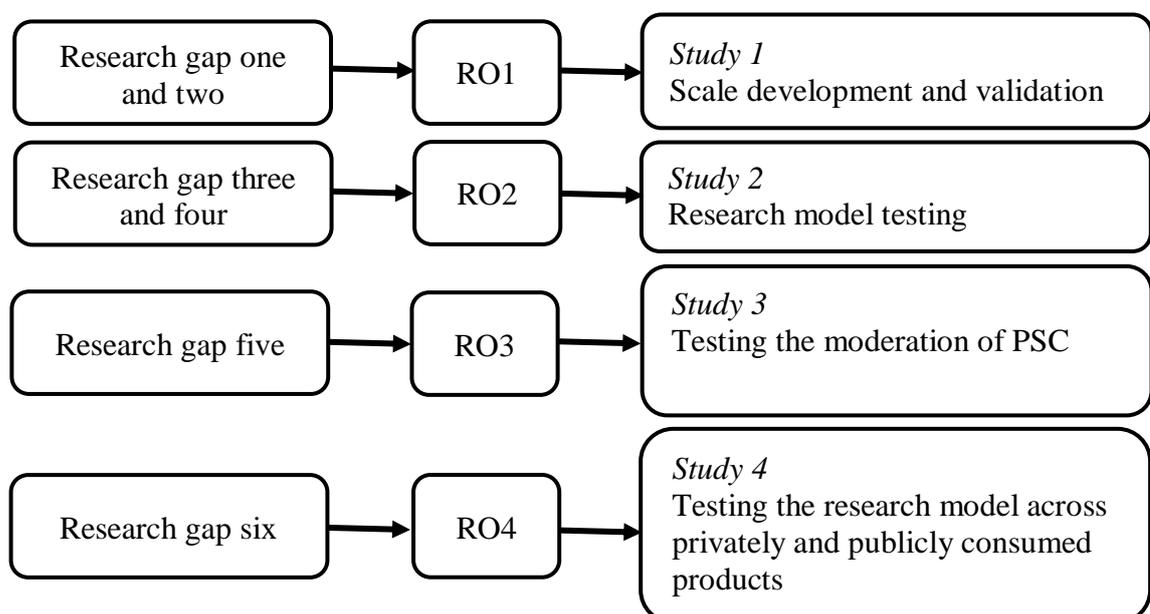
### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 proposed a research model with a set of hypotheses and underpinning theories. This chapter outlines the research methods undertaken in the four studies which are conducted in this research to achieve the research objectives specified in the previous chapters. RO1 is achieved through the study 1 that develops and validates the luxury brand attachment scale. RO2 is achieved through the study 2 that tests the research model and hypothesised relationships. RO3 refers to the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment, which is tested in the study 3. Finally, the RO4 is achieved in the study 4 that tests the luxury brand attachment model across privately and publicly consumed products.

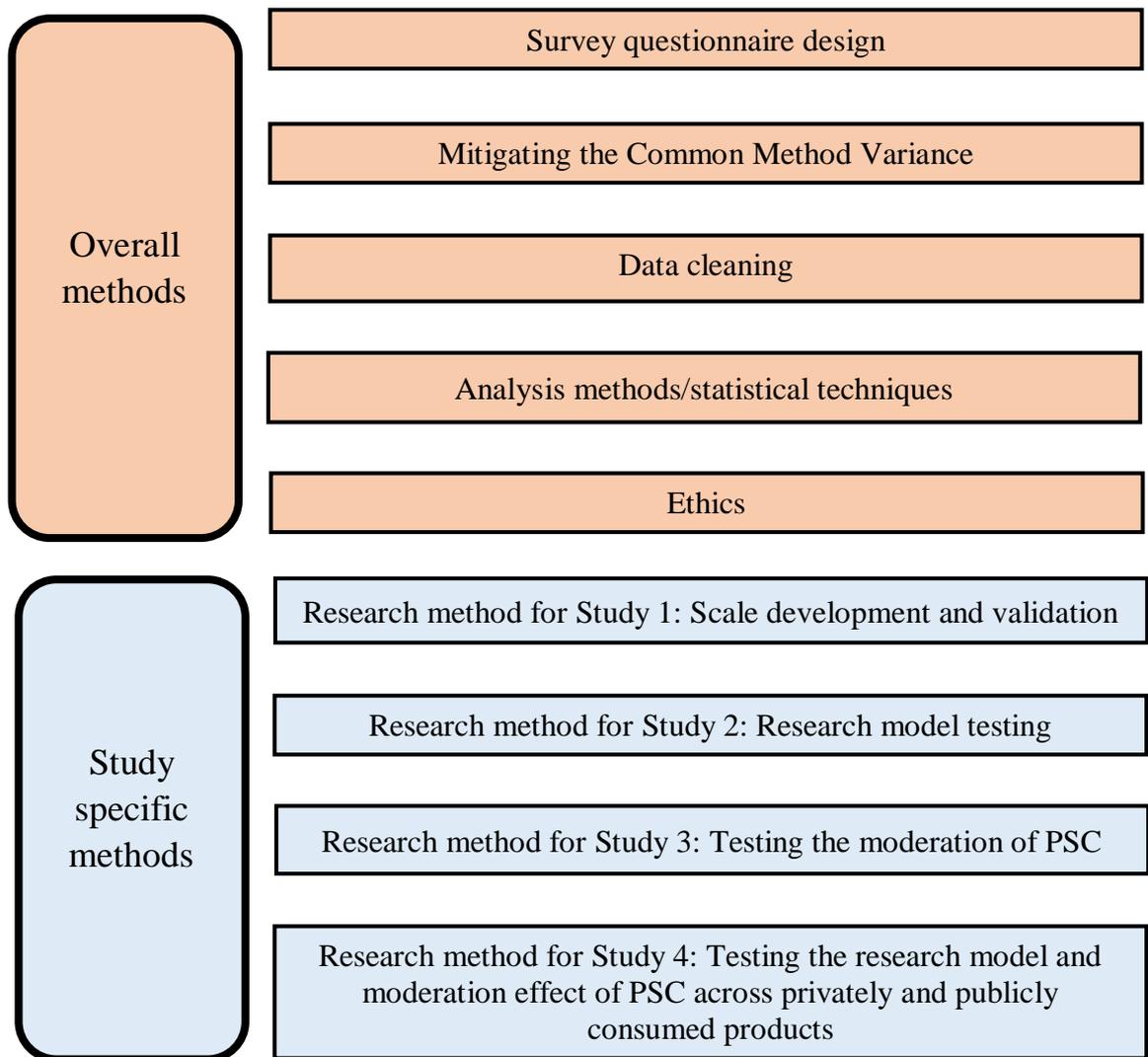
This chapter is structured in the following sections: first, the overall methods for data cleaning, mitigating the common method variance, data analysis techniques and ethics approval procedures are provided. Next, the outlines of the specific methodologies undertaken in each study are described. An overview of the research gaps, objectives and relevant studies is presented in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1: Overview of the research gaps, objectives and relevant studies**



The overall and study specific methodologies undertaken in this research are outlined in the Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.2: An overview of Chapter four**



## **4.2. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

The products and brands to be used in the survey questionnaires were selected through the consultation with luxury branding literature, academics and consumers. A set of real life printed advertisements were prepared within the context of the research questions to test the hypotheses postulated in the studies. Resources were utilised from sources available in the public domain over the Internet. The texts within the images were manipulated in some cases if required. For example, the elements of the Dolce&Gabbana sunglasses advertisement were adapted for the advertisement for Giorgio Armani sunglasses in the study 2. The Giorgio Armani brand logo was slightly enlarged for jeans and undergarments as well.

In addition, gender neutrality was ensured in the advertisements. In doing so, the presence of both male and female were depicted in the advertisements across four studies. Images of these advertisements are presented in the Appendix D, E and F. Attempts have also been made to ensure that the selected advertisements represent the consumers' emotion toward the luxury brands.

A pre-test of each advertisement with relevant scale items was conducted with a group of undergraduate brand management students ( $n = 21$ ) to ensure the appropriateness of the stimulus. This pre-test also examined the grammatical problems, ambiguity with wordings, leading/loaded questions and such other issues relevant to the questionnaire design (Benkler, 2004).

The cover page of the online survey questionnaire provided the aims, scopes and objectives of the research. The participants were assured that the information and responses from the survey would be aggregated and treated with the strictest confidentiality. In addition, the participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and the participants could choose to end their participation at any point without prejudice. The participants were also informed about the ethics approval by the Curtin University's Human Research Ethics. This ensured the ethical standards and minimal risk involved in the research.

There were six to seven sections in the survey instruments. In the section A, the filtering question screened out the respondents who never used the particular luxury branded product. Next, respondents were exposed to a stimulus (advertisement from the particular luxury branded product) in the section B and were asked to report their

brand likability. This was done to identify the respondents who have higher level of brand likability. Then, the respondents' perceived actual brand self-congruence and ideal brand self-congruence were recorded in the section C. Next, the respondents were asked to complete section D that included the scale items for the luxury brand attachment. Following this, the respondents completed section E which consists of the scale items for consumer advocacy. The respondents' public self-consciousness were measured in the section F (only for the study 3 and 4). Finally, the respondents were asked to fill out the demographic information in the section G.

A summary of the survey instrument design is presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Survey instrument design**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Measurement item</b>
<b>Section A</b>	Past usage of the brand/product
<b>Section B</b>	Brand likability
<b>Section C</b>	Actual self-congruence and Ideal self-congruence
<b>Section D</b>	Luxury brand attachment
<b>Section E</b>	Consumer advocacy
<b>Section F</b>	Public self-consciousness
<b>Section G</b>	Demographics

As mentioned earlier, all items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree". A summary of the scale items and reliabilities are presented in the Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Summary of the scale items and reliabilities**

Scales	Composite Reliability ( $\alpha$ )	Source
<p><b>Brand likeability</b>            How favourable is this brand to you?            How likeable is the brand to you?            How pleasing is the brand to you?</p>	0.83	Martin and Stewart (2001)
<p><b>Actual self-congruence</b>            This brand is consistent with how I see myself.            This brand reflects who I am.            People similar to me use this brand.            The kind of person who typically uses this brand is very much like me.            This brand is a mirror image of me.</p>	0.83	Sirgy et al. (1997)
<p><b>Ideal self-congruence</b>            This brand is consistent with how I would like to see myself.            This brand reflects who I would like to be.            People that I would like to be use this brand.            The kind of person whom I would like to be typically uses this brand.            This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.</p>	0.93	Sirgy et al. (1997)
<p><b>Public Self-consciousness</b>            I am concerned about my style of doing things.            I am concerned about the way I present myself.            I am self-conscious about the way I look.            I usually worry about making a good impression.            One of the last things I do before I leave my house is look in the mirror.</p>	0.84	Fenigstein et al. (1975)
<p><b>Consumer advocacy</b>            By sharing my experience with this luxury brand, I assist other people towards a similar experience.            It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury brand.            I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brand.            I suggest others about this luxury brand.            I give suggestions to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience.</p>	0.85	Chelminski and Coulter (2011)
<p><b>Luxury brand attachment</b></p>	To be developed in the study 1 of this research	

### **4.3. MITIGATING COMMON METHOD VARIANCE**

Common Method Variance (CMV) can inflate or deflate the strength of the relationship between two constructs and so can mislead the amount of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, CMV may also enhance or dilute the nomological and discriminant validities of a measurement scale (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Therefore, the potential impacts of CMV were considered in this research. In doing so, both procedural and statistical remedies were undertaken to reduce the CMV. As a procedural remedy, the respondents were provided autonomy in the cover page of the online survey questionnaire with the notion that there was no right or wrong answer, the responses would be anonymous and treated with confidentiality, and their participation was entirely voluntary. This autonomy is expected to reduce the social desirability bias.

Moreover, few scale items were reversed coded to identify and control for the acquiescence biases (Churchill, 1979; Nunnally, 1978). For the statistical remedy, the CMV was examined through Harman's single-factor test for all measurement items (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An exploratory factor analysis with one-factor extraction and unrotated solution revealed the single factor accounting for less than 50% of the total variance, which met the threshold recommended by past research (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 2001; Craighead et al., 2011; MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Moreover, common latent factor method was applied to test the common variance among the observed variables. The result did not show any significant differences among the standardized regression weights. These findings suggest that common method bias was deemed non-problematic in this research.

### **4.4. DATA CLEANING**

Several attempts were made to retrieve the valid and useable responses through data cleaning. This research utilised 'forced response' option in the online survey form and incomplete responses were discarded. So, missing values were not considered a legitimate problem. Of the completed responses, outliers were identified through the standard deviation of the responses. Hence, the straight liners, i.e., responses with zero standard deviation, were deleted. Furthermore, responses with little variance (standard deviation less than 0.40) were discarded as well. The responses that were inconsistent

with the reverse coded questions were deleted too. Additionally, a trap question (bogus question) was also placed in the middle of the survey to check whether the respondents were paying attention. The responses that failed in the trap questions were discarded as well because those respondents were more likely to answer quickly and choose random answers without reading the questions carefully (Miller and Baker-Prewitt, 2009).

#### **4.5. ANALYSIS METHODS/STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES**

A set of statistical analysis techniques were applied in this research. First, factor analysis and correlation analysis were used to test construct validity to ensure that the scales were unidimensional. Second, Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure construct reliability. An initial Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis and Varimax rotation with an eigenvalue of greater than 1 were utilised for testing the unidimensional constructs. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the IBM SPSS AMOS 24.0 was used to test the hypothesised relationships and proposed model. Several underlying assumptions for the SEM were checked. For instance, an examination on the collinearity statistics assured the absence of extreme multicollinearity as the variance inflation factors (VIF) were less than 3 (Hair et al., 2010). The univariate normality assumption was satisfied because all skewness values associated with each item were within the range of  $\pm 1.96$  and the absolute values of kurtosis were less than 2.

The two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was followed to test the hypothesised relationship. First, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the measurement model was tested to assess whether the measurement items had the appropriate properties to represent each construct. Once the measurement model achieved a satisfactory fit, the structural model was tested. As the normality assumption was met earlier, this study used the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method for the CFA. The reliability and validity of each construct were tested by running the confirmatory factor analysis, optimizing the measurement model and purifying the scale items.

The goodness-of-fit indices, path coefficients, explanatory power and parsimony were tested for the measurement model and structural model. The Tucker–Lewis index

(TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) were assessed on the threshold values of 0.90, whereas the maximum acceptable value for the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.08 as suggested by Kline (2011). In addition, the ideal  $\chi^2/df$  value was assessed as less than 3 (Kline, 2011) and the benchmark for Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR) was less than 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Each analysis is further discussed in detail in the respective chapters.

For testing the moderating influence of the public self-consciousness, a multi-group analysis was conducted. A median test was conducted for public self-consciousness construct in this regard. Thus, the sample was divided into two subsamples: high public self-conscious and low public self-conscious. Next, the base model was tested with the postulated relationships for the two subsamples. Then the chi-square difference tests were conducted for model level and path level differences.

#### **4.6. ETHICS**

The findings reported in this research was conducted according to the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The university’s appointed Research Integrity Manager was consulted to examine potential ethical and legal implications prior to administration of the questionnaires. The proposal for this research got the required human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number # RDBS-39-16).

#### **4.7. RESEARCH METHOD FOR STUDY 1: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION**

This research follows the scale development guideline suggested by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2003). At first, the consumers’ notion of luxury brand attachment is assessed through in-depth interview of consumers (n=17). Attempts have been made to ensure the distinction of luxury brand attachment from the generic brand attachment. Then, a series of five studies are undertaken to develop the scale. Study 1.1 generates and selects potential scale items through literature review, thesaurus search and experience survey. Study 1.2 (n = 252) reduces the items and assesses the dimensionality of the scale. Study 1.3 (n = 222) validates the dimensionality of the

scale. Next, study 1.4 (n = 291) assesses the four types of validities (convergent, discriminate, predictive, and nomological) for the scale. Finally, study 1.5 (n = 252) examines two behavioural indicators of luxury brand attachment. The respondents in the aforementioned five studies consisted of luxury branding academics, doctoral students, industry practitioners, and luxury consumers. An outline of the scale development procedure is presented in the Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Outline of scale development procedure**

<b>Study 1.1</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Item generation and selection
<b>Respondents</b>	luxury branding academics (n=3) and industry experts (n=2)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Explained working definitions of concepts
<b>Methods</b>	Literature review, thesaurus search, expert survey
<b>Study 1.2</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Item reduction and assessment of scale dimensionality
<b>Respondents</b>	Phase 1: luxury brand academics (n=2) and doctoral students (n=3) Phase 2: luxury consumer panel (n=94) Phase 3: Academics (n=8), doctoral students (n=16), industry Phase 4: luxury consumer panel (n=252)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Phase 1–3: Explained working definitions of concepts Phase 4: Giorgio Armani sunglasses
<b>Methods</b>	EFA, reliability analysis (Cronbach's), correlations.
<b>Study 1.3</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Validation of the scale dimensionality
<b>Respondents</b>	Luxury consumer panel (n=222)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Giorgio Armani sunglasses
<b>Methods</b>	CFA with AMOS 24
<b>Study 1.4</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Scale validation
<b>Items</b>	7 items
<b>Respondents</b>	Luxury consumer panel (n=291)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Rolex wristwatch
<b>Methods</b>	EFA, reliability analysis (Cronbach's), and CFA with AMOS 24
<b>Study 1.5</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Behavioural indicators of luxury brand attachment
<b>Items</b>	7 Items
<b>Respondents</b>	Luxury consumer panel (n=252)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Giorgio Armani sunglasses
<b>Other</b>	Brand satisfaction, brand loyalty
<b>Methods</b>	CFA and structural model testing with AMOS 24

## **4.8. RESEARCH METHOD FOR STUDY 2: RESEARCH MODEL TESTING**

### **4.8.1. Study design (study 2)**

A pool of 38 product categories from 32 brands was populated to select the survey stimulus of this study. First, a focus group was conducted with luxury branding researchers (n=3) who selected 5 brands (Giorgio Armani, Dolce&Gabbana, Chanel, Prada, and Gucci) and 4 product categories (sunglasses, handbags, jeans, and shoes) as the potential stimulus. Next, a pre-test was conducted among 67 luxury consumers (Male = 31, Female = 36, Average age = 27). The results suggested sunglasses from the brand Giorgio Armani (M = 5.50, SD = 1.07) and Dolce&Gabbana (M = 5.43, SD = 1.20) as the gender neutral, affordable, and appropriate luxury brands to be used as the stimulus in the survey of this study. The symbolic values of the brands and products also supported the utilisation of the category in this study (Perry and Kyriakaki, 2014). Moreover, past research on luxury branding used sunglasses as the product category as well (e.g., Liu et al., 2012; O’Cass and Frost, 2002). Data were collected from a global panel of luxury consumers who previously used Giorgio Armani or D&G sunglasses. The usage of the product was assured through a filter question in the beginning of the survey questionnaire. Thereafter, the respondents were presented an advertisement of the brand. These respondents received email invitations to complete the online survey, hosted by a large university in the Western Australia.

### **4.8.2. Measures (study 2)**

The respondents’ ‘brand likeability’ was tested as a screening question with the 3-item measurement scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) developed by Martin and Stewart (2001). This was done with the notion that “self-concept congruence is greater for most preferred product brands than for least preferred product brands” (Dolich, 1969, 80). Only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. The subsequent section included scale items for the four key constructs of this study. Sirgy et al.’s (1997) 5-item scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) was used to measure actual self-congruence as well as was adapted to measure the ideal self-congruence. The luxury brand attachment (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) was measured by 7-item scale developed in the chapter 5 of this research. The 5-item consumer advocacy scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) was adapted from Chelminski and

Coulter (2011). All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 7 representing “strongly agree”. The final section of the survey asked the basic demographic characteristics – gender, age, income, education, and marital status of the respondents. A copy of the survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix F.

#### **4.8.3. Sample (study 2)**

A total of 550 consumers were contacted and the yield resulted 431 valid and useable responses. Of the sample collected, 50.8% were female, 80.5% aged between 18-30 years age bracket, and 62.6% had an undergraduate degree. Note that the majority of the sample (18-30 age group) mirrors the segment that has been recognized by past studies as the most likely demographics to purchase luxury goods and services (Sarkar, 2017; Hung et al, 2011).

### **4.9. RESEARCH METHOD FOR STUDY 3: TESTING THE MODERATION OF PSC**

#### **4.9.1. Study design (study 3)**

A pre-test was conducted among 60 luxury consumers (Male = 34, Female = 26, Average age = 24). The results suggested jeans from the brand Giorgio Armani (M = 5.30, SD = 1.39) as the gender neutral, affordable, and appropriate publicly used luxury branded product to be used as the stimulus in the survey of this study. Data were collected from a global panel of luxury consumers who previously used Giorgio Armani jeans. The usage of the product was assured through a filter question in the beginning of the survey questionnaire. Thereafter, the respondents were presented with a real-life advertisement of Giorgio Armani Jeans. These respondents received email invitations to complete the online survey, hosted by a large university in the Western Australia.

#### **4.9.2. Measures (study 3)**

The respondents’ ‘brand likeability’ was tested as a screening question with the 3-item measurement scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) developed by Martin and Stewart (2001). Only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were

considered for further analysis. The subsequent section included scale items for the four key constructs of this study. Sirgy et al.'s (1997) 5-item scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) was used to measure actual self-congruence as well as was adapted to measure the ideal self-congruence. The luxury brand attachment (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) was measured by 7-item scale developed in the chapter 5 of this research. The 5-item consumer advocacy scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) was adapted from Chelminski and Coulter (2011). Finally, Fenigstein et al.'s (1975) 7-item public self-consciousness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$ ) scale was used. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree". The final section of the survey asked the basic demographic characteristics – gender, age, income, education, and marital status of the respondents. A copy of the survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix G.

#### **4.9.3. Sample (study 3)**

A total of 375 consumers were contacted and the yield resulted 290 valid and useable responses. Of the sample collected, 52.4% were female, 90.4% aged between 18-30 years age bracket, and 58.9% had an undergraduate degree and above.

### **4.10. RESEARCH METHOD FOR STUDY 4: TESTING THE RESEARCH MODEL ACROSS PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY CONSUMED PRODUCTS**

#### **4.10.1. Study design (study 4)**

A pre-test was conducted among 60 luxury consumers (Male = 34, Female = 26, Average age = 24). The results suggested Giorgio Armani undergarments ( $M=5.23$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) as the affordable, and appropriate privately used luxury branded product to be used as the stimulus in the survey of this study. Data were collected from a global panel of luxury consumers who previously used Giorgio Armani undergarments. The usage of the product was assured through a filter question in the beginning of the survey questionnaire. Thereafter, the respondents were presented with a real-life advertisement of Giorgio Armani undergarments. These respondents received email invitations to complete the online survey, hosted by a large university in the Western Australia.

#### **4.10.2 Measures (study 4)**

The respondents' 'brand likeability' was tested as a screening question with the 3-item measurement scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) developed by Martin and Stewart (2001). Only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. The subsequent section included scale items for the five key constructs of this study. Sirgy et al.'s (1997) 5-item scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) was used to measure actual self-congruence as well as was adapted to measure the ideal self-congruence. The luxury brand attachment (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) was measured by 7-item scale developed in the chapter 5 of this research. The 5-item consumer advocacy scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) was adapted from Chelminski and Coulter (2011). Finally, Feningstein et al.'s (1975) 7-item public self-consciousness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$ ) scale was used. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree". The final section of the survey asked the basic demographic characteristics – gender, age, income, education, and marital status of the respondents. A copy of the survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2.3.

#### **4.10.3. Sample (study 4)**

A total of 390 consumers were contacted and the yield resulted 280 valid and useable responses. Of the sample collected, 64.6% were female, 88.9% aged between 18-30 years age bracket, and 56.4% had an undergraduate degree and above. Noteworthy, to compare the privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products, data collected in this study (n=280) were compared with the data collected for Giorgio Armani Jeans in the study 3 (n=290).

An overview of the four studies is presented in the Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Overview of four studies**

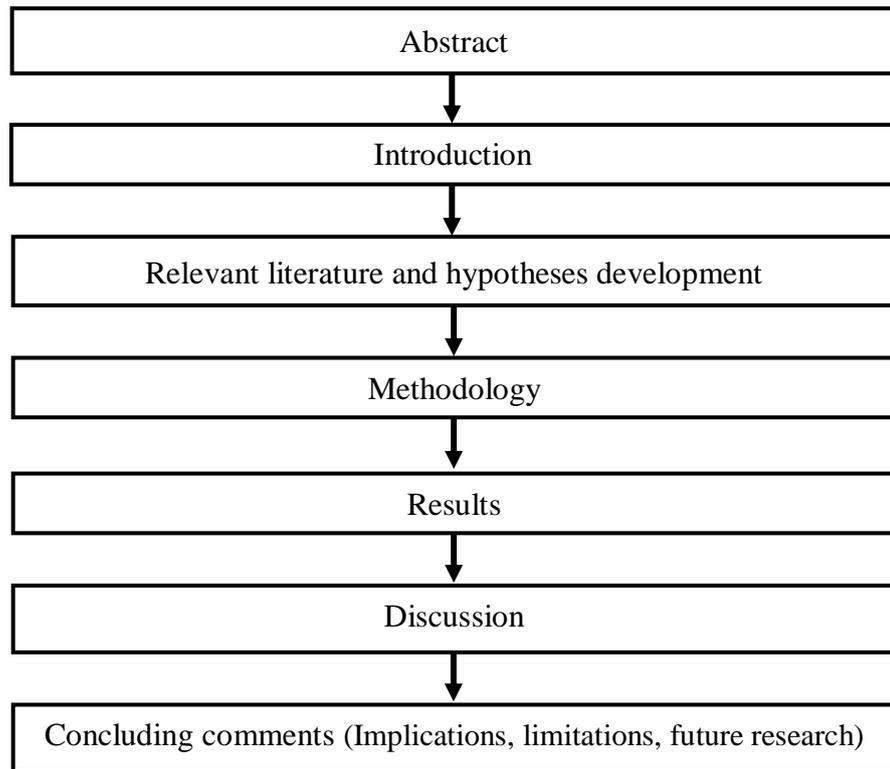
<b>Study</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Brand</b>	<b>Product category</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
<b>1</b>	To develop and validate a scale to measure luxury brand attachment	<i>Please see Table 4.3 for details</i>		
<b>2</b>	To test the research model for luxury brand attachment across two different brands within same product category.	Giorgio Armani	Sunglasses	223
		Dolce&Gabbana	Sunglasses	208
<b>3</b>	To the moderating impact of public self-consciousness on the relationship between perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.	Giorgio Armani	Jeans	290
<b>4</b>	To test the research model and moderating effect of public self-consciousness across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products.	Giorgio Armani	Undergarments	280
		Giorgio Armani	Jeans	290

#### **4.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods to be undertaken in the four studies of this research. In particular, stimulus selection and utilisation, measurement scales, data collection and analysis procedures including the ethics approval have been discussed. The next four chapters (5 to 8) represent the four studies specified in the Table 4.4. Each of these chapters is written as independent journal article consisting of the following sections: abstract, introduction, relevant literature and hypotheses development, method, results, discussion, and concluding comments. The scale development chapter (study 1) is currently under review in the *Journal of Brand Management*. An abridged version of chapter 6 (study 2), chapter 7 (study 3) and chapter 8 (study 4) will be submitted to the *European Journal of Marketing*.

A schematic overview of the structure of the chapters (6 to 8) is presented in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3: Schematic overview of individual chapters (5 to 8)**



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCEPTUALISING LUXURY BRAND ATTACHMENT *SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION*

#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This paper aims to conceptualise consumer’s luxury brand attachment by developing and validating a psychometric scale.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Study 1.1 generates and selects potential scale items through literature review, thesaurus search and experience survey. Study 1.2 reduces the items and assesses the dimensionality of the scale. Study 1.3 validates the dimensionality of the scale. Next, study 1.4 assesses the four types of validities (convergent, discriminate, predictive, and nomological) for the scale. Finally, study 1.5 examines two behavioural indicators of luxury brand attachment.

**Findings** – The results show a parsimonious 7-item luxury brand attachment scale. The studies confirm that there are major differences among luxury brand attachment, emotional attachments to brands, and the brand attitude scales. Besides, this research demonstrates that the luxury brand attachment is a unique construct that captures the essence of consumers’ emotional connection with luxury brands.

**Implication** – The development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale fulfils an important gap in the luxury branding literature. The scale will provide meaningful insights for the luxury practitioners.

**Originality** – The luxury brand attachment scale provides an improved measure and better understanding of consumer’s attachment with the luxury brands which was not accurately measured by using general attachment scales in past studies.

**Key words:** Luxury brand attachment, Consumer emotion, Scale development, Validation

## 5.1. INTRODUCTION

“Modern luxury is not based on age. Retail premium brands are very difficult to build. Great premium brands take time, based on the emotional connection [with the consumer that’s] sustained over the long term, and on shared qualities of great design, materials and craftsmanship as well as constant innovation” – Victor Luis, CEO of the luxury brand Coach, points out the importance of emotional connection with consumers for luxury brand success (Young, 2017). Consumers’ emotional intimacy with other luxury brands such as Burberry and Porsche has been evident in the literature (e.g., Straker and Wrigley, 2016; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). In another study, BMW and Tiffany & Co. have been identified as the top two brands that resonate with the consumers’ deepest emotional desire for security, exclusivity, and ideal self-representation (Magids et al., 2015). Consumers’ emotional attachment to luxury brand has been suggested as the strategic tool for enhancing brand loyalty, combating counterfeit luxury in the competitive luxury market (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2016; So et al., 2013).

The worldwide luxury market experienced a 5% growth in 2017, to an estimated US\$1.5 trillion globally (D’Arpizio et al., 2017). This sluggish growth rate is recognised as ‘new normal’ and a fundamental shift in the luxury brand market which is anticipated to continue a 2-5 percent growth through 2020 (Gibbs, 2016). Industry experts attribute this slowed growth to the evolving consumer dynamics and preferences, increased competition, economic slowdown, and influx of counterfeit luxury (Bain, 2017). The complexity escalates with the phenomenon that rich consumers are becoming less loyal (Moses, 2013) and luxury brands fail to segment and target consumers strategically (Briggs, 2016). Market experts suggest luxury brands find strategic ways to stay connected with the consumers to combat these challenges (Gomelsky, 2016).

Past studies have shown that building emotional connection with the consumer is an effective strategy for the brand’s long term success (e.g., Park et al., 2006; Schmalz and Orth, 2012). However, there is a lack of research on how luxury brands can build a strong and sustainable bond with the consumers. Extensive literature largely supports that an emotional connection with the consumers creates a positive impact on the brand equity (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Malär et al., 2011). The studies on brand attachment

clearly indicate that the consumers' attachment differs between symbolic and functional brands (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005). Therefore, consumers' attachment for luxury brands should not be viewed and treated as same for functional brands.

Previous studies have largely overlooked the unique landscape of luxury perception while measuring the luxury brand attachment. Studies mostly utilise the brand attachment (Park et al., 2010) and emotional attachments to brands (Thomson et al., 2005) to measure consumers' luxury brand attachment. However, there has been no clear justification behind the usage of these scales. The key question arises whether these measures accurately capture the consumers' luxury brand attachment. The conceptualisation of luxury brands shows the importance of emotional connection and the distinctiveness of the consumers' perceived value in consumer brand relationship (e.g., Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Therefore, the application of the existing scales would remain inaccurate and provide limited outcome without incorporating the conceptualisation of luxury brands into the measure.

In particular, the traits of luxury brands, consumers' perceived benefits and the elicited emotions need to be investigated for a deeper understanding of the luxury brand attachment. For example, Kim and Joung (2016) adopt and use Thomson et al.'s (2005) emotional attachments to brands to measure consumers' luxury brand attachment, and they find no significant relationship between luxury brand attachment and repurchase intention. This finding contradicts the theoretical expectation of brand attachment and reflects the limitations of using emotional attachments to brands scale for measuring luxury brand attachment. The limitations with generic measures in luxury context have been echoed in recent studies and researchers have called for more accurate measures (e.g., Sung et al., 2015; S et al., 2016). Unfortunately, no past research has undertaken effort to understand the dimensions of luxury brand attachment.

This paper fulfils the aforementioned research gaps by developing and validating a new measure for luxury brand attachment with an incorporation key dimensions in luxury branding, for example, consumers' emotions, exclusivity, and symbolic values. Practically, luxury managers can use this improved measure to segment and target the market effectively. The following sections of this paper conceptualise the luxury brand

attachment, describe the methods and five studies on the scale development procedure, discuss the implications, and provide directions for future research.

## **5.2. CONCEPTUALISING LUXURY BRAND ATTACHMENT**

### **5.2.1. Luxury brands defined**

The definition of luxury brand differs due to the diverse socio-cultural context in which consumers evaluate the brands and product categories (e.g., Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2018; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) and the subjective interpretation of the term ‘luxury’ (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Luxury brand has been conceptualized with having unique traits such as emotional connection (Atwal and Williams, 2008), exclusivity (Cristini et al., 2017), conspicuousness (O’cass and Frost, 2002), status, high transaction value, and craftsmanship. (e.g., Roux et al., 2017). The hierarchy pyramid for luxury brand classification suggests the consumer’s socio-economic class and purchasing power provide a segmentation method in which the top level is inaccessible luxury, the mid-level is intermediate luxury and the bottom level is accessible luxury (e.g., Alleres, 1990; De Barnier et al., 2012).

Past studies explain the luxury brand consumption from a personal aspect (Dubois and Laurent, 1994), interpersonal aspect (Mason, 1992), and socio-economic and political aspect (Hennigs et al., 2012). It is suggested that luxury brand consumption boosts consumers’ ego (Eastman et al., 1999) and social recognition (Jiang and Cova, 2012). Literature also considers high price a key dimension of luxury brands (e.g. Keller, 2017), but few other studies make a counter argument that the price value of a product may not alone describe the brand as luxury (Jacoby and Olson, 1977). Furthermore, the symbolic value that consumers seek from luxury brands is seen as critical (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). These factors indicate that consumers’ attachment to the luxury brands tend to be different from brand attachment in general.

### **5.2.2. What is luxury brand attachment?**

There is no consensus of a definition for luxury brand attachment until now. Therefore, this study adapts and adopts conceptualisation of ‘attachment’ from the field of psychology and marketing. The psychological theories explain attachment as the tie

between a person and an object or any other components (e.g., Bowlby, 1979; Hazan and Shaver, 1994). In the marketing literature, brand attachment is defined as a long-term and commitment oriented tie between the consumer and the brand (e.g., Esch et al., 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

The brand attachment literature hinges on four major streams of research. The first stream shows that there is a relationship between the consumers' brand possession and a sense of self (e.g., Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Such possession and brand self-connection generate love, passion, and intimacy toward the brand (e.g., Forunier, 1998; Holt, 2002). The second stream known as Connection-Automaticity-Attachment (CAA) explains brand attachment as the combined outcome of 'strong self-brand linkages and automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand' (Park et al., 2006, p. 9). The third stream of research is an advancement of the CAA model by Park et al. (2010), who provide a new conceptual and methodological approach to brand attachment known as Connection-Prominence Attachment Model (CPAM). The CPAM conceptualises brand attachment with two critical indicators: a) brand-self connection and b) the prominence of brand-related thoughts and feelings. The fourth stream of research pioneered by Thomson et al. (2005) emphasises on the emotional aspects of the attachment and name the construct as emotional attachments to brands. Later on, Malär et al. (2011) validate the construct with identifying consumers' perceived brand self-congruence as the predictor of the consumers' emotional attachments to brands.

The conceptualization of luxury brand demonstrates that the inherent traits of luxury brands are very unique and the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (e.g., Murray, 2016; Tsai, 2005). Studies on luxury consumer-brand relationships show the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers' purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). These distinctiveness of luxury brands clearly indicates that consumers' emotional connection is fundamental in designing the luxury brand attachment measurement. Building on this idea and considering the

predominant emotion laden connection between consumers and luxury brands, luxury brand attachment is defined as “the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand”. A set of theories from social psychology (e.g., attachment theory, theory of emotion, self-expansion theory) were examined to identify the theoretical underpinning of luxury brand attachment.

### **5.2.3. Distinction between luxury brand attachment and other related constructs**

Luxury brand attachment is different from emotional attachments to brands in several ways. First, the conceptualisation of emotional attachments to brands (Thomson et al., 2005) encompasses three major dimensions of emotions (affection, passion, and connection). Although few of these emotions might be applicable for luxury brand attachment, the 10-item measure for emotional attachments to brands does not consider the key traits of luxury brands (e.g. exclusiveness, exquisiteness, status, achievement) that elicit a particular type of emotion (e.g. joy, devotion, pleasure, infatuation).

Second, the desire for proximity maintenance and feeling of separation distress have been extensively emphasised in the attachment literature (Bowlby, 1979). Unfortunately, the emotional attachments to brands scale does not include these two elements. Thus, it limits the researchers and practitioners’ ability to accurately measure luxury brand attachment. It has been evident from the literature that luxury brands provide uniqueness and social status to the consumers and thus they show willingness to prolong the relationship (i.e. proximity maintenance) for a continuous achievement (Hung et al., 2011).

In addition, when a luxury brand becomes unavailable it creates a sense of loss (i.e. separation distress) in the consumers’ mind (e.g., Rindfleisch et al, 2009). Overall, emotional attachments to brands scale does not reflect the luxury consumers’ high involvement, strong emotional connection, and perceived exclusivity. A similar argument is applicable for distinguishing luxury brand attachment from brand attachment (Park et al., 2010). Although brand-self connection and brand prominence

are relevant to luxury brand attachment, the scale developed by Park et al. (2010) does not capture above discussed essence of luxury brands. This research acknowledges that luxury brand attachment is related to but conceptually distinct from general brand attachment and emotional attachments to brands.

Several studies distinguish brand attachment from brand attitude (e.g., Park et al., 2010, Thomson et al., 2005). The conceptualisation of luxury brand attachment assumes similar distinction between the constructs. First, luxury brand attachment develops over the time which is not a requirement for brand attitude. Second, luxury brand attachment involves consumers' emotional connection to the brand, whereas brand attitude is rather an overall evaluation of the brand. Third, consumers' self-brand congruence has been identified as the predictor of luxury brand attachment, which is not applicable for brand attitude. Fourth, luxury brand attachment results separation distress for the consumers which brand attitude does not upshot. Finally, the effect of luxury brand attachment is stronger than that of brand attitude. Consumers with high luxury brand attachment are expected to stay loyal, advocate the brand to others, and show willingness to pay premium price for the brand. By contrast, brand attitude does not result in any such behavioural intentions.

### **5.3. METHOD**

This research follows the scale development guideline suggested by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2003). At first, the consumers' notion of luxury brand attachment is assessed through in-depth interview of consumers (n=17). Attempts have been made to ensure the distinction of luxury brand attachment from the generic brand attachment. Then, a series of five studies are undertaken to develop the scale. Study 1.1 generates and selects potential scale items through literature review, thesaurus search and experience survey. Study 1.2 (n = 252) reduces the items and assesses the dimensionality of the scale. Study 1.3 (n = 222) validates the dimensionality of the scale. Next, study 1.4 (n = 291) assesses the four types of validities (convergent, discriminate, predictive, and nomological) for the scale. Finally, study 1.5 (n = 252) examines two behavioural indicators of luxury brand attachment. The respondents in the aforementioned five studies consisted of luxury branding academics, doctoral

students, industry practitioners, and luxury consumers. A summary of the scale development procedure is presented in the Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Summary of scale development procedure**

<b>Study 1.1</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Item generation and selection
<b>Respondents</b>	luxury branding academics (n=3) and industry experts (n=2)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Explained working definitions of concepts
<b>Methods</b>	Literature review, thesaurus search, expert survey
<b>Results</b>	A pool of 107 items were populated
<b>Study 1.2</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Item reduction and assessment of scale dimensionality
<b>Respondents</b>	Phase 1: luxury brand academics (n=2) and doctoral students (n=3) Phase 2: luxury consumer panel (n=94) Phase 3: Academics (n=8), doctoral students (n=16), industry Phase 4: luxury consumer panel (n=252)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Phase 1–3: Explained working definitions of concepts Phase 4: Giorgio Armani sunglasses
<b>Methods</b>	EFA, reliability analysis (Cronbach's), correlations.
<b>Results</b>	Retained: 63 items in phase 1, 27 items in phase 2, and 22 items in phase 3. An EFA revealed one dimensional 16 items in phase 4.
<b>Study 1.3</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Validation of the scale dimensionality
<b>Respondents</b>	Luxury consumer panel (n=222)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Giorgio Armani sunglasses
<b>Methods</b>	CFA with AMOS 24
<b>Results</b>	CFA on the 21 items resulted 7 items with good model fit.
<b>Study 1.4</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Scale validation
<b>Items</b>	7 items
<b>Respondents</b>	Luxury consumer panel (n=291)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Rolex wristwatch
<b>Methods</b>	EFA, reliability analysis (Cronbach's), and CFA with AMOS 24
<b>Results</b>	Convergent, Discriminant, Predictive and Nomological validities were
<b>Study 1.5</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	Behavioural indicators of luxury brand attachment
<b>Items</b>	7 Items
<b>Respondents</b>	Luxury consumer panel (n=252)
<b>Stimuli</b>	Giorgio Armani sunglasses
<b>Other</b>	Brand satisfaction, brand loyalty
<b>Methods</b>	CFA and structural model testing with AMOS 24
<b>Results</b>	Brand satisfaction positively influences luxury brand attachment and brand loyalty. Luxury brand attachment positively influences brand

## **5.4. ASSESSING CONSUMERS' NOTION OF LUXURY BRAND**

### **ATTACHMENT**

What is the consumers' understanding of luxury brand attachment? Does their perception align with the conceptual notion of this study? A total of 17 consumers (9 female, 8 male, average age 27 years) were interviewed to address those questions. The responding participants had past or ongoing experiences with luxury brands. However, they were provided with a brief on the nature and conceptualisation of luxury brands with some examples in the beginning of the interview for a better understanding of the research goal. In step one, the participants were asked in an open-ended question to provide the name of a luxury brand with which they feel a sense of attachment. In step two, they were asked to describe their feelings toward that particular brand with a set of key words. For clarity and simplicity, three sample attachment-expressing words (bond, connection, and attached) were provided to the participants. In the final step, the participants were asked to write statements with each of the words that would best describe their feelings toward the luxury brand. Hence, it was imperative to investigate whether the consumers' notion of luxury brand attachment would be different from the attachment to a non-luxury brand. Therefore, the participants were asked to repeat the above mentioned three steps within the context of a non-luxury brand. This has been done to establish the separation of luxury brand attachment from the generic brand attachment.

The collected responses showed that consumers identified Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Giorgio Armani, Dolce&Gabbana, Swarovski, and Rolex as their chosen luxury brands to which they have a sense of attachment. Overall, the participants expressed their luxury brand attachment as a strong affinity and intimate desire to stay close to the brand. They also described their feeling to the attached luxury brand with keywords such as – 'love', 'addiction', 'devotion', 'prestige', 'fancy', 'desire', 'worship', 'exclusiveness', 'achievement', 'accomplishment' etc. For instances, one participant noted her attachment to Louis Vuitton as – "I am addicted to LV products". Another participant pointed that his "Rolex wristwatch provides prestige and social recognition". Most of the respondents highlighted that the unique traits of the luxury brands, such as – exclusiveness, limited edition, and uniqueness, generate a sense of desire and proximity toward the brand. The interview responses also showed that the participants' attachment toward non-luxury brands primarily centred on the perceived

benefits and functionality of the brand. The participants mentioned the ease of search with Google, consistent and reliable performance from Apple (Iphone, Macbook), durability of Nike, and the dental protection provided by Colgate as the key drivers of perceived attachment to these brands. Although, few participants indicated their emotional connection to the non-luxury brands (e.g., Google is a part of my life), the level of emotion was not only mild but also resulted from the utilitarian nature of the brand (e.g., Google search makes my life easy).

In line with the extant literature, it has been found in this study that consumers' luxury brand attachment is mostly emotion laden. Moreover, the sense of achievement, status-seeking, conspicuousness and exclusivity are the key catalysts behind the consumers' aspiration for and attachment with the luxury brands. In summary, it has become evident that the emotional aspects are prominent in the consumers' notion of luxury brand attachment.

### **5.5. STUDY 1.1 – ITEM GENERATION AND SELECTION**

In this study, a set of potential scale items were generated following the scale development procedure suggested by DeVellis (2003). This was done through an extensive literature reviews (Churchill, 1979), thesaurus searches (Wells et al., 1971), and expert surveys (Chen and Wells, 1999; Churchill, 1979).

First, the extant psychology literature on “human attachment” was studied to understand the basic conceptualisation of attachment. Following that the literature on attachment theory (e.g., Bowlby, 1979; Ainsworth, 1982), theory of emotion (e.g., Parrott, 2001), self-expansion theory (e.g., Aron and Aron, 1986), social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel, 1974), and self-congruence theory (e.g., Sirgy, 1982) were examined to establish the theoretical foundation of luxury brand attachment.

Second, the branding literature relevant to brand-self congruity, general brand attachment, emotional attachments to brands, brand love, brand attitude, brand authenticity, brand community engagement, brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand trust, and such other consumer-brand relationship constructs were searched to identify

the dimensions and keywords that might be relevant to the luxury brand attachment. Additionally, existing scales on brand attachment (Orth et al., 2010; Park et al., 2010; Lacœuilhe, 2000) and emotional attachments to brands (Thomson et al., 2005) were consulted to generate items for the luxury brand attachment scale. The adoption of general brand attachment items might be questionable due to the limited transferability from non-luxury to luxury context. However, these scale items cannot be ignored as some of them captures the feelings that are attached to the brand.

Third, luxury branding literature was studied to comprehend the nature of the relationships that consumers build with the luxury brands. In particular, the emotional aspects (benefits, desire, aspiration etc.) were examined throughout the review. Moreover, research was conducted on newspaper, magazine, blog and other popular press through which various applications of ‘feeling wheel’ (Willcox, 1982) and ‘Plutchik’s Flower’ (Plutchik, 1980) were found and considered for scale item generation. A set of 24 words (e.g., pleasure, self-expression, distinctiveness, elegancy, success, face saving, pleasurable benefits) were generated through the literature search.

With an understanding of the emotional nature of the luxury brand attachment, a thesaurus search was conducted to populate the words that reflect human emotion and might be relevant to the consumers’ expression of luxury brand attachment. A total of 73 words (e.g., affinity, close, delight, exquisite, fond, intimate, joy, attractive, excitement, and zeal) were generated in this process (Appendix A).

Furthermore, three academics and two industry experts in luxury branding were surveyed to populate more scale items. They proposed 29 words of which 19 were already enlisted through the literature review and thesaurus search. Thus, the expert survey generated 10 additional items (e.g., conformity, achieve, and aspiration).

Next, a pool of 107 statements were composed with the populated words. As suggested by Brakus et al. (2009), some of the items were reworded to maintain linguistic style and make relevant to the consumer-branding context. Items were also looked at critically for eliminating potential ambiguity, double-barrelled items, and multiple negatives (DeVellis, 2003).

## **5.6. STUDY 1.2 – ITEM REDUCTION AND ASSESSMENT OF SCALE DIMENSIONALITY**

The twofold goal of the study 1.2 was to reduce the items generated in the study 1.1 and to determine the dimensionality of the luxury brand attachment scale. This was achieved in 4 sequential phases.

Four different types of respondents were targeted for data collection throughout the 4 phases: (1) Luxury academics, who prominently published in the luxury branding area, were identified through Google Scholar search. (2) Academics and doctoral students in luxury branding from academic conferences (e.g. Australian New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference, World Marketing Congress, The Mystique of Luxury Brands Conference, and Korean Scholars of Marketing Science Conference. (3) The luxury consumers were recruited through an online consumer panel. (4) Industry practitioners were contacted through LinkedIn and the past years' CV books (2012-2015) of two large European universities that offer postgraduate degree in Luxury Marketing Management.

In the phase 1, two luxury branding academics and three doctoral students rated the items for the initial screening and face validity check. Based on their judgements, the number of items were reduced from 107 to 63. Items were deleted primarily for two reason: first, the intended meaning of multiple items were duplicated; and second, some items do not potentially capture the essence of luxury brand attachment.

In the phase 2, the 63 items were presented to an online panel of luxury consumers (n=94). The respondents were provided with the conceptual definition of the luxury brand attachment in the beginning of the survey. They were then asked to think of and write the name of a luxury brand they are heavily attached to. The name of three luxury brands (Giorgio Armani, Gucci, and D&G) were provided for a better understanding. Using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Not representative at all, and 7 = Clearly representative), the respondents evaluated whether the statements were good or bad measures of their luxury brand attachment. An additional option (NA = Not applicable) was also added to the Likert scale. A total of 27 items which had an average value greater than 4.0 were retained for the next phase (Appendix B).

In the phase 3, another panel of luxury branding academics (n=8), doctoral students (n=16), and industry practitioners (n=10) were surveyed for testing the content validity. The respondents were asked to rate the items on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Not representative at all, and 7 = Clearly representative), and to select the five most important items that would represent the luxury brand attachment (Appendix C). They were also asked to provide additional comments on wordings and potential dimensionality of the scale. Based on the rating and qualitative comments from the experts, 5 items were removed and thus 22 items were retained in this phase. Notably, 3 respondents predicted multidimensionality of the scale. In addition, few linguistic issues were fixed to maintain consistency amongst the items.

In the phase 4, attempts were made to reduce the items further and to identify the dimensionality of the scale. However, as prescribed by past studies (e.g., Thomson et al., 2005), one particular brand was used in this phase to assess the consumers' luxury brand attachment. For selecting an appropriate brand, a pre-test (n=61) was conducted with a list of 38 product categories from 32 luxury brands. The most familiar brands (Rolex, Giorgio Armani, Dolce&Gabbana, Prada, Gucci, Chanel, Christian Dior, and Guess) and product categories (sunglasses, jeans, watches, undergarments, bags, shoes, and fragrances) were identified through the pre-test. Two academics in luxury branding independently rated the brands and product categories through which Giorgio Armani sunglasses was selected as a gender neutral, affordable, and appropriate luxury brand to be used as the stimulus in the survey of this study. Thereafter, a new set of data was collected from a luxury consumer panel in this phase. The sequence of items in the questionnaire was randomised to avoid the order effect. A real-life advertisement of Giorgio Armani sunglasses was presented as the stimulus in the beginning of the survey (Appendix D). Hence, the respondents' brand likeability (Martin and Stewart, 2001) was tested as a screening question. This was done with the notion that "self-concept congruence is greater for most preferred product brands than for least preferred product brands" (Dolich, 1969, 80). Only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. The valid and useable respondents (n = 252) comprised of 54.8% female and 84.9% within the 18-30 age bracket. This age group reflects the segment that has been identified as the most potential future market segment to buy luxury goods and services (e.g., Sarkar, 2017; Hung et al, 2011).

An internal criterion was applied as the first step of the measurement procedure to assess the 22 items. An item-to-total correlation test was conducted and one item with low correlation ( $<.40$ ) was eliminated. Then an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted with Principle Component Analysis, Varimax rotation and factor loading greater than 0.40 to assess the remaining 21 items. The sample adequacy ( $KMO > 0.70$ ) and reliability (Cronbach alpha  $> 0.70$ ) of the constructs were satisfied. Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) for all the constructs. Interestingly, there were no cross-factor loading; the final set of items reflected one factor solution (eigenvalue  $> 1$ ) with 16 items loading 0.580 – 0.915 as well as explaining 71.75% variations. In addition, the inter-item correlation matrix demonstrated satisfactory item-item correlation ( $>0.20$ ). A double check on the items' mean scores and standard deviations (DeVellis, 2003) did not show any extreme value either way. However, the considerably high level of Cronbach's Alpha (0.973) suggested that the initial scale might be unnecessarily long. This issue was addressed in the study 1.3 which validates the dimensionality of the scale through a newly collected data set.

### **5.7. STUDY 1.3 – VALIDATION OF THE SCALE DIMENSIONALITY**

The purpose of study 1.3 was to confirm the stability of the dimensions of the luxury brand attachment scale. This study followed a similar survey structure used in the phase four of the study 1.2 (Appendix D). A real life Giorgio Armani sunglasses advertisement was used as the stimulus. Again, only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. Data was collected from a new online luxury consumer panel. Among the valid and useable respondents ( $n = 222$ ), 52.3% were female and 86.0% were within the age range of 18-30 years.

First, an EFA was conducted with Principle Component Analysis, Varimax rotation and factor loading greater than 0.40 to assess the 16 items. The sample adequacy ( $KMO > 0.70$ ) and reliability (Cronbach alpha  $> 0.70$ ) of the constructs were satisfied, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) for all the

constructs. No cross-factor loading emerged; the final set of items reflected one factor solution (eigenvalue > 1) with 16 items loading 0.563 – 0.908 as well as explaining 70.74% variations. Further, an item-to-total correlation test was conducted and all items had satisfactory correlations (>.40). The Cronbach Alpha level (0.972) for this sample was very high also. Besides, the items' mean scores and the standard deviations did not show any extreme value either way.

Next, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was undertaken with AMOS 24.0. Throughout the CFA, 9 items were deleted due to high modification indices or low standardized loadings (cut-off: 0.40). Finally, the CFA assessed a one-factor measurement model and provided an excellent model fit with  $\chi^2 = 17.215$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.23$ , CFI = 0.998, AGFI = 0.956, TLI = 0.996, RMR = 0.044, SRMR = 0.019, RMSEA = 0.032, and PClose = 0.698 (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Moreover, the composite reliability (CR) = 0.945, AVE = 0.711, MaxR(H) = 0.956, and strong coefficient of determination for individual item (standardized loadings from 0.70 to 0.93) provided satisfactory convergent validity for the scale (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

## **5.8. STUDY 1.4 – SCALE VALIDATION**

The discriminant, nomological, and predictive validity of the luxury brand attachment scale were established in the study 1.4. Moreover, it is imperative to establish that luxury brand attachment scale items do not depend on the brand, product category or respondents. Therefore, a new set of data was collected with a different stimulus from a new online luxury consumer panel. This study also followed a similar survey structure used in the study 1.4. A real life Rolex wristwatch advertisement was used as the stimulus (Appendix E). The respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. The valid and useable respondents (n = 291) consisted of 55.3% female and 87.8% respondents were within the age range of 18-30 years.

**Discriminant validity** of the luxury brand attachment scale was established through an EFA and CFA of the construct by comparing against the scales for emotional

attachments to brands and the brand attitude. The 10-item emotional attachments to brands (Thomson et al., 2005) was measured on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very well). In addition, the 5-item attitude toward the brand (Erdem and Swait, 2004) was employed on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). First, an EFA was conducted for the three constructs with Principle Component Analysis, Varimax rotation and factor loading greater than 0.60. The sample adequacy ( $KMO > 0.70$ ) and reliability (Cronbach alpha  $> 0.70$ ) of the constructs were satisfied, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) for all the constructs. The factor loadings revealed three distinct constructs without any cross-factor loading (Table 5.2). Thus, the EFA assured the distinctiveness of the luxury brand attachment, emotional attachments to brands and brand attitude.

**Table 5.2: EFA with Luxury Brand Attachment (LBA) items and measures for Emotional Attachments to Brands (EAB) and Brand Attitude (BAtt)**

	<i>Factors</i>		
	EAB	LBA	BAtt
Bonded	0.855		
Connected	0.850		
Attached	0.832		
Delighted	0.810		
Peaceful	0.804		
Loved	0.796		
Affectionate	0.790		
Passionate	0.790		
Friendly	0.772		
Captivated	0.700		
When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy		0.804	
I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want		0.798	
I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand		0.779	
I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand		0.768	
I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer		0.744	
I am deeply in love with this luxury brand		0.744	
I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand		0.635	
This brand's product claims are believable			0.874
This brand has a name you can trust			0.857
This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't			0.853
This brand delivers what it promises			0.839
Over time, my experiences with this brand have led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less.			0.625
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.953	0.919	0.888
<b>Eigenvalues (% of Variance)</b>		70.757	
<b>KMO</b>		0.926	
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>			
<i>Approx. Chi-Square</i>		5584.41	
<i>df</i>		231	
<i>Sig.</i>		0.000	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

To ensure **convergent validity**, the measurement model was analysed with the three constructs. The model revealed a good fit as well ( $\chi^2 = 401.731$ ,  $df = 195$ ,  $\chi^2 / df = 2.060$ , CFI = 0.963, TLI = 0.956, SRMR = 0.060, and RMSEA = 0.060 (Hu and Bentler, 1999)). As shown in the Table 5.3, the composite reliability (CR) for the three

constructs were between 0.884 and 0.949 and thus the internal consistencies were assured (Hair et al., 2010). All the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were higher than the pair-wise inter-construct correlations in assurance of discriminant validity among the three constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, the AVE value for the constructs were above 0.60 and thus the results further attested the convergent validity (Malhotra, 2010).

**Table 5.3: Composite reliability and discriminant validity of construct measures (Study 1.3)**

	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>EAB</i>	<i>LBA</i>	<i>BAtt</i>
Emotional Attachments to Brands (EAB)	0.949	0.654	<b>0.809</b>		
Luxury Brand Attachment (LBA)	0.916	0.614	0.344	<b>0.783</b>	
Brand Attitude (BAtt)	0.884	0.607	0.681	0.224	<b>0.779</b>

Note: *Figures in the diagonal (values given in bold) are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE); those below the diagonal are the correlations between the constructs.*

To assess the **nomological validity** of the scale, the relationship between consumers' perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment was tested. Theoretically, consumers' perceived self-congruence should have a positive influence on luxury brand attachment. Perceived self-congruence with the brand refers to the degree of match between a consumer's perception of a brand and the perception they have of themselves (Sirgy, 1982). The more the brand reflects the consumer's self, the greater the personal connection to the brand (Park et al., 2010). Sirgy et al.'s (1997) 5-item scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) was used to measure actual self-congruence as well as was adapted to measure the ideal self-congruence on 7 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). A linear regression test showed a significant positive relationship between perceived actual self-congruence and luxury brand attachment (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.394$ ,  $\beta = .629$ ,  $t = 13.760$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). A similar relationship was found between perceived ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.489$ ,  $\beta = 0.701$ ,  $t = 16.689$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Finally, the **predictive validity** was assessed through testing the relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy. Consumer advocacy has been

explained in the marketing literature as the consumers' tendency to offer passionate referral and helping behaviour that benefit other consumers in their choices and consumptions (e.g. Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Price et al., 1995). Scholars argue that consumers are willing to advocate the brand if they feel an affection to the brand (e.g., Shukla et al., 2016). Therefore, it was postulated that luxury brand attachment would predict consumer advocacy. The 5-item consumer advocacy (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011) was measured on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The regression result showed a significant positive relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.467$ ,  $\beta = 0.685$ ,  $t = 15.984$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The EFA and CFA loadings for the luxury brand attachment scale in study 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 are summarised in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4: Summary psychometric data for the 7-item luxury brand attachment scale**

	Study 1.2 n=252	Study 1.3 n=222	Study 1.4 n=291	
	Giorgio Armani Sunglasses	Giorgio Armani Sunglasses	Rolex wristwatch	
	EFA loading	EFA loading	CFA loading	EFA loading CFA loading
I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand.	0.915	0.929	0.930	0.864 0.800
I am deeply in love with this luxury brand.	0.897	0.904	0.900	0.873 0.810
When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy.	0.887	0.904	0.890	0.888 0.890
I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand.	0.888	0.862	0.840	0.884 0.830
I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available.	0.812	0.854	0.830	0.764 0.710
I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want.	0.841	0.843	0.800	0.843 0.820
I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand.	0.744	0.758	0.700	0.639 0.580
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.973	0.944		0.919
<b>Eigenvalues (% of Variance)</b>	71.752	75.046		68.318
<b>KMO</b>	0.961	0.934		0.901
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>				
<i>Approx. Chi-Square</i>	4583.18	1355.1		1553.69
<i>df</i>	120	21		21
<i>Sig.</i>	0.000	0.000		0.000

## **5.9. STUDY 1.5 – BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF LUXURY BRAND ATTACHMENT**

A review of the literature indicates brand satisfaction as the antecedent and brand loyalty as the outcome of luxury brand attachment. Underpinned by the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (Oliver, 1980), brand satisfaction is defined as the consumers' post-purchase experience whether a particular brand fulfils the consumer's expectations. Past literature suggests that a pleasurable brand experience (i.e. brand satisfaction) generates affection (i.e. attachment) toward the brand (e.g., Belaid and Behi, 2011). In addition, studies largely posit brand loyalty as a key outcome of brand attachment (e.g. Park et al., 2010). Studies have utilised the Social Exchange Theory to conceptualise brand loyalty as the consumers' strong commitment to patronage a brand repeatedly (Oliver, 2010). Brand attachment elicits a sense of happiness and the consumers wish to prolong the relationship with brand (Aksoy et al., 2015). The luxury brand attachment is also expected to predict similar outcome in this study. Further, this study revisits the widely debated proposition whether satisfied consumers necessarily become brand loyal (e.g. Mittal, 2016). Thus, the following are hypothesised:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Brand satisfaction will have a significant positive influence on luxury brand attachment

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Luxury brand attachment will have a significant positive influence on brand loyalty

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Brand satisfaction will have a significant positive influence on brand loyalty

This study uses the responses (n=252) collected in the study 1.2. The screening questions ensured that the respondents owned and used Giorgio Armani sunglasses at least once in their life time (Appendix E). The subsequent sections included the 8-item brand satisfaction scale (Sahin et al., 2011) and 4-item brand loyalty scale (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003) scale. All items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree").

Structural Equation Modelling with AMOS 24.0 was used for testing the model and proposed hypotheses. The measurement model provided a good fit with  $\chi^2 = 117.057$ ,  $df = 51$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.295$ , RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.065, CFI = 0.975, and TLI = 0.968. Moreover, the composite reliabilities (Brand satisfaction: 0.867, Luxury brand

attachment: 0.951, and Brand loyalty: 0.865) and the AVE's (Brand satisfaction: 0.624, Luxury brand attachment: 0.762, and Brand loyalty: 0.763) provided internal consistency and convergent validity. The discriminant validity was achieved as the pair-wise inter-construct correlations were smaller than the square root of the AVE values for the construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The structural model also provided a very good model fit holding the same fit indices of the measurement model. All the three hypotheses were supported ( $p < 0.01$ ). Brand satisfaction positively influences luxury brand attachment ( $\beta = 0.786$ ,  $t = 10.281$ ) and brand loyalty ( $\beta = 0.208$ ,  $t = 2.708$ ). As postulated, luxury brand attachment has positive impact on brand loyalty ( $\beta = 0.697$ ,  $t = 9.215$ ). It is noteworthy that luxury brand attachment has a stronger (than brand satisfaction) impact on brand loyalty. The result reinforces the importance of luxury brand attachment with the notion that mere brand satisfaction might not be adequate to build brand loyalty. A summary of measurement model fit indices for study 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5 is presented in Table 5.5.

**Table 5.5: Measurement model fit indices**

	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\chi^2/df$	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>TLI</i>
<b>Study 1.3</b>	17.215	14.000	1.230	0.019	0.032	0.998	0.996
<b>Study 1.4</b>	401.731	195.000	2.060	0.060	0.060	0.963	0.956
<b>Study 1.5</b>	117.057	51.000	2.295	0.065	0.070	0.975	0.968

## 5.10. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale fulfils a number of key gaps in the luxury branding literature. As mentioned earlier, one of the key limitations with studies in luxury branding research is the lack of an accurate scale to measure luxury brand attachment and researchers have called for more accurate measures (e.g., Sung et al., 2015; S et al., 2016). This study fulfils this research gap by conceptualising and providing empirical support for the luxury brand attachment scale. This research establishes that luxury brand attachment is a unique construct that captures the essence of consumers' emotional connection to luxury brands. The luxury brand attachment scale provides an improved and more accurate measure for a better understanding of the consumer's attachment with luxury brands.

The usage of real-life advertisements as the survey stimuli provides ecological validity of the research. Similarly, surveying the luxury consumer panels and interviewing luxury branding academics and practitioners provide conceptual reliability of the construct. This research also validates the role of perceived self-congruence of consumers' luxury brand attachment. In addition, the predictive power of luxury brand attachment has been tested and it shows a significant positive correlation with consumer advocacy.

From a managerial viewpoint, the luxury brand attachment scale will facilitate the managers in segmenting the luxury consumers. This scale will be useful for luxury brand managers in three ways; (1) Luxury managers can *understand* the strength of the bond between consumer and luxury brand. (2) They can also *identify* the highly attached consumers who will not only remain loyal to brand but also advocate the brand to others (e.g., Tesla motor's customer story). Such consumer advocacy will increase the consumer base through attracting new consumers and will reduce the promotional expenditures. (3) Brand strategists can also *engage* the highly attached consumers in brand communities (e.g., travel for Louis Vuitton, horse riding for Hermes). Those consumers will act as the brand evangelists in the high net worth network. The recommendations from existing consumers are expected to results in a strong brand credibility to the potential consumers.

It has been apparent in the branding literature that highly attached consumers are willing to pay more for the brand, tend to switch less, get involved in brand-community, and show resilience to negative information about the brand (e.g., Japutra et al., 2014; Xie and Peng, 2009). All these behavioural intentions create a positive impact on the overall brand equity. Studies suggest that a strong and enduring psychological intimacy with the brand continuously provides a sense of joy, pleasure and happiness (e.g., Ben-Shahar, 2007; Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008) and thus the consumers are expected to continue the reciprocal relationship for an extended period of time (Aksoy et al., 2015). Thus, it would be easier for the luxury brand managers to identify and target highly attached consumers with personalised messages to maintain a strong bond with the brand. For example, the perceived sense of closeness with the brand can be strengthen by sending greetings on the consumers' personal

occasions (e.g. birthday). Additionally, exclusive offers and priority options to buy limited edition luxury products will reinforce the enduring affinity between the consumer and brand. Overall, building and maintaining a deep emotional connection between consumer and brand is vital for a long-term profitable customer relationship. The luxury brand attachment scale would be the strategic tool to measure the strength of the consumer-brand connection.

Luxury brand managers can also leverage the attachment in extending the brand portfolio. Consumers with high luxury brand attachment are expected to show positive attitude toward the new offerings from the parent brand. Thus, cultivating and nurturing a strong emotional bond with consumers will make a positive impact on the luxury brand's extension success.

Furthermore, the growth of counterfeit luxury products and popularity of affordable 'masstige' and 'massclusive' luxury brands have diluted the consumers' desire for exclusive luxury brands. Luxury brand managers should emphasise on building an emotional connection between the consumer and brand to protect and nourish the sense of exquisiteness offered by luxury brands. This invisible barrier will help protect the luxury brands from counterfeits, masstige and massclusive products.

Advertising managers can benefit from luxury brand attachment scale in several ways. They can understand which components of the measurement highly reflect the consumers' attachment to a particular luxury brand. Thereafter, that component can be portrayed in the advertising campaigns. For instance, *2015 Be Dior* advertising campaign illustrates a series of printed advertisements in which Jennifer Lawrence preciously holds the Dior handbag (Cichowski, 2015) and the execution of the message shows her passion and connection toward the brand. Another example could be Tom Ford's *Neroli Portofino 2011* campaign, which features a couple frolicking in the shower (Wischhover, 2011), builds on the consumers' perceived sense of joy and pleasure from the brand. Consumers' perceived luxury brand attachment might be enhanced by communicating the extreme beauty and delicacy (i.e. exquisiteness) of the luxury brand. Advertising campaigns may also render the luxury brand attachment by demonstrating storyboard on the inseparable bond between consumer and the luxury brand.

Another implication of luxury brand attachment would be to incorporate the consumers' perceived self-concept into the advertising messages. Although Malär et al. (2011) suggest authentic and aspirational branding for emotionally attached consumers, very little is known about the relationship between consumers' brand-self congruence and luxury brand attachment. Luxury managers need to identify which aspect of the consumers' perceived selves has greater impact on luxury brand attachment. Thereafter, the particular self (actual or ideal) should be reflected on the advertising campaign to reinforce the level of attachment.

### **5.11. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although a comprehensive approach was undertaken in the scale development process, there are few limitations of this research. First, this research tests the scale only across the affordable to intermediate luxury products. Additional research should test the scale for inaccessible luxury products (e.g. Rolls-Royce, Bentley). Second, the scale needs to be validated in the luxury services context (e.g. luxury hotel, spa). Third, this research focused on the publicly visible products, however it would be imperative to examine the generalisability of the scale for privately consumed luxury branded products (e.g. undergarments, perfume). Future research may consider invariance test for the scale between actual and aspirational luxury consumers. In addition, the impact of luxury brand attachment on brand trust, satisfaction, commitment, and other consumer-brand related constructs should be examined. Empirical support is also required to identify the moderating and mediating variables that may influence the relationships among the antecedents and outcomes of the luxury brand attachment.

## CHAPTER 6

# PREDICTORS AND OUTCOMES OF LUXURY BRAND ATTACHMENT

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This study aims to propose and examine a research framework for luxury brand attachment.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were collected from an online luxury consumer panel in Australia. A total of 431 valid and useable responses were collected and analysed through structural equation modelling.

**Findings** – The results reveal that consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. However, the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence was not significantly different. In addition, luxury brand attachment has been found to result consumer advocacy.

**Practical implications** – Luxury branding practitioners can benefit from the proposed research framework in segmenting and targeting the market efficiently. They can also utilise the aspects of luxury brand attachment into their marketing communication programs to enhance the consumer advocacy.

**Originality** – This is the first study to examine the luxury brand attachment with a research framework. The findings will provide meaningful insights for the luxury branding academics and practitioners.

**Key words:** Luxury brand attachment, Brand self-congruence, Consumer advocacy

## 6.1. INTRODUCTION

The practitioners in the luxury industry have recently emphasised on building a strong emotional connection between the consumers and brands (Canalichio, 2018). The president of the luxury automobile brand Cadillac has referred to his brand's competitive advantage of having a strong emotional connection with the consumers (Naughton, 2018). Advertising campaigns such as Dior's "*The Future is Gold*" often reflects the consumers' strong affection for the brand (Bain, 2016). The significance of the consumers' affective bond with brand has been reflected in product design as well. For instance, the 2018 Mercedes-Benz A-Class compact luxury hatchback includes a new media system for making the car 'a mobile assistant' with an expectation that consumers would develop an emotional attachment to the brand (Campbell, 2018).

From an academic standpoint, brand attachment has received notable attention over the last three decades. Studies in the early 1990s utilise the social-cognitive theories of the self and incorporate the possession of an object to conceptualise attachment in the study of consumer behaviour (e.g., Belk, 1988; Ball and Takasi, 1992). This idea has later been advanced with the argument that consumers may develop attachment to brands as well (Fournier, 1998; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). The subsequent research on this topic have focused on the consumers' brand self-connection (e.g., Park et al., 2006; Park et al., 2010) and emotional attachments to the brands (Thomson et al., 2005). The facet of emotional brand attachment has further been explained with consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence (Malär et al., 2011). Other studies have shed light on the impact of brand attachment on consumer-brand relationship from both utilitarian and hedonic perspectives (e.g., Belaid and Behi, 2011). In line with the perceived hedonic value, few studies have also investigated consumers' emotional attachments to luxury brands (e.g., Kim and Joung, 2016; Pourazad and Pare, 2014). Although these studies show interesting and insightful findings, few questions need to be addressed regarding the conceptualisation of the consumers' luxury brand attachment.

Traditionally, luxury brands are researched with having distinctive characteristics such as extravagant, exclusive, conspicuous, craftsmanship and so on (e.g. Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). Therefore, the perceived value and traits of the luxury

consumer-brand relationship are different from their non-luxury counterparts (Keller, 2009). Studies have indicated that consumers' attachment symbolic brands (i.e., luxury brand) deserve special attention (e.g., Malär et al., 2011; Kim and Joung, 2016). Therefore, the key question arises whether the general brand attachment measures accurately capture the essence of consumers' luxury brand attachment. This research posits that the outcome might be limited if emotional attachments to brands scale is used within luxury branding context. The speculation has been evident in the study by Kim and Joung (2016) that against the theoretical expectation, does not find significant relationship between luxury consumers' emotional attachments to brands and repurchase intention.

Besides the measurement issue, there exists limited research on the predictors, moderators and outcomes of the luxury brand attachment. The extant literature on consumers' affective bond to luxury brands has mostly focused around the core concepts of emotional attachments to brands and ignored the unique crux of luxury consumer brand interaction. These studies are primarily aimed at validating the impact of emotional attachments to brands on luxury consumers' brand trust, loyalty, satisfaction, and attitude (e.g., Pourazad and Pare, 2014). Thus, very little is known regarding the impact of consumers' self-image, public image, and self-esteem on their perceived self-congruence for luxury brands. Moreover, extant literature has not provided empirical support for the outcomes of luxury brand attachment rather are centred within limited behavioural outcomes. Therefore, it is imperative to re-examine the affluent consumers' long-term emotional connection to luxury brands and then identify the subsequent outcomes.

While the key aim is to develop a research framework for luxury brand attachment, this research further provides empirical supports to the understanding of the role of self-congruence (actual and ideal) on luxury brand attachment. Moreover, the outcome of the luxury brand attachment is investigated. The following sections of this paper review the relevant literature, develop the research hypotheses, describe the method of the study to test the hypotheses, report the results, and discuss the implications of the findings.

## **6.2. RELEVANT LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **6.2.1. Attachment theory**

Attachment theory has been conceptualised by John Bowlby in the 1950s. Since then it becomes a key paradigm in developmental psychology (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Holmes, 1993). The idea of attachment has also been applied and explained in the areas of social sciences (e.g., Cooper et al., 1998; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Schachner and Shaver, 2002). Scholars define attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (Bowlby, 1979). Holmes (1993, p.67) explains the phenomenon of attachment as the state of “when I am close to my loved one I feel good, when I am far away I am anxious, sad or lonely”. The pioneer literature in this area suggests that the primary human attachment relationship is formed between an infant and caregiver in the early stages (i.e. around seven months) of life (Harlow, 1958). The attachment relationship further develops the sense of proximity seeking and separation distress amongst the young children at the later stage of their life (e.g., Holmes, 1993).

The primary understanding of attachment theory was largely relevant to biological protection from threats (Ainsworth, 1982). As such the role of attachment deemed to be a source of safety and protection which in turn reduces anxiety (Heard and Lake, 1986). An attached relational interaction requires emotional comfort, reliance and ability to deal the negative effect in case of insecure attachments (Holmes, 1993). In line with this, Heard and Lake (1986) further argue that the attachment dynamics do not halt at childhood rather further develop to mature dependence (Fairbairn, 1952) and emotional autonomy (Holmes and Lindley, 1989). Whereas the sense of safety and protection (secure attachment) has been widely acknowledged as the key source of attachment in the early literature, the nature of attachment has been examined through several longitudinal studies (e.g., Thomas, 2000). Ainsworth’s (1969) ‘strange situation’ test added three types of insecure attachments into the domain: insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, and insecure-disorganised (See Ainsworth et al. (1978) for a review).

Weiss (1982) highlights three particular patterns and behavioural notions when a person is attached to and interacts with his/her significant others. The first pattern

iterates Bowlby's (1979) idea of 'proximity seeking' to a preferred figure. The second pattern is relevant to the conceptualisation of 'secure base' (Ainsworth, 1982) that focuses on the ambience provided by the attachment figure to the attached person. The final notion known as 'separation protest' refers to the enduring nature of the attachment whereby the people react to the loss of or distance from the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1979).

### **6.2.2. Self-expansion theory**

The process of self-expansion occurs in the intimate relationships in which one person includes another into his/her concept of the self (Aron and Aron, 1986). People self-expand with a motivation to get resources that would help in achieving some particular goals and provide higher level of efficacy (Aron et al., 2001). When people continue a friendship for a long time, they ignore the downside of the friend (e.g., Aron and Fraley, 1999). Tesser et al. (1988) show that people feel relationship partners' success as their own achievement and take ownership of the accomplishment. Self-expansion also reflects the mutual trust and confidence between the partners and strengthens the sense of relational proximity (Aron et al., 2001).

Marketing studies often argue that consumers' self-expansion to the brands is represented through the matching between the consumer and brand image (Hong and Zinkhan, 2006; Sirgy, 1982). The more congruence are felt, the stronger relationship is built between the consumer and brand (e.g., Reimann and Aron, 2009; Trump and Brucks, 2012). However, strong personification of the brand is important to utilise the explanatory power of self-expansion theory in consumer-brand relationship (Huang and Mitchell, 2014). The process of self-expansion starts with a comparison of a person's current state (actual self) and desired state (ideal self), and if the person feels that the desired state will improve the person's actual self, he/she will be motivated to self-expand for including others into the current self (Aron and Aron, 1986).

Social psychologists also propose a self-related motive called 'self-improvement' which is relevant to person's desire for 'self-expansion' and 'self-verification' (Taylor et al., 1995). Few marketing studies on consumer brand attachment (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) utilise these two theories as the motivation behind emotional connection to the

brand. However, the major line of work on human attachment argue that the sense safety is the core of attachment and therefore self-expansion motivation is strongly linked with attachment model (e.g. Bowlby, 1969; Shaver and Hazan, 1993). Such self-expansion results intimacy and creates the feeling of understanding, care and the inner-most self-validation for the partners in relationship (Reis and Shaver, 1988).

Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006) argue that self-expansion results enhanced sense of the self and greater self-efficacy as the expansion helps the person to achieve new skill, knowledge and resources. If the persons expand themselves to others and feel an improved sense of self, they want to prolong the relationship. Such expansion requires investment/allocation of perspectives, resources and characteristics (Aron and Aron, 1986). Four areas of interest have been identified as the motivational source of self-expansion: physical and social influence, cognitive complexity, social and bodily identity, and an awareness of human's position in the universe (Aron and Aron, 1986). Self-expansion should reward the partner who in turn would be willing to maintain the satisfying and useful relationship for a longer time (Aron et al., 2001). Self-expansion is a key instrument of understanding the consumers' attachment to brands as it reflects the social and psychological nature of the consumers (e.g., Park et al., 2010). Self-expansion might be considered the underlying human process through which consumers connect themselves to a particular brand (Malär et al., 2011; Kaufmann et al., 2017).

### **6.2.3. Social identity theory**

Social identity theory is defined as “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). Social psychological theories argue that the social context is important in analyzing the application of social identity theory (e.g., Ellemers and Haslam, 2011). Social identity theory (SIT) postulates that people think themselves as a member of a social group and this notion of belongingness influences the individual's intergroup and social behavior (For a review, see – Hornsey, 2008). The SIT also suggests that people in a particular group interact with other members on the basis of their subjective beliefs

about the relation rather than the materialistic reliance or benefits (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997). The theory further explores the motivation behind belonging to a group and interacting within the group (Abrams and Hogg, 1990). In particular, cognitive awareness and emotional significance have been emphasized in understanding the people's intention to choose a group membership (Tajfel, 1974). Moreover, the members tend to be concerned about protecting and maintain the image and identity of the group (Turner and Brown, 1978).

In explaining the development of people's social identities over personal identities, scholars point out three psychological processes: social categorization, social comparison, and social identification (Hornsey, 2008). The social identification aspect of the SIT has received vast attention is marketing research for investigating consumer behaviour and consumer-brand relationship (e.g., Kleine et al., 1993; Reed 2002). As noted by Lam et al. (2010, p. 130), studies underpinned with the SIT show that "members of brand communities engage in collective behavior, such as rituals, to extol the virtues of their beloved brands and to help other brand identifiers". Other marketing studies have incorporated the SIT with the idea that social categorization and self-enhancement are the two socio-cognitive processes through which group members assist each other (Hogg et al., 1995). The self-enhancement aspect of the SIT is pertinent to the scope of this research in investigating the relationship amongst consumers' perceived self-congruence, luxury brand attachment, and consumer advocacy. Therefore, it is expected that the SIT will explain luxury consumers' attitude and behaviour as well as inter-group communications relevant to the consumer advocacy construct.

#### **6.2.4. Normative theory of altruism**

Human altruism is a purposeful and deliberate action performed toward increasing the welfare of other people (Batson, 1991). In doing so, the actor may have conscious or unconscious expectation of reward. Rushton and Sorrentino (1981) categorise the notion of conscious expectation of reward as the altruistic approach and the unconscious expectation of reward as the pseudo-altruistic approach (For a review, see – Feigin et al., 2014). Extant literature suggests that the pseudo-altruistic approach

is relevant to the people's egoistic motivation whereas the altruistic approach is motivated toward self-reward or relief of personal distress (Baston, 1987; Schwartz, 1993).

Relevant to the scope of this research, the normative theory of altruism states that people consider themselves as a part of the society and therefore they regard the helping behaviour as a social responsibility based on their past experience or present expectations (e.g., Berkowitz and Daniels, 1963). Piliavin et al. (1981) further emphasise that people are willing to help others whom they are dependent on. Such cognitive component of interpersonal relation often aligns with the personal standard of being benevolent to others (Schwartz and Howard, 1982). Graziano and Eisenberg (1997) point out that the individual's perceived self-efficacy and confidence are relevant to the subjective assessment of the altruistic actions. Few studies show that people with high self-esteem, internal locus of control, and self-competence tend to get involved in altruistic behaviour. Besides the social and personal standard, peoples' learning as well as arousal and affect work as the mechanism behind helping behaviour (e.g., Dovidio and Penner, 2001). Arousal and affect have further been identified as the key motivational factors behind altruism and helping behaviour (Dovidio, 1984). In particular, people with positive mood and cognition consider the prospective altruistic behaviour favourably and step out with the action thereby (Clark and Isen, 1982).

Numerous studies have shed light onto the arguments on whether altruistic behaviours involve reciprocity (For a review, see – Gintis et al., 2003). One stream of research argues that people only help those who helped them (Gouldner, 1960). However, this argument is only applicable in case people have the chance of meeting the helper again (Carnevale et al., 1982). Because, in many cases, the 'genuine' altruism delivered to unfamiliar persons does not involve any direct reciprocity (Bykov, 2017). The altruistic concerns for helping other people is often led by the empathetic feelings for other people as well (e.g., Einlof, 2008). Studies widely hold the view that even if the expected reward is not materialistic, people feel a sense of enjoyment through their altruistic activities (e.g., Maslow, 1970).

### **6.2.5. Luxury brands**

The definition of luxury brand differs due to the diverse socio-cultural context in which consumers evaluate the brand and the product category (Ko et al., 2018; Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2018; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) and the subjective interpretation of the term 'luxury' (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Luxury brand has been conceptualized with having unique traits such as emotional connection (Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (O'cass and Frost, 2002), and exclusivity, high transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). The hierarchy pyramid for luxury brand classification suggests the consumer's socio-economic class and purchasing power could provide a segmentation method in which the top level is inaccessible luxury, the mid-level is intermediate luxury and the bottom level is accessible luxury (e.g., Alleres, 1990; De Barnier et al., 2012).

Regardless of the lack of consensus regarding a unique definition, the conceptualisation of luxury brands shares some unique traits such as emotional connection (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (O'cass and Frost, 2002; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), and exclusivity, high transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Kim, 2018; Dubois et al, 2001; Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). Extant literature explains the luxury brand consumption from a personal aspect (Dubois and Laurent, 1994), interpersonal aspect (Mason, 1992), and socio-economic and political aspect (e.g., Hennigs et al., 2012). It is suggested that luxury brand consumption boosts consumer's ego (Eastman et al., 1999) and social recognition (Jiang and Cova, 2012). These factors indicate that consumers' attachment to the luxury brands tend to be different from brand attachment in general.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the motivation behind luxury brand consumption. The symbolic value of luxury brands has been associated with consumer's self-identity in a considerable number of studies (e.g. Holt, 1995; Dittmar, 1994). For instance, Hung et al. (2011) find that experiential and symbolic values influence the purchase intention for luxury brands. Although symbolic and functional value may vary according to consumers' perception (Berthon et al., 2009), consumers around the world buy luxury brands not only for utilitarian values but also for social, symbolic, self-expressive and relational values (e.g., Doss and Robinson, 2013; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010).

Research on luxury consumer-brand relationships shows the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers' purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). Wang et al. (2010) identify eight motives behind luxury consumption: self-actualization, product quality, social comparison, others' influence, investment for future, gifting, special occasions, and emotional purchasing. In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012).

#### **6.2.6. Luxury brand attachment**

The literature has not provided a definition of luxury brand attachment until now. Therefore, this study adapts and adopts conceptualisation of 'attachment' from the field of psychology and marketing. The psychological theories explain attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (e.g., Bowlby, 1979; Hazan and Shaver, 1994). In marketing literature, brand attachment is defined as a long-term and commitment oriented tie between the consumer and the brand (Esch et al., 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

A review on brand attachment literature results four major streams of research. The first stream focuses on the possession and extended self. Research in this stream show that there is a relationship between brand possession and sense of self (Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Such possession and brand self-connection generate love, passion, and intimacy toward the brand (e.g., Forunier, 1998; Holt, 2002). The second stream known as Connection-Automaticity-Attachment (CAA) explains brand attachment as the combined outcome of 'strong self-brand linkages and automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand' (Park et al., 2006, p. 9). The third stream of research is an advancement of the CAA model by Park et al. (2010). The authors provide a new conceptual and methodological approach to brand attachment known as Connection-Prominence Attachment Model (CPAM). The CPAM conceptualises brand attachment with two critical indicators: a) brand-self connection

and b) the prominence of brand-related thoughts and feelings. The fourth stream of research originated by Thomson et al. (2005) emphasises on the emotional aspects of the attachment and name the construct as emotional attachments to brands. Later on, Malär et al. (2011) validate the construct with identifying consumers' perceived brand self-congruence as the predictor of emotional brand attachment.

The conceptualization of luxury brand demonstrates that the inherent traits of luxury brands are very unique and the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (e.g., Murray, 2016; Tsai, 2005). Thus, it is very clear that there are significant differences between general brand attachment and luxury brand attachment. Past studies have applied the emotional attachments to brands in the luxury product category (e.g., Pourazad and Pare, 2014); however, these studies were limited to consumers' brand attachment levels rather than consumers' luxury brand attachment. Scholars have shown that brand attachment is an emotional connection between the consumers and the brands (Radon, 2012). Past studies show that brand attachment could lead to loyalty, repeat purchase and positive word of mouth (Assiouras et al., 2015). Further, Park et al. (2010) highlight brand-self connection and brand prominence as the two major drivers of brand attachment. It is predicted in this research that luxury brand attachment could have a similar impact on these behavioural measures.

Malär et al. (2011) examine the role of consumers' self-image and brand image in exploring emotional brand attachment. The authors have used two types of self-congruency to predict brand attachment: actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence. The study suggests that consumers' self-congruence and product involvement are positively associated with emotional brand attachment. This result is consistent with the finding of Chaplin and John (2005) which concludes that consumer's self-concept is an integral component in creating emotional attachment to the brand. In sum, majority of the previous research have argued that consumer self-congruence drives emotional attachments to brands (e.g. Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005).

Consumers seek hedonism, conspicuousness, quality and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will

fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). In addition, the luxury brand attachment is expected to result consumer's advocacy for that specific brand.

Past literature indicates that brand attachment in general encompasses for rational and emotional perspectives of consumers (Belaid and Behi, 2011). The rational factors are reflected through the consumers' trust and commitment to the brand (e.g., Park et al., 2006; Park et al., 2010; Oliver, 1999; Dick and Basu, 1994) whereas the emotional components are relevant to the consumers' deep feelings for the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Branding literature suggests that the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (Jiang and Cova, 2012) and consumers attachment to luxury brands are driven by the emotional factors such as affection, passion, love, connection etc. (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2017).

Research on luxury consumer-brand relationships shows the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers' purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). These distinctiveness of luxury brands clearly indicates that consumers' emotional connection to luxury brand would be very much different and calls for a unique measurement tool. Build on this argument and considering the predominant emotion laden connection between consumers and luxury brands, luxury brand attachment is defined as "the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand".

#### **6.2.7. Consumers' brand self-congruence**

Consumers' brand self-congruence is the conformity between a consumer's self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982). Self-image (also known as self-concept) is defined as "the totality of individual's thought and feelings having reference to himself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). Early research in this domain identify two types

of self-image; actual self-image refers to how people see themselves and ideal self-image explains how people would like to see themselves (e.g., Wylie, 1979; Belch, 1978; Belch and Landon, 1977). The duality dimension of self-concept has later been advanced by Sirgy (1979, 1980) who suggests four components of the construct: actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image. While the social self-image (also known as ‘looking-glass self’ or ‘presenting self’) denotes how a person thinks other members of the society perceive him/her (Sirgy, 1982), the ideal social self-concept refers to the way a person desires to be perceived by others (Maheshwari, 1974). Past studies on consumers’ brand self-congruence have found that the actual and ideal-self effects are stronger than the social and ideal social self-congruence (For a review, see – Kim and Hyun, 2013) and perhaps therefore, majority of the marketing studies consider actual and ideal self as the two primary components of self-concept (e.g., Hosany and Martin, 2012).

The self-congruence theory postulates that consumption choices are set by the matching between consumers’ self-concept and the value-expressive attributes of a brand (Sirgy et al., 1991). Based on this argument, marketing scholars theorize the self-congruence construct in the study of consumer behaviour with the notion that if the brand image or personality matches with a consumer’s personality trait, the consumer will prefer that brand (e.g. Boksberger et al., 2011; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Aaker, 1999). Self-congruence motivates the consumers to process information (Mangleburg et al., 1998) and the consumers often buy self-expressive brands to validate their own image (Aaker, 1996). Thus, the self-congruence explains and predicts difference aspects of consumer behaviour such as brand attitude, product use and ownership, willingness to buy, retail loyalty and so on (e.g., Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy, 1982). From the context of advertising effectiveness, Hong and Zinkhan (2012) find that the target audiences’ image-congruent appeals are more effective than incongruent appeal for resulting consumers’ behavioural intention such as brand preference and repeat purchase. Experiential marketing connects consumers’ perceived selves with the brand, provides memorable brand experience, and thus builds emotional attachments to brands (Schmitt et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2005).

Vigolo and Ugolini (2016) point out two methods of measuring consumers’ brand self-congruence. The first method, known as the global measurement, requires the

respondents rating the congruence as a holistic, gestalt-like construct. Malär et al. (2011) have used this method with scale items such as “the personality of brand X is a mirror image of me (actual self). The second method, known as absolute score method, calculates the congruence from the absolute arithmetic difference between perceived brand personality and the consumer’s personality. The smaller the absolute value, the higher the perceived brand self-congruence (e.g., Hosany and Martin, 2012, Park and Lee, 2005). Research shows the predictive power of the global measurement method is stronger than that of the absolute score method (Sirgy et al., 1997). Besides, the absolute score method has been criticised on the ground that it inflates the reliability score and may not reflect the respondents’ actual evaluation (Peter et al., 1993).

Existing literature largely supports that consumers buy luxury brand to extend their self-image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer’s actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty within luxury branding context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010).

The key characteristics of luxury brands such as social status, conspicuousness, hedonic value, and exclusivity provide the consumers a way of sensory gratification which is not offered by non-luxury brands (Gistri et al., 2009). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that helps them to obtain the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As self-congruence can enhance consumer’s affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated into the brand attachment construct (Chaplin and John, 2005).

### ***6.2.7.1. Actual self-congruence***

Literature on brand attachment has widely established the impact of consumers' perceived actual self-congruence on brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). The major streams of research on brand attachment emphasise on the brand possession and sense of self (e.g., Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992), automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand (Park et al., 2006) and emotional connection to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005; Malär et al., 2011). Thus, the conceptualisation of brand attachment focuses on the incorporation of the brand into the consumers' own self. The sense of oneness generated between the consumer and the brand develops a cognitive connection and in turn results brand attachment (e.g., Park et al., 2010). Numerous studies have revealed that consumers buy the products that are consistent with their perceived actual self-image (Belch and Landon, 1977, Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy et al., 1997). Underpinned with self-verification motive, Malär et al. (2011) argue that consumers tend to behave in a consistent way of how they see themselves; and therefore, the consumers buy the brands that match their actual self. Furthermore, Malär and her associates (2011) compare the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment and find that the brands with actual self-congruence create higher level attachment.

Studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Fionda and Moore (2009) consider symbolic value as the most prominent driver behind the purchase intention of luxury brand, because consumers want to attain social status and self-esteem through the consumption of luxury brand. This phenomenon is termed as 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed in the luxury branding literature (e.g. O'cass and Frost, 2002; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brand for social status and aspirational values. Also, luxury brands are used as a means to enhance the consumers' physical attractiveness and social acceptance (Durvasula et al., 2001). Netemeyer et al. (1995) categorize such desire as physical vanity and achievement vanity which are basically excessive concerns for physical appearance and personal achievements respectively.

Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer's actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty in luxury brand context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Existing literature supports that consumers buy the luxury brand that match their personality and brand image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Based on these empirical findings and referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** The higher the actual self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

#### **6.2.7.2. Ideal self-congruence**

Aron and Aron's (1986, 1996) self-expansion model is considered the theoretical foundation for conceptualizing brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). Hong and Zinkhan (1995) argue that consumers attempt to attain the ideal state if there is a gap between the perceived actual self-image and ideal self-image. Thus, the ideal self works as a motivational factor and influences consumer behaviour. Several studies have examined the role of ideal self-image in product evaluation and purchase intention. For instance, Hong and Zinkhan (1995) find that ideal self-image is a stronger indicator than actual self-image for predicting consumers' brand preference for different types of products (e.g. shampoos, car, etc.). In a study on consumers' preferences for houses, Malhotra (1988) also shows that the ideal self-image plays more significant role than the actual self-image does. From the context of celebrity-consumer congruence, Choi and Rifon (2012) find ideal self-image has stronger role than actual self-image on consumers' purchase intention. Within the service evaluation context, ideal self-congruence has been identified as an important indicator customer satisfaction and overall attitude (e.g., Ekinici and Riley, 2003).

Ideal self-concept has also been found more relevant to publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996) and conspicuous products (Munson, 1974). Against the theoretical expectation, consumers' ideal self-congruence has been identified as a stronger predictor than actual self-congruence of repurchase intention for non-luxury intimate apparel (Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016). Thwaites and Ferguson (2012) note that luxury brand consumers seek to display the brand name to other members of the society. Such conspicuous consumption is explained with the need for uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin, 1977) which focuses on the consumers' attempt to differentiate themselves from others through material goods (e.g., Knight and Kim, 2007; Tian et al., 2001). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that help them to obtain the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As the self-congruence can enhance the consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated into the analysis of the luxury consumer-brand relationship (Chaplin and John, 2005). Based on these empirical findings and referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** The higher the ideal self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

#### **6.2.8. Luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy**

Attachment literature in the field of Psychology have demonstrated that commitment is a major construct for understanding the strength and quality of the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1991). In line with this, Park et al. (2009) have argued that brand commitment and commitment related behaviour are the key outcomes of brand attachment whereby consumers aspire to maintain a long-term relationship with the brand. Later on, Park et al. (2010) have broaden the outcomes as the consumers' 'intention to perform difficult behaviour' such as continuously patronising the brand through repurchase, paying more, promoting the brand, defending the brand and so on. Numerous marketing studies consider brand attachment a key indicator of the consumer-brand relationship quality (e.g., Fournier 1998; Fullerton, 2005).

Existing literature identifies several behavioural intentions as the outcomes of the consumers' emotional attachments to brands. The widely accepted argument in this regard is that the emotionally attached consumers become brand loyal which in turn creates positive impact on brand equity (e.g. Hwang and Kandampully, 2012; So et al., 2013; Malär et al., 2011). Furthermore, highly attached consumers have been found to develop strong trust and commitment toward the brand (Belaid and Behi, 2011).

The nature of luxury brands and its niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, while consumers consider buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands, they rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). Such peer recommendations activate over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g. Algesheimer et al., 2005). Marketing scholars and industry experts have noted that luxury brands require strong consumer to consumer engagement to be successful in the increasingly competitive and interconnected market (e.g., Chiou and Droge, 2006; Gomelsky, 2016).

Consumer advocacy refers to exchanging market information and counselling other consumers so that they have a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). Jayasimha and Billore (2016) conceptually differentiate consumer advocacy from customer advocacy with the notion that customer advocacy is a firm-level construct whereas consumer advocacy is the sharing of market information amongst consumers. To some extent, consumer advocacy is similar to the helping behaviour (market mavenism and altruistic helping behaviour) that benefits others in their purchases and consumption (Price et al., 1995; Feick et al., 1986). Theoretically, consumer advocacy differentiates itself from other similar constructs (e.g., word-of-mouth, brand advocacy) with the notion that it encompasses the consumers' willingness to assist others in having a positive brand experience (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Billore, 2016). Consumer advocacy is more relevant to luxury brands for several reasons. First, luxury consumers seek information about the craftsmanship, artisan, and other consumers' memorable experience while evaluating a luxury brand (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). At this point, consumer advocacy plays

an important role in luxury consumers' purchase decision. Second, personal source of information has been considered more reliable than the company generated messages in marketing (e.g., Klein et al., 2016). This conception is expected to be more relevant for luxury consumers. Third, the affluent consumers tend to switch the brands frequently and cannot be attracted with typical loyalty card or cashback opportunities (Schneider, 2017). To address this, luxury brands can initiate consumer advocacy to and generate trust and credibility from consumers by providing organic and reliable information about the brand.

Past studies have demonstrated that brand attachment motivates the consumers to repurchase the product (e.g. Assiouras et al., 2015; Japutra et al., 2014; 2018b), revisit the website or the store (e.g. Jones et al., 2006) and also to promote the brand to others (e.g. Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Besides, strong brand attachment influences the consumers to ignore the downside of the brand, defend the brand in social networks and thereby prove the sturdy emotional connection to the brand (Japutra et al., 2014). Furthermore, consumers with a higher degrees of brand attachment tend to ignore negative information regarding that specific brand and they encourage other people to buy it (Xie and Peng, 2009). Overall, the behavioural intentions like positive word of mouth, promoting the brand, defending the brand, and brand community engagement are considered affective reflection of consumer advocacy (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011).

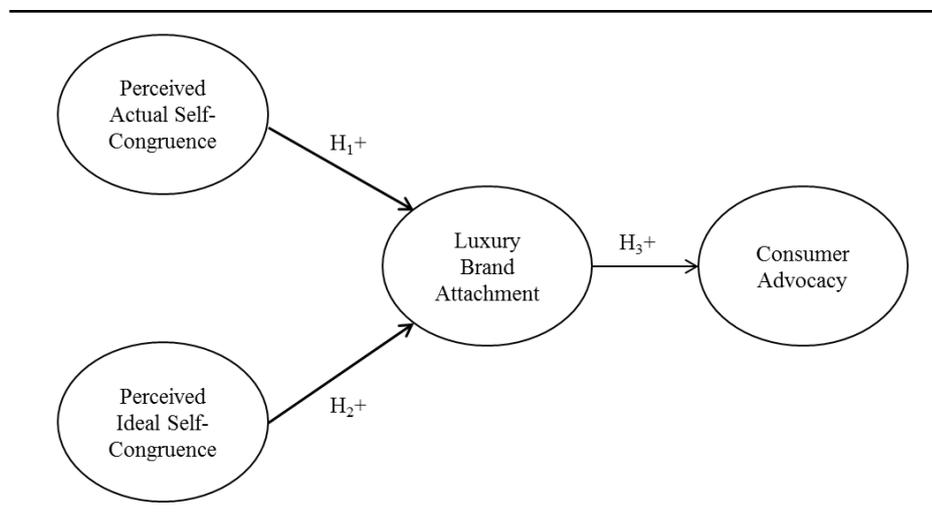
Relevant to the context of the luxury brand attachment, past studies have examined the luxury consumer-brand interaction within the context of brand trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Shukla et al., 2016; Song et al., 2012). However, as noted in the literature review section earlier, the nature of luxury brands as well as the niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, , luxury consumers rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations while buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). The activities related to peer recommendations are operationalised through over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). An investigation into relevant literature suggests that consumer's emotional bond to the brand is a key pre-requisite for

advocacy (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wilder, 2015). Therefore, based on the aforementioned empirical findings and referring back to the social identity theory and normative theory of altruism, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** The higher the luxury brand attachment, the higher the consumer advocacy.

The hypothesised relationships are presented in the proposed research model (Figure 6.1)

**Figure 6.1: Proposed research model**



### 6.3. METHOD

#### 6.3.1. Study design

A pool of 38 product categories from 32 brands was populated to select the survey stimulus of this study. First, a focus group was conducted with luxury branding researchers (n=3) who selected 5 brands (Giorgio Armani, Dolce&Gabbana, Chanel, Prada, and Gucci) and 4 product categories (sunglasses, handbags, jeans, and shoes) as the potential stimulus. Next, a pre-test was conducted among 67 luxury consumers (Male = 31, Female = 36, Average age = 27). The results suggested sunglasses from the brand Giorgio Armani (M = 5.50, SD = 1.07) and Dolce&Gabbana (M = 5.43, SD = 1.20) as the gender neutral, affordable, and appropriate luxury brands to be used as the stimulus in the survey of this study. The symbolic values of the brands and products also supported the utilisation of the category in this study (Perry and

Kyriakaki, 2014). Moreover, past research on luxury branding used sunglasses as the product category as well (e.g., Liu et al., 2012; O’Cass and Frost, 2002). Data were collected from a global panel of luxury consumers who previously used Giorgio Armani or D&G sunglasses. The usage of the product was assured through a filter question in the beginning of the survey questionnaire. Thereafter, the respondents were presented with an advertisements of the brand. The advertisements were manipulated to control the aesthetic effect. These respondents received email invitations to complete the online survey, hosted by a large university in the Western Australia.

### **6.3.2. Measures**

The respondents’ ‘brand likeability’ was tested as a screening question with the 3-item measurement scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) developed by Martin and Stewart (2001). This was done with the notion that “self-concept congruence is greater for most preferred product brands than for least preferred product brands” (Dolich, 1969, 80). Only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. The subsequent section included scale items for the four key constructs of this study. Sirgy et al.’s (1997) 5-item scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) was used to measure actual self-congruence as well as was adapted to measure the ideal self-congruence. The luxury brand attachment (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) was measured by 7-item scale developed in the chapter 5 of this research. The 5-item consumer advocacy scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) was adapted from Chelminski and Coulter (2011). All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 7 representing “strongly agree”. The final section of the survey asked the basic demographic characteristics – gender, age, income, education, and marital status of the respondents (Appendix F).

### **6.3.3. Sample**

A total of 550 consumers were contacted and the yield resulted 431 valid and useable responses. Of the sample collected, 50.8% were female, 80.5% aged between 18-30 years age bracket, and 62.6% had an undergraduate degree and above. Note that the majority of the sample (18-30 age group) mirrors the segment that has been recognized by past studies as the most likely demographics to purchase luxury goods and services

(Sarkar, 2017; Hung et al, 2011). A summary of the respondents' profile is presented in the Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Respondents' profile**

Sample Characteristic	Percentage		
	Pooled Sample (n=431)	D&G Sunglasses (n=208)	Giorgio Armani Sunglasses (n=223)
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	49.2	46.6	51.6
Female	50.8	53.4	48.4
<b>Age</b>			
18 – 20 years	2.3	3.8	0.9
21 – 25 years	55.5	66.3	45.3
26 – 30 years	22.7	12	32.7
31 – 40 years	10.4	7.2	13.5
Above 40 years	9	10.6	7.6
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married	23.4	12.5	33.6
Single	65.9	74.0	58.3
De-facto	2.1	1.9	2.2
Divorced	2.6	2.9	2.2
Others	6	8.7	3.6
<b>Education</b>			
Secondary/High School	10	12.5	7.6
Diploma/Certificate	25.3	28.4	22.4
Undergraduate	41.3	45.2	37.7
Postgraduate Degree	21.3	13.0	29.1
Other	2.1	1.0	3.1

#### **6.4. RESULTS**

Structural equation modelling (SEM) with the IBM SPSS AMOS 24.0 was used to test the hypothesised relationships and proposed model. Several underlying assumptions for the SEM were checked. An initial Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis and Varimax rotation resulted four unidimensional constructs with an eigenvalue of 1.49 explained 64.02% of the variance and the factor loadings ranged from 0.63 to 0.81. Thus, all the 22 items were retained for further analysis. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.91, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity index was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The Cronbach's Alphas were 0.85 and above for the four constructs.

Additional examination on the collinearity statistics assured the absence of extreme multicollinearity as the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) ranged from 1.41 to 1.6 (Hair et al., 2010). The univariate normality assumption was satisfied because all skewness values associated with each item were within the range of  $\pm 1.96$  (-0.72 to 0.78) and the absolute values of kurtosis were less than 2 (0.18 to 1.24). The common method variance was examined through Harman's single-factor test for all measurement items (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An exploratory factor analysis with one-factor extraction and unrotated solution revealed the single factor accounting for 39.11% of the total variance, which meets the recommended threshold of less than 50% (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 2001; Craighead et al., 2011; MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Moreover, common latent factor method was applied to test the common variance among the observed variables. The result did not show any significant differences among the standardized regression weights. These findings suggest that common method bias was deemed non-problematic in this study.

The two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was followed to test the hypothesised relationship. First, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the measurement model was tested to assess whether the measurement items had the appropriate properties to represent each construct. Once the measurement model achieved a satisfactory fit, the structural model was tested. As the normality assumption was met earlier, this study used the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method for the CFA. The reliability and validity of each construct were tested by running the confirmatory factor analysis, optimizing the measurement model and

purifying the scale items. One item each from actual self-congruence, ideal self-congruence, and consumer advocacy was removed due to low loading or high modification indices. However, all the seven items were retained for luxury brand attachment.

The goodness-of-fit indices, path coefficients, explanatory power and parsimony were tested for the measurement model and structural model. As suggested by Kline (2011), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) were assessed on the threshold values of 0.90, whereas the maximum acceptable value for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.08. In addition, the ideal  $\chi^2/df$  value was assessed as less than 3 (Kline, 2011) and the benchmark for standardised root mean residual (SRMR) was less than 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

The measurement model resulted good fit with  $\chi^2 = 364.72$ ,  $df = 140$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.60$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.06$ ,  $SRMR = 0.04$ ,  $CFI = 0.95$ , and  $TLI = 0.94$ . The composite reliability (CR) is above 0.80 for all the measurement constructs, and thus the internal consistencies are assured (Hair et al., 2010). The convergent validity is achieved as the average variance extracted (AVE) value for the constructs are above 0.50 (Malhotra, 2010). The model also achieved discriminant validity, as all the square root of the AVE values were higher than the pair-wise inter-construct correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). A summary of the convergent and discriminant validity of the construct measures is presented in the Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2: AVE and discriminant validity of construct measures.**

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. Actual self -congruence	<b>0.717</b>			
2. Ideal self-congruence	0.694	<b>0.76</b>		
3. Consumer advocacy	0.635	0.636	<b>0.752</b>	
4. Luxury brand attachment	0.574	0.417	0.637	<b>0.76</b>
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.514	0.577	0.565	0.577

Note: Figures in the diagonal (values given in bold) are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE); those below the diagonal are the correlations between the constructs.

A result summary for measurement model is presented in the Table 6.3. The final structural model also achieved strong fit. The model fit indices are:  $\chi^2 = 365.11$ ,  $df =$

139,  $\chi^2/df = 2.63$ ; RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.05, CFI = 0.95, and TLI = 0.94. Upon examination of the solution's reliability, the Cronbach's alpha figure of 0.85 represents strong internal consistency. Each of the path coefficient was statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 6.3: Result summary for measurement model**

	Loadings	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha
<b>Actual self-congruence</b>		0.81	0.84
This brand is consistent with how I see myself.	0.60		
This brand reflects who I am.	0.75		
The kind of person who typically uses this brand is very much like me.	0.66		
This brand is a mirror image of me.	0.84		
<b>Ideal self-congruence</b>		0.85	0.86
This brand is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	0.72		
People who I would like to be like use this brand.	0.73		
The kind of person whom I would like to be typically uses this brand.	0.80		
This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	0.79		
<b>Luxury Brand Attachment</b>		0.91	0.91
I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand.	0.79		
I am deeply in love with this luxury brand.	0.78		
I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand.	0.78		
When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy.	0.78		
I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want.	0.80		
I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available.	0.74		
I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand	0.63		
<b>Consumer Advocacy</b>		0.84	0.83
It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury brand.	0.82		
I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brand.	0.70		
I suggest others about this luxury brand.	0.82		
I give suggestions to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience.	0.64		

As shown in the Table 6.4, consumers' perceived actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence had a significant positive impact on the luxury brand attachment. Thus H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> were supported. The result also supported H<sub>3</sub> that luxury brand attachment had a significant positive impact on consumer advocacy. Additionally, the relative impact of actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment was examined and the impacts were not significantly different. In this purpose, a chi-square difference test between a constrained and an unconstrained model was conducted. The path coefficients of actual self-congruence to luxury brand attachment and ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment were constrained to be equal under a constrained model. The result reveals no significant difference between the two models ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.17$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.68$ ).

**Table 6.4: Summary of the hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Relationship	$\beta$	t-test	<i>p</i>
<b>H<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Actual self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment</b>			
	Full model	0.45	6.30	<0.001
	Dolce&Gabbana	0.49	4.13	<0.001
	Giorgio Armani	0.40	4.09	<0.001
<b>H<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Ideal self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment</b>			
	Full model	0.38	5.53	<0.001
	Dolce&Gabbana	0.35	3.63	<0.001
	Giorgio Armani	0.40	4.04	<0.001
<b>H<sub>3</sub></b>	<b>Luxury brand attachment → Consumer advocacy</b>			
	Full model	0.66	11.91	<0.001
	Dolce&Gabbana	0.67	7.78	<0.001
	Giorgio Armani	0.62	8.58	<0.001

To validate the proposed luxury brand attachment model, a multi-group analysis was conducted across two different brands. In doing so, the data were divided into two separate groups: Dolce and Gabbana sunglasses (n = 208) and Giorgio Armani sunglasses (n = 223). The structural model for both brands achieved acceptable model fit. The model fit indices for Dolce and Gabbana sunglasses are:  $\chi^2 = 286.57$ ,  $df = 139$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.06$ ; RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.07, CFI = 0.92, and TLI = 0.90. The

postulated three hypotheses were supported as well. A chi-square difference test showed no significant difference in the relative impact of actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.19$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ). The structural model for Giorgio Armani sunglasses supported the three hypotheses and the following model fit indices are:  $\chi^2 = 294.36$ ,  $df = 139$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.12$ ; RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.05, CFI = 0.95, and TLI = 0.94. Again, no significant difference was found between the relative impact of actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.01$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.92$ ).

The multi-group analysis also compared the structural models for the two brands at model level and path level. A chi-square difference test did not show any significant difference at the model level comparison ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 30.71$ ,  $\Delta df = 18$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). Next, the chi-square difference tests on the path level comparison also showed non-significant results: actual self-congruence to luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.12$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.73$ ), ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.09$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.77$ ), and luxury brand attachment to consumer advocacy ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 1.273$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.26$ ). Thus, the results were consistent across full model and multi-group analyses.

## **6.5. DISCUSSION**

This study aims to examine the impact of consumers' actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment as well as test the influence of luxury brand attachment on consumer advocacy. The hypothesised relationships were tested across sunglasses of two different brands (i.e., Giorgio Armani and Dolce&Gabbana). As highlighted in the result section, consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. Consequently, attached luxury consumers are inclined to get involved in consumer advocacy.

The first finding that consumers' perceived actual self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment ( $H_1$ ) validates the argument that consumers develop a strong connection with the brand that matches with their apparent actual-self. As pointed out by Malär et al. (2011), consumers are motivated to verify and maintain their prevailing self-concept and therefore they consume the self-

congruent brand. Such perceived benefit motivates the consumers' self-expansion to the brand and generates a sense of psychological proximity and emotional attachment to the brand. The relationship between actual self-congruence and emotional brand attachment is highly relevant within luxury branding context. Traditionally, luxury brands are well known and recognised for providing social status, uniqueness, and other socio-psychological benefits. The affluent consumers who identify themselves within the luxury bracket would feel an immense desire for the brands that are congruent with their current self-image. In turn, they not only hold an attachment and positive attitude toward the luxury brand but also purchase and use the brand (e.g., Liu et al., 2012, Giovannini et al., 2015). The finding of the H<sub>1</sub> is consistent with the studies by Kaufmann et al. (2016) and Kim and Joung (2016) that reveal a significant positive relationship between luxury consumers' actual brand self-congruence and emotional attachment to luxury brands.

The result of the H<sub>2</sub> shows that consumers' perceived ideal self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. This finding reflects the luxury consumers' perceived difference between their actual and ideal self-image that they want to minimize through consuming ideally self-congruent luxury brands. Past studies on consumers' emotional brand attachment argue that the discrepancy between the perceived actual and ideal-self motivates consumers to improve the image through self-enhancement strategies (e.g., Malär et al., 2011). Influenced by self-enhancement motive, consumers aspire to consume the brand that would help them achieving the desired ideal state. Thus, consumers develop a sense of strong psychological closeness to and attachment with the brand (e.g., Japutra et al., 2018a). Although tested within a counterfeit luxury branding context, Kaufmann et al. (2016) find a significant positive relationship between luxury consumers' ideal brand self-congruence and emotional attachment to luxury brands. Furthermore, consumers' perceived ideal-self congruence with the brand increases emotional reliance and reduces separation anxiety (Kim et al., 2005). Thus, the consumers' perceived ideal-self may generate luxury brand attachment through 'aspirational and compensatory mechanisms' (Kaufmann et al., 2016). Overall, the findings of the H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> are consistent with the notion that brands can often build and maintain the consumers' self-image that might be expressed publicly or privately (e.g., Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

Although not postulated within a hypothesis, this study further investigates the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. In contrast to Malär et al. (2011), no significant difference has been found on the relative impact of self-congruencies on brand attachment. There are two plausible explanations of the invariant impacts. First, the context of this study is set within luxury brands whereas other studies (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) have considered a wide range of brands from fast moving consumer goods, retailing, services, and so on. In line with Kaufmann et al. (2016), this study argues that consumers' actual and ideal self-congruence both would have a similar impact on luxury brand attachment. Second, the measurement scale used to measure the consumers' attachment to brands are different. Thomson et al.'s (2005) emotional brand attachment scale is conceptually different from luxury brand attachment scale and so this study perhaps better captures the essence of luxury consumers' self-congruence and brand attachment. Therefore, the operationalisation of luxury brand attachment in this study provides a better understanding of the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence.

The results of this study also show that luxury brand attachment has significant positive impact on consumer advocacy (H<sub>3</sub>). This finding validates the affective commitment resulted through strong emotional connection to the brand. In particular, the findings echo the argument that consumers' emotional connection to a brand leads to advocacy for the brand (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Kemp et al., 2012). Studies on consumer-brand relationship state that consumers have inherent motive to share their brand experience with others. Such notion of experience sharing has been identified as positive word of mouth, market mavenism, brand community identification, commitment and engagement (e.g., Zhou et al., 2012). Past studies on luxury brands report that consumers' perceived self-congruence has positive impact on the perceived brand value, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty (e.g., Ha and Im, 2012; Liu et al., 2012). Because luxury brands are primarily targeted toward a very niche and affluent consumer segment, it has been evident in the academic research and industry report that luxury consumers rely heavily on recommendations from other consumers (e.g., Godey et al., 2016).

## **6.6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

This study results a number of theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment. The findings are expected to provide meaningful insights on luxury brand attachment that has not been delivered by past studies. Theoretically, this is the first study to conceptualize luxury brand attachment as a unique construct by using consumers' perceived self-congruence. The use of consumers' actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence provides a suitable dimension for luxury brand attachment because earlier research in this domain shows that consumers want to upgrade their actual self-image to ideal self-image through the consumption of luxury products. Moreover, incorporating consumer advocacy as the key outcome of luxury brand attachment is a new addition into the literature.

Methodologically, surveying the existing and potential luxury consumer panels provides conceptual soundness of the construct. This research validates the role of perceived self-congruence of consumers' luxury brand attachment. In addition, the predictive power of luxury brand attachment has been tested through revealing its significant positive correlation with consumer advocacy.

This study also provides practical insights for luxury brand managers. First, the luxury managers can understand how consumers develop bond with luxury brands on the basis of the perceived brand self-congruence. In particular, they can investigate which aspect of the self-congruence has stronger impact on the attachment for a particular luxury brand. Moreover, it would be imperative to understand the particular aspects of luxury brand attachment (e.g., love, passion, separation distress) that are relevant to the brand. Thus, the manager can incorporate these aspects into their marketing communication programs to enhance the consumers' luxury brand attachment.

The luxury brand attachment framework would help managers in segmenting the luxury consumers and identify the segments that have low, medium and high attachment. Thereafter, initiatives can be taken over elevating the level of attachment. On the other hand, consumers with strong attachment level can be motivated to get involved into consumer advocacy in both online and offline community. Luxury

managers can also strengthen the relationship by offering customised offer on the highly attached consumers' personal special occasions.

The emotional aspect of luxury brand attachment can be incorporated into the overall brand experience. For instance, campaigns such as 'Burberry kisses' and 'Volkswagen's SmileDrive' emphasise on the consumers' love, passion, and joy to enhance the intimacy with the brand through interactive experiences (Glaser, 2014). Luxury advertising managers can portray the actual and ideal self-images on the advertisements. Marketers may emphasise the brand performance (e.g., brand self-congruence) especially when consumers apply lexicographic decision rule, highest score on the most important attribute, in advertising appeal. In addition, the advertising message contents may emphasise on the consumers' self-images to make the appeal more relevant. For instance, Burberry rebranded itself successfully by emphasising on proper image congruence and emotional connection (e.g., Straker and Wrigley, 2016; Hope, 2017).

Finally, consumers' luxury brand attachment can be capitalised in extending the brand portfolio. Attached consumers are expected to have a positive attitude, preference and purchase intention for the newly offered brands. Besides, the consumers who can buy only the affordable luxury category can further be motivated to buy intermediate luxury products through building and nurturing luxury brand attachment. For instance, flanker brands like 'Miu Miu by Prada' are often targeted toward consumers who cannot afford high-end luxury products (i.e., Prada). Thus, a better understanding and incorporation of luxury brand attachment into the branding strategy would provide sustainable competitive advantage to the luxury brand.

## **6.7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are few limitations of this study. First, the context of the study is limited to sunglasses of two luxury brands. It would be imperative to examine whether the results are consistent across other product categories. In particular, intermediate and inaccessible luxury categories (e.g. Rolls-Royce, Bentley) need to be investigated. Future research may also validate the results across luxury services (e.g. luxury hotel,

spa), food, and wine. Moreover, this research has focused on the publicly visible products only. It would be imperative to examine the generalisability of the research model for privately consumed luxury branded products (e.g. undergarments, perfume). Moreover, this study does not consider the impacts of consumers' social self-congruence and ideal social self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. In addition, future research may also examine the impact of self-congruence on consumer advocacy as well as the mediating role of luxury brand attachment in between the self-congruence and consumer advocacy. Few other studies on consumers' attachment to brand suggest the moderating impact of related constructs such as public self-consciousness, self-esteem, need for uniqueness, and attachment style. Therefore, further research is warranted in these aspects.

## CHAPTER 7

### **SELF-CONGRUENCE AND LUXURY BRAND ATTACHMENT** *DOES PUBLIC SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS MODERATE?*

#### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** – This research aims to examine the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were collected from an online luxury consumer panel in Australia. A total of 290 valid and useable responses were collected and analysed through structural equation modelling.

**Findings** – The results reveal non-significant impact of public self-consciousness on the luxury brand attachment framework. In addition, this research validates that consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. However, the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence was not significantly different. In addition, luxury brand attachment has been found to result consumer advocacy.

**Practical implications** – The findings of this research suggest that public self-consciousness is not relevant to the consumers' luxury brand attachment. Rather, evoked emotion and self-congruence with the luxury brand need to be incorporated for building and enhancing luxury brand attachment.

**Originality** – This research validates the research framework for luxury brand attachment. The findings will provide meaningful insights for the luxury branding academics and practitioners.

**Keywords:** Luxury brand attachment, brand self-congruence, consumer advocacy, public self-consciousness

## 7.1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing activities often build on the consumers' awareness of a desirable representation in front of others in the society. '*The Now*' – a promotional campaign by Moët & Chandon, one of the LVMH's wine & spirits brands, reflects the joy and celebration of enthusiast consumers in public atmosphere (Pirola, 2016; Savannah Winters, 2016). Such public display is highly relevant to the consumers' materialism and conspicuous consumption (e.g., Richins, 1994; Milan and Mittal, 2017). The aspect of the individual's self-aspect in public display is conceptualised as the public self-consciousness which has received vast attention in the field of psychology and marketing since 1970s (e.g., Fenigstein et al., 1975; Carver and Glass, 1976; Froming and Carver, 1981; Darvil et al., 1992).

Numerous research has investigated the role of public self-consciousness on human behaviour across different contexts and cultures (Gould and Barak, 1988; Nasby, 1989; Heinemann, 1979; Vleeming and Engelse, 1981). Studies on personality and individual differences have found that public self-consciousness influences the emotional benefits of autobiographical writings with social bias (e.g., Green et al., 2017). Marketing studies have focused on the impact of public self-consciousness on the consumption choices and decision (e.g., Roybiskie, 2001). For example, consumers tend to prefer national level brand to private level brand with a notion of presenting favourable image to others (Bushman, 1993). Consumers with high public self-consciousness also attune their self-monitoring regarding a desirable social representation (e.g., Carver and Scheier, 1978; Lennon et al., 2017). In line with this, other studies have examined how public self-consciousness influences the strength of the consumer brand relationship (e.g., Workman and Lee, 2013; Lau-Gesk and Drolet, 2008). Another stream of research has examined the role of public self-consciousness on the consumers' desirable self-representations over social media (e.g., Lee et al., 2012; Lee-Won et al., 2014; Shim et al., 2016).

Studies have also examined the impact of the construct on the consumers' emotional attachments to brands. For instance, the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and emotional attachments to brands has been found to be influenced by public self-consciousness (Malär et al., 2011; Kauffmann et al., 2016). It has also been evident in the literature that consuming luxury brands involves

consumers' desire for self-esteem, social recognition, prestige, and signalling status (e.g., Han et al., 2010; Cheah et al., 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). In particular, people with high public self-consciousness are expected to care more for the signalling status through luxury consumption and so public self-consciousness influences the purchase intention for luxury brands. However, the question arises whether consumers' public self-consciousness has any impact on luxury brand attachment. Very little is known whether the consumers' concern for other people's perspectives makes any impact on their (consumers') emotional intimacy with the luxury brands. Until today, no study has provided empirical support to answer whether public self-consciousness moderates the relationship between consumers' self-congruence (actual and ideal) and luxury brand attachment. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.

The following sections of this paper are organised into several sections. It begins with a discussion on the relevant literature, theoretical underpinning and justification of research hypotheses. Next, the methodology and results of the study are discussed. Finally, the theoretical and practical implications, limitations and future research directions are provided.

## **7.2. RELEVANT LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **7.2.1. Attachment theory**

Attachment theory has been conceptualised by John Bowlby in the 1950s. Since then it becomes a key paradigm in developmental psychology (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Holmes, 1993). The idea of attachment has also been applied and explained in the areas of social sciences (e.g., Cooper et al., 1998; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Schachner and Shaver, 2002). Scholars define attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (Bowlby, 1979). Holmes (1993, p.67) explains the phenomenon of attachment as the state of “when I am close to my loved one I feel good, when I am far away I am anxious, sad or lonely”. The pioneer literature in this area suggests that the primary human attachment relationship is formed between an infant and caregiver in the early stages (i.e. around seven months) of life (Harlow,

1958). The attachment relationship further develops the sense of proximity seeking and separation distress amongst the young children at the later stage of their life (Holmes, 1993).

The primary understanding of attachment theory was largely relevant to biological protection from threats (Ainsworth, 1982). As such the role of attachment deemed to be a source of safety and protection which in turn reduces anxiety (Heard and Lake, 1986). An attached relational interaction requires emotional comfort, reliance and ability to deal the negative effect in case of insecure attachments (Holmes, 1993). In line with this, Heard and Lake (1986) further argue that the attachment dynamics do not halt at childhood rather further develop to mature dependence (Fairbairn, 1952) and emotional autonomy (e.g., Holmes and Lindley, 1989). Whereas the sense of safety and protection (secure attachment) has been widely acknowledged as the key source of attachment in the early literature, the nature of attachment has been examined through several longitudinal studies (e.g., Thomas, 2000). Ainsworth's (1969) 'strange situation' test added three types of insecure attachments into the domain: insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, and insecure-disorganised (See Ainsworth et al. (1978) for a review).

Weiss (1982) highlights three particular patterns and behavioural notions when a person is attached to and interacts with his/her significant others. The first pattern iterates Bowlby's (1979) idea of 'proximity seeking' to a preferred figure. The second pattern is relevant to the conceptualisation of 'secure base' (Ainsworth, 1982) that focuses on the ambience provided by the attachment figure to the attached person. The final notion known as 'separation protest' refers to the enduring nature of the attachment whereby the people react to the loss of or distance from the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1979).

### **7.2.2. Self-expansion theory**

The process of self-expansion occurs in the intimate relationships in which one person includes another into his/her concept of the self (Aron and Aron, 1986). People self-expand with a motivation to get resources that would help in achieving some particular goals and provide higher level of efficacy (Aron et al., 2001). When people continue

a friendship for a long time, they ignore the downside of the friend (e.g., Aron and Fraley, 1999). Tesser et al. (1988) show that people feel relationship partners' success as their own achievement and take ownership of the accomplishment. Self-expansion also reflects the mutual trust and confidence between the partners and strengthens the sense of relational proximity (Aron et al., 2001).

Marketing studies often argue that consumers' self-expansion to the brands is represented through the matching between the consumer and brand image (e.g., Hong and Zinkhan, 2006; Sirgy, 1982). The more congruence are felt, the stronger relationship is built between the consumer and brand (Reimann and Aron, 2009; Trump and Brucks, 2012). However, strong personification of the brand is important to utilise the explanatory power of self-expansion theory in consumer-brand relationship (Huang and Mitchell, 2014). The process of self-expansion starts with a comparison of a person's current state (actual self) and desired state (ideal self), and if the person feels that the desired state will improve the person's actual self, he/she will be motivated to self-expand for including others into the current self (Aron and Aron, 1986).

Social psychologists also propose a self-related motive called 'self-improvement' which is relevant to person's desire for 'self-expansion' and 'self-verification' (Taylor et al., 1995). Few marketing studies on consumer brand attachment (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) utilise these two theories as the motivation behind emotional connection to the brand. However, the major line of work on human attachment argue that the sense safety is the core of attachment and therefore self-expansion motivation is strongly linked with attachment model (e.g. Bowlby, 1969; Shaver and Hazan, 1993). Such self-expansion results intimacy and creates the feeling of understanding, care and the inner-most self-validation for the partners in relationship (Reis and Shaver, 1988).

Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006) argue that self-expansion results enhanced sense of the self and greater self-efficacy as the expansion helps the person to achieve new skill, knowledge and resources. If the persons expand themselves to others and feel an improved sense of self, they want to prolong the relationship. Such expansion requires investment/allocation of perspectives, resources and characteristics (Aron and Aron, 1986). Four areas of interest have been identified as the motivational source of self-

expansion: physical and social influence, cognitive complexity, social and bodily identity, and an awareness of human's position in the universe (Aron and Aron, 1986). Self-expansion should reward the partner who in turn would be willing to maintain the satisfying and useful relationship for a longer time (Aron et al., 2001). Self-expansion is a key instrument of understanding the consumers' attachment to brands as it reflects the social and psychological nature of the consumers (Park et al., 2010). Self-expansion might be considered the underlying human process through which consumers connect themselves to a particular brand (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2017; Malär et al., 2011).

### **7.2.3. Social identity theory**

Social identity is defined as “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). Social psychological theories argue that the social context is important in analyzing the application of social identity theory (e.g., Ellemers and Haslam, 2011). Social identity theory (SIT) postulates that people think themselves as a member of a social group and this notion of belongingness influences the individual's intergroup and social behavior (For a review, see – Hornsey, 2008). The SIT also suggests that people in a particular group interact with other members on the basis of their subjective beliefs about the relation rather than the materialistic reliance or benefits (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997). The theory further explores the motivation behind belonging to a group and interacting within the group (Abrams and Hogg, 1990). In particular, cognitive awareness and emotional significance have been emphasized in understanding the people's intention to choose a group membership (Tajfel, 1974). Moreover, the members tend to be concerned about protecting and maintain the image and identity of the group (e.g., Turner and Brown, 1978).

In explaining the development of people's social identities over personal identities, scholars point out three psychological processes: social categorization, social comparison, and social identification (Hornsey, 2008). The social identification aspect of the SIT has received vast attention in marketing research for investigating consumer behaviour and consumer-brand relationship (e.g., Kleine et al., 1993; Reed 2002). As

noted by Lam et al. (2010, p. 130), studies underpinned with the SIT show that “members of brand communities engage in collective behavior, such as rituals, to extol the virtues of their beloved brands and to help other brand identifiers”. Other marketing studies have incorporated the SIT with the idea that social categorization and self-enhancement are the two socio-cognitive processes through which group members assist each other (Hogg et al., 1995). The self-enhancement aspect of the SIT is pertinent to the scope of this research in investigating the relationship amongst consumers’ perceived self-congruence, luxury brand attachment, and consumer advocacy. Therefore, it is expected that the SIT will explain luxury consumers’ attitude and behaviour as well as inter-group communications relevant to the consumer advocacy construct.

#### **7.2.4. Normative theory of altruism**

Human altruism is a purposeful and deliberate action performed toward increasing the welfare of other people (Batson, 1991). In doing so, the actor may have conscious or unconscious expectation of reward. Rushton and Sorrentino (1981) categorise the notion of conscious expectation of reward as the altruistic approach and the unconscious expectation of reward as the pseudo-altruistic approach (For a review, see – Feigin et al., 2014). Extant literature suggests that the pseudo-altruistic approach is relevant to the people’s egoistic motivation whereas the altruistic approach is motivated toward self-reward or relief of personal distress (e.g., Baston, 1987; Schwartz, 1993).

Relevant to the scope of this research, the normative theory of altruism states that people consider themselves as a part of the society and therefore they regard the helping behaviour as a social responsibility based on their past experience or present expectations (Berkowitz and Daniels, 1963). Piliavin et al. (1981) further emphasise that people are willing to help others whom they are dependent on. Such cognitive component of interpersonal relation often aligns with the personal standard of being benevolent to others (Schwartz and Howard, 1982). Graziano and Eisenberg (1997) point out that the individual’s perceived self-efficacy and confidence are relevant to the subjective assessment of the altruistic actions. Few studies show that people with high self-esteem, internal locus of control, and self-competence tend to get involved

in altruistic behaviour. Besides the social and personal standard, peoples' learning as well as arousal and affect work as the mechanism behind helping behaviour (Dovidio and Penner, 2001). Arousal and affect have further been identified as the key motivational factors behind altruism and helping behaviour (Dovidio, 1984). In particular, people with positive mood and cognition consider the prospective altruistic behaviour favourably and step out with the action thereby (Clark and Isen, 1982).

Numerous studies have shed light onto the arguments on whether altruistic behaviours involve reciprocity (For a review, see – Gintis et al., 2003). One stream of research argues that people only help those who helped them (Gouldner, 1960). However, this argument is only applicable in case people have the chance of meeting the helper again (Carnevale et al., 1982). Because, in many cases, the 'genuine' altruism delivered to unfamiliar persons does not involve any direct reciprocity (Bykov, 2017). The altruistic concerns for helping other people is often led by the empathetic feelings for other people as well (e.g., Einlof, 2008). Studies widely hold the view that even if the expected reward is not materialistic, people feel a sense of enjoyment through their altruistic activities (e.g., Maslow, 1970).

#### **7.2.5. Self-consciousness and aspects of identity**

Self-consciousness is defined as the human tendency of directing attention to self-related aspects either inward or outward (Doherty and Schlenker, 1991). Based on Duval and Wicklund's (1972) theory of objective self-awareness, Fenigstein et al. (1975) have developed self-consciousness scale and suggested three aspects of the construct: private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness, and social anxiety. The private self-consciousness refers to the individual's inner self and feelings, whereas the public self-consciousness is relevant to the person's awareness of being viewed by others, and the social anxiety is related to the individual's discomfort in front of others (e.g., Carver and Glass, 1976). In spite of initial controversy over the three components of self-consciousness (For a review, see – Fenigstein, 1987; Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1987), numerous research provides evidence on the reliability and validity of these sub-factors (e.g., Hope and Heimberg, 1988; Heinemann, 1979; Shepperd and Arkin, 1989).

A number of follow-up studies on Fenigstein et al.'s (1975) conceptualization of self-consciousness have examined the impact of private and public self-consciousness on people's compliance behavior (e.g., Froming and Carver, 1981; Cheek and Briggs, 1982). Froming and Carver (1981) interpret these two components as the covert aspect of the self (i.e., private self-consciousness) and overt aspect of the self (i.e., public self-consciousness). They further argue that people with high private self-consciousness depend on their own perceptual experiences than on the external influences (Froming and Carver, 1981). Literature also suggests that the private (public) self involves the individual's personal (social) identity; and the dominance of the particular identity varies across people often with an attempt of making a balance in between their privately held belief and public expression (e.g., Cheek and Briggs, 1982). In line with this, Darvill et al. (1992) point out that private self-consciousness occasionally induces guilt proneness whereas public self-consciousness results the feeling of shame and embarrassment.

Studies have also examined the role of self-consciousness in various contexts and identified the construct as an important predictor of human behavior (e.g., Scheier, 1976; Scheier et al., 1974). Public self-consciousness has been considered a segmentation variable for the products that are consumed in presence of others (Burnkrant and Page, 1981; Gould and Barak, 2001). In another study, Carver and Scheier (1981) find that people with high public self-consciousness show expression of reactance to a self-imposed threat to their freedom of choice. Thus, the people with high public self-consciousness are more sensitive, than their counterparts, to their desired public image and interpersonal rejection (e.g., Scheier, 1980; Fenigstein, 1979).

#### **7.2.6. Luxury brands**

The definition of luxury brand differs due to the diverse socio-cultural context in which consumers evaluate the brand and the product category (e.g., Ko et al., 2018; Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2018; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) and the subjective interpretation of the term 'luxury' (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Luxury brand has been conceptualized with having unique traits such as emotional connection (Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (O'cass and Frost, 2002), and exclusivity, high

transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). The hierarchy pyramid for luxury brand classification suggests the consumer's socio-economic class and purchasing power could provide a segmentation method in which the top level is inaccessible luxury, the mid-level is intermediate luxury and the bottom level is accessible luxury (e.g., Alleres, 1990; De Barnier et al., 2012).

Regardless of the lack of consensus regarding a unique definition, the conceptualisation of luxury brands shares some unique traits such as emotional connection (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (O'cass and Frost, 2002; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), and exclusivity, high transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Kim, 2018; Dubois et al, 2001; Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). Extant literature explains the luxury brand consumption from a personal aspect (Dubois and Laurent, 1994), interpersonal aspect (Mason, 1992), and socio-economic and political aspect (e.g., Hennigs et al., 2012). It is suggested that luxury brand consumption boosts consumer's ego (Eastman et al., 1999) and social recognition (Jiang and Cova, 2012). These factors indicate that consumers' attachment to the luxury brands tend to be different from brand attachment in general.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the motivation behind luxury brand consumption. The symbolic value of luxury brands has been associated with consumer's self-identity in a considerable number of studies (e.g. Holt, 1995; Dittmar, 1994). For instance, Hung et al. (2011) find that experiential and symbolic values influence the purchase intention for luxury brands. Although symbolic and functional value may vary according to consumers' perception (Berthon et al., 2009), consumers around the world buy luxury brands not only for utilitarian values but also for social, symbolic, self-expressive and relational values (e.g., Doss and Robinson, 2013; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010).

Research on luxury consumer-brand relationships shows the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers' purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). Wang et al. (2010) identify eight motives behind luxury consumption: self-actualization, product quality, social comparison, others' influence, investment for future, gifting, special occasions, and emotional purchasing. In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and

they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012).

### **7.2.7. Luxury brand attachment**

The literature has not provided a definition of luxury brand attachment until now. Therefore, this study adapts and adopts conceptualisation of ‘attachment’ from the field of psychology and marketing. The psychological theories explain attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (e.g., Bowlby, 1979; Hazan and Shaver, 1994). In marketing literature, brand attachment is defined as a long-term and commitment oriented tie between the consumer and the brand (e.g., Esch et al., 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

A review on brand attachment literature results four major streams of research. The first stream focuses on the possession and extended self. Research in this stream show that there is a relationship between brand possession and sense of self (e.g., Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Such possession and brand self-connection generate love, passion, and intimacy toward the brand (Forunier, 1998; Holt, 2002). The second stream known as Connection-Automaticity-Attachment (CAA) explains brand attachment as the combined outcome of ‘strong self-brand linkages and automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand’ (Park et al., 2006, p. 9). The third stream of research is an advancement of the CAA model by Park et al. (2010). The authors provide a new conceptual and methodological approach to brand attachment known as Connection-Prominence Attachment Model (CPAM). The CPAM conceptualises brand attachment with two critical indicators: a) brand-self connection and b) the prominence of brand-related thoughts and feelings. The fourth stream of research originated by Thomson et al. (2005) emphasises on the emotional aspects of the attachment and name the construct as emotional attachments to brand. Later on, Malär et al. (2011) validate the construct with identifying consumers’ perceived brand self-congruence as the predictor of the consumers’ emotional attachments to brands.

The conceptualization of luxury brand demonstrates that the inherent traits of luxury brands are very unique and the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are

mostly emotional (e.g., Murray, 2016; Tsai, 2005). Thus, it is very clear that there are significant differences between general brand attachment and luxury brand attachment. Past studies have applied the emotional attachments to brands in the luxury product category (e.g., Pourazad and Pare, 2014); however, these studies were limited to consumers' brand attachment levels rather than consumers' luxury brand attachment. Scholars have shown that brand attachment is an emotional connection between the consumers and the brands (Radon, 2012). Past studies show that brand attachment could lead to loyalty, repeat purchase and positive word of mouth (Assiouras et al., 2015). Further, Park et al. (2010) highlight brand-self connection and brand prominence as the two major drivers of brand attachment. It is predicted in this research that luxury brand attachment could have a similar impact on these behavioural measures.

Malär et al. (2011) examine the role of consumers' self-image and brand image in exploring emotional brand attachment. The authors have used two types of self-congruency to predict brand attachment: actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence. The study suggests that consumers' self-congruence and product involvement are positively associated with emotional brand attachment. This result is consistent with the finding of Chaplin and John (2005) which concludes that consumer's self-concept is an integral component in creating emotional attachment to the brand. In sum, majority of the previous researchers have argued that consumer self-congruence drives emotional attachments to brands (e.g. Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005).

Consumers seek hedonism, conspicuousness, quality and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). In addition, the luxury brand attachment is expected to result consumer's advocacy for that specific brand. Past literature indicate that brand attachment in general encompasses for rational and emotional perspectives of consumers (e.g., Belaid and Behi, 2011). The rational factors are reflected through the consumers' trust and commitment to the brand (Park et al., 2006; Park et al., 2010; Oliver, 1999; Dick and Basu, 1994) whereas the emotional components are relevant to the consumers' deep feelings for the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Branding

literature suggests that the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (Jiang and Cova, 2012) and consumers attachment to luxury brands are driven by the emotional factors such as affection, passion, love, connection etc. (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2017; Malär et al., 2011).

Research on luxury brand–consumer relationships shows the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers’ purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). These distinctiveness of luxury brands clearly indicates that consumers’ emotional connection to luxury brand would be very much different and calls for a unique measurement tool. Build on this argument and considering the predominant emotion laden connection between consumers and luxury brands, luxury brand attachment is defined as “the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand”.

#### **7.2.8. Consumers’ brand self-congruence**

Consumers’ brand self-congruence is the conformity between a consumer’s self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982). Self-image (also known as self-concept) is defined as “the totality of individual’s thought and feelings having reference to himself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). Early research in this domain identify two types of self-image; actual self-image refers to how people see themselves and ideal self-image explains how people would like to see themselves (e.g., Wylie, 1979; Belch, 1978; Belch and Landon, 1977). The duality dimension of self-concept has later been advanced by Sirgy (1979, 1980) who suggests four components of the construct: actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image. While the social self-image (also known as ‘looking-glass self’ or ‘presenting self’) denotes how a person thinks other members of the society perceive him/her (Sirgy, 1982), the ideal social self-concept refers to the way a person desires to be perceived by others (Maheshwari, 1974). Past studies on consumers’ brand self-congruence have found that the actual and ideal-self effects are stronger than the social and ideal social self-

congruence (For a review, see – Kim and Hyun, 2013) and perhaps therefore, majority of the marketing studies consider actual and ideal self as the two primary components of self-concept (e.g., Hosany and Martin, 2012).

The self-congruence theory postulates that consumption choices are set by the matching between consumers' self-concept and the value-expressive attributes of a brand (Sirgy et al., 1991). Based on this argument, marketing scholars theorize the self-congruence construct in the study of consumer behaviour with the notion that if the brand image or personality matches with a consumer's personality trait, the consumer will prefer that brand (e.g. Boksberger et al., 2011; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Aaker, 1999). Self-congruence motivates the consumers to process information (Mangleburg et al., 1998) and the consumers often buy self-expressive brands to validate their own image (Aaker, 1996). Thus, the self-congruence explains and predicts difference aspects of consumer behaviour such as brand attitude, product use and ownership, willingness to buy, retail loyalty and so on (e.g., Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy, 1982). From the context of advertising effectiveness, Hong and Zinkhan (2012) find that the target audiences' image-congruent appeals are more effective than incongruent appeal for resulting consumers' behavioural intention such as brand preference and repeat purchase. Experiential marketing connects consumers' perceived selves with the brand, provides memorable brand experience, and thus builds emotional attachments to brands (e.g., Schmitt et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2005).

Vigolo and Ugolini (2016) point out two methods of measuring consumers' brand self-congruence. The first method, known as the global measurement, requires the respondents rating the congruence as a holistic, gestalt-like construct. Malär et al. (2011) have used this method with scale items such as "the personality of brand X is a mirror image of me (actual self). The second method, known as absolute score method, calculates the congruence from the absolute arithmetic difference between perceived brand personality and the consumer's personality. The smaller the absolute value, the higher the perceived brand self-congruence (e.g., Hosany and Martin, 2012, Park and Lee, 2005). Research shows the predictive power of the global measurement method is stronger than that of the absolute score method (Sirgy et al., 1997). Besides, the absolute score method has been criticised on the ground that it inflates the

reliability score and may not reflect the respondents' actual evaluation (Peter et al., 1993).

Existing literature largely supports that consumers buy luxury brand to extend their self-image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer's actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty within luxury branding context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010).

The key characteristics of luxury brands such as social status, conspicuousness, hedonic value, and exclusivity provide the consumers a way of sensory gratification which is not offered by non-luxury brands (Gistri et al., 2009). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that helps them to obtain the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As self-congruence can enhance consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated into the brand attachment construct (Chaplin and John, 2005).

#### ***7.2.8.1. Actual self-congruence***

Literature on brand attachment has widely established the impact of consumers' perceived actual self-congruence on brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). The major streams of research on brand attachment emphasise on the brand possession and sense of self (e.g., Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992), automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand (Park et al., 2006) and emotional connection to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005; Malär et al., 2011). Thus, the conceptualisation of brand attachment focuses on the incorporation of the brand into the consumers' own self. The sense of oneness generated between the consumer and the brand develops a cognitive connection and in turn results brand attachment (e.g., Park et al., 2010). Numerous studies have revealed that consumers buy the products that are consistent with their perceived actual self-image (e.g., Belch and Landon, 1977, Malhotra, 1988;

Sirgy et al., 1997). Underpinned with self-verification motive, Malär et al. (2011) argue that consumers tend to behave in a consistent way of how they see themselves; and therefore, the consumers buy the brands that match their actual self. Furthermore, Malär and her associates (2011) compare the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment and find that the brands with actual self-congruence create higher level attachment.

Studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Fionda and Moore (2009) consider symbolic value as the most prominent driver behind the purchase intention of luxury brand, because consumers want to attain social status and self-esteem through the consumption of luxury brand. This phenomenon is termed as ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed in the luxury branding literature (e.g. O’cass and Frost, 2002; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brand for social status and aspirational values. Also, luxury brands are used as a means to enhance the consumers’ physical attractiveness and social acceptance (e.g., Durvasula et al., 2001). Netemeyer et al. (1995) categorize such desire as physical vanity and achievement vanity which are basically excessive concerns for physical appearance and personal achievements respectively.

Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer’s actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty in luxury brand context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Existing literature highly supports that consumers buy the luxury brands that match their personality and brand image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Based on these empirical findings and referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>1</sub>**: The higher the actual self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

#### ***7.2.8.2. Ideal self-congruence***

Aron and Aron's (1986, 1996) self-expansion model is considered the theoretical foundation for conceptualizing brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). Hong and Zinkhan (1995) argue that consumers attempt to attain the ideal state if there is a gap between the perceived actual self-image and ideal self-image. Thus, the ideal self works as a motivational factor and influences consumer behaviour. Several studies have examined the role of ideal self-image in product evaluation and purchase intention. For instance, Hong and Zinkhan (1995) find that ideal self-image is a stronger indicator than actual self-image for predicting consumers' brand preference for different types of products (e.g. shampoos, car, etc.). In a study on consumers' preferences for houses, Malhotra (1988) also shows that the ideal self-image plays more significant role than the actual self-image does. From the context of celebrity-consumer congruence, Choi and Rifon (2012) find ideal self-image has stronger role than actual self-image on consumers' purchase intention. Within the service evaluation context, ideal self-congruence has been identified as an important indicator customer satisfaction and overall attitude (e.g., Ekinici and Riley, 2003).

Ideal self-concept has also been found more relevant to publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996) and conspicuous products (Munson, 1974). Against the theoretical expectation, consumers' ideal self-congruence has been identified as a stronger predictor than actual self-congruence of repurchase intention for non-luxury intimate apparel (Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016). Thwaites and Ferguson (2012) note that luxury brand consumers seek to display the brand name to other members of the society. Such conspicuous consumption is explained with the need for uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin, 1977) which focuses on the consumers' attempt to differentiate themselves from others through material goods (e.g., Knight and Kim, 2007; Tian et al., 2001). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that help them to obtain the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As the ideal self-congruence can enhance the consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses

(Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated into the analysis of the luxury consumer-brand relationship (Chaplin and John, 2005). Based on these empirical findings and referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** The higher the ideal self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

### **7.2.9. Luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy**

Attachment literature in the field of Psychology have demonstrated that commitment is a major construct for understanding the strength and quality of the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1991). In line with this, Park et al. (2009) have argued that brand commitment and commitment related behaviour are the key outcomes of brand attachment whereby consumers aspire to maintain a long-term relationship with the brand. Later on, Park et al. (2010) have broaden the outcomes as the consumers' 'intention to perform difficult behaviour' such as continuously patronising the brand through repurchase, paying more, promoting the brand, defending the brand and so on. Numerous marketing studies consider brand attachment a key indicator of the consumer-brand relationship quality (e.g., Fournier 1998; Fullerton, 2005).

Existing literature identifies several behavioural intentions as the outcomes of the consumers' attachment to brands. The widely accepted argument in this regard is that the emotionally attached consumers become brand loyal which in turn creates positive impact on brand equity (e.g. Hwang and Kandampully, 2012; So et al., 2013; Malär et al., 2011). Furthermore, highly attached consumers have been found to develop strong trust and commitment toward the brand (Belaid and Behi, 2011).

The nature of luxury brands and its niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, while consumers consider buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands, they rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). Such peer recommendations activate over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand

community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). Marketing scholars and industry experts have noted that luxury brands require strong consumer to consumer engagement to be successful in the increasingly competitive and interconnected market (e.g., Chiou and Droge, 2006; Gomelsky, 2016).

Consumer advocacy refers to exchanging market information and counselling other consumers so that they have a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). Jayasimha and Billore (2016) conceptually differentiate consumer advocacy from customer advocacy with the notion that customer advocacy is a firm-level construct whereas consumer advocacy is the sharing of market information amongst consumers. To some extent, consumer advocacy is similar to the helping behaviour (market mavenism and altruistic helping behaviour) that benefits others in their purchases and consumption (Price et al., 1995; Feick et al., 1986). Theoretically, consumer advocacy differentiates itself from other similar constructs (e.g., word-of-mouth, brand advocacy) with the notion that it encompasses the consumers' willingness to assist others in having a positive brand experience (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Billore, 2016). Consumer advocacy is more relevant to luxury brands for several reasons. First, luxury consumers seek information about the craftsmanship, artisan, and other consumers' memorable experience while evaluating a luxury brand (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). At this point, consumer advocacy plays an important role in luxury consumers' purchase decision. Second, personal source of information has been considered more reliable than the company generated messages in marketing (e.g., Klein et al., 2016). This conception is expected to be more relevant for luxury consumers. Third, the affluent consumers tend to switch the brands frequently and cannot be attracted with typical loyalty card or cashback opportunities (Schneider, 2017). To address this, luxury brands can initiate consumer advocacy to and generate trust and credibility from consumers by providing organic and reliable information about the brand.

Past studies have demonstrated that brand attachment motivates the consumers to repurchase the product (e.g. Assiouras et al., 2015; Japutra et al., 2014), revisit the website or the store (e.g. Jones et al., 2006) and also to promote the brand to others (e.g. Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Besides, strong brand attachment influences the consumers to ignore the downside of the brand, defend the brand in social networks

and thereby prove the sturdy emotional connection to the brand (Japutra et al., 2014; 2018b). Furthermore, consumers with a higher degrees of brand attachment tend to ignore negative information regarding that specific brand and they encourage other people to buy it (Xie and Peng, 2009). Overall, the behavioural intentions like positive word of mouth, promoting the brand, defending the brand, and brand community engagement which are considered affective reflection of consumer advocacy (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011).

Relevant to the context of the luxury brand attachment, past studies have examined the luxury consumer-brand interaction within the context of brand trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Shukla et al., 2016; Song et al., 2012). However, as noted in the literature review section earlier, the nature of luxury brands as well as the niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, , luxury consumers rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations while buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). The activities related to peer recommendations are operationalised through over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). An investigation into relevant literature suggests that consumer's emotional bond to the brand is a key pre-requisite for advocacy (e.g., Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wilder, 2015). Therefore, based on the aforementioned empirical findings and referring back to the social identity theory and normative theory of altruism, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** The higher the luxury brand attachment, the higher the consumer advocacy.

#### **7.2.10. The moderating influence of public self-consciousness**

Public self-consciousness is an individual's general awareness about him/herself as a social identity (Fenigstein et al., 1975). People with high public self-consciousness conform to the social norms and show high need for affiliation, low self-esteem and low risk taking (Tunnel, 1984). They are also anxious about their social impressions and appearances (Scheier, 1980). The aspiration of desirable social representation

motivates people to consume the goods and experience the services that would facilitate them in achieving ideal social image (Buss, 1980). Studies have investigated the impact of public self-consciousness on choices for clothing, food, intimate apparel, social network behaviour and so on (e.g., Solomon and Schopler, 1982; Bushman, 1993; Lee et al., 2012; Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016)

Relevant to the context of this research, past studies show that luxury brand consumption is highly associated with the desire of attaining social status and self-esteem (e.g. O'cass and Frost, 2002; Fionda and Moore, 2009). This phenomenon is termed as 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed in the luxury brand literature (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brands for social status and aspirational values. Thus, luxury brands are used as a means of enhancing the consumers' physical attractiveness and social acceptance (e.g., Durvasula et al., 2001). Recent study by Roux et al. (2017) has found positive relationship between public self-consciousness and the refinement dimension of the luxury value. As luxury brands provide both physical and social vanity (Wang and Waller, 2006), it is predicted that consumers with high public self-consciousness will tend to build and maintain a strong luxury brand attachment.

Does public self-consciousness influence the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and attachment to the brand? To answer this question, Malär et al. (2011) refer to the consumers' self-expression motive and argue that consumers prefer the self-congruent (both for actual and ideal self) brands with an expectation of making a balance between their inner view and public perception that may lead to a higher level of emotional attachment to the brand. The authors find that high (low) public self-consciousness strengthen the relationship between actual (ideal) self-congruence and emotional attachment to the brand. This finding is counter-intuitive because the theoretical expectations suggest that high public self-consciousness leads to conforming the social norm and thus creating a persistent desire for and psychological proximity toward the ideal self-congruent brand (e.g., Tunnel, 1984). The plausible reasoning behind the findings of Malär et al. (2011) perhaps lies within the non-luxury context of the study.

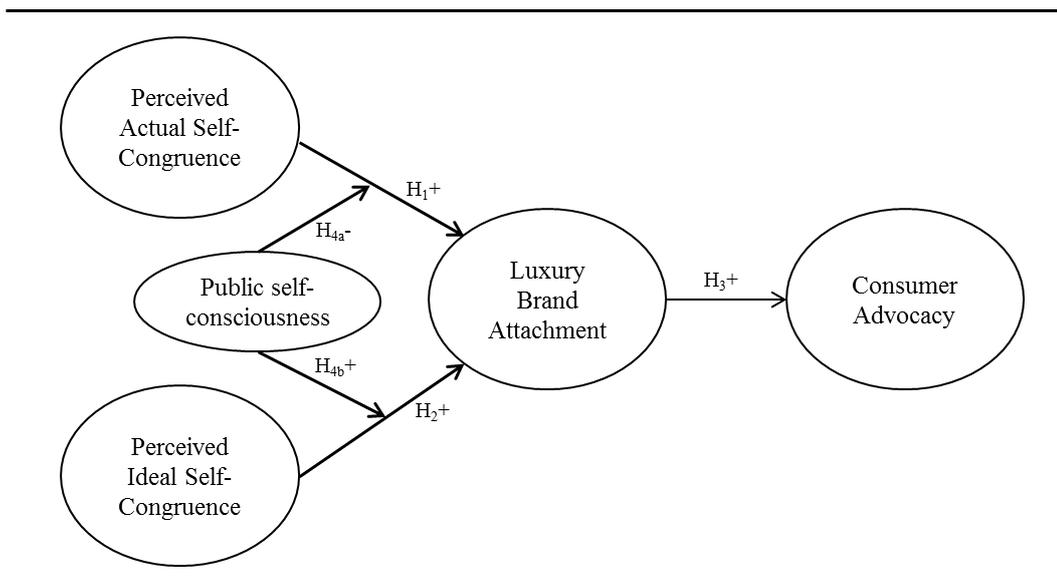
In line with the framework of this study, it is expected that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand, would express to others who they would like to be (e.g., Markus and Wurf, 1987). Thus, it is intuitively postulated that higher level of public self-consciousness would enhance the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. By contrast, it is theoretically expected that the people who build attachment with an actual self-congruent luxury brand would care less about what other people are thinking of them. Therefore, they would not care much about showcasing themselves to the public. In line with this, this research argues that the consumers' luxury brand attachment driven by actual self-congruence is more relevant to the consumers' high private self-consciousness than high public self-consciousness. Based on this argument, within the context of this study, it is further anticipated that people with low public self-consciousness will care more about their actual self-image and so will have stronger luxury brand attachment than the people with high public self-consciousness do. Thus, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>4a</sub>:** High (low) public self-consciousness will dilute (enhance) the positive relationship between actual self-congruence and luxury brand attachment

**H<sub>4b</sub>:** High (low) public self-consciousness will enhance (dilute) the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment

The hypothesised relationships are presented in the proposed research model (Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1: Proposed research model**



### 7.3. METHOD

#### 7.3.1. Study design

A pool of 38 product categories from 32 brands was populated to select the survey stimulus of this study. First, a focus group was conducted with luxury branding researchers (n=3) who selected 5 brands (Giorgio Armani, Dolce&Gabbana, Chanel, Prada, and Gucci) and 3 product categories (sunglasses, handbags, jeans, and shoes) as the potential stimulus. Next, a pre-test was conducted among 60 luxury consumers (Male = 34, Female = 26, Average age = 24). The results suggested jeans from the brand Giorgio Armani (M = 5.30, SD = 1.39) as the gender neutral, affordable, and appropriate publicly used product and luxury brand to be used as the stimulus in the survey of this study. Data were collected from a global panel of luxury consumers who previously used Giorgio Armani jeans. The usage of the product was assured through a filter question in the beginning of the survey questionnaire. Thereafter, the respondents were presented with a real-life advertisement of Giorgio Armani jeans. These respondents received email invitations to complete the online survey, hosted by a large university in the Western Australia.

### **7.3.2. Measures**

The respondents' 'brand likeability' was tested as a screening question with the 3-item measurement scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) developed by Martin and Stewart (2001). Only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. The subsequent section included scale items for the four key constructs of this study. Sirgy et al.'s (1997) 5-item scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) was used to measure actual self-congruence as well as was adapted to measure the ideal self-congruence. The luxury brand attachment (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) was measured by 7-item scale developed in the chapter 5 of this research. The 5-item consumer advocacy scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) was adapted from Chelminski and Coulter (2011). Finally, Feningstein et al.'s (1975) 7-item public self-consciousness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$ ) scale was used. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree". The final section of the survey asked the basic demographic characteristics – gender, age, income, education, and marital status of the respondents (Appendix G).

### **7.3.3. Sample**

A total of 375 consumers were contacted and the yield resulted 290 valid and useable responses. Of the sample collected, 52.4% were female, 90.4% aged between 18-30 years age bracket, and 58.9% had an undergraduate degree and above. Note that the majority of the sample (18-30 age group) mirrors the segment that has been recognized by past studies as the most likely demographics to purchase luxury goods and services (Sarkar, 2017; Hung et al, 2011).

A summary of the respondents' profile is presented in the Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1: Respondents' profile**

<b>Sample Characteristic</b>	<b>Percentage (n=290)</b>
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	47.6
Female	52.4
<b>Age</b>	
18 – 20 years	4.1
21 – 25 years	69.7
26 – 30 years	16.6
31 – 40 years	5.2
Above 40 years	4.5
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Married	10.7
Single	83.1
De-facto	0.3
Divorced	1.0
Others	4.8
<b>Education</b>	
Secondary/High School	27.2
Diploma/Certificate	13.4
Undergraduate	48.6
Postgraduate Degree	10.3
Other	0.3

#### **7.4. RESULTS**

Structural equation modelling (SEM) with the IBM SPSS AMOS 24.0 was used to test the hypothesised relationships and proposed model. Several underlying assumptions for the SEM were checked. An initial Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis and Varimax rotation resulted five unidimensional constructs with an eigenvalue of 1.08 explained 66.89% of the variance and the factor loadings ranged from 0.58 to 0.88. Only one item (I am concerned about what other people think of me) from public self-consciousness scale was deleted due to low factor loading. Thus, the rest 28 items were retained for further analysis. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.93, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity index was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The Cronbach's Alphas were 0.85 and above for the four constructs.

Additional examination on the collinearity statistics assured the absence of extreme multicollinearity as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranged from 1.06 to 2.27 (Hair et al., 2010). The univariate normality assumption was satisfied because all skewness values associated with each item were within the range of  $\pm 1.96$  and the absolute values of kurtosis were less than 2. The common method variance was examined through Harman's single-factor test for all measurement items (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An exploratory factor analysis with one-factor extraction and unrotated solution revealed the single factor accounting for 39.43% of the total variance, which meets the recommended threshold of less than 50% (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 2001; Craighead et al., 2011; MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Moreover, common latent factor method was applied to test the common variance among the observed variables. The result did not show any significant differences among the standardized regression weights. These findings suggest that common method bias was deemed non-problematic in this study.

The two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was followed to test the hypothesised relationship. First, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the measurement model was tested to assess whether the measurement items had the appropriate properties to represent each construct. Once the measurement model achieved a satisfactory fit, the structural model was tested. As the normality assumption was met earlier, this study used the Maximum Likelihood Estimation

method for the CFA. The reliability and validity of each construct were tested by running the confirmatory factor analysis, optimizing the measurement model and purifying the scale items. Only one item (I am usually aware of my appearance) from public self-consciousness scale was removed due to low loading or high modification indices. However, all the items were retained for the rest four constructs.

The goodness-of-fit indices, path coefficients, explanatory power and parsimony were tested for the measurement model and structural model. As suggested by Kline (2011), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) were assessed on the threshold values of 0.90, whereas the maximum acceptable value for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.08. In addition, the ideal  $\chi^2/df$  value was assessed as less than 3 (Kline, 2011) and the benchmark for Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR) was less than 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

The measurement model resulted excellent fit with  $\chi^2 = 369.70$ ,  $df = 195$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.90$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.05$ ,  $SRMR = 0.05$ ,  $CFI = 0.96$ , and  $TLI = 0.95$ . The composite reliability (CR) is above 0.84 for all the measurement constructs, and thus the internal consistencies are assured (Hair et al., 2010). The convergent validity is achieved as the average variance extracted (AVE) value for the constructs are above 0.50 (Malhotra, 2010). The model also achieved discriminant validity, as all the square root of the AVE values were higher than the pair-wise inter-construct correlations with an exception for the consumer advocacy construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). A summary of convergent and discriminant validity of the construct measures is presented in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2: AVE and discriminant validity of construct measures.**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Actual self -congruence	<b>0.755</b>			
2. Ideal self-congruence	0.759	<b>0.773</b>		
3. Luxury brand attachment	0.609	0.766	<b>0.807</b>	
4. Consumer advocacy	0.771	0.709	0.769	<b>0.728</b>
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.571	0.597	0.651	0.530

Note: Figures in the diagonal (values given in bold) are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE); those below the diagonal are the correlations between the constructs.

**Table 7.3: Result summary for measurement model**

	Loadings	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha
<b>Actual self-congruence</b>		0.862	0.879
This brand is consistent with how I see myself.	0.80		
This brand reflects who I am.	0.89		
People similar to me use brand like this.	0.56		
The kind of person who typically uses this brand is very much like me.	0.66		
This brand is a mirror image of me.	0.79		
<b>Ideal self-congruence</b>		0.883	0.888
This brand is consistent with how I would like to see	0.83		
People who I would like to be like use this brand.	0.81		
The kind of person whom I would like to be typically uses this brand.	0.82		
This brand reflects who I would like to be.	0.65		
This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	0.76		
<b>Luxury Brand Attachment</b>		0.928	0.932
I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand.	0.85		
I am deeply in love with this luxury brand.	0.83		
I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand.	0.86		
When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy.	0.84		
I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want.	0.77		
I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available.	0.74		
I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand.	0.74		
<b>Consumer Advocacy</b>		0.844	0.846
By sharing my experience with this luxury brand, I assist other people towards a similar experience.	0.58		
It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury brand.	0.80		
I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brand.	0.65		
I suggest others about this luxury brand.	0.84		
I give suggestions to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience.	0.71		
<b>Public self-consciousness</b>		0.861	0.856
I am concerned about my style of doing things.	0.82		
I am concerned about the way I present myself.	0.89		
I am self-conscious about the way I look.	0.87		
I usually worry about making a good impression.	0.57		
One of the last things I do before I leave my house is look in the mirror.	0.52		

A result summary for measurement model is presented in the Table 7.3. The final structural model also achieved strong fit. The model fit indices are:  $\chi^2 = 381.241$ ,  $df =$

197,  $\chi^2/df = 1.94$ ; RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.05, CFI = 0.96, and TLI = 0.95. Upon examination of the solution's reliability, the Cronbach's alpha figure of 0.85 represents strong internal consistency. Each of the path coefficient was statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

As shown in the Table 7.4, consumers' perceived actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence had a significant positive impact on the luxury brand attachment. Thus H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> were supported. The result also supported H<sub>3</sub> that luxury brand attachment had a significant positive impact on consumer advocacy.

Additionally, the relative impact of actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment was examined and the impacts were not significantly different. In this purpose, a chi-square difference test between a constrained and an unconstrained model was conducted. The path coefficients of actual self-congruence to luxury brand attachment and ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment were constrained to be equal under a constrained model. The result reveals no significant difference between the two models ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.01$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.91$ ).

**Table 7.4: Summary of the hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Relationship		$\beta$	t-test	p
H <sub>1</sub>	Actual self-congruence	→ Luxury brand attachment	0.47	5.921	<0.001
H <sub>2</sub>	Ideal self-congruence	→ Luxury brand attachment	0.41	5.066	<0.001
H <sub>3</sub>	Luxury brand attachment	→ Consumer advocacy	0.78	10.557	<0.001

Multi group SEM was used to test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on consumers' perceived actual self-congruence (H<sub>4a</sub>) and ideal self-congruence (H<sub>4b</sub>). A median test was conducted for public self-consciousness construct in this regard. Thus the sample was divided into two subsamples: high public self-conscious and low public self-conscious. Then the base model was tested with the postulated relationships. The chi-square difference tests on the path level comparison showed non-significant difference between the two groups: actual self-congruence to luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.28$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.60$ ), ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.04$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.85$ ). Thus, the postulated H<sub>4a</sub> and H<sub>4b</sub> were not accepted (Table 7.5).

Further, the moderating influence of public self-consciousness was examined on the relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy. The result was non-significant as well ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 1.273$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.26$ ).

**Table 7.5: Summary of the moderation testing**

Relationship	Public self-consciousness		$\Delta \beta$	P-value for difference
	High	Low		
	$\beta$	$\beta$		
Actual self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment	0.449***	0.469***	-0.020	0.599
Ideal self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment	0.487***	0.331*	0.156	0.847
Luxury brand attachment → Consumer advocacy	0.714***	0.870***	-0.156	0.440

**Significance Indicators:** \*  $p < 0.050$ , \*\*  $p < 0.010$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Although not postulated as hypotheses, this study further tested the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. A chi-square difference test between a constrained and an unconstrained model was conducted with the path coefficients of actual and ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment were constrained to be equal under a constrained model. The result reveals no significant difference between the two models for the two subsamples: high public self-consciousness ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.19$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ) and low public self-consciousness ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.01$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.93$ ).

## 7.5. DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the impact of consumers' actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment as well as test the influence of luxury brand attachment on consumer advocacy. The hypothesised relationships were tested within the context of Giorgio Armani jeans. As highlighted in the result section, consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. Consequently, attached luxury consumers are inclined to get involved in consumer advocacy.

The first finding that consumers' perceived actual self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment ( $H_1$ ) validates the argument that consumers develop a strong connection with the brand that matches with their apparent actual-self. As pointed out by Malär et al. (2011), consumers are motivated to verify and maintain their prevailing self-concept and therefore they consume the self-congruent brand. Such perceived benefit motivates the consumers' self-expansion to the brand and generates a sense of psychological proximity and emotional attachment to the brand. The relationship between actual self-congruence and emotional brand attachment is highly relevant within luxury branding context. Traditionally, luxury brands are well known and recognised for providing social status, uniqueness, and other socio-psychological benefits. The affluent consumers who identify themselves within the luxury bracket would feel an immense desire for the brands that are congruent with their current self-image. In turn, they not only hold an attachment and positive attitude toward the luxury brand but also purchase and use the brand (e.g., Liu et al., 2012, Giovannini et al., 2015). The finding of the  $H_1$  is consistent with the studies by Kaufmann et al. (2016) and Kim and Joung (2016) that reveal a significant positive relationship between luxury consumers' actual brand self-congruence and emotional attachment to luxury brands.

The result of the  $H_2$  shows that consumers' perceived ideal self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. This finding reflects the luxury consumers' perceived difference between their actual and ideal self-image that they want to minimize through consuming ideally self-congruent luxury brands. Past studies on consumers' emotional brand attachment argue that the discrepancy between the perceived actual and ideal-self motivates consumers to improve the image through self-enhancement strategies (e.g., Malär et al., 2011). Influenced by self-enhancement motive, consumers aspire to consume the brand that would help them achieving the desired ideal state. Thus, consumers develop a sense of strong psychological closeness to and attachment with the brand (e.g., Japutra et al., 2018a). Although tested within a counterfeit luxury branding context, Kaufmann et al. (2016) find a significant positive relationship between luxury consumers' ideal brand self-congruence and emotional attachment to luxury brands. Furthermore, consumers' perceived ideal-self congruence with the brand increases emotional reliance and reduces separation anxiety (Kim et al., 2005). Thus, the consumers' perceived ideal-self may generate luxury

brand attachment through ‘aspirational and compensatory mechanisms’ (Kaufmann et al., 2016). Overall, the findings of the H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> are consistent with the notion that brands can often build and maintain the consumers’ self-image that might be expressed publicly or privately (Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

Although not postulated within a hypothesis, this study further investigates the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. In contrast to Malär et al. (2011), no significant difference has been found on the relative impact of self-congruencies on brand attachment. There are two plausible explanations of the invariant impacts. First, the context of this study is set within luxury brands whereas other studies (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) have considered wide range of brands from fast moving consumer goods, retailing, services, and so on. In line with Kaufmann et al. (2016), this study argues that consumers’ actual and ideal self-congruence both would have a similar impact on luxury brand attachment. Second, the measurement scale used to measure the consumers’ attachment to brands are different. Thomson et al.’s (2005) emotional brand attachment scale is conceptually different from luxury brand attachment scale and so this study perhaps better captures the essence of luxury consumers’ self-congruence and brand attachment. Therefore, the operationalisation of luxury brand attachment in this study provides a better understanding of the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence.

The results of this study also show that luxury brand attachment has significant positive impact on consumer advocacy (H<sub>3</sub>). This finding validates the affective commitment resulted through strong emotional connection to the brand. In particular, the finding echoes the argument that consumers’ emotional connection to a brand leads to advocacy for the brand (Anderson, 1998; Kemp et al., 2012). Studies on consumer-brand relationship state that consumers have inherent motive to share their brand experience with others. Such notion of experience sharing has been identified as positive word of mouth, market mavenism, brand community identification, commitment and engagement (e.g., Zhou et al., 2012). Past studies on luxury brands report that consumers’ perceived self-congruence has positive impact on the perceived brand value, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty (e.g., Ha and Im, 2012; Liu et al., 2012). Because luxury brands are primarily targeted toward a very niche and affluent consumer segment, it has been evident in the academic research and industry report

that luxury consumers rely heavily on recommendations from other consumers (e.g., Godey et al., 2016).

Finally, no significant impact of consumers' public self-consciousness was found on the relationship between perceived self-congruence (actual and ideal) and luxury brand attachment. To explain such non-significant impact, it is important to look into the conceptualisation of the three interacting variables: self-congruence, luxury brand attachment, and public self-consciousness. Whilst luxury brand attachment reflects the consumers' emotional connection with the luxury brands, it is theoretically anticipated that consumers' brand self-congruence would have positive impact on luxury brand attachment. The alignment of the relationship has empirically been supported in the H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>. However, the question arises regarding the relevance of the consumers' public self-consciousness to their brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. The emotional bond between a consumer and luxury brand is very much relevant to the consumer's own feelings and sense of belongingness for the brand. The evoked emotion is personal in nature and perhaps is not influenced by external factors (e.g., social expectations). Furthermore, the psychographic profile of luxury consumers may also contribute to the non-significant impact of public self-consciousness in this study. Highly attached luxury consumers might have distinct psychological state that has more desire for self-actualisation than social recognition. Therefore, those consumers' emotional gratification derived from luxury consumption surpasses the need for social approval. More importantly, the construct 'attachment' has long been defined as the enduring bond between two objects (Bowlby, 1969). In line with this argument, luxury brand attachment is regarded as an outcome of the consumers' long-term psychological proximity to brand rather than consciousness about public perception. However, the concern for public self-consciousness might have potential impact on the consumers' luxury brand attitude and purchase intention as it has been evident in past studies (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2016). Within the context of this study, consumers' attachment to the luxury brand has little to do with the consumers' awareness about themselves as a social identity.

## **7.6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

This study results a number of theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment. The findings are expected to provide meaningful insights on luxury brand attachment that has not been delivered by past studies. Theoretically, this is the first study to examine the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. The use of consumers' actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence provides a suitable dimension for luxury brand attachment because earlier research in this domain shows that consumers want to upgrade their actual self-image to ideal self-image through the consumption of luxury products. Moreover, incorporating consumer advocacy as the key outcome of luxury brand attachment is a new addition into the literature.

Methodologically, the usage of real-life advertisement as the survey stimuli provides ecological validity of the research. Similarly, surveying the existing and potential luxury consumer panels provide conceptual soundness of the construct. This research validates the role of perceived self-congruence of consumers' luxury brand attachment. In addition, the predictive power of luxury brand attachment has been tested through revealing its significant positive correlation with consumer advocacy.

This study also provides practical insights for luxury brand managers. First, the luxury managers can understand how consumers develop bond with luxury brands on the basis of the perceived brand self-congruence. In particular, they can investigate which aspect of the self-congruence has stronger impact on the attachment for a particular luxury brand. Moreover, it would be imperative to understand the particular aspects of luxury brand attachment (e.g., love, passion, separation distress) that are relevant to the brand. Thus, the manager can incorporate these aspects into their marketing communication programs to enhance the consumers' luxury brand attachment.

The luxury brand attachment framework would help managers in segmenting the luxury consumers and identify the segments that have low, medium and high attachment. Thereafter, initiatives can be taken over elevating the level of attachment. On the other hand, consumers with strong attachment level can be motivated to get involved into consumer advocacy in both online and offline community. Luxury

managers can also strengthen the relationship by offering customised offer on the highly attached consumers' personal special occasions.

The emotional aspect of luxury brand attachment can be incorporated into the overall brand experience. For instance, campaigns such as 'Burberry kisses' and 'Volkswagen's SmileDrive' emphasise on the consumers' love, passion, and joy to enhance the intimacy with the brand through interactive experiences (Glaser, 2014). Luxury advertising managers can portray the actual and ideal self-images on the advertisements. Marketers may emphasise the brand performance (e.g., brand self-congruence) especially when consumers apply lexicographic decision rule, highest score on the most important attribute, in advertising appeal. In addition, what kind of language and images be used in the advertising message. In addition, the advertising message contents may emphasise on the consumers' self-images to make the appeal more relevant. For instance, Burberry rebranded itself successfully by emphasising on proper image congruence and emotional connection (Straker and Wrigley, 2016; Hope, 2017).

Finally, consumers' luxury brand attachment can be capitalised in extending the brand portfolio. Attached consumers are expected to have a positive attitude, preference and purchase intention for the newly offered brands. Besides, the consumers who can buy only the affordable luxury category can further be motivated to buy intermediate luxury products through building and nurturing luxury brand attachment. For instance, flanker brands like 'Miu Miu by Prada' are often targeted toward consumers who cannot afford high-end luxury products (i.e., Prada). Thus, a better understanding and incorporation of luxury brand attachment into the branding strategy would provide sustainable competitive advantage to the luxury brand.

## **7.7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are few limitations of this study. First, the context of the study is limited to Giorgio Armani jeans only. It would be imperative to examine whether the results are consistent across other product categories. In particular, intermediate and inaccessible luxury categories (e.g. Rolls-Royce, Bentley) need to be investigated. Future research may also validate the results across luxury services (e.g. luxury hotel, spa), food, and

wine. Moreover, this research has focused on the publicly visible products only. It would be imperative to examine the generalisability of the research model for privately consumed luxury branded products (e.g. undergarments, perfume). Moreover, this study does not consider the impacts of consumers' social self-congruence and ideal social self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. Future research may also examine the impact of self-congruence on consumer advocacy as well as the mediating role of luxury brand attachment in between the self-congruence and consumer advocacy. The non-significant impact of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment warrants further investigations. As pointed out in the discussion section of this paper, if luxury brand attachment is more relevant to the consumers' personal feelings and emotion, it would be imperative to examine the moderating influence of private self-consciousness and social anxiety on the postulated relationships. Few other studies on consumers' attachment to brand suggest the moderating impact of related constructs such as self-esteem, need for uniqueness, and attachment style. Therefore, further research is warranted in these aspects.

## CHAPTER 8

### LUXURY BRAND ATTACHMENT *PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CONTEXT OF CONSUMPTION*

#### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This research aims to examine and compare the luxury brand attachment framework for privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. In addition, the moderating influence of public self-consciousness is tested across two product categories.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were collected from an online luxury consumer panel in Australia. A total of 280 valid and useable responses were collected and analysed through structural equation modelling.

**Findings** – The results are mostly consistent across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. Consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. In addition, luxury brand attachment has been found to result consumer advocacy. The moderating impact of public self-consciousness was non-significant. Noteworthy, actual self-congruence had a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for the consumers with low public self-consciousness.

**Practical implications** – The findings suggest that the predictors and outcomes for luxury brand attachment is invariant across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. Marketing practitioners need to incorporate more of the consumers' actual self-concept for building and enhancing luxury brand attachment for the privately consumed luxury branded products.

**Originality/value** – This research validates the research framework for luxury brand attachment. The findings will provide meaningful insights for the luxury branding academics and practitioners.

**Keywords:** Luxury brand attachment, brand self-congruence, consumer advocacy, public self-consciousness

## 8.1. INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing consensus that the evaluation and choices for the products often depends on the private versus public context of the consumption (e.g., Cherchye et al., 2013; Woodruffe-Burton, 1998). Studies suggest that consumers are concerned about face saving for publicly consumed products and they tend to be thrifty for privately consumed products (e.g., Lin et al., 2013). Literature refers to the consumers' perceived self-image, brand self-congruence, and social influences in explaining the variance in the consumer behaviour for privately and publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996; Kulviwat et al, 2009). Theoretically, consumers' perceived brand self-congruence has been considered a key antecedent of brand attachment in the marketing literature (e.g., Malär et al., 2011; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Japutra et al., 2014). In practice, the consumers' actual and ideal self-concepts have often been utilised in brand positioning and advertising messages. For instance, women's lingerie brand Victoria's Secret promotes the consumers' ideal self in its 'Angel' campaign, whereas Lane Bryant's #ImNoAngel campaign encourages the women to be confident with their actual self and thus challenges the mainstream and idealised beauty standards (e.g., McLain, 2017; Rodulfo, 2017).

Compared to the vast research on publicly consumed luxury branded products, extant literature provides very limited understanding on how emotion may lead to consumers' attachment with the privately consumed luxury branded products. Few past studies have shed light onto the consumers' emotional aspects relevant to the undergarments purchase and consumption (e.g., Phau et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013). The functional and emotional aspects of intimate apparels have been evident in past studies (e.g., Koff and Benavage, 1998; Østergaard et al., 1999). Studies largely suggest that intimate luxury branded apparels are of high involvement purchase and are associated with the consumers' self-image and self-esteem (e.g., Hume and Mills, 2013; Ommen et al., 2010). Another study on consumers' luxury intimate apparel suggests that an effective and credible marketing strategy should be consistent with the consumers' perceived self-concept, value and personal style (Hume and Mills, 2013). However, until today there is no study that has examined or compared the role of brand self-congruence on luxury brand attachment within private and public nature of consumption.

Extant literature calls for further research on whether actual or ideal brand self-congruence motivates the purchase and consumption of privately consumed products (Hart and Dewsnap, 2001). Additional research is required for a better understanding of consumer-brand relationship; as the consumers of undergarments often display variety seeking behaviour, marketers need to know how the brand loyalty and commitment be enhanced (e.g., Tsarenko and Lo, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to validate the luxury brand attachment framework for privately consumed luxury branded product and compare the research model across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. Similar to the conceptualisation by Law et al. (2012), this study considers undergarments, used interchangeably intimate apparels, as the privately consumed product.

The following sections of this paper are organised into several sections. It begins with a discussion on the relevant literature, theoretical underpinning and justification of research hypotheses. Next, the methodology and results of the study are discussed. Finally, the theoretical and practical implications, limitations and future research directions are provided.

## **8.2. RELEVANT LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **8.2.1. Attachment theory**

Attachment theory has been conceptualised by John Bowlby in the 1950s. Since then it becomes a key paradigm in developmental psychology (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Holmes, 1993). The idea of attachment has also been applied and explained in the areas of social sciences (e.g., Cooper et al., 1998; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Schachner and Shaver, 2002). Scholars define attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (Bowlby, 1979). Holmes (1993, p.67) explains the phenomenon of attachment as the state of “when I am close to my loved one I feel good, when I am far away I am anxious, sad or lonely”. The pioneer literature in this area suggests that the primary human attachment relationship is formed between an infant and caregiver in the early stages (i.e. around seven months) of life (Harlow, 1958). The attachment relationship further develops the sense of proximity seeking and separation distress amongst the young children at the later stage of their life (e.g., Holmes, 1993).

The primary understanding of attachment theory was largely relevant to biological protection from threats (Ainsworth, 1982). As such the role of attachment deemed to be a source of safety and protection which in turn reduces anxiety (Heard and Lake, 1986). An attached relational interaction requires emotional comfort, reliance and ability to deal the negative effect in case of insecure attachments (Holmes, 1993). In line with this, Heard and Lake (1986) further argue that the attachment dynamics do not halt at childhood rather further develop to mature dependence (Fairbairn, 1952) and emotional autonomy (e.g., Holmes and Lindley, 1989). Whereas the sense of safety and protection (secure attachment) has been widely acknowledged as the key source of attachment in the early literature, the nature of attachment has been examined through several longitudinal studies (e.g., Thomas, 2000). Ainsworth's (1969) 'strange situation' test added three types of insecure attachments into the domain: insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent, and insecure-disorganised (See Ainsworth et al. (1978) for a review).

Weiss (1982) highlights three particular patterns and behavioural notions when a person is attached to and interacts with his/her significant others. The first pattern iterates Bowlby's (1979) idea of 'proximity seeking' to a preferred figure. The second pattern is relevant to the conceptualisation of 'secure base' (Ainsworth, 1982) that focuses on the ambience provided by the attachment figure to the attached person. The final notion known as 'separation protest' refers to the enduring nature of the attachment whereby the people react to the loss of or distance from the attachment figure (Bowlby, 1979).

### **8.2.2. Self-expansion theory**

The process of self-expansion occurs in the intimate relationships in which one person includes another into his/her concept of the self (Aron and Aron, 1986). People self-expand with a motivation to get resources that would help in achieving some particular goals and provide higher level of efficacy (Aron et al., 2001). When people continue a friendship for a long time, they ignore the downside of the friend (Aron and Fraley, 1999). Tesser et al. (1988) show that people feel relationship partners' success as their own achievement and take ownership of the accomplishment. Self-expansion also

reflects the mutual trust and confidence between the partners and strengthens the sense of relational proximity (Aron et al., 2001).

Marketing studies often argue that consumers' self-expansion to the brands is represented through the matching between the consumer and brand image (e.g., Hong and Zinkhan, 2006; Sirgy, 1982). The more congruence are felt, the stronger relationship is built between the consumer and brand (Reimann and Aron, 2009; Trump and Brucks, 2012). However, strong personification of the brand is important to utilise the explanatory power of self-expansion theory in consumer-brand relationship (e.g., Huang and Mitchell, 2014). The process of self-expansion starts with a comparison of a person's current state (actual self) and desired state (ideal self), and if the person feels that the desired state will improve the person's actual self, he/she will be motivated to self-expand for including others into the current self (Aron and Aron, 1986).

Social psychologists also propose a self-related motive called 'self-improvement' which is relevant to person's desire for 'self-expansion' and 'self-verification' (Taylor et al., 1995). Few marketing studies on consumer brand attachment (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) utilise these two theories as the motivation behind emotional connection to the brand. However, the major line of work on human attachment argue that the sense safety is the core of attachment and therefore self-expansion motivation is strongly linked with attachment model (e.g. Bowlby, 1969; Shaver and Hazan, 1993). Such self-expansion results intimacy and creates the feeling of understanding, care and the inner-most self-validation for the partners in relationship (Reis and Shaver, 1988).

Lewandowski and Ackerman (2006) argue that self-expansion results enhanced sense of the self and greater self-efficacy as the expansion helps the person to achieve new skill, knowledge and resources. If the persons expand themselves to others and feel an improved sense of self, they want to prolong the relationship. Such expansion requires investment/allocation of perspectives, resources and characteristics (Aron and Aron, 1986). Four areas of interest have been identified as the motivational source of self-expansion: physical and social influence, cognitive complexity, social and bodily identity, and an awareness of human's position in the universe (Aron and Aron, 1986). Self-expansion should reward the partner who in turn would be willing to maintain the

satisfying and useful relationship for a longer time (Aron et al., 2001). Self-expansion is a key instrument of understanding the consumers' attachment to brands as it reflects the social and psychological nature of the consumers (e.g., Park et al., 2010). Self-expansion might be considered the underlying human process through which consumers connect themselves to a particular brand (Malär et al., 2011; Kaufmann et al., 2017).

### **8.2.3. Social identity theory**

Social identity theory is defined as “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). Social psychological theories argue that the social context is important in analyzing the application of social identity theory (e.g., Ellemers and Haslam, 2011). Social identity theory (SIT) postulates that people think themselves as a member of a social group and this notion of belongingness influences the individual's intergroup and social behavior (For a review, see – Hornsey, 2008). The SIT also suggests that people in a particular group interact with other members on the basis of their subjective beliefs about the relation rather than the materialistic reliance or benefits (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997). The theory further explores the motivation behind belonging to a group and interacting within the group (Abrams and Hogg, 1990). In particular, cognitive awareness and emotional significance have been emphasized in understanding the people's intention to choose a group membership (Tajfel, 1974). Moreover, the members tend to be concerned about protecting and maintain the image and identity of the group (Turner and Brown, 1978).

In explaining the development of people's social identities over personal identities, scholars point out three psychological processes: social categorization, social comparison, and social identification (Hornsey, 2008). The social identification aspect of the SIT has received vast attention in marketing research for investigating consumer behavior and consumer-brand relationship (e.g., Kleine et al., 1993; Reed 2002). As noted by Lam et al. (2010, p. 130), studies underpinned with the SIT show that “members of brand communities engage in collective behavior, such as rituals, to extol the virtues of their beloved brands and to help other brand identifiers”. Other

marketing studies have incorporated the SIT with the idea that social categorization and self-enhancement are the two socio-cognitive processes through which group members assist each other (Hogg et al., 1995). The self-enhancement aspect of the SIT is pertinent to the scope of this research in investigating the relationship amongst consumers' perceived self-congruence, luxury brand attachment, and consumer advocacy. Therefore, it is expected that the SIT will explain luxury consumers' attitude and behavior as well as inter-group communications relevant to the consumer advocacy construct.

#### **8.2.4. Normative theory of altruism**

Human altruism is a purposeful and deliberate action performed toward increasing the welfare of other people (Batson, 1991). In doing so, the actor may have conscious or unconscious expectation of reward. Rushton and Sorrentino (1981) categorise the notion of conscious expectation of reward as the altruistic approach and the unconscious expectation of reward as the pseudo-altruistic approach (For a review, see – Feigin et al., 2014). Extant literature suggests that the pseudo-altruistic approach is relevant to the people's egoistic motivation whereas the altruistic approach is motivated toward self-reward or relief of personal distress (e.g., Baston, 1987; Schwartz, 1993).

Relevant to the scope of this research, the normative theory of altruism states that people consider themselves as a part of the society and therefore they regard the helping behaviour as a social responsibility based on their past experience or present expectations (Berkowitz and Daniels, 1963). Piliavin et al. (1981) further emphasise that people are willing to help others whom they are dependent on. Such cognitive component of interpersonal relation often aligns with the personal standard of being benevolent to others (Schwartz and Howard, 1982). Graziano and Eisenberg (1997) point out that the individual's perceived self-efficacy and confidence are relevant to the subjective assessment of the altruistic actions. Few studies show that people with high self-esteem, internal locus of control, and self-competence tend to get involved in altruistic behaviour. Besides the social and personal standard, peoples' learning as well as arousal and affect work as the mechanism behind helping behaviour (e.g., Dovidio and Penner, 2001). Arousal and affect have further been identified as the key

motivational factors behind altruism and helping behaviour (Dovidio, 1984). In particular, people with positive mood and cognition consider the prospective altruistic behaviour favourably and step out with the action thereby (Clark and Isen, 1982).

Numerous studies have shed light onto the arguments on whether altruistic behaviours involve reciprocity (For a review, see – Gintis et al., 2003). One stream of research argues that people only help those who helped them (Gouldner, 1960). However, this argument is only applicable in case people have the chance of meeting the helper again (Carnevale et al., 1982). Because, in many cases, the ‘genuine’ altruism delivered to unfamiliar persons does not involve any direct reciprocity (Bykov, 2017). The altruistic concerns for helping other people is often led by the empathetic feelings for other people as well (e.g., Einlof, 2008). Studies widely hold the view that even if the expected reward is not materialistic, people feel a sense of enjoyment through their altruistic activities (e.g., Maslow, 1970).

#### **8.2.5. Self-consciousness and aspects of identity**

Self-consciousness is defined as the human tendency of directing attention to self-related aspects either inward or outward (Doherty and Schlenker, 1991). Based on Duval and Wicklund’s (1972) theory of objective self-awareness, Fenigstein et al. (1975) have developed self-consciousness scale and suggested three aspects of the construct: private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness, and social anxiety. The private self-consciousness refers to the individual’s inner self and feelings, whereas the public self-consciousness is relevant to the person’s awareness of being viewed by others, and the social anxiety is related to the individual’s discomfort in front of others (e.g., Carver and Glass, 1976). In spite of initial controversy over the three components of self-consciousness (For a review, see – Fenigstein, 1987; Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1987), numerous research provides evidence on the reliability and validity of these sub-factors (e.g., Hope and Heimberg, 1988; Heinemann, 1979; Shepperd and Arkin, 1989).

A number of follow-up studies on Fenigstein et al’s (1975) conceptualization of self-consciousness have examined the impact of private and public self-consciousness on people’s compliance behavior (e.g., Froming and Carver, 1981; Cheek and Briggs,

1982). Froming and Carver (1981) interpret these two components as the covert aspect of the self (i.e., private self-consciousness) and overt aspect of the self (i.e., public self-consciousness). They further argue that people with high private self-consciousness depend on their own perceptual experiences than on the external influences (Froming and Carver, 1981). Literature also suggests that the private (public) self involves the individual's personal (social) identity; and the dominance of the particular identity varies across people often with an attempt of making a balance in between their privately held belief and public expression (e.g., Cheek and Briggs, 1982). In line with this, Darvill et al. (1992) point out that private self-consciousness occasionally induces guilt proneness whereas public self-consciousness results the feeling of shame and embarrassment.

Studies have also examined the role of self-consciousness in various contexts and identified the construct as an important predictor of human behavior (e.g., Scheier, 1976; Scheier et al., 1974). Public self-consciousness has further been considered a segmentation variable for the products that are consumed in presence of others (Burnkrant and Page, 1981; Gould and Barak, 2001). In another study, Carver and Scheier (1981) find that people with high public self-consciousness show expression of reactance to a self-imposed threat to their freedom of choice. Thus, the people with high public self-consciousness are more sensitive, than their counterparts, to their desired public image and interpersonal rejection (e.g., Scheier, 1980; Fenigstein, 1979).

#### **8.2.6. Luxury brands**

The definition of luxury brand differs due to the diverse socio-cultural context in which consumers evaluate the brand and the product category (e.g., Ko et al., 2018; Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2018; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) and the subjective interpretation of the term 'luxury' (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Luxury brand has been conceptualized with having unique traits such as emotional connection (Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (O'cass and Frost, 2002), and exclusivity, high transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). The hierarchy pyramid for luxury brand classification suggests the consumer's socio-economic class and purchasing power could provide a segmentation method in

which the top level is inaccessible luxury, the mid-level is intermediate luxury and the bottom level is accessible luxury (Alleres, 1990; De Barnier et al., 2012).

Regardless of the lack of consensus regarding a unique definition, the conceptualisation of luxury brands shares some unique traits such as emotional connection (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; Atwal and Williams, 2008), conspicuousness (O’cass and Frost, 2002; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), and exclusivity, high transaction value, status, craftsmanship etc. (e.g. Kim, 2018; Dubois et al, 2001; Cristini et al., 2017; Roux et al., 2017). Extant literature explains the luxury brand consumption from a personal aspect (e.g., Dubois and Laurent, 1994), interpersonal aspect (Mason, 1992), and socio-economic and political aspect (Hennigs et al., 2012). It is suggested that luxury brand consumption boosts consumer’s ego (Eastman et al., 1999) and social recognition (Jiang and Cova, 2012). These factors indicate that consumers’ attachment to the luxury brands tend to be different from brand attachment in general.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the motivation behind luxury brand consumption. The symbolic value of luxury brands has been associated with consumer’s self-identity in a considerable number of studies (e.g. Holt, 1995; Dittmar, 1994). For instance, Hung et al. (2011) find that experiential and symbolic values influence the purchase intention for luxury brands. Although symbolic and functional value may vary according to consumers’ perception (Berthon et al., 2009), consumers around the world buy luxury brands not only for utilitarian values but also for social, symbolic, self-expressive and relational values (e.g., Doss and Robinson, 2013; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010).

Research on luxury consumer-brand relationships shows the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers’ purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). Wang et al. (2010) identify eight motives behind luxury consumption: self-actualization, product quality, social comparison, others’ influence, investment for future, gifting, special occasions, and emotional purchasing. In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012).

### **8.2.7. Luxury brand attachment**

The literature has not provided a definition of luxury brand attachment until now. Therefore, this study adapts and adopts conceptualisation of ‘attachment’ from the field of psychology and marketing. The psychological theories explain attachment as the tie between a person and an object or any other components (Bowlby, 1979; Hazan and Shaver, 1994). In marketing literature, brand attachment is defined as a long-term and commitment oriented tie between the consumer and the brand (e.g., Esch et al., 2006; Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

A review on brand attachment literature results four major streams of research. The first stream focuses on the possession and extended self. Research in this stream show that there is a relationship between brand possession and sense of self (Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Such possession and brand self-connection generate love, passion, and intimacy toward the brand (e.g., Forunier, 1998; Holt, 2002). The second stream known as Connection-Automaticity-Attachment (CAA) explains brand attachment as the combined outcome of ‘strong self-brand linkages and automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand’ (Park et al., 2006, p. 9). The third stream of research is an advancement of the CAA model by Park et al. (2010). The authors provide a new conceptual and methodological approach to brand attachment known as Connection-Prominence Attachment Model (CPAM). The CPAM conceptualises brand attachment with two critical indicators: a) brand-self connection and b) the prominence of brand-related thoughts and feelings. The fourth stream of research originated by Thomson et al. (2005) emphasises on the emotional aspects of the attachment and name the construct as emotional attachments to brand. Later on, Malär et al. (2011) validate the construct with identifying consumers’ perceived brand self-congruence as the predictor of emotional brand attachment.

The conceptualization of luxury brand demonstrates that the inherent traits of luxury brands are very unique and the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (e.g., Murray, 2016; Tsai, 2005). Thus, it is very clear that there are significant differences between general brand attachment and luxury brand attachment. Past studies have applied the emotional attachments to brands in the

luxury product category (Pourazad and Pare, 2014); however, these studies were limited to consumers' brand attachment levels rather than consumers' luxury brand attachment. Scholars have shown that brand attachment is an emotional connection between the consumers and the brands (Radon, 2012). Past studies show that brand attachment could lead to loyalty, repeat purchase and positive word of mouth (e.g., Assiouras et al., 2015). Further, Park et al. (2010) highlight brand-self connection and brand prominence as the two major drivers of brand attachment. It is predicted in this research that luxury brand attachment could have a similar impact on these behavioural measures.

Malär et al., (2011) examine the role of consumers' self-image and brand image in exploring emotional brand attachment. The authors have used two types of self-congruency to predict brand attachment: actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence. The study suggests that consumers' self-congruence and product involvement are positively associated with emotional brand attachment. This result is consistent with the finding of Chaplin and John (2005) which concludes that consumer's self-concept is an integral component in creating emotional attachment to the brand. In sum, majority of the previous researchers have argued that consumer self-congruence drives emotional attachments to brands (e.g. Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005).

Consumers seek hedonism, conspicuousness, quality and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). In addition, the luxury brand attachment is expected to result consumer's advocacy for that specific brand.

Past literature indicate that brand attachment in general encompasses for rational and emotional perspectives of consumers (Belaid and Behi, 2011). The rational factors are reflected through the consumers' trust and commitment to the brand (Park et al., 2006; Park et al., 2010; Oliver, 1999; Dick and Basu, 1994) whereas the emotional components are relevant to the consumers' deep feelings for the brand (Thomson et al., 2005). Branding literature suggests that the benefits that consumers seek from luxury brands are mostly emotional (Jiang and Cova, 2012) and consumers attachment

to luxury brands are driven by the emotional factors such as affection, passion, love, connection etc. (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2017; Malär et al., 2011).

Research on luxury brand–consumer relationships shows the strength of symbolic value, self-expression and conspicuousness on consumers’ purchase intention (e.g., Cheah et al., 2015; Hudder, 2012). In addition, consumers seek hedonism, status, and uniqueness from luxury brands and they believe that a strong and enduring emotional bond with the brand will fit their actual self-image and help them to attain ideal self-image (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Liu et al., 2012). These distinctiveness of luxury brands clearly indicates that consumers’ emotional connection to luxury brand would be very much different and calls for a unique measurement tool. Build on this argument and considering the predominant emotion laden connection between consumers and luxury brands, luxury brand attachment is defined as “the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand”.

#### **8.2.8. Consumers’ brand self-congruence**

Consumers’ brand self-congruence is the conformity between a consumer’s self-concept and brand image (Sirgy, 1982). Self-image (also known as self-concept) is defined as “the totality of individual’s thought and feelings having reference to himself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). Early research in this domain identify two types of self-image; actual self-image refers to how people see themselves and ideal self-image explains how people would like to see themselves (e.g., Wylie, 1979; Belch, 1978; Belch and Landon, 1977). The duality dimension of self-concept has later been advanced by Sirgy (1979, 1980) who suggests four components of the construct: actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image, and ideal social self-image. While the social self-image (also known as ‘looking-glass self’ or ‘presenting self’) denotes how a person thinks other members of the society perceive him/her (Sirgy, 1982), the ideal social self-concept refers to the way a person desires to be perceived by others (Maheshwari, 1974). Past studies on consumers’ brand self-congruence have found that the actual and ideal-self effects are stronger than the social and ideal social self-congruence (For a review, see – Kim and Hyun, 2013) and perhaps therefore, majority

of the marketing studies consider actual and ideal self as the two primary components of self-concept (Hosany and Martin, 2012).

The self-congruence theory postulates that consumption choices are set by the matching between consumers' self-concept and the value-expressive attributes of a brand (Sirgy et al., 1991). Based on this argument, marketing scholars theorize the self-congruence construct in the study of consumer behaviour with the notion that if the brand image or personality matches with a consumer's personality trait, the consumer will prefer that brand (e.g. Boksberger et al., 2011; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Aaker, 1999). Self-congruence motivates the consumers to process information (Mangleburg et al., 1998) and the consumers often buy self-expressive brands to validate their own image (Aaker, 1996). Thus, the self-congruence explains and predicts difference aspects of consumer behaviour such as brand attitude, product use and ownership, willingness to buy, retail loyalty and so on (e.g., Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy, 1982). From the context of advertising effectiveness, Hong and Zinkhan (2012) find that the target audiences' image-congruent appeals are more effective than incongruent appeal for resulting consumers' behavioural intention such as brand preference and repeat purchase. Experiential marketing connects consumers' perceived selves with the brand, provides memorable brand experience, and thus builds emotional attachments to brands (Schmitt et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2005).

Vigolo and Ugolini (2016) point out two methods of measuring consumers' brand self-congruence. The first method, known as the global measurement, requires the respondents rating the congruence as a holistic, gestalt-like construct. Malär et al. (2011) have used this method with scale items such as "the personality of brand X is a mirror image of me (actual self). The second method, known as absolute score method, calculates the congruence from the absolute arithmetic difference between perceived brand personality and the consumer's personality. The smaller the absolute value, the higher the perceived brand self-congruence (e.g., Hosany and Martin, 2012, Park and Lee, 2005). Research shows the predictive power of the global measurement method is stronger than that of the absolute score method (Sirgy et al., 1997). Besides, the absolute score method has been criticised on the ground that it inflates the reliability score and may not reflect the respondents' actual evaluation (Peter et al., 1993).

Existing literature largely supports that consumers buy luxury brand to extend their self-image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer's actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty within luxury branding context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010).

The key characteristics of luxury brands such as social status, conspicuousness, hedonic value, and exclusivity provide the consumers a way of sensory gratification which is not offered by non-luxury brands (Gistri et al., 2009). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that helps them to obtain the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As self-congruence can enhance consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated into the brand attachment construct (Chaplin and John, 2005).

#### ***8.2.8.1. Actual self-congruence***

Literature on brand attachment has widely established the impact of consumers' perceived actual self-congruence on brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). The major streams of research on brand attachment emphasise on the brand possession and sense of self (Belk, 1988; Ball and Tasaki, 1992), automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the brand (Park et al., 2006) and emotional connection to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005; Malär et al., 2011). Thus, the conceptualisation of brand attachment focuses on the incorporation of the brand into the consumers' own self. The sense of oneness generated between the consumer and the brand develops a cognitive connection and in turn results brand attachment (e.g., Park et al., 2010). Numerous studies have revealed that consumers buy the products that are consistent with their perceived actual self-image (e.g., Belch and Landon, 1977, Malhotra, 1988; Sirgy et al., 1997). Underpinned with self-verification motive, Malär et al. (2011) argue that consumers tend to behave in a consistent way of how they see themselves;

and therefore, the consumers buy the brands that match their actual self. Furthermore, Malär and her associates (2011) compare the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment and find that the brands with actual self-congruence create higher level attachment.

Studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Fionda and Moore (2009) consider symbolic value as the most prominent driver behind the purchase intention of luxury brand, because consumers want to attain social status and self-esteem through the consumption of luxury brand. This phenomenon is termed as ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed in the luxury branding literature (e.g. O’cass and Frost, 2002; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brand for social status and aspirational values. Also, luxury brands are used as a means to enhance the consumers’ physical attractiveness and social acceptance (e.g., Durvasula et al., 2001). Netemeyer et al. (1995) categorize such desire as physical vanity and achievement vanity which are basically excessive concerns for physical appearance and personal achievements respectively.

Malär et al. (2011) explain the implications and impacts of consumer’s actual and ideal self-congruence on emotional brand attachment. In a similar study, Liu et al. (2012) focus on the self-congruity theory and find that user and usage imagery congruity are positively associated with attitude and loyalty in luxury brand context. Furthermore, recent studies on luxury brands have argued that luxury branding experience is a critical factor in increasing the value of product, because consumers buy the luxury brand to express themselves (e.g. Tynan et al., 2010). Existing literature highly supports that consumers buy the luxury brands that match their personality and brand image (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Based on these empirical findings and referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** The higher the actual self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

#### ***8.2.8.2. Ideal self-congruence***

Aron and Aron's (1986, 1996) self-expansion model is considered the theoretical foundation for conceptualizing brand attachment (Moussa, 2015). Hong and Zinkhan (1995) argue that consumers attempt to attain the ideal state if there is a gap between the perceived actual self-image and ideal self-image. Thus, the ideal self works as a motivational factor and influences consumer behaviour. Several studies have examined the role of ideal self-image in product evaluation and purchase intention. For instance, Hong and Zinkhan (1995) find that ideal self-image is a stronger indicator than actual self-image for predicting consumers' brand preference for different types of products (e.g. shampoos, car, etc.). In a study on consumers' preferences for houses, Malhotra (1988) also shows that the ideal self-image plays more significant role than the actual self-image does. From the context of celebrity-consumer congruence, Choi and Rifon (2012) find ideal self-image has stronger role than actual self-image on consumers' purchase intention. Within the service evaluation context, ideal self-congruence has been identified as an important indicator customer satisfaction and overall attitude (e.g., Ekinici and Riley, 2003).

Ideal self-concept has also been found more relevant to publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996) and conspicuous products (Munson, 1974). Against the theoretical expectation, consumers' ideal self-congruence has been identified as a stronger predictor than actual self-congruence of repurchase intention for non-luxury intimate apparel (Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016). Thwaites and Ferguson (2012) note that luxury brand consumers seek to display the brand name to other members of the society. Such conspicuous consumption is explained with the need for uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin, 1977) which focuses on the consumers' attempt to differentiate themselves from others through material goods (Knight and Kim, 2007; Tian et al., 2001). Thus, consumers build an emotional bond with the brands that help them to obtain the expected image thorough purchase and ownership of that specific brand (e.g., Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Malär et al., 2011). As the ideal self-congruence can enhance the consumer's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses (Grohmann, 2009), it should be incorporated into the analysis of the luxury consumer-brand relationship (Chaplin and John, 2005). Based on these empirical findings and

referring back to the phenomenon of self-expansion and feeling of oneness with an object, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** The higher the ideal self-congruence, the higher the luxury brand attachment.

### **8.2.9. Luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy**

Attachment literature in the field of Psychology have demonstrated that commitment is a major construct for understanding the strength and quality of the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1991). In line with this, Park et al. (2009) have argued that brand commitment and commitment related behaviour are the key outcomes of brand attachment whereby consumers aspire to maintain a long-term relationship with the brand. Later on, Park et al. (2010) have broaden the outcomes as the consumers' 'intention to perform difficult behaviour' such as continuously patronising the brand through repurchase, paying more, promoting the brand, defending the brand and so on. Numerous marketing studies consider brand attachment a key indicator of the consumer-brand relationship quality (e.g., Fournier 1998; Fullerton, 2005).

Existing literature identifies several behavioural intentions as the outcomes of the consumers' attachment to brand. The widely accepted argument in this regard is that the emotionally attached consumers become brand loyal which in turn creates positive impact on brand equity (e.g. Hwang and Kandampully, 2012; So et al., 2013; Malär et al., 2011). Furthermore, highly attached consumers have been found to develop strong trust and commitment toward the brand (e.g., Belaid and Behi, 2011).

The nature of luxury brands and its niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, while consumers consider buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands, they rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). Such peer recommendations activate over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). Marketing scholars and industry experts have noted that luxury brands require strong consumer to consumer

engagement to be successful in the increasingly competitive and interconnected market (e.g., Chiou and Droge, 2006; Gomelsky, 2016).

Consumer advocacy refers to exchanging market information and counselling other consumers so that they have a positive brand experience (Chelminski and Coulter, 2011). Jayasimha and Billore (2016) conceptually differentiate consumer advocacy from customer advocacy with the notion that customer advocacy is a firm-level construct whereas consumer advocacy is the sharing of market information amongst consumers. To some extent, consumer advocacy is similar to the helping behaviour (market mavenism and altruistic helping behaviour) that benefits others in their purchases and consumption (Price et al., 1995; Feick et al., 1986). Theoretically, consumer advocacy differentiates itself from other similar constructs (e.g., word-of-mouth, brand advocacy) with the notion that it encompasses the consumers' willingness to assist others in having a positive brand experience (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Billore, 2016). Consumer advocacy is more relevant to luxury brands for several reasons. First, luxury consumers seek information about the craftsmanship, artisan, and other consumers' memorable experience while evaluating a luxury brand (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). At this point, consumer advocacy plays an important role in luxury consumers' purchase decision. Second, personal source of information has been considered more reliable than the company generated messages in marketing (e.g., Klein et al., 2016). This conception is expected to be more relevant for luxury consumers. Third, the affluent consumers tend to switch the brands frequently and cannot be attracted with typical loyalty card or cashback opportunities (Schneider, 2017). To address this, luxury brands can initiate consumer advocacy to and generate trust and credibility from consumers by providing organic and reliable information about the brand.

Past studies have demonstrated that brand attachment motivates the consumers to repurchase the product (e.g. Assiouras et al., 2015; Japutra et al., 2014), revisit the website or the store (e.g. Jones et al., 2006) and also to promote the brand to others (e.g. Fedorikhin et al., 2008). Besides, strong brand attachment influences the consumers to ignore the downside of the brand, defend the brand in social networks and thereby prove the sturdy emotional connection to the brand (Japutra et al., 2014; 2018a). Furthermore, consumers with higher degrees of brand attachment tend to

ignore negative information regarding that specific brand and they encourage other people to buy it (Xie and Peng, 2009). Overall, the behavioural intentions like positive word of mouth, promoting the brand, defending the brand, and brand community engagement are considered affective reflection of consumer advocacy (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011).

Relevant to the context of the luxury brand attachment, past studies have examined the luxury consumer-brand interaction within the context of brand trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty (Shukla et al., 2016; Song et al., 2012). However, as noted in the literature review section earlier, the nature of luxury brands as well as the niche market segment require consumer level interaction and sharing of market information for a strong consumer-brand relationship. In particular, , luxury consumers rely more on opinion leaders, reference groups and peer recommendations while buying expensive, exclusive, and conspicuous brands (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016). The activities related to peer recommendations are operationalised through over positive word-of-mouth, brand advocacy, brand evangelism, and brand community engagement (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005). An investigation into relevant literature suggests that consumer's emotional bond to the brand is a key pre-requisite for advocacy (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Wilder, 2015). Therefore, based on the aforementioned empirical findings and referring back to the social identity theory and normative theory of altruism, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** The higher the luxury brand attachment, the higher the consumer advocacy

### **8.2.10. The moderating influence of public self-consciousness**

Public self-consciousness is an individual's general awareness about him/herself as a social identity (Fenigstein et al., 1975). People with high public self-consciousness conform to the social norms and show high need for affiliation, low self-esteem and low risk taking (Tunnel, 1984). They are also anxious about their social impressions and appearances (e.g., Scheier, 1980). The aspiration of desirable social representation motivates people to consume the goods and experience the services that would facilitate them in achieving ideal social image (Buss, 1980). Studies have investigated the impact of public self-consciousness on choices for clothing, food, intimate apparel, social network behaviour and so on (e.g., Solomon and Schopler, 1982; Bushman, 1993; Lee et al., 2012; Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016)

Relevant to the context of this research, past studies show that luxury brand consumption is highly associated with the desire of attaining social status and self-esteem (e.g. O'cass and Frost, 2002; Fionda and Moore, 2009). This phenomenon is termed as 'conspicuous consumption' (Veblen, 1899) and has been extensively analysed in the luxury brand literature (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Vickers and Renand (2003) add that regardless of the economic situation, consumers are motivated to purchase luxury brands for social status and aspirational values. Thus, luxury brands are used as a means of enhancing the consumers' physical attractiveness and social acceptance (e.g., Durvasula et al., 2001). Recent study by Roux et al. (2017) has found positive relationship between public self-consciousness and the refinement dimension of the luxury value. As luxury brands provide both physical and social vanity (Wang and Waller, 2006), it is predicted that consumers with high public self-consciousness will tend to build and maintain a strong luxury brand attachment.

Does public self-consciousness influence the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and attachment to the brand? To answer this question, Malär et al. (2011) refer to the consumers' self-expression motive and argue that consumers prefer the self-congruent (both for actual and ideal self) brands with an expectation of making a balance between their inner view and public perception that may lead to a higher level of emotional attachment to the brand. The authors find that high (low) public self-consciousness strengthen the relationship between actual

(ideal) self-congruence and emotional attachment to the brand. This finding is counter-intuitive because the theoretical expectations suggest that high public self-consciousness leads to conforming the social norm and thus creating a persistent desire for and psychological proximity toward the ideal self-congruent brand (e.g., Tunnel, 1984). The plausible reasoning behind the findings of Malär et al. (2011) perhaps lies within the non-luxury context of the study.

In line with the framework of this study, it is expected that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand, would express to others who they would like to be (Markus and Wurf, 1987). Thus, it is intuitively postulated that higher level of public self-consciousness would enhance the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. By contrast, it is theoretically expected that the people who build attachment with an actual self-congruent luxury brand would care less about what other people are thinking of them. Therefore, they would not care much about showcasing themselves to the public. In line with this, this research argues that the consumers' luxury brand attachment driven by actual self-congruence is more relevant to the consumers' high private self-consciousness than high public self-consciousness. Based on this argument, within the context of this study, it is further anticipated that people with low public self-consciousness will care more about their actual self-image and so will have stronger luxury brand attachment than the people with high public self-consciousness do. Thus, this research hypothesises that:

**H<sub>4a</sub>:** High (low) public self-consciousness will dilute (enhance) the positive relationship between actual self-congruence and luxury brand attachment

**H<sub>4b</sub>:** High (low) public self-consciousness will enhance (dilute) the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment

### **8.2.11. Privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products**

Extant research explains that while publicly consumed products are those that are seen by others when being used, privately consumed products are utilized away from the gaze of others with the possible exception of the user (Bourne, 1957; Kulviwat et al., 2009). The examples of publicly-consumed products are handbag, luggage, shoe etc. (Park et al., 2008) and the examples of privately-consumed products are underwear, perfume and dental products etc. (e.g., Smith, 2007; Graeff, 1996). Smith (2007) provides reflexive identity of consumers within the context of three privately consumed product categories – pharmaceutical, underwear and personal hygiene products. Referring to the situational complexity of consumption Heine (2012, p.59) points out that “for some product categories, the categorization is especially situation-dependent. For instance, a good wine can be consumed conspicuously in a restaurant or just all by oneself at home”. Moreover, the difference in the situational factors are related to the social purchasing motives and reference group influence (Bearden and Etzel, 1982).

Research has also explored the cross-country analysis with the interaction effect of country of origin and consumers’ emotion for intimate apparels (Ommen et al., 2010). However, few studies refer to the context of group consumption and suggest that certain products can be consumed both privately and publicly (Cherchye et al., 2013). For instance, a car can be used within both individualistic and collective consumption context (Browning et al., 2013).

Studies within the innovation and adoption context suggest that social influence has a strong impact on the consumers’ adoption intention for publicly consumed products (Kulviwat et al., 2009). For example, a table lamp used inside the household has a very little chance to be seen by outsider. On the other hand, a wrist watch or hand bag is used in front of public and often visible to others. Therefore, the consumers’ purchase decision for wrist watch and hand bag is reasonably influenced by public self-consciousness. In line with this, Graeff (1996) further notes that the social visibility of the consumption enhances the impact of social influence on purchase decision. Relevant to the context of this study, a good number of past studies on privately consumed products utilised intimate apparels as the stimulus of the research (e.g., Richards and Sturman, 1977; Hart and Dewsnap, 2001; Vigolo and Ugolini, 2016).

The findings of the studies indicate that the experiential consumption of privately consumed luxury branded products is more related to the consumers' inner self rather than the concern for public display (Miller and Mills, 2012; Hume and Mills, 2013).

Research has also argued that consumers' decisions on private products are influenced by 'what type of persons they are' (actual self) (Schlenker et al., 1996). Referring to the bandwagon and snob effects, Corneo and Jeanne (1997) add that consumers trade off the more intrinsically useful products with the status seeking products to impress the public. Thus, consumers obtain the expected image by consuming public products which are evaluated favourably by others (Ratner and Kahn, 2002). While examining the self-concept congruence and consumption context, Dolich (1969, 81) posits that "self-concept congruence with socially consumed products differs from self-concept congruence with privately consumed products". In particular, consumers have greater sensitivity to ideal self-congruence than actual self-congruence in social situations for publicly consumed products (Graeff, 1996). Therefore, the assessments of privately consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer's actual self-image, whereas the evaluations of publicly consumed products is more affected by the congruence between brand image and the consumer's ideal self-image (e.g., Dolich, 1969; Ross, 1971; Aaker, 1999). Based on the aforementioned arguments, this research hypothesises that:

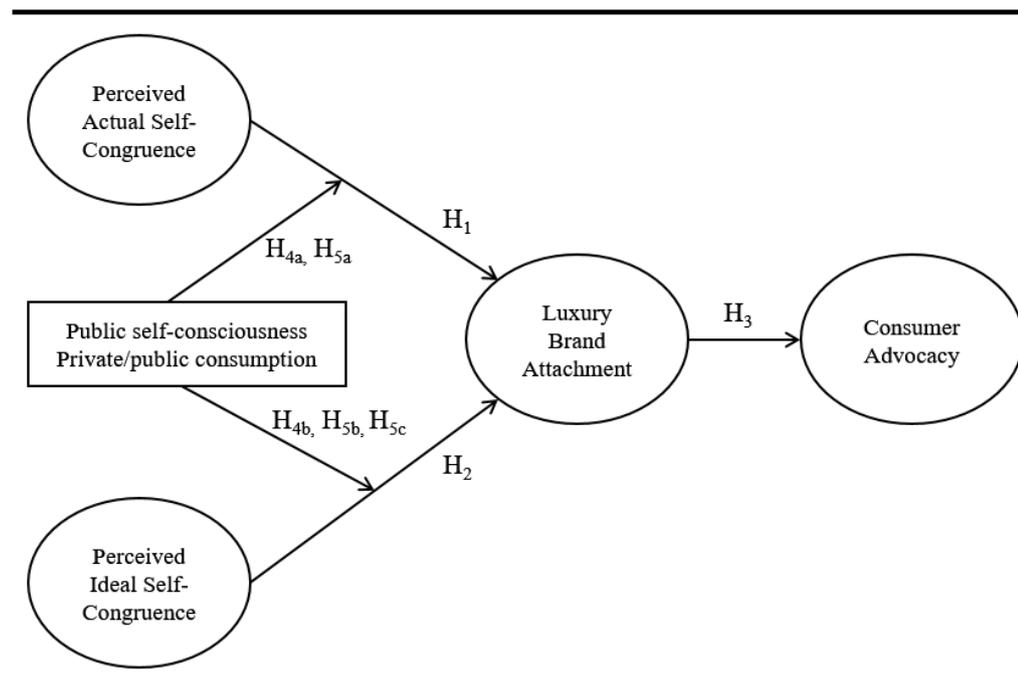
**H<sub>5a</sub>:** Actual self-congruence has a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for privately consumed luxury branded products

**H<sub>5b</sub>:** Ideal self-congruence has a stronger (than actual self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for publicly consumed luxury branded products

**H<sub>5c</sub>:** Actual self-congruence has a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for privately consumed luxury branded products among the consumers with low public self-consciousness

The hypothesised relationships are presented in the proposed research model (Figure 8.1)

**Figure 8.1: Proposed research model**



### 8.3. METHOD

#### 8.3.1. Study design

A pool of 38 product categories from 32 brands was populated to select the survey stimulus of this study. First, a focus group was conducted with luxury branding researchers (n=3) who selected 5 brands (Giorgio Armani, Dolce&Gabbana, Chanel, Prada, and Gucci) and 3 product categories (sunglasses, handbags, jeans, and shoes) as the potential stimulus. Next, a pre-test was conducted among 60 luxury consumers (Male = 34, Female = 26, Average age = 24). The results suggested Giorgio Armani's jeans (M = 5.30, SD = 1.39) and undergarments (M=5.23, SD = 1.12) as the affordable, and appropriate publicly and privately used product and luxury brand to be used as the stimulus in the survey of this study. Data were collected from a global panel of luxury consumers who previously used Giorgio Armani undergarments. The usage of the product was assured through a filter question in the beginning of the survey questionnaire. Thereafter, the respondents were presented with a real-life advertisement of Giorgio Armani undergarments (Appendix G). These respondents received email invitations to complete the online survey, hosted by a large university in the Western Australia. Noteworthy, to compare the privately and publicly consumed

luxury products, data collected in this study (n=280) was compared with the data (n=290) collected in the study 3 of this research (chapter 7).

### **8.3.2. Measures**

The respondents' 'brand likeability' was tested as a screening question with the 3-item measurement scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) developed by Martin and Stewart (2001). Only the respondents with minimum score of 4.0 out of 7.0 on brand likeability were considered for further analysis. The subsequent section included scale items for the five key constructs of this study. Sirgy et al.'s (1997) 5-item scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) was used to measure actual self-congruence as well as was adapted to measure the ideal self-congruence. The luxury brand attachment (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) was measured by 7-item scale developed in the chapter 5 of this research. The 5-item consumer advocacy scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) was adapted from Chelminski and Coulter (2011). Finally, Feningstein et al's (1975) 7-tem public self-consciousness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$ ) scale was used. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree". The final section of the survey asked the basic demographic characteristics – gender, age, income, education, and marital status of the respondents.

### **8.3.3. Sample**

A total of 390 consumers were contacted and the yield resulted 280 valid and useable responses. Of the sample collected, 64.6% were female, 88.9% aged between 18-30 years age bracket, and 56.4% had an undergraduate degree and above. Note that the majority of the sample (18-30 age group) mirrors the segment that has been recognized by past studies as the most likely demographics to purchase luxury goods and services (Sarkar, 2017; Hung et al, 2011). A summary of the respondents' profile is presented in the table 8.1.

**Table 8.1: Respondents' profile**

<b>Sample Characteristic</b>	<b>Percentage (n=280)</b>
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	35.4
Female	64.6
<b>Age</b>	
18 – 20 years	3.9
21 – 25 years	66.4
26 – 30 years	18.6
31 – 40 years	4.6
Above 40 years	6.4
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Married	16.1
Single	75.4
De-facto	1.1
Divorced	1.1
Others	6.4
<b>Education</b>	
Secondary/High School	21.8
Diploma/Certificate	19.3
Undergraduate	44.6
Postgraduate Degree	11.8
Other	2.5

#### **8.4. RESULTS**

Structural equation modelling (SEM) with the IBM SPSS AMOS 24.0 was used to test the hypothesised relationships and proposed model. Several underlying assumptions for the SEM were checked. An initial Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis and Varimax rotation resulted five unidimensional constructs with an eigenvalue of 1.22 explained 69.58% of the variance and the factor loadings ranged from 0.54 to 0.85. All the 29 items were retained for further analysis. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.94, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity index was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The Cronbach's Alphas were 0.85 and above for the four constructs.

Additional examination on the collinearity statistics assured the absence of extreme multicollinearity as the maximum Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was 1.96 (Hair et al., 2010). The univariate normality assumption was satisfied because all skewness values associated with each item were within the range of  $\pm 1.96$  and the absolute values of kurtosis were less than 2. The common method variance was examined through Harman's single-factor test for all measurement items (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An exploratory factor analysis with one-factor extraction and unrotated solution revealed the single factor accounting for 43.56% of the total variance, which meets the recommended threshold of less than 50% (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 2001; Craighead et al., 2011; MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Moreover, common latent factor method was applied to test the common variance among the observed variables. The result did not show any significant differences among the standardized regression weights. These findings suggest that common method bias was deemed non-problematic in this study.

The two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was followed to test the hypothesised relationship. First, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the measurement model was tested to assess whether the measurement items had the appropriate properties to represent each construct. Once the measurement model achieved a satisfactory fit, the structural model was tested. As the normality assumption was met earlier, this study used the Maximum Likelihood Estimation method for the CFA. The reliability and validity of each construct were tested by running the confirmatory factor analysis, optimizing the measurement model and purifying the scale items. Only one item (I am usually aware of my appearance) from

public self-consciousness scale was removed due to low loading or high modification indices. However, all the items were retained for the rest four constructs.

The goodness-of-fit indices, path coefficients, explanatory power and parsimony were tested for the measurement model and structural model. As suggested by Kline (2011), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) were assessed on the threshold values of 0.90, whereas the maximum acceptable value for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.08. In addition, the ideal  $\chi^2/df$  value was assessed as less than 3 (Kline, 2011) and the benchmark for Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR) was less than 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

The measurement model resulted excellent fit with  $\chi^2 = 342.92$ ,  $df = 194$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.77$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.05$ ,  $SRMR = 0.04$ ,  $CFI = 0.97$ , and  $TLI = 0.97$ . The composite reliability (CR) is above 0.80 for all the measurement constructs, and thus the internal consistencies are assured (Hair et al., 2010). The convergent validity is achieved as the average variance extracted (AVE) value for the constructs are above 0.50 (Malhotra, 2010). The model also achieved discriminant validity, as all the square root of the AVE values were higher than the pair-wise inter-construct correlations with an exception for the consumer advocacy construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). A summary of convergent and discriminant validity of the construct measures is presented in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2: AVE and discriminant validity of construct measures**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Actual self -congruence	<b>0.776</b>			
2. Ideal self-congruence	0.696	<b>0.816</b>		
3. Luxury brand attachment	0.798	0.698	<b>0.830</b>	
4. Consumer advocacy	0.789	0.736	0.725	<b>0.792</b>
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.603	0.665	0.689	0.628

Note: Figures in the diagonal (values given in bold) are the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE); those below the diagonal are the correlations between the constructs.

**Table 8.3: Result summary for measurement model**

	Loadings	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha
<b>Actual self-congruence</b>		0.88	0.89
This brand is consistent with how I see myself.	0.86		
This brand reflects who I am.	0.88		
People similar to me use brand like this.	0.61		
The kind of person who typically uses this brand is very much like me.	0.70		
This brand is a mirror image of me.	0.79		
<b>Ideal self-congruence</b>			
This brand is consistent with how I would like to see	0.80	0.91	0.91
People who I would like to be like use this brand.	0.90		
The kind of person whom I would like to be typically uses this brand.	0.88		
This brand reflects who I would like to be.	0.76		
This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	0.72		
<b>Luxury Brand Attachment</b>			
I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand.	0.89	0.94	0.94
I am deeply in love with this luxury brand.	0.92		
I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand.	0.87		
When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy.	0.86		
I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want.	0.76		
I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available.	0.78		
I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand.	0.70		
<b>Consumer Advocacy</b>		0.89	0.89
By sharing my experience with this luxury brand, I assist other people towards a similar experience.	0.63		
It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury	0.87		
I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brand.	0.69		
I suggest others about this luxury brand.	0.90		
I give suggestions to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience.	0.83		
<b>Public self-consciousness</b>		0.84	0.85
I am concerned about my style of doing things.	0.63		
I am concerned about the way I present myself.	0.73		
I am self-conscious about the way I look.	0.95		
I usually worry about making a good impression.	0.70		
I am usually aware of my appearance.	0.54		

A result summary for measurement model is presented in the table 8.3. The final structural model also achieved strong fit. The model fit indices are:  $\chi^2 = 361.53$ ,  $df = 1966$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.85$ ; RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.05, CFI = 0.97, and TLI = 0.966. Upon

examination of the solution's reliability, the Cronbach's alpha figure of 0.85 represents strong internal consistency. Each of the path coefficient was statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

As shown in the Table 8.4, consumers' perceived actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence had a significant positive impact on the luxury brand attachment. Thus  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  were supported. The result also supported  $H_3$  that luxury brand attachment had a significant positive impact on consumer advocacy.

Additionally, the relative impact of actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment was examined and the impacts were significantly different. In this purpose, a chi-square difference test between a constrained and an unconstrained model was conducted. The path coefficients of actual self-congruence to luxury brand attachment and ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment were constrained to be equal under a constrained model. The result reveals significant difference between the two models ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 4.3766$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ) which suggests that the impact of actual self-congruence is stronger on luxury brand attachment than that of the ideal self-congruence.

**Table 8.4: Summary of the hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Relationship		$\beta$	t-test	p
$H_1$	Actual self-congruence	→ Luxury brand attachment	0.56	8.287	<0.001
$H_2$	Ideal self-congruence	→ Luxury brand attachment	0.36	5.698	<0.001
$H_3$	Luxury brand attachment	→ Consumer advocacy	0.81	13.707	<0.001

Multi group SEM was used to test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on consumers' perceived actual self-congruence ( $H_{4a}$ ) and ideal self-congruence ( $H_{4b}$ ). A median test was conducted for public self-consciousness construct in this regard. Thus the sample was divided into two subsamples: high public self-conscious and low public self-conscious. Then the base model was tested with the postulated relationships. The chi-square difference tests on the path level comparison showed non-significant difference between the two groups; actual self-congruence to luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.18$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.68$ ), ideal self-congruence to

luxury brand attachment ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 1.60$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.21$ ). Thus, the postulated  $H_{4a}$  and  $H_{4b}$  were not accepted (Table 8.5).

Further, the moderating influence of public self-consciousness was examined on the relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy. Further, the moderating influence of public self-consciousness was examined on the relationship between luxury brand attachment and consumer advocacy. The result was non-significant as well ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.49$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.48$ ).

**Table 8.5: Summary of the moderation testing**

Relationship	Public self-consciousness		$\Delta\beta$	P-value for difference
	High	Low		
	$\beta$	$\beta$		
Actual self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment	0.501***	0.576***	-0.075	0.676
Ideal self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment	0.432***	0.293**	0.139	0.206
Luxury brand attachment → Consumer advocacy	0.819***	0.760***	0.059	0.482

**Significance Indicators:** \*  $p < 0.050$ , \*\*  $p < 0.010$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Although not postulated as hypotheses, this study further tested the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. A chi-square difference test between a constrained and an unconstrained model was conducted with the path coefficients of actual and ideal self-congruence to luxury brand attachment were constrained to be equal under a constrained model. The result was non-significant for the high public self-conscious subsample ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.36$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.55$ ). However, the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment was significantly different for the low public self-conscious subsample ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 3.03$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.08$ ). In particular, for the consumers with low public self-consciousness, their perceived actual self-congruence had a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment. Thus the postulated  $H_{5c}$  is supported.

**Table 8.6: Path level comparison for Jeans and undergarments**

Relationship	$\Delta df$	$\Delta\chi^2$	P-value for difference
Actual self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment	1	1.580	0.209
Ideal self-congruence → Luxury brand attachment	1	0.987	0.320
Luxury brand attachment → Consumer advocacy	1	0.914	0.339

This study further compared the hypothesised relationship across privately consumed products (Giorgio Armani undergarments) and publicly consumed products (Giorgio Armani Jeans). The result did not reveal any significant difference amongst the impacts across two product categories (Table 8.6). Thus, H<sub>5a</sub> and H<sub>5b</sub> were not accepted.

## 8.5. DISCUSSION

The twofold aim of this study is validate the luxury brand attachment framework for privately consumed luxury branded product and compare the research model across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. In doing to, the hypothesised relationships were tested for Giorgio Armani undergarments. As highlighted in the result section, consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. Consequently, attached luxury consumers are inclined to get involved in consumer advocacy.

The first finding that consumers' perceived actual self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment (H<sub>1</sub>) validates the argument that consumers develop a strong connection with the brand that matches with their apparent actual-self. As pointed out by Malär et al. (2011), consumers are motivated to verify and maintain their prevailing self-concept and therefore they consume the self-congruent brand. Such perceived benefit motivates the consumers' self-expansion to the brand and generates a sense of psychological proximity and emotional attachments to the brands. The relationship between actual self-congruence and emotional brand attachment is highly relevant within luxury branding context. Traditionally, luxury brands are well known and recognised for providing social status, uniqueness, and other socio-psychological benefits. The affluent consumers who identify themselves

within the luxury bracket would feel an immense desire for the brands that are congruent with their current self-image. In turn, they not only hold an attachment and positive attitude toward the luxury brand but also purchase and use the brand (e.g., Liu et al., 2012, Giovannini et al., 2015). The finding of the H<sub>1</sub> is consistent with the studies by Kaufmann et al. (2016) and Kim and Joung (2016) that reveal a significant positive relationship between luxury consumers' actual brand self-congruence and emotional attachment to luxury brands.

The result of the H<sub>2</sub> shows that consumers' perceived ideal self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. This finding reflects the luxury consumers' perceived difference between their actual and ideal self-image that they want to minimize through consuming ideally self-congruent luxury brands. Past studies on consumers' emotional attachments to brands argue that the discrepancy between the perceived actual and ideal-self motivates consumers to improve the image through self-enhancement strategies (e.g., Malär et al., 2011). Influenced by self-enhancement motive, consumers aspire to consume the brand that would help them achieving the desired ideal state. Thus, consumers develop a sense of strong psychological closeness to and attachment with the brand (Japutra et al., 2018a). Investigated within a counterfeit luxury branding context, Kaufmann et al. (2016) find a significant positive relationship between luxury consumers' ideal brand self-congruence and emotional attachment to luxury brands. Furthermore, consumers' perceived ideal-self congruence with the brand increases emotional reliance and reduces separation anxiety (Kim et al., 2005). Thus, the consumers' perceived ideal-self may generate luxury brand attachment through 'aspirational and compensatory mechanisms' (Kaufmann et al., 2016). Overall, the findings of the H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> are consistent with the notion that brands can often build and maintain the consumers' self-image that might be expressed publicly or privately (e.g., Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

Although not postulated within a hypothesis, this study further investigates the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. In contrast to Malär et al. (2011), no significant difference has been found on the relative impact of self-congruencies on brand attachment. There are two plausible explanations of the invariant impacts. First, the context of this study is set within luxury brands whereas other studies (e.g., Malär et al., 2011) have considered wide range of brands from fast

moving consumer goods, retailing, services, and so on. In line with Kaufmann et al. (2016), this study argues that consumers' actual and ideal self-congruence both would have a similar impact on luxury brand attachment. Second, the measurement scale used to measure the consumers' attachment to brands are different. Thomson et al.'s (2005) emotional attachments to brands scale is conceptually different from luxury brand attachment scale and so this study perhaps better captures the essence of luxury consumers' self-congruence and brand attachment. Therefore, the operationalisation of luxury brand attachment in this study provides a better understanding of the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence.

The results of this study also show that luxury brand attachment has significant positive impact on consumer advocacy (H<sub>3</sub>). This finding validates the affective commitment resulted through strong emotional connection to the brand. In particular, the finding echoes the argument that consumers' emotional connection to a brand leads to advocacy for the brand (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Kemp et al., 2012). Studies on consumer-brand relationship state that consumers have inherent motive to share their brand experience with others. Such notion of experience sharing has been identified as positive word of mouth, market mavenism, brand community identification, commitment and engagement (e.g., Zhou et al., 2012). Past studies on luxury brands report that consumers' perceived self-congruence has positive impact on the perceived brand value, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty (e.g., Ha and Im, 2012; Liu et al., 2012). Because luxury brands are primarily targeted toward a very niche and affluent consumer segment, it has been evident in the academic research and industry report that luxury consumers rely heavily on recommendations from other consumers (Kapferer, 1998; Godey et al., 2016).

Furthermore, no significant impact of consumers' public self-consciousness was found on the relationship between perceived self-congruence (actual and ideal) and luxury brand attachment. To explain such non-significant impact, it is important to look into the conceptualisation of the three interacting variables: self-congruence, luxury brand attachment, and public self-consciousness. Whilst luxury brand attachment reflects the consumers' emotional connection with the luxury brands, it is theoretically anticipated that consumers' brand self-congruence would have positive impact on luxury brand attachment. The alignment of the relationship has empirically been supported in the H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>. However, the question arises regarding the relevance of the consumers'

public self-consciousness to their brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. The emotional bond between a consumer and luxury brand is very much relevant to the consumer's own feelings and sense of belongingness for the brand. The evoked emotion is personal in nature and perhaps is not influenced by external factors (e.g., social expectations). Furthermore, the psychographic profile of luxury consumers may also contribute to the non-significant impact of public self-consciousness in this study. Highly attached luxury consumers might have distinct psychological state that has more desire for self-actualisation than social recognition. Therefore, those consumers' emotional gratification derived from luxury consumption surpasses the need for social approval. More importantly, the construct 'attachment' has long been defined as the enduring bond between two objects (Bowlby, 1969). In line with this argument, luxury brand attachment is regarded as an outcome of the consumers' long-term psychological proximity to brand rather than consciousness about public perception. However, the concern for public self-consciousness might have potential impact on the consumers' luxury brand attitude and purchase intention as it has been evident in past studies (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2016). Within the context of this study, consumers' attachment to the luxury brand has little to do with the consumers' awareness about themselves as a social identity.

The invariant results for the hypothesised relationships (H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4a</sub>, and H<sub>4b</sub>) across privately and publicly consumed products suggest the rigour of the relevant constructs for luxury brand attachment. Moreover, the generalisability of the research model is achieved through the consistent result across different product categories.

Finally, the results suggest that perceived actual self-congruence had a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for the consumers with low public self-consciousness (H<sub>5c</sub>). This finding supports the theoretical expectation that the choices and consumption of intimate apparel is more consistent with the consumers' actual self-concept (Hart and Dewsnap, 2001). Therefore, it can be reasonably argued that the consumers with low public self-consciousness are more concerned about their inner feeling and perception of 'who they actually are'. As a result, their attachment with the privately consumed luxury branded products would largely be driven by their perceived actual brand self-congruence.

## **8.6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

This study results a number of theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment. The findings are expected to provide meaningful insights on luxury brand attachment that has not been delivered by past research. Theoretically, this is the first study to examine the predictors, outcomes and moderators of luxury brand attachment with the context of privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. Often identified as controversial, sensitive, and under investigated, research on intimate apparel have mostly emphasised on segmentation, purchase and consumption behaviour (e.g., Tsarenko and Lo, 2017; Law et al., 2012; Cole, 2012; Phau et al., 2015). Thus, this research uncover the emotional bond between consumers and luxury branded intimate apparels.

Methodologically, the usage of real-life advertisements as the survey stimuli provides ecological validity of the research. Similarly, surveying the existing and potential luxury consumer panels provide conceptual soundness of the construct. This research validates the role of perceived self-congruence of consumers' luxury brand attachment. In addition, the predictive power of luxury brand attachment has been tested through revealing its significant positive correlation with consumer advocacy.

This study also provides practical insights for luxury brand managers. First, the luxury managers can how consumers develop bond with luxury brands on the basis of the perceived brand self-congruence. In particular, they can investigate which aspect of the self-congruence has stronger impact on the attachment for a particular luxury brand. Moreover, it would be imperative to understand the particular aspects of luxury brand attachment (e.g., love, passion, separation distress) that are relevant to the brand. Undergarments have stronger social meaning than other apparel products have (Law et al., 2012). The image conscious consumers would maintain their perceived actual and ideal self-image though the consumption of self-congruent (e.g., hedonic) values (Hale and Hodges, 2013). Therefore, marketers have to provide personal affection while building strong emotional connection between the consumers and brands. In particular, the sense of joy and pleasure derived from undergarments consumption need to be communicated with the consumers (Rickardsson et al., 2005). Therefore, the luxury brand managers need to incorporate these aspects into their marketing communication programs to enhance the consumers' luxury brand attachment.

Second, the luxury brand attachment framework would help managers in segmenting the luxury consumers and identify the segments that have low, medium and high attachment. As suggested by other studies, lifestyle can be utilised to segment the undergarments market (Richard and Sturman, 1977). Further initiatives can be taken over elevating the level of attachment. On the other hand, consumers with strong attachment level can be motivated to get involved in consumer advocacy in both online and offline community. As noted in the past studies, consumers display variety seeking behaviour for the publicly consumed products (Rartner and Kahn, 2002) which might lead to brand switching. Therefore, building strong luxury brand attachment is important to reduce the brand switching and increasing brand loyalty. Luxury managers can also strengthen the relationship by offering customised offer on the highly attached consumers' personal special occasions.

Finally, consumers' luxury brand attachment can be capitalised in extending the brand portfolio. Attached consumers are expected to have a positive attitude, preference and purchase intention for the newly offered brands. Besides, the consumers who can buy only the affordable luxury category can further be motivated to buy intermediate luxury products through building and nurturing luxury brand attachment. For instance, flanker brands like 'Miu Miu by Prada' are often targeted toward consumers who cannot afford high-end luxury products (i.e., Prada). Thus, a better understanding and incorporation of luxury brand attachment into the branding strategy would provide sustainable competitive advantage to the luxury brand.

## **8.7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are few limitations of this study. First, the context of the study is limited to two different types of apparel (jeans and undergarments). It would be imperative to examine whether the results are consistent across other product categories. In particular, intermediate and inaccessible luxury categories (e.g. Rolls-Royce, Bentley) need to be investigated. Future research may also validate the results across luxury services (e.g. luxury hotel, spa), food, wine, and furniture. Moreover, this study does not consider the impacts of consumers' social self-congruence and ideal social self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. There has been a transition in the product concept of undergarments over the last few decades (Tsarenko and Lo, 2017). In

particular, the combination of support, comfort and confidence aspects of undergarments consumption has experienced a slight shift through the fashion trend of being an outwear into social visibility (e.g., Hart and Dewsnap, 2001). Future research may also examine the consumers' perception on the relative importance of the functional and hedonic value provided by luxury branded undergarments. Then, further research might be conducted on how the perceived value may influence the luxury brand attachment for the undergarments and other intimate apparels. The non-significant impact of public self-consciousness on the relationship between the actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment warrants further investigations. As pointed out in the discussion section of this paper, if luxury brand attachment is more relevant to the consumers' personal feelings and emotion, it would be imperative to examine the moderating influence of private self-consciousness and social anxiety on the postulated relationships. As the H<sub>5c</sub> is supported in this study, the private self-consciousness might have stronger impact on the consumers' attachment with privately consumed luxury brands. Few other studies on consumers' attachment to brand suggest the moderating impact of related constructs such as self-esteem, need for uniqueness, and attachment style. Therefore, further research is warranted in these aspects.

## CHAPTER 9

# CONCLUSION

### 9.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous four chapters (5-8) described the four studies of this research. In particular, the luxury brand attachment scale was developed and validated in chapter 5. Next, chapter 6 tested the research model and hypothesised relationships. Chapter 7 examined the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. Finally, chapter 8 tested the research model and moderating influence of public self-consciousness across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. This chapter concludes the research with four sections. The first section summarises the response to research questions and objectives. The second section outlines the findings of the four studies. The next section discusses the conceptual, methodological and managerial contributions of this research. Finally, the limitations of the research are discussed and future research directions are provided.

### 9.2. RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

There were three research questions accompanied by four research objectives in this research. The following is a summary of how the research questions were addressed to achieve the objectives throughout four studies:

*Research question 1: How to measure consumers' luxury brand attachment?*

This question was addressed through achieving the RO1: To develop and validate a scale to measure luxury brand attachment. RO1 was identified to address the research gap that there is a lack of conceptualisation and a specific measure for luxury brand attachment. Therefore, this research conceptualised luxury brand attachment through the development and validation of a psychometric scale. The five sub-studies undertaken in study 1 (chapter 5) provide empirical supports to the conceptualisation of luxury brand attachment. This research establishes that luxury brand attachment is a unique construct that captures the essence of consumers' emotional connection to

luxury brands. The unidimensional 7-item luxury brand attachment scale provides an improved and more accurate measure for a better understanding of the consumer's attachment to the luxury brands. The scale is further validated in the rest three studies (study 6 to 8) in this research.

*Research question 2: What are the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment?*

This question was addressed through achieving the RO2: To develop and test a research framework for luxury brand attachment. RO2 was identified to address the research gap that very little is known about the drivers and outcomes of luxury brand attachment. This research utilises the luxury brand attachment scale and provides a better and deeper understanding of the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment. In this research, consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence are identified as the predictors and consumer advocacy as the outcome of luxury brand attachment. The RO2 is achieved through testing the H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub> across study 2, 3 and 4.

*Research question 3: What variables have direct and indirect influence on luxury brand attachment?*

This question was addressed through achieving the RO3 and RO4. In particular, RO3 aimed to test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. RO3 was identified to address the question whether consumers' level of public self-consciousness would influence their perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. Thus, RO3 is achieved through testing the H<sub>4</sub> in study 3 and 4. On the other hand, RO4 aimed to test the research model and moderation influence of PSC across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. The RO4 is achieved through testing the H<sub>5</sub> in study 4.

The research questions, research objectives, related studies/chapters and hypotheses is outlined in Table 9.1.

**Table 9.1: Responses to research questions and objectives**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Research Objective</b>	<b>Study and chapter</b>	<b>Hypotheses</b>
<b>RQ1:</b> How to measure consumers' luxury brand attachment?	<b>RO1:</b> To develop and validate a scale to measure luxury brand attachment	Study 1 (chapter 5)	N/A
<b>RQ2:</b> What are the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment?	<b>RO2:</b> To develop and test a research framework for luxury brand attachment.	Study 2 (chapter 6) Study 3 (chapter 7) Study 4 (chapter 8)	H <sub>1</sub> , H <sub>2</sub> , H <sub>3</sub>
<b>RQ3:</b> What variables have direct and indirect influence on luxury brand attachment?	<b>RO3:</b> To test the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment.	Study 3 (chapter 7) Study 4 (chapter 8)	H <sub>4</sub>
	<b>RO4:</b> To test the research model and moderation effect of PSC across privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products.	Study 4 (chapter 8)	H <sub>5</sub>

### **9.3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This section presents a consolidated discussion on the objectives and findings of this research. In particular, study 1 addresses RQ1 and RO1, study 2 addresses RQ2 and RO2, study 3 addresses RQ3 and RO3, and study 4 addresses RO4. These research objectives which address the research gaps are reiterated and a brief overview of the findings are provided below:

#### **9.3.1. Findings of study 1**

Study 1 (chapter 5) conceptualises consumer's luxury brand attachment by developing and validating a psychometric scale through 5 studies. Study 1.1 generates and selects potential scale items through literature review, thesaurus search and experience survey. Study 1.2 reduces the items and assesses the dimensionality of the scale. Study 1.3 validates the dimensionality of the scale. Next, study 1.4 assesses the four types of validities (convergent, discriminate, predictive, and nomological) for the scale. Finally, study 1.5 examines two behavioural indicators of luxury brand attachment. The results show a parsimonious 7-item luxury brand attachment scale. The final scale items are: 1) *When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy*, 2) *I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want*, 3) *I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand*, 4) *I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand*, 5) *I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available*, 6) *I am deeply in love with this luxury brand*, and 7) *I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand*. The studies confirm that there are major differences among luxury brand attachment, emotional attachments to brands, and the brand attitude scales. Besides, this research demonstrates that the luxury brand attachment is a unique construct that captures the essence of consumers' emotional connection with luxury brands.

#### **9.3.2. Findings of study 2**

Study 2 (chapter 6) examines a research framework for luxury brand attachment. In particular, the study provides empirical supports to the understanding of the role of self-congruence (actual and ideal) on luxury brand attachment. Moreover, the outcome (consumer advocacy) of the luxury brand attachment is investigated. The first finding that consumers' perceived actual self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment (H<sub>1</sub>) validates the argument that consumers develop a strong

connection with the brand that matches with their apparent actual-self. The result of the H<sub>2</sub> shows that consumers' perceived ideal self-congruence has a significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment. This finding reflects the luxury consumers' perceived difference between their actual and ideal self-image that they want to minimize through consuming ideally self-congruent luxury brands. The results of this study also show that luxury brand attachment has significant positive impact on consumer advocacy (H<sub>3</sub>). This finding validates the affective commitment resulted through strong emotional connection to the brand. In particular, the findings echo the argument that consumers' emotional connection to a brand leads to advocacy for the brand (Anderson, 1998; Kemp et al., 2012).

### **9.3.3. Findings of study 3**

Study 3 (chapter 7) validates the research framework for luxury brand attachment. Then, it examines the moderating influence of public self-consciousness on the relationship between consumers' perceived brand self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. The results of the H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub> are consistent with that of the study 2. Thus, study 3 validates that consumers' perceived self-congruence (actual/ideal) has significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>). In addition, luxury brand attachment has been found to result in consumer advocacy (H<sub>3</sub>). Finally, this study finds no significant impact of consumers' public self-consciousness on the relationship between perceived self-congruence (actual and ideal) and luxury brand attachment (H<sub>4</sub>). This research argues that the emotional bond between a consumer and a luxury brand is very much relevant to the consumers' own feelings and sense of belongingness for the brand. The evoked emotion is personal in nature and perhaps is not influenced by external factors (e.g., social expectations). Furthermore, the psychographic profile of luxury consumers may also contribute to the non-significant impact of public self-consciousness in this study.

### **9.3.4. Findings of study 4**

Study 4 (chapter 8) examines and compares the luxury brand attachment framework for privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products. In addition, the moderating influence of public self-consciousness is tested across two product

categories. Consistent with the findings of study 2 and 3, this study finds that consumers' perceived actual and ideal self-congruence have significant positive impact on luxury brand attachment (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>). In addition, luxury brand attachment has been found to result consumer advocacy (H<sub>3</sub>). Moreover, the moderating impact of public self-consciousness has non-significant in the study 4 as well (H<sub>4</sub>). This finding (H<sub>4</sub>) validates the argument made in study 3 that the emotional bond between a consumer and luxury brand is very much relevant to the consumer's own feelings and perhaps is not influenced by external factors (e.g., social expectations). Highly attached luxury consumers might have distinct psychological state that has more desire for self-actualisation than social recognition. Therefore, those consumers' emotional gratification derived from luxury consumption surpasses the need for social approval as well as the concern of PSC.

The findings of study 4 also suggest that perceived actual self-congruence has a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for the consumers with low public self-consciousness (H<sub>5c</sub>). This finding supports the theoretical expectation that the choices and consumption of intimate apparel is more consistent with the consumers' actual self-concept (Hart and Dewsnap, 2001). Therefore, it can be reasonably argued that the consumers with low public self-consciousness are more concerned about their inner feeling and perception of 'who they actually are'. As a result, their attachment with the privately consumed luxury branded products would largely be driven by their perceived actual brand self-congruence. A summary of the findings of study 2, 3, and 4 is available in the Appendix H.

## 9.4. CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study results a number of theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment. The findings are expected to provide meaningful insights on luxury brand attachment that has not been delivered by earlier research. These findings include support, and in some cases contradiction to previous studies, as well as discovering previously unknown relationships. Specifics of each contribution are delineated in the following sections.

### 9.4.1. Conceptual contributions

This research conceptualises luxury brand attachment. More specifically, this research aims to develop and validate a scale for measuring luxury brand attachment. Moreover, it identifies the predictors, outcomes, and moderating variables for luxury brand attachment. The results indicate that consumers' luxury brand attachment is a unique and distinct construct. Consumers' perceived actual/ideal brand self-congruence predicts their luxury brand attachment. Consequently, consumers with high luxury brand attachment get involved in consumer advocacy. Furthermore, public self-consciousness does not influence the relationship between self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. Noteworthy, consumers' perceived actual self-congruence has stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment in case of the privately consumed luxury branded products. The contributions from these findings are outlined below:

- i. First, the **development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale** fulfils a number of key gaps in the luxury branding literature (Research gap 1 and 2, Objective 1). As mentioned earlier, one of the key limitations with extant luxury branding research is the lack of an accurate scale to measure luxury brand attachment and so studies have called for more accurate measures (e.g., Sung et al., 2015; S et al., 2016). Study 1 fulfils this research gap by conceptualising and providing empirical support for the luxury brand attachment scale. The five studies in the scale development process provide empirical supports to the conceptualisation of luxury brand attachment. This

research establishes that luxury brand attachment is a unique construct that captures the essence of consumers' emotional connection with luxury brands. In particular, the emotion relevant to the hedonic values offered by luxury brands are better captured in the luxury brand attachment scale. Moreover, the scale developed in this research reflects the unique traits of luxury brands (e.g., exclusivity, delicacy and exquisiteness) that create strong passion and proximity seeking among consumers. Thus, the luxury brand attachment scale contributes to the literature with an improved and more accurate measure for a better understanding of the consumer's attachment to the luxury brands.

- ii. This research (study 2, 3 and 4) conceptualises luxury brand attachment as a unique construct by using consumers' perceived self-congruence. The **use of consumers' actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence** provides a suitable dimension for luxury brand attachment because earlier research in this domain shows that consumers want to upgrade their actual self-image to ideal self-image through the consumption of luxury products (H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>). Moreover, incorporating consumer advocacy as the key outcome of luxury brand attachment is a new addition into the literature. This research provides a new understanding of **consumer advocacy** within the context of luxury brand attachment. While past studies have explained consumer advocacy from the viewpoint of the consumers' dissatisfactory experience and complaint behaviour (e.g., Chelminski and Coulter, 2011; Jayasimha and Billore, 2016), this research incorporates consumers' positive experience into the construct. Current literature provides very little understanding on the role of consumer advocacy within the domain of luxury consumer-brand relationships. The results show that consumers with a higher luxury brand attachment are more willing to advocate other consumers about the brand (H<sub>3</sub>). This, this research provides empirical support in understanding the impact of luxury brand attachment on consumer advocacy.
- iii. Study 3 is the first study to examine the **moderating influence of public self-consciousness** on the relationship between perceived self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. This research expected that consumers with high public self-consciousness, by consuming an ideal self-congruent luxury brand,

would express to others who they would like to be (e.g., Malär et al., 2011). Therefore, it was intuitively postulated that a higher level of public self-consciousness would enhance the positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment. On the other hand, the people who build attachment with an actual self-congruent luxury brand would care less about what other people are thinking of them. Therefore, they would not care much about showcasing themselves to the public. Thus, this research expected that the consumers' luxury brand attachment driven by actual self-congruence is more relevant to the consumers' high private self-consciousness than high public self-consciousness (H<sub>4a</sub>, H<sub>4b</sub> in study 3 and 4). However, no significant influence of consumers' public self-consciousness was found on the relationship between perceived self-congruence (actual and ideal) and luxury brand attachment. This finding is theoretically important that the emotional bond between a consumer and a luxury brand is very much relevant to the consumers' own feelings and sense of belongingness for the brand. The evoked emotion is personal in nature and perhaps is not influenced by external factors (e.g., social expectations) and therefore, consumers' emotional gratification derived from luxury consumption surpasses the need for social approval.

- iv. Theoretically, study 4 is the first study to compare the predictors, outcomes and moderators of luxury brand attachment with the context of **privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products** (H<sub>5</sub> in study 4). Often identified as controversial, sensitive, and under investigated, research on intimate apparel has mostly emphasised on segmentation, purchase and consumption behaviour. Thus, this research uncovers the emotional bond between consumers and luxury branded intimate apparels. The results suggest that perceived actual self-congruence had a stronger (than ideal self-congruence) impact on luxury brand attachment for the consumers with low public self-consciousness. This finding supports the theoretical expectation that the choices and consumption of intimate apparel is more consistent with the consumers' actual self-concept.

#### 9.4.2. Methodological contributions

This research resulted a number of methodological contributions in the area of luxury brand and brand attachment.

- i. The development and validation of luxury brand attachment scale makes the most significant methodological contribution in this research. The scale development procedure discussed in chapter 5 entailed a total of five studies and responses from 32 academics, 12 industry experts, and 859 consumers, resulting in a unidimensional 7-item scale for luxury brand attachment. This research strictly followed traditional **scale development methods** such as literature review, thesaurus searches and expert surveys to generate the scale items as suggested by Churchill (1979) and Devellis (2003).
- ii. The incorporation of luxury branding academics, industry experts, and real life consumers enhance the **rigour and conceptual reliability** of the construct. In addition, the usage of real-life advertisements as the survey stimuli provides ecological validity of the research. The convergent, discriminate, predictive, and nomological validities were established as well. Noteworthy, study 5 examined two behavioural indicators of luxury brand attachment to enhance the predictive validity of the scale.
- iii. The luxury brand attachment scale has further been validated in the chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8 in this research. The contexts of the aforementioned studies ranged across wristwatch (Rolex), sunglasses (Giorgio Armani, D&G), jeans (Giorgio Armani), and undergarments (Giorgio Armani). Testing the scale across different brands and product categories has provides **generalisability** of the measure as well.

### 9.4.3. Managerial contributions

This study will also provide practical insights for luxury brand managers.

- i. The luxury brand attachment scale will facilitate the managers in **segmenting** the luxury consumers. This scale will be useful for luxury brand managers in three ways; (1) Luxury managers can *understand* the strength of the bond between consumer and luxury brand. (2) They can also *identify* the highly attached consumers who will not only remain loyal to brand but also advocate the brand to others (e.g., Tesla motor's customer story). Such consumer advocacy will increase the consumer base through attracting new consumers and will reduce the promotional expenditures. (3) Brand strategists can also *engage* the highly attached consumers in brand communities (e.g., travel for Louis Vuitton, horse riding for Hermes). Those consumers will act as the brand evangelists in the high net worth network. The recommendations from existing consumers results a strong brand credibility to the potential consumers.
- ii. Luxury brand managers can also leverage the attachment in **extending** the brand portfolio. Consumers with high luxury brand attachment are expected to show positive attitude toward the new offerings from the parent brand. Thus, cultivating and nurturing a strong emotional bond with consumers will make a positive impact on the luxury brand's extension success. Besides, the consumers who can buy only the affordable luxury category can further be motivated to buy intermediate luxury products through building and nurturing luxury brand attachment. For instance, flanker brands like 'Miu Miu by Prada' are often targeted toward consumers who cannot afford high-end luxury products (i.e., Prada). Thus, a better understanding and incorporation of luxury brand attachment into the branding strategy would provide sustainable competitive advantage to the luxury brand.
- iii. The growth of counterfeit luxury products and popularity of affordable 'masstige' and 'massclusive' luxury brands have diluted the consumers' desire for exclusive luxury brands. Luxury brand managers should emphasise on building an emotional connection between the consumer and brand to protect

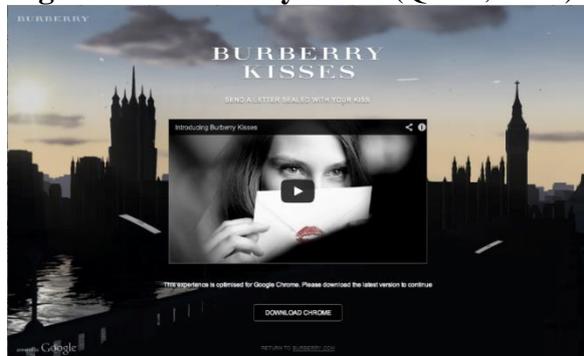
and nourish the sense of exquisiteness offered by luxury brands. This invisible barrier will help **protect** the luxury brands from counterfeits, masstige and massclusive products.

- iv. Advertising managers can benefit from luxury brand attachment scale in several ways. They can understand which components of the measurement highly reflect the consumers' attachment to a particular luxury brand. Thereafter, that component can be portrayed in the **advertising campaigns**. For instance, *2015 Be Dior* advertising campaign illustrates a series of printed advertisements in which Jennifer Lawrence preciously holds the Dior handbag (Cichowski, 2015) and the execution of the message shows her passion and connection toward the brand. Another example could be Tom Ford's *Neroli Portofino 2011* campaign, which features a couple frolicking in the shower (Wischhover, 2011), builds on the consumers' perceived sense of joy and pleasure from the brand. Consumers' perceived luxury brand attachment might be enhanced by communicating the extreme beauty and delicacy (i.e. exquisiteness) of the luxury brand. Advertising campaigns may also render the luxury brand attachment by demonstrating storyboard on the inseparable bond between consumer and the luxury brand.
- v. Another implication of luxury brand attachment would be to incorporate the consumers' perceived self-concept into the **advertising messages**. Although Malär et al. (2011) suggest authentic and aspirational branding for emotionally attached consumers, very little is known about the relationship between consumers' brand-self congruence and luxury brand attachment. Using the findings of this research, the luxury managers can understand how consumers develop bond with luxury brands on the basis of the perceived brand self-congruence. In particular, they can investigate which aspect of the self-congruence has stronger impact on the attachment for a particular luxury brand. Moreover, it would be imperative to understand the particular aspects of luxury brand attachment (e.g., love, passion, separation distress) that are relevant to the brand. For example, in line with study 4, past studies suggest that undergarments have stronger social meaning than other apparel products have (Law et al., 2012). The image conscious consumers would maintain their

perceived actual and ideal self-image though the consumption of self-congruent (e.g., hedonic) values (Hale and Hodges, 2013). Therefore, marketers have to provide personal affection while building strong emotional connection between the consumers and brands. In particular, the sense of joy and pleasure derived from undergarments consumption need to be communicated with the consumers (Rickardsson et al., 2005). Therefore, the luxury brand managers need to incorporate these aspects into their marketing communication programs to enhance the consumers' luxury brand attachment for privately consumed products.

- vi. The emotional aspect of luxury brand attachment can be incorporated into the overall **brand experience**. For instance, campaigns such as 'Burberry kisses' (Figure 9.1) and 'Volkswagen's

**Figure 9.1: Burberry kisses (Quinn, 2013)**



SmileDrive' emphasise on the consumers' love, passion, and joy to enhance the intimacy with the brand through interactive experiences (Glaser, 2014; Quinn, 2013). Luxury advertising manager can portray the actual and ideal self-images on the advertisements. Marketers may emphasise the brand performance (e.g., brand self-congruence) especially when consumers apply lexicographic decision rule, highest score on the most important attribute, in advertising appeal. In addition, what kind of language and images be used in the advertising message. The advertising message contents may emphasise on the consumers' self-images to make the appeal more relevant. For instance, Burberry rebranded itself successfully by emphasising on proper image congruence and emotional connection (e.g., Straker and Wrigley, 2016; Hope, 2017).

- vii. The luxury brand attachment framework would help managers in segmenting the luxury consumers and identify the segments that have low, medium and

high attachment. As suggested by other studies, lifestyle can be utilised to segment the undergarments market (Richard and Sturman, 1977). Further initiatives can be taken over **elevating the level of attachment**. On the other hand, consumers with strong attachment level can be motivated to get involved in **consumer advocacy** in both online and offline community. As noted in the past studies, consumers display variety seeking behaviour for the publicly consumed products (Rartner and Kahn, 2002) which might lead to brand switching. Therefore, building strong luxury brand attachment is important to reduce the brand switching and increasing brand loyalty. Luxury managers can also strengthen the relationship by offering customised offer on the highly attached consumers' personal special occasions.

- viii. It has been apparent in the branding literature that highly attached consumers are willing to pay more for the brand, tend to switch less, get involved in brand-community, and show resilience to negative information about the brand (Japutra et al., 2014; Xie and Peng, 2009). All these **behavioural intentions** create a positive impact on the overall brand equity. Studies suggest that a strong and enduring psychological intimacy with the brand continuously provides a sense of joy, pleasure and happiness (Ben-Shahar, 2007; Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008) and thus the consumers are expected to continue the reciprocal relationship for an extended period of time (Aksoy et al., 2015). Therefore, it would be easier for the luxury brand managers to identify and target highly attached consumers with personalised messages to maintain a strong bond with the brand. For example, the perceived sense of closeness with the brand can be strengthened by sending greetings on the consumers' personal occasions (e.g. birthday). Additionally, exclusive offers and priority options to buy limited edition luxury products will reinforce the enduring affinity between the consumer and brand. Overall, building and maintaining a deep emotional connection between consumer and brand is vital for a long-term profitable customer relationship. The luxury brand attachment scale would be the strategic tool to measure the strength of the consumer-brand connection.

## 9.5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study successfully addressed the research questions by achieving the objectives and thus fulfilling the identified gaps. Although a comprehensive approach was undertaken in the scale development process, there are few limitations of this research. Each of the limitations are discussed below with future research directions.

- i. This research tests the scale only across the affordable to intermediate luxury products. Additional research should test the scale for inaccessible luxury products (e.g. Rolls-Royce, Bentley). The scale needs to be validated in the luxury services context (e.g. luxury hotel, spa) for more generalisability of the scale. Furthermore, this research focused on three publicly consumed products (watches, sunglasses, and jeans) and one privately consumed product (undergarments). However it would be imperative to examine the generalisability of the scale for other privately and publicly consumed luxury branded products (e.g., wine, furniture, perfume). In addition, empirical studies might examine the difference between generic brand attachment and luxury brand attachment.
- ii. This research did not consider the impacts of consumers' social self-congruence and ideal social self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. Although the review of literature suggested actual and ideal self-congruence be more relevance to consumers' brand attachment, it might be interesting to check the impact of social self-congruence and ideal social self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. Except for privately consumed luxury branded products, this research did not find any significant difference between the relative impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on luxury brand attachment. However, social self-congruence might have a notable influence in case of publicly consumed luxury branded products.
- iii. Consumer advocacy has been researched as the outcome of luxury brand attachment in this research. Although brand loyalty, online brand community engagement, resilience to negative information have been acknowledged as the potential outcome, this research did not test it empirically. Therefore, the impact of luxury brand attachment on the aforementioned outcomes might be

researched further. Future research may also examine the impact of self-congruence on consumer advocacy as well as the mediating role of luxury brand attachment in between self-congruence and consumer advocacy.

- iv. This research tested the moderating influence of public self-consciousness. However, literature indicates the potential impact of other moderating variables such as self-esteem, brand experience, need for uniqueness, attachment style and so on. In particular, attachment styles (e.g., secured, avoidant, anxious) need to be investigated in future research.
- v. The non-significant impact of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment warrants further investigations. As pointed out in the discussion section of this paper, if luxury brand attachment is more relevant to the consumers' personal feelings and emotion, it would be imperative to examine the moderating influence of private self-consciousness on the postulated relationships. Perhaps, because the  $H_{5c}$  is supported in this study, the private self-consciousness might have stronger impact on the consumers' attachment with privately consumed luxury brands. Referring back to Fenigstein et al.'s (1975) self-consciousness theory, further research is warranted on the influence of private self-consciousness and social anxiety on luxury brand attachment.
- vi. A recent stream of research has focused on the negative consequences of brand attachment (e.g., Japutra et al., 2014; 2018a; 2018b). These studies have shown that highly attached consumers may get involved in trash-talking, schadenfreude and anti-brand actions. Does luxury brand attachment result in similar negative consequences? Future research might answer this question.
- vii. This research argued that cultivating and nurturing a strong emotional bond with consumers will make a positive impact on the luxury brand's extension success. This theoretical expectation can be empirically tested with consumers' level of luxury brand attachment. For example, the brand extension model (Kalamas et al., 2006) can be tested for luxury brand with the consumers of high and low level of attachment.

- viii. In recent years, signalling with subtle versus prominent branding has received keen attention in luxury research (Hung et al., 2010; Cheah et al., 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). However, it is unknown whether the brand prominence has any influence on luxury brand attachment. Future research may test the research model across visually subtle and prominent luxury brands.
- ix. The non-significant impact of public self-consciousness on the relationship between actual/ideal self-congruence and luxury brand attachment warrants further investigations. As pointed out in the chapter 7 and 8 of this paper, if luxury brand attachment is more relevant to the consumers' personal feelings and emotion, it would be imperative to examine the moderating influence of private self-consciousness and social anxiety on the postulated relationships.
- x. There has been a transition in the product concept of undergarments over the last few decades (Tsarenko and Lo, 2017). In particular, the combination of support, comfort and confidence aspects of undergarments consumption has experienced a slight shift through the fashion trend of being outwear into social visibility (e.g., Hart and Dewsnap, 2001). Future research may also examine the consumers' perception on the relative importance of the functional and hedonic value provided by luxury branded undergarments and other privately consumed products. Then, further research might be conducted on how the perceived value may influence the luxury brand attachment for the publicly and privately consumed luxury branded products.

## **9.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter concludes this research with several sections. At first, the research questions, gaps, and objectives are reviewed and details are provided on how these research questions have been addressed with 4 individual studies. Next, the contributions and implications (conceptual, methodological, and managerial) have

been outlined. Finally, the limitations of this research are discussed with future research directions.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Words related to feeling**

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. addiction    | 23. dedication   |
| 2. adoration    | 24. delicate     |
| 3. adulation    | 25. delight      |
| 4. affection    | 26. desire       |
| 5. affinity     | 27. devotion     |
| 6. allegiance   | 28. eagerness    |
| 7. amore        | 29. elegant      |
| 8. appeal       | 30. enthusiasm   |
| 9. ardor        | 31. esteem       |
| 10. arousal     | 32. estimation   |
| 11. aspiration  | 33. excitement   |
| 12. attachment  | 34. exquisite    |
| 13. captivated  | 35. faithfulness |
| 14. charming    | 36. familiarity  |
| 15. closeness   | 37. fancy        |
| 16. comfy       | 38. favor        |
| 17. confidence  | 39. fealty       |
| 18. congruity   | 40. fervor       |
| 19. connection  | 41. fidelity     |
| 20. cozy        | 42. fondness     |
| 21. craving     | 43. friendly     |
| 22. deification | 44. idolatry     |

45. infatuation
46. Insistence
47. intimate
48. inwardness
49. joy
50. kinship
51. like
52. longing
53. love
54. loyalty
55. nearness
56. passionate
57. pleasure seeking
58. probity
59. rare
60. regard
61. relationship
62. relish
63. similitude
64. significance
65. sincerity
66. togetherness
67. trustworthiness
68. warmth
69. worship
70. yearning
71. zeal
72. zest
73. satisfaction

## **Appendix B: Pool of statement**

1. Affection: I have a deep affection for this brand
2. Bond: I have a long lasting bond with this brand
3. Attachment: I am deeply attached to this brand
4. Connection: I have a deep emotional connection to this brand
5. Desire: I have a strong desire for this brand
6. Closeness/close: I feel a sense of closeness to this brand
7. Captivated: I am strongly captivated by this brand
8. Pleasure: I feel a sense of emotional pleasure from this brand
9. Exclusive: I feel a sense of exclusiveness with this brand
10. Trustworthiness: I strongly trust this brand
11. Dedication: I have strong dedication to this brand
12. Intimate: I feel strong intimacy with this brand
13. Affinity: I have an enduring affinity with this brand
14. Aspiration: I feel this brand helps me to achieve what I want
15. Delight: I am delighted with this brand
16. Trustworthiness: This brand is untrustworthy
17. When someone appreciates \_\_\_ brand, it feels like a personal complement.
18. Devotion: I am strongly devoted to this brand
19. Exquisite: I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this brand
20. Fondness: I am strongly fond of this brand
21. Infatuation: I am deeply infatuated with this brand
22. Intimate: This brand is intimate
23. Loss: I would feel a loss if \_\_\_ brand is no more available.
24. Love: I am deeply in love with this brand
25. Passionate: I am deeply passionate about this brand
26. Joy: When I think of this brand, I feel a sense of joy.
27. Attraction: I am attracted to this brand.

## **Appendix C: Survey instrument: Phase 3 of scale development**

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### **Luxury Brand Attachment Scale**

The aim of this study is to develop a scale that measures the consumers' attachment to luxury brands. It will provide empirical support in understanding the level and consequences of luxury brand attachment and will explore the factors that drive consumers to form the attachment.

Please note that you have a choice to participate in this survey and that you may end the survey at any time without giving a reason or justification. Your information and responses will be aggregated and treated with the strictest confidentiality. In this instance, your data will be deleted. In addition, Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number 5129). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au). In addition, you acknowledge that you have received information regarding this research and had an opportunity to ask questions. You believe that you understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of your involvement in this project and you voluntarily consent to take part. Completion of the survey will be taken as evidence of consent to participate in this study.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

As an expert in the area of luxury branding, you are invited to rate each statement based on the extent to which you believe the statement to be representative of the luxury brand attachment scale.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Please read the definitions and evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1-7 or "Not Applicable (NA)". There is neither right nor wrong answers. All statements employ a seven point Likert scale, ranging from "Not representative at all" to "Clearly representative" and "Not applicable"

1 = Not representative at all

7 = Clearly representative

NA = Not applicable

Further if you have ANY COMMENTS, please provide them in the "comments" box at the end. To help you with your assessment the definition of the constructs are provided:

**Luxury brand:** Luxury brand is defined as having unique characteristics such as social status, uniqueness, conspicuousness, exclusivity, high transaction value, superior quality, craftsmanship, and emotional connection.

**Luxury brand attachment:** Luxury brand attachment is defined as the emotional bond that connects a consumer to the luxury brand and develops deep feelings within the consumer toward the luxury brand.

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
1	I have a deep affection for this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
2	I have a long lasting bond with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
3	I am emotionally attached to this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
4	I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
5	I have a strong desire for this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
6	I feel a sense of closeness to this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
7	This luxury brand brings emotional pleasure for me	<input type="radio"/>							
8	I feel a sense of exclusiveness with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
9	I have a strong dedication to this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
10	I feel a strong intimacy with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
11	I have an enduring affinity with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
12	I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want	<input type="radio"/>							
13	I am strongly devoted to this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
14	It feels like a personal compliment when someone appreciates this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
15	I am attracted to this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
16	I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
17	I am very fond of this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
18	This luxury brand is intimate to me	<input type="radio"/>							
19	I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available	<input type="radio"/>							
20	I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
21	When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy	<input type="radio"/>							
22	I really care about this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
23	I am deeply in love with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
24	I have a special connection with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
25	I have a strong devotion for this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
26	I am deeply infatuated with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							
27	I am delighted with this luxury brand	<input type="radio"/>							

1. Please mention the FIVE most important items from the list above that represent Luxury Brand Attachment.

2. Please provide your COMMENTS below.

## **Appendix D: Survey instrument: Phase 4 of scale development**

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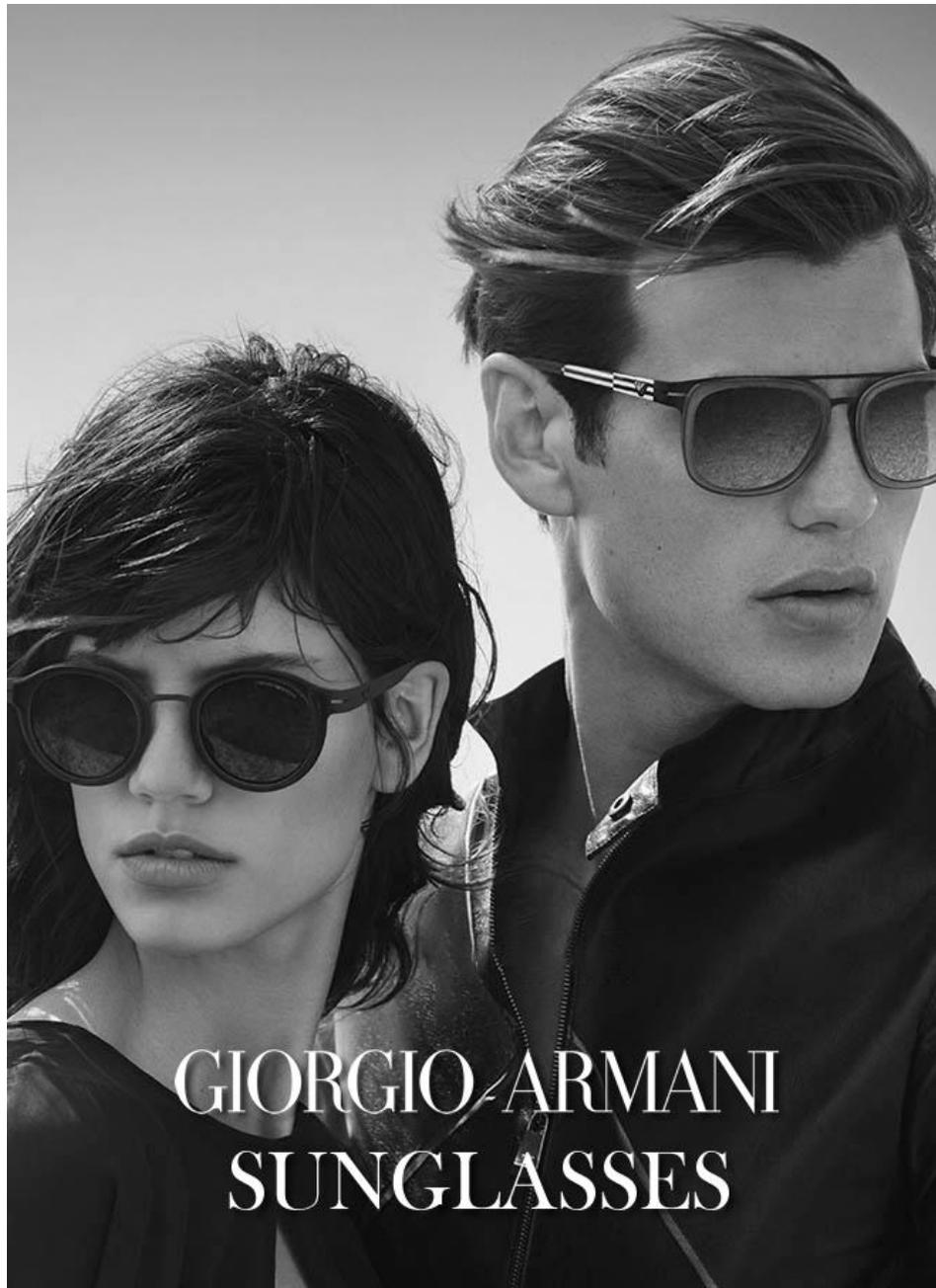
### **Study on the Luxury Brand Attachment**

The aim of this study is to develop a research framework for luxury brand attachment that will provide empirical support in understanding the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment. It will also explore the factors that drive consumers to form the attachment.

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**Please view the advertisement carefully before moving into the next section. The following section is based on this advertisement. The next button will appear after viewing the advertisement.**



**Have you ever used any Giorgio Armani Sunglasses?**

1. Yes
2. No

**SECTION A**

For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views

**A1.** How favourable is this brand to you?

Not at all Favourable						Very Favourable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A2.** How likeable is the brand to you?

Not at all Likeable						Very Likeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A3.** How pleasing is the brand to you?

Not at all Pleasing						Very Pleasing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION B

The following statements relate to your attachment toward this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>B1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I have a deep affection for this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	I have a long lasting bond with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	I am emotionally attached to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	I have a strong desire for this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6	This luxury brand brings emotional pleasure for me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
7	I feel a sense of exclusiveness with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
8	I have a strong dedication to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
9	I feel a strong intimacy with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
10	I have an enduring affinity with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
11	I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
12	It feels like a personal compliment when someone appreciates this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
13	I am attracted to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
14	I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
15	I am very fond of this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
16	This luxury brand is intimate to me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
17	I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
18	I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
19	When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
20	I really care about this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
21	I am deeply in love with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
22	I feel a sense of closeness to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

## SECTION C

The following section contains demographic questions that are used to help classify information. Your responses will not be linked to you in any way and will remain confidential. Please answer all questions by circling one number for each question.

<b>C1</b>		What is your gender?	
[1]	Male	[2]	Female

<b>C2</b>		What is your age group?	
[1]	18-20 years	[2]	21-25 years
[3]	26 – 30 years	[4]	31 – 40 years
[5]	Above 40		

<b>C3</b>		What is your current marital status?	
[1]	Married	[2]	Single
[3]	De Facto	[4]	Divorced
[5]	Other		

<b>C4</b>		What is your country of birth? (Please choose one only)	
[1]	Australia	[2]	China
[3]	India	[4]	Indonesia
[5]	Ireland	[6]	Italy
[7]	Malaysia	[8]	Netherland
[9]	New Zealand	[10]	Philippine
[11]	Poland	[12]	Singapore
[13]	South Africa	[14]	Sri Lanka
[15]	Thailand	[16]	Turkey
[17]	United Kingdom	[18]	United States of America
[19]	Vietnam	[20]	Other

<b>C5</b>		What is the level of your education qualifications?	
[1]	Primary School	[2]	Secondary/High School
[3]	Diploma/Certificate	[4]	Undergraduate Degree
[5]	Postgraduate Degree	[6]	Other (Please specify)- _____

<b>C6</b>		What is your annual income?	
[1]	Under \$7,799	[2]	\$7,800 - \$12,999
[3]	\$13,000 - \$20,799	[4]	\$20,800 - \$31,199
[5]	\$31,200 - \$41,599	[6]	\$41,600 - \$51,999
[7]	\$52,000 - \$67,599	[8]	\$67,600 - \$83,199
[9]	\$83,200 - \$103,999	[10]	\$104,000 or more
[11]	I do not wish to specify		

**End of survey**  
**Thank you for your time and participation!**

## **Appendix E: Survey instrument: Study 1.4 and 1.5**

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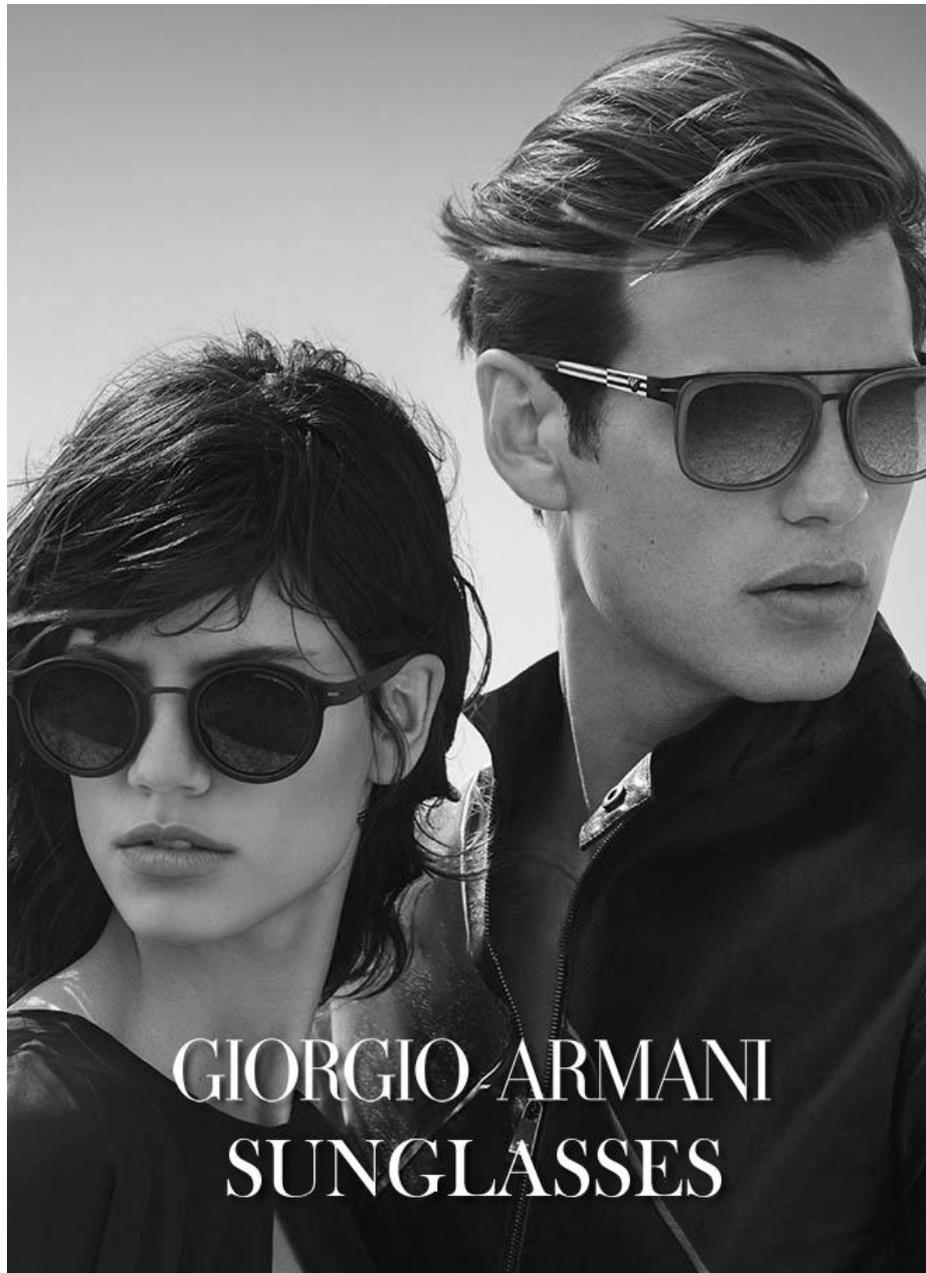
### **Study on the Luxury Brand Attachment**

The aim of this study is to develop a research framework for luxury brand attachment that will provide empirical support in understanding the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment. It will also explore the factors that drive consumers to form the attachment.

Please note that you have a choice to participate in this survey and that you may end the survey at any time without giving a reason or justification. Your information and responses will be aggregated and treated with the strictest confidentiality. In this instance, your data will be deleted. In addition, Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number 5129). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au). In addition, you acknowledge that you have received information regarding this research and had an opportunity to ask questions. You believe that you understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of your involvement in this project and you voluntarily consent to take part. Completion of the survey will be taken as evidence of consent to participate in this study.

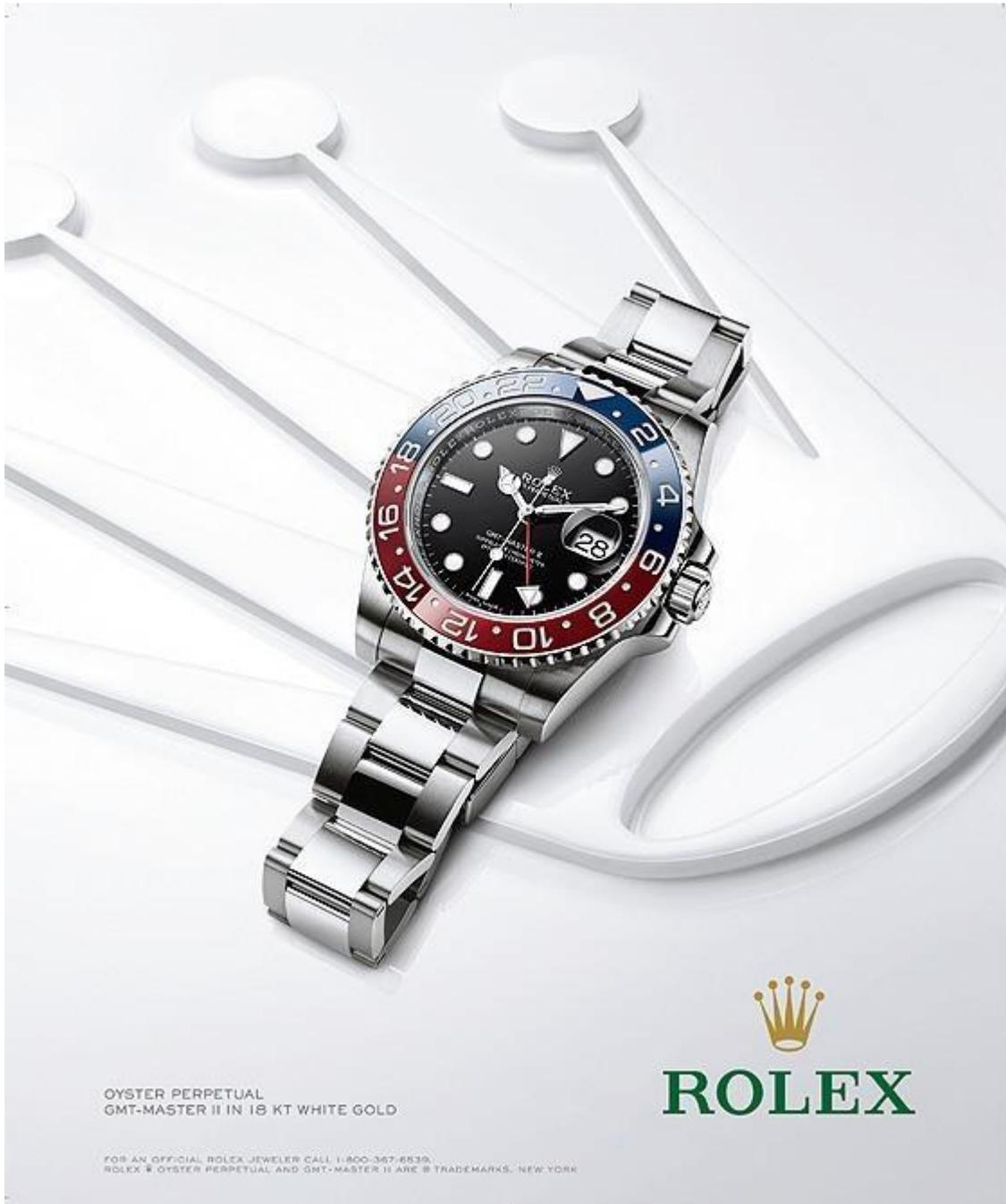
In addition, you acknowledge that you have received information regarding this research and had an opportunity to ask questions. You believe that you understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of your involvement in this project and you voluntarily consent to take part. Completion of the survey will be taken as evidence of consent to participate in this study.

Please view the advertisement carefully before moving into the next section. The following section is based on this advertisement. The next button will appear after viewing the advertisement.



Have you ever used any Giorgio Armani Sunglasses?

1. Yes
2. No



OYSTER PERPETUAL  
GMT-MASTER II IN 18 KT WHITE GOLD

  
**ROLEX**

FOR AN OFFICIAL ROLEX JEWELER CALL 1-800-367-6839.  
ROLEX, OYSTER PERPETUAL AND GMT-MASTER II ARE ® TRADEMARKS. NEW YORK

**Have you ever used any Rolex watch?**

1. Yes
2. No

**SECTION A**

For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views

**A1.** How favourable is this brand to you?

Not at all Favourable						Very Favourable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A2.** How likeable is the brand to you?

Not at all Likeable						Very Likeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A3.** How pleasing is the brand to you?

Not at all Pleasing						Very Pleasing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**SECTION B**

The following statements relate to your attachment toward this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>B1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	I am deeply in love with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6	I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
7	I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

**SECTION C**

The following statements measure your actual self-congruity with this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>C1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	This brand is consistent with how I see myself.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	This brand reflects who I am.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	People similar to me use brand like this/People similar to me use this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	The kind of person who typically uses this brand is very much like me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	This brand is a mirror image of me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

The following statements relate to your ideal self-congruity with this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>C2</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	This brand is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	This brand reflects who I would like to be.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	People that I would like to be use this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	The kind of person whom I would like to be typically uses this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

**SECTION D**

The following statements relate to your willingness to advocate for this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>D1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	By sharing my experience with this luxury brand, I assist other people towards a similar experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury brands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I suggest others about this luxury brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I give suggestion to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION E

The following statements relate to your satisfaction with this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>E1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I am very satisfied with the service provided by this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	I am very satisfied with this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	This brand does a good job of satisfying my needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	The service-products provided by this brand is very satisfactory.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	I believe that using this brand is usually a very satisfying experience.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6	I made the right decision when I decided to use this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
7	I am very happy with this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
8	I am addicted to this brand in some way.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

## SECTION F

The following statements relate to your loyalty toward luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>F1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	I am willing to pay more for this brand than for other brands on the market.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	I often recommend buying this brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	If this brand is not available at the store, I would buy it in another store.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

## SECTION G

The following statements relate to your emotional attachment to luxury brand. Your feelings toward this luxury brand can be characterized by (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>G1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	Affectionate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	Loved	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	Peaceful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	Attached	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Bonded	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	Connected	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Passionate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	Delighted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Captivated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION H

The following statements relate to your attitude toward this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>H1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	This brand delivers what it promises.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	This brand's product claims are believable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	Over time, my experiences with this brand have led me to expect it to keep its	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	This brand has a name you can trust.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION I

The following section contains demographic questions that are used to help classify information. Your responses will not be linked to you in any way and will remain confidential. Please answer all questions by circling one number for each question.

<b>I1</b>		What is your gender?	
[1]	Male	[2]	Female

<b>I2</b>		What is your age group?			
[1]	18-20 years	[2]	21-25 years	[3]	26 – 30 years
[4]	31 – 40 years	[5]	Above 40		

<b>I3</b>		What is your current marital status?			
[1]	Married	[2]	Single	[3]	De Facto
[4]	Divorced	[5]	Other		

<b>I4</b>		What is your country of birth? (Please choose one only)					
[1]	Australia	[2]	China	[3]	India	[4]	Indonesia
[5]	Ireland	[6]	Italy	[7]	Malaysia	[8]	Netherland
[9]	New Zealand	[10]	Philippine	[11]	Poland	[12]	Singapore
[13]	South Africa	[14]	Sri Lanka	[15]	Thailand	[16]	Turkey
[17]	United Kingdom	[18]	United States of America	[19]	Vietnam	[20]	Other

<b>I5</b>		What is the level of your education qualifications?			
[1]	Primary School	[2]	Secondary/High School	[3]	Diploma/Certificate
[4]	Undergraduate Degree	[5]	Postgraduate Degree	[6]	Other (Please specify)- _____

<b>I6</b>		What is your annual income?			
[1]	Under \$7,799	[2]	\$7,800 - \$12,999	[3]	\$13,000 - \$20,799
[4]	\$20,800 - \$31,199	[5]	\$31,200 - \$41,599	[6]	\$41,600 - \$51,999
[7]	\$52,000 - \$67,599	[8]	\$67,600 - \$83,199	[9]	\$83,200 - \$103,999
[10]	\$104,000 or more	[11]	I do not wish to specify		

**End of survey  
Thank you for your time and participation!**

## **Appendix F: Survey instrument: Study 2**

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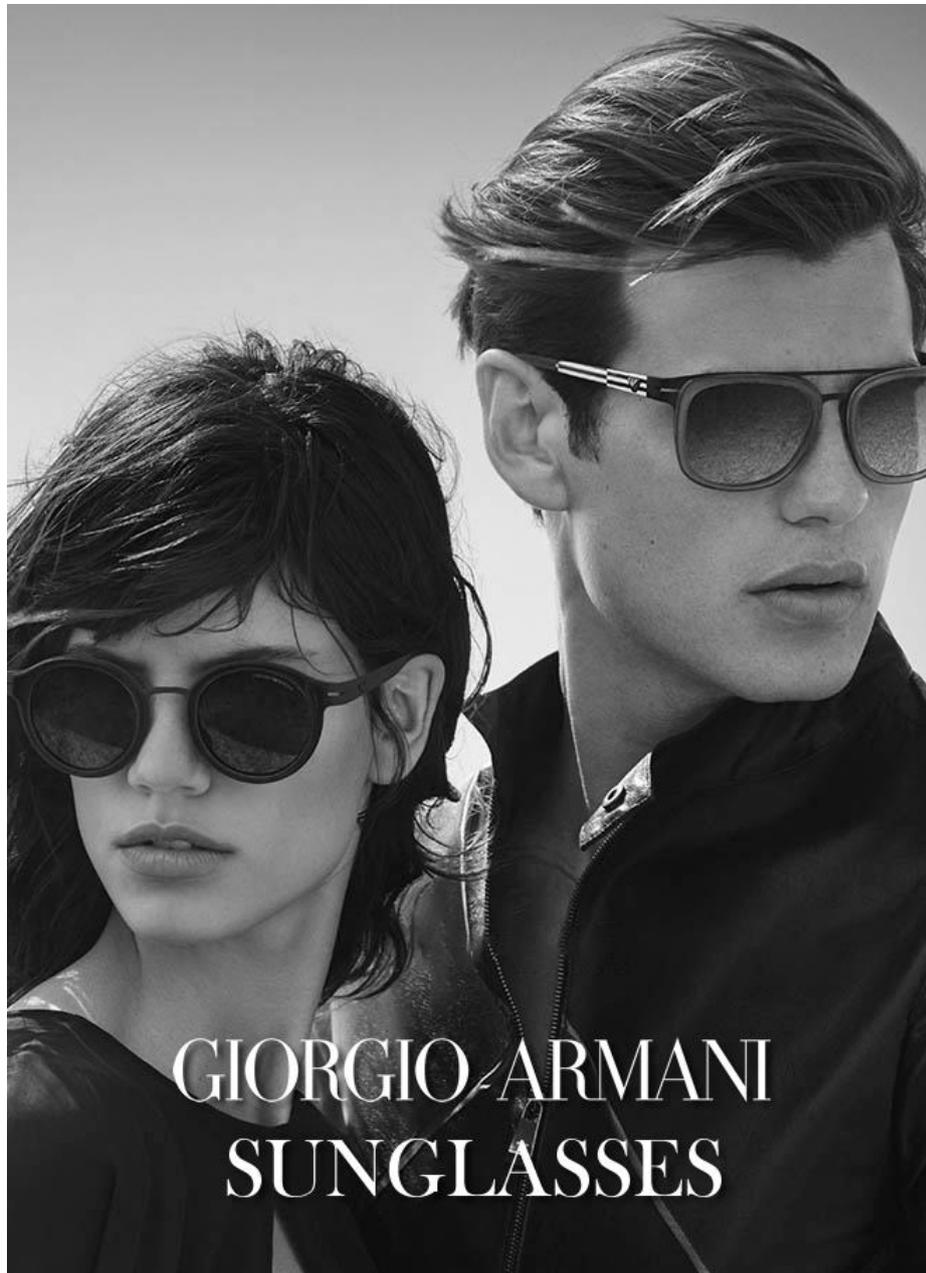
### **Study on the Luxury Brand Attachment**

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Please note that you have a choice to participate in this survey and that you may end the survey at any time without giving a reason or justification. Your information and responses will be aggregated and treated with the strictest confidentiality. In this instance, your data will be deleted. In addition, Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number 5129). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au). In addition, you acknowledge that you have received information regarding this research and had an opportunity to ask questions. You believe that you understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of your involvement in this project and you voluntarily consent to take part. Completion of the survey will be taken as evidence of consent to participate in this study.

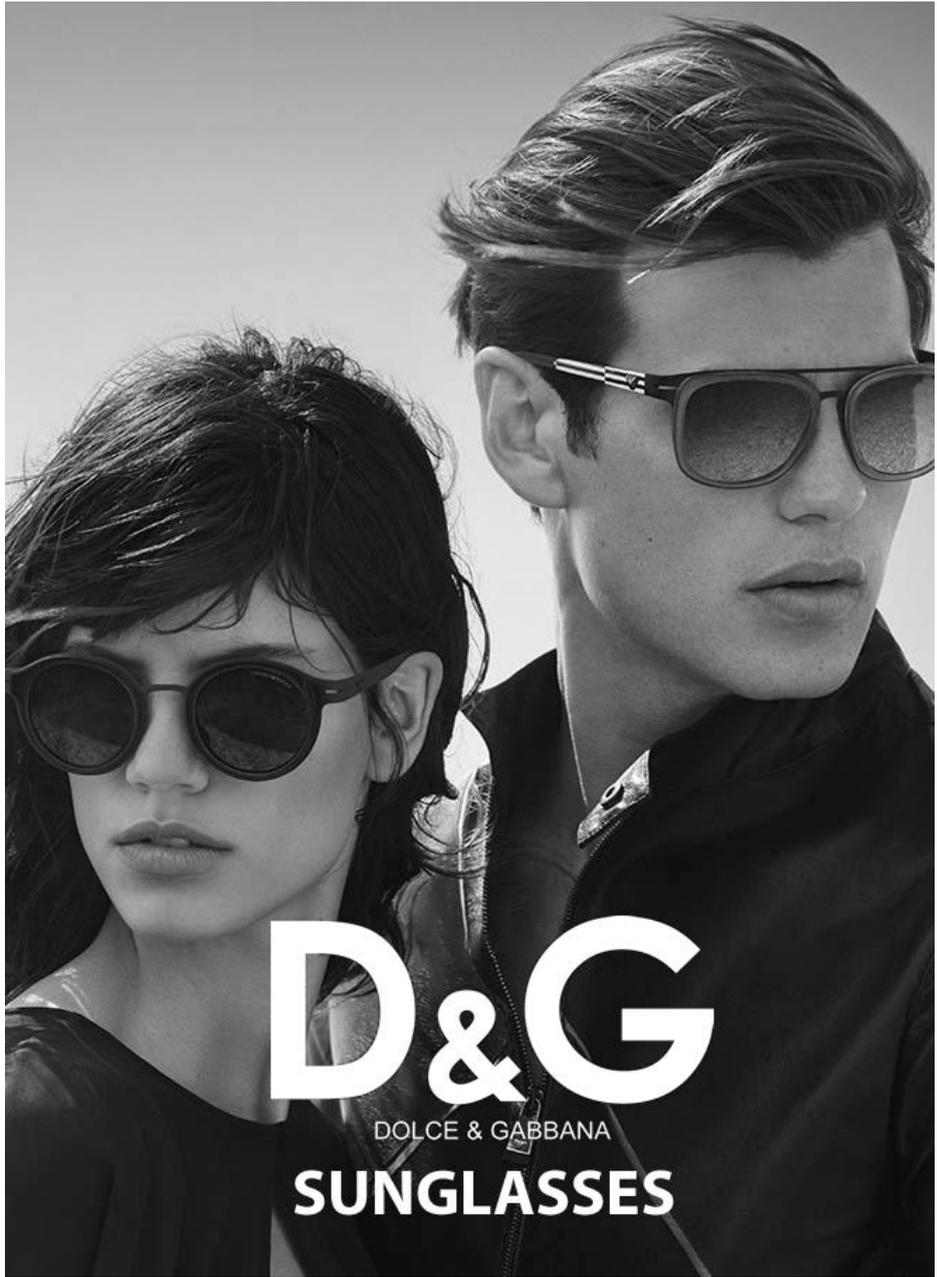
In addition, you acknowledge that you have received information regarding this research and had an opportunity to ask questions. You believe that you understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of your involvement in this project and you voluntarily consent to take part. Completion of the survey will be taken as evidence of consent to participate in this study.

Please view the advertisement carefully before moving into the next section. The following section is based on this advertisement. The next button will appear after viewing the advertisement.



Have you ever used any Giorgio Armani Sunglasses?

1. Yes
2. No



**Have you ever used any D&G Sunglasses?**

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

**SECTION A**

For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views

**A1.** How favourable is this brand to you?

Not at all Favourable						Very Favourable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A2.** How likeable is the brand to you?

Not at all Likeable						Very Likeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A3.** How pleasing is the brand to you?

Not at all Pleasing						Very Pleasing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**SECTION B**

The following statements relate to your attachment toward this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>B1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	I am deeply in love with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6	I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
7	I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

**SECTION C**

The following statements measure your actual self-congruity with this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>C1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	This brand is consistent with how I see myself.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	This brand reflects who I am.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	People similar to me use brand like this/People similar to me use this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	The kind of person who typically uses this brand is very much like me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	This brand is a mirror image of me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

The following statements relate to your ideal self-congruity with this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>C2</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	This brand is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	This brand reflects who I would like to be.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	People that I would like to be use this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	The kind of person whom I would like to be typically uses this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

**SECTION D**

The following statements relate to your willingness to advocate for this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>D1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	By sharing my experience with this luxury brand, I assist other people towards a similar experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury brands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I suggest others about this luxury brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I give suggestion to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION E

The following section contains demographic questions that are used to help classify information. Your responses will not be linked to you in any way and will remain confidential. Please answer all questions by circling one number for each question.

<b>E1</b>		<b>What is your gender?</b>	
[1]	Male	[2]	Female

<b>E2</b>		<b>What is your age group?</b>	
[1]	18-20 years	[2]	21-25 years
[3]	26 – 30 years	[4]	31 – 40 years
[5]	Above 40		

<b>E3</b>		<b>What is your current marital status?</b>	
[1]	Married	[2]	Single
[3]	De Facto	[4]	Divorced
[5]	Other		

<b>E4</b>		<b>What is your country of birth? (Please choose one only)</b>	
[1]	Australia	[2]	China
[3]	India	[4]	Indonesia
[5]	Ireland	[6]	Italy
[7]	Malaysia	[8]	Netherland
[9]	New Zealand	[10]	Philippine
[11]	Poland	[12]	Singapore
[13]	South Africa	[14]	Sri Lanka
[15]	Thailand	[16]	Turkey
[17]	United Kingdom	[18]	United States of America
[19]	Vietnam	[20]	Other

<b>E5</b>		<b>What is the level of your education qualifications?</b>	
[1]	Primary School	[2]	Secondary/High School
[3]	Diploma/Certificate	[4]	Undergraduate Degree
[5]	Postgraduate Degree	[6]	Other (Please specify)- _____

<b>E6</b>		<b>What is your annual income?</b>	
[1]	Under \$7,799	[2]	\$7,800 - \$12,999
[3]	\$13,000 - \$20,799	[4]	\$20,800 - \$31,199
[5]	\$31,200 - \$41,599	[6]	\$41,600 - \$51,999
[7]	\$52,000 - \$67,599	[8]	\$67,600 - \$83,199
[9]	\$83,200 - \$103,999	[10]	\$104,000 or more
[11]	I do not wish to specify		

**End of survey**  
**Thank you for your time and participation!**

## **Appendix G: Survey instrument: Study 3 and 4**

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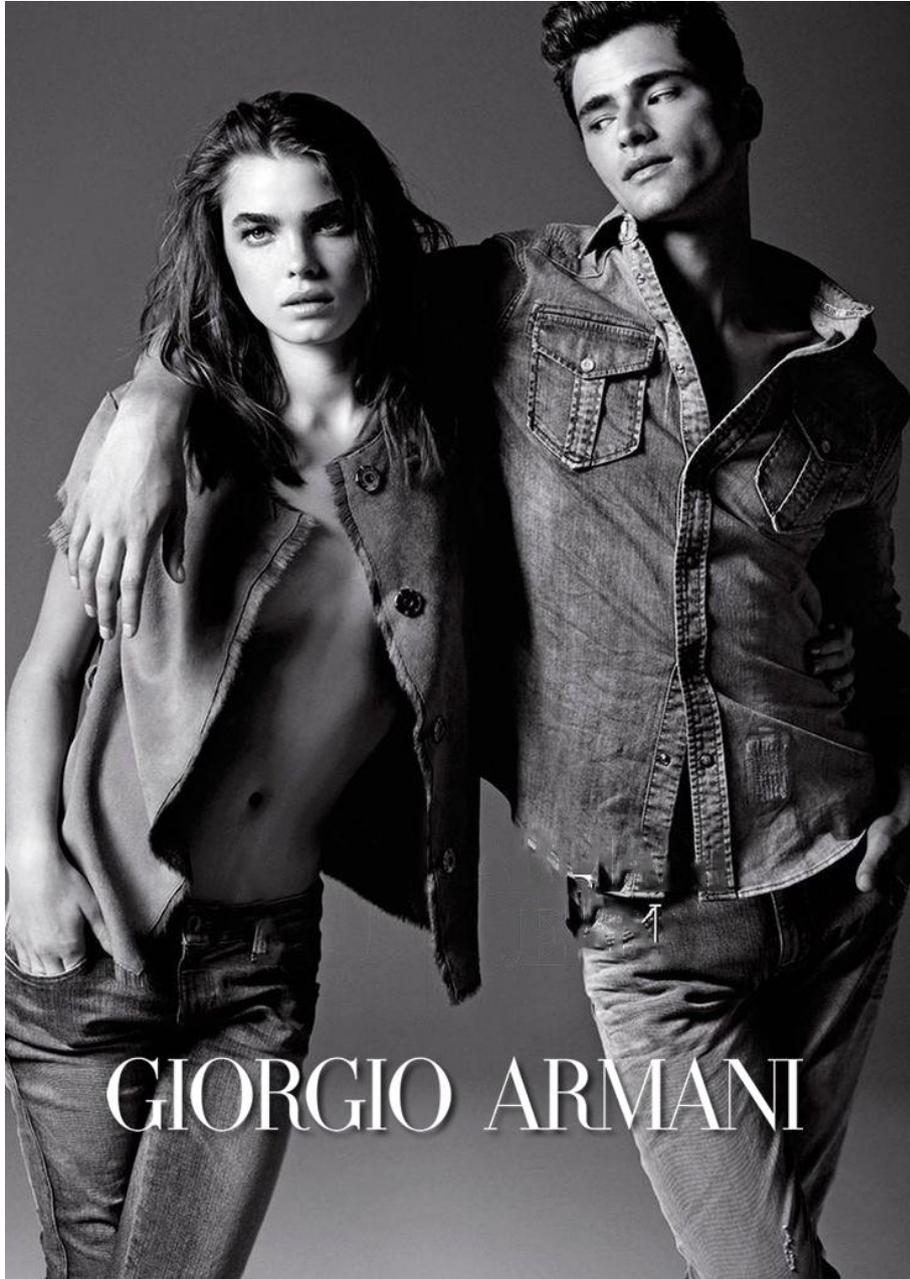
### **Study on the Luxury Brand Attachment**

The aim of this study is to develop a research framework for luxury brand attachment that will provide empirical support in understanding the predictors and outcomes of luxury brand attachment. It will also explore the factors that drive consumers to form the attachment.

Please note that you have a choice to participate in this survey and that you may end the survey at any time without giving a reason or justification. Your information and responses will be aggregated and treated with the strictest confidentiality. In this instance, your data will be deleted. In addition, Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number 5129). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au). In addition, you acknowledge that you have received information regarding this research and had an opportunity to ask questions. You believe that you understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of your involvement in this project and you voluntarily consent to take part. Completion of the survey will be taken as evidence of consent to participate in this study.

In addition, you acknowledge that you have received information regarding this research and had an opportunity to ask questions. You believe that you understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of your involvement in this project and you voluntarily consent to take part. Completion of the survey will be taken as evidence of consent to participate in this study.

Please view the advertisement carefully before moving into the next section. The following section is based on this advertisement. The next button will appear after viewing the advertisement.



Have you ever used any Giorgio Armani jeans?

1. Yes
2. No



**Have you ever used any Giorgio Armani undergarments?**

1. Yes
2. No

**SECTION A**

For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views

**A1.** How favourable is this brand to you?

Not at all Favourable						Very Favourable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A2.** How likeable is the brand to you?

Not at all Likeable						Very Likeable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**A3.** How pleasing is the brand to you?

Not at all Pleasing						Very Pleasing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**SECTION B**

The following statements relate to your attachment toward this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>B1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I am deeply passionate about this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	I am deeply in love with this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	I have a deep emotional connection to this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	When I think of this luxury brand, I feel a sense of joy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	I feel this luxury brand helps me achieve what I want	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6	I would feel a sense of loss if this brand is no longer available	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
7	I feel a sense of exquisiteness from this luxury brand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

## SECTION C

The following statements measure your actual self-congruity with this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>C1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	This brand is consistent with how I see myself.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	This brand reflects who I am.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	People similar to me use brand like this/People similar to me use this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	The kind of person who typically uses this brand is very much like me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	This brand is a mirror image of me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

The following statements relate to your ideal self-congruity with this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>C2</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	This brand is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2	This brand reflects who I would like to be.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3	People that I would like to be use this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4	The kind of person whom I would like to be typically uses this brand.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5	This brand is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

## SECTION D

The following statements relate to your willingness to advocate for this luxury brand. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>D1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	By sharing my experience with this luxury brand, I assist other people towards a similar experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	It makes me feel good to tell others about this luxury brands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I have responsibility to society to tell others about my experiences with this luxury brands	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I suggest others about this luxury brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I give suggestion to other people about the quality of this luxury brand to help them have a similar experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION E

The following statements relate to your public self-consciousness. For each of the following statements, please circle the value that closely represents your views (1 stands for strongly disagree while 7 stands for strongly agree).

<b>E1</b>	<b>Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following.</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I am concerned about my style of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I am concerned about the way I present myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I am self-conscious about the way I look.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I usually worry about making a good impression.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	One of the last things I do before I leave my house is look in the mirror.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I am concerned about what other people think of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I am usually aware of my appearance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## SECTION F

The following section contains demographic questions that are used to help classify information. Your responses will not be linked to you in any way and will remain confidential. Please answer all questions by circling one number for each question.

<b>F1</b>		<b>What is your gender?</b>			
[1]	Male	[2]	Female		

<b>F2</b>		<b>What is your age group?</b>			
[1]	18-20 years	[2]	21-25 years	[3]	26 – 30 years
[4]	31 – 40 years	[5]	Above 40		

<b>F3</b>		<b>What is your current marital status?</b>			
[1]	Married	[2]	Single	[3]	De Facto
[4]	Divorced	[5]	Other		

<b>F4</b>		<b>What is your country of birth? (Please choose one only)</b>					
[1]	Australia	[2]	China	[3]	India	[4]	Indonesia
[5]	Ireland	[6]	Italy	[7]	Malaysia	[8]	Netherland
[9]	New Zealand	[10]	Philippine	[11]	Poland	[12]	Singapore
[13]	South Africa	[14]	Sri Lanka	[15]	Thailand	[16]	Turkey
[17]	United Kingdom	[18]	United States of America	[19]	Vietnam	[20]	Other

<b>F5</b>		<b>What is the level of your education qualifications?</b>			
[1]	Primary School	[2]	Secondary/High School	[3]	Diploma/Certificate
[4]	Undergraduate Degree	[5]	Postgraduate Degree	[6]	Other (Please specify)- _____

<b>F6</b>		<b>What is your annual income?</b>			
[1]	Under \$7,799	[2]	\$7,800 - \$12,999	[3]	\$13,000 - \$20,799
[4]	\$20,800 - \$31,199	[5]	\$31,200 - \$41,599	[6]	\$41,600 - \$51,999
[7]	\$52,000 - \$67,599	[8]	\$67,600 - \$83,199	[9]	\$83,200 - \$103,999
[10]	\$104,000 or more	[11]	I do not wish to specify		

**End of survey**  
**Thank you for your time and participation!**

## Appendix H: Summary of the findings in study 2, 3, and 4

Relationships	<b>Study 2</b> Base model test Compare base model across 2 brands			<b>Study 3</b> Base model test Moderation of PSC	<b>Study 4</b> Base model test Moderation of PSC Compare base model for private & public	
	D&G Sunglasses (n=208)	Giorgio Armani Sunglasses (n=223)	Compare D&G and Giorgio Armani Sunglasses	Giorgio Armani Jeans (n=290)	Giorgio Armani Undergarment (n=280)	Compare Giorgio Armani Jeans and Undergarments
ASC -> LBA	Supported	Supported	No significant difference	Supported	Supported	No significant difference
ISC -> LBA	Supported	Supported	No significant difference	Supported	Supported	No significant difference
LBA -> Advocacy	Supported	Supported	No significant difference	Supported	Supported	No significant difference
Relative impact of ASC and ISC on LBA	No significant difference	No significant difference		No significant difference	ASC has stronger impact on LBA	
PSC moderates ASC -> LBA				No moderation	No moderation	
PSC moderates ISC -> LBA				No moderation	No moderation	
PSC moderates LBA -> Advocacy				No moderation	No moderation	
PSC moderates the relative impact of ASC and ISC on LBA				No significant difference	ASC has stronger impact on LBA for the low PSC	