



SCHOOL OF  
ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT

Drinking from the Fountain of Youth?  
Brand rejuvenation in the case of heritage luxury  
fashion brands

*Insights from Millennial consumers*

by

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# Abstract

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Title</b>                  | Drinking from the Fountain of Youth? - Brand rejuvenation in the case of heritage luxury fashion brands  |
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| <b>Keywords</b>               | Heritage brands; Luxury fashion brands; Brand rejuvenation; Millennials; Brand identity  |
| <b>Thesis purpose</b>         | The aim of this study was to examine whether German Millennials are in favor of rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands or if such actions instead lead to negative associations, as they tend to ignore the heritage aspect.   |
| <b>Methodology</b>            | Following a relativist ontology, this research is guided by a social constructionist position, which allows a deep understanding of Millennials' opinions. To explore their viewpoints on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands, we chose a qualitative method with an abductive approach. To analyze the data, a thematic approach has been adopted.                   |
| <b>Theory</b>                 | We used the concepts of brand identity and brand image, as well as the Consumer-Company Identification framework, to understand Millennials' opinions on rejuvenation practices and illuminate how such attempts impact the brand image hold by the consumers.   |
| <b>Empirical data</b>         | 18 semi-structured in-depth interviews with German Millennial consumers were conducted.  |
| <b>Conclusion</b>             | We found that Millennials are generally in favor of rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands (e.g. collaborations with youth brands). However, we identified that the aspects of tradition and history are what the generation values most about such brands. Therefore, when rejuvenating a heritage luxury fashion brand, these central aspects should never be diluted. |
| <b>Practical implications</b> | In this thesis identity coherence has been identified as a key success driver of heritage luxury fashion brands' rejuvenation efforts. Thus, we claim that all rejuvenation practices need to be in line with the established brand core. Consequently, only because innovation seems to be on every company's agenda, it does not mean that "one-size fits all".                          |

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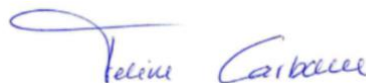
Tack så mycket!

May 2020



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Katharina Netek



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Feline Carbone

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# 1 Introduction

This first chapter provides the reader with background information on our topic under study, outlines the research question as well as the aimed contribution, and further presents the structure of our thesis.

## 1.1 Background

“*There is a new way to be a luxury brand today*”, claimed by Cédric Charbit, CEO of Balenciaga, with this implying that in the past years, a tremendous shift in the climate of the luxury fashion industry could be observed (Paton, 2018; Kapferer, 2012a). Breaking with conventions of luxury brand management, more and more brands decide to modernize themselves as a response to fast-changing market trends and developments (Keller, 2009). Such changes are, for instance, the shift towards an experience-based economy (Atwal & Williams, 2009), the advancing digitization, and primarily, the predicted transformation in the luxury market’s target audience (Blazquez, Mattich, Henninger & Helberger, 2019). It is anticipated that the generation of Millennials will in five years from now make up more than 50 percent of the global personal luxury goods market (Bain & Company, 2018). Equally, in the next seven years, 130 percent of market growth will be ascribed to this generation, which makes it an essential segment for further observation (Burnasheva, Villalobos-Moron & Gusuh, 2019; Bain & Company, 2018).

There is no consistent definition of the term “Millennial”, however, this thesis follows the definition of Lee and Kotler (2016), who set the birth period of this cohort between 1980 and 2000. Researchers and business consultancies call for new strategies for luxury brands, warning that Millennials are a disruptive generation and that their values, motivations, and behaviors differ from those of previous generations (Wuestefeld, Hennigs, Schmidt & Wiedmann, 2012; De Kerviler & Rodriguez 2019; Deloitte, 2017). In contrast, Kapferer and Michaut (2019), who define Millennials as those born between 1980 and 1996, argue that they do not differ significantly from other cohorts regarding luxury consumption.

Until recently, it was considered that consumers are inclined to purchase luxury brands with genuine history because they appear to be more credible and trustworthy (Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt & Wuestefeld, 2011). In particular, heritage brands, meaning brands “*with a positioning and a value proposition based on [their] heritage*” (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007, p.5), benefit from this aspect in times of economic uncertainty (Stewart-Allen, 2002).

This heritage element is additionally supposed to provoke brand loyalty and increase the acceptance of higher prices, notably relevant in the luxury sector (Wiedmann et al., 2011). In this regard, Kapferer (2012b) argues that “*luxury is creator driven, not consumer oriented*” (p.67), and according to Urde et al. (2007), long-term continuity is inevitable for such heritage brands.

Consequently, heritage brands emphasize permanence in their branding, which makes adaptations in response to changing market needs especially challenging for them (Ottolenghi, 2018; Chandon, Laurent & Valette-Florence, 2016). In this context, heritage and innovation are often considered adversary forces – a so-called paradox (Larsen, Jong, Bendixen & Juncker, 2018). While heritage is mostly driven by internal factors, often built on initial values of the business, innovation is mainly driven by external factors, such as the present-day changes in a brand's target group (Kapferer, 2012b).

Nevertheless, considering Millennials to be substantially different from other consumers and seeing a need to appeal to them, more and more luxury fashion brands with a strong heritage reassess conventional approaches of luxury fashion management (Keller, 2009) and seek to alter their image with the help of various innovative practices (Blazquez et al., 2019).

Kapferer (2012b) calls this phenomenon brand rejuvenation and describes it as “*opening [the brand] up to younger clientele*” (p.256). The trigger of brand rejuvenation is the fear of having an outdated image (Kapferer, 2012b). Thus, especially among mature heritage luxury brands, some organizations seem to be obsessed with innovation, considering disruption as one of the main success factors (Nicoletti, 2019). To keep pace with the predicted change in Millennial consumers’ tastes, brands like Burberry and Gucci have decided to adapt their longstanding strategies. Instead of sticking with tradition and in some way running from change, these brands instead follow a new path to stay up to date and to speak to younger consumers (Imagination, 2019). Thereby, they do not fear to risk the potential lack of success and loss of loyal customers (Sheridan, 2019). Thus, by performing rejuvenation practices, such as collaborating with youth brands, changing visual identifiers, or being active on social media, these brands seek to alter their established image.

Such developments in the contemporary fashion market somehow contradict existing literature, where for instance, Urde et al. (2007) claim that especially the long history should be highlighted because it protects the heritage brand against changing consumer preferences and makes radical adaptations redundant. According to the authors, such brands should, therefore, always stay true to their brand core, even when rejuvenating (Urde et al., 2007). In line with this, for instance, Hermès has relied on its heritage since 1873 and has repeatedly been ranked the world’s most valuable luxury brand, only marginally redefining the brand in response to emerging marketplaces (Roll, 2018).

Looking at these different approaches, it is questionable to which extent heritage luxury fashion brands should rejuvenate themselves to attract Millennial consumers. Does the generation expect these brands to maintain their focus on history and exclusiveness, or is the target group in favor of strategies that embrace new opportunities and radical practices that alter the brand’s image?

## 1.2 Research question

This study aims to examine whether Millennials prefer rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury brands, which set them apart from conventional luxury brands, or if that innovativeness rather leads to negative associations, as it tends to ignore the above-emphasized heritage aspect.

Addressing the need to shed light on the phenomenon of brand rejuvenation in the luxury fashion market, resolving contradictions in the existing literature and, considering the missing perspective of Millennial consumers, there seems to be a relevant question that has not been addressed yet. In this context, we aim to fill a contemporary academic and practical gap by answering the following research question:

***What are Millennials' opinions on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands?***

To sufficiently answer this question, we first have to thoroughly understand the phenomenon of brand rejuvenation in luxury fashion. Therefore, we consider it necessary to provide illustrative examples by addressing the following sub question:

*SQ1: What are rejuvenation practices adopted by heritage luxury fashion brands?*

Knowing what Millennials are looking for in luxury fashion brands and why they are attracted to them will further enable us to understand why this generation prefers some rejuvenation actions over others. We must, therefore, answer a second sub question, namely:

*SQ2: Why do Millennials consume luxury fashion brands?*

In the following, we expand on the relevancy of the topic and further narrow down our research field.

### 1.2.1 Specification and relevance

As a shift in the luxury sector can be observed (Keller, 2009), with brands embracing reinvigoration strategies and thus more and more straying away from tradition, we see a need to address this topic academically. Since especially luxury fashion brands with a formerly very strong focus on their heritage, such as Gucci or Burberry, seem to follow unconventional new paths to address Millennials (Kim & Reed, 2018; Burberry, n.d. a), we found these heritage brands to be an interesting focus for our research. They constitute illustrative examples to illuminate the dilemma between heritage and innovation, as they are steeped in history and seem to strengthen their brand from within (Panda, 2006) but still see a need to adapt to present market needs. Further, the increased appearance of these heritage infused brands in global rankings, which list the most valuable and successful brands in the luxury segment (Interbrand, 2019), make these types of brands relevant for contemporary research.

These current rejuvenation strategies of heritage luxury fashion brands are based on the belief that Millennials fundamentally change the luxury fashion market (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019).

This generation is, for instance, assumed to be growing into financial security and to be more oriented towards consumption than older generations (Jackson et al., 2011). Thus, studying the needs and wants of this generation is deemed highly relevant. Even though this generation is of central importance as its members will be the key luxury consumers of the future, research on this target group predominantly focuses on topics like labor (Breitsohl & Ruhle, 2012) or attitudes towards sustainability and consciousness (Hanson-Rasmussen & Lauver, 2018). Knowledge about this generation in the context of luxury fashion consumption is, however, still rare.

To further narrow down the scope of our study, we only focus on German Millennials. Our argumentation centering around why we specifically look at Germans is twofold. Firstly, not only generational but also cultural influences determine luxury consumption (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Siebels, 2007). As we aim to look at the generational aspect in isolation, we have to make sure that the determinant of cultural differences does not influence our findings. Therefore, we decided to focus on German Millennials, especially as we have direct access to this consumer group.

Secondly, as an economically powerful country with high purchasing power (Gfk, 2020), Germany makes up for a substantial percentage of luxury consumption (Bain & Company, 2018) and thus allows for a relevance transfer to other markets. Furthermore, we see this country as a suitable environment to shed light on our topic under research as German consumers are known for their tendency to purchase and test innovative items, thus taking a leader role in regard to consumption (Silhouette-Dercourt & DeLassus, 2016).

### 1.3 Aimed contribution

Discovering opinions of German Millennials on unconventional rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands, we intend to contribute to the research field of luxury fashion and brand rejuvenation in various ways.

Firstly, we aim to explain and clarify the concept of brand rejuvenation in the luxury fashion context illuminating four illustrative heritage luxury fashion brands (Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Gucci, and Hermès). These brands adopt different strategies to adapt to the contemporary market needs and thus offer optimal cases to understand the phenomenon of brand rejuvenation. Consequently, we add to the existing literature by providing examples of rejuvenation practices in the luxury fashion industry, as this has been missed by contemporary research and thus ignored a vital development. This gained knowledge may act as a starting point and call for future research on brand rejuvenation in the luxury fashion industry.

Secondly, we aim to solve a contradiction between existing literature and actual market developments. As previously mentioned, there seems to be uncertainty whether making adaptations to the brand core should be part of a rejuvenation process (Urde et al., 2007; Wuestefeld et al., 2012). Whereas researchers call for a balance between heritage and innovation, contemporary heritage brands such as Burberry adopt more radical approaches,

which seem to ignore this literary advice by neglecting the core values and elements that made the brand famous and recognizable. Thus, we address the lack of clear guidance for luxury brand managers, which gives rise to potential confusion and misunderstanding in this field.

As Millennials are believed to make up more than half of the total luxury market in less than five years from now (Bain & Company, 2018) and professional experts and papers already call for new strategies in luxury brand management to appeal to these consumers (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019), we claim that the incomplete understanding of their motivations and preferences concerning luxury consumption marks a gap in the existing research.

With our research, we further aim to provide an understanding of how rejuvenation efforts affect a heritage brand's image in the minds of Millennial consumers and contribute to the ongoing theoretical debate on whether Millennials expect luxury brands to change their strategy (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019; Wuestefeld et al., 2012).

Providing knowledge on the perspective of Millennial consumers, we not only extend existing literature but also aim to provide managerial implications for luxury fashion firms on how to attain this rising consumer group.

We elaborate on factors and practices that make a luxury brand attractive for Millennials to guide managers on how to adequately revitalize their brand to remain an essential part of today's marketplace. In this context, this research also intends to complement knowledge as to whether and to what extent luxury businesses should respect their brand heritage and core values when reinvigorating the brand.

To conclude, we aim to provide insights into the opinions of German Millennial consumers and offer an understanding of their attitudes towards innovative practices of heritage luxury fashion brands. Luxury brand managers can consider these insights when setting up rejuvenation strategies that focus on attracting the target consumers of the future. As the Millennial generation makes up a highly relevant target market for luxury brands (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019), it is inevitable to carefully examine the opinions, tastes, and preferences of these consumers, and with this, the importance they attach to tradition and heritage.

## 1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis will be structured as follows. Having presented the introduction, which outlines the focus of the thesis, its purpose, and direction, existing literature on the topic under study is displayed. To achieve the research aim, an understanding of the term luxury and luxury fashion is vital. In this context, we further shed light on the changes in the luxury industry, focusing on contemporary strategies to attract the new consumer group of Millennials. After that, we introduce the theoretical framework, in which we assess theories relevant to our research. These concepts are then applied to understand our empirical material better and to put in in a theoretical context.

In chapter four, the applied method, the analysis approach, as well as ethical considerations, limitations, and quality assurance, are presented. In the next part of the thesis, we illuminate four illustrative examples of heritage luxury fashion brands that perform rejuvenation practices, namely Gucci, Hermès, Louis Vuitton, and Burberry. The following section presents the empirical findings, which are then discussed in chapter seven. Finally, the study is concluded with outcomes, managerial and theoretical implications, as well as limitations and implications for further research. The successive figure should serve as an illustration of this structure:

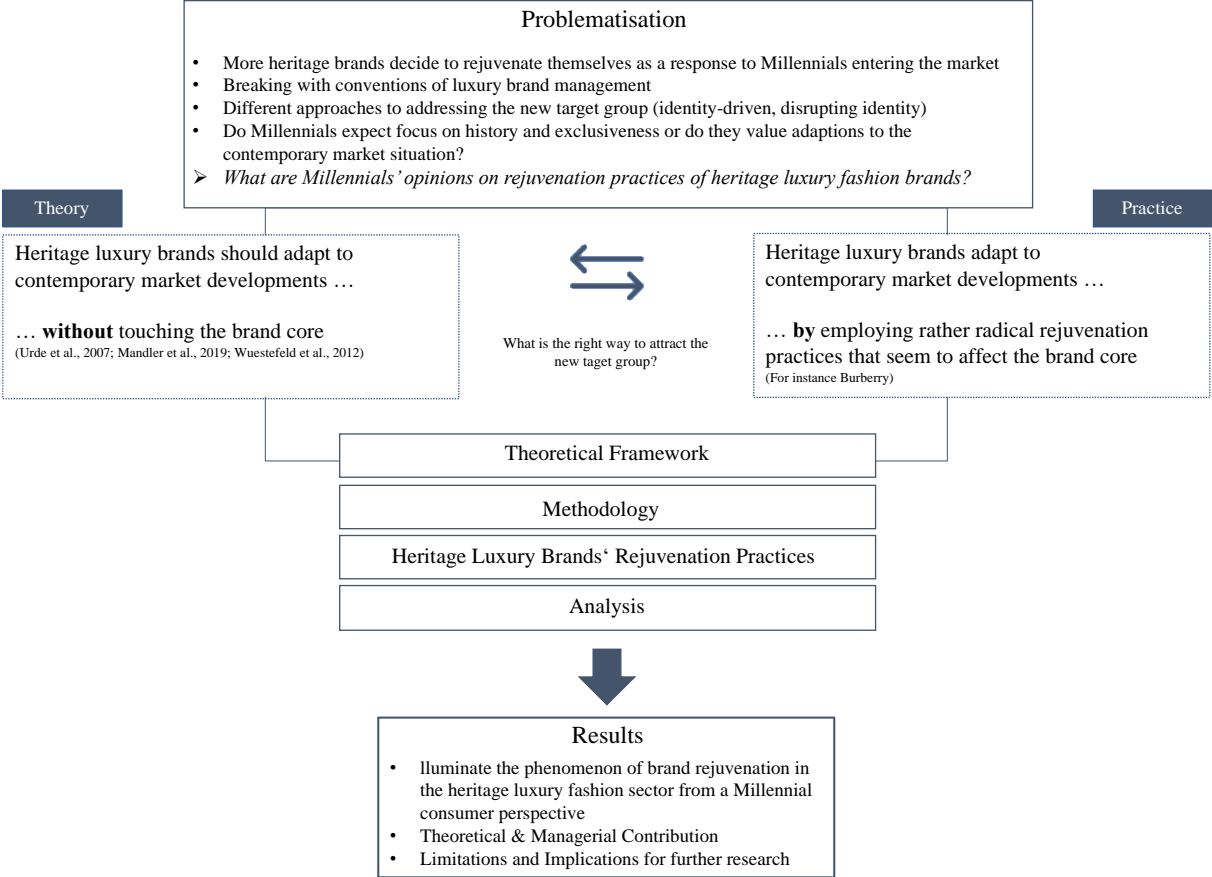


Figure 1: Thesis overview (Own figure, 2020)

## 2 Literature Review

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the existing research, the following chapter reviews related literature on luxury and luxury fashion, brand heritage as well as brand rejuvenation. Further, literature addressing the changes in the luxury industry, Millennial consumers, as well as research about the strategies adopted by luxury brands to target this group is included. Overall, this literature review is supposed to allow the identification of a research gap and the subsequent formulation of the research question.

### 2.1 Background on luxury fashion

This section provides the conceptual foundation of the term luxury in general and background on luxury fashion. As there is no clear-cut definition of luxury as a general term, we consider it necessary to clarify what our study deems as “luxury”. Additionally, in the following, the term brand heritage, its meaning, as well as the importance to luxury brands, are clarified.

#### 2.1.1 Defining luxury

Even though luxury as a phenomenon already existed in ancient history (Godey et al., 2013), only recently, more and more scholars shed light on the growing luxury segment. Researchers were thereby aiming to establish a definition for the term luxury and the interrelated concept of luxury brands. Although these various definitions do share substantial common ground, as they use multiple dimensions to define a luxury brand, there is no academic analog of what a luxury brand is and no coherent knowledge on the value admeasurement of luxury brands (Berthon, Pitt, Parent & Berthon, 2009). This becomes visible, for instance, in the fact that the American Marketing Association, which in marketing societies is often referred to as an essential source for definition gathering, does not enclose definitions for luxury as a concept, luxury brands, and luxury marketing.

Defining luxury by differentiating it from premium, Kapferer and Bastien (2012) argue that the high price of luxury cannot be explained by factors such as function or accomplishment, but the price of singularity (Karpik & Scott, 2010), which is built on intangibles. These intangibles might, for instance, be the valuable heritage aspect, history on its own, or the country of origin (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Consequently, Kapferer and Bastien (2012) distinguish premium and luxury based on intangibles and incomparability.

From a marketing perspective, scholars define luxury as something that can differentiate the brand from its competitors and can lead to consumers perceiving the brand as appealing (Kapferer, 1997; Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). However, Heine (2012) defines luxury as “*anything that is desirable and more than necessary and ordinary*”, (p.42) thereby demonstrating that luxury is not only related to the availability, but also human’s desirability for an item. Linking to luxury as a desire, Kapferer (2012b) argues that “*luxury brands are to*

*civilians the equivalent of what medals are for military officers”* (p.66). With this quote, the researcher emphasizes that people wear luxury items to reward themselves and to accentuate their position in the social hierarchy.

Building upon earlier findings of Kapferer (2008), who states that luxury brands are mainly related to their core commodities, Heine (2012) distinguishes the concepts of luxury, luxury products, and luxury brands to establish a clear-cut definition of these ideas. His findings, which imply that the essential aspects of luxury products also coincide with those of luxury brands, led Heine (2012) to the following definition: Luxury brands are connected with consumers’ impression of a *“high price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness, and a high degree of non-functional association”* (p.62).

Other researchers attempt to define luxury brands by emphasizing the difference between luxurious and non-luxurious brands. In this context, Vigneron and Johnson (2004) claim that materialistic consumers that attach importance to interpersonal influence show a higher appreciation for luxury brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Their conclusions are based on the fact that a brand cannot determine itself as a “luxury brand”, it latterly depends on the evaluation of the consumers. Brands can, through various tactics, like premium pricing or excellent performance, increase the probability of being perceived as luxurious. Still, in the end, it is in the consumers’ hands to appraise luxury brands (Ko, Costello & Taylor, 2019).

Vickers and Renand (2003) claim that luxury brands differ from non-luxury brands by the extent to which they incorporate functionalism, experientialism, and symbolic interaction (Vickers & Renand, 2003). In this context, functionalism is referred to as features of the product that solve or prevent a current problem, for instance, superior quality and durability. Experientialism describes the stimulation of sensory delight and hedonic devouring, in that regard indicated as e.g. exclusive and traditional design. The third component, symbolic interaction, entails product aspects correlated to status, self-enhancement, and membership to a group (Vickers & Renand, 2003).

Due to its strong consumer focus and the three clearly defined dimensions of luxury brands, our thesis builds on this definition of luxury. The data collection of Vickers and Renand (2003) was further carried out on diverse categories, such as cars, which allows us to apply it to our case without any concern. This definition is also considered the most appropriate because it enables operationalization, due to its testing in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Ko et al., 2019).

### 2.1.2 Luxury fashion

Berry (1994) makes first attempts at categorizing luxury. He identifies four types, the first one being sustenance, the second one shelter, followed by clothing or apparel, which is also termed luxury fashion and leisure (Berry, 1994). This academic paper will focus on the third category, namely fashion.

Whereas luxury, as discussed above, implies immutability and solidity, fashion is more related to change (Radon, 2012; Kapferer, 2012a). Herewith, Kapferer (2012a) acknowledges that this



pace related to fashion contributes to a shift in luxury “*from rarity and timelessness to originality and change*” (p.457). This inevitably shows the difficulty of managing luxury fashion brands, where scarcity and long-lasting exclusiveness are prioritized but also innovativeness and newness, which are deeply rooted in the concept of fashion, are imminent (Radon, 2012).

In this academic paper, the term fashion relates to apparel, footwear, bags as well as jewelry, and therefore does not examine other fashion categories like makeup or hairstyle products.

### 2.1.3 Brand heritage in luxury fashion

Especially for luxury brands, the concept of brand heritage seems to be an essential element. Hudson (2011) refers to brand heritage as a developing conception within the marketing environment, proposing that the history of older companies is notably linked to their brand identity, as well as to consumer appeal. He hereby builds on Urde et al. (2007), who define a heritage brand as “*one with a positioning and a value proposition based on its heritage*” (Urde et al., 2007, p.5).

The authors exemplify this concept by referring to the watch industry, naming Patek Philippe, and Tag Heuer as brands with heritage (Urde et al., 2007). Comparing these two brands, they, however, differentiate heritage brands and brands with a heritage (Urde et al., 2007). Patek Philippe can be referred to as a heritage brand, because it intentionally accentuates its history as a main factor of its brand identity, as well as positioning (Urde et al., 2007). In contrast, Tag Heuer does not do so (Urde et al., 2007). It is, therefore, emphasized that making heritage part of a brand’s value proposition is a deliberate, strategic choice, and thus, allows a brand with a heritage to become a heritage brand (Urde et al., 2007).

Making use of this heritage aspect in brand management is considered a valuable asset, mainly due to its ability to allow the past, as well as the present, to enhance the future (Urde et al., 2007). Aaker (2004) indicates that a brand relying on heritage is perceived more authentic by consumers because the personality then comes from its roots. Heritage can, therefore, develop a definite competitive advantage and provide the consumer with a feeling of trustworthiness and depth (Wiedmann et al., 2011; Urde et al., 2007).

The concept of heritage has gained popularity over the past years, especially regarding its re-interpretation in contemporary light. Scholars, for instance, have more and more indicated the importance of emphasizing heritage in brand communication (Aaker, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2011). Most of the conceptualizations are built upon the most cited framework of Urde et al. (2007), in which they identified five characteristics that make up a brand’s heritage quotient. These five elements surround a mindset called brand stewardship, which helps to “*nurture, maintain and protect*” brand heritage (Urde et al., 2007, p.1).

Track record refers to “proof” that the company has accomplished to fulfill its values and promises (Urde et al., 2007). The second element longevity describes a consistent projection of heritage aspects, like the aforementioned track record under many executives, proving that these

are reflected in the organization's culture. Core values, the third element of brand heritage, have been anchored in the brand for long and are a promise, expressed through external as well as internal communication. These form the basis for positioning and guiding a brand's behavior in day-to-day decisions. Core values might become part of the brand's identity and, eventually of the brand's heritage (Urde et al., 2007). Urde et al. (2007) further identify the use of symbols as the fourth element, indicating that their usage in communication is a further aspect of heritage. These symbols can be found in brand logos, as well as specific looks in the design of brands, e.g. Tiffany's shade of blue. Lastly, the history is not just important to a heritage brand's identity, but such brands are somewhat influenced by their past, even in current operations or future decisions (Urde et al., 2007).

The more these five elements, which are displayed below to better visualize the components of the framework, are present in a brand, the higher its heritage quotient (HQ). This means that in a company with a high HQ, heritage is not only important internally, but also essential to consumers and other stakeholders (Urde et al., 2007).

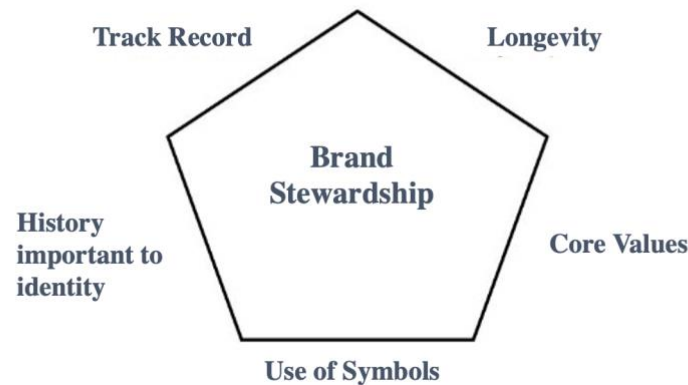


Figure 2: Heritage Quotient (Own figure adapted from Urde et al., 2007, p.8)

Other scholars followed Urde et al.'s (2007) definition and their conceptualization of brand heritage and further added on this. Banerjee (2008), for instance, identified four pillars of brand heritage, thereby building on Urde et al. (2007). The first pillar, history, embodies the rich past, whereas the second, image, serves as the aftereffect of the brand communication and positioning based on the benefits enjoyed by the consumer (Banerjee, 2008). If the brand has an appealing set of benefits that consumers can encounter, then they are likely to have a positive image of this brand (Banerjee, 2008). With the third pillar, brand expectancy, Banerjee (2008) refers to physical, as well as emotional benefits that consumers can draw on. Ultimately, the last pillar, equity, relates to heterogenous and homogenous competences of a brand, that lead to progression and differentiation from the competition (Banerjee, 2008).

Also building on Urde et al. (2007), Wiedmann et al. (2011) developed 15 indicators that were supposed to cover all five elements of the heritage quotient presented above, including bonding, imagination, prestige, and differentiation.

Even though the heritage phenomenon has been developed further by the researchers mentioned above, the thesis draws from the definition of Urde et al. (2007) due to its heavy citation, its significant contribution to the research field and because it is based on the identity-oriented approach of brands relevant to this study.

Previous research on brand heritage in the luxury brand context indicates that a brand's heritage can considerably enhance the brand image and the perceived value (Riley, Lomax & Blunden, 2004; Wuestefeld et al., 2012; Dion & Borraz, 2015). Kapferer and Bastien (2012) further conclude that especially luxury brands are obliged to tell a narrative that incorporates their past actions and history to advocate consumers' emotional attachment.

Whereas prior research has only highlighted heritage connected to luxury products, Halwani (2019) made first attempts in explaining how consumers of different age groups perceive heritage luxury. He refers to heritage luxury brands as any luxury brand with a long history that still emphasizes its roots in the present and has maintained its originality. He acknowledges the challenge of staying relevant and argues that participants from all age groups associate timelessness, quality craftsmanship and, prestige with heritage luxury brands. Emerging adults favor the trendiness and attractive design of luxury items, while older adults emphasize the high quality and durability (Halwani, 2019). However, consumers of all ages claimed that the possession of heritage luxury branded goods provides them with a feeling of uniqueness (Halwani, 2019).

In the context of luxury fashion, Wiedmann et al. (2011) found that in an increasingly global and dynamic marketplace, consumers search for authentic brands with a strong focus on their history. This is in line with what Urde et al. (2007) propose – heritage mainly increases credibility, authenticity and, trust. Similarly, Ciappei, Zollo, Boccardi and Rialti (2016) explored customer perceptions in luxury fashion and found heritage and authenticity to be the two most important variables that have to be emphasized in marketing communication.

Summing up, researchers agree that heritage is not only desirable but an essential element of a brand, especially in the luxury sector. Particularly in the context of fashion, the aspect of heritage is considered vital, as the dynamic fashion industry requires a certain permanence that ensures authenticity and durability.

## 2.2 Current developments in the luxury fashion brand market

Researchers such as Keller (2009) as well as Kapferer and Michaut (2019) acknowledge that substantial changes can be experienced in the luxury fashion industry. Such developments will be illuminated in the following paragraphs, including new strategies in luxury brand management, brand rejuvenation as well as the uprising Millennial target group.

### 2.2.1 Luxury brands and Millennials

In the past years, a shift in the luxury fashion target audience was evident (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019). In this sense, a relevant stream of research looks into the consumption of a rising target group, namely the Millennial generation. The sociological concept of generations complements the demographic factor of age. Mannheim (1952) was one of the first claiming that being born in the same year “*creates the potential for the development of a shared consciousness that unites and motivates people*” (p.284). This shared consciousness is, for instance, shaped by common experiences (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019) and historical events (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

There is no consistent definition of the term Millennial, with birth periods ranging from 1977 until 2000. Valentine and Powers (2013) refer to Millennials as people born between 1977 and 1996, and Moore (2012) between 1982 and 2000. Lee and Kotler (2016) set the birth period between 1980 and 2000. Even though his range varies, this thesis will follow Lee and Kotler’s (2016) definition because it covers the longest time-period, was published recently and, records several citations in the research field.

Millennials, also called Generation Y, are seen to have a considerable purchasing power and are more oriented towards consumption than older generations, mainly as a result of growing up with the Internet, being connected globally, and the effects of mass media (Jackson, Stoel & Brantley, 2011). This generation is, therefore, not only influenced by the web but also eager to incorporate technologies into its way of living. Thus, the usage of smartphones and the Internet in general links consumers with brands (Moore, 2012). In connection with their technological savviness, this cohort is known as convenient and in favor of online shopping (Sullivan & Heitmeyer, 2008). Following recent statistics, approximately 45 percent of German Millennials regularly shop online (Statista, 2019). In this regard, this generation spends more money than other generations on online shopping, and its purchasing rate is further categorized as one of the highest (Dhanapal et al., 2015; Klapilova, 2016). It is also claimed that this generation, especially when consuming luxury goods, uses mobile apps to evaluate and buy products (Jain, Vatsa & Jagani, 2014).

Abraham and Harrington (2015) propose that when consuming brands, Millennials put high emphasis on their peers’ opinions and that their judgments about brands are especially shaped by interaction on social media. Additionally, the generation grew up in a materialistic society where shopping is considered a form of entertainment and is thus supposed to provide experiences (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). They thereby look for unique experiences around luxury purchases and do not plainly value high-quality products (Atwahl & Williams, 2009). Scholars further consider this generation to be the most motivated to consume for status due to its high attention to material possessions (Eastman & Liu, 2012).

Looking at the luxury consumption of Millennials from a managerial perspective, Wuestefeld et al. (2012) acknowledge that there is a significant need to attract younger consumers in the luxury industry, which forces luxury brand management to maintain a balance between heritage and innovativeness. Especially the digital age raises challenges for luxury brands in terms of reinterpreting tradition and linking past and present in a compelling way. They are confronted

with the problem of being observed as “*old*” brands and as not being on the “*cutting edge*” (Aaker, 1996, p.231). The authors suggest that a brand’s personality can remain in the past, but the organization still has to adapt to the contemporary consumer needs through innovation (Wuestefeld et al., 2012).

De Kerviler and Rodriguez (2019) additionally propose that luxury brands should assure that their brand-related stimuli arouse rich experiences with the brand, especially those that allow Millennials to discover and explore something new, as this generation is especially interested in opportunities for self-exploration. In this context, marketers could make use of brand heritage to create experiences to grant consumers the opportunity to refresh knowledge and to deepen the understanding of the brand’s meaning (De Kerviler & Rodriguez, 2019).

Adkins (2016), for instance, claims that although Millennials are seen as an affluent target with a high eagerness to purchase and means to positively influence their social circle, they pose difficulties to brand managers and marketers. According to the author, brands seem to struggle to live up to the expectations of this prospectively essential audience and face problems to create a strong emotional connection between the brand and the new consumers (Adkins, 2016).

In this context, Kapferer and Michaut (2019) acknowledge that professional experts and papers call for new branding strategies, warning that Millennials are a disruptive generation and that their motivations and behaviors differ from those of previous generations. The authors themselves, however, argue that Millennials do not differ significantly from other generations regarding luxury consumption (Kapferer & Michaut, 2019).

### 2.2.2 Breaking with conventions of luxury brand management

Even though the above-addressed disagreement on whether Millennial consumers have different preferences when consuming luxury products has not yet been resolved, luxury brands have already started to adopt new strategies. In the past, such brands used to rely on strict principles to maintain their exclusive image (Keller, 2009). Conforming to this, Keller (2009) outlines ten characteristics of luxury brand management, for instance the maintenance of a premium image, the central importance of brand elements such as the name, logos, symbols and packaging, and the significance of controlling the contribution over selected channels. Likewise, premium pricing is especially central to luxury brands, as well as one-to-one relationships with consumers (Keller, 2009).

Kapferer and Bastien (2012) similarly address this specific kind of brand management with the 24 Anti Laws of luxury brand management, hereby emphasizing that these principles contradict marketing standards. Adding to Keller (2009) they outline characteristics such as making it difficult for clients to buy, not incorporating stars in communication efforts and not selling openly on the Internet (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012)

Guided by the desire for growth and responding to the growing new target audience, some luxury brands have however decided to increase penetration among the public and thus ignore constraints of traditional luxury brand management (Keller, 2009). In this context, Keller

(2009) identifies three trade-offs luxury brands face when aiming for growth and addressing new consumer groups such as Millennials. Firstly, Keller (2009) addresses the “*classic vs. contemporary image*” (p.293) dilemma and acknowledges that long-time customers favor history, heritage and experiences while there is uncertainty whether these factors are also relevant to younger, prospective customers.

Secondly, “*acquisition vs. retention*” deals with the trade-off between focusing marketing efforts on profitable existing customers in the short run or profitable prospective customers in the long term (Keller, 2009, p.293)

Looking at the third trade-off “*exclusivity vs. accessibility*”, Keller (2009, p.293) describes the conflict mentioned above that luxury brands are facing, being extraordinary on the one hand but at the same time relevant to a wider audience to guarantee sufficient growth. Thus, luxury brand managers are confronted with the dilemma that strategies which allow for exclusivity and the emphasis of heritage might not be efficient to ensure growth, accessibility, and contemporariness (Keller, 2009).

The author argues that one way to address this growth dilemma is an appropriate brand architecture that enables an efficient organization of a brand’s offerings to cater to different market segments and thus to ensure growth. In this context, he provides the example of Armani entering a new market with its sub brand Armani Jeans to prevent dilution of the original brand and confusion among existing customers (Keller, 2009).

In the context of these three trade-offs, other researchers start to explore specific practices of luxury brands directed towards Millennial consumers. Addressing the conflict of exclusivity and accessibility, Mrad, Farah and Haddad (2018) state that strong competition and the dynamic market development force companies to follow innovative branding strategies. As a consequence, companies are increasingly interested in establishing co-branding partnerships with fast fashion brands, not only to offer innovative grounds through adaptations of traditional products but also to benefit from the likely positive spillover associations between the allying brands, as well as to raise the brand image and awareness (e.g. the collaboration between H&M and Karl Lagerfeld).

Furthermore, these partnerships are supposed to reinforce the visibility of the luxury brand, give it an aura of newness and surprise, generate buzz and allow it to remain present in the minds of consumers (Mrad et al., 2018). Such collaborations further allow the brand to reach a wider audience and to make new customers familiar with it, thereby making the brand more accessible to the public. However, when directly talking to consumers, the researchers found that co-branding does not merely lead to improved perceptions of the luxury brand since it can harm the brand’s exclusiveness and authenticity. These co-branding partnerships again exemplify the difficulty of managing a luxury brand, showcasing the need to find a balance between newness and surprise, and on the other hand, exclusiveness and authenticity. Thus, the authors warn that luxury brands should be aware of the possible consequences of collaborating with fast fashion brands and should instead aim for horizontal alliances with brands of similar market image and reputation (Mrad et al., 2018).

Further, in order to become more accessible for the young target audience, more and more luxury brands become active on social media, which Mandler, Johnen and Gräve (2019) emphasize as a main success driver of luxury brand communication. Studying Facebook posts of luxury brands and including consumer opinions, the authors found that luxury brands should, however, still actively emphasize their heritage elements.

Baker, Ashill, Amer and Diab (2018) introduce the “Internet Dilemma”, a term that addresses the challenge of reaching out to technology-savvy consumers and, at the same time, preserving the exclusive brand image and ensuring the personal connection to consumers. Observing 92 luxury firms, the authors found that offering products online is considered an essential step to stay exclusive for consumers in an innovative digital era (Baker et al., 2018). The researchers further encourage luxury companies to follow an omnichannel approach (Baker et al., 2018). In line with this, Lawry and Choi (2016) found that more and more luxury brands promote mobile applications, as well as m-commerce platforms, mainly to widen the relationship with consumers and therewith to create various touchpoints with the brand. Thus, luxury brands use different online channels to sell products, support the shopping process, and provide consumers with inspiration and brand-related news. Looking at the conventions of luxury brand management introduced by Kapferer and Bastien (2012), such efforts seem to contradict the claim that luxury brands should only marginally sell their products online.

Focusing on the luxury fashion sector, Blazquez et al. (2019) also acknowledge shifts in brand management, with “*traditional luxury fashion houses either revitalizing their brands or completely rebranding themselves making it challenging to maintain their core heritage identity*” (p.93). They found the process of rebranding, including changes of visual identifiers, to be a more radical strategy of luxury companies to alter their position in the market. Exploring consumer perceptions regarding such rejuvenation practices, Blazquez et al. (2019) found that it is vital for brands to refer back to the brand’s core values and to strike a balance between the original core elements that made the brands famous (brand heritage) and innovation. In this context, the authors argue that the brand’s underlying identity must be in line with such radical approaches, so the brand remains recognizable and familiar in the long run (Blazquez et al., 2019).

### 2.2.3 Brand rejuvenation

Reacting to the growing target group of Millennials, the above-mentioned researchers started to explore how luxury brands attempt to attract these consumers, for instance via social media (Mandler et al., 2019), e-commerce (Baker et al., 2018), by creating co-branding partnerships with fast fashion brands (Mrad et al., 2018) or even with a complete disruption and makeover of the brand as a whole (Blazquez et al., 2019). Thus, to be perceived as more innovative and to attract the younger consumer group of Millennials, various more or less radical strategies can be observed in the luxury fashion industry.

Kapferer (2012b) refers to this phenomenon as brand rejuvenation, meaning “*opening [the brand] up to younger clienteles*” (p.256) and modernizing it. Such rejuvenation practices are

considered a response to a brand's fear of aging and being perceived as outdated by consumers (Kapferer, 2012b). According to Kapferer (2012b), even brands that target older consumers should be cautious and prevent being too closely associated with a mature customer base to also be attractive for future customers. The author presents different "*symptoms*" of aging brands, the loss of direct contact with young generations being particularly relevant for our study (Kapferer, 2012b). In this regard, whenever a brand does not seem to fit into contemporary times, Aaker and Shansby (1982) argue for brand rejuvenation. With this, the authors indicate that rejuvenation is a strategic exercise that builds on the brand associations that are likely to work for current trends and behaviors, while placing less emphasis on those that are no longer beneficial. In line with this, Downs and Haynes (1984) highlight the disparity between a company's and the consumers' brand perception, with this again implying that brand rejuvenation is a sort of innovating the company with the younger consumer segments in mind, as these will be imperative in the future.

Taking over a long-term focus, Kapferer (2012b) claims that "*the management of a brand involves maintaining the present (what the brand is now) while at the same time working for the future*" (p.401). Explicitly arguing for heritage brands, Aaker (1996) suggests that brands undergoing rejuvenation processes should take advantage of their heritage and thus exhaust already existent values. This is in line with Urde et al. 's (2007) claim that a brand's position needs to be altered as a response to market changes, thus ensuring brand relevance. Hence, changes to a brand should not exceed a certain degree that disrespects the core values and dilutes what the brand stands for (Urde et al., 2007).

However, in practice, radical approaches of luxury fashion brands are evident, such as Burberry's complete change of its visual identity. With its contemporary strategy, the brand made alterations to its core and thus seems to reject its heritage (Ma & Theodosi, 2018).

## 2.3 Critique of the existing literature

All the research fields considered in this chapter have been investigated in isolation in greater or lesser detail. Researchers produced knowledge about heritage in the luxury segment, addressed growth dilemmas of luxury brands, and provided initial findings on the luxury fashion consumption of the Millennial cohort. The concept of brand rejuvenation has also been discussed, however, linkages to what this means in a luxury fashion context are rather rare. Acknowledging the new and unconventional strategies of contemporary luxury fashion brands, researchers have already explored some of the brands' approaches that aim towards attracting Millennial consumers (e.g. collaborations with fast fashion brands or social media activities). However, there is a lack of research that gives an overview of the phenomenon of luxury brands following new strategies to attract Millennials. Despite various attempts of heritage luxury fashion brands to adapt their image to attract Millennial consumers, rejuvenation in luxury fashion is a rather under-investigated field of research.

Whereas Gucci followed a drastic paradigm shift and completely disrupted its signature style and way of communicating (Interbrand, 2019), the French luxury house Hermès approaches



Millennials with slight adaptations and a strong focus on heritage (Roll, 2018). Thereby not changing the brand promise of exclusivity but rather appealing to the emerging consumer group acting within the boundaries of the brand. Hermès still manages to appear more modern with fresh takes on design, technology-related adaptations, such as being active on social media or collaborating with the technology firm Apple (Roll, 2018). Despite these different approaches, both firms continue their success as one of the world's most valued brands (Interbrand, 2019).

This ambivalence is also evident comparing the developments in the luxury fashion market with the claims in the existing literature. When evaluating how Burberry, for instance, rejected its heritage with a logo and monogram change, one might wonder whether the claims of researchers such as Urde et al. (2007) that the brand core should never be diluted, even when rejuvenating a brand, are still appropriate. Looking at this gap between theory and practice, it is unclear whether luxury brands should still refer their core values and the elements that made the brands famous and recognizable (Urde et al., 2007; Wuestefeld et al., 2012).

The different and to a certain extent contradicting approaches of heritage luxury brands may result from the fact that the existing literature only outlines the luxury consumption of Millennials but does not provide a clear picture of the needs and wants of the currently most relevant consumer group. However, as most rejuvenation attempts of luxury brands focus on this generation, it is inevitable to understand what they think about these endeavors. While researchers like Wuestefeld et al. (2012) claim that luxury brands need to follow new strategies to attract future customers, Kapferer and Michaut (2019) state that the Millennial generation does not differ from other cohorts and that luxury brand management should consequently not break with established conventions of the branch. Looking at these contradicting views, we claim that this field of research is not sufficiently reflected from a Millennial consumer perspective.

## 3 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, we present relevant theories related to our research topic, which form the theoretical framework of our thesis. This framework is supposed to support us in understanding our empirical material and builds on the concepts of brand identity, brand image, and the theory of Consumer-Company Identification.

### 3.1 Brand identity & brand image

As mentioned earlier, the connotation of luxury is driven by personal, as well as interpersonal motives. Thus, the concept of luxury is considered highly subjective and built on consumer perceptions (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). To better understand the viewpoints of our respondents, we see a need to address the concepts of brand identity and brand image.

Brand identity describes the personality of a brand, which is manifested in a brand's underlying components, such as its mission, leadership, the intended position, or the core values (Tarnovskaya, 2017). It heavily relies on the brand's roots and its heritage, which provide the brand with unique authority and legitimacy (Kapferer, 2012b). The brand identity thus builds the foundation for a brand's positioning, meaning the emphasis of the characteristics that differentiate the brand from its competitors and make it attractive for consumers (Kapferer, 2012b). Thus, if a brand aims to rejuvenate itself, these efforts are likely to impact the brand identity. It seems like such alterations of the identity must be especially evaluated carefully in the case of heritage luxury brands as they heavily rely on their origin and traditions. Consequently, we deem it vital to consider the identity concept when looking into rejuvenation attempts of such brands.

While brand identity is built by the company itself, the brand image is created on the receiver side (Kapferer, 2012b). Thus, the concept of brand image illuminates how different groups (e.g. consumers) perceive a brand by interpreting the signals it conveys (Kapferer, 2012b). Therefore, the brand image is a synthesis of the receivers' viewpoints on all the brand messages, e.g. the brand name, visual identifiers, products, or advertisements (Kapferer, 2012b) and relates to what consumers associate with the brand (Anselmsson & Bondesson, 2017). A positive brand image may lead to brand strength, which relates to reactions of consumers towards the brand (Anselmsson & Bondesson, 2017). Consequently, we can state that our studied rejuvenation attempts of heritage luxury brands are directed towards an alteration of their brand image, which makes this concept a central theoretical element of our research.

### 3.2 Consumer-Company Identification

With their Consumer-Company Identification framework, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) describe the process of how consumers become attracted to a brand. They found that the

perceived identity (brand image) determines a consumer's identity attractiveness evaluation. Throughout this evaluation process, identity knowledge, coherence and trustworthiness determine the attractiveness and influence the brand image held by consumers. We chose those three determinants to be relevant for our research as they are, according to the authors, "*key moderators*" for influencing the perception of a company's identity (brand image) and the subsequent consumer reaction (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p.79).

The authors claim that "*consumers' perceptions of a company identity and their reactions to it depend on the extent to which they know and trust the identity [...] and more specifically, the extent to which they perceive what they do know as a consistent, coherent whole (identity coherence)*" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, pp.79-80). In the following sections, we will elaborate on each of these three elements and argue how these components will enable us to thoroughly understand our empirical material.

### 3.2.1 Identity knowledge

Consumer perceptions of a brand identity, also called brand image, are influenced by the knowledge they have about an organization's identity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). The authors claim that in the consumer-company identification process, consumers need to have sufficient knowledge about the brand identity to make identity-related judgments (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This identity knowledge is determined by communicators, such as the company itself, the media, or other consumers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

### 3.2.2 Identity coherence

The authors also consider the coherence of a brand identity to be an essential factor in the process of consumer-company identification. When consumers see a company's identity as an internally consistent, coherent whole, they are more likely to be attracted to a brand (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Identity coherence is "*achieved through distinctive corporate positioning strategies that are consistent over time*" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p.81). This is in line with Keller's (1993) earlier-mentioned claim that the brand image must be coherent to allow for solid associations.

### 3.2.3 Identity trustworthiness

The identification process is further influenced by the trustworthiness of a company's identity. This is explained by the researchers as follows: "*If consumers trust the company's identity, they are likely to perceive lower risk*" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p.81). This trustworthiness is mainly determined by the historical experience with that company, its reputation, and the type or category of a company (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

Taking all this into consideration, the question arises whether rejuvenation practices, which are likely to influence the identity of a heritage luxury brand, really promise success or whether

they disturb identity coherence, trustworthiness and knowledge, thus dilute the brand identity and further harm the identification-process of the consumer.

### 3.3 Summary

Taking the presented concepts into consideration allows us to better understand our empirical material by seeing it through the lens of existing, relevant theory.

Our framework incorporates the concept of brand identity, which comprises core values and other elements that make the brand recognizable. As more and more heritage luxury fashion brands start to follow unconventional paths, thereby making alterations to their established brand identity, we see a need to reflect upon the concept of brand identity in combination with current rejuvenation practices. Since such rejuvenation practices are supposed to alter the established brand image in the minds of consumers, and as we adopt the consumer perspective throughout our research, the concept of brand image is also central to our research question.

As Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) and other researchers like Keller (1993) state that practices that impact the brand identity must be coherent from a consumer point of view, we aim to reflect these claims in the case of rejuvenation of heritage luxury fashion brands. Further, we look at the concepts of identity knowledge, and identity trustworthiness to find out whether innovative practices of heritage luxury brands influence these image-building determinants.

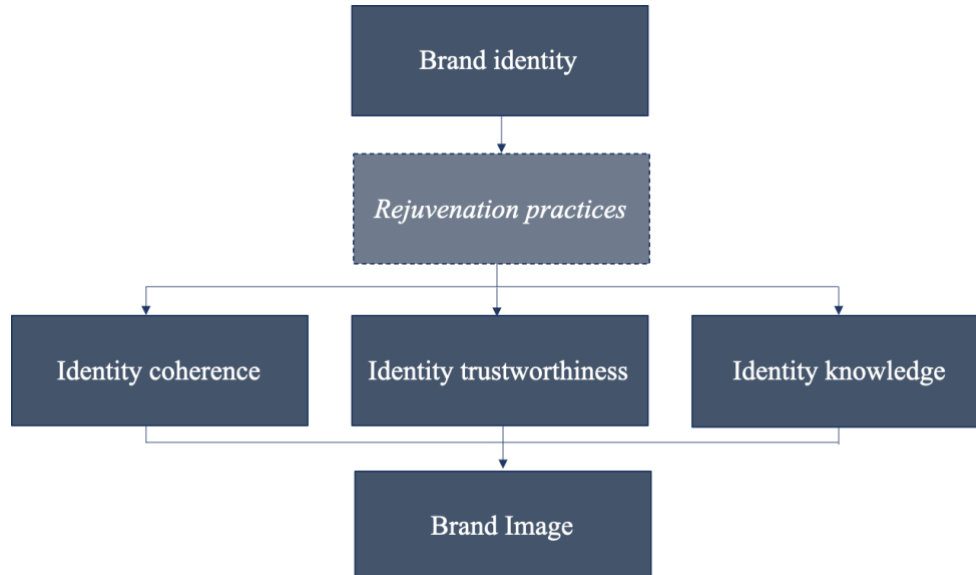


Figure 3: Relevant theories & concepts (Own Figure, 2020)

Consequently, we use the above-illustrated theories and concepts to understand the viewpoints of our German Millennials on actions that are primarily directed at making luxury brands appear younger. Do they affect the determinants that are central to the process of consumer-company identification, namely identity knowledge, trustworthiness as well as coherence and thus influence the brand image held by Millennial consumers?

## 4 Methodology

In this chapter, we present the research philosophy, which forms the basis for the choice of our research design and method of data collection. Afterwards, the section will deal with the research approach and the choice of method used to gather the desired data. Further, the sample will be discussed, followed by a description of the research process. Moreover, we address ethical considerations, limitations, and quality assurance.

### 4.1 Research philosophy

Every research demands assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and how it is gathered (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2018). These assumptions impact the formulation of the research question as well as the chosen method of data collection and the following interpretation of the empirical findings. Therefore, transparency regarding the ontological and epistemological position that justifies the research design must be ensured (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

By discovering viewpoints of German Millennials, this research attaches importance to not only one perspective but appraises different prospects. In line with this, various interpretations of specific phenomena are valued. Consequently, this research is guided by a relativist ontology, with many truths and where reality allows many perspectives on one issue (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Collins (1983) underlines this by arguing that what can be realized as “*truth*” varies from “*place to place and from time to time*” (p.88).

To gather this knowledge (epistemology), we adopt a social constructionist position (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Easterby-Smith et al. (2018) explain that with such epistemology, researchers acknowledge various perspectives and experiences of human beings. In line with relativism, this paradigm recognizes that reality is not objective, but it is socially constructed and given meaning by people in their daily lives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Following this, our research particularly focuses on experiences, meanings, and viewpoints expressed through language and therefore allows us to analyze how people make sense of our studied phenomenon (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

Literature refers to three approaches regarding the nature of the link between research and theory, namely deductive, inductive, and abductive (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Whereas deduction deals with testing theoretical assumptions, induction generates theories from data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Abduction is defined as a middle ground between these two (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). We rather follow an abductive approach, as our knowledge about the topic under research is likely to influence our interpretations (Rennstam, 2020) and since we take our theoretical framework into consideration to better understand our empirical material. Abduction starts with a puzzle and a surprise and then seeks to find an explanation for it (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thereby, we as researchers go back and forth between existing literature, our related

theories, and the empirical material, using all of them to reach a conclusion. With this, we remain open to the possibility of finding something unexpected in our data (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

## 4.2 Research approach

Guided by our research question and the adopted research philosophy, we aim for explorative research that puts high emphasis on the deep understanding of Millennials' viewpoints regarding luxury brands' rejuvenation practices. To clearly grasp the personalistic, holistic, and experiential meanings on this topic, a qualitative research approach has been chosen (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Such a qualitative approach distinguishes itself from a quantitative one by its creation of rich data about a specific development (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Especially for the exploration of why the generation under study prefers either a focus on a brand's heritage or innovativeness, it is necessary to get deep insights and to obtain various viewpoints.

Further, referring to Miles and Huberman (1994), who underline that qualitative research allows us to understand the particular rather than the general, our study strives to add with profound knowledge, instead of presenting generalizable findings. We conduct this type of research mainly because analyzing "*meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context*" is the primary purpose of this study (Malterud, 2001, p.483). Taking this into consideration, qualitative research seems suitable as our research focuses on a specific target group, namely German Millennials, and our goal is to understand the modernization phenomena in the luxury fashion segment from the perspective of this consumer group.

A main advantage of qualitative methods is that by using open-ended questions, responses tend to be unanticipated and descriptive. Therefore, a qualitative method is appropriate for our research as it allows us to conduct exploratory research and will provide us with many different opinions of diverse Millennial luxury consumers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). In contrast, quantitative methods force participants to choose from given responses, which would not provide us with the desired freely developed insights (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005).

## 4.3 Research design

This chapter first elaborates on the choice and applicability of the applied data collection method before describing the sampling technique used.

### 4.3.1 Data collection method

The underlying purpose of this thesis is threefold: (1) Disclosing motivations for why Millennials consume luxury fashion brands, (2) revealing what rejuvenation practices adopted by heritage luxury fashion brands are, as a basis for (3) evaluating Millennials' opinions on rejuvenation practices of such brands. In this section, we elaborate on our choices of the data collection method, which underlies this research.

#### *In-depth interviews*

To explore consumer viewpoints on luxury fashion brands, we aim to explore experiences, discourses, and associations of young luxury fashion consumers and thus strive to collect primary qualitative data through language (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). One method to gain this type of data is the usage of qualitative interviews, namely conversations evolving around questions and answers about a specific phenomenon (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). We chose such qualitative interviews as our method, mainly because they allow *“describing how people experience some phenomenon - how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others”* (Patton, 2002, p.104).

As interviews enable gaining an understanding of the respondents' perspectives and shed light on why participants hold a specific viewpoint, we find this to be the appropriate method to explore our research subject. Interviews provide access to information in context and allow us to study the rejuvenation phenomenon in luxury fashion from a consumer perspective, which would be hard to examine alternatively (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

Further, interviews grant asking open-ended questions that allow participants to express their thoughts, as well as feelings in a more or less *“loosely structured, guided”* setting (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018, p.136). Therefore, interviews enable entering the worldviews of participants, and thereby allow us to explore their different opinions, as well as feelings on luxury fashion brands' reinvigoration endeavors.

Interviews can be conducted in different ways, either in a group setting, in the form of focus groups or on a one-on-one basis. Focus groups are useful when the emphasis of the research lies in how groups of individuals react to an issue or shared experience (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). As social dynamics within a group are not of primary interest in our study but rather the in-depth understanding of individual viewpoints, one-on-one interviews are conducted. In-depth interviews ensure that participant responses are less influenced by group pressure and the opinions of others but rather derive from the individual beliefs of the respondent (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). This aspect is especially important, as luxury fashion consumption is directly linked to an individual's financial means and thus considered a sensitive topic. Discussing such a topic in a group setting could put the interviewee at the risk of social embarrassment and might profoundly influence responses (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). Within a one-on-one interview setting, participants *“may be less concerned about offending someone else or answering in the right or socially acceptable way”* (Guest et al., 2013, p.117). Further, through this method, the respondents get the chance to express their opinion without

interruption of the train of thought, thereby gaining more fruitful and detailed responses (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

We base our in-depth interviews on a previously loosely defined set of questions, allowing us to stray from the proposed path if an unexpected conversation provides useful and beneficial content (Bell, 1999; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Conducting such semi-structured interviews, we as researchers aim to act as catalysts but, at the same time, avoid influencing the opinions of the interviewee (Wilkinson, 1998).

Summing up, mainly because we aim to gather independent thoughts of each participant and want to delve deeper into the phenomenon under study, conducting semi-structured interviews seems applicable (Adams, 2015).

### *Selection of illustrative brands*

As suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015), in order to make sure that we fully understand the phenomenon of brand rejuvenation in the luxury fashion market and thus ask the right questions, we additionally make use of secondary data collected from Internet-based sources. This data is supposed to provide us with examples of what rejuvenation practices in luxury fashion are, thus answering our first sub question. Consequently, choosing four brands as illustrative examples we review not only theoretical material, but also reveal actual events and developments.

These illustrative examples of heritage luxury fashion brands' rejuvenation attempts are essential to gather our intended primary data on opinions of Millennial shoppers and to offer a foundation for a discussion with our participants. We carefully selected four heritage brands, namely Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Gucci, and Hermès, based on their reputation in the fashion industry. All of them are considered luxurious and were ranked as one of the best global brands in 2019 (Interbrand, 2019). Additionally, the outcomes of our recent pilot study, including six Millennial luxury fashion shoppers, identified these brands as optimal cases to illuminate the given research topic. The fact that the four brands further cover different cultural fields, e.g. Burberry being English and Gucci as an Italian fashion label, allows broad conclusions regarding the luxury fashion segment. Through the selection of these brands, diversity is also covered in many ways, for instance, the already mentioned country of origin, type of organization, expectations on modernity as well as the distribution model. Also, these four brands are battling in comparable markets with the same product categories, e.g. bags and apparel, thus allowing us to shed light on their performance in a similar matter.

Although the illustrative examples are not explicitly case studies, they assist our research by offering background information on heritage luxury brands and their rejuvenation practices. Thereby, they specify the understanding of rejuvenation in the case of heritage luxury fashion brands.

This secondary data is gathered from Internet-based sources such as the brands' websites, their social media accounts, but also news outlets to gather up-to-date material on the development



of these brands. Due to the abundance of data and information circulating on the Internet, we make sure to evaluate the material based on the criteria introduced by Easterby-Smith et al. (2018): purpose, authorship, credibility, and accuracy and timelessness.

Based on this information, we intend to carefully select pictures that visualize different rejuvenation attempts of these four brands and which are supposed to provide a platform for descriptive statements of our respondents. Such usage of images, also called photo-elicitation, is essentially useful in an interview setting, as it allows mutual understanding between us as researchers and the participants (Harper, 2002). This common ground is supposed to ensure the same understanding of the topic. While the use of photographs not only enables observing more than words, meaning for instance emotions that might arise when talking about the pictures, it can also enhance diverse insights, which can provide “*additional validity and depth*” and offer “*new opportunities and new viewpoints*” (Bigante, 2010, p.16).

To achieve assurance that we have the right to use the chosen images, we only incorporate photographs that are explicitly labeled for reuse, as well as visuals from social media accounts. In the context of research, privacy concerns related to the usage of public social media content arise regularly. Kozinets (2019) argues that through certain agreements, for instance, end-user licensing arrangements, users of the platforms are still the owners of their published content but lose control over it. Thus, this data can be used for research purposes (Kozinets, 2019). Nevertheless, we are aware that most of the users expect their data to be kept private, and therefore, we only incorporate images from the luxury brands owned social media accounts. With this, we further understand the motivations behind the posting and ensure credibility of the source.

To allow for a lively discussion with our respondents, we set up two different interview guides with identical questions but pictures that have been adapted to the respective gender (*see Appendix A & B*). Doing so, we wanted to ensure that men and women are not forced to form opinions about unfamiliar product categories. However, emphasis is put on assuring that the examples share commonality. Therefore, only in some cases, showing male and female versions of the products, is necessary. We still make sure that they display the same content, for instance, the same collaboration, but only adapted to the respective gender.

### 4.3.2 Sampling

As we aim to understand the viewpoints of German Millennial luxury fashion consumers, these were chosen as the population, and from this, a purposive sample, which the researchers had access to, was selected. By further making use of a snowball technique, also unknown participants were recruited to enhance diversity within the participant pool (Guest et al., 2013).

With this type of nonprobability sampling, we selected participants to confirm that they are eligible to meet a previously defined set of criteria (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018) related to our research question: the purchase of a luxury fashion item in the past twelve months, the self-appointed interest for fashion and the belonging to the German Millennial cohort. Thus, we

made sure that the participants represent the subject under study. Such purposive samples are considered powerful in the context of qualitative research since they allow us to look at information-rich cases, those “*from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry*” (Patton, 2002, p.230).

It must be noted that research findings with this sampling method are not statistically generalizable, mainly due to the lack of representativeness in terms of a quantitative aspect (Liu, 2016). However, the main aim of qualitative research is not to achieve generalizable outcomes (Strauss & Robin, 1990). It is rather concerned with the generation of rich, contextual and explanatory data (Guest et al., 2013) and thus aims at gaining a deep understanding of the social reality (Liu, 2016). The use of a purposive sample can be argued as valuable, as this research is one of the first of its kind and thus has an explorative character, therefore preparing the ground for forthcoming research. Further, this sampling technique enables a rich description of a unit of analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In our case employing a probability sample could even have negatively influenced the findings as it may have ignored specific individuals who have unique attributes, such as knowledge or experiences regarding our research field (Guest et al., 2013). Especially in times of the unexpected Covid-19 outbreak, this sampling technique has provided us with the necessary flexibility, since the process of gathering such a sample is adaptive when circumstances change in an unanticipated way (Regoli, 2019).

By taking a heterogeneous approach to this sampling technique, efforts have been made in trying to reduce the likelihood that the way the sample is chosen influences the outcome of the research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The study therefore aimed towards a diverse participant pool, which increased the probability of unique and different worldviews (Guest et al., 2013). To achieve a maximum level of variation, not only participants covering different age periods within the cohort but also Millennials in different occupations and phases of lives were included in the sample.

Due to the reason that purposive sample sizes are usually driven by theoretical saturation, we could not before-hand state the number of interviews planned. Hereby, theoretical saturation means the point of data collection, when there is no new data that leads to additional, unknown insights regarding the research question (Liu, 2016; Mack et al., 2005). In our case, this was achieved after 18 interviews. In order to get a better overview of the interviewees, their demographics are presented in *Appendix C*. It must be acknowledged that in order to assure anonymity and confidentiality of our participants, we obscured their identities by assigning fictional names. We decided to use pseudonyms to enhance the reading flow and to enable us as researchers to constitute the participants’ stories adequately.

#### 4.4 Ethical considerations

To protect the interests of the participants, but also to ensure the cohesion of the research society, ethical principles must be considered (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). In order to make sure that these ethical considerations are intact, our research builds on Bryman and Bell’s (2011) key principles in research ethics.

By insisting on participants' completion of the LUSEM master thesis consent form (*see Appendix D*), we established ground for a few ethical principles, namely respecting the dignity of research informants, ensuring fully informed consent, as well as protecting the privacy and the anonymity of the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This consent form, among others, deals with the participants' approval of the data usage and informs them about the opportunity to ask questions regarding the project and their participation. Additionally, the fact that they will be mentioned with a pseudonym thereby not appearing directly in the research, has been communicated and explained. Further, we paid attention to act ethically correct and responsibly by not publishing information that could, in any way, harm the participants. Another principle mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2011) is the avoidance of deception about the nature of the research. Even though Ditton (1977) claims that observing participants through research is substantially deceitful by nature, we tried to be as transparent as possible by clearly stating the conditions of our research.

## 4.5 Data collection process

After finishing the preparations for the interviews, the actual data collection process started, which will be presented in the following sections.

### 4.5.1 Remote interviews

Due to the current Covid-19 outbreak, we were forced to conduct our research remotely. The federal government of the researchers' home countries has decided to prohibit personal contact of people not living together. This interdiction, therefore, did not allow us to conduct face-to-face interviews and demanded us to make use of computer-mediated communication.

As such online-settings are likely to restrict free-flowing communication (Salmons, 2012), we made use of an information and communication technology that enables full visual, as well as verbal exchange. Gaining a full understanding of our respondents' viewpoints, requires next to verbal, especially kinesic communication, that looks at facial expressions and body language, as well as the analysis of chronemic communication, dealing with pace and time of speech (Salmons, 2012). Therefore, the videoconference tool Google Hangouts was used, as it simulates as much as possible the natural face-to-face communication and did not require the participants to set up any accounts before the interview. To ensure smooth processing, we ran a pre-test to check the use of visuals as well as the connectivity.

### 4.5.2 Interview structure

After conducting the technical pre-test, the actual interviews with our German Millennials started. Over a period of two weeks, 18 interviews were conducted.

At the beginning of each interview, we communicated that there are no right or wrong answers to provide the participants with a sense of security. To make them feel even more comfortable,

we aimed to conduct the interview in a conversational way so that the interviewees experience the setting as talking with a highly interested conversation partner (Guest et al., 2013). To create a personal connection, we approached the interviewees with an open and curious attitude, emphasizing that we are interested in their viewpoints (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019). Moreover, we aimed to create a balance between empathizing with the participants, being open-minded, and appearing knowledgeable enough to engage in complex discussions (Leech, 2002). To further increase comfort among our participants and maximize the likelihood of rich answers, we held our interviews in German and translated the most important insights and relevant quotes into English.

Questions asked in an in-depth-interview setting are designed to lead the discussion and are supposed to foster discourses, thereby increasing the occurrence of detailed and highly textured answers (Guest et al., 2013). Keeping this in mind, our interviews followed two steps. First, the participants had been asked to bring a picture of a luxury fashion item they really like, to discuss their reasons for choosing exactly this piece. This exercise was supposed to function as an icebreaker and to contribute to the storytelling process of our participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Through their elaborations, we aimed for an initial understanding of their preferences when purchasing luxury fashion, thus allowing us to answer one of our sub questions. With this, we made sure that their statements are not influenced by previous discussions and questions, guiding them in a certain direction. Thus, we offered them the opportunity to, for instance, decide which brand to talk about or which aspects to highlight. Freely elaborating on self-imposed topics makes participants feel more comfortable and therefore allowed us as researchers to explore diverse “*layers of meaning*” (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton, 2017, p.1).

In the second step, we asked open-ended questions, still following an interactive and participatory approach of qualitative data gathering to support the discussion and to stimulate the thoughts of our respondents (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018; Thomas, 2009). One such participatory method was the above-mentioned usage of visuals during the interviews, thereby discussing images displaying rejuvenation practices of the four brands under study.

To also get answers that are not influenced by the pictures presented by us as interviewers, we asked open questions allowing the interviewees to freely elaborate on their own examples. Such questions centered around the concepts of luxury and luxury fashion, thus further enabling us to understand our participants’ motivations for luxury purchases, their preferences when consuming luxury goods, and their opinions on and examples of current brand rejuvenation practices.

Moreover, visual metaphors were used to interact with our participants and to gain an in-depth comprehension of the image Millennials have of luxury brands, thereby allowing us to understand whether the rejuvenation practices of the heritage luxury brands under study were efficient from the perspective of our German Millennials. Likewise, this method allowed the interviewees to articulate their thoughts in a creative manner (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Hereof, emphasis was put on the description of brands as human beings.

To understand the deeper meanings of the participants' statements, we additionally employed the laddering up technique by asking why questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). In order to gather examples of the stated views, the laddering down (pyramiding) method also found application in our research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

## 4.6 Data analysis method

In order to analyze the gathered data, the thematic analysis approach was applied, as it reinforces the detailed description and interpretation of qualitative studies (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Since it was of interest to identify, organize, describe, and report themes found within a data set, it is an appropriate method to explore attitudes of various participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is further essential when emphasizing differences as well as generating unexpected insights (King, 2004).

After recording our interviews with *Apple's Voice Memo* function, we listened to the interviews again and again and transcribed them using the same words communicated by our participants, therewith intending to accurately represent the environment of the dialogue. We considered this as necessary since the accuracy, as well as the authenticity of the interviews, including pauses, silence, and emotions, are essential elements that give the data valuable depth and legitimacy (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Taking these transcripts as a basis, we followed the steps of the thematic analysis process. First, we read the transcripts to get familiar with the material and to gain an in-depth understanding of the arguments brought up by our Millennials. Doing so, we immersed with the data before starting the process of coding, as researchers' familiarizations shapes interpretations and labeling of potential patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

After detailed reading, we started observing initial patterns by coding the data. We selected recurring insights and ideas relevant to our research question and classified them into overarching text clusters. For this purpose, we implemented a color system to maintain an overview and to improve our comprehension of the patterns with the help of a consistent structure (Bianco, Gasparini & Schettini, 2014). Coding the data, we attached importance to before-hand determined categories: similarities occurring in the statements of the Millennials, contrasting opinions, as well as indications for causation. Further, the recurrence of thoughts and ideas of individuals was considered. Throughout this process, we made sure to discover patterns that allow us, on the one hand, to understand why Millennials consume luxury fashion brands and, on the other hand, codes that indicate the viewpoints of our respondents on rejuvenation practices of such brands.

Afterwards, we used these highlighted text segments to create initial overarching themes, thereby going back-and-forth in the data. In order to see the text segments and the responses of the interviewees in relation to each other, we transferred the relevant sections into a separate document. Throughout this process, we made sure to also be open to themes that, at first glance, do not provide an answer to the research question. With this in mind, we created themes, which

did not obviously fit the matter. The main reason for this was that at this point in the analysis, themes are not set and might be revised at the upcoming phases of the thematic analysis process.

The next step in our analysis process started right after a set of themes had been developed, which then needed to be rechecked. It has to be acknowledged that coding is an organic process, therefore, even though we already established themes, we were open to the process of recoding, longing from erasing codes that were not sufficiently supported by the data to the generation of new codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Throughout this process step, we supplemented some of the overarching themes that comprised detailed information, with corresponding sub themes to better structure and refine these findings, as well as to thoroughly examine the complexity of these themes.

After coherent patterns have been identified, we started the final definition and naming of the determined themes, thereby differentiating between the sub and the actual research question. In order to ensure structural integrity, five themes for the sub question, and four themes with ten corresponding sub themes for the main research question have been identified. For each of these themes, a short analysis, as well as a description of why it is relevant, was written. With this, we further ensured that the themes sufficiently answer the research questions and expose the information necessary for the research topic. As moving onto the final step of thematic analysis can only be made if the researchers can briefly explain each theme in regard to scope and meaning, we, both researchers, decided to independently make summaries of each, which we then compared (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

After the refinements were incorporated, and a logical order was created to present a coherent “story”, the final analysis was put on paper. Hereby, attention has been paid to selecting applicable quotations of the Millennial luxury fashion shoppers that precisely disclose the meaning and basis of the themes. The selected quotations were then translated into English and checked by both researchers, so the meaning, as well as the wording was as close to the original as possible. Additionally, high importance has been put on not only describing and summarizing but offering theorization of the patterns and their wider connotation regarding existing literature.

## 4.7 Limitations of the applied method

Critically acknowledging the limitations and drawbacks of the chosen method, we consider mentioning biases as essential. Biases caused by the subjects of research and the researchers themselves can pose problems when conducting interviews (Kvale, 1994). In this context, researchers tend to “*obtain an empirical result that they are looking for, even when that result does not necessarily reflect the truth*” (Strickland & Suben 2012, p.1). In order to reduce this so-called experimenter bias, stakeholder checks were carried out (Thomas, 2006). By summarizing the main outcomes and asking our interviewees for immediate feedback on the encapsulated information, we aimed to act upon the participants' viewpoints only, thereby neglecting our own expectations and opinions.

Additionally, the so-called interviewer bias can be observed in interviews, meaning the phenomenon of influencing the participants' answers by asking questions in a certain way (Kvale, 1994). To minimize the risk of this bias, we reviewed the interview guide for any questions that may be interpreted as leading when phrasing our interview questions (Guest et al., 2013).

In the same regard, it was essential to objectively choose the images used in the interviews. Even though emphasis has been put on offering a broad range of visuals, thereby again minimizing the risk to influence the outcomes of the research, we as human beings can never be entirely objective (Svensson, 2020) and thus cannot guarantee the appearance of the same findings when using different visuals. That is why we decided to not only rely on photo-elicitation but to use it as a supporting feature while also asking interview questions without supporting images.

Even though one-on-one interviews reduce socially accepted answers in comparison to discussions in a group setting, the potential risk for a social desirability bias still exists (Guest et al., 2013). In order to minimize this occurrence, we made sure that there is little incentive for such socially desired answers. Firstly, we assured confidentiality and anonymity by asking all participants to fill in the LUSEM Master thesis consent form. Additionally, through carefully selecting the interview questions, we intended to reduce the reasons for social desirability.

Further, it has to be acknowledged that interviews may vary according to the interviewer due to different ways of personal interaction, even when using the same interview guide (Kvale, 1994). However, as this is a team study, we see this objection as a chance. By employing our varying abilities, we were able to obtain different nuances and depths of the topic under investigation. With this, we aimed to enhance the study outcomes and work towards more trustworthy, more applicable findings.

Even though there is no alternative way to conduct our interviews other than remotely, we still consider it essential to elaborate on the potential drawbacks of distant interviewing. In this regard, Opdenakker (2006) mentions that the interviewer loses the possibility of actively influencing the situation in which the interviewee finds himself. Whereas this, can in specific cases, negatively affect the discussion, we see this as an opportunity to create an individually comfortable situation. In their homes, participants might be less affected by their surroundings, therefore acting more naturally. The researcher further states that remote interviews are likely to reduce valuable social cues, which might lead to missing indirect communication (Opdenakker, 2006). As aforementioned, this cannot be entirely prevented, but by using a communication tool that also allows visual exchange, we strived for minor restraints. Another limitation of conducting remote interviews is the factor of not being physically there. Some might further claim that communication, in general, is restricted because talking over each other might happen more often. However, as we did not take over a major role in the discussion, but only stimulated the conversation, this was not considered an extensive drawback.

## 4.8 Quality assurance

In qualitative research, several criteria need to be evaluated to make the study trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The commonly used criteria of generalizability, validity, and reliability are questioned by Lincoln and Guba (1985) because they do not correspond to the qualitative research goals, especially because of their clear focus on one reality. Thus, the authors introduce more suitable criteria for qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to evaluate the trustworthiness and quality of our study, we adopt these four criteria.

Credibility focuses on the suitability of the respondents' perspectives and the researcher's description of these (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is reached with the help of thick and transparent descriptions of the empirical material (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As our research addresses Millennials' opinions on modernization strategies of heritage luxury fashion brands, we enriched the empirical material by firstly getting deeply familiar with the topic by analyzing four selected brands and related literature as a foundation for the study. The fact that we reviewed several different sources, likewise, acknowledges the richness of the empirical material. We further created thick descriptions of the empirical material by supporting every claim with at least one descriptive quote from our interviewees. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also mention that credibility can be operationalized through certain consistency checks, as Thomas (2006) calls them. As mentioned earlier, the participants were asked to check the interpretations of their comments to make sure that they are consistent with their personal beliefs and to make sure that we did not misinterpret their statements. Credibility is further concerned with the transparency of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, we thoroughly described our research design as well as the analysis scheme to give the reader detailed insights and make our research as transparent as possible.

The second criterion, transferability, involves the traditional aspect of generalizability, meaning the extent to which the study outcomes are applicable to other "times" or alternative circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). As we conduct qualitative research, we cannot provide transferable findings to specific grounds but have to present "*thick descriptions*", so whoever wants to transfer the discoveries into their grounds, can "*reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility*" (p.361) (Nowell et al., 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Even though Lincoln and Guba (1985) themselves state that there is no consent on what comprises this "*thick description*", they argue that a purposeful sampling is one way to engage in detailed descriptions. As we purposely chose the participants of the study, the transferability was enhanced. Further, applicability to the general is maximized by making sure that our four illustrative brand cases are distinctive in themselves and therefore offer examples of a variety of rejuvenation practices. Also, since the chosen brands, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Hermès, as well as Burberry, are international companies, credibility in transferring the outcomes of this study to comparable companies is improved. With this in mind, we made sure to describe the brands' practices effectively, so other researchers can compare the instances more easily.



The third criterion, dependability, needs to ensure that the study findings are likely to occur again within similar conditions, meaning choosing participants from the same cohort in the same context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, especially the use of interviews in this study makes it more challenging to replicate the study, mainly because the outcomes heavily depend on the individual interviewees. In order to still accomplish dependable research, we assured a detailed description of the study methods, enabling other researchers to better judge the dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In line with this, Easterby-Smith et al. (2018) claim that findings gathered with the help of constructionist designs should be believable and achieved based on transparent methods. Therefore, we provided in-depth information on how we chose our method of data collection, selected our participants, and collected our data. Furthermore, we transparently presented our means of analyzing the data and translating it into themes and ideas.

Confirmability, the last criterion for assessing the trustworthiness of a study, is often compared with the quantitative benchmark objectivity (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Confirmability is the researchers' capability of demonstrating "*that the data represent the participant's responses and not the researcher's bias*" (Cope, 2014, p.89). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that this criterion can be achieved if the other ones, meaning credibility, transferability, and dependability are assured. We attempted to incorporate several reasons for why we chose specific methodological, as well as analytical options, to lower the subjectivity, mostly present in qualitative studies. Such a comprehensive description of the methodology eases the way for other researchers to determine confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Even though this reflexive endeavor does not completely eliminate any bias, it can still be a useful contribution to understand the researchers' influence on the research outcomes (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016).

Considering the four criteria in our given context and the measures taken, we deem this research to be trustworthy.

## 5 Illustrative examples of rejuvenation practices in heritage luxury fashion

This chapter aims to present practices of heritage luxury fashion brands directed at attracting Millennial consumers and which, due to their contemporary nature, have not been captured by existing research. To better understand the concepts of heritage, innovation, and rejuvenation in the world of luxury fashion, we will delve deeper into four luxury fashion brands following different strategies, namely, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Gucci, and Hermès.

As pointed out in the literature review of this study, heritage brands, especially in the luxury segment, put high emphasis on their history and roots, and thus make these aspects central to their value proposition. In this context, we also demonstrated that such heritage luxury brands commonly follow specific brand management conventions to maintain their tradition and with this their aura of exclusiveness and quality. However, our literature further clarified that rejuvenation practices present in the luxury fashion sector seem to break with these conventions and, thus, with the nature of luxury.

In order to understand these market shifts and in particular the phenomenon of brand rejuvenation among such brands, we consider it necessary to delve into the chronicles and origins as well as the genuine histories of the four selected brands. Based on that, we show how they adapt to contemporary needs of the Millennial consumer and how or whether they manage to prevail their heritage-infused identity. Understanding the phenomenon of brand rejuvenation, examining the heritage brands' histories and stories, and with this obtaining specific examples, we create a rich basis for our interviews.

Building on existing research, we identified four categories that will help us in analyzing the reinvigoration attempts of the four brands in a consistent way. Three variables, namely *visual identity* (name, logo, etc.), *product* and *communication* (social media, celebrity endorsement, fashion shows, heritage references, etc.) are borrowed from Blazquez et al. (2019). To get a holistic understanding of the brands' reinvigoration practices, we further shed light on the category *target group & distribution strategy*.

### 5.1 Louis Vuitton

Whereas the French fashion house was founded in 1854 in Paris, the heritage of the luxury brand even predates the establishment of Louis Vuitton. The acclaimed trunk maker already started in 1837, where he got advanced knowledge in custom design boxes, as well as trunks (Louis Vuitton, n.d. a). Still today, the brand has a deep affiliation with heritage, which is reflected in the mission statement: “*Our products, and the cultural values they embody, blend tradition and innovation, and kindle dream and fantasy.*” (LVMH, n.d.).

## *Visual identity*

In comparison to other luxury brands, Louis Vuitton never changed the time-honored logo and still heavily relies on its famous monogram, which is awarded one of the world's most recognized brand symbols (Yotka, 2018).

## *Products*

With its products Louis Vuitton, however, emphasizes innovation and regularly steps away from its tradition by partnering with other brands and artists. Thus, the product portfolio can be described as valuing traditional aspects complemented with innovative elements. The recently launched LVforUNICEF collection especially reflects the brand's mission of blending heritage and innovation, by integrating the tumbler lock invented in 1890 with a new fresh, colorful design (Louis Vuitton, n.d. b). Collaborations like these tend to be deeply linked to the brand's monogram and core (Rebag, 2019), thus reflecting the appreciation of Louis Vuitton's roots, making it a typical heritage brand (Louis Vuitton, n.d. b; Urde et al., 2007). The merge of traditional products with modern pieces can additionally be exemplified by Louis Vuitton's connected luggage, which allows tracking the suitcase via a specially designed application or the brand's heritage infused bags, which are embossed with digital touchscreens (Handley, 2018; Arnault, 2019).

With other collaborations, Louis Vuitton followed a more radical approach. For example, collaborating with the young streetwear manufacturer Supreme, the heritage brand completely changed its traditional style and the color palette by encouraging a streetwear-luxury synthesis and thus addressing a completely new target group (see *Appendix E, figure 1*). Another illustrative example that makes the shift towards reaching younger generations recognizable is Louis Vuitton's collaboration with the online game provider League of Legends (Meisenzahl, 2019). Even though the product portfolio has changed over time, Louis Vuitton aims to stay true to the quality of the production process. In this context, the average number of operations to create a Louis Vuitton bag has never changed (LVMH, n.d.).

## *Distribution strategy & target group*

The modern, as well as the traditional compositions, can only be purchased through limited distribution channels, meaning the brand's own and selected high-end department stores (Feng, 2017). Reacting to the technologically connected society, Louis Vuitton also attempts to find a balance between tradition and technology by opening the first entirely 3D printed pop-up store (see *Appendix E, figure 2*) (Santamaria, 2016).

Offering traditional as well as innovative items and implementing new creative touchpoints Louis Vuitton aims at targeting the new, younger consumers, but still does not forget its existing older ones. In comparison to other luxury brands, the French fashion house steps more and more into the direction of accessibility (Danziger, 2018). The brand's CEO explains that each individual consumer experience inspires the brand to “*constantly go further, transforming its founders' initial journey into a great adventure that continues and gains momentum every day*”

(LVMH, n.d.). Recent analyses are already looking into the brand's ability to gain momentum for the new consumers and presented that about 33 percent of Louis Vuitton's profit in 2018 came from Millennials (UBS, 2018).

### *Communication*

Aiming to extend the target group, the brand makes use of influencers on social media, herewith promoting accessories, and ready-to-wear looks on Instagram and YouTube (Adegeest, 2019). The move of integrating celebrities is an example of the brand breaking with one of the 24 Anti-Laws of luxury brand management (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). This, coupled with online campaigns, and the possibility for consumers to reach out to the brand if they have complaints via Twitter might be the reason why the luxury brand was able to bear the coveted title of the second most influential fashion brand on social media in 2017 (GQ Australia, 2017; Roxan, 2019). Even though the brand heavily works with social media, some campaigns on these platforms are marked with red-stamped initials. This refers to the beginning of the brand as personalized trunk craftsmen and leads *"back to the heart of what they do"* (Attest, 2018). With this they again emphasize the balance between their willingness to innovate while staying true to the brand core.

This bond to the brand's heritage, as well as a very attentive distribution strategy helped Louis Vuitton to connect their past to the present (Nicoletti, 2018). Their approach to rejuvenating this tradition by incorporating young, modern creators and the welcoming of unexpected artistic directors, is their way of entering the battle for Millennials appreciation (Roxan, 2019; Strupczewski, 2019). This combination of heritage and innovation can be summarized by LVMH's description of the brand's core values: *"unique heritage, values and rigorous spirit of innovation and ingenuity, the boldness of its creations and the demand for perfection in its designs"* (LVMH, n.d.).

## 5.2 Burberry

Known for its classic print, Burberry has been one of the most popular English high-class fashion brands since 1856 (Roper & Fill, 2012). However, in the early 2000s, the brand suffered from negative associations as it unintentionally became a symbol for the so-called English chav-culture of football hooligans and suffered from many counterfeit versions of their original products (Roper & Fill, 2012). In 2006, Burberry started to fight back from this position and followed a digital strategy to rejuvenate the brand and attract a younger target audience (Petey, 2016). Burberry became active on social media, made use of mobile marketing, and put emphasis on a unique digital store experience (Burberry, n.d. a).

However, these initial attempts were not sufficient to completely revitalize the brand. Thus, at the end of 2017, Burberry decided to follow a more radical strategy also touching the brand core (Burberry, n.d. a). In this context, Riccardo Tisci, one of the first contemporary designers to experiment with gender fluidity and streetwear, became Burberry's Creative Director (Alexander, 2018).

## Visual identity

The first significant step of the new strategy was the introduction of Burberry's new visual identity on Instagram, including a refreshed logo and monogram in 2018 (see Appendix E, figure 3) (Bobb, 2019). The new visual elements have from then on, been used throughout all communication channels and ad campaigns. With this radical action, the luxury fashion house broke with several conventions of the luxury fashion segment (Keller, 2009) and with the heritage element "use of symbols", introduced by Urde et al. (2007).

## Products

Not only the visual identifiers but also the product offerings are supposed "to signal immediate and visible change and win the attention of the luxury consumers while retaining [the] core customers" (Burberry, n.d. a). The desired position of the brand has become most evident during the presentation of the Burberry Fall Collection 2020. Divided into sections, the show addressed different kinds of consumers. Colorful streetwear was presented, followed by beige classic trench coats, elegant suits, and evening clothes (Menkes, 2019). The designer itself characterized the diversity among the products ranging "from aristocracy and the Queen, to the street and the shopping mall with edgy kids" (Menkes, 2019).

In the same way, Burberry's collaborations mirror that the brand makes use of unconventional means to rejuvenate itself in the luxury fashion market. Especially the cooperation with the British designer Vivienne Westwood exemplified that Burberry takes innovative actions while still striving to emphasize its heritage identity and tradition, thus reformulating it in the contemporary market. On Burberry's website, the collaboration is defined as "a union of punk and heritage, rebellion and tradition, the past and the future" (Burberry, n.d. b).

Consequently, Burberry follows a strategy of offering innovative products and the brand's classics, such as the beige trench coat, at the same time. With this broadly defined product portfolio, Burberry is supposed to be worn by all age groups and genders (Menkes, 2019).

## Distribution strategy & target group

In the past, Burberry was only concerned with catering to the British bourgeoisie (Mower, 2018). However, the new "all-embracing" strategy aims at attracting a broad range of different consumers, male and female, as well as youth and mature grown-ups under one brand umbrella (Menkes, 2019). According to Tisci, "that's what fashion should be: every age, every culture, every lifestyle" (Singer, 2019).

Also, the brand's distribution strategy is supposed to reflect the new direction (Burberry, n.d. a). Burberry follows a renovation program for its stores and further aims at improving the omnichannel customer experience (Burberry, n.d. a). Burberry's high-tech store in London exemplifies this approach. The store conveys a more accessible and inviting aura than many other luxury stores, combines digital and analog, and aims at providing consumers with an exciting experience (Kansara, 2012). For instance, RFID tags are integrated into the items and

connected to mirrors in the shop, which, when approached by a shopper wearing or carrying these products, turn into screens and display relevant video content (Burberry, n.d. c).

### *Communication*

The main ambition throughout all communication activities is to shift consumer perceptions and to re-energize the brand (Burberry, n.d. a). Burberry's communication centers around social media and aims at reaching consumers through popular influencers (Burberry, n.d. a). Embracing various digital opportunities, the brand further performs social selling (Burberry, 2019). Different from other brands, Burberry does not put the products directly in the stores, but first presents them on social media channels such as Instagram (Faull, 2019).

To conclude, Burberry's effort in modernizing the brand still underlies the principles of finding a balance between heritage and innovation. However, compared to other heritage luxury brands, Burberry's practices are more radical and can be considered focusing more on contemporary adaptations than on the brand's history. This is especially exemplified in the brand's revolutionary decision to adapt its visual identifiers.

## 5.3 Gucci

Gucci, the fastest-growing luxury brand at the moment (Davis, 2020), was founded in 1921 by Guccio Gucci in Florence, with a focus on luggage and leather goods (Elle, n.d.). The brand was constantly changing designers, for instance, from Dawn Mello to Tom Ford, who was capable of challenging the status quo and thereby led the luxury brand into being one of the most well-known luxury brands. More designers followed, until in 2015, Alessandro Michele took over the design department and again substantially changed the brand's appearance towards now being trendy by following a genderless approach with colorful collections (Foley & Zargani, 2015; Burzynski, 2018). The brand's motto, "*redefining modern luxury*" by being "*influential, innovative and progressive*", mirrors the concept behind the brand (Gucci, n.d. a). In line with this, Marco Bizzarri, President and CEO of Gucci, states that the luxury brand wants to extend the impetus they "*have established through a mentality that seeks constant innovation and disruption*" (Interbrand, n.d.). He thereby indicates that innovation, not fearing change, and being eager to take risks are central and have always been central to Gucci's brand identity (Interbrand, n.d.).

### *Visual identity*

Even though Gucci has kept its logo since the 1960s, which indicates the emphasis on its heritage and further allows for the categorization as a heritage brand (Urde et al., 2007), the luxury brand dares to change the logo in various ways, depending on the ongoing collection. For the Fall/Winter 2020 collection, Gucci's logo is inspired by a children's handwriting (Gucci, n.d. b). Some other variations of the logo have a vintage touch, others mock counterfeit products, with an adaption to Guccy (see Appendix E, figure 4), and even more alterations echo the colorful, unconventional path Gucci is following (Gucci, n.d. b).

## *Products*

Under the new vision of Alessandro Michele, the luxury brand decided to focus on Millennials, thereby leaving their traditional path, which is especially exemplified by the changed product portfolio (Danziger, 2017). Collaborations with unexpected creators, like Coco Capitan, a Spanish artist, which helped to reimagine the famous logo by scribbling over the traditional one with Graffiti elements, and the rapper Gucci Mane, which exemplifies the marriage of glamour and gangster are signs for Gucci's new direction (Caraan, 2019; Higgins, 2019; Fisher, 2018).

## *Distribution strategy & target group*

Attracted by the new styles, consumers under the age of 35 accounted for around 62 percent of Gucci's sales in 2018 (Mau, 2019). Acknowledging the new direction of the brand, the chairman of the group Gucci belongs to stated: "*The attractiveness of couture, of ready-to-wear is much higher for that clientele than it used to be for older people*", thereby accepting the risk of losing older customers (Danziger, 2017). The omen of Gucci's CEO, "*inclusivity is the new exclusivity*" (CPPLuxury, 2018a), the brand's unconventional moves and the innovative mindset of its new designer, clearly show that the heritage brand turns away from traditional luxury brand management.

Consequently, Gucci broke with the main principle of luxury brand management, namely exclusivity, making the brand approachable, especially for young consumers (Segran, 2018). In this context, the new store concepts are aimed towards winning over the hearts of Millennials, intending to combine the valuable in-store experience with digital mediums (Danziger, 2017). Recently, the luxury brand further adapted to technology-savvy consumers by allowing them to get in contact with specifically designed augmented reality solutions, followed by more experience-infused content on Snapchat and Instagram (Kelly, 2019).

## *Communication*

The innovative approach can also be noticed in the shifted communication endeavor, which, for instance, the #TFWGucci campaign, demonstrates (*see Appendix E, figure 5*). The luxury brand instructed influential artists to establish various memes that consumers can relate to, in order to present their new collections of watches (Danao, 2017). To generate more innovative ideas like this and to better understand the perspectives of contemporary consumers, Gucci developed a "*shadow committee*", consisting only of people under 30 years. According to Marco Bizzarri, "*[t]hese [young] people often know much more about certain things than you do*", he says (Segran, 2019).

With this uncommon approach, coupled with the incorporation of influencers and celebrities, including Rihanna and Beyoncé, Gucci heavily advocates the step up from tradition (CPPLuxury, 2018a). Through practices like these, it has been awarded the "*best performing digital fashion brand*" in 2016 and 2017 and by that outranked strong brands (Danziger, 2017). The focus on social media goes as far as exclusively launching new collections on Instagram (Burzynski, 2018).

Summing up, Gucci follows a more radical strategy than other luxury brands, accepting that by making the brand more approachable and focusing on Millennial consumers; they might lose their older customer segment (Segran, 2018). Even though the brand works towards addressing younger consumers segments, it still connects this innovativeness with history. This can be exemplified in Gucci's commitment to its hometown, for example, by opening the Gucci Gardens to honor the historic birthplace of the iconic luxury brand (Kerr, 2019).

## 5.4 Hermès

The strategy of this illustrative brand is again different from the previously mentioned cases and thus allows us to better understand the range of approaches adopted in luxury fashion. Hermès follows a more organic growth strategy, always emphasizing its history and tradition and thus only making slight adaptations (Taplin, 2019). The high-class brand puts the quality of the traditional handcrafted products in the focus of its practices, which is summarized by the former CEO Jean-Louis Dumans as: “*We don't have a policy of image, we have a policy of product*” (Roll, 2018). In this context, the brand's heritage is one of the main elements of the brand identity and is constantly reflected and thus leads to what Urde et al. (2007) term *longevity*. Despite various changes in the organization's ownership and management throughout multiple generations, the core principles of the brand have never been diluted (Roll, 2018).

### *Visual identity*

The visual identity of the brand has not changed since the implementation in the 1950s and thus acts as support and proof of the long history and origins of the brand (Truefacet, 2015).

### *Products*

In the same way, the product portfolio of the brand acts as a symbol of the brand's history as it has only undergone slight changes (Roll, 2018). While other brands like Burberry collaborate with celebrities and popular youth brands (Mrad et al., 2018), Hermès is known for its collaborations with artisans from all over the world who design iconic products for the brand (Williams, 2018). The aim of these collaborations is not primarily to raise awareness but to further increase the aura of exclusivity (Roll, 2018). Even though the brand has been approached by several companies striving for a partnership, Hermès decided not to “*stray away from what they do best*” (CPPLuxury, 2018b). However, in 2015 the luxury heritage brand embraced a new opportunity and reinterpreted its tradition in the contemporary marketplace by collaborating with Apple to introduce a collection called Apple Watch Hermès (*see Appendix E, figure 6*) (Huen, 2015).

### *Distribution strategy & target group*

Hermès started as a saddle maker, with the exclusive French upper-class as its target group (Taplin, 2019). Until today, the main driver of Hermès' strategy is to maintain an aura of exclusivity, scarcity, quality, and uniqueness. The brand, therefore, makes sure that the products



can only be afforded by the very few wealthy individuals and that they are not easy to acquire (Roll, 2018). This makes it, according to Kapferer and Bastien (2012), a traditional luxury brand.

Hermès keeps up with the brand promise of delivering premium quality at a price premium, therefore differentiating itself from mass-produced goods (Taplin, 2019), by strictly limiting its production and regularly making use of the “limited edition” strategy (Roll, 2018). For instance, acquiring the classic Birkin bag, consumers have to be on the longest waiting list for an accessory today, meaning a minimum of two years (Roll, 2018). Consequently, the aim is not to keep up with the consumer demand, but to enhance it (Danziger, 2018). Connected to this, the brand only has around 300 stores worldwide, and only perfumes, tableware as well as gifts are offered in department stores (Danziger, 2018).

However, in its stores, the traditional heritage brand starts to cater to the needs of contemporary consumers by, for instance, opening a store in Manhattan's youth-oriented Meatpacking District (Taplin, 2019). In contrast to traditional store layouts, the new shop seems more casual and invites consumers to socialize. It seeks to merge digital and brick-and-mortar shopping and thus aims at attracting young consumers without losing existing ones (Taplin, 2019).

Even though the luxury brand offers almost all its products in its webstore and acknowledges this platform as an essential channel, the iconic Birkin Bag cannot be found online (CPPLuxury, 2018b). Robert Chavez, the brand's CEO, explained that as follows: *“You have to give people reasons to keep coming into the store”* (CPPLuxury, 2018b).

### Communication

With a subtle approach to advertising (Danziger, 2018), Hermès stays true to the principles of heritage and exclusivity in its communication (Roll, 2018). Nevertheless, the brand addresses the needs of Millennial consumers by being active on social media channels such as Instagram or offering mobile applications (Parr, 2014). Providing consumers with a behind-the-scenes glance of the brand, Hermès also runs a podcast with interviews of employees (Devaney, 2019). In contrast to the previously mentioned brands, Hermès refuses to collaborate with celebrities, such as influencers but uses the high-class customers who actually purchase their products as authentic testimonies (Danziger, 2018).

Summing up, Hermès embraces opportunities to attract Millennial consumers, such as offering mobile applications, being active on social media, or collaborating with the tech giant Apple. However, in contrast to other brands, Hermès' focus does not lie on presenting the brand as cool and modern, but, in line with traditional luxury brand management, on maintaining its aura of exclusiveness and authenticity.

## 5.5 Rejuvenation practices in today's luxury marketplace

Before analyzing the data derived from our interviews with German Millennial shoppers, the following table is supposed to recall our research design and answer our first sub question by summarizing present examples of rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands.

Table 1: Rejuvenation practices in today's luxury marketplace (Own table, 2020)

| <b>Research Question:</b><br><i>What are Millennials' opinions on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands?</i>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>SQ1: What are rejuvenation practices adopted by heritage luxury fashion brands?</b>   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Illustrative examples of rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands</li> <li>▪ Illuminating the concept of brand rejuvenation in the luxury fashion sector</li> </ul> |   |
| <i>Visual Identity</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Logo adaptations depending on collections</li> <li>▪ New logo</li> <li>▪ New monogram</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Products</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partnering with other brands</li> <li>▪ Partnering with artists</li> <li>▪ Partnering with celebrities</li> <li>▪ Unconventional young styles</li> <li>▪ Modern interpretations of classic items</li> <li>▪ Broad, contrasting product portfolio</li> </ul>  |
| <i>Distribution strategy &amp; target group</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pop-up stores</li> <li>▪ E-commerce</li> <li>▪ Social selling</li> <li>▪ Unconventional locations</li> <li>▪ Combining digital and analog</li> <li>▪ Digital in-store tools</li> <li>▪ Conveying an aura of accessibility rather than exclusivity</li> </ul> |
| <i>Communication</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong social media presence</li> <li>▪ Incorporating influencers</li> <li>▪ Incorporating celebrities</li> <li>▪ Exclusively launching new collections online</li> <li>▪ Look behind the scenes</li> </ul>  |
| <b>SQ2: Why do Millennials consume luxury fashion brands?</b>  |   |
| <b>RQ: What are Millennials' opinions on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands?</b>   |   |
| <i>Purpose?</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gaining insights to be able to answer the research question</li> </ul>   |
| <i>What data?</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qualitative primary data through language</li> <li>▪ Opinions of Millennial consumers on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands</li> </ul>   |
| <i>How to collect?</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In-depth interviews</li> </ul>   |
| <i>From where?</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ German Millennial luxury fashion consumers</li> </ul>  |
| <i>How to analyze?</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Thematic analysis</li> </ul>   |

## 6 Analysis

In this chapter, we analyze our gathered data. The outcomes were derived from the conducted interviews with German Millennial consumers and are presented in the form of themes. For our research question, as well as our second sub question, such themes and sub themes will be presented. For each of them, quotes from our interviews were selected to clarify their deeper meaning.

### 6.1 Why do Millennials consume luxury fashion brands?

In order to be able to answer our research question sufficiently, it is necessary to firstly answer the question of “Why do Millennials consume luxury fashion brands?”. This will provide a better understanding of our interviewees’ viewpoints regarding rejuvenation attempts of luxury brands and will support us in making precise conclusions. In the following, five themes relevant to the sub question are presented and complemented with quotes from the participants. This figure is supposed to provide the reader with an overview of the themes.



Figure 4: Themes – Reasons for Millennials' luxury fashion consumption (Own figure, 2020)

#### 6.1.1 Luxury fashion brands tell a story

Our participants repeatedly emphasize the past as one of the most important attributes of luxury fashion brands. These heritage-infused brands all have a rich history that makes them unique and which thus allows the status of a luxury brand. Based on this, our interviewees highlight that such heritage brands should base their promise of value on these long-standing stories. This creates consumer interest and deep affiliation with the brand because they can identify with the brand narrative, and feel empowered through their purchase, as Fabian's comment shows:

*Chanel is a brand that I appreciate. [...] [Because] I like the story and the whole founder idea. The whole idea behind Coco Chanel, the fight for this idea, the fight for women, this idea of freedom, that's something I really appreciate.*

Annabelle further declares herself in favor of brands that allow her to look back on a long history, which, as she says, makes them more “interesting”:

*I have the feeling that if a brand has really embodied luxury for such a long time, it is also worth investing in. And it also has such an interesting touch, way better than brands that just claim to be luxurious but do not have any history.*

In that regard, our Millennials further explain that their preferences are even guided by the brand's narrative, choosing them based on their roots. Comments on this were not unlikely, mentioning only Lisa's in the following, which is rather self-explaining:

*You buy brands like Gucci and Louis Vuitton because you like the origin [of the brand].*

Taking these comments into consideration, we can sum up that the interviewed Millennials value history and heritage, and with this, the traditional aspect of luxury fashion brands. The participants, regardless of age and gender, share akin sets of values and ideals, which place importance on time-honoring and established practices.

### 6.1.2 Luxury fashion is timeless and thus an investment for the future

All our interviewees considered the aspect of timelessness, paired with quality, as another crucial component when purchasing luxurious items. If the luxury product is still wearable many years after the purchase, meaning that the Millennials do not have to separate from it and the stories connected to the piece, they consider it worth the money, because they are always delighted by it, as Valerie states:

*Quality is an important factor for me because, for me, luxury is a certain kind of permanence. As this timelessness also says that you don't have to part with it. But that you simply have it and are happy about it for 20 or 30 years.*

The aspect of quality, paired with longevity, was a reoccurring pattern, with participants expressing that quality in luxury fashion is mostly connected to superior workmanship and the durability of products:

*Luxury fashion for me is very, very high quality, so craftsmanship, high-quality materials, and elaborate processing.*

Viola expands on the topic and elaborates that she misses the "old quality" in current luxury fashion products, therefore favoring second-hand items, which still deliver what they promise:

*I like second-hand. I just like the old quality. [...] Looking at Louis Vuitton with their old luggage, which is 50, 60 years old. I have a bag, which is ten years old and has holes in the bottom. It's just a different quality. Therefore, when purchasing expensive bags, I would always look for second-hand.*

Connected to this significance of quality and timelessness, older Millennials (over 33) also highlight that they see luxury products as some sort of investment, meaning objects that they can transfer to their children, which for instance Andrea mentioned:

*So, I bought a Kelly Bag. I bought it in cognac, knowing that I'm leaving it to my daughter.*

Even younger Millennials consider purchasing luxury items for the future, either also thinking about passing it on, or reselling it at a later point in life, as explained by David:

*[...] if you buy these watches [Rolex] and if you buy them well, you have no loss with them at all, and you will never ever have one.*

Consequently, quality and timelessness, as well as the financial value of luxury items, are important factors for our German Millennials in luxury fashion consumption. Not only interviewees above the age of 33, but also participants in the early twenties highlight the aspect of permanence of luxury fashion products, which allows them to profit from their purchase for decades and thus justifies major investments connected to it.

### 6.1.3 Luxury fashion is something exceptional

Even though our Millennials are experienced luxury shoppers, they consider luxury fashion as highly exceptional. For instance, Fabian explains:

*So, it [luxury fashion consumption] should not become a matter of course, because if for example, buying a Gucci bag becomes a habit, then it is nothing special anymore. Then this aspect [of specialty] is gone, and I think that is a pity.*

Participants do not only highlight that for them, luxury fashion is a rather precious, as well as memorable experience; they also repeatedly emphasize that luxury should also stay the type of luxury they value. In this context, Corinna illustrates why luxury is so special to her, mentioning the exceptional nature, and how she wants this to be preserved:

*They are luxury brands for a reason. Not because everyone should have them, not because they belong to the masses, [...] that it is somehow special, it is not the normal bag that everybody has, but it is really something special.*

More participants addressed the need for luxury fashion brands to not “forget” their nature, preserving the time-honoring luxury the consumers know. Adding to this, Annabelle refers to authenticity and highlights that they should not “appeal to everyone”:

*I think it is very, very important that the brand looks authentic, that the brand does not forget that it is a luxury brand that is not intended to appeal to everyone.*

Related to this, Corinna comments that luxury brands should continue to be exclusive and rare:

*And it should stay that way because otherwise this special or magic of these luxury brands simply gets lost.*

This theme showcases that our Millennials still recognize luxury fashion as something rare and special and that they want this consumption to be treated as an experience. With this, they refer to the danger of decreased exclusiveness when brands start to become more accessible and the connected fear of not being able to stand out from other consumers anymore.

### 6.1.4 Luxury fashion is a treat

Drawing from the theme above, the interviewees connected luxury fashion consumption to uniqueness, but also see it as an expression of success and attach personal stories to the items. Some Millennials, such as Fabian, associate their luxury purchases with university

accomplishments which they were proud of and therefore felt like they needed to treat themselves with something special:

*I bought this piece of jewelry after probably passing the most challenging test of my university career. That was Finance Mathematics, and then I got the result [...], and then I actually immediately stormed into the center and told myself: It's time to treat yourself.*

Others mentioned that luxury fashion products reflect the value that they have worked for and that these give them a feeling of achievement and triumph. Viola's comment on what she associates with luxury fashion consumption demonstrates this thought:

*A little bit of success somehow. Something you save money on, where you say I reward myself, I treat myself now.*

This theme illustrates that our German Millennials see luxury fashion products as a reward for hard work and success and therefore attach positive meanings to the object. Their consumption allows our interviewees to re-live successful moments and thus the worthwhile feeling of achievement.

#### 6.1.5 Luxury fashion is a means of recognition and reflection of prestige

Luxury fashion should be recognized by others. Many of our participants' comments centered around the image transfer of the brand to their person. In this context, our interviewee Anton, for instance, claimed that wearing Louis Vuitton allows him to be perceived as a "cool guy":

*People recognize it, and they know exactly, Louis Vuitton bag means cool guy.*

Another interviewed Millennial, Vanessa, explained why she buys luxury fashion products, also emphasizing on the high level of identification:

*With luxury brands or luxury clothing, it is important for me that it has good quality, but also that it has a name that everyone knows. When I'm wearing it, I want people to see where the brand is from, to make a statement, so to speak.*

Acknowledging the importance of recognition while talking about his Rolex, David illustrates:

*It's also about the fact that you buy such an expensive watch and then you want to have a certain recognition value, and in the minds of many people this model is simply stored as "THE" Rolex.*

Not only wanting other people in their surroundings to recognize that they wear luxury items, but also making use of the brand as an enhancement of their identity, it was repeatedly made clear that the consumption of such brands allows the participants to feel more prestigious. Consuming such products enables them to become someone they "would like to be", as Andrea demonstrates:

*I think that's a little bit the desire of every woman and every girl to reflect something you would like to be. But it's a bit of a back and forth, so it should reflect what you are, but also reflect a bit of what you'd like to be.*

Connecting to this thought, Sarah explains how her luxury item of desire would grant her some sort of permission to be part of a specific, appealing crowd:

*With the possession of a Rimowa suitcase, you feel like you belong to a certain group. Many creative people are [...] constantly photographed at the airport with it. Virgil Abloh, Karl Lagerfeld, of course, are all very famous people and I think if you have a suitcase like this, you might feel part of it.*

In order to answer our research question, gaining insights into why Millennials consume luxury fashion brands seemed essential. To conclude, our interviewed German Millennials, regardless of their gender, appreciate the luxury brands’ histories and see the aspect of tradition as a central component of the luxury experience. They further consume luxury fashion due to its timelessness, making the purchase an investment for the future. Even experienced luxury shoppers still consider the consumption as highly exceptional and rare and highlight the feeling of treating themselves when consuming such brands. Participants further draw attention to the possibility of enhancing their identity with the help of luxury brands.

## 6.2 What are Millennials’ opinions on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands?

Having identified why the interviewed German Millennials consume luxury fashion brands, we can now analyze their thoughts on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands. Thus, corresponding themes are presented to support us in answering our main research question. The four overarching themes were supplemented with corresponding sub themes to thoroughly examine their complexity (see Figure 5).

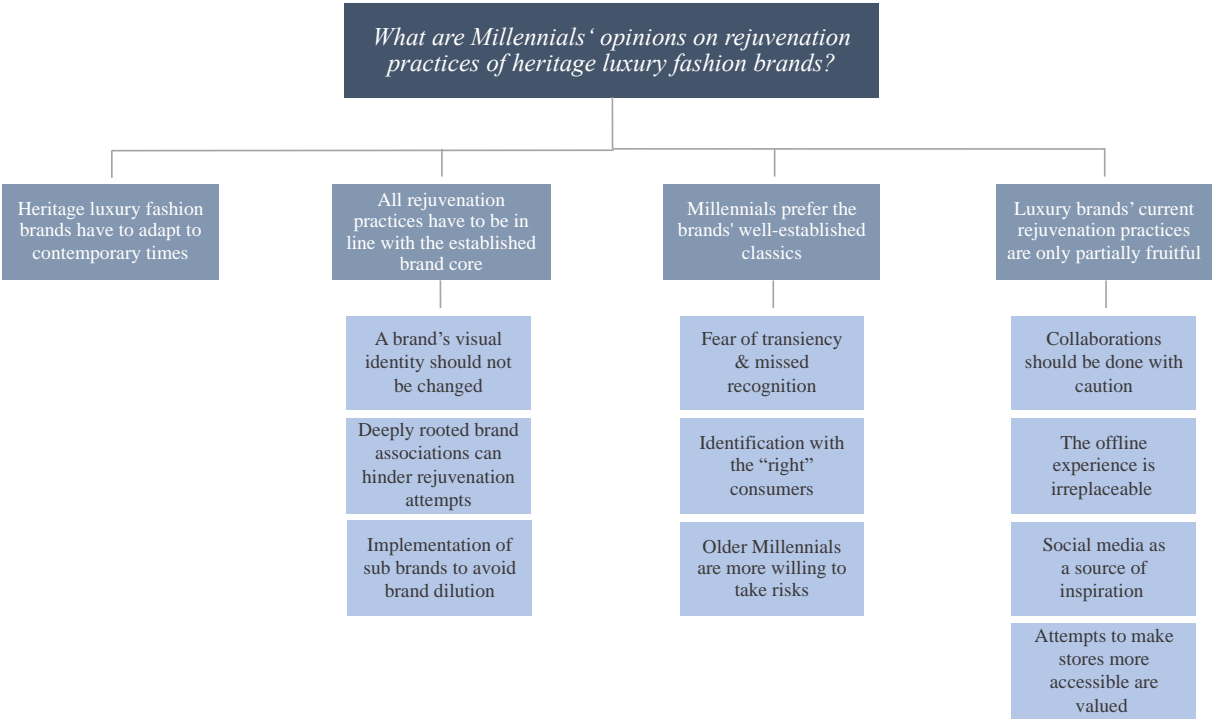


Figure 5: Themes – Millennials’ opinions on rejuvenation practices (Own figure, 2020)

### 6.2.1 Heritage luxury fashion brands have to adapt to contemporary times

Throughout our interviews, all participants agreed that luxury brands have to somehow evolve to stay relevant for them, as Adam's comment shows:

*I think that a brand must reinvent itself, again and again, to keep up with the time, especially in the fashion sector.*

Adding to this, Sarah again refers to the importance of "keeping up with the times" to address contemporary needs and desires of consumers:

*I think they [luxury fashion brands] definitely need to keep up with the times. But depending on what the brand stands for and what makes the brand special, the change can be different. [...], because that's contemporary and that's what people want nowadays, and for me, this is important as well.*

This is further supported by Corinna, expanding on the importance of present-day campaigns and the adaptation to "contemporary trends":

*Of course, they have to adapt their collections, their appearance, or their advertising campaigns to present times and adjust them to contemporary trends.*

Even though we can therewith note that luxury fashion brands cannot stay the same over time, the next theme will point out that adaptations to the brand should not exceed a certain degree.

### 6.2.2 All rejuvenation practices have to be in line with the established brand core

Despite the finding that our German Millennial luxury shoppers expect certain innovativeness from luxury fashion brands, they repeatedly warn that such changes need to be in line with and should not harm the brand core. Corinna continues:

*It is important that they develop themselves further. However, the development has to be in line with the brand. [...], and it must be, to a certain extent, where not everyone thinks, oh my gosh, what are they doing now? It really has to fit, fit to the current times, and above all, the brand core should not get lost.*

Even though we did not refer to the term "brand core" when asking our interview questions, it was repeatedly mentioned by our interviewees, making it an important concept that needs to be taken into consideration when rejuvenating a brand. The participants refer to this term as:

*The very core of the brand, which [...] makes it [the brand] attractive for the consumer.*

*What the brand somehow represents in its core and what provides it with a unique selling proposition.*

In this context, our interviewed Millennials also consider recognition features, such as the logo to be part of the brand core.

The importance of this theme becomes most apparent when comparing the brands Gucci and Burberry, two brands most our Millennials referred to when talking about rejuvenation. Even



though Gucci seems to be following a drastic, unconventional approach, thereby breaking with traditional conventions of luxury brand management, all our interviewed Millennials agreed that their practices are still in line with the brand core and are thus appreciated. When, for instance, discussing Gucci's move to use memes in order to attract young consumers, Fabian claims:

*I think they're allowed to. Well, it suits them and their way of expressing themselves.*

The luxury brand further was able to rejuvenate itself with a little twist, which makes the brand appear charming and fun, as Andrea's comment illustrates:

*Although Gucci is also insanely loud, they always do it with a twinkle in their eye.*

Additionally, our Millennials highlight that Gucci, even though the brand made radical changes to its traditional approach, still incorporates essential elements from the past, that make the brand recognizable and unique.

In comparison to Gucci, which is what our Millennials consider an example of a successful brand rejuvenation, they also comment on Burberry's efforts to attract younger consumer groups. The interviewees expressed quite strongly that the brand's radical break with its tradition by changing logo and pattern as well as offering completely new styles seems more of a financial move and destroys the brand image they have built in their minds. Tom puts it like this:

*Yes, I'm totally deterred because I see a bit of greed for profit contrasting the values that have been defined in the brand core. The greed for profit dominates, because they try to be a generalist on all levels, and this outweighs their own values. And I think that is something that no brand should do because then it shows that they do not really have their own values anymore.*

Adam explains why he thinks that addressing younger target consumers works for Gucci and not for Burberry, thereby highlighting that the essence of Gucci is "re-invention", whereas Burberry stands for tradition:

*Because Burberry has an aspect of consistency in its brand core, and that consistency is also a formal consistency, whereas I see Gucci's brand core, as I said before, in always reinventing itself.*

### *A brand's visual identity should not be changed*

In this context, we found that especially central visual identifiers that make a brand recognizable, such as the iconic and well-established logo and pattern should remain untouched, as illustrated by Tom:

*For me, every brand has its own brand values, [...], and when I see a changed brand logo, then I do not perceive the same values that I have associated the brand with so far [...].*

Such logo changes do not just harm a brand's identity and core but also discourage existing customers. In this context, Annabelle mentions "dishonesty" and "not appreciating" a brand's roots:

*I think it seems very dishonest and somehow also as if they don't appreciate what connects them to the past if they completely let go of their logo. [...] It seems very ungrateful, especially to the people who had been wearing the brand in the past.*

Asking our participants, for instance, what they associate with the brand Burberry, all of them undoubtedly mentioned the old logo and pattern, as illustrated by Lisa's comment:

*[...] you just know this pattern, because I think you don't have to know much about the fashion industry or anything else. That's just the Burberry pattern. I also think it is extremely timeless.*

In this context, some did not even know about Burberry's change of visual identifiers, as exemplified by Marie's comment:

*I would not have associated it with Burberry at all. If I hadn't read it below, it wouldn't have attracted me at all. And I wouldn't have recognized it at all. [...] because [...] the little checks and the logo are already burned into my head and the other one I can't do anything with it. I would have thought that it is a fake to be honest.*

Other respondents such as Fabian and Andrea expressed bitter disappointment and grief about the drastic move of Burberry:

*I think it's a pity that this [the old] logo is no longer used, so I feel rather nostalgia and almost sadness about this leveling down in the font. They do not differentiate themselves anymore.*

*I think it's a pity that they dropped the old aspects altogether. For me, with the new logo, the identity gets lost.*

Our interviewees do not associate the traditional brand with the new logo and pattern as the old associations are still strongly embedded in their minds. These new identifiers are not "Burberry" for them and were repeatedly mistaken for a different brand throughout our interviews:

*I really do not know what to think about that, because that [the new pattern] is not Burberry for me. For me, it looks more like Desigual or something like that.*

*I would immediately suspect Bentley behind it, in the first moment.*

*It reminds me more of Gucci patterns than Burberry patterns. For me, Burberry is always that classic check pattern.*

Showing the participants adaptations of the Gucci logo, it became evident that playing around with visual identifiers is not always connected to disappointment, but in some cases, even considered creative and exciting. However, only if it stays clear, that this is just done for special collections and that the well-established logo itself remains the same, as expressed by Lisa:

*[...] I could do something with them [different variations of the Gucci logo] because I think they [Gucci] still remain relatively true to the font and the design ... it still has the recognition value that Gucci has and therefore I think, if I were to compare it with*

*Burberry again, I don't think they are too bad or so absurd. Because they [Gucci] adapt it a little bit to their collections. But the old logo is not completely discarded.*

### *Deeply rooted brand associations can hinder rejuvenation attempts*

Building on the previous themes, we can note that even though Gucci and Burberry both tried to reinvigorate themselves, from our participants' point of view, it seems to have worked for Gucci but not for Burberry. This becomes even more apparent when asking our participants how they would describe the brands as human beings. Almost all participants still considered the typical "Burberry-person" to be old and mature and described the "Gucci-person" as rather young, loud and colorful:

*Tom (about Burberry): In the case of Burberry, I always have to think of a grandpa in front of a fireplace, with large Chesterfield sofas [...] where the big sheepdog walks around, and where you can replace the good Burberry scarf with a warm woolen blanket.*

*Fabian (about Gucci): 20-25, under any circumstances young, dynamic, eccentric, not really ... I would say, not classy, no, not classy at all. Eccentric, but still with a certain connection to tradition.*

Despite their associations of Burberry with "old" people, all our Millennials could better identify with Burberry than with Gucci. We consider it even more important to mention that our Millennials seem to ignore Burberry's attempts to rejuvenate the brand, still sticking to the old image they have of the heritage brand.

With its signature pieces, Burberry holds a particular position in our Millennials' minds, which somehow hinders a complete change of image. Through Burberry's longstanding efforts of associating the beige trench coat and the checkered scarf with the brand, they have established a specific basis, which Valerie even describes as trapped in their classics:

*I think Burberry is having a hard time bringing something new to the market, because unlike Gucci I would say they are very captivated with their classics through the trench coat, the absolute traditional and classic item, but which you simply can't make any younger. It always has its standing, just like the scarf.*

### *Implementation of sub brands to avoid brand dilution*

As mentioned in chapter 6.1, our Millennials value the history, roots, and traditions behind luxury fashion brands as they provide them with a valuable aspect of uniqueness. Relating to the need to stay true to the brand core, our interviewees attached importance to maintaining and still focusing on a brand's heritage when aiming for rejuvenation. In this context, many participants were envisaging the possibility of, instead of shattering the established brand, implementing a sub brand, as indicated by Tom:

*Before you try to become a generalist, you can rather establish a new brand, a sub brand, daughter brand, or whatever, which you then call differently and which then has a different look and feel to appeal to and pick up other groups of buyers.*

Looking at the overarching theme and the three sub themes, we can sum up that rejuvenation attempts of brands that Millennials strongly associate with tradition and heritage are perceived

more skeptical, as such actions are likely to dilute what the brand stands for. Furthermore, key aspects of the brand identity, such as visual identifiers should not be changed fundamentally, as they make the brand recognizable and unique. However, slight adaptations are appreciated and even express a brand's creativity and willingness to innovate. If radical rejuvenation practices are considered necessary, the Millennials suggest that they should be realized under a separate sub brand.

### 6.2.3 Millennials prefer the brands' well-established classics

Our participants did emphasize not only the importance of consistent visual identifiers but also the significance of classic products of a brand. When asked to bring a picture of a luxury fashion item they like, they all brought classic items rather than trendy pieces of luxury brands. Arguing for his choice, Matthias, for example, stated:

*Because this is a timeless classic. [...] I think that when you buy a luxury good, it should somehow always be something that lasts for a certain time and that is enduring, and not just a short-term fad.*

While introducing their luxury fashion products of choice, the participants further stated that they would choose the "original product" of the brand, even though for instance Viola is aware that other combinations might suit her age better and are somehow "cooler":

*[I would purchase] a black and gold one [Hermès bag] because that is simply the most classic version for me. I think in our age, silver is maybe a little younger and cooler. But in the long run, if you pay a high amount of money, I would always go for a classic color, for instance, gold, because that's the original product for me. The alternative would have been the caramel-colored one, [...] because those are the two original bags, as they were introduced by Hermès.*

#### Fear of transiency & missed recognition

In the previous comments, we could already observe a certain fear that the luxury item purchased could just be a hype and could thus not be worth the high amount of money spent. This is supported by Corinna, who claims:

*It's really important that it [luxury item] is not a temporary trend right now, and after a few months it is in the closet and not worn anymore, but that it's really an item, that when you get older or somehow also change in style or type, it actually always fits.*

As mentioned earlier, our Millennial consumers value the timelessness of luxury products and see their purchase as an investment. Thus, they want to make sure that the luxury products they purchase are not just trends, but last for a lifetime. Therefore, they prefer the characteristic products of a brand even though more trendy and innovative options are available, as explained by Frederik:

*I just think that the cooler it is right now, the faster it [the hype] decreases again, and in one year, it is not at all cool anymore. [...] So [...] I rather choose something timeless, which always remains cool, also remains good, if many people wear it because it is simply timeless.*

Combined with the fear of transient trends is the perceived risk that others might not recognize innovative, atypical products of a brand. When referring to Louis Vuitton bags with different modern patterns, Helena admits that she likes the styles but would still go with one of the classics, as she claims:

*Of course, you want to see somehow that it is a Louis Vuitton bag.*

As many of our interviewees are under 30 years old and consider themselves to be at the beginning of their careers, financial restrictions determine their purchasing decisions. Therefore, most of them agree that they would first purchase the classics of a luxury brand, that come with a lower risk of transience and are more recognizable, before they acquire new and trendy products of a brand, as illustrated by Selena's statement:

*If I had so much money that I could afford two or three bags [...], then I would first take something classic and then a fancy variation.*

Making sure to still be up to date but at the same time reducing the risk of transient trends, our German Millennials prefer combining classic luxury pieces with other trendy but more affordable products, rather than wearing fancy, new ones. The statement of the interviewee Frederik exemplifies this:

*I would wear a vintage Burberry coat that a grandpa wears and then I would combine it in a completely different way. [...] I would go to a [...] better second-hand shop, and I would definitely buy a vintage Burberry coat. And then I would mix it with a sportier robe.*

Even though Frederik is, for instance, attracted by Burberry's new young collections and expressed that they match his style, he would still rather buy the brand's classic trench coat and combine it accordingly to make a fresh and young look out of it. In this context, our German Millennials also emphasize that they would rather wear classic Burberry products and opt against trendy, colorful Gucci items. This is in line with our earlier finding that Millennials seek safety and timelessness when acquiring luxury items.

Summing up, our Millennials are generally attracted by innovative products of luxury fashion brands but are more likely to buy the classics as purchasing such items is considered less risky in terms of being outdated too fast or not being recognized by others. Thus, they constitute an investment for a lifetime.

### *Identification with the "right" consumers*

The participants' statements indicate that there is a preference for classic products over innovative ones. However, besides the fear of transient trends, we could identify an additional intention, namely the allowance to differentiate themselves from other luxury consumers, who seem to have the "wrong" motives for consuming luxury fashion. Our respondents enrich their statements by expressing knowledge about the brand's roots and its history, therefore emphasizing that they consume luxury brands for different reasons than other consumers. Expressing connoisseurship, Fabian claims:

*[...] I think you have to differentiate. There are people who simply wear it [luxury items], without really thinking about it too much. They just wear it like, "newly rich, I'm buying something expensive". And then there are people who are aware of the tradition, who also know the history, for instance about the [Louis Vuitton] suitcase and so on.*

By expressing his background knowledge about Louis Vuitton and using connoisseur jargon, Fabian intends to differentiate himself from consumers who only wear brands because of their hype and their connotation to wealth.

Classic products resemble the timelessness our respondents value and outlast several generations. In this context, wearing and carrying such classics allows our Millennials to identify with people they look up to. They do not want to be associated with other young individuals who consume the brand because it is hip and trendy but rather seek to identify with older consumers who wear the classic products because of their quality and history. This is underlined by David's comment:

*With a Rolex, you're more in the range of a 70-year-old than in the range of 20-year-old. [...] Basically, if a brand is still worn by a 70-year-old, this shows that it is not just so high fashion and worn because it is cool right now, it rather shows that it's a bit cross-generational.*

In the context of Louis Vuitton, Corinna for instance claims:

*This typical Louis Vuitton logo, still this classic, traditional, how should I say ... classic, timeless pattern is what makes Louis Vuitton what it is, and that is also the pattern that the older ladies wear, who are still real Louis Vuitton fans and wear Louis Vuitton since day one.*

With this comment, she clearly expresses what she considers the "real" luxury consumer, the one who values the roots and traditions of the brand. Her fascination indicates that she would rather like to be associated with this group of luxury consumers.

As identified in section 6.1.5 our interviewees consume luxury fashion brands to enhance their own identity. In the case of luxury fashion, they seek to be associated with mature, knowledgeable, and experienced consumers. Looking at the prevailing theme, we can state that such identity enhancement and reflection of prestige can be better achieved from our participants' point of view when consuming classic products rather than trendy pieces resulting from rejuvenation strategies of brands.

### *Older Millennials are more willing to take risks*

In contrast to our younger Millennials, the older ones (above 33 years) seem to be more willing to take risks when it comes to trendy luxury fashion pieces. Andrea claimed:

*I'm actually someone who tends to buy classic pieces when it comes to luxury products and seasonally buys three or four very fashionable accessories or pieces. [...] Well, [...] I bought myself a Kelly Bag, I bought it in cognac, knowing that I'm leaving it to my daughter. It's always up to date in cognac. I wouldn't have dared, because it was my first, to buy an apple green one. But, if I now buy a Push from Bottega Veneta, these new clutches that are available right now, I would buy it in light blue, but it also only*

*costs a third [of the Kelly Bag]. There it is important to me that it lasts two or three years. For me, it doesn't have to last 50 years, because it [the hype] will be over then.*

Equally, Andreas responded positively to colorful adaptations of traditional luxury fashion products. With the following statement he explains why he is attracted by, as he calls it, “funny” variations of classic luxury products, referring to the positive radiant effect of combining “tradition and innovation”:

*For me, this yellow-brown combination somehow is quite exciting, and funny and it somehow plays with tradition and innovation in a way that creates a positive supra-summative effect.*

Considering the comments of our older Millennials (above 33 years), we can sum up that it seems like Millennials, with an already settled way of life, are more open-minded regarding untraditional products of luxury fashion brands.

#### 6.2.4 Luxury brands’ current rejuvenation practices are only partially fruitful

Having looked at what Millennials think about changes of visual identifiers and innovative products of traditional brands, we will now shed light on their viewpoints regarding more reinvigoration attempts, such as collaborating with other brands, being active online, or becoming more accessible. It became evident that our participants are in favor of rejuvenation practices but that they should always be done with caution and that some are more fruitful, meaning more effective in attracting the consumers, than others.

##### *Collaborations should be done with caution*

Even though our interviewees are generally in favor of collaborations of luxury fashion brands with other brands, designers, artists, or celebrities, they repeatedly highlight that caution should be maintained. They emphasize that there must be a clear, coherent link to the partnering person or brand. This connection also has to be communicated, so consumers understand the collaboration and are not left in the dark by figuring out why they match, as Lisa illustrates with her comment on a collaboration of Louis Vuitton with a young streetwear fashion label, called Supreme:

*Somehow, there must also be a clear statement. Why are we doing this? And why are we working together? So, that the people have a connection somehow and understand that... Because when I see that all of a sudden, I think: Okay, that doesn't fit together at all. [...] I think you need some background information. Why exactly these two?*

Also referring to the risk of misunderstanding, Fabian shares his personal experience with the Supreme x Louis Vuitton collection, where he was skeptical at first because he could not see a clear link, but after a friend explained the overlap, he perceived it more positive:

*I had little use for Supreme. I can still remember, [...] my roommate told me a bit about Supreme, that they are actually in the premium segment of streetwear. When I knew that, I somehow perceived it differently. Before, I was a little more skeptical. Well, it depends*

*a lot on whether you already have knowledge, and I think that's where the risk is: [...] Do the loyal Louis Vuitton customers know the Supreme brand well enough?*

After discussing various collaborations, it became even more apparent that a fit between the two partners is of central relevance. No matter which brand joined a partnership with whom, the emphasis on matching each other was highlighted frequently. Additionally, the interviewees underline that the luxury brands should always stay true to their origins, as Adam explained in the case of the Hermès Apple Watch:

*If you see the origin of Hermès as a saddler, and thus in the end as someone who agrees with the leather processing in its basic DNA, then the extension of an Apple Watch with a really fine, elegant leather strap is [...] a really decorative added value [...], a very nice way of combining the core benefits of the brand with a new, technological aspect.*

The same thought also occurred while talking about the new collaboration of Gucci and Disney's Mickey Mouse. Corinna points out that this partnership only works with the brand Gucci, also referring to the importance of staying true to the brand core:

*I wouldn't see it on any other brand except Gucci. It wouldn't fit Dior, it wouldn't fit Yves Saint Laurent, it wouldn't fit Hermès [...], it's really only possible with Gucci because they somehow have also brought in this youthful touch in the last years [...].*

Taking into consideration that these kinds of collaborations somehow make the brand more accessible, leading to a diminishing feeling of exclusivity, most of our interviewees responded quite persistently about recent moves of luxury brands partnering with fast fashion companies, such as H&M. Selena, for instance, highlights that such collaborations lead to a misunderstanding of what the brand stands for:

*For me, it would be a pity if they [luxury fashion items] suddenly became such a mass product. [...] that would then devalue my understanding of the brands a little bit, to be honest.*

Taking up the thought of rarity, David adds:

*Things that are available in an infinite amount are not luxury for me. I think luxury should be limited in a certain way and not immediately accessible to everyone.*

A few others like the idea and do not agree that the exclusivity is affected by collaborating with fast fashion brands. Andrea, for instance, refers to the obvious differences in production, and claims:

*If I liked the item, I'd buy it. [...] It's not handstitched. At H&M, it's mass-produced in Bangladesh [...]. But these then disappear from the streets after two years. It doesn't change anything.*

However, those expressing to be in favor of such collaborations emphasize, that it has to be clear that it is just a special collection which does not affect the core of the luxury brand, as exemplified by Sarah's comment:

*Well, I still think you should definitely see that it's a special collaboration. And then I would buy the pieces.*



Summing up, our Millennials are open-minded about collaborations if they understand how the two partners fit together and as long as the luxury brand stays true to its brand core. The interviewees are, however, a bit more suspicious about collaborations with fast fashion brands, mentioning the aspect of opening it up to the public and thus making it less extraordinary and exclusive.

### *The offline experience is irreplaceable*

Even though Millennials are considered to be technologically savvy and in favor of online shopping, it does not seem to be the case in the world of luxury fashion consumption. Almost none of the participants would consider purchasing luxury fashion online, as they value the whole experience connected to the offline purchase:

*I would never buy [...] a luxury item online because I think you simply need this feeling. You go into a Dior store, you have this feeling, you get a glass of champagne, you get it [the product] wrapped up, you go out with a huge bag with a beautiful golden bow. It's a different feeling or a more special feeling than getting a package and unpacking it like an H&M package, which you basically get every day.*

When referring to luxury fashion possessions and the related in-store experience, Marie even compares it to once in a lifetime events, just like the purchase of her bridal dress:

*When I buy something like that [luxury products], I actually hope for a certain experience. For example, when choosing a wedding dress, you wouldn't order it online, even if you knew the brand and everything, because you are hoping for an experience. Something special. And that's pretty much the same when purchasing a luxury item. [...] Why, I would pay the same amount of money and wouldn't even get a glass of water?*

Even though our interviewees are highly familiar with online interaction in general, they still seem to mistrust online sources to a certain extent, therefore valuing the certainty connected to offline acquisitions, as Lisa confirms:

*[...], [I would] walk out with a much safer feeling than if I had ordered it online.*

These comments show that it is not just about acquiring the product itself, but also about the experience around the purchase. In this context, our luxury shoppers also value and even expect personal contact with employees. Rather than in-depth consultations, as in most cases, they already know what they want to purchase anyway, they expect personal appreciation and a certain personalization of the shopping experience. David, for instance, claims:

*You don't go in there [luxury store], buy the 300 Euro wallet, take it out of the showcase, pay, and leave again. I think it is not important that he advises me, he should not try to sell me five other wallets. Basically, he should just pay attention to me ... Provide me with a feeling like, wow today you are going to buy something special. And then it's not like I'm at Footlocker where he just gives me the shoe box, it's just ... I don't know ... it's just this feeling that a [luxury] brand should convey.*

The participants seem to appreciate the feeling of being important, which allows them to maximize their self-worth. Considering Fabian's comment, it gets even more evident that this appreciation and personalization is highly valued and an essential aspect of the luxury experience:

*I can remember, at Fendi, when I bought this bracelet ... after 6 months, I got an email from my salesperson [...] and this email was signed personally. I can't imagine that this employee has written to me personally, that was undoubtedly an automated mail, but it doesn't matter. To have this feeling that they know you as a customer and not as a number in a system is very, very important.*

Such experiences allow our interviewees to build personal relationships with the brand through interaction. As the purchase is solely the starting point of such brand relationships, further strengthening it is considered crucial by our German consumers.

Opinions on digital in-store tools in luxury fashion shops were quite neutral. Participants do not expect them in such stores but would be likely to use them if they were available and if they would heavily facilitate the decision-making process. However, such tools should never replace personal assistance, as David expresses with this comment:

*I believe in order to support the sales staff, yes, but never instead, so maybe I'm a little old-fashioned, but I just think it's nice when I can have this personal conversation while buying something like that [luxury item].*

Even though our participants cannot imagine shopping luxury goods online, they use the luxury brand's websites to gather in-depth information on the desired products before going to the luxury fashion store. Explaining that he would start his customer journey on the brand's website, Matthias claims:

*I want to discover as much information and details [about the product] as possible on my own. [...] It must be directly and conveniently accessible.*

All our participants agreed that the offline experience is central to luxury fashion consumption. Not only having certainty but also personal interaction and some sort of personalization remain crucial. Also, our interviewees do not see the need for online tools in-store but would not refuse to use them as an enhancement of the decision-making process. Likewise, the company's website serves as a means to gather product-related information.

### *Social media as a source of inspiration*

Nevertheless, according to the interviewed Millennials, almost all of them can be reached and influenced through social media. However, despite their marked interest in luxury fashion, only two actively follow luxury brands on social media. Our respondents rather get inspired by bloggers and peers on the platform Instagram, as Helena's statement regarding where she gets her inspiration from, illustrates:

*I actually believe on Instagram from one of my favorite bloggers or something. So, I think that's my first source of inspiration.*

Even older Millennials (above 33), like Andrea, clearly demonstrate that inspiration does not come from the luxury brands' designers on their platforms, but from, as she calls it "exciting women":

*So, when I want to get fashion inspiration, I don't follow the designers, I rather follow influencers. Exciting women.*

Vanessa highlights the aspect of wanting to see the pieces of the brand on “normal” people and emphasizes the aspect of approachability:

*I think photos of normal people, not necessarily models, but just normal people, just like me, so you can see how they wear things in everyday life and at cool events or whatever.*

However, others state that collaborations with influencers who are not in line with what the brand stands for can harm the brand’s authenticity. Acknowledging the danger of a mismatch, Corinna highlights the importance of a fit between the person and the brand personality:

*But there it is again important that you don't take any influencer or any YouTuber, but it is really important that you choose someone who fits the brand to 100 percent.*

As stated above, the interviewed Millennials do not get inspired on the luxury brands’ channels, also meaning that the brands’ new, innovative approach to enter the world of mobile applications does not change this aspect, as Sarah illustrates:

*An app, I think, would not have the added value for me that I would let it take up space on my already full mobile phone.*

The few Millennials who follow brand-owned online platforms do so to enrich their knowledge about the brand, especially regarding its origin, history, and handcraft, as Viola’s comment illustrates:

*[...] with Dior, Chanel, and Hermès, I get these stories and insights behind the scene, for instance, Dior does super lovely things and shows how they dye their fabrics themselves ... or just like Hermès with their scarfs. [...] I think it is really nice to see what’s behind [the brand].*

### Attempts to make stores more accessible are valued

As stated before, our interviewees value the experience connected to luxury shopping, therefore also striving for an exclusive treatment and a feeling of extravagance. However, even though they value personal contact in luxury fashion stores and consider it necessary for the store environment, this is at the same time what impedes them from visiting such stores. Even our most experienced luxury shopper, Andrea criticizes:

*There are shops where you simply just feel ... not welcome, and the staff is more exclusive than the customer who enters the shop. You know, just like this, Julia Robert experience in Pretty Woman.*

As most luxury stores appear very exclusive, it was expressed by the participants that they would not go there to get inspired but only if they knew which luxury product to acquire, as revealed by Corinna:

*[If] a sales assistant somehow accompanies you through the store and first checks you out from top to bottom, if you're in the right place ... anyway ... so it's not a store or a shop where I would just walk in and say I'm going to get inspired and see what I'll buy. I would go into that store only with a specific purpose.*

To some extent, these luxury stores seem to even frighten the participants, which is further expressed by Lisa, who feels the need to justify her style choice and to change her clothes before entering such stores:

*I am wearing sneakers most of the time, more athletic, more casual, I would say, and I would think twice about going into a Louis Vuitton store before I checked the clothes I am wearing at that moment.*

Taking this barrier into consideration our Millennials are attracted by casual and welcoming stores of luxury fashion brands. While they would still purchase the products in one of the “*traditional*” stores, most of our respondents would rather prefer a less exclusive store design to get inspired and in touch with the brand. Showing our participants, a picture of a colorful and unconventional Louis Vuitton pop-up store, they stated that they were more likely to walk in even without the intention to purchase. Vanessa, for instance, stated:

*I think that's pretty cool. I think if I walked by, I'd definitely take a picture. And it's funny, but somehow if I think about going in there, it wouldn't be so awkward for me anymore [as opposed to entering a traditional store].*

Thus, more approachable and welcoming stores, such as pop-ups, seem to be an efficient means to create buzz to attract and get in touch with our German Millennials as they could also serve as a source for inspiration.

### 6.2.5 Summary

It may be concluded that our Millennials expect luxury heritage brands to adapt to the rapidly changing environment. However, too drastic rejuvenation practices that are not in line with an established brand core and the deeply rooted values, such as changes to the visual identity, are criticized by our interviewees. Our Millennials, especially the younger ones, seek safety and prestige, therefore, appreciating the classics of the brand. Thus, only some of the identified rejuvenation practices are valued by the consumers.

At this point, we would further like to highlight that our research does not indicate discrepancies regarding the sex of our German Millennials, therefore indicating that their opinions on rejuvenation practices are not determined by gender. The age, in contrast, impacts the viewpoints of our Millennials regarding such brand rejuvenation attempts.

## 7 Discussion

In this chapter, we aim to apply our theoretical framework to our findings and connect them to existing literature in related research fields. This allows us to adequately answer our research as well as sub question, to subsequently find out whether rejuvenation attempts of heritage luxury fashion brands rather foster or harm the brands' attractiveness for German Millennial consumers. In this regard, we put special emphasis on the rejuvenation practices of the four brands illuminated in *chapter 5*.

### 7.1 Why do Millennials consume luxury fashion brands?

Our interviewed Millennials attach great importance to the history of luxury fashion brands and expect the unique brand story to be a part of the luxury experience. This is in line with Wiedmann et al.'s (2011) claim that consumers tend to purchase luxury brands with a genuine history, because they seem more credible, as well as trustworthy.

For all our respondents, regardless of age and gender, the aspect of timelessness is the main motivator for consuming luxury fashion. In this context, luxury purchases are seen as an investment for life and as a means for constant gratification. Even though they are experienced and frequent shoppers, our interviewed Millennials do not take luxury purchases for granted and value the special, experiential touch connected to luxury fashion consumption.

Further, as luxury possessions remain exceptional, our German Millennials tend to link their items to personal achievements and efforts and see luxury fashion as some sort of "*treating themselves*". Interpreting it as a reward, they also hope for advancement into higher, distinctive groups of people, therewith enhancing their own identity. This finding coincides with Belk's (1988) construct of the extended self, which argues for the connection of a consumer's possession with his/ her sense of self. In order to be part of extraordinary groups, our German Millennials seem to expand their self through the meaning of luxury products, thereby assimilating this meaning into their identity.

Whereas researchers claim this cohort to be distinctive compared to prior generations, such differences are only marginally evident in the luxury fashion segment, with our Millennials still favoring enduring classics and appreciating the aspect of timelessness. With this finding, we support the research of Kapferer and Michaut (2019), who claim that Millennials do not differ significantly from other generations in their preferences in luxury consumption. On the other side, our findings challenge Halwani (2019), who states that emerging adults highlight trendiness and attractive designs as their main motivators for heritage luxury consumption while older consumers are predominantly attracted by the quality and durability of the products. All our Millennials, regardless of their age, highlighted the aspects of quality and durability as the main motivators for their luxury fashion purchases.

## 7.2 What are Millennials' opinions on rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands?

In the following sections, we discuss the findings related to our main research question.

### 7.2.1 The need to adapt to contemporary times

The interviews with our German Millennials clearly pointed out that these consumers tolerate and also expect certain degrees of innovation of luxury fashion brands, depending on the established values anchored in the brand. However, in this regard, it is important to mention that radical changes or even changes that exceed slight adaptations are not demanded and thus rarely appreciated by the participants.

Even though it is indispensable that heritage brands have to moderately reinvigorate to keep up in a world that is changing faster than ever before, it was repeatedly emphasized that these brands have to act in accordance with their core. The upcoming section displays the importance of preserving such identity coherence. It exemplifies how radical modernization attempts away from the core may lead to the destruction of this component, therewith heavily influencing consumers' brand image.

### 7.2.2 The importance of staying true to the brand core

The aspects of tradition, history, as well as the deep roots, are central elements of a heritage luxury fashion brand's identity and are also what the interviewed Millennial consumers consistently emphasize as the main value proposition. These elements are especially vital for heritage luxury brands, as they have a longstanding history, which is considered an important asset (Urde et al., 2007). Therefore, all branding practices, even when aiming at rejuvenating the brand, should, according to our participants, be in line with the prevailing and established brand identity, which in the case of heritage luxury fashion brands mostly builds on the values of quality, tradition, and longevity. Linking this to our theoretical framework, we state that our interviewees see a substantial need for identity coherence of heritage luxury fashion brands.

This becomes particularly visible when looking at the rejuvenation efforts of Burberry and Gucci, and the corresponding comments of our participants. While Gucci's re-birth seemingly succeeded in the minds of the Millennial generation with the establishment of a younger, hip image, Burberry was not able to get rid of its traditional, conservative standing. Gucci's brand identity embraces constant rejuvenation and development, which allows radical innovation. With its moves, Gucci stayed true to the core of the brand - *keep reinventing yourself* - and with this maintained consistency despite the fundamental changes to the brand. Our German Millennials, could, therefore, recognize the brand Gucci behind all its practices and thus determine the brand identity as coherent.

In the case of Burberry, where the English tradition and the preservation of history are main identification features, consumers did not see the radically different steps as appropriate and suitable for the brand. Considering this, our participants' statements indicate that Burberry was acting outside of its identity frame, which led to an incoherent identity and therewith also to a negative influence on the brand image held by our interviewees.

A similar pattern could be identified by looking at the brand Louis Vuitton. Our interviewees responded positively to the rejuvenation attempts of this brand. For instance, with the Supreme collaboration, Louis Vuitton still respected its core values and, at the same time, managed to appear more creative and modern. By preserving the quality and the exceptional hand-made craftsmanship even in the atypical collaboration, Louis Vuitton acted within its identity frame. This was further accomplished through the short availability of the collection, as well as the scarcity in general, both being important indicators for a luxury brand. With such rejuvenation practices, the identity of the luxury brand does not get incoherent and thus remains what German Millennials are looking for in heritage luxury fashion brands.

The great significance of the element identity coherence is again verified when acknowledging another brand under study, namely Hermès. In the eyes of our Millennials, Hermès, which was constantly referred to as the most privileged luxury fashion brand, is only that exclusive and worth striving for, because the core driver of the company's business still today is its tradition and uniqueness. The ultra-luxury brand maintains its authentic luxury aura by sticking to the longstanding "less is more" identity, thereby valuing its uniqueness of tradition and its loyal, exclusive customer base. However, in line with our earlier finding, it is still appreciated that this brand takes innovative incremental steps, such as partnering with Apple, but only because this collaboration is in line with Hermès' exclusive character, thus still allowing for identity coherence.

To conclude, brands whose identity is mainly built on the aspects of tradition, history, and heritage should adapt to contemporary developments by staying true to the core and should only marginally try to alter the brand image with selected rejuvenation practices. Taking on the consumer perspective, we can thus support Wuestefeld et al.'s (2012) suggestion of letting the brand personality remain in the past but adapting to the contemporary consumer needs through innovation. Our findings are also in line with the claims of Urde et al. (2007), who claim that heritage brands should stay true to the brand core and their deeply-anchored values, only reinterpreting them in modern light.

The subsequent discussion of the remaining themes builds on the above-mentioned claim that the brand core must be maintained in all rejuvenation practices. The aspect of such identity coherence was central to almost all our respondents' viewpoints, thereby constituting a central component in the process of brand rejuvenation.

### *The significance of a brand's visual identity*

We were further able to identify that our German Millennials consider the visual identity as a central element of a brand, which should, therefore, remain untouched when aiming for rejuvenation. This became especially evident in the case of Burberry, who changed the well-known logo and further introduced a new pattern. With this radical rebranding, the brand was no longer recognizable from our Millennials' point of view, which negatively influenced the brand image held by these consumers. This is in line with Blazquez et al.'s (2019) findings, which claim that no matter how radical rejuvenation practices are, the brand must always be recognizable in the long run.

Some of our interviewees even expressed disappointment when discussing this rejuvenation move of Burberry. As mentioned earlier, this reaction is likely to result from the incoherence of the luxury fashion brands' identity. Without the acclaimed logo and pattern, the brand cannot be seen as a coherent whole anymore, which negatively influences the brand image held by the consumers. This finding particularly showcases the importance of the element "symbols" introduced by Urde et al. (2007). We therewith support that especially visual identifiers are central to heritage luxury fashion brands and thus, are of significance for consumers.

With our research, we were, however, able to demonstrate that the interviewed Millennials are in favor of creative attempts of luxury brands that marginally play around with their heritage. This was, for instance, exemplified by the positive responses on Gucci's concept of changing its logo based on collections. These adaptations were centering around retro, as well as modernized adjustments of the traditional brand symbol, thereby allowing the presentation of traditional brand aspects in a new light, still conveying a vintage touch. Gucci's approach clearly demonstrates that our Millennials are open to innovation and that these practices do enhance a brand's image in the minds of the young consumers, but that these always need to have a profound connection to the brand's history, thus ensuring identity coherence.

### *The endurance of established brand associations*

Throughout our study, we could even determine that our Millennial consumers intend to prevail identity coherence and trustworthiness of heritage luxury fashion brands, sticking to what they are used to. This becomes especially evident when again illuminating the case of Burberry. In this regard, we were able to observe a certain blockade that complicates the process of perceiving and accepting the new, intended position of the heritage luxury fashion brand. This was, for instance, justified by the fact that the majority of our Millennials were utterly ignoring the "younger" Burberry and continued to stick with the traditional image of the luxury brand. This observation allows the assumption that very strongly embedded brand identities with powerful signature pieces can hinder the adoption of rejuvenation practices. This is further in line with Keller's (2012) claim that efforts to achieve a new desired position are ineffective if previous brand associations disturb the new image and thereby hinder consumers from noticing the modern approach.



The brand, that is, according to our interviewees, known for its “*Britishness*”, its “*conservativeness*”, as well the “*deeply rooted tradition*”, is not likely to appear trustworthy when trying to be something other than it is known for, in this case, “*cool*” or “*extravagant*”. In line with Aaker (2004), who claims that heritage brands appear authentic because their personality is anchored in their origins, Burberry’s new identity does not seem trustworthy for our German Millennials anymore as this “*coolness*” is not embedded in the brand’s roots.

### *The sub brand as the way out*

Further emphasizing that brands should remain the same at core, radical rejuvenation attempts are only appreciated by our interviewees if these are realized under a separate sub brand, as exemplified in the cases of Miu Miu and Prada or Armani and Armani Jeans. Such architecture allows a brand to cater to an entirely new target audience with a distinctive appearance, a separate visual identity as well as different styles. At the same time, the core of the mother brand is not affected, and thus, the risk of scaring off existing customers is reduced (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). However, the brands are likely to profit from spillover effects (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000), which could provide the mother brand with a younger aura and the sub brand in turn with a connotation of high status. This finding also reflects Keller’s (2019) claim that the introduction of a sub brand solves the dilemma of growth and the maintenance of exclusivity.

In the same regard, brands that do not want to lose all of the brand attributes they have built over time, but still seek to profit from a wider target audience and more accessibility, could emphasize on penetrating youthful realms, not through their core competencies, but other segments in their product portfolio. Our luxury fashion shoppers, for instance, brought up Hermès, who provides cheaper, entry-level offers in their perfume world, thereby appealing to young consumers, but staying true to its exclusive core.

### 7.2.3 The preference of a brand’s classics

We found that our interviewed Millennials are for several reasons in favor of traditional, classic luxury fashion products. These will be reflected below.

### *The risk of transience and lack of recognition*

Abraham & Harrington (2015) claim that when consuming brands, Millennials put high emphasis on their peers’ opinions, which is also reflected in Eastman and Liu’s (2012) research, which defines this generation as the most motivated to consume for status. In line with this, we identified the fear of missed recognition and short-term trends to be key reasons for why Millennials prefer classic products of luxury fashion brands. Looking at the concept of identity trustworthiness, which is built upon past experiences with a brand and thus on what the consumer is used to while consuming it, we claim that the introduction of highly innovative, unconventional products is likely to clash with the identity trustworthiness. Consequently, the consumption of such products would maximize the risk perceived by our Millennial consumers.

Even though our interviewees prefer traditional items of luxury fashion brands, they are not averse to innovative styles and product lines. They, however, connect the consumption of such goods to a higher risk resulting from transient trends as well as missed recognition by others.

In contrast to brands leaving the “trusted sphere”, for example by offering nonconforming products, Hermès, which evolves in line with its core values, embodies a trustworthy and authentic brand for our Millennial consumers. Our interviewees seem to value the fact that they know in advance what exactly they are getting involved in when consuming the brand, as well as the assurance that the acquired luxury piece never gets out of fashion, therewith minimizing the financial risk and maximizing the valued recognition.

With this finding, we were able to demonstrate that atypical products of a luxury fashion brand are likely to impact the identity trustworthiness from our consumers' point of view. Such products are not what they and their peers associate with and what they know from the brand. Thus, the less recognizable these products resulting from such rejuvenation strategies are, the higher the risk for our consumers, and with this the lower the brand's identity trustworthiness. Therefore, our German luxury shoppers stick with the classics of a heritage luxury brand, which provide them with a feeling of safety and allow them to profit from their purchase for a long time.

### *The chance to become the “right” consumer*

We could further identify that the consumption of luxury brands' classics allows our interviewed Millennials to identify with consumers they look up to. Even though our participants consider Burberry as very traditional, almost old-fashioned, this image does not deter this generation but rather attracts it. Consuming such traditional brands that convey a certain status allows our luxury fashion shoppers to differentiate themselves from other young consumers that consume luxury brands mainly because of their trendiness and the aspect of wealth attached to it.

Our research also pointed out that drastic rejuvenation practices are likely to negatively impact the aspect of identity knowledge. It became evident that drastic shifts make our knowledgeable Millennials doubt their expertise, wondering if they are still the “right” consumer for the brand if these tend to break with everything they were used to, as in the case of Burberry. This does not only lead to a feeling of insecurity among our Millennials, herewith contributing to a skeptical attitude but to a certain degree, this lack of knowledge also works as a deterrent.

Summing up, these heritage-focused brands and their classic products provide our Millennials with a certain feeling of security, contentment, as well as confidence and allow them to be associated with people they look up to. Therefore, such brands and their products should only be changed marginally. In this context, we agree with Kapferer and Bastien (2012), who claim that especially luxury brands should emphasize on their history and their origin to create an emotional relationship with the consumer.

### *The open-mindedness of older Millennials*

We already stated earlier that luxury fashion purchases are connected to a high financial risk. Thus especially, younger study participants carefully evaluate their purchasing decision and rather aim for classic products. However, at this point in our research, we could identify a difference between younger and older Millennials (above 33).

As those more mature participants are already in the midst of their life and have the disposable income, they also “dare” to purchase extraordinary products that are likely to be out of fashion in the next season. Further, older Millennials might be more stylistically confident and therefore do not feel the need to differentiate themselves from other less-experienced luxury shoppers. Taking the minimized financial risk due to the disposable income and the stylistic confidence into consideration, we argue that the component of identity trustworthiness does not play such a significant role for our older Millennials in the process of forming a luxury fashion brands’ image.

#### 7.2.4 Reflection on fruitful rejuvenation practices

It became evident that our participants are generally in favor of rejuvenation practices of heritage luxury fashion brands but that they should always be done with caution. Following specific practices, which will be presented in the following, luxury brands can alter their brand image by appearing more modern but at the same time ensuring identity coherence, trustworthiness, and knowledge.

### *The opportunities and dangers of collaborations*

Throughout this study, it was recognizable that all practices that were in line with the brand’s core and also communicated accordingly are comprehended and thus welcomed by our participants. This finding is especially central to Millennials’ viewpoints on collaborations of luxury heritage brands with various partners. As they clearly see the link between the brands, collaborations such as Gucci x Disney or, for instance, Hermès x Apple are appreciated, even positively influence the brand image held by consumers and provide the luxury brand with a younger touch. On the other side, practices, in this case, collaborations, where the intent is not communicated or directly visible make identity-related judgments hard for consumers, and with this tend to lead to an unintended knowledge-gap, which diminishes the positive brand image.

In the context of collaborations of luxury fashion brands with fast fashion brands, our findings are in line with Mrad et al. (2018). We could identify that such partnerships are appreciated by the participants but have to be considered carefully. This exemplifies the difficulty of managing a luxury brand, showcasing the need to find a balance between newness and surprise, and on the other hand, exclusiveness, and authenticity. As a part of such partnerships, brands have to make sure that they do not lose their exclusiveness and that their products are not perceived as being available to the masses. The interviewed German Millennials hold the opinion that as soon as something becomes abundant, it loses its exclusivity and thus devalues their understanding of luxury. Therefore, luxury fashion brands have to make sure that the special

collections in fast fashion stores can be clearly differentiated from their own collections and that they are available for a limited time and in limited quantity only.

### *The relevance of the offline experience*

Our research clarified that in the case of luxury fashion consumption, e-commerce is of minor importance, as the experience around in-store visits is highly valuable to our interviewees. With this, we challenge researchers such as Sullivan and Heitmeyer (2008), who refer to the general preference of Millennials for online shopping. Even though the interviewees do not consider shopping luxury goods online, they expect to be provided with sufficient in-depth information about the products on the company website, as this is where they decide what to purchase offline. The website should not only include product-specific information but also offer more engaging and story-related details about the company.

We could also identify that this need for in-depth product information can be further satisfied with the help of digital-in store tools. Although our respondents do not expect luxury fashion stores to provide such tools, mentioning, for instance, Burberry's digital solution of interactive mirrors, most of the interviewed Millennials would appreciate such means, if they significantly facilitate their decision-making process. Our informants, for example, highlighted that especially stores with limited space capacity would profit from efficient digital tools. In these stores, the whole product range can often not be displayed. Therewith, for instance, tablets would allow showing the variety of a brand's offering. In this context, it has to be emphasized that these tools should never replace personal contact with store personnel, as this is one of the main assets of luxury fashion stores. In that regard, Millennials even demand a customized shopping experience, which allows them to feel unique and valued.

Summing up, we argue that technologies ranging from e-commerce platforms to in-store devices are valued as sources of information by the participants. However, they can and should not replace the valued experience connected to the offline purchase, which is primarily built on personal interaction. Shopping online or using devices instead of talking to staff and consciously perceiving the luxury atmosphere of physical stores, would hurt this valued luxury experience and the gratification connected to it. With this finding, we support the research of Atwahl & Williams (2009), which highlights that Millennials look for unique experiences around luxury purchases, and do not plainly value superior products.

### *The usage of social media as inspiration*

As almost all our informants are active on social media but rather follow fashion bloggers than the luxury brands' accounts, this research further illustrates the importance of influencer collaborations on social media. In this context, the brands Burberry, as well as Louis Vuitton, seem to be on the right track, using bloggers as means to reach the younger audience. As previously mentioned, our German Millennials are on the lookout for inspirational content, preferably from approachable sources. Influencers are not only able to reflect the Millennials' style but are also considered more authentic than the fashion brands' content. However, it was repeatedly argued that brands, in particular heritage brands, should pay attention to carefully

selecting these influencers, so they can assure the match with, as well as the reflection of what the brand stands for.

Even though our German Millennials do not place high importance on mobile apps and social media accounts of luxury fashion brands, most of them stated that on such platforms they would be interested in content, that allows them to gain further knowledge about the brand, its origin, and history as well as glimpses behind the scene.

As heritage luxury fashion brands often have unique, brand-specific, sophisticated ways of producing their items, with unique peculiarities, consumers tend to favor online content that centers around such historic, persisting traditions. Our interviewees emphasize craftsmanship and with this, the clear distinction to mass-produced products. Thus, particularly content that allows the further gathering of brand-specific knowledge, is valued.

This, coupled with the desire to get more knowledgeable in the luxury segment, speaks for the request of getting fascinating insights into the unique practices of each luxury brand. This finding is in line with De Kerviler and Rodriguez's (2019) claim that luxury heritage brands should allow their consumers to refresh their brand knowledge constantly and to explore the brand in various ways.

Taking this into consideration, for instance, the brand Hermès seems to be on the “right” track, providing consumers with a behind-the-scenes glance of the brand by running a podcast and publishing stories about their outstanding production process.

### *The step towards accessibility*

As our Millennial luxury consumers continuously referred to the issue of luxury store employees looking down on them, thereby questioning their purchasing power and status, our interviewees consider trendy, to some sort casual stores to be an appropriate alternative, for instance, in the form of pop-up stores. Therefore, brands like Louis Vuitton, Burberry, and Hermès seem to be following successful paths by opening unique stores with unconventional designs in atypical, accessible locations. Colorful store layouts right in the middle of a lively city might be the solution to the above-mentioned obstacle and might thus create a less exclusive brand touchpoint, coupled with some buzz, as well as interest coming from younger consumers. However, it has to be noted that our Millennials would treat these stores only as a source of inspiration and as means to get in touch with the luxury brand while the actual purchase would still take place in conventional luxury stores.

## 7.3 Summary

Summing up, the concept of identity coherence is especially central to the identification process of our interviewed consumers with heritage luxury fashion brands, whose traditions are deeply anchored in the brand core. For such brands, the heritage aspect is a fundamental constituent and an integral added value from the perspective of our consumers, which is why this aspect

should not be diluted. Consequently, if heritage luxury fashion brands start to alter their identity through drastic rejuvenation practices, we would regard this as counterproductive as it hinders the identification process and thus negatively influences the established brand image held by our German Millennials. In this context, we further demonstrated that extreme alterations to a heritage brand's strategy make the brand appear less trustworthy and also harm the component of identity knowledge. This, in turn, negatively influences the brand image held by the participants.

However, we showed that rejuvenation practices that aim at modernizing the brand are appreciated, even if not expected, by our Millennials, as long as the brand core is retained. At first glance, Gucci seems to be an exception, having succeeded in generating a positive image in the minds of Millennials, despite their radical approach to rejuvenation. However, looking at our respondent's viewpoints, the case of Gucci cannot be considered an exception. The luxury brand successfully appealed to the new consumer group, as it stayed true to its brand core, which is built on the aspects of innovation and recreation, therefore allowing for constant reinvention. Taking this into consideration, we can conclude that Millennials value the deep bond with a luxury brand's roots and want to recognize these, even after a brand's rejuvenation.

To conclude, we identified brand rejuvenation as fruitful and as efficient means to alter the image of heritage luxury brands from a Millennial consumer perspective. The following figure gives a brief overview of image-enhancing practices, which can be considered by heritage luxury fashion brands aiming to appeal to the generation of German Millennials:



Figure 6: Overview of image-enhancing rejuvenation practices (Own figure, 2020)

## 8 Conclusion

This study was set out to illuminate the phenomenon of brand rejuvenation in the heritage luxury fashion sector from a German Millennial consumer perspective. More and more luxury fashion brands that used to rely on their roots and traditions now start to follow innovative strategies to attract Millennial consumers. Even though it is a common phenomenon in practice, existing literature has only marginally addressed it so far. Therefore, we first provided illustrative examples of rejuvenation practices in the luxury fashion segment. As these practices are directed towards a specific target group, namely Millennial consumers, who are and will be of steadily growing importance in the near future, we considered it necessary to look at such rejuvenation practices through their lens and understand their opinions.

We found that German Millennial consumers not only value traditional aspects, historical annotations, and stories filled with past events and experiences; they rather search for them in luxury fashion. Thus, heritage luxury fashion brands that retain original components and anecdotes from the past embody what Millennials are looking for in luxury fashion. Such heritage-infused brands allow them to transfer the image, which is positively, as well as emotionally charged, onto their person. Further, consuming these brands enables Millennials to be associated with more mature luxury consumers they look up to. Moreover, they grant experienced luxury shoppers some sort of standing out from the crowd.

We identified that in luxury fashion consumption, the experience makes true luxury, especially when this experience is personalized. Purchasing luxury fashion allows our interviewees to alter their identity not only by consuming the products but also by being treated exceptionally, making luxury fashion consumption an emotional endeavor. With this, the development from ownership to experience gets evident.

Seeing the need to compromise contemporary strategies with the “luxury nature”, our Millennials are in favor of rejuvenation practices that do not dilute the central heritage aspect of luxury brands. This was especially exemplified by the contrasting opinions of our participants on reinvigorating strategies of two heritage luxury fashion brands. Even though Gucci followed a drastic approach, therewith dissolving some connections to the past, the Millennials regarded this as authentic and coherent, because Gucci’s core reflects diversity and development. However, when it comes to a brand like Burberry, whose identity is deeply anchored in the past and with this has a certain commitment to preserving its tradition, such changes are seen as insincere and incoherent and thus harm the brand image held by our German Millennials.

This can be concluded with a quote of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who summarizes our study in a vivid way:

*To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.*

## 8.1 Theoretical contributions

By providing examples of rejuvenation practices in the luxury fashion industry, we add to existing literature shedding light on a phenomenon that has so far not sufficiently been addressed. Therewith, the concept of brand rejuvenation is further applied in a new context, namely in luxury fashion.

We further intended to solve a contradiction between practice and the existing literature regarding the degree to which a brand should reinvent itself. While researchers, such as Urde et al. (2007) suggest that a brand should indeed adapt to contemporary market developments, however without touching the brand core, Burberry, for instance, changed central elements of its identity, such as the well-established logo and monogram, thereby rejecting fundamental aspects of its heritage. Talking to German Millennial consumers, we could clearly identify that they value the roots and heritage of a brand as well as its classic products. They are fascinated by the history behind these heritage brands and are rather disappointed when brands like Burberry dilute this vital aspect with radical rejuvenation practices. Therefore, we contribute by supporting the standpoint represented in the existing literature that heritage luxury brands should, when aiming to alter the brand image, always stay true to their core.

This is further supported by the demonstrated significance of the factors identity coherence, trustworthiness, and knowledge, which we identified to have an overarching impact on a brand's attractiveness. We, therefore, additionally contribute by applying these concepts in a new context, namely heritage luxury fashion consumption of Millennials.

Further, existing literature does not find agreement on whether Millennials as a cohort are different from consumers of previous generations. Even though we have not conducted a cross-generational study, we found that our German Millennials still value the traditional conventions of luxury brand management, which indicates that they are unlikely to differ significantly from older generations when it comes to luxury fashion consumption. This also becomes evident in the fact, that our Millennials rather aim to identify themselves with more mature luxury consumers than younger ones who, according to them, do not seem to value the long-established aspects of brands. With these findings, we contribute to the rather under-studied field of Millennial consumers in regard to luxury consumption.

Moreover, while many researchers support the concept of generations, we argue that focusing solely on the generational aspect is not sufficient. As we found differences within our sample between older and younger Millennials, we claim that the factors of age and phase of life also need to be taken into consideration when studying luxury fashion consumption.



## 8.2 Managerial contributions

This study further intends to guide luxury brand managers in the setup of a rejuvenation strategy directed at targeting the consumers of the future. In this context, we provide them with an overview of what German Millennial consumers look for in luxury brands and therefore give implications on what aspects to focus when managing heritage luxury fashion brands.

Moreover, by showing what kind of rejuvenation practices are valued by German Millennials, we help brand managers to choose the most effective ones to appeal to this consumer group. In this regard, we thoroughly analyzed current rejuvenation practices employed by four heritage luxury brands, namely Gucci, Burberry, Louis Vuitton, and Hermès, and pointed out which ones positively affect the image of these brands from a Millennial point of view. These examples as well as the specific recommendations of our Millennials of how they want to be approached can be taken into consideration by luxury fashion brands when planning a rejuvenation strategy.

However, only because innovation seems to be on every company's agenda that does not mean that "one-size fits all". Each luxury brand has to individually evaluate which practices are in line with its brand identity since identity coherence has been identified as a key success driver of rejuvenation efforts. Consequently, the degree of possible change depends on the brand essence and thus needs to be in line with central brand characteristics.

## 9 Limitations & implications for further research

Like all studies, our research has limitations that must be taken into consideration.

First, as this study follows a qualitative data analysis approach, it is based on the researchers' subjective opinions and individual interpretation. Therefore, the likeliness that other researchers may reveal different or complementing findings in the data has to be acknowledged (Kvale, 1994). However, to allow for reproduction and to contribute to open and transparent science, we would be happy to share our data with interested parties (Munafò, Nosek, Bishop, Button, Chambers, Du Sert & Ionnidis, 2017).

With this study, we strive to foster future research in the field of brand rejuvenation of heritage luxury brands. In this context, it would, for instance, be interesting to see whether the same findings would be gathered in other areas of luxury, where tradition and scarcity are also of great significance.

Further, we were only able to provide indications that our interviewed Millennials do not seem to differ significantly from older generations in their consumption of luxury goods, as we did not conduct a cross-generational study. Therefore, it would be interesting to see whether such a study would confirm our claims. In this context, it would also be of great interest to explore what consumers of the young Generation Z value about luxury fashion and what they think about rejuvenation practices, to be able to identify differences and similarities between generations even better.

As we found differences within our sample between older and younger Millennials, research focusing on such intragenerational differences, could shed light on the topic under study and may make it more nuanced.

Our study further only focused on Millennials from Germany. Thus, further research could look at Millennials from other countries and explore whether cultural differences can be observed. In this context, we consider it valuable to conduct similar research with British Millennials with a special focus on Burberry. As the brand's image has extensively suffered from unfavored associations with the English chav-culture, which might not have been as recognized and acknowledged in Germany, the opinions of British Millennials might differ. Thus, it would be of great interest to see whether they consider Burberry's facing away from its tradition an appropriate step.

Furthermore, this research centers around heritage luxury fashion brands, as they are performing more and more rejuvenation practices in the contemporary marketplace and clearly demonstrate the dilemma of emphasize long-lasting exclusiveness, but also innovativeness and trendiness, which is deeply rooted in fashion. To facilitate the analysis and to provide common ground for our interviews, we further narrowed down our research selecting four specific brands. Even though we let our participants elaborate on their experiences with other brands, the prepared examples that were discussed centered around our four pre-selected brands. They

constitute illustrative examples of heritage brands aiming to rejuvenate themselves. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see whether similar findings occur if the interviews center around other brands, as our selection might have restricted gaining a full understanding of the research area.

Moreover, it has to be acknowledged that our study only focused on regular and knowledgeable luxury shoppers. Even though they all agreed that they favor classic, long-established products, brands like Gucci and Burberry are still considered successful companies and are also able to profitably sell their trendy pieces. Therefore, it might be interesting to see whether less experienced and less frequent luxury shoppers value different aspects. The same applies to Millennials with unrestricted financial means.

In order to make our findings more reliable, a quantitative study could be conducted, which for instance, illuminates how and to what degree specific rejuvenation practices influence brand attractiveness and change the brand image kept by Millennials.

To conclude, further research is needed with larger samples, in other cultural and social contexts to allow for general statements about our topic under investigation. However, our study gives first indications and thus calls for further research.

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# Appendix A – Interview guide female

## **Interview Guide - Female participant**

- Thanking the participant
- LUSEM Form
- Ask for confirmation to record the interview
- Information is confidential, questions

## ***Icebreaker & free elaboration***

- Elaboration on the selection of the luxury fashion item brought to the virtual meeting

## ***Luxury in general***

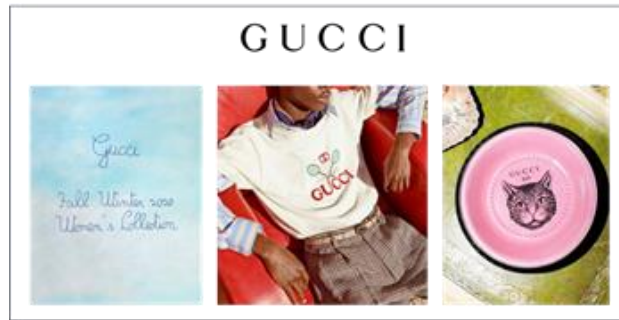
- What is luxury for you (in the fashion context)?
- What do you like about luxury items?
  - How do you feel when purchasing them?
- What is your favorite luxury fashion brand? Why?
- Visual metaphors
  - If you think of the brand as a person, how would you describe it?  
> Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Hermès
  - With which of these brands can you most easily identify yourself?

## ***Visual identity***

- Burberry 's old vs. new logo/ Monogram (*show one after another*)
  - What do you think/ like about this logo/ pattern? What do you associate with it?



- Gucci logo normal vs. special editions
  - Gucci uses different versions of its logo for its collections. What do you think about these logos?

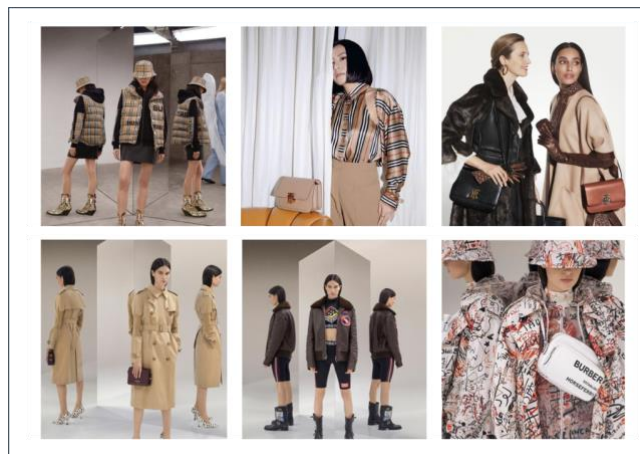


- *If applicable: Imagine a brand decides to address a new target group, would you expect a total change of visual identity, including the logo etc.? (as in the case of Burberry)*

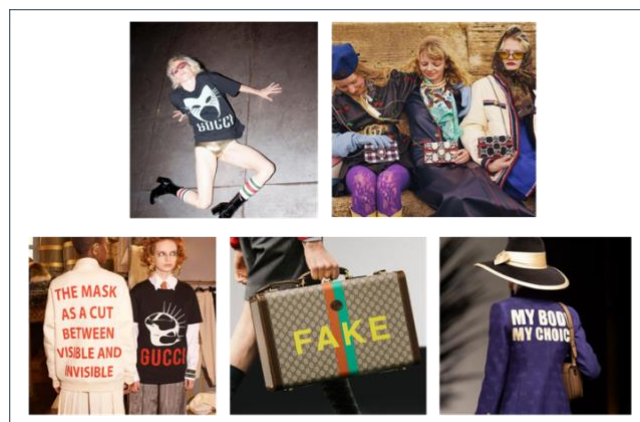
## Products

### a.) General

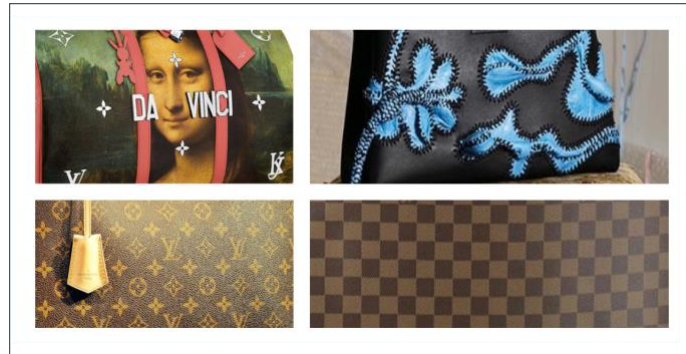
- Burberry collections
  - What comes to your mind when you see these Burberry products?



- Gucci products
  - What comes to your mind when you see these Gucci products?



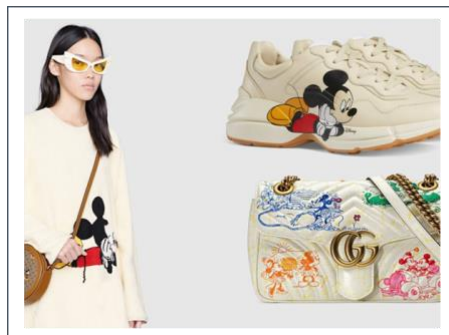
- Louis Vuitton classic bag vs. Louis Vuitton limited edition
  - What do you think about these different patterns?



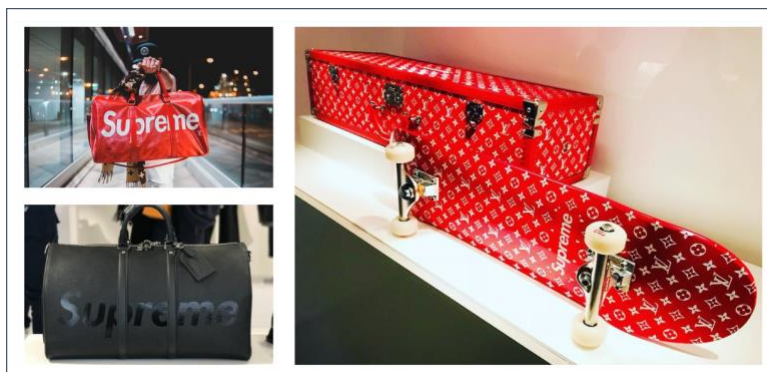
- How would you feel if Hermès would bring out unconventional styles of their products?
  - *If applicable: If they liked it before with Gucci/ Louis Vuitton > Why is it different with Hermès?*

**b.) Collaborations**

- Gucci x Disney
  - What is your initial feeling about this special edition of Gucci?
  - Would you have expected a collaboration like this?



- Supreme x Louis Vuitton
  - What do you think about this collaboration of Supreme and Louis Vuitton?
  - Would you have expected a collaboration like this?



- Hermès x Apple
  - What do you think about the Hermès Apple Watch?
  - Would you have expected a collaboration like this?



- Imagine *\*favorite brand\** would offer a special collection in collaboration with a fast fashion brand, for instance H&M. How would you feel?
- *If applicable: Are there any collaborations of luxury brands you can think of that you really liked?*
  - *What did you like about them?*

### ***Target group***

- Would you bother wearing the same brand as a 70-year old?
  - *If applicable: Are you attracted by brands that target all kinds of age groups or does that rather hinder you from buying them?*

### ***Distribution strategy***

- You have to be on a waiting list for about two years to acquire the Hermès Birkin Bag. Do you think the bag would be less desirable for you if you would be able to purchase it right away?
- What kind of luxury fashion store attracts you?
  - What should it be equipped with?
  - *If applicable: Do you want personal assistance?*
- What do you think about these store designs? (*show one after the other*)
  - On your shopping trip, which one would you rather go in to look around? Why?
  - Would you rather go to the first or the second one for inspiration? And where would you go if you already knew what you wanted to buy?



- Digital in-store tools
  - Would you like to incorporate digital tools when being in a luxury store?
- Process of luxury shopping (Inspiration, Purchase)
  - Where do you get inspired?
  - Where do you look for the products?
  - Where do you purchase it?
- *If applicable: Would you buy luxury products online?*
- What do you think about platforms that are renting luxury items?
- What is your opinion on re-commerce? (Online resale of luxury items)

### **Communication**

- Are you active on social media?
  - Which channels?
  - Do you follow luxury brands on social media, which ones, why?
  - What would a luxury brand's social media account have to offer in order for you to follow it?
  - Do bloggers influence your luxury consumption?
- In order to promote its new line of watches, Gucci communicated through Memes
  - What do you think about it?
  - *If applicable: Imagine another brand would have promoted its products with such memes, what would you think then?*



- Imagine *\*favorite luxury brand\** would offer an app, would you download it?
  - *If applicable: What do you expect the app to offer?*

### ***General concluding questions***

*(If we did not get sufficient information throughout the interview)*

- What is your opinion - Do luxury brands like Burberry, Hermès or Louis Vuitton have to change in order to attract you?
  - What do they have to change?
  - Do you expect them to be innovative, unconventional?
- Are you rather attracted by the new strategies luxury brands follow, such as being present on social media, collaborating with youth brands, appearing more accessible, or do they negatively influence your attractiveness of these brands?
- As you might have noticed, this interview has centered around rejuvenation activities of luxury brands. Can you think of a general example where you would say that the brand has managed to create a whole new, young image for you?



# Appendix B – Interview guide male

## **Topic Guide - Male participant**

- Thanking the participant
- LUSEM Form
- Ask for confirmation to record the interview
- Information is confidential, questions

## ***Icebreaker & free elaboration***

- Elaboration on the selection of the luxury fashion item brought to the virtual meeting

## ***Luxury in general***

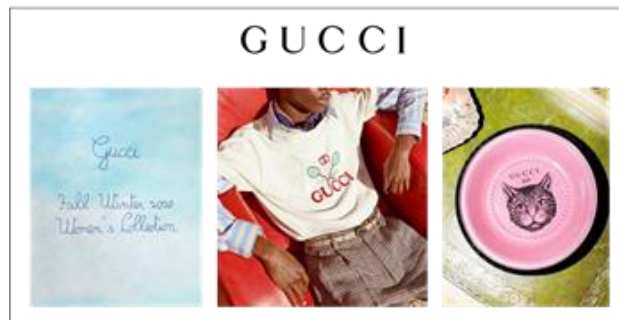
- What is luxury for you (in the fashion context)?
- What do you like about luxury items?
  - How do you feel when purchasing them?
- What is your favorite luxury fashion brand? Why?
- Visual metaphors
  - If you think of the brand as a person, how would you describe it?
    - > Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Hermès
  - With which of these brands can you most easily identify yourself?

## ***Visual identity***

- Burberry 's old vs. new logo/ Monogram (*show one after another*)
  - What do you think/ like about this logo/ pattern? What do you associate with it?



- Gucci logo normal vs. special editions
  - Gucci uses different versions of its logo for its collections. What do you think about these logos?

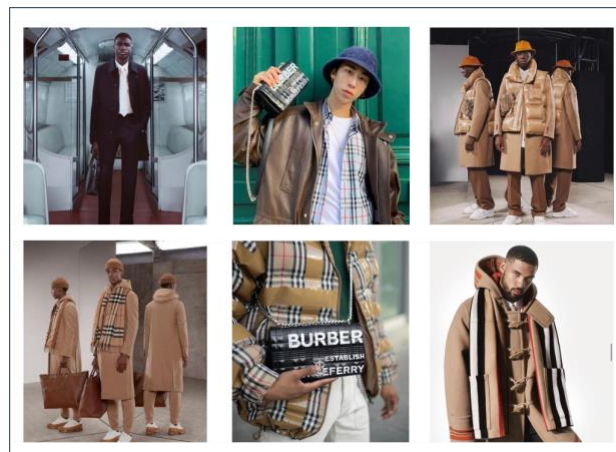


- *If applicable: Imagine a brand decides to address a new target group, would you expect a total change of visual identity, including the logo etc.? (as in the case of Burberry)*

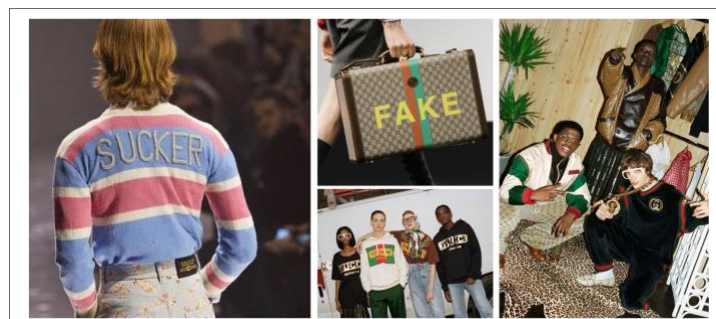
## Products

### a.) General

- Burberry collections
  - What comes to your mind when you see these Burberry products?



- Gucci products
  - What comes to your mind when you see these Gucci products?



- Louis Vuitton classic bag vs. Louis Vuitton limited edition
  - What do you think about these different patterns?

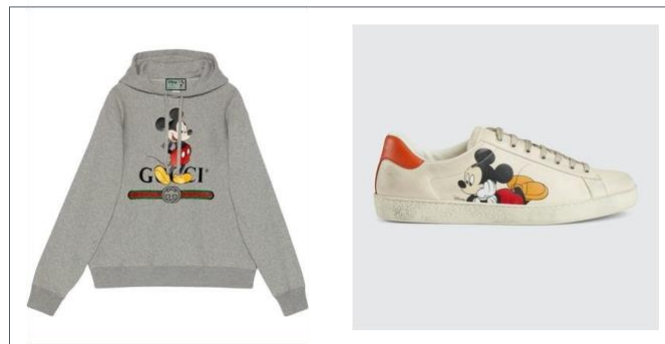




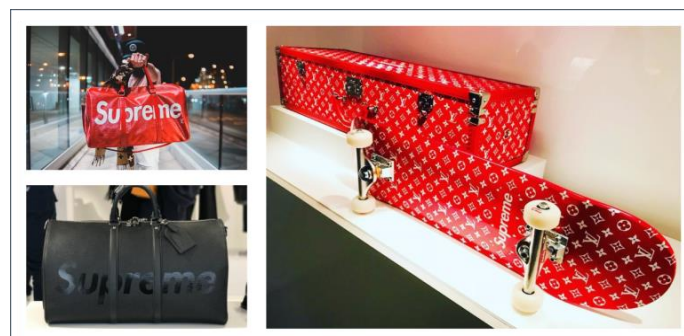
- How would you feel if Hermès would bring out unconventional styles of their products?
  - *If applicable: If they liked it before with Gucci/ Louis Vuitton > Why is it different with Hermès?*

### ***b.) Collaborations***

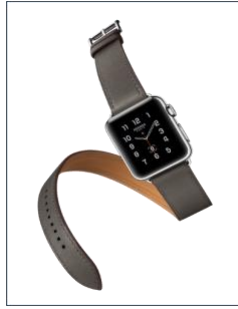
- Gucci x Disney
  - What is your initial feeling about this special edition of Gucci?
  - Would you have expected a collaboration like this?



- Supreme x Louis Vuitton
  - What do you think about this collaboration of Supreme and Louis Vuitton?
  - Would you have expected a collaboration like this?



- Hermès x Apple
  - What do you think about the Hermès Apple Watch?
  - Would you have expected a collaboration like this?



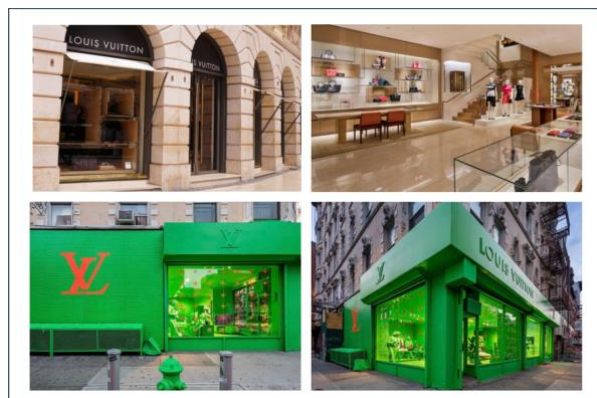
- Imagine *\*favorite brand\** would offer a special collection in collaboration with a fast fashion brand, for instance H&M. How would you feel?
- *If applicable: Are there any collaborations of luxury brands you can think of that you really liked?*
  - *What did you like about them?*

### ***Target group***

- Would you bother wearing the same brand as a 70-year old?
  - *If applicable: Are you attracted by brands that target all kinds of age groups or does that rather hinder you from buying them?*

### ***Distribution strategy***

- Imagine you have to be on a waiting list for about two years to acquire a desired product. Do you think it would be less desirable for you if you had the possibility to purchase it right away?
- What kind of luxury fashion store attracts you?
  - What should it be equipped with?
  - *If applicable: Do you want personal assistance?*
- What do you think about these store designs? (*show one after the other*)
  - On your shopping trip, which one would you rather go in to look around? Why?
  - Would you rather go to the first or the second one for inspiration? And where would you go if you already knew what you wanted to buy?



- Digital in-store tools
  - Would you like to incorporate digital tools when being in a luxury store?
- Process of luxury shopping (Inspiration, Purchase)
  - Where do you get inspired?
  - Where do you look for the products?
  - Where do you purchase it?
- *If applicable: Would you buy luxury products online?*
- What do you think about platforms that are renting luxury items?
- What is your opinion on re-commerce? (Online resale of luxury items)

### **Communication**

- Are you active on social media?
  - Which channels?
  - Do you follow luxury brands on social media, which ones, why?
  - What would a luxury brand's social media account have to offer in order for you to follow it?
  - Do bloggers influence your luxury consumption?
- In order to promote its new line of watches, Gucci communicated through Memes
  - What do you think about it?
  - *If applicable: Imagine another brand would have promoted its products with such memes, what would you think then?*



- Imagine *\*favorite luxury brand\** would offer an app, would you download it?
  - *If applicable: What do you expect the app to offer?*

### **General concluding questions**

*(If we did not get sufficient information throughout the interview)*

- What is your opinion - Do luxury brands like Burberry, Hermès or Louis Vuitton have to change in order to attract you?
  - What do they have to change?
  - Do you expect them to be innovative, unconventional?

- Are you rather attracted by the new strategies luxury brands follow, such as being present on social media, collaborating with youth brands, appearing more accessible, or do they negatively influence your attractiveness of these brands?
- As you might have noticed, this interview has centered around rejuvenation activities of luxury brands. Can you think of a general example where you would say that the brand has managed to create a whole new, young image for you?

## Appendix C – Research participants

| No. | Interview Date & Time | Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Occupation/ Education | Location        | Recorded | Interviewer |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------|-----|--------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|
| 1   | 17. April, 19:00      | Tom       | 33  | Male   | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 2   | 20. April, 10:30      | Vanessa   | 22  | Female | Student               | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 3   | 20. April, 12:30      | Selena    | 31  | Female | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 4   | 20. April, 15:30      | Lisa      | 23  | Female | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 5   | 20. April, 17:00      | Annabelle | 32  | Female | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 6   | 20. April, 19:00      | Helena    | 24  | Female | Student & Employed    | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 7   | 21 April, 11:00       | Valerie   | 27  | Female | Student               | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 8   | 21 April, 14:00       | David     | 24  | Male   | Student               | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 9   | 21 April, 17:30       | Corinna   | 26  | Female | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 10  | 21 April, 19:30       | Matthias  | 32  | Male   | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 11  | 23 April, 14:00       | Andrea    | 40  | Female | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 12  | 23 April, 16:00       | Viola     | 27  | Female | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 13  | 23 April, 18:00       | Frederik  | 29  | Male   | Student               | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 14  | 23 April, 20:00       | Marie     | 35  | Female | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 15  | 24 April, 10:00       | Fabian    | 23  | Male   | Student               | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Feline      |
| 16  | 24 April, 17:00       | Sarah     | 25  | Female | Student & Employed    | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 17  | 25 April, 11:00       | Anton     | 23  | Male   | Student & Employed    | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |
| 18  | 28 April, 9:00        | Adam      | 37  | Male   | Employed              | Google Hangouts | Yes      | Katharina   |

# Appendix D – LUSEM Consent Form



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
School of Economics and Management

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick the appropriate box):

|     |   |                          |
|-----|---|--------------------------|
| 1.  | I understand the information about the project.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.  | I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.  | I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4.  | I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.  | The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6.  | If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7.  | The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8.  | I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9.  | Select only <b>one</b> of the following:  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.</li> <li>• I do not want my name used in this project.</li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. | I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Participant:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Researcher:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Appendix E – Examples of rejuvenation practices



Figure 1: Louis Vuitton x Supreme collaboration (Louis Vuitton Instagram, 2020)



Figure 2: Louis Vuitton's 3D printed pop-up store (Louis Vuitton, 2017)



Figure 3: Burberry's changed logo & monogram (Burberry Instagram, 2018)



Figure 4: Gucci's playful way of changing the visual identifiers (Gucci Instagram, 2020)





Figure 5: Gucci Memes (Gucci Instagram, 2017)



Figure 6: Apple Watch Hermès (Hermès, n.d.)