



SCHOOL OF  
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# Star-Crossed Luxury

A quantitative study on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity  
Fit of unconventional luxury fashion collaborations, Brand Loyalty, and  
Purchase Intention

by

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## Abstract

**Title:** Star-Crossed Luxury: A quantitative study on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit of unconventional luxury fashion collaborations, Brand Loyalty, and Purchase Intention

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**Keywords:** Luxury fashion collaborations, Unconventional Luxury, Perceived Brand Identity Fit, Brand Loyalty, Purchase Intention, Consumer-Brand Identification

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to understand what effects Perceived Brand Identity Fit of luxury fashion collaborations have on Brand Loyalty and ultimately Purchase Intention. Furthermore, Consumer-Brand Identification with the luxury brand is tested as a moderator towards these relationships.

**Main research question:** *What is the relationship between unconventional luxury fashion collaborations and consumer intentions?*

**Methodology:** The study uses quantitative methods with several types of analyses, including t-tests, linear regressions, moderation regressions, mediation regression and a robustness check. Data was collected through a survey which resulted in 208 respondents after data cleaning.

**Findings/Conclusion:** Perceived Brand Identity Fit had a strong positive significant relationship with Brand Loyalty and furthermore Purchase Intention. Additionally, a mediating effect from Brand Loyalty was found, impacting Purchase Intention. A moderating effect of Consumer-Brand Identification, was not found in the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention, but was instead present in the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty.

**Theoretical- and Managerial Contributions:** This study bridges *theoretical* gaps between luxury fashion collaborations, identity, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. It extends brand fit literature by focusing on consumer perceptions rather than settling for actual brand fit. Furthermore, this study has integrated the concept of identity and thereby continued the conversation of Perceived Brand Identity Fit into the luxury fashion sector. Lastly, this study adds knowledge to the field of luxury fashion collaborations by incorporating the importance of Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Consumer-Brand Identification and its relationship to consumer intentions. *Managers* can use unconventional fashion collaborations as a strategic tool to influence Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention, given there is a high Perceived Brand Identity Fit. When initiating luxury fashion collaborations, managers should put effort into ensuring a high perceived identity fit when choosing the collaborating partner. Managers should pay extra attention to the perceptions of those consumers who highly self-identify with the luxury brand as their Brand Loyalty are more sensitive to the perceptions of brand identity fit than those who don't.

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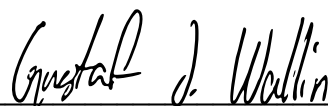
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# 1. Introduction

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*This introductory chapter introduces the concepts of luxury fashion collaborations and its growing relevance and importance within the fashion industry, as well as in the academic literature. Furthermore, this chapter introduces the new blurring boundaries of luxury and how it influences the traditional guidelines of luxury fashion collaborations. This is studied through the lens of Perceived Brand Identity Fit of an unconventional collaboration in relation to Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. Furthermore, the role of Consumer-Brand Identification with the luxury brand is also introduced. This is then followed by a research purpose, research questions and a brief outline of the thesis.*

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## 1.1 Background and problematization

*On the 7th of June in 2022, the well-renowned Italian luxury brand Gucci launched its first collaboration with the German sports brand Adidas which shook the global fashion scene (Baskin, 2022; Harris Poll, 2022; Metro Mode, 2022). Mixing design elements from both brands seemed to appeal to a larger audience as Gucci sprung into becoming the world's most trendiest fashion brand that year as its online search increased by 286%. The unconventional co-branded initiative furthermore resulted in increased brand equity for both respective brands, turning the campaign into a success and also showcasing a paramount change in the world of luxury fashion (Harris Poll, 2022). A similar unconventional collaboration occurred in 2020 when Christian Dior and Nike joined forces and created the Air Jordan 1 OG Dior sneaker which grew very popular and ultimately sold out during the reservation stage (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). The success of these unconventional collaborations contradicts previous academic literature on luxury collaborations as both collaborators differed in terms of their brand fit (Paydas Turan, 2021; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022), yet they were a success in terms of both financial and brand performance. This perceptual shift is not only recognized externally by consumers, but also internally within the luxury fashion brands. For example Louis Vuitton has chosen to appoint both the famous rapper Pharrell and high-end streetwear designer Virgil Abloh as their creative directors indicating a shift in the newer generations perception about luxury fashion.*

The Luxury fashion industry is set to grow continuously in the coming years, despite the current global economically-constrained state (Indvik, 2023; Statista, 2024). The luxury

conglomerate LVMH, who sells luxury goods ranging from handbags, perfumes and champagne, now accounts for a bigger share of France's global exports than the country's entire agriculture sector. This underscores the importance of the luxury sector and further marks it as one of the most important sectors for the French trade balance (Klasa, 2024). The luxury category is expected to outperform the overall fashion industry in 2024 and in the wider category of luxury goods, luxury fashion is the segment with the significantly biggest revenue contribution (Statista, 2024b). Bain & Company stress the importance of luxury fashion brands to focus on innovation and creativity in 2024 to create relevance towards consumers, both to increase their customer base, but also to cultivate brand lovers so they are not lost when purchasing power declines (D'Arpizio, Levato, Steiner & de Montgolfier, 2024). In other words, ensuring customers Purchase Intention and Brand Loyalty is highly relevant. McKinsey & Company further predicts an increase in brand marketing, as one of the key themes for 2024, as luxury brands may benefit from forging emotional connections with consumers rather than focusing on performance marketing (Amed, Balchandani, Barrelet, Berg, D'Auria, Rölkens & Starzynska, 2023).

The importance of forging connections with consumers that resonate with their values and identities is also emphasized in "Luxury 3.0", a joint landscape exploration paper created by Boston Consulting Group and the global fashion magazine Highsnobiety. It states that traditional definitions and concepts of luxury brands are changing as the new generation cares as much about the brand's cultural impact as high-end products and experiences (Wang, 2022). Research nowadays often suggest that brands are dynamic social processes and that branding is a cultural phenomenon driven by its stakeholders and their actions, language, meanings and values which ultimately allows them to express their identity (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009; Vallaster, Von Wallpach, 2013). Previous luxury fashion archetypes are based on the notion of gatekeeping the consumers from brand narratives that's exclusionary by default (Wang, 2022). Instead, the report continues to emphasize the paradigm shift on consumers' perception of luxury as it now incorporates associations of knowledge, belonging and self-identification, thereby blurring the definitions of luxury.

Luxury fashion brands have become cultural intermediaries as they act as frameworks for individual behaviors and offer guidelines and reassurance for lifestyle choices that better consumers' selfs, thereby interacting with their identity (Huggard & Cope, 2020). Cultural



intermediaries create value by weaving brand identity into the ethos of our time and a sure way of doing that is by drawing upon both “high” and “pop” culture and craft those meanings and values into their offerings (Huggard & Cope, 2020).

A strategy that has become increasingly more frequent for engaging consumers culturally is by initiating collaborations with other brands to build a wider brand world for consumers to take part in (Adegeest, 2024; Paydas Turan, 2021; Wang, 2022). This, additionally, enables brands to expand across different segments to create universes that enable consumer-brand engagement long before they ever buy a product. As brand-self connection is linked to higher brand engagement and Brand Loyalty within luxury fashion (Nyadzayo, Johnson & Rossi, 2020), it therefore seems evident that luxury collaborations should be leveraged in a way that enables consumers to fortify their self identification with the brand.

Collaboration strategies in luxury are traditionally recognized for providing positive outcomes like increased return on investments, return on equity and increased success rates and is an additional way of improving innovation in an continuously competitive market (Alexander & Contreras, 2016; de Oliveira Campos, Costa & da Costa, 2019). These newly formed alliances can affect brand perception of the partners and create synergy effects like access to intellectual and identity assets as well as enhance a brands “Cool factor” (Alexander & Contreras, 2016). Successful attribute transfer between brands in a collaboration may also help fortify self identification for consumers (Huggard & Cope, 2020). Furthermore Luxury collaborations seems to foster Brand Loyalty (Lee & Che, 2022; Ma, Cheng, Bu, Jiang, 2018; Shen, Choi & Chow, 2017; Swaminathan, Reddy & Dommer, 2012) which ultimately may translate into increased consumer Purchase Intention (Alexander & Contreras, 2016).

The amount of brand collaborations has been growing continuously in the last 20 years and its importance is even growing (Paydas Turan, 2021; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022), especially for luxury brands (Coleman, 2022; Wang, 2022). A common conception is that luxury brands have to delicately balance being innovative to adapt to the blurring boundaries of luxury as well as maintaining their aspirational status in order not to dilute the identity which their existing fanbase may highly self identify with (Adegeest, 2024; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Ruiz & Cruz, 2023). In order to seize more shares of the growing category while maintaining customers, understanding what drives Purchase Intention and Brand Loyalty is of high importance. As the growth of luxury fashion, the projected increase of collaborations and the

new consumer demands of self identification with luxury, this study will examine whether or not luxury fashion brands are able to continue selling their aspirations and inflicting their dreamlike associations to their consumers while collaborating with an unconventional partner. Previous academic literature on this particular topic is quite limited as only a few researchers study brand collaborations in the fashion setting and even fewer touch upon luxury fashion. Furthermore, there have been a number of studies looking at the relationship between co-branded products, Brand Loyalty and consumers Purchase Intention. However, only a few incorporate the concept of Perceived Brand Identity Fit between the partnering brands, as they examine perceived brand image fit. Examining luxury fashion collaborations through the lenses of brand identity instead of image like most existing academic literature provides managerial insights as brand identity, unlike brand image, can be directly controlled by the brand (Huggard & Cope, 2020).

## **1.2 Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand how the new blurring boundaries of luxury influence the traditional guidelines of luxury fashion collaborations by testing what the effects of Perceived Brand Identity Fit of a collaboration are on Brand Loyalty and ultimately Purchase Intention. Furthermore, Consumer-Brand Identification with the luxury brand will be tested as a moderator towards these relationships. Previous academic literature exploring luxury fashion collaboration have not examined them through the perspective of Perceived Brand Identity Fit and therefore the weight of the Consumer-Brand Identification towards the partnering brands might be neglected, to date.

### **1.2.1 Research Question**

Given the outlined research purpose above, the resulting research question emerges as follows:

- *What is the relationship between unconventional luxury fashion collaborations and consumer intentions?*

Sub-questions:

- *Does a traditional fashion collaboration have a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit than an unconventional fashion collaboration?*

- *What is the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand?*
- *What is the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand?*
- *What is the moderation of Consumer-Brand Identification in the relationships between unconventional luxury fashion collaboration and Purchase Intention of the co-brand?*
- *What is the moderation of Consumer-Brand Identification in the relationships between unconventional luxury fashion collaboration and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand?*

### **1.3 Disposition of the study**

This study consists of five chapters.

*Chapter 1:* The first chapter entails the introduction where the research problem is discussed. Aims, research questions and hypotheses are also presented in this introductory part.

*Chapter 2:* The second chapter offers an extensive literature review of the relevant theoretical concepts this study is situated in, as well as a development of the hypotheses.

*Chapter 3:* The third chapter outlines the methodology and research design this study has pursued.

*Chapter 4:* The fourth chapter presents the results from the data collection and presents an analysis and discussion of the collected results.

*Chapter 5:* The fifth and final chapter encompasses aspects such as conclusions, managerial- and theoretical implications, as well as limitations and suggestions for further research.

## 2. Literature and Theoretical Review

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*The purpose of this chapter is to give a perspective on the relevant theoretical concepts as well as providing a literature review of previous studies made within the research field. The chapter begins with an examination of the meaning of luxury, which is thereon followed by a discussion regarding the concept of collaborations and luxury fashion collaborations. This is followed by a review of brand identity and consumer based identification, Brand Loyalty, Purchase Intention. Finally, the hypotheses are developed and the conceptual framework is presented.*

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### 2.1 The Meaning of Luxury

The word “luxury” is derived from the latin word of “*luxatio*”, meaning distance (Kapferer, 2012). Luxury is a disruption from normal life and its many constraints, liberating us from life's confines into an ideal world of beauty, indulgence, self-care, and a hint of timelessness (Kapferer, 2012). It's about buying things we don't necessarily need – but they're so luxurious and expensive that we can't resist. Luxury items are all about treating ourselves, giving us a sense of reward. This is further amplified by the added value of scarcity as it satisfies consumers' need for exclusivity, self-differentiation and distinctiveness (Rosendo-Rios & Shukla, 2023). Kapferer (2012) further draws a parable with the placebo effect, where patients' illnesses vanish because they believe they're receiving genuine medication bearing a renowned brand name. Comparably, luxury consumers may experience a similar placebo effect often deriving satisfaction from luxury goods because of the prestige associated with the brand. In both of these examples, the belief in the brand's reputation reinforces the perception of benefits and value of the product. In the case of luxury, it leads to a sense of exclusivity which is based on the associations connected to the brand, rather than solely on the product's functional qualities (Kapferer, 2012).

According to Vigneron and Johnson (2004) providing a true definition of the concept of luxury as well as a luxury brand is difficult, and has been discussed by researchers without a clear consensus. Partly, this is because luxury implies different meanings in relation to different groups of people, cultures and across time. Furthermore, the meaning of luxury is evolving with its consumers' taste and likings (Shahid & Paul, 2021; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), which also implies that the meaning of luxury is subjective to a large extent, and it is further understood differently since it also depends on consumer experiences (Kapferer &

Laurent, 2016). Reasoning in line with this is made by Loureiro, Jiménez-Barreto and Romero (2020) who highlight that the allure of luxury goods is frequently intensified by their emotional significance. Additionally, one could describe luxury as rooted in prestige administration and social hierarchy (Loureiro et. al., 2020), which further aligns with Mandel (2006) who involve the aspect of luxury goods often being associated with exclusivity and success, as well as a way of showing status.

Florin, Callen, Mullen and Kropp (2007) brings an interesting angle by pointing out that luxury brands can be described in two different ways: (1) the “*old luxury*” or (2) the “*new luxury*”. The first one, refers to in which the brand and its goods are defined by the company. The latter refers to luxury brand experience and how it is understood by the consumer. Similar to Shadid and Paul (2021) who concluded that modern consumers purchase for experience and self-indulgence, which implies a change in the tides from its ‘old model’ to an individualistic model where consumers desire luxury for personal self and experience.

Additional categorizations have been made by Thomsen, Holmqvist, von Wallpach, Hemetsberger and Belk (2020) who provide focal aspects of luxury conceptualizations divided into two opposing categories: (1) *Traditional Luxury* and (2) *Unconventional Luxury*. Each of the two categories thereon contains three different aspects representing the essence of the category in question. *Traditional Luxury* includes the aspects *Receptive* (marketing-led, acquired, existing), *Product-focused* (public symbolism, conspicuous, enduring), *Ontologically Scarce* (expansive, accessible to few, owned). Meanwhile, *Unconventional Luxury* includes the aspects of *Epistemologically Scare* (inexpensive, accessible to many, possessed), *Experiential* (private symbolism, inconspicuous, ephemeral), *Agentic* (consumer defined, enacted, constructed) (Thomsen et. al., 2020). It is noted that a new and practical definition of luxury must consider the consumer's viewpoint, shaped by their unique needs, encounters and experiences. Today, consumers are crafting their personal definitions of luxury. This trend is driven by the desire for pleasure, a break from the routine, and a focus on self-indulgence (Holmqvist & Fritze, 2020).

The concept of unconventional luxury has further been studied by researchers such as Diaz Ruiz & Cruz (2023) who focus their attention specifically on unconventional luxury brand collaborations. They argue that unconventional luxury at its core focuses on the paradox of rarity, where luxury brands must maintain an aura of unattainability while at the same time

being widely recognized. In line with the emergence of unconventional luxury new forms of luxury consumption have emerged (Diaz Ruiz & Cruz, 2023). Examples of strategies increasingly more common are personalization, limited collections and collaborations.

The shift towards new and unconventional luxury clearly reflects several complexities in today's consumer landscape and the meaning of luxury itself. First of all, it has taken a shift towards an emphasis on consumer perception. Unconventional luxury offers consumers something new and unexpected, catering to their desire for novelty and personalization. Secondly, unconventional luxury has increased the blurring of traditional luxury boundaries. Luxury brands are no longer confined to their traditional domains but are branching out into new territories. This further validates the need for deeper understanding of how these shifting perceptions can be leveraged in a commercial manner.

## **2.2 Co-branding**

Since collaborations are an increasingly more popular strategy in handling the changing nature of the luxury fashion landscape (Diaz Ruiz & Cruz, 2023), it is beneficial for this study to firstly unravel the concept of co-branding. With markets growing more competitive and consumers becoming increasingly more demanding, business managers are actively pursuing strategies in order to seek out ways of enhancing customer experiences and foster business growth, and therefore turn to co-branding (Besharat & Langan, 2014; Paydas Turan, 2021). By partnering with the right brand, business managers can use co-branding strategies in order to complement their current strengths while covering their current weaknesses. Co-branding, also known as brand alliance which entails a marketing tactic where two or more brands are presented simultaneously together to consumers with a unified product, aiming to leverage the combined brand assets to create greater value than each brand could achieve individually (Paydas Turan, 2021). However, co-branding initiatives also entails risks that can hurt either one, or both involved brands (Shan, Lu & Cui, 2022). For example, when two brands are presented together it can cause an interference effect where either one or both brands might interfere with each other's ability to be remembered by the recipient (Sana, Yan, Kim, Bjork & Bjork, 2018). This is also emphasized by (Shan et al., 2022) who voice the concern that co-branding may lead to poor brand recall and therefore risk hurting the effectiveness of the co-branding initiative. In other words, "sharing the spotlight" with another brand may cancel out the potential positive benefits.

There have been a vast number of studies within the landscape of brand alliances and co-branding focusing on the success drivers, and some of them that have attracted attention are brand attitude of the partner brand, product fit, and brand fit (Paydas Turan, 2021). The brand fit is described by Keller (1993) to be the commonality of the two, or more, brands that construct the new co-brand where it is usually determined by the consumers own brand association network. Brand associations refers to the mental connections that consumers make between a brand and certain attributes, qualities, emotions or experiences and are formed through various touchpoints (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). Park, Milberg and Lawson, R. (1991) emphasize the importance of both fit between the product categories and their brand concepts for creating a “perceived fit”. However, Helmig, Huber and Leeflang (2007) came to the conclusion that product fit was the most influential aspect affecting consumers' behavioral intention of buying the co-branded product. On the other hand, others argue that the perceived brand fit between the two collaborators is central in co-branding strategies as the higher the fit, the higher the evaluation of that specific co-branded product by the consumer (Lanseng & Olsen, 2012; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022).

Sénéchal, Georges and Pernin (2013) found that both product fit and brand fit were the most important aspects influencing consumers evaluation of co-branding. These findings however contradicts the findings of the study made by Singh, Kalafatis and Ledden (2014) who conducted a quasi-experimental design where they used three different types of collaborations within cosmetics, tablet computers and smartphones. The results showed that the product fit and brand fit did not have an impact on consumer evaluation of co-branding which also contradicts the findings of Helmig et al. (2007). Instead it was the positioning perceptions that were the most influential (Singh et al., 2014). On the other hand, the results from Baumgarth (2004) concluded that the most important success factor in co-branding evaluation was brand fit, but did not find any support of product fit. The authors further reason that in deciding on a partner brand, managers should especially consider the logical fit between the images of both brands. Similar findings have been found by others suggesting that matching brand concepts, meaning an alignment of values, between the partnering brands resulted in a higher perceived brand fit (Barsalou, 1985; Elliott-Rosenbaum, 2020; Lanseng and Olsen, 2012).

Amidst these varied findings and to further build upon the aspect of brand image, it is relevant to acknowledge the study by Paydas Turan (2021) who made a meta analysis of 197 effect sizes from 37 independent studies reported in 27 different articles. According to the meta analysis, previous research made within the field provides a rather spread difference of findings. The results reveal that the significance of the dyadic relationship between brands (i.e perceived brand image fit) is more important in assessing co-branding initiatives, than the individual brand characteristics (i.e brand equity) (Paydas Turan, 2021). Moreover, the results demonstrate that brand image fit between the brands collaborating outweighs as a success driver rather than product category fit when it comes to positive attitude and behavioral intention from consumers towards co-branding (Paydas Turan, 2021). Therefore, the perceptions and associations of consumers about the partner brands are more vital than to what extent the partnering product categories share similarities and compatibilities.

Thus, while research has partly contributed to our understanding of co-branding success drivers, the lack of consensus underscores the intricate nature of consumer behavior and the multifaceted considerations at play in co-branding initiatives. However, as perceived brand image fit seems to have superior influence on the success of the co-brand, it's relevant to further examine the effects of brand perceptions in a luxury setting as luxury in itself is all about extensive branding efforts (Kapferer, 2012).

### **2.2.1 Collaborations in the luxury fashion industry**

When a co-branding initiative consists of a minimum of one luxury fashion brand partner, the collaboration takes the form of 'luxury co-branding' (Yu, Rothenberg & Moore, 2021). As mentioned in the introduction, luxury fashion collaborations have occurred in many different forms and it is difficult to say when the first 'official' collaboration took place. In the 1930s, one of the earliest collaborations, still vividly recalled today, unfolded between Elsa Schiaparelli, the Italian designer and inventor of the jumpsuit, and the influential Spanish surrealist artist Salvador Dalí. Their Iconic creation, the Lobster dress, was worn by Wallis Simpson when she married the Duke of Windsor (Verb, 2024). Moreover, during the sixties Emilio Pucci, Italian fashion designer and politician worked with the fashion house Ermengildo Zegna on a range of menswear which lasted into the seventies. Other examples are luxury designer Karl Lagerfeld who initiated a relationship with Chanel in the eighties with such an impact that it thereon led Karl Lagerfeld to take charge of the firm (Verb, 2024).



As presented, collaborations have historically been between fashion houses and one single artist or designer.

However, in the recent two decades there have been a vast amount of interesting and different collaborations within the luxury fashion scene which has included luxury brands collaborating with other luxury brands, as well as with fast-fashion brands and sportswear brands (Murtas, Pedeliento, Mangiò & Andreini, 2022). For instance, one of the first collaborations originated in 2004 and was between the global fast fashion retailer H&M and Karl Lagerfeld where the collection sold out in a few minutes (Murtas et al., 2022; Mrad, Farah & Haddad, 2019). Other collaborations within the sportswear / streetwear fashion scene and luxury scene have been Air Jordan x Dior and Supreme x Louis Vuitton (Murtas et al., 2022). The latest being considered one of the most striking collaborations in recent history. The collaboration between the French luxury brand Louis Vuitton and the New York brand associated with the world of hip-hop culture and skateboarding shook not only the luxury fashion scene, but also the whole fashion industry in itself (Cabigiosu, 2021). This unconventional pairing with two brands containing contrasting perceived identities seemed unthinkable at first (Cabigiosu, 2021). Despite marked differences between the brands identities, the brands somehow proved to be perceived as more fitting than what might have appeared originally. This striking collaboration left the luxury fashion world unsettled but has been embraced and worn by numerous artists and celebrities not only from the hip-hop scene but also within the luxury fashion sphere (Cabigiosu, 2021). These unconventional luxury collaborations once again clearly reflect several complexities on the modern fashion scene. Unconventional luxury collaborations have expanded the perception of what luxury fashion actually entails, which further blurs the boundaries of luxury consumption.

In parallel with increasing co-branding initiatives within the luxury fashion industry, there has been multiple studies focusing on more unconventional luxury fashion collaborations. For example, some studies have focused on ‘masstige strategies’, meaning a brand positioning strategy that involves premium market goods being sold at a mid-market price point (Lee & Cho, 2023; Quamina, Xue, & Chaudhary, 2023; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). Results from studies of masstige strategies showcase that collaborating with a cool mass brand can affect perceived fit positively, which in turn impacts attitude towards the co branded product and its Purchase Intention (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). The results further showcase that a high perceived fit has a positive effect on the co-brand attitude, which in turn has a positive effect

on the co-brand product purchase probability (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). Lee and Cho (2023) looked at a collaboration between Gucci and Disney concluding that a Disney collaboration lowered the perceptions of brand luxury. Co-branding within luxury fashion is furthermore favored towards other types of brand extensions due to its often limited time in the market (Oeppen & Jamal, 2014; Shan et al, 2022). Moreover, Quamina et al. (2023) interestingly found that co-branding doesn't necessarily harm the luxury brand's reputation. This contradicts the idea that making luxury items more accessible makes them less special. Within the field of luxury co-branding a lot of focus has also been placed on collaborations between a luxury brand and the fast fashion retailers H&M (Mrad, Farah & Haddad, 2019) and Zara (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). Introducing masstige collaborations with fast fashion may however dilute the luxury brands image and further damage Brand Loyalty (Shan et al., 2022). However, this effect can be mitigated if consumers perceive a high self-brand connection (Ferrero, Kirmani & Matherly, 2013). Shan et al. (2022) found that luxury collaborations with a high product category fit were better perceived when the brand personality fit of the partners was low, which they argued could be due to increased feelings of excitement and novelty from the consumers.

### **2.3 Brand Identity and Consumer-Brand Identification**

Examining luxury fashion collaborations through the lenses of brand identity instead of brand image like most existing academic literature, provides deeper insights as brand identity, unlike brand image, can be controlled by the brand (Huggard & Cope, 2020). The concept of brand identity fit differs from constructs like brand concept consistency, brand image fit and brand personality that academic literature has previously been focusing on, as brand identity fit incorporates cultural and relational elements that the others neglect (Xiao & Lee, 2014). Brand image is purely the reflection of the brand identity and brand personality is a construct that contributes to the creation of identity (Silveria, Lages & Simoes, 2013).

In its purest form a brand's identity describes a brand's meaning, purpose and direction. It's essential for ensuring a strategic corporate vision and is according to Aaker (1996) the main driver of brand associations which is the "heart and soul" of the brand. Brand managers should nurture a clear and consistent brand identity in order to enable brands to become solid reference points for consumers to associate with (Kapferer, 2008). To further understand the concept, Kapferer (2009) has through his brand identity prism identified the six constructs

that together compose the brand identity. These are the brand's physique, its personality, culture, relationships, reflection and self-image.

**Physique:** This construct is the set of physical aspects that are evoked in individuals' minds whenever the brand is mentioned and recalled. Examples of these assets could be physical aspects such as its logo, color scheme, packaging and design (Kapferer, 2008).

**Personality:** Described as the character of the brand. It symbolizes the specific personal traits that communication from the brand projects if it had been a human (Kapferer, 2008).

**Culture:** The set of specific values and fundamental principles on which brands ground their communication in. Kapferer (2009) further stresses the importance for brand managers to make the culture of the brand resonate with as many customers to the greatest extent and is arguing that a brand is a culture. Brands do not only contain product benefits and personality, they also represent an ideology where they both are driven by culture as well as conveying a culture (Kapferer, 2012). The culture facet is one of the key aspects in order to understand the difference between brands. The underlying reason for this ties to that humans gravitate towards causes, values, ideals and ideas forming the essence of the brand which in turn is the ideological glue that ties everything together (Kapferer, 2012).

**Relationship:** Brands can also symbolize different relationships. This facet lays its focus externally on how the specific brand interacts with its customers and the type of relationship it then aims to establish (Kapferer, 2012).

**Reflection:** This construct showcases the reflection of the consumer and provides their source of identification. Aspects of the brand should therefore opt to reflect characteristics of the consumer and present them in a way that will appeal to members of the target group (Kapferer, 2012).

Self-Image: Mirrors the image that consumers want to be perceived. These intrinsic drivers are what can really provide boosts for brands. If these insights exist, the marketing material can leverage these to its advantage (Kapferer, 2012).

Furthermore, Aakers (1996) brand identity system also includes self-expressive benefits where consumers explicit their own self-identity. According to O'Reilly & Chapman (1986), Brand Identity has two dimensions that need to be taken into consideration when trying to develop a strong brand. These are the individual's acceptance of social influences that affect the feeling of group-belonging, which in the end determines the brand experience and the extent of integration between the consumer's personal identity and the brand identity.

Unfortunately, the academic literature on the concept of brand identity fit is quite limited and needs to be further explored (Xiao & Lee, 2014). As efforts in understanding the drivers of co-brand attitudes increase, a broader understanding of brand fit is studied (Riley, Charlton & Wason, 2015). Brand Identity fit is the perceived congruence between two partnering brands' cultural meanings (Xiao & Lee, 2014). Consumers can create psychological connections between the brand's identity and their own, which the literature refers to as "Consumer-Brand Identification" (Escalas, 2004; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022; Xiao & Lee, 2014). The more intense the connection is, the more likely that the consumers experience a higher brand attachment (Park, McInnis, Preister, Eisingerich, Iacobucci, 2010). High Consumer-Brand Identification may also reduce risk of brand dilution (Ferraro, Kirmani & Matherly). The self-identification doesn't necessarily even have to be an individual's actual-self but can also be their ideal-self, which often is the case with luxury brands (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffeneger, 2011). Self identification is especially apparent in fashion as consumers often use fashion as vehicles of self-expression and allows for alignment with social groups as we often inhabit our values, history, status and politics when we get dressed (Huggard & Cope, 2020).

The extent to which consumers identify themselves with the brand identity of one of the partnering brands of a collaboration may also have an effect on the Perceived Brand Identity Fit, as indicated by Xiao & Lee (2014) in the tech industry. Their results indicated that higher Consumer-Brand Identification did not significantly increase Brand Loyalty of the focal brand when the brand identity fit was high. Moreover, Brand Loyalty towards the focal brand in the alliance was higher for the consumers with a lower brand identification. Their findings contradict previous literature that a high brand congruence leads to positive co-brand

evaluations (Xiao & Lee, 2014). They continue arguing that consumers with lower brand identification to a larger extent seek the functional benefits of products and that the divisiveness and complementarity that a low brand identity fit co-brand may provide are perceived as superior. As luxury brands are hedonic and not functional in nature, it is further interesting to understand these effects in the luxury realm. It is important to highlight the potential risks with Consumer-Brand Identification. The more the connection increases between the consumer and the brand, the harder will the consumers work to maintain the congruence with the brand. This makes it harder for brand managers to adapt their brands to changing market trends and new opportunities, especially when conducting brand altering actions like initiating collaborations (Gaustad, Samuelsen, Warlop, Fitzsimons, 2019).

Notably, this discussion underscores the importance of brand identity fit in shaping consumer engagement and loyalty within collaborative settings. Contrary to conventional assumptions, higher levels of brand identification do not consistently lead to increased Brand Loyalty, particularly in instances of high brand identity fit (Xiao & Lee, 2014). Instead, consumers may exhibit heightened loyalty towards brands offering complementary or divisive brand identities, reflecting the complexity of consumer preferences (Xiao & Lee, 2014). As luxury fashion collaborations continue to shape consumer-brand interactions, it is of relevance to continue conducting research in this complex area in order to navigate in the evolving field of luxury consumption. By emphasizing the relevance of brand identity fit in the sphere of luxury collaborations and its implications for consumer behavior and Brand Loyalty, this study provides a foundation for further research in this area.

## **2.4 Brand Loyalty**

As for the relationship between Brand Loyalty and collaborations, particularly in fashion, research is quite scarce. Yet, Brand Loyalty in itself is considered as one of the top three branding concepts of the 21st century (Parris & Guzman, 2023) and is originally defined as “*the attachment that a customer has to a brand.*” (Aaker, 1991, p. 39). The meaning has also been described as the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice (Oliver, 2014). It often manifests as repeated purchases of the brand's product (Belli, O’Rourke, Carillat, Pupovac, Melnyk & Napolova, 2022) and is consequently something that often brings organizations reduced costs and increased sales (Gallo, 2014). Rodrique & Biswas (2004) found that previous attitudes towards the brands in the alliance may affect attitudes towards their co-

brand as well as the post-attitudes towards the brand. Increased Brand Loyalty could, according to Swaminathan et al., (2012) be one of potential spillover-effects of co-brands if the perceived brand fit is high. Ma, Cheng, Bu and Jiang (2018) also came to the same conclusion in their article. The association transfer of the partnering brands may also improve consumers' quality perceptions, which ultimately may increase Brand Loyalty (Mróz-Gorgón, 2016).

Looking at fashion in particular, Kim, Yoo & Ko (2023) found that unconventional luxury fashion collaboration with the video game League of Legends could increase relational equity which according to Wang, Ko, Woodside & Yu (2021) positively affects loyalty. Shen, Choi & Chow (2017) showed that alliances between a luxury brand and fast fashion brand may improve Brand Loyalty for both brands. This was also the case for masstige collaborations (Lee & Che, 2022). Heo, Pedersen, Williams and Byon (2023) found a positive relationship between perceived brand fit and Brand Loyalty when examining a footwear co-brand between a luxury brand and a sports brand. Shen et al (2017) highlights the importance of understanding how the Brand Loyalty of the partnering brands may be affected after the co-brand has been launched.

The concept of Brand Loyalty has furthermore also evolved into incorporating elements like attitudinal loyalty, such as emotional connections, psychological elements such as beliefs and affects, and ultimately desire for an ongoing relationship with the brand (Desveaud, Mandler, Eisend, 2024). Several authors have found the relevance of self-identification in the context of fostering Brand Loyalty (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Van der Westhuizen, 2018) and is especially present in luxury consumption (Wang, Yuan, Liu & Luo, 2022). As luxury consumption may boost self esteem, help maintain social and self-identities and result in the gain of social approval, Wang et al (2022) found that the more effectively a luxury brand can maintain consumers' social and self-identities, the more likely they are to preserve their self-worth. This may ultimately conclude in repeated purchase behavior and increased Brand Loyalty (Wang et al, 2022). Nyadzayo, Johnsson & Rossi (2020) further found similar results when examining self identification within luxury fashion. Increased connection with luxury brands drives dependency and brand engagement which may translate into increased Brand Loyalty, however when the effects of brand image as a construct was examined, no effect could be found.

Relative to other constructs that nurture consumer-brand relationships and in the long run, Brand Loyalty, Consumer-Brand Identification showed to have a relatively high importance in academic literature (Albert & Thomson, 2018).

## **2.5 Purchase Intention**

As discussed earlier, luxury collaborations seem to foster Brand Loyalty (Ma et al., 2018; Lee & Che, 2022; Shen et al., 2017; Swaminathan et al., 2012) which ultimately may translate into increased consumer Purchase Intention (Alexander & Contreras, 2016). The concept of Purchase Intention originates from consumer behavior research within the field of organizational behavior, organizational psychology, human cognition, judgment, and decision-making (Ajzen, 1991). Early theories of consumer behavior such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) heavily emphasize the role of intentions in predicting an actual behavior (such as purchasing a product) (Ajzen, 1991). By studying Purchase Intentions, the aim is to provide marketers with useful knowledge of the likelihood of consumers buying the co-branded product or not, based on the type of collaboration. This is crucial since it will help marketers and managers to develop effective collaboration strategies in order to secure business growth.

There have been a number of studies looking at the relationship between co-branded products involving either one or two luxury brands, and consumers Purchase Intention. However, there are only a few that incorporate the concept of Perceived Brand Identity Fit between the partnering brands and if it affects consumers evaluation and Purchase Intention of the co-brand in question. As mentioned earlier in this report, consumers' perception on brand fit in co-branding initiatives play a major role on consumers evaluation towards the co-branded product in terms of Purchase Intention (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022).

In the literature of co-branding and Purchase Intention, Paydas Turan (2021) study the congruence of Consumer-Brand Identification, which is described as the match between a brand image and an consumers own identification and how this has been found as one of the consumer-related variables that are positively related to a consumers Purchase Intention to co-branding. Furthermore, Mazodier and Merunka (2014) found that when a consumer is involved with the brand and identifies with it, this factor is positively related to consumer evaluation of co-branding since the identification with the brands identity trigger the appeal

of co-branding and thereon the willingness to purchase the product. Mazodier and Merunka (2014) further found a significant relationship between the purchase probability for the co-branded product and Consumer-Brand Identification. Additionally, the study also confirms that Consumer-Brand Identification is a better predictor of symbolic co-branded product Purchase Intention rather than attitude for the consumer (Mazodier & Merunka, 2014). Which stretches the reasoning of why it is relevant and valid in our research to measure consumers' identification with the co-brand and how it moderates the Purchase Intention. However, the study made by Mazodier and Merunka (2014) highlights an avenue for future research which is to further look into the role of consumer identification with the parent brand.

## **2.6 Hypothesis Development**

### **2.6.1 The relationship between luxury fashion collaboration type and Perceived Brand Identity Fit**

Traditionally, the literature on co-brands suggest that successful collaborations in general are the result of a high congruence between the fit of the partnering brands (Baumgarth, 2004; Lanseng & Olsen, 2012; Park et al., 1991; Sénéchal, Georges and Pernin, 2013). Baumgarth (2004) found that the brand fit had the most significant impact on co-brand evaluation. Similar findings have been found by others suggesting that matching brand concepts, meaning an alignment of values, between the partnering brands resulted in a higher perceived brand fit (Barsalou, 1985; Elliott-Rosenbaum, 2020; Lanseng and Olsen, 2012). However, more increasingly this paradigm is questioned as modern dynamics of luxury seem to allow unconventional variations (Cabigiosu, 2021; Heo et al, 2023; Murtas et al, 2022; Quamina et al, 2023; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). Suzuki and Kanno (2022) concluded that collaborating with a cool mass brand could affect perceived fit by the consumer positively which in turn is a construct that, if high, also increases the co-brand attitude and Purchase Intention. These unconventional pairings have not yet been studied through the lens of Perceived Brand Identity Fit as it has only been present when comparing technology brands and not in luxury fashion (Xiao & Lee, 2014). Since Perceived Brand Identity Fit has not been studied within the sphere of unconventional luxury fashion collaborations it is reasonable to formulate the following hypothesis based on the traditional notion suggesting that a higher perceived brand fit is based on the alignment of brand concepts, values and brand image. Combining the concept of Perceived Brand Identity Fit with the duality of the luxury fashion collaboration



literature, the first hypothesis is developed in order to examine whether or not Perceived Brand Identity Fit is influenced by the actual brand identity fit.

The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

- **H1:** *Traditional luxury fashion collaborations have a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit than the unconventional luxury fashion collaboration.*

### **2.6.2 The relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit & Brand Loyalty**

Even though Brand Loyalty is one of the most studied branding concepts of the 21st century, its relationship with co-brands and luxury fashion co-brands in particular is limited, yet the rewards that Brand Loyalty brings establishes its relevance (Gallo, 2014; Parris & Guzman, 2023). Several authors indicate that unconventional co-brands may reap the benefit of increased Brand Loyalty (Kim et al, 2023; Lee & Che, 2022; Shen et al, 2017; Xiao & Lee, 2014). Even though these collaborations don't have a conventional fit, consumers may still positively evaluate their perceived fit (Lanseng & Olsen, 2012; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022) and in some cases even Perceived Brand Identity Fit (Xiao & Lee, 2014). Heo et al, (2023) found a positive relationship between perceived brand fit and Brand Loyalty. As literature seems to indicate a relationship between perceived brand fit of collaborations and Brand Loyalty, while the importance of identity and values within the luxury domain seems to grow (Huggard & Cope, 2020; Shahid & Paul, 2021), including identity when examining the relationship between perceived brand fit and Brand Loyalty like Xiao & Lee (2014), in a luxury context is highly relevant.

The second hypothesis is therefore stated:

- **H2:** *There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand.*

### **2.6.3 The moderating effect of Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty**

With the increasing relevance of self identification for fostering Brand Loyalty (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Van der Westhuizen, 2018) particularly in fashion (Wang et al 2022), the concept of Consumer-Brand Identification may be of interest when managing a luxury collaboration. Since the more effectively a luxury brand can maintain consumers' self-

identities through branding and ultimately preserving their self-worth, the more Brand Loyalty increases (Nyadzayo et al, 2020; Wang et al, 2022), it's evident to consider Consumer-Brand Identification as a concept on collaboration strategies in order to understand its potential importance.

Suzuki & Kanno (2022) found a positive relationship between self-brand connection to the luxury brand and evaluation of the perceived fit of the collaboration and findings of Heo et al (2023) indicate a relationship between self-image congruence, perceived brand fit and Brand Loyalty. It could therefore be argued that when taking a brand identity perspective, like in our case with luxury fashion collaborations, Consumer-Brand Identification could affect the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty.

Hypothesis three is consequently stated as:

- **H3:** *Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand.*

#### **2.6.4 The relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit & Purchase Intention**

As described earlier, Purchase Intention is deeply rooted in consumer behavior theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991). In order to provide marketing managers with valuable insights and successful collaboration strategies, it's crucial to understand Purchase Intentions in relation to the perceived brand fit in co-branding initiatives. Numerous studies have explored the relationship between co-branded products and Purchase Intention. For example, Suzuki and Kanno (2022) investigated whether perceived fit has a positive effect on the co-brand attitude, which in turn had a positive effect on the co-branded product Purchase Intention and found results supporting this hypothesis. Yet, few delve into Perceived Brand Identity Fit and its relationship with consumers' Purchase Intention. However, Heo et al. (2023) included perceived brand fit and found a positive relationship between perceived brand fit and its influence on Purchase Intention amongst consumers in an unconventional luxury collaboration context. Heo et al (2023) also emphasizes the importance of continuous research within the field of collaborations between luxury brands and sportswear brands which this study aims to further build upon.

Moreover, it is reasonable to propose that a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit positively affects Purchase Intention of the co-brand. When brands exhibit strong congruence in cultural

associations, consumers perceive a shared relationship, fostering positive perceptions and increasing Purchase Intention. Therefore, it is hypothesized that higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit between collaborating brands will lead to increased Purchase Intention of the co-brand.

The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

- **H4:** *There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand.*

#### **2.6.5 The moderating effect of Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention**

As previously presented, Heo et al (2023), Paydas Turan (2021) and Suzuki & Kanno (2022) highlight Consumer-Brand Identification in predicting Purchase Intention in co-branding scenarios. Moreover, Brand Identity Fit, as emphasized by Xiao and Lee (2014), influences consumers' evaluations regarding co-branded products. Similar to this, Heo et al. (2023) indicates a positive relationship between self-image congruence, perceived brand fit and Purchase Intention. Therefore, understanding the moderating role of Consumer-Brand Identification in the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention is necessary for comprehending consumer behavior in co-branding contexts. Furthermore, studies by Mazodier and Merunka (2014) underscores the need to examine the role of consumer identification towards Purchase Intention. This suggests that the strength of Consumer-Brand Identification may moderate the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention.

Building upon the discussion above, it is hypothesized that Consumer-Brand Identification moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. Consumer-Brand Identification is therefore expected to influence how consumers respond to co-branding partnerships.

The following hypotheses is therefore proposed:

- **H5:** *Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand.*

### **2.6.6 The mediating role of Brand Loyalty on Purchase Intention**

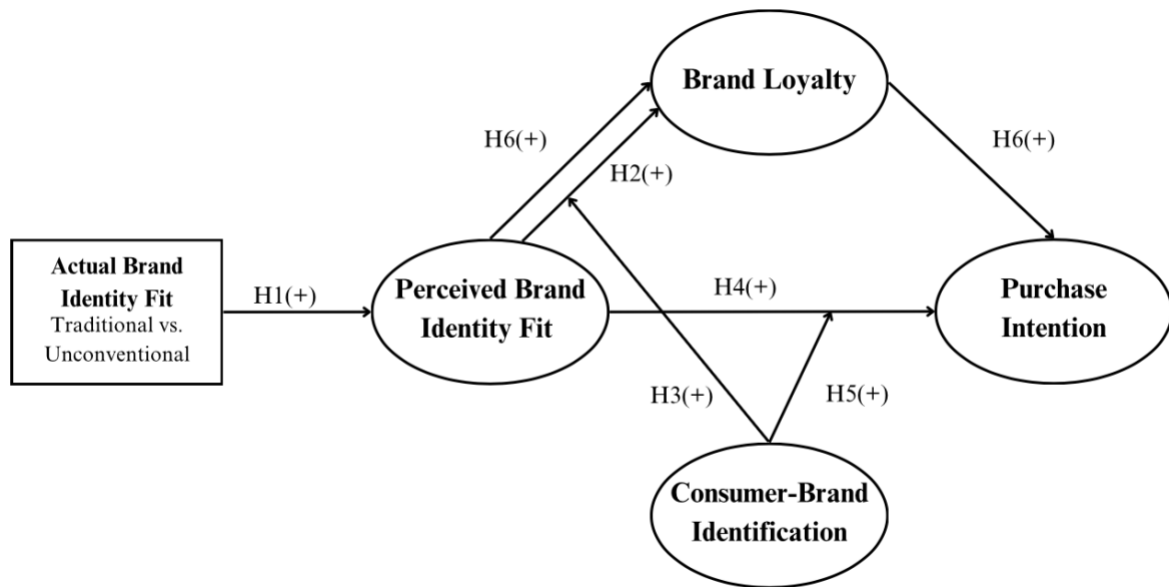
Since the concept of Brand Loyalty, apart from the emotional/attitudinal elements, often is described with purchase behavioral definitions (Belli et al., 2022; Oliver, 2014), it is evident to hypothesize its link to the concept of Purchase Intention. Heo et al (2023) propose that when further examining the Purchase Intention of luxury fashion collaborations, they found a strong significant relationship between Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. These findings are similar to those of Alexander & Contreras (2016) who claim that Brand Loyalty towards one of the partnering brands is directly linked to the likelihood of purchasing the co-brand.

The following and final hypothesis is therefore proposed as:

- **H6:** *Brand Loyalty positively mediates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention.*

## **2.7 Conceptual framework**

In order to address the stated research question and sub questions, a conceptual model was constructed consisting of six hypotheses. Figure 2.1. illustrates these relationships. The first hypothesis H1(+) suggests traditional luxury fashion collaborations have a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit than the unconventional luxury fashion collaboration. The second hypothesis H2(+) proposes a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty. The third hypothesis H3(+) suggests if there is a positive moderating effect of Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty. The fourth hypothesis H4(+) tests if there is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. The fifth hypothesis H5(+) suggests a positive moderating effect of Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. Finally, the sixth hypothesis H6(+), investigates if there is a positive mediation of Brand Loyalty on Purchase Intention.



**Figure 2.1.** Conceptual model

### **3. Methodology**

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*The third chapter of this study displays the methodological aspects. The first parts discuss research approach, research design, measurements and questionnaire construction and finally data collection method. More parts being discussed are also data analysis methods and quality criterias.*

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#### **3.1 Research Approach**

Our research approach follows a deductive research methodology, as defined by Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019). There are two research approaches, deductive and inductive. The deductive approach begins with the development of hypotheses based on existing literature and established theories which are tested through empirical data collection and analysis. In contrast to the deductive approach, the inductive approach begins with data collection and linking it to theory.

Utilizing prior research on luxury branding, Co-brands and consumer behavior, we aim to formulate hypotheses that illustrate the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit, Consumer-Brand Identification, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention within the luxury fashion industry.

Our study applies a quantitative research method to empirically test the formulated hypotheses. Quantitative method implies a systematic collection and analysis of numerical data, allowing for the examination of relationships between variables (Bell et al., 2019).

In terms of ontology, we adopt an internal realist perspective, meaning that facts when discovered are absolute, but they cannot be accessed directly; rather they are created by humans (Easterby-Smith, J. Jaspersen, Thorpe, & Valizade, 2021).

From an epistemological perspective, our research is grounded in positivism, which holds that knowledge about the social world exists externally and can be objectively measured through methods (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). The positivist perspective is most suitable for the study as it seeks to reveal insights about the relationship between brand identity fit,

Consumer-Brand Identification, Purchase Intention, and Brand Loyalty by utilizing established research methods to ensure the validity and reliability of our findings.

## **3.2 Research Design**

For this study, a cross-sectional research design was utilized. This design can be used to analyze and examine relationships between variables to reveal potential correlation patterns (Bell et al, 2019). Applying a cross-sectional design is useful when the study has more than one case, measures data at a single point in time, uses a quantitative measure and seeks to understand patterns of associations (Bell et al, 2019). All of these fit into the purpose of this study.

The study involved two separate scenarios, in which the luxury brand collaborated with another brand with either high or low brand identity fit, similar to the design of Xiao & Lee (2014). To be able to analyze between groups for the manipulated factor, Qualtrics randomization tool was used to randomly assign each respondent to one of the two collaborations in the survey. This design ensures that each participant only experiences one condition, reducing spillover effects and bias compared to exposing participants to every condition.

For the studies, the French luxury fashion house Louis Vuitton was chosen as the focal luxury brand due to its size and global recognition. Louis Vuitton was by far the world's most valuable luxury brand in 2023 (Statista, 2023). This brand was then paired with one brand for each collaboration, one with a different brand identity (Nike) and one with a similar brand identity (Dior). Kapferer's brand identity prism and its components is used to distinctly show the similarities and differences of these brands, in order to justify their relevance for this study.

### **3.2.1 Louis Vuitton X Nike**

For our main collaboration, the famous sports/streetwear brand Nike was chosen. Originally it was founded in the US and is currently, according to Interbrand, the only fashion brand with an even higher brand valuation than Louis Vuitton (Interbrand, 2023). The physique of the two brands are very different as Louis Vuitton is characterized by its high-end fashion and leather goods while Nike's physique is synonymous with athletic footwear, apparel and

equipment. Louis Vuitton's personality embodies luxury, exclusivity and refinement and their culture revolves around haute couture, craftsmanship and a glamorous lifestyle. The personality of Nike on the other hand exudes dynamism, determination and athleticism and their culture is deeply rooted in sports, fitness and inclusivity. Where the relationships of Louis Vuitton signal exclusivity and prestige, Nike's manifests community and empowerment. While Louis Vuitton reflects the social-standing of the consumer, Nike reflects the pursuit of overcoming challenges and achieving victory. Finally, the self-image of Nike's consumers are characterized by feelings of confidence, motivation and readiness to take on any challenge. Unlike Nike, the self-image of Louis Vuitton's consumers are distinguished through their success as they are a part of an elite circle of individuals.

### **3.2.2 Louis Vuitton X Dior**

Our Second collaboration consists of Louis Vuitton and Dior. This collaboration represents the case where the brands have similar brand identities. Dior, much like Louis Vuitton, also originates from France and is according to Kantar the fifth most valuable luxury brand globally (Kantar, 2023). The similarities of the physique between the two luxury brands are their characterization of exquisite craftsmanship, their timeless design and usage of iconic logos/monograms. They both embody luxury and refinement while appealing their personalities consist of elegance, sophistication and aspiration. Their cultures are deeply rooted in heritage while embracing artistry and continually redefine the standards of luxury. Their relationships revolve around exclusive and intimate communities that appreciate sophistication and prestigiousness. Both brands reflect elegance and sophistication, the wearers social-standing and status and furthermore a timeless style transcending trends. Similarly, consumers of these brands believe that their self-image is enhanced by reflecting their refined taste and aspirational traits. All elements that compose the brand identities of the three brands of the study can be found in table 3.1.



**Table 3.1.** Elements of Brand identity for the respective brands of this study

	<b>Louis Vuitton</b>	<b>Dior</b>	<b>Nike</b>
<i>Physique</i>	Iconic monogram canvas, high-quality leather goods, luxurious craftsmanship, and timeless designs	Characterized by its haute couture fashion, iconic designs like the Bar suit and the Lady Dior handbag, exquisite craftsmanship, and the signature logo	Iconic Swoosh logo, the "Just Do It" slogan, the recognizable designs of its shoes and apparel
<i>Personality</i>	Elegant, sophisticated, and aspirational. It exudes luxury, exclusivity, and refinement	Sophisticated, romantic, and visionary. It embodies the essence of French elegance	Dynamic, determined, empowering, push boundaries and inspire others to strive for greatness.
<i>Culture</i>	Culture revolves around craftsmanship, heritage, and artistry	Steeped in tradition, craftsmanship, and artistic expression	Deeply rooted in sports and fitness. It promotes a culture of inclusivity, diversity, and performance.
<i>Relationships</i>	Exclusivity and intimacy, about being part of a prestigious club	Intimacy and exclusivity with its customers. being part of a community that appreciates beauty and sophistication	Customers feel like part of a larger community, united by their love for sports and active lifestyles
<i>Reflection</i>	Statement of one's social standing, sophistication and impeccable taste	Reflects elegance, romance, and artistic expression. creations evoke a sense of timeless beauty and grace	Symbolizes the pursuit of excellence, overcoming challenges, and achieving victory
<i>Self-image</i>	Reflection of their refined taste, success, and social status. It's about feeling aspirational and part of an elite circle of individuals	Reflects refined taste and appreciation for art and beauty. It's about feeling aspirational, elegant, and part of a legacy of timeless glamor and style	Feeling confident, motivated, and ready to take on any challenge

### 3.3 Data Collection Method

#### 3.3.1 Questionnaire Design

Based on our two fictional collaborations, Louis Vuitton x Nike and Louis Vuitton x Dior, we created a mockup collection with pictures of Louis Vuitton products with logos from the different collaborating partner (Appendix A). We choose to use the same products for the two collaborations only modifying the logos. To make the collaborations feel more authentic we

put the pictures in a setting of social media posts. Each case was also presented with a larger press statement explaining the collaboration (Appendix B).

Using Qualtrics, a questionnaire was created. Each respondent was exposed to one of the fictional collaboration cases using the built-in randomization tool. Other than that each respondent was presented the same questions.

The survey consisted of a total of 30 questions. First, respondents were presented with information about the survey, that they have to be 18 to participate and also that they are protected by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The respondents were given the option to consent in order to continue with the survey. The survey started with demographic questions, such as age, gender, and nationality.

The demographic questions were followed by one of the fictional cases. After the respondent had been exposed to the stimulus, they immediately had to answer 5 questions that captured the perceived brand identity fit of the collaborations on a likert scale (1-7). The respondent subsequently went through an attention check where they had to answer a multiple choice question about the content of the case. At two separate occasions during the questionnaire, the respondents were shown two attention checks in order to ensure their attention and that they understood the context, but also to minimize the risk of bots answering the questionnaire. In the case of the first attention check, the respondents were asked: “*What was the case about?*” and were provided with three different answers: (1) *Cars*, (2) *Buildings* and (3) *Luxury fashion*. The first attention checks were provided after the case was presented in order to ensure the respondents understood the context. Regarding the second attention check, the respondents were asked: “*What was the last question about?*” and were provided with the answers: (1) *Purchase Intention*, (2) *Jogging* and (3) *Sleepiness*. If respondents passed the first attention check, they got to answer 5 questions capturing their future Brand Loyalty of the focal brand (Louis Vuitton). These questions also used a likert scale (1-7). Similarly, they then answered 6 questions to understand their Purchase Intention of the co-brand on a likert scale (1-7). Afterwards, respondents once again got exposed to the second attention check. This time they had to take a stance on the content of the previous question in order to ensure their attention and understanding of the questionnaire. Finally, consumers had to rate their stance on 6 statements about their Consumer-Brand Identification to the focal brand (Louis Vuitton) on a likert scale (1-7). Each measure (e.g Brand Loyalty or Consumer-Brand

Identification) was presented on a separate page to make the experience easier, appear shorter and create the layout more visually appealing (Bell et al. 2019).

The questions in the survey were items retrieved from previous academic research to ensure their validity in assessing their respective variables. The questions were then adapted to our topic to fit the study. All items are listed in Table 3.2.

### **3.3.2 Distribution and Sample**

Due to the conditions of time and resources for the development of this thesis, In order to recruit participants to our target sample a convenience sample was applied. A convenience sample is a non-probability sample method where participants are included in the sample because they are easy for the researcher to access (Bell et al, 2019).

The survey was also distributed on online communities focusing on luxury consumption in order to gather respondents which are considered to be luxury consumers. The data collection was conducted through the survey tool Qualtrics between April and May 2024. To analyze the data we used Jamovi, a statistics software for social science. Given that the online community uses English as the preferred language the survey was in English as well. To furthermore increase the number of respondents the authors utilized their personal and professional network to distribute the survey as well.

Moreover, 282 respondents participated in the survey in total, however 74 respondents were removed due to different reasons which will be explained further down in this report under *3.3.4 Data Cleaning*. Since the sample size exceeded past  $n = 30$ , and the overall sample size exceeded past 100 respondents, the sample size met the requirements of both the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) and the law of large numbers. According to the CLT, as the sample size grows, the distribution of sample means tends to approximate a normal distribution (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). Additionally, a sample size over 100 enhances the reliability and external validity of the convenience sample (Bell et al. 2019).

### **3.3.3 Measurements**

All latent variables were measured using existing multi-item scales from previous research articles in order to operationalize the conceptual model. The questions were answered using a 7-point likert scale ranging from “1. *Strongly disagree*” to “7. *Strongly agree*”. A likert scale

is one of the most common types of measurement used in a survey-based research (Bell et al. 2019). After the confirmatory factor analysis was conducted, the items were combined to represent the constructs it is intended to measure. As presented in Table 3.2, variables are categorized to either an independent variable, dependent variable, mediator or moderator. The independent variable or “predictor” is what explains our relationship, while the role of the dependent variable or the “outcome” is to be explained (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). Mediators contribute to the variance in the dependent variable, however not beyond that of which is originally explained by the independent variable (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). It therefore mediates the relationship. Finally, moderators interact with the independent variable to further explain the variance in the dependent variable (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). All variables, their variable category, items, scales and their sources can be observed in Table 3.2.

The independent variable “Perceived Brand Identity Fit” was measured through the statements “*I think these brands are consistent*”, “*I think these brands are complementary*”, “*I think these brands fit each other,*”, “*I think this collaboration is logical*”, “*I think this collaboration is appropriate*”. The items were derived from Suzuki & Kanno (2022) and Aaker & Keller (1990).

The mediating variable “Brand Loyalty” was measured with the statements “*In the future, I will be loyal to Louis Vuitton*”, “*I will buy Louis Vuitton again, the next time I buy a luxury product*”, “*Louis Vuitton will be my first choice in the future when buying luxury products*”, “*I will not buy other luxury brands if Louis Vuitton is available at the store*” and “*I will recommend Louis Vuitton to others*”. All Brand Loyalty items come from Yoo & Donthu (2001).

The dependent variable “Purchase Intention” was measured by using “*I am willing to purchase products of this collaboration*”, “*I am willing to buy this collaboration to give as gifts*”, “*If I were going to purchase a luxury product, I would consider buying this collaboration*”, “*My willingness to buy this collaboration would be high if I were shopping for a luxury product*”, “*The probability I would consider buying this collaboration is high*” And “*I would recommend products from this collaboration to others*”. These were derived from Kim, Yoo & Ko (2023), Baker, Levy & Grewal (1991) and Bian & Forsythe (2012).

Finally, the moderating variable “Consumer-Brand Identification” was constructed with the following items, “*Louis Vuitton reflects who I am*”, “*I can identify with Louis Vuitton*”, “*I feel a personal connection to Louis Vuitton*”, “*I (can) use Louis Vuitton to communicate who I am to other people*”, “*I think Louis Vuitton help(s) me become the type of person I want to be*”, “*I consider Louis Vuitton to be “me” (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others)*”, “*Louis Vuitton suits me well*”. These are all adapted from Escalas & Bettman (2003).

**Table 3.2.** Measured variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Scale type</b>	<b>Variable Type</b>
<p><b>Percieved Brand Identity Fit (adapted from Bouten et al., 2011; Aaker and Keller, 1990)</b></p> <p>I think these brands are consistent.</p> <p>I think these brands are complementary.</p> <p>I think these brands fit each other.</p> <p>I think this collaboration is logical</p> <p>I think this collaboration is appropriate</p>	7-point Likert scale	Independent Variable
<p><b>Consumer brand identification (adapted from Escalas and Bettman, 2003)</b></p> <p>Louis Vuitton reflects who I am.</p> <p>I can identify with Louis Vuitton.</p> <p>I feel a personal connection to Louis Vuitton.</p> <p>I (can) use Louis Vuitton to communicate who I am to other people.</p> <p>I think Louis Vuitton help(s) me become the type of person I want to be.</p> <p>I consider Louis Vuitton to be “me” (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).</p> <p>Louis Vuitton suits me well.</p>	7-point Likert scale	Moderator
<p><b>Purchase intention (adapted from Kim, Yoo &amp; Ko, 2023; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Baker et al., 1992)</b></p> <p>I am willing to purchase products of this collaboration</p> <p>I would recommend products from this collaboration to others.</p> <p>If I were going to purchase a luxury product, I would consider buying this collaboration.</p>	7-point Likert scale	Dependent Variable

My willingness to buy this collaboration would be high if I were shopping for a luxury product.

The probability I would consider buying this collaboration is high.

I would be willing to buy this collaboration to give as gifts.

**Brand loyalty (adapted from Yoo and Donthu, 2001)**

7-point Likert scale

Mediator

In the future, I will be loyal to Louis Vuitton

I will buy Louis Vuitton again, the next time I buy a luxury product

Louis Vuitton will be my first choice in the future when buying luxury products

I will not buy other luxury brands if Louis Vuitton is available at the store

I will recommend Louis Vuitton to others

### 3.3.4 Data Cleaning

Due to failing to complete the survey correctly participants were removed. Out of total 282 respondents, 74 respondents (26%) were removed. 70 respondents (25%) were removed due to leaving any of the questions blank. 3 respondents (1%) were removed due to not agreeing on GDPR privacy policy. 1 respondent (<1%) were removed due to failing to answer the attention checks. This led to a total of 74 respondents (26%) being removed and in total 208 participating respondents. Table 3.3 provides an overview of the cleaning procedure.

**Table 3.3.** Overview of data cleaning process

	Respondents	GDPR Refusal	Unfinished	Attention Check Fallacy	Removed Participants	Participation
<b>Total</b>	282	3	70	1	74	208
<b>Percentage</b>	100%	1%	25%	<1%	26%	74%

## 3.4 Data Analysis Method

### 3.4.1 Independent sample t-test (student t-test)

To test hypothesis 1, an independent sample t-test was used. An independent sample t-test is used to compare two independent groups, where each group corresponds differently to the studys' conditions (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). These two groups are then compared on their effect on an outcome variable through their population mean. The goal is to understand if the two groups have statistically significant differing means (the alternative hypothesis) or the

same mean (the null hypothesis). This data analysis method is therefore assessed primarily by addressing the means and p-values of the groups (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022).

In this Study, the two groups that will be compared are the two different collaborations (Conventional vs Unconventional), which for our conceptual model has been named “actual brand identity fit”. The outcome variable is the “Perceived Brand Identity Fit” (PBIF).

### 3.4.2 Linear Regression

A linear regression is used when the focus is to estimate a casual relationship between a continuous dependent variable (effect) and a continuous independent variable (causes, predictors) (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). In this conducted study the independent variable is “Perceived Brand Identity Fit” and the dependent variable is “Purchase Intention”. Since the purpose of this study is to understand how the new blurring boundaries of luxury influence the traditional guidelines of luxury fashion collaborations by testing what the effects of Perceived Brand Identity Fit of a collaboration are on Brand Loyalty and ultimately Purchase Intention, it is relevant to apply linear regression as the type of analysis method in order to understand this relationship. In order to fulfill this research aim, a linear regression will also address the main research question: “*What is the relationship between unconventional luxury fashion collaborations and consumer intentions?*”, as well as two of the sub-questions: (2) “*What is the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand?*” and (3) “*What is the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand?*”. Furthermore, a linear regression will contribute to our understanding of the relationships stated in the second hypothesis: “*There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand.*” and the fourth hypothesis: “*There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand.*”.

Pearson’s correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is one of the most commonly used metrics which determines whether an association between two continuous variables is statistically significant, which consequently indicates the strength of the effect (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). The values of  $r$  range from  $-1$  to  $+1$  where a positive  $r$  means that there is a positive association between the variables and a negative  $r$  means a negative association between the variables (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). Worth mentioning is if  $r$  is close to 0, then there is only a weak correlation between the variables. If  $r$  is close to either  $-1$  or  $+1$ , then there is a

strong positive / negative correlation between the variables (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). These values can be found in table 4.6.

Throughout the three presented regressions, data from both cases are included in order to answer hypothesis 2,3,4,5 & 6 as we are measuring the relationship between the variables Perceived Brand Identity Fit, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention, rather than comparing the two cases against each other like in the independent t-test. However, a robustness check has also been conducted in order to look at any dissimilarities between the cases. The Robustness check is seen under sub-chateper: *4.10 Robustness Check*.

### **3.4.2.1 Moderated Regression**

The purpose of a moderated regression is to examine the interaction between two or more variables in regression models (Easterby-Smith et al, 2021). In other words, the interaction effects are effects on the dependent variable (Purchase Intention) where one independent variable influences the relationship of another independent variable that also connects with a dependent variable (Bell et al. 2019). Since the aim of this study is also to answer the fourth and fifth sub-research questions which is if Consumer-Brand Identification with the luxury brand moderate the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty, as well as the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention, a moderated regression is necessary in order to contribute to enhanced understanding regarding this research aim. Additionally, a moderated regression is also conducted in order to test the third hypothesis: *“Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand”* and the fifth hypothesis: *“Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand”*.

### **3.4.2.2 Mediated Regression**

Mediated regression is used to test if another independent variable mediates the effect of the original independent variable. The second independent variable is called a “mediator” (Bryman et al, 2022). In this study, the variable of “Brand Loyalty” will, apart from being a dependent variable according to the second hypothesis, also act as mediator to understand how its inclusion may explain that “Perceived Brand Identity Fit” has on “Purchase Intention”. The purpose of using a mediated regression is to test the sixth hypothesis *“Brand*



*Loyalty positively mediates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention.”.*

### **3.5 Quality Criteria**

Ensuring the validity, reliability and replicability of the research is important to maintaining the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Bell et al. 2019). Rigorous quality criteria are employed throughout the research process.

#### **3.5.1 Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which a measure of a concept accurately measures the specific concept. To enhance construct validity, careful attention is paid to the selection and adaptation of measurement scales, ensuring that survey items effectively capture the intended concepts of interest. Additionally, face validity is ensured through expert review and pilot testing of the survey instrument to assess its comprehensiveness and relevance (Bell et al, 2019).

In order to accurately measure validity, this study conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This is used to analyze the efficacy of measurement models where the number of factors and their relationships are specified (Price, 2023). Researchers using CFA try to understand why specific correlations between variables exist (Price, 2023). Following the logic of Hair, Black, Babin & Andersson (2009), the factor loadings should be at least 0,5 and ideally above 0,7. These should also be accompanied by a significant p-value. Furthermore, average variance extracted should exceed 0,5 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981)

Once the validity was established, the model fit of the study was established to confirm a good fit between the model and the observed data (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). Model fit will be evaluated with a chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), Degrees of freedom (df), P-value (p) and furthermore with the fit measures Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The threshold for these values is presented in table 3.4.

**Table 3.4.** Model fit

<b>Model Fit Indices</b>	<b>Recommended Values</b>	<b>Sources</b>
$\chi^2/df$	$1 < \chi^2/df < 3$	Kline (2016)
p-value	$< 0.05$	Navarro & Foxcraft (2022)
CFI	$> 0.9$	Navarro & Foxcraft (2022)
TLI	$> 0.9$	Navarro & Foxcraft (2022)
RMSEA	0.05 to 0.08	Navarro & Foxcraft (2022)

### 3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability pertains to the consistency and stability of measurement over time and across different contexts (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). In this study, Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is used to compute the average internal consistency among the measuring variables. Bell et al. (2019) states that in research when multiple item measures are answered an overall score is formed which involves the risk that the indicators do not relate to the same thing, therefore, there may be a lack of coherence. Consequently, it's important to ensure that the designed indicators in this study are related to each other, hence the usage of Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ ).

In terms of values, reliability tests less than 0.60 are considered poor, those in the range of 0.70 and 0.80 are considered “acceptable” and “good” reliability scores (Bell et al. 2019; Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). In other words, an  $\alpha$  of 0.70 is connected with 30% error variance in a scale, and a  $\alpha$  of 0.80 is associated with 20% error variance in a scale (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). Thus, the minimum threshold for internal consistency reliability of the measures in this study will be 0.70. If the internal consistency reliability tests scores above 0.70 it indicates that the questions used in the survey are properly developed in relation to what is intended to be measured (Bell et al. 2019).

### 3.5.3 Replicability

Ensuring replicability is important to make sure that the results of a study are not colored by the lack of objectivity or the authors own values (Bryman & Bell, 2017). In order to establish a proper level of replicability, authors have made sure to be very explicit on the research process and course of action that this current study has used, whether its literature, sample, study design, items, results and analysis.

### 3.5.4 Ethical aspects

The aim of this section is to present and discuss how the conducted research aligns with ethical principles. When conducting business research it is crucial to be aware of the ethical principles involved in the research and how to engage with them (Bell et al. 2019). Bell et al (2019) mention four ethical principles and recurrent issues which are important to keep in mind when conducting business research. These four principles are: *harm to participants*, *lack of informed consent*, *invasion of privacy* and *deception*. In this study, these four ethical principles have been achieved through conscious actions and decisions in order to minimize these risks.

The first ethical principle, *avoidance of harm to participants*, entails multiple different aspects such as physical harm and psychological harm, which the latter includes stress (Bell et al. 2019). During the collection of data, the respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and if the respondent did not want to finish the survey they were permitted to discontinue. In order to further reduce feelings of stress amongst the participants we provided them with full information about the purpose of the study and that their answers were anonymous. They were also allowed to ask questions about the study and the survey itself. Additionally, the participants who made the study online had the advantage of doing it anywhere they preferred which enabled them to provide answers at their own pace and convenience.

Regarding the second ethical principle provided by Bell et al. (2019) which is *informed consent* was achieved mainly by providing all of the respondents with well grounded information about the study. The principle of *informed consent* refers to ensuring that information about the study is provided to the respondents in order for them to make an informed decision about whether they want to participate or not (Bell et al. 2019). The provided information about this research entailed who we were, where we studied, what the purpose of the research was, and last but not least, that their answers were completely anonymous.

The second principle of *informed consent* is connected with the third principle: *invasion of privacy*, which refers to the privacy of the participants (Bell et al. 2019). Firstly, this principle was achieved by providing grounded information about the study. Secondly, before the actual

survey, the respondents were met with the question: “*Do you consent to the processing of your personal data for the academic purposes of our research?*”, and were given the answer alternatives: “*Yes, I consent*” and “*No, I do not consent*”. This question was a conscious choice to involve in the survey in order to meet the third ethical principle provided by Bell et al. (2019). Here the respondents had the choice to either consent or not and if they answered “*No, I do not consent*”, they were not included in the study.

All of the actions discussed above were also made in order to meet the fourth and final ethical principle *preventing deception*. *Preventing deception* refers to presenting research as something other than what it actually is (Bell et al. 2019). By presenting and providing grounded information about the purpose of study, who we were, where we studied and the opportunity for the participants to ask questions, a truthful presentation of the study was made.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

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*This chapter contains demographics, validity and factor analysis. Furthermore, the analyzed data results from the independent sample t-test, correlation analysis, linear regressions, mediation analysis, moderation analysis and robustness check are presented. These analyzes are then followed by a hypothesis summary and ultimately a discussion based on the results.*

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### 4.1 Data management

The data collected through our survey using Qualtrics were directly exported to google sheets due to lack of export option directly to Jamovi. The data was then downloaded as a .csv file which Jamovi supports. In Jamovi the data cleaning process started with using multiple filters to remove participants that didn't meet our requirements. Since we used likert scales containing text, all of the observations were changed to its numerical value using Jamovi's transform function. Some of the variables were renamed to make it easier to see the connecting items to its construct. After doing the CFA, each construct's items were averaged using the compute function. After finishing the data cleaning process the inferential statistical tests were performed.

### 4.2 Demographics

Before conducting the actual statistical test, taking a closer look at the demographic factors may provide important insights into the characteristics of the population, especially since this study leverages a convenience sample.

Out of the 208 respondents that made it through our data cleaning, there were exactly as many that identified as females and males, accounting for 48,56% of the total, each. There were 6 respondents that identified as others (2,88%) of the total.

Regarding age, a clear majority of the respondents range between 18-24 years old. These were a total of 136 respondents accounting for 65,38% of the population. 54 respondents were between 25-34 (25,96%). There were furthermore just as many respondents ranging from 34-44 as there were respondents 45+ years old. Nine of each, accounting for 4,33% each.

The geographic data shows that almost the entire population, 191 out of 208, currently resides in Sweden (91,83%). Five of the respondents currently live in Denmark (2,4%) and Five in the United States of America (2,4%). Seven respondents or 3,37% answered other countries, however these have been composed into a category called “other”.

Observing the educational level of the respondents, most of them hold a three-year bachelor degree. These were 91 in total or 43,75%. 51 respondents or 24,52% have attended some college but have no degree. When it comes to master degrees, there were 33 in total accounting for a total of 15,87%. 23 of the respondents or 11,06% have no higher academic attendance but are high school high school graduates. The remaining have been categorized into “other” and are 10 respondents or 4,8% of the total. Demographics can be found in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1.** Demographics of the respondents

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Female	101	48,56%
	Male	101	48,56%
	Other	6	2,88%
Age	18-24 years old	136	65,38%
	25-34 years old	54	25,96%
	35-44 years old	9	4,33%
	45+ years old	9	4,33%
Country	Sweden	191	91,83%
	United States of America	5	2,40%
	Denmark	5	2,40%
	Other	7	3,37%
Education	Bachelor's degree in college (3-year)	91	43,75%
	Some college but no degree	51	24,52%
	Master's degree	33	15,87%
	High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)	23	11,06%
	Other	10	4,81%

## 4.3 Validity and Factor Analysis

### 4.3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Internal reliability

Upon executing the Confirmatory factor analysis, the results showed that all of the 23 items used for this study turned out to be statistically significant ( $< 0,05$ ) as depicted in table 4.2. Furthermore, all items but one had loadings above 0,7 which according to Navarro & Foxcraft (2022) expressed is ideal. The item “*I think these brands are consistent*” had a loading of 0.645, which still is more than the recommended minimum of 0.5 and is therefore kept.

In terms of the internal reliability of the constructs. All variables had an acceptable cronbach’s alpha, therefore demonstrating a proper internal consistency of all items. All constructs of this study indicated a good reliability score as Perceived Brand Identity Fit ( $\alpha = 0,886$ ), Consumer-Brand Identification ( $\alpha = 0,960$ ), Purchase Intention ( $\alpha = 0,962$ ) and Brand Loyalty ( $\alpha = 0,922$ ) all had a cronbach’s alpha above 0.8 (Bell et al, 2019). Hence, the error variance is below 20% in all constructs and three out of four had an error variance lower than 10% (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). The internal reliability of the respective construct can be found in table 4.2. The average variance extracted (AVE) stretched from 0,618 to 0,809 which is above 0,50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

**Table 4.2.** Measurement scales

Variable	Item loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
<b>Perceived Brand Identity Fit</b>		0,886	0,618
<i>I think these brands are consistent.</i>	0,645		
<i>I think these brands are complementary.</i>	0,806		
<i>I think these brands fit each other.</i>	0,869		
<i>I think this collaboration is logical</i>	0,771		
<i>I think this collaboration is appropriate</i>	0,820		
<b>Consumer Brand Identification</b>		0,960	0,780
<i>Louis Vuitton reflects who I am.</i>	0,899		
<i>I can identify with Louis Vuitton.</i>	0,879		
<i>I feel a personal connection to Louis Vuitton.</i>	0,915		
<i>I (can) use Louis Vuitton to communicate who I am to other people.</i>	0,829		

<i>I think Louis Vuitton help(s) me become the type of person I want to be.</i>	0,914		
<i>I consider Louis Vuitton to be “me” (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).</i>	0,928		
<i>Louis Vuitton suits me well.</i>	0,810		
<b>Purchase Intention</b>		0,962	0,809
<i>I am willing to purchase products of this collaboration</i>	0,904		
<i>I would recommend products from this collaboration to others.</i>	0,827		
<i>If I were going to purchase a luxury product, I would consider buying this collaboration.</i>	0,917		
<i>My willingness to buy this collaboration would be high if I were shopping for a luxury product.</i>	0,904		
<i>The probability I would consider buying this collaboration is high.</i>	0,915		
<i>I would be willing to buy this collaboration to give as gifts.</i>	0,926		
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>		0,922	0,715
<i>In the future, I will be loyal to Louis Vuitton</i>	0,857		
<i>I will buy Louis Vuitton again, the next time I buy a luxury product</i>	0,906		
<i>Louis Vuitton will be my first choice in the future when buying luxury products</i>	0,919		
<i>I will not buy other luxury brands if Louis Vuitton is available at the store</i>	0,710		
<i>I will recommend Louis Vuitton to others</i>	0,819		

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### 4.3.2 Model Fit

The model fit test resulted in a chi-square value of 522 with 224 degrees of freedom, ultimately providing a ratio of 2,33. This ratio falls within the perimeters of  $1 < \chi^2/df < 3$  in line with the recommendations of Kline (2016). The observed p-value ( $<.001$ ) is smaller than the recommendation of 0.05, indicating a statistical significance. As for the fit measures, the observed CFI value of  $0.942 > 0.9$  in combination with the observed TLI value of  $0.935 > 0.9$  and RMSEA  $0.08 = 0.08$ , indicates a satisfactory model fit (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). Results can be found in table 4.3.



**Table 4.3.** Model fit results

$\chi^2$	df	p	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
522	224	<,001	0,942	0,935	0,08

#### 4.4 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics related to the constructs of this study can be found in table 4.4. These values have been divided into the respective collaboration for increasing the comparability. The means indicate the average value on a scale, taking all respondents of that variable into account (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). The means range from 2,63-4,72 and comparison between the collaborations show that most means are quite similar. Taking a closer look at the standard deviation (SD) provides insights into how dispersed the responses are. The SD were the highest for the “Purchase Intention” variable as LVxNike had 1,82 and LVxDior had 1,78. SD was the lowest for “Perceived Brand Identity Fit” 1,3 and 1,57. As standard deviation only measures the spread of respondents, it is recommended to also look at the skewness and kurtosis as it measures the direction of possible asymmetry in the spread and the weight of the tails (Navarro & Foxcraft, 2022). These values should fall within the range of +2/-2 which all values do. The negative skewness of both collaborations in “Perceived Brand Identity Fit” indicates a spread directed towards left, which also is the case for LVxNike in “Purchase Intention”. All other skewness variables indicate that they move towards the right direction. The small skewness values indicate a normal distribution and the data can therefore be assumed to be well distributed.

**Table 4.4.** Descriptives

	Collaboration	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Brand Identity Fit	LVxDior	4,63	1,57	2,46	-0,7741	-0,0559
	LVxNike	4,72	1,3	1,69	-0,7599	0,3998
Brand Loyalty	LVxDior	3,1	1,56	2,43	0,4564	-0,451
	LVxNike	3,37	1,68	2,82	0,2367	-1,1725
Purchase Intention	LVxDior	3,4	1,78	3,18	0,3942	-0,9
	LVxNike	3,89	1,82	3,3	-0,0919	-1,2598
Consumer-Brand Identification	LVxDior	2,63	1,37	1,89	0,8494	-0,1722
	LVxNike	2,91	1,76	3,08	0,5765	-1,0791

## 4.5 T-test

The first hypothesis was about whether there was a difference in Perceived Brand Identity Fit between the two collaborations. The independent samples t-test reported there were no significant difference for Perceived Brand Identity Fit,  $t(206) = -,401, p = ,689$ , despite Louis Vuitton X Nike ( $M = 4,72, SD = 1,30, n = 159$ ) attaining a higher mean for Perceived Brand Identity Fit than Louis Vuitton X Dior ( $M = 4,63, SD = 1,57, n = 49$ ). Hypothesis 1 (H1) is therefore not supported. Results are presented in table 4.5

**Table 4.5.** t-test result

	Statistic	df	p	Mean Difference	SE difference	Effect Size	Remark
Perceived Brand Identity Fit Student's t	-0,401	206	0,689	-0,0897	0,223	-0,0656	H1(+):Not supported

Note.  $H_a \mu_{LVxDior} \neq \mu_{LVxNike}$

## 4.6 Correlation Matrix Analysis

Purchase Intention ( $M = 3,77, SD = 1,82$ ) has a significant positive correlation with both Perceived Brand Identity Fit ( $M = 4,70, SD = 1,36; r = 0,673, p < ,001$ ) and Brand Loyalty ( $M = 3,30, SD = 1,65; r = 0,738, p < ,001$ ) seen in table 4.6. Furthermore Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty also have a significantly strong positive correlation ( $r = 0,581, p < ,001$ ).

**Table 4.6.** Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3
1. Perceived Brand Identity Fit	-		
2. Purchase Intention	0,633***	-	
3. Brand Loyalty	0,565***	0,749***	-

## 4.7 Linear Regression Analysis

The direct effect of Perceived Brand Identity Fit on Purchase Intention can be observed in table 4.7. Our model fit test (Appendix C) shows a significant result ( $F(1, 206) = 96,8, p < 0,001, adjusted R^2 = 0,316$ ). According to the results of the linear regression, Perceived

Brand Identity Fit has a significantly positive relationship with Purchase Intention ( $\beta = 0,565$ ,  $SE = 0,0696$ ,  $t = 9,84$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). Hypothesis 4 (H4) is therefore supported.

**Table 4.7.** Linear Regression Analysis

Purchase Intention	$\beta$	SE	t	p-value	Remarks
Intercept	-	0,3402	0,257	<0,001	-
Perceived Brand Identity Fit	0,565	0,0696	9,84	<0,001	Needs further analysis

#### 4.8 Mediation Role Analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to explore whether Brand Loyalty is a mediator. The analysis was performed using the jAMM module in jamovi 2.3.28.0 (The jamovi project, 2022). The module uses maximum likelihood to estimate the coefficients implemented in the lavaan package for R (Rosseel, 2012). To ensure the robustness of the mediation effects, bootstrapping with 5000 resamples was employed (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship on the direct effect between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention ( $\beta = 0,308$ ,  $SE = 0,0777$ ,  $z = 5,27$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). Hence the significance, hypothesis 4 (H4) is supported.

Further, the positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty were also significant ( $\beta = 0,565$ ,  $SE = 0,0622$ ,  $z = 11,01$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). Hypothesis 2 (H2) is therefore supported.

The positive relationship between Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention is significant ( $\beta = 0,575$ ,  $SE = 0,0576$ ,  $z = 10,99$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ).

Hence the previous confirmed paths and the indirect effect of Perceived Brand Identity Fit on Purchase Intention through Brand Loyalty ( $\beta = 0,325$ ,  $SE = 0,0588$ ,  $z = 7,36$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). The relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention is positively mediated by Brand Loyalty. In conclusion, the direct and the indirect effects were significant which suggest a partial mediation. Hypothesis 6 (H6) is therefore supported. Results of the mediating effects are found in table 4.8.

**Table 4.8.** Mediation Path Analysis

<b>Path</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Perceived Brand Identity Fit → Purchase Intention	0,308	0,0777	5,27	<0,001	H4(+): Supported
Perceived Brand Identity Fit → Brand Loyalty	0,565	0,0622	11,01	<0,001	H2(+): Supported
Brand Loyalty → Purchase Intention	0,575	0,0576	10,99	<0,001	-
Perceived Brand Identity Fit → Brand Loyalty → Purchase Intention	0,325	0,0588	7,36	<0,001	H6(+): Supported

#### 4.9 Moderation Effect Analysis

In order to examine the moderating effects of Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention and furthermore the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty, a moderation analysis was conducted. Results show that both Brand Loyalty ( $\beta = 0,4167$ ,  $SE = 0,081$ ,  $t = 5,657$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0,001$ ) and Perceived Brand Identity Fit ( $\beta = 0,3052$ ,  $SE = 0,07$ ,  $t = 5,808$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0,001$ ) has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention. Moreover Consumer-Brand Identification ( $\beta = 0,1921$ ,  $SE = 0,076$ ,  $t = 2,739$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0,007$ ) had a significant effect on Purchase Intention.

The interaction between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Consumer-Brand Identification on Purchase Intention is non-significant ( $\beta = 0,0283$ ,  $SE = 0,0401$ ,  $t = 0,56$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0,576$ ). These results cannot support a positive moderation by Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. Therefore, hypothesis 5 (H5) is not supported.

**Table 4.9.** Moderation Analysis

<b>Effect</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Purchase Intention</b>					
Brand Loyalty	0,4167	0,081	5,657	<0,001	Significant
Perceived Brand Identity Fit	0,3052	0,07	5,808	<0,001	Significant
Consumer-Brand Identification	0,1921	0,076	2,739	0,007	Significant

Perceived Brand Identity Fit * Consumer-Brand Identification	0,0283	0,0401	0,56	0,576	H5(+): Not Supported
<hr/>					
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>					
Perceived Brand Identity Fit	0,2629	0,0562	5,66	<0,001	Significant
Consumer-Brand Identification	0,63	0,52415	12,61	<0,001	Significant
Perceived Brand Identity Fit * Consumer-Brand Identification	0,0971	0,0343	2,04	0,042	H3(+): Supported

Moving on to the moderation of Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty, the main effect between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty have a significantly strong positive effect ( $\beta = 0,2629$ ,  $SE = 0,0562$ ,  $t = 5,66$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0,001$ ). Likewise, Consumer-Brand Identification also has a significantly strong positive effect on Brand Loyalty ( $\beta = 0,63$ ,  $SE = 0,52415$ ,  $t = 12,61$ ,  $p\text{-value} = <0,001$ ). However, examining the interaction between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Consumer-Brand Identification on Brand Loyalty shows that it's significant ( $\beta = 0,0971$ ,  $SE = 0,0343$ ,  $t = 2,04$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0,042$ ). These results support a positive moderation by Consumer-Brand Identification on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty, hence hypothesis 3(H3) is supported.

The plot found in appendix D, visualizes the simple slopes (1 SD above and 1 SD below the mean) of the moderating effect. The figure shows that those who had low Consumer-Brand Identification had slightly higher Brand Loyalty the higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit. Those who had high Consumer-Brand Identification had higher Brand Loyalty the higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit as well. If they had a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit the higher Brand Loyalty however if the Perceived Brand Identity Fit were lower the brand loyalty were lower than the group with low Consumer-Brand Identification. Ultimately, the higher the Consumer-Brand Identification, the more sensitive that respondent is to the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty.

#### 4.10 Robustness Check

In order to analyze eventual differences of the two collaborations a robustness check was done to the main model. The paths can be found in table 4.10.

The first path, which is the direct effect of the model shows a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention for both collaborations. The collaboration with LVxDior was non-significant ( $\beta = 0,192$ ,  $SE = 0,116$ ,  $z = 1,88$ ,  $p = 0,06$ ). However, in the Nike collaboration the relationship was significant ( $\beta = 0,362$ ,  $SE = 0,0827$ ,  $z = 6,11$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ).

Furthermore, the second path in our model revealed a positive significant relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty in both collaborations, in the Dior collaboration ( $\beta = 0,514$ ,  $SE = 0,122$ ,  $z = 4,2$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ) and in the Nike collaboration ( $\beta = 0,587$ ,  $SE = 0,0829$ ,  $z = 9,15$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ).

The third path in our model revealed a positive relationship between Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. In the Dior collaboration ( $\beta = 0,675$ ,  $SE = 0,117$ ,  $z = 6,62$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ) and in the Nike collaboration ( $\beta = 0,529$ ,  $SE = 0,064$ ,  $z = 8,94$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), the relationships were positive and significant.

In the indirect path of our model, Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention through Brand Loyalty, the relationships were positive and significant in both collaborations. In the Dior collaboration ( $\beta = 0,347$ ,  $SE = 0,111$ ,  $z = 3,55$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ) and for Nike ( $\beta = 0,311$ ,  $SE = 0,0679$ ,  $z = 6,4$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ).

In the model featuring the Dior collaboration the direct effect between Perceived Brand Identity Fit were non-significant. However, the indirect effects were significant establishing a full mediation effect.

In the case of the Nike collaboration, both the direct and indirect effect were significant which suggests a partial positive mediation of the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention through Brand Loyalty.

**Table 4.10.** Robustness check regressions

<b>Path</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>z</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Perceived Brand Identity Fit → Purchase Intention	LVxDior	0,192	0,116	1,88	0,06	Non-Significant
	LVxNike	0,362	0,0827	6,11	<0,001	Significant
Perceived Brand Identity Fit → Brand Loyalty	LVxDior	0,514	0,122	4,2	<0,001	Significant
	LVxNike	0,587	0,0829	9,15	<0,001	Significant
Brand Loyalty → Purchase Intention	LVxDior	0,675	0,117	6,62	<0,001	Significant
	LVxNike	0,529	0,064	8,94	<0,001	Significant
Perceived Brand Identity Fit → Brand Loyalty → Purchase Intention	LVxDior	0,347	0,111	3,55	<0,001	Significant
	LVxNike	0,311	0,0679	6,4	<0,001	Significant

#### 4.11 Hypothesis Summary

This study examined six hypotheses and two hypotheses were not supported. Results show that traditional luxury collaborations do not have a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit in comparison to unconventional luxury fashion collaborations. What is also concluded is that a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit positively affects Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand. Consumer-Brand Identification is shown to positively moderate the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty. What is also seen, is that a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit positively affects Purchase Intention of the co-brand. However, Consumer-Brand Identification does not moderate the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. Finally, the results revealed that Brand Loyalty mediates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. This is summarized in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11.** Hypothesis Summary

Hypothesis	Result
H1 <i>Traditional luxury fashion collaborations have a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit than the unconventional luxury fashion collaboration.</i>	Not supported ( $p = 0,689$ )
H2 <i>There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand.</i>	Supported ( $p < 0,001$ )
H3 <i>Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand.</i>	Supported ( $p = 0,042$ )
H4 <i>There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand.</i>	Supported ( $p < 0,001$ )
H5 <i>Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand.</i>	Not supported ( $p = 0,254$ )
H6 <i>Brand Loyalty positively mediates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention.</i>	Supported ( $p < 0,001$ )

## 4.12 Discussion

This quantitative study investigates the evolving dynamics of luxury fashion collaborations, more specifically focusing on how the blurring boundaries of luxury influence the traditional guidelines of luxury fashion collaborations by testing what the effects of Perceived Brand Identity Fit of a collaboration are on Brand Loyalty and ultimately Purchase Intention. By investigating these blurred boundaries, the aim of the study was to fill the gap in existing literature which has not adequately considered studying it through the perspective of Perceived Brand Identity Fit, as well as the moderating role of Consumer-Brand Identification in shaping responses to such collaborations. Out of the six proposed hypotheses, two were not supported and four were supported. Firstly, hypothesis one which read “*Traditional luxury fashion collaborations have a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit than the unconventional luxury fashion collaboration*” was not supported, meaning that the tests could not prove that the collaboration with congruent brand identities (LVxDior) had a higher perception of fit compared to the unconventional collaboration (LVxNike). Previous



research has indicated that the success of luxury fashion collaborations are a consequence of consumers evaluation of the perceived fit (Lanseng & Olsen, 2012; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022) and that success furthermore is derived from a congruence of the partnering brands (Baumgarth, 2004; Lanseng & Olsen, 2012; Park et al., 1991; Sénéchal, Georges and Pernin, 2013), which this study examines through an identity perspective like Xiao & Lee (2014). However, results of this study suggest that there is no difference in the perceptual brand identity fit from the consumer's point of view when comparing the two cases. This further provides an alternative angle to the studies by Barsalou, 1985, Elliott-Rosenbaum, 2020 Lanseng and Olsen, 2012. Interpreting these results may showcase that when initiating luxury fashion collaborations, both traditional strategies and unconventional strategies can be leveraged to the same extent in terms of being perceived as having a proper fit between the participating brands. These results reflect several complexities in the dynamic world of luxury fashion and indicate that consumer perceptions are shifting from the traditional definitions of luxury, just as proposed by (Diaz Ruiz & Cruz, 2023; Shahid & Paul, 2021; Thomsen et al, 2020).

Results from the linear regression showcase a strong significantly positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty. The second hypothesis (H2) “*There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand.*” is therefore supported in line with previous research on collaborations and Brand Loyalty (Heo et al, 2023; Kim et al, 2023; Lee & Che, 2022; Mróz-Gorgón, 2016; Shen et al, 2017; Xiao & Lee, 2014). However, the results extend the literature by proving a significant positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty, which validates the growing importance of identity and consumer perceptions in luxury (Huggard & Cope, 2020) instead of just examining constructs like traditional fit measures such as brand concept consistency and product fit (Baumgarth, 2004; Helmig et al., 2007; Park et al., 1991; Sénéchal et al., 2013). The results can provide an alternative angle compared to the findings of Shan et al. (2022) as the maintenance of Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand, even though participating in an unconventional collaboration may indicate that the risk of luxury brand dilution is not that pressing. This could therefore instead be in line with the findings of Quamina et al. (2023) which argue that luxury brands prestige and desirability attributes aren't diluted after unconventional collaborations. Following this logic, the concerns expressed by Sana, Yan, Kim, Bjork & Bjork (2018) and Shan et al (2022)

about the risks of "sharing the spotlight" might be over exaggerated as increased Brand Loyalty was correlated with a high Perceived Brand Identity Fit.

The moderating effects of the third hypothesis "*Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand*" resulted in a significant positive relationship, and is therefore supported. This indicates that Consumer-Brand Identification does moderate the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty. These result are congruent with previous literature about the relevance of Consumer-Brand Identification of fostering Brand Loyalty (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Nyadzayo et al, 2020; Van der Westhuizen, 2018; Wang et al, 2022), especially in the context of unconventional luxury fashion collaborations (Heo et al, 2023; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). This also challenges the findings of Xiao & Lee (2014) as the positive moderation of our study indicates that someone with a higher Consumer-Brand Identification exudes a higher Brand Loyalty towards the luxury brand, if the Perceived Brand Identity Fit is high. An explanation to this could be the difference in functional/hedonic attributes between the tech collaborations in their study and the luxury fashion collaborations of this study, which Xiao & Lee (2014) meant could explain the lack of effect. Additionally, since consumers often use fashion as vehicles for self expression (Huggard & Cope, 2020), self identification might be of higher pertinence.

The fourth hypothesis which read "*There is a positive relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand.*" was supported as the study found a significantly strong positive relationship between the two constructs. This follows the logic of Suzuki & Kanno (2022) and Heo et al (2023). The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that Purchase Intention is influenced by individual attitudes and perceived behavioral control. Drawing the parallel to co-branding, results from this study showcase that Perceived Brand Identity Fit of the collaboration serve as a crucial determinant of consumers attitudes towards the co-branded product, which in turn influence their Purchase Intention. Additionally, this study has extended previous studies by specifically involving the role of Perceived Brand Identity Fit in shaping consumer perceptions and Purchase Intentions within the context of luxury fashion collaborations. Findings of this study also resonate with the conclusions provided by Heo et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of further research within the field of collaborations between luxury brands and sportswear brands, which in this case have been between Louis Vuitton and Nike. By answering the call from (Heo et al.,

2023), this study has contributed to the understanding of how Perceived Brand Identity Fit influences Purchase Intention within the sphere of luxury fashion collaborations.

Unlike the other hypotheses, the fifth hypothesis of this study, which states “*Consumer-Brand Identification positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand*” resulted in a non-significant effect and is therefore not supported. These results are not in line with current research saying that higher Consumer-Brand Identification with the luxury brand increases Purchase Intention of the co-brand (Heo et al 2023; Mazodier & Merunka, 2014; Paydas Turan, 2021; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022). Several implications could be extracted from the rejection of this moderating hypothesis, including the indication that when pursuing an unconventional collaboration strategy within luxury fashion with the goal of increasing Purchase Intention, managers can spend less time concerned about the different behaviors and intentions of their consumers related to their Consumer-Brand Identification. Even though the study did not find empirical support for H5, the results contribute with interesting insights to the ongoing discussion on consumer behavior in unconventional luxury fashion collaborations, especially regarding the discrepancy between theoretical expectations and empirical findings.

The sixth and final hypothesis “*Brand Loyalty positively mediates the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention*” was supported as it resulted in a significantly strong positive mediating effect between the variables which is in agreement with past literature on unconventional luxury fashion collaborations (Alexander & Contreras, 2016; Heo et al, 2023). This could be explained by the notion that Brand Loyalty often is described with purchase behavioral definitions (Belli et al., 2022; Oliver, 2014). As luxury collaborations according to the literature moreover seem to foster Brand Loyalty (Lee & Che, 2022; Ma et al., 2018; Shen et al., 2017; Swaminathan et al., 2012) which ultimately may translate into increased consumer Purchase Intention (Alexander & Contreras, 2016), it was evident to hypothesize its link to the concept of Purchase Intention. However, our study extends this understanding by examining the mediation effect that Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand has between the relationship of Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand.

The results of the Robustness check, when examining the two different cases by themselves, show that the relationship between the Perceived Brand Identity Fit of the unconventional

collaboration of LVxNike was positively significant with both Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. The same goes for the mediation effect which was also significant. Examining the results of the conventional case of LVxDior, showed a positive significant relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty, but a non-significant relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. The mediation was also significant indicating a full mediation effect on the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention through Brand Loyalty.

Referring back to the paradigm shift of luxury mentioned in the introduction of this study, the findings related to the concept of Perceived Brand Identity Fit propose that consumer perceptions play a bigger part in this transformation. Both in terms of the brand identity fit and thereby the matchmaking of collaborations, but also the extent of consumers own self-identification and ultimately how it affects the outcome of the strategy. This trend can redefine the competitive landscape of the luxury fashion industry, where adaptability and an understanding of perceptual alignment with consumers are as crucial as the traditional pillars of exclusivity within luxury fashion collaborations. In addition to this, luxury brands partnering with a widely recognized brand, for instance Nike, could ease management of the rarity paradox since unconventional luxury fashion collaborations can tap into brand assets of both partners, enabling the co-brand to be both unattainable and widely recognized (Diaz Ruiz & Cruz, 2023). This reasoning is strengthened by the fact that this study found no difference between the collaborations in their Perceived Brand Identity Fit, yet found Perceived Brand Identity Fit to be a success factor for nurturing consumer intentions.

Even though the fifth hypothesis was not supported, which may indicate that Consumer-Brand Identification does not moderate Purchase Intention, the fact that both hypothesis three and six was supported, indicate that the moderation effects of Brand Loyalty in combination with the mediating effects that Brand Loyalty has on Purchase Intention may still indicate that managers should consider consumers self-identification when seeking to increase Purchase Intention. However, through the indirect effects. This reasoning would instead put the findings of this study in line with previous results within the literature (Heo et al 2023; Mazodier & Merunka, 2014; Paydas Turan, 2021; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022).

The mediation effect in the unconventional collaboration could be explained by the innovation and potential synergies in intellectual and identity assets that both brands

contribute with to the co-brand (Alexander & Contreras, 2016; de Oliveira Campos, Costa & da Costa, 2019). The loyal consumers of the luxury brand may find these types of collaborations intriguing compared to the regular products that they offer and appreciate the divisiveness and complementarity that the brand's varying identities may bring to the co-brand (Xiao & Lee, 2014).

## 5. Conclusion

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*The final chapter of this study discusses research aims, research objectives, concludes the findings, highlights theoretical- and managerial implications which is ultimately followed by the limitations and future research.*

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### 5.1 Research Aims and Objectives

This study answered the call of many past researchers (Heo et al, 2023; Mazodier & Merunka, 2014; Shen et al, 2017; Xiao & Lee, 2014) by providing deeper understanding of the concepts Perceived Brand Identity Fit, unconventional luxury fashion collaborations, Purchase Intention, Brand Loyalty and Consumer-Brand Identification. The aim of this study has been to enhance the understanding of how the increasingly blurred boundaries of luxury influence the traditional guidelines of luxury fashion collaborations. This has been done by testing what the effects of Perceived Brand Identity Fit of a collaboration are on Brand Loyalty and ultimately Purchase Intention. Furthermore, Consumer-Brand Identification with the luxury brand has been tested as a moderator towards these relationships. Ultimately, the mediation effect of Brand Loyalty on Purchase Intention has been tested. In order to achieve this research aim, the following research questions were constructed:

Main research question:

- *What is the relationship between unconventional luxury fashion collaborations and consumer intentions?*

Sub-questions:

- *Does a traditional fashion collaboration have a higher perceived identity fit than an unconventional fashion collaboration?*
- *What is the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention of the co-brand?*
- *What is the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand?*

- *What is the moderation of Consumer-Brand Identification in the relationships between unconventional luxury fashion collaboration and Purchase Intention of the co-brand?*
- *What is the moderation of Consumer-Brand Identification in the relationships between unconventional luxury fashion collaboration and Brand Loyalty of the luxury brand?*

To conclude, this study found the following relationships between unconventional luxury fashion collaborations and consumer intentions: Firstly, the conventional luxury collaboration with the Actual Brand Identity Fit (LVxDior) did not have a higher Perceived Brand Identity Fit than the unconventional luxury fashion collaboration (LVxNike), answering the first subquestion. Moreover, the construct Perceived Brand Identity Fit had a strong positive significant impact on Brand Loyalty and furthermore Purchase Intention. Additionally, a significantly strong positive mediation effect from Brand Loyalty was found, impacting Purchase Intention. However, no moderating effect of Consumer-Brand Identification was found in the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Purchase Intention. On the other hand, a moderating effect was instead found in the relationship between Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Brand Loyalty.

## **5.2 Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study provides theoretical implications by bridging gaps between the research streams of luxury fashion collaborations, identity, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention. Firstly, our study has extended the literature on brand fit (Baumgarth, 2004; Lanseng & Olsen, 2012; Park et al., 1991; Sénéchal, Georges and Pernin, 2013) by incorporating the alternative angle of consumer perceptions rather than settling for actual brand fit. This study has furthermore, similar to Xiao & Lee (2014), integrated the concept of identity and thereby continued the conversation of Perceived Brand Identity Fit into the luxury fashion sector, which proved to be of relevance for luxury fashion collaboration success. While previous research has partly contributed to our understanding of co-branding success drivers (Barsalou, 1985; Baumgarth, 2004; Elliott-Rosenbaum, 2020; Helmig et al., 2007; Lanseng and Olsen, 2012; Paydas Turan, 2021; Sénéchal et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2014), the lack of consensus underscores the complex nature of consumer behavior in co-branding initiatives. This study adds to this field by incorporating the importance of

Perceived Brand Identity Fit and Consumer-Brand Identification and its relationship to consumer intentions, addressing the main research question. Moreover, findings from this study responds to the call from Xiao and Lee (2014) to understand if there is an effect on Brand Loyalty towards the focal brand after a co-brand launch. In the light of the blurring lines of luxury (Diaz Ruiz & Cruz, 2023; Shahid & Paul, 2021; Thomsen et al., 2020), this study have by comparing traditional collaborations with a unconventional one, continued to explore the emerging trend of unconventional luxury fashion collaborations and proved its (atleast) parity with traditional collaborations (Cabigiosu, 2021; Heo et al, 2023; Murtas et al, 2022; Quamina et al, 2023; Suzuki & Kanno, 2022).

### **5.3 Managerial Implications**

This study also contributes with several managerial implications. Firstly, managers may leverage unconventional fashion collaborations as a strategic tool to influence Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention, given that the identities of the collaborating partners are perceived to be of high fit. Luxury fashion brands could therefore pursue more exciting partnerships to the same extent as traditional luxury fashion collaborations. Secondly, when initiating luxury fashion collaborations, managers should put effort into ensuring a high perceived identity fit when choosing the collaborating partner. As seen in the robustness check, this applies to both unconventional and traditional luxury fashion collaborations. Thirdly, managers should pay extra attention to the perceptions of those consumers who highly self-identify with the luxury brand as their behaviors and intentions are more sensitive to the perceptions of brand identity fit than those who don't self-identify with the luxury brand.

### **5.4 Limitations and Future Research**

It's important to acknowledge that this thesis has some limitations. Since the research design utilizes the cases LVxDior and LVxNike as stimuli, as well as in the analysis, generalizability of the results beyond these collaborations should be done with caution. Future research should therefore use other cases than those used in this study to test if the results are similar. On top of that, researchers should incorporate a pre-study when creating the collaborations in order to ensure their identity congruence or dissimilarity. The pre-test could use a similar design as those of (Suzuki & Kanno, 2022; Xiao & Lee, 2014).



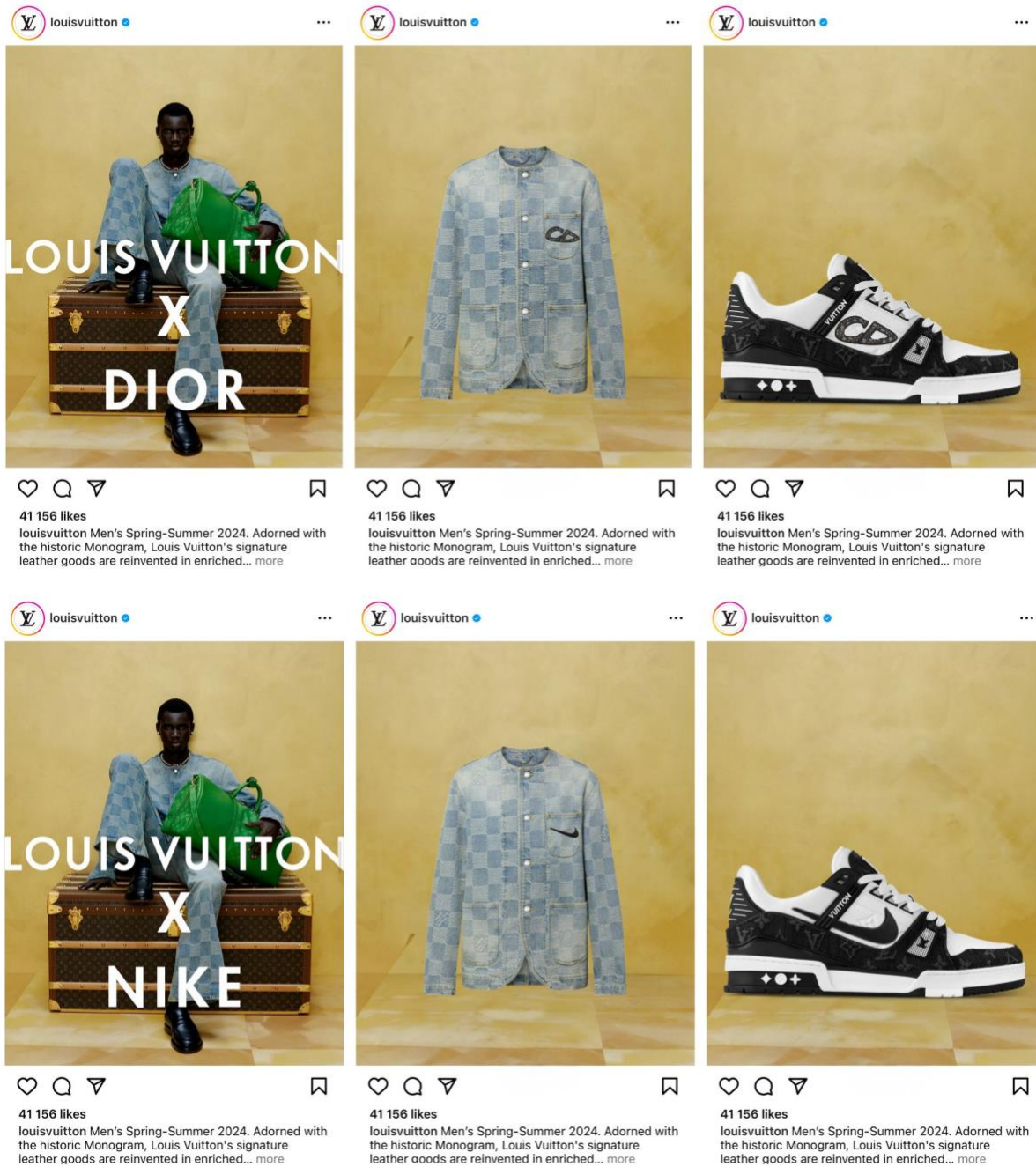
Based on the aim of this study a cross-sectional research design was chosen. However, to visualize a more nuanced picture of the differences between traditional and unconventional collaborations, a more extensive experimental research design could be utilized to investigate the different variables more thoroughly together with using appropriate statistical tests for comparing means. The suggestion can further help to understand casualties for the future research field of luxury collaborations.

Since this research based its findings on a convenience sample, it creates further limitations as it may provide difficulties in terms of generalizability and lack of diversity. This opens up for further opportunities. To gain deeper insights into consumer perceptions about Perceived Brand Identity Fit on unconventional luxury collaborations, future opportunities would be to conduct studies with sample groups that are distinctively divided into several sub- luxury consumer groups, and thereon compare them with each other. This would provide researchers with extended knowledge of how different demographics, consumption patterns, personal values and cultural backgrounds influence the perception of these types of collaborations. By doing this, researchers could identify patterns and draw more generalized conclusions regarding consumer behavior. Moreover, longitudinal studies would also be interesting in order to observe how consumer perceptions and attitudes evolve over time in response to the rapidly changing environment of luxury fashion.

As the result showcases that Perceived Brand Identity Fit necessarily doesn't have to mean actual congruence between the brands identities, further research should investigate which components contribute in order for a collaboration to be seen as having a high Perceived Brand Identity Fit. By conducting a qualitative study with in-depth interviews, a more thorough understanding of what drives these perceptions could be obtained. Whether it's due to some association transfers between the brands, a consequence of pop-culture intermediation or because of celebrities' influence (Huggard & Cope, 2020).

# Appendix

## Appendix A. Stimuli



## Appendix B. Press Release

Paris Fashion Week Unveils Historic Collaboration: Louis Vuitton x Nike  
Paris, France - [5th March, 2024]

In a historic moment at Paris Fashion Week, the world-renowned creative director of Louis Vuitton, Pharrell Williams, took center stage to announce an unprecedented collaboration with Nike, marking a significant milestone in the realm of luxury fashion.

The collaboration, which merges the distinct aesthetics of Louis Vuitton and Nike, promises to redefine the boundaries of creativity and luxury. With Pharrell Williams at the helm of Louis Vuitton's innovative endeavors and Nike's legacy of groundbreaking athletic design, this partnership sets a new standard for the industry.

"This collaboration represents a fusion of artistic vision and craftsmanship," commented Pharrell Williams. "It's an honor to work alongside Nike to create something truly extraordinary."

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Paris Fashion Week Unveils Historic Collaboration: Louis Vuitton x Dior  
Paris, France - [5th March, 2024]

In a historic moment at Paris Fashion Week, the world-renowned creative director of Louis Vuitton, Pharrell Williams, took center stage to announce an unprecedented collaboration with Dior, marking a significant milestone in the realm of luxury fashion.

The collaboration, which merges the distinct aesthetics of Louis Vuitton and Dior, promises to redefine the boundaries of creativity and luxury. With Pharrell Williams at the helm of Louis Vuitton's innovative endeavors and Dior's timeless elegance, this partnership sets a new standard for the industry.

"This collaboration represents a fusion of artistic vision and craftsmanship," commented Pharrell Williams. "It's an honor to work alongside Dior to create something truly extraordinary."

Audiences at Paris Fashion Week were treated to a sneak peek of the collaborative collection, showcasing a seamless integration of Louis Vuitton and Dior's iconic styles.

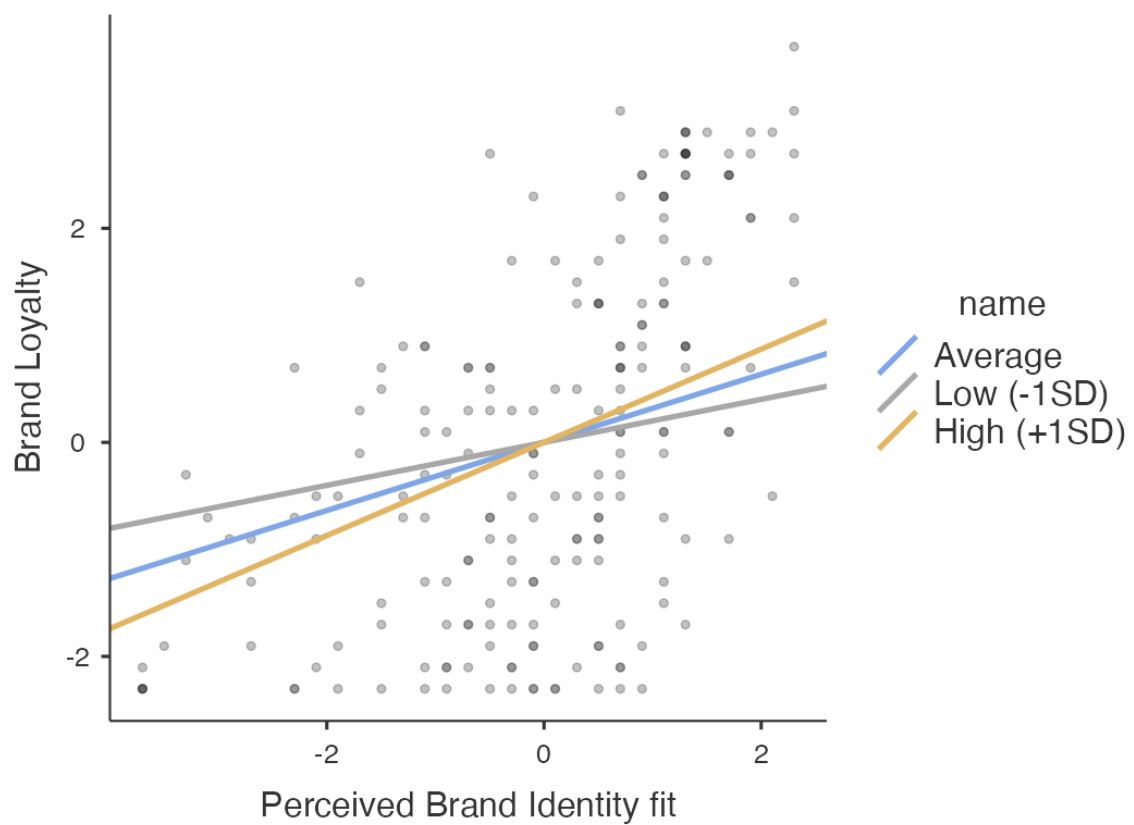
## Appendix C. Model Fit: Linear regression

### Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Overall Model Test			
				F	df1	df2	p
1	0.565	0.320	0.316	96.8	1	206	<.001

## Appendix D. Simple Slope Plot

### Simple Slope Plot



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