



Identifying antecedent conditions for luxury brand purchase

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ABSTRACT

This research draws upon self-termination and complexity theories and aims to identify the antecedent recipes for Chinese consumers' intention to purchase Chinese- (referred to as domestic) or non-Chinese (referred to as foreign) luxury brands. Two studies were undertaken. First, an online survey was undertaken to examine the antecedent conditions of luxury brand purchase. The opted conditions in this study include value perceptions, special occasions, and demographic profiles. An asymmetrical method by employing fsQCA was used to identify the unique antecedent conditions of purchase intentions. Symmetrical testing was also performed prior to fsQCA as a comparison. The findings from symmetrical and asymmetrical methods share few similar, but nevertheless complementary findings, hence providing new insights into consumers' luxury brand choices. In the second study, interviews were conducted to deepen the understanding of Chinese consumers' knowledge, perceptions of, and attitudes towards luxury brands. Discussion and implications for marketing luxury brands in the Chinese market conclude this paper.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of the Chinese economy and the substantial purchasing power of Chinese consumers have led to a high demand for luxury goods consumption. Chinese consumption is expected to account for almost 40% of the total market share of the global luxury goods market in 2025 (McKinsey and Company, 2019; Zhan and He, 2012). Affluent Chinese are willing to pay for luxury goods to highlight status and prestige (Wang et al., 2011). There has been an increase in the demand for the inconspicuous consumption of luxury brands in recent years (Wu et al., 2017), indicating influence of personal values and social influences on luxury brand purchase (Ajitha and Sivakumar, 2017; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Wilcox et al., 2009).

Chinese consumers are more prone to purchase and consume international, non-Chinese luxury brands (hereafter foreign luxury brands). Consumers believe that foreign luxury brands provide better financial performance (Hsu, 2014; Wang et al., 2011), have greater functional benefits, and have a high-status image, in addition to communicating a sense of Western lifestyles (Mo, 2016; Zhan and He, 2012). Foreign luxury brands seem to appeal to the cultural, social, and economic needs of Chinese consumers (Lu, 2011). Nevertheless, some Chinese consumers show high favourability to domestic luxury brands. For example,

Chow Tai Fook has replaced Cartier, and Wu Liang Ye and Maotai have a relatively higher demand than other Spanish, Australian, or British liquor brands (Lab Report, 2008). Domestic luxury brands are distinctive in the way that these brands are embedded with Chinese cultural elements (e.g. pictures and symbols), traditional manufacturing skills (e.g. silk), and Chinese cultural heritage (i.e. stories, fairy tales, superstition) (Heine and Gutsatz, 2015; Lab Report, 2008). A review of the literature suggests little is known about Chinese consumers' opinions towards domestic and/or foreign luxury brands.

Aliyev et al. (2018) indicated that Westerners and non-Westerners have different perceptions of luxury brands. European consumers tend to be attentive to the object (i.e. luxury car) and Asian consumers focus on the peripheral attributes associated with the object. Aliyev and Wagner (2018) found differences in luxury value perceptions (i.e. conspicuousness, uniqueness, high quality, hedonism) between collectivist and individualistic cultures. Shukla et al. (2015) argued that there is often a lack of optimal performance of foreign luxury brands in the Asian markets (i.e. China, India, Indonesia) due to a lack of understanding of consumer value perceptions towards luxury brands. Little research has examined whether Chinese consumers take into consideration similar or different luxury values when choosing between domestic luxury brands and foreign luxury brands and whether these

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values will influence their purchase intention. Such values can be intrinsically or extrinsically driven based on self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The theory indicates that the underlying motive of purchasing or consuming luxury brands can be intrinsic (i.e. self-expression through luxury brand purchase) and/or extrinsic (i.e. obtaining social status and approval through luxury consumption). Purchasing a luxury brand may be initially extrinsically motivated by the perceived value and benefits, then intrinsically motivated by gratification of possessing the brand. Consequently, this study draws on the self-determination theory and aims to investigate how value perceptions affect Chinese consumers' purchase and consumption of luxury brands, both domestic and foreign.

Given the expensive nature of luxury brands, the purchase of luxury brands (i.e. timing) is often related to the occurrence of special occasions such as anniversaries, weddings, birthdays, and other ceremonies (Godart and Zhao, 2014; Liu and Murphy, 2007; Lukkarinen and Wei, 2012; Shukla, 2010; Wang et al., 2010, 2011). These occasions form external motivation and can also be explained by self-determination theory. The literature also shows that demographic characteristics play a role in Chinese consumers' luxury brand purchase behaviour. For example, Aliyev and Wagner (2018) found that the uniqueness and hedonism of luxury brands play a more important role among women than men. Kim et al. (2011) found that younger generation consumers tend to engage in self-gift giving when purchasing luxury products. It was also found that consumers with higher levels of education tend to integrate the symbolic meaning of luxury brands in the presentation and development of their self-identity (Kim et al., 2011).

This discussion suggests that the purchase of luxury products can result from various factors including value perceptions, special occasions, and consumers' demographic characteristics. Previous research primarily focused on unique variance accounted for by each factor in symmetrical testing, such as multiple regression and structural equation modelling. However, the intention to buy an expensive luxury brand can be affected by a combination of reasons or factors. Urry's (2005) complexity theory suggests that causal factors seldom operate alone to explain the outcome, and the same casual element can have a positive and/or negative effect (Prentice, 2019). Asymmetrical testing is reflective of the complexity theory and more suitable to explain the decision-making process of purchasing luxury brands. Asymmetrical testing offers the following merits: causal asymmetry, equifinality, and conjunction. The asymmetry indicates both high and low scores of the same antecedent condition for different cases and can appear in two different configurations (also referred to as recipes) to account for the same outcome. Asymmetrical testing includes contrarian cases with additional algorithms to the findings. The equifinality indicates that an outcome can be reached by multiple paths or recipes of proposed antecedent conditions (Douglas and Prentice, 2019; Douglas et al., 2020; Prentice, 2019). For example, a high score for a given recipe may be sufficient to indicate a high outcome for a given case but this recipe is not necessary for a high outcome score to occur. Causal conjunction shows that the same simple antecedent condition can appear in both positive and negative models for the same outcome condition. Whereby the recipes indicating the negation of an outcome condition are not the mirror opposites of the recipes showing a positive response for the same outcome condition. These merits are manifested in fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), a data analytical method that is configurational based and relies on Boolean algebra and set theory principles (Douglas and Prentice, 2019; Prentice, 2019).

Consistent with the foregoing discussion, this study draws on self-determination and complexity theories examines asymmetrical relationships between the proposed antecedent conditions including value perceptions, demographic characteristics, and special occasions, and the purchase intention of luxury brands as the outcome, with a focus on Chinese consumers. This research includes both domestic and foreign luxury brands since the antecedent conditions for such purchases vary across individuals (Shukla and Purani, 2012). To fulfil the research aim,

two studies were undertaken. The first involved a survey to identify the antecedent conditions for the purchase intent of domestic or foreign luxury brands by Chinese consumers using the asymmetrical approach, fsQCA. The findings led to the second study which seeks insights into brand choices by interviewing selected Chinese consumers. As a result, this study contributes to luxury brand research by employing the complexity theory and a fsQCA method to provide a fresh perspective on the configurations of values, personal characteristics, and situational factors that explain consumer purchase behaviours.

Next, we provide an overview of the literature on luxury brand value perceptions, demographic characteristics, and special occasions, followed by hypothesis development. The methodology for testing these proposed relationships are outlined for the first study and results are presented. The second study was undertaken based on the findings of the first. Discussion of the findings of both studies and implications conclude the paper.

2. Literature review

2.1. Value perceptions and purchase intention

Consumers' perceived value has been considered the most important indicator of the purchase of luxury brands (Sheth et al., 1991; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010). Research shows that value perception has a positive influence on purchase intention and consumer choice (Kim and Park, 2016; Schlosser et al., 2006; Smith and Colgate, 2007; Tynan et al., 2010; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Luxury value perception can be seen as the most critical indicator of repurchase intention (Parasuraman and Grewal, 2000). Luxury brand value consists of several dimensions and multiple frameworks of luxury value perceptions (Berthon et al., 2009; Burmann et al., 2009; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2007, 2009). Vigneron and Johnson (1999, 2004) developed a theoretical framework of luxury brand value focusing on both non-personal (i.e. conspicuousness, uniqueness, and social values) and personal oriented value perceptions (i.e. hedonism, and extended self). Wiedmann et al. (2007, 2009) extend Vigneron and Johnson's (1999, 2004) luxury value framework by adding a financial value dimension to consumer perceived value. More recently researchers have argued that luxury brand value is co-created by brand owners, consumers, employees, and other stakeholders (Burmann et al., 2009; Tynan et al., 2010).

Based on self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), there are intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations within consumer behaviour. For individuals, intrinsic motivation reflects the satisfaction and pleasure derived from engaging in activities for its own sake (Walker et al., 2006) and is associated with higher levels of self-determination (Fairchild et al., 2005). Alternatively, extrinsic motivation reflects behaviour viewed more as a means to an end (Walker et al., 2006) and is more reliant on external rewards or demands (Ryan and Deci, 2000). We argue that luxury value perceptions are internally versus externally oriented. For example, social value involves a public display of wealth and using conspicuous consumption to enhance one's prestige in society. Whereas hedonic value reflects on a shift in consumer attitudes away from social class and status seeking, towards personalised experience and might be influenced by personal goals and aspirations.

The literature has identified multiple luxury value perceptions, summarised in Appendix 1. Drawing on this summary, within this study we categorise these into product and personal values. The former includes functional (i.e. quality, design), financial (i.e. price worthiness, economical), and hedonic value (i.e. brand sense, brand emotion) dimensions. The latter includes individual (i.e. self-complacency, mood-lifting), social values (social symbol, social acceptance), and overall luxury value perception (i.e. a sense of luxury) dimensions. The purchase of luxury brands can be a combination of different value perceptions. Shukla and Purani (2012) investigated luxury value perceptions among British and Indian consumers. They found that several luxury

value perceptions may be relevant among all cultures and countries, but their degree of influence may differ significantly. Similarly, when comparing Chinese and non-Chinese luxury brands, several value perceptions may be more or less influential among Chinese consumers in terms of purchase intention. Domestic and foreign brands are often connotated with different values in the case of Chinese consumers. Therefore, the following hypotheses were offered:

H1. Value perceptions are significantly related to purchase intention of domestic luxury brands

H2. Value perceptions are significantly related to purchase intention of foreign luxury brands

2.2. Special occasions and demographic characteristics

Consumers purchase and use luxury products for special occasions (de Barnier et al., 2006; Hume and Mills, 2013; Nieves-Rodriguez et al., 2017; Pocheptsova et al., 2010) such as date nights, anniversaries (Kara and Vredevelde, 2020), weddings, birthdays, and other events (Eastman et al., 2020). Consumers of high socioeconomic status might perceive luxury goods as essential to be used for important business and social occasions (Chen and Lamberti, 2015).

Consumers view the unique aspect of special occasion products differently (Pocheptsova et al., 2010). According to Walley and Li (2015), Chinese consumers tend to purchase luxury goods during traditional cultural festivals (e.g. Spring Festival, Moon Festival) and for birthdays. Similarly, Yu (2016) argued that holidays (which often occur at the same time as the festivals) or anniversaries were significant predictors of Chinese consumers purchasing luxuries. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2011) argued that elite Chinese consumers tend to purchase more luxury goods for special occasions (Wang et al., 2011). Although consumers' brand perceptions can be influenced by their socioeconomic classification (Munn, 1960). Previous studies have identified the influence of the demographic characteristics of consumers on luxury goods and services purchase decisions (Ajitha and Sivakumar, 2019; Dubois et al., 2005; Dubois and Duquesne, 1993; Eastman and Liu, 2012; Eisend et al., 2017; Lee and Hwang, 2011; Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Park et al., 2008; Zhan and He, 2012).

The financial status of an individual is related to the consumption of luxury goods (Husic and Cicic, 2009). Previous research has demonstrated the dominant role of income on luxury consumption behaviour (Han et al., 2010). Higher-income consumers tend to purchase more luxuries than lower-income consumers (Ikeda, 2006). Whereas Francese (2002) indicated that the low-income population may consume a certain amount of luxuries. In addition, gender might influence luxury consumption. Dittmar (1994, 2005) argued that men tend to focus on function-oriented luxury goods, whereas female consumers tend to purchase luxury goods based on their emotional and social appeal. Women also tend to value the uniqueness of luxury brand more than men (Aliyev and Wagner 2018; Nwankwo et al., 2014). However, gender and age might not influence the repurchase intention of luxury brands and products (Young and Combs, 2016). Overall, it is expected that demographic characteristics will influence Chinese consumers' intention to purchase domestic and foreign luxury brands. Consequently, the following hypotheses were offered:

H3. Special occasions and demographic characteristics are significantly related to purchase intention of Chinese luxury brands

H4. Special occasions and demographic characteristics are significantly related to purchase intention of foreign luxury brands

The proposed relationships are present in Fig. 1.

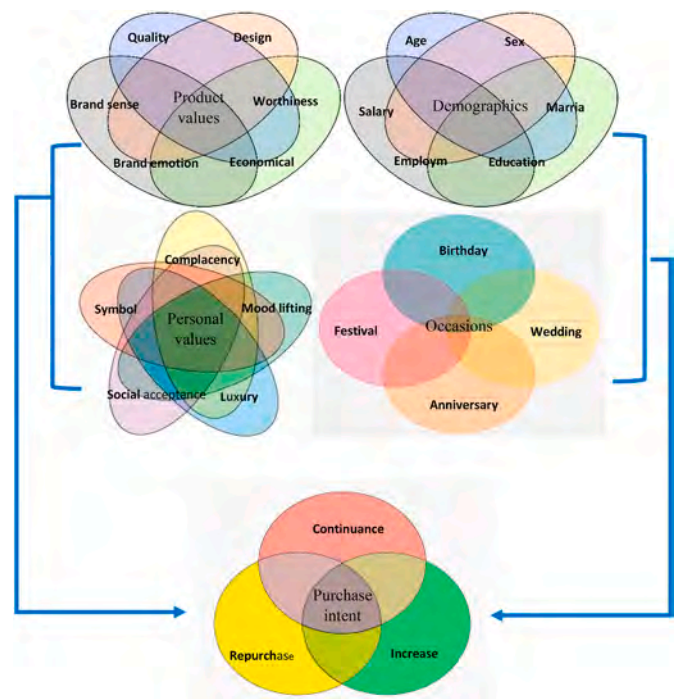


Fig. 1. The model of the study.

3. Study 1

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Sample and data collection

To test the hypotheses, data were collected via an online survey in Shanghai, which accounts for a large market share of the consumption of luxury brands (Pope et al., 2020). The questionnaires were distributed through a Chinese web-based market research list service named "WenJuanXing" from May to June 2020. The list service resulted in a total of 400 useable responses, including 200 who had experience with, and had purchased, domestic luxury brands, and 200 who had similar experiences with foreign luxury brands. The demographic profile is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 shows an equal gender split between the 400 participants. For the domestic luxury brands, 61.5% of the participants were aged between 25 and 34 years old, with approximately two-thirds (77.5%) holding a bachelor's degree, and 28% of the participants had an approximate income of 100,001RMB to 150,000RMB. For foreign luxury brands, 55.5% of the participants were aged between 25 and 34 years old, with approximately 80.5% holding a bachelor's degree, and 35.5% of the participants earned over 150,000RMB yearly.

3.1.2. Instruments

The scale items used to measure the variables of interest in this study were sourced from the literature. Product and design dimensions were measured using 5 items developed by Stepien et al. (2016). Price worthiness and economic value were assessed with 4 items from Hennigs et al. (2013) and Choo et al. (2012). Brand sense and brand emotion were measured using six items developed by Wiedmann et al. (2018). Five items proposed by Yang et al. (2018) were used to measure self-complacency and mood lifting. Social symbol and social acceptance were measured with 8 items developed by Shukla (2012). A sense of luxury was measured by three items developed by Hennigs et al. (2013) and Shukla and Purani (2012). All of the items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Respondents were asked to name three Chinese luxury brands they were familiar with, and select their favourite brand from the three

Table 1
The sample characteristics (N = 400).

	Domestic luxury brands (n = 200)		Foreign luxury brands (n = 200)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age				
18 to 24	30	15%	43	21.5%
25 to 34	123	61.5%	111	55.5%
35 to 44	47	23.5%	46	23%
Gender				
Male	100	50%	100	50%
Female	100	50%	100	50%
Marital status				
Single	49	24.5%	62	31%
Married or De facto	151	75.5%	135	67.5%
Divorced or Separated	0	0%	3	1.5%
Widowed	0	0%	0	0%
Level of education				
High school or below	4	2%	2	1%
College	15	7.5%	10	5%
Bachelor	155	77.5%	161	80.5%
Master or above	26	13%	27	13.5%
Occupation				
Full-time	173	86.5%	166	83%
Part-time	4	2%	1	0.5%
Unemployment	1	0.5%	0	0%
Student	15	7.5%	23	11.5%
Retired	0	0%	0	0%
Self-employed	6	3%	9	4.5%
Others	1	0.5%	1	0.5%
Yearly income				
0,20,000RMB	16	8%	16	8%
20,001RMB-50,000RMB	17	8.5%	21	10.5%
50,001RMB-100,000RMB	54	27%	30	15%
100,001RMB-150,000RMB	56	28%	55	27.5%
Over 150,000RMB	54	27%	71	35.5%
Prefer not to say	3	1.5%	7	3.5%

brands. For example, they might mention Gucci and Maotai (茅台 Chinese liquor). The brand that was chosen as their favourite was included in the survey in relation to measuring their value perceptions for that specific brand. Subsequently if Maotai was their favourite, the brand name Maotai would be inserted into the question bank - "The products of Maotai provide the best quality to money ratio". In this way the questionnaire became individualised, brand specific, and more relevant to the participants.

The original survey questionnaire was translated into Chinese by the research team who were proficient in both Chinese and English. The Chinese questionnaire was then back translated into English by an independent, NAATI Certified translator to ensure the accuracy of the meanings were not lost during the translation process.

3.1.3. Common method bias

To minimise common method bias, we undertook rigorous ex-ante procedures and ex-post statistical remedies following Lindell and Whitney's (2001) approach. First, we used validated scales for the constructs used in this study for the survey. Respondents were anonymous with no revealing of identification information in the questionnaire. Both negative and positive wording for the survey items were used to ensure no response bias. The ex-post remedies include conducting Harman's single factor test, partial correlation procedure, and controlling for the effects of an unmeasured latent methods factor (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicate no violation of common method bias and multicollinearity issue.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability and validity

To understand how product and personal attributes associated with domestic and foreign luxury brands account for purchase intent, we performed symmetrical (multiple regression) and asymmetrical (fsQCA) analyses to gain better insights. The former aimed to understand how each proposed factor contributes to the outcome variables. The rationale for this testing was intended to reinforce the merits of asymmetrical testing by fsQCA, which generates antecedent recipes or configurations for the outcomes of interest. The product attributes opted for this study consisted of product values including product quality, design, price worthiness and economic value, brand sense and emotion, and personal values including self-complacency, mood lifting, social symbol and social acceptance, and a sense of luxury. Personal attributes include demographic characteristics (i.e. age, gender, marital status, education, employment status, and salary) and special occasions (i.e. birthday, wedding, anniversary, and festivals).

The reliability and validity of the study variables were examined prior to hypotheses testing. We assessed these attributes as first-order factors to analyse the unique variance of each dimension. The factor loadings on respective corresponding constructs were significant and the path coefficients between the indicators and their respective first-order factors were significant at the 0.05 level. The composite reliability for all factors were acceptable, and the average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor was over 0.50, indicative of adequate convergence (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The results of standardised residuals and modification indices show no conspicuously significant changes to the model. Table 2 shows the correlations among variables. The square root of average variance extracted for each construct exceeds the correlation between constructs, indicating discriminant validity.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

To highlight the merits of asymmetrical testing, we performed symmetrical analysis using regression first. In the case of domestic brands, economic value ($\beta = 0.16, p < .01$) and brand emotions ($\beta = 0.40, p < .0005$) demonstrated a significant unique variance in purchase intention. Whereas brand values manifested in brand sense ($\beta = 0.27, p < .0005$) and brand emotion ($\beta = 0.29, p < .0005$) and have significant beta coefficients for the purchase of foreign brands. In the case of personal values, mood lifting ($\beta = 0.21, p < .0005$), and a sense of luxury ($\beta = 0.28, p < .05$), these had a significant effect on the intention to purchase domestic brands. Individual values manifested in self-complacency ($\beta = 0.30, p < .0005$) and mood lifting ($\beta = 0.13, p < .05$), as well as social acceptance ($\beta = 0.15, p < .05$), and demonstrated significant unique variances in the purchasing of foreign brands. The results are shown in Table 3. Overall, brand emotions and mood lifting were shown in the purchase intentions of both domestic and foreign brands.

The symmetrical testing shows that only certain value perceptions influence purchase intent. To examine whether the proposed value perceptions can be configured to explain luxury brand choice and purchase fsQCA was deployed. The data were calibrated prior to performing truth table results. The calibration was in accordance with the procedure described in Douglas et al. (2020), Douglas and Prentice (2019), and Prentice and Loureiro (2017). The truth table values were represented by consistency and coverage. Consistency ranged from 0 to 1 with 1, equivalent to statistical significance in regression analysis with values over 0.80 considered significant (Ragin, 2008), indicating the within-person relationships between the recipes and the outcome. Coverage, analogous to the R square value in regression analysis, indicated the magnitude of a specific configuration in the outcome (Ragin, 2008). Table 4 shows the calibrated details of both samples.

H1 and H2 proposed that there were multiple configurations of

Table 2
Correlations among the study variables.

Chinese (International)	Quality	Design	Worthiness	Economical	Brand emotion	Brand sense	Self-complacency	Mood lifting	Acceptance	Symbol
Quality										
Design	.38**(.12)									
Worthiness	.56** (.69**)	.25** (.03)								
Economical	.06(.25**)	.16* (.24**)	.16*(.34**)							
Brand emotion	.23** (.41**)	.33** (.26**)	.31** (.46**)	.11(.31**)						
Brand sense	.30** (.28**)	.40** (.25**)	.27** (.19**)	.32** (.27**)	.38** (.39**)					
Complacency	.30** (.17*)	.34** (.37**)	.35** (.19**)	.26** (.22**)	.26** (.33**)	.45** (.40**)				
Mood lifting	.31** (.23**)	.34** (.31**)	.31** (.30**)	.10(.22**)	.52** (.37**)	.30** (.32**)	.32**(.37**)			
Acceptance	.17* (.23**)	.27** (.10)	.10(.26**)	.15*(.29**)	.37** (.46**)	.20** (.28**)	.18*(.15*)	.30** (.12)		
Symbol	.16*(.12)	.31** (.24**)	.04(.06)	.21** (.34**)	.45** (.35**)	.34** (.32**)	.27**(.21**)	.30** (.12**)	.66** (.59**)	
Luxury	.25** (.25**)	.32** (.15*)	.14*(.22**)	.21** (.24**)	.43** (.47**)	.29** (.40**)	.21**(.19**)	.33** (.22)	.91** (.68**)	.67** (.59**)

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (the values on the left are for Chinese brands, the right for International brands).

Table 3
The effects of product and personal values on purchase intention.

Chinese (International)	Quality	Design	Worthiness	Economical	Brand emotion	Brand sense	Self-complacency	Mood lifting	Acceptance	Symbol
Quality										
Design	.38**(.12)									
Worthiness	.56** (.69**)	.25**(.03)								
Economical	.06(.25**)	.16* (.24**)	.16*(.34**)							
Brand emotion	.23** (.41**)	.33** (.26**)	.31** (.46**)	.11(.31**)						
Brand sense	.30** (.28**)	.40** (.25**)	.27** (.19**)	.32** (.27**)	.38**(.39**)					
Complacency	.30** (.17*)	.34** (.37**)	.35** (.19**)	.26** (.22**)	.26**(.33**)	.45** (.40**)				
Mood lifting	.31** (.23**)	.34** (.31**)	.31** (.30**)	.10(.22**)	.52**(.37**)	.30** (.32**)	.32**(.37**)			
Acceptance	.17* (.23**)	.27**(.10)	.10(.26**)	.15*(.29**)	.37**(.46**)	.20** (.28**)	.18*(.15*)	.30**(.12)		
Symbol	.16*(.12)	.31** (.24**)	.04(.06)	.21** (.34**)	.45**(.35**)	.34** (.32**)	.27**(.21**)	.30** (.12**)	.66** (.59**)	
Luxury	.25** (.25**)	.32** (.15*)	.14*(.22**)	.21** (.24**)	.43**(.47**)	.29** (.40**)	.21**(.19**)	.33**(.22)	.91** (.68**)	.67** (.59**)

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .0005$.

product and personal values leading to the purchase intent of either domestic or foreign brands. Necessity conditions were examined prior to performing the truth table analysis. The results showed none of the attributes were necessary conditions of the proposed outcomes. However, the truth table analyses showed that 11 configurations of product values explained purchase intent in both cases. However, the recipes for each model (configuration) varied between domestic and foreign brands. For instance, Model 1 shows that price worthiness with low brand sense, and emotion, account for the intention to purchase domestic brands. Whereas brand emotion was the only member of intention to purchase in relation to the foreign brand. A review of all 11 models in the case of the domestic brand showed that economic value was the key to purchase intention, and brand sense was key to the purchase of foreign brands. These results provide insights into Chinese consumers' luxury brand product choices. The results are shown in Table 5.

In the case of personal values, the results show that 8 configurations explain the intention to purchase domestic brands, and 5 for foreign brands. Social symbol, social acceptance, and a sense of luxury are

critical for the purchase of domestic brands. Individual value (i.e. mood lifting) and a sense of luxury explains the choice of foreign brands. In comparison, social value has more weighting on the purchase of domestic luxury brands. The results are shown in Table 6.

In contrast to what was proposed, special occasions and demographic characteristics in H5 and H6 did not account for the intention to purchase Chinese domestic luxury brands as the solution coverage was not substantial (0.25). Nevertheless, two recipes were identified with a consistency of 0.80 to explain purchase intention. The recipes reveal that highly educated married individuals, either male or female with a highly paid full-time jobs, tend to purchase domestic luxury brands for their anniversaries. In the case of foreign luxury brands, five recipes explained purchase intention with a solution coverage of 0.46. The results show that education, birthdays, and anniversaries are the key ingredients in the five recipes for the purchase of foreign brands. Full-time, middle age, married individuals tend to favour foreign brands for their anniversaries. We computed these models with algebra expressions following the computing-with-words recommendation by Zadeh (1999).

Table 4
Calibration for the study variables.

Variable/ Antecedent	Descriptive Statistics	Calibrations (.95, .50, .05)
Quality	China: $\mu = 3.88, \sigma = 0.63, \text{min} = 2.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 2.00)
	International: $\mu = 3.75, \sigma = 0.70, \text{min} = 2.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 2.00)
Design	China: $\mu = 4.13, \sigma = 0.60, \text{min} = 2.33, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.33, 2.33)
	International: $\mu = 4.28, \sigma = 0.56, \text{min} = 2.33, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.33, 2.33)
Worthiness	China: $\mu = 3.87, \sigma = 0.76, \text{min} = 1.33, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 1.33)
	International: $\mu = 3.65, \sigma = 0.79, \text{min} = 1.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 3.67, 1.00)
Economical	China: $\mu = 4.22, \sigma = 0.75, \text{min} = 1.50, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.50, 1.50)
	International: $\mu = 3.89, \sigma = 0.74, \text{min} = 1.50, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 1.50)
Brand emotion	China: $\mu = 3.90, \sigma = 0.67, \text{min} = 1.75, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 1.75)
	International: $\mu = 3.63, \sigma = 0.67, \text{min} = 2.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 3.75, 2.00)
Brand sense	China: $\mu = 4.14, \sigma = 0.68, \text{min} = 1.50, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.50, 1.50)
	International: $\mu = 4.15, \sigma = 0.57, \text{min} = 2.50, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 2.50)
Self-complacency	China: $\mu = 4.34, \sigma = 0.57, \text{min} = 2.50, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.50, 2.50)
	International: $\mu = 4.40, \sigma = 0.50, \text{min} = 3.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.50, 3.00)
Mood lifting	China: $\mu = 3.72, \sigma = 0.89, \text{min} = 1.33, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 1.33)
	International: $\mu = 3.98, \sigma = 0.70, \text{min} = 1.33, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 1.33)
Social Acceptance	China: $\mu = 3.23, \sigma = 0.97, \text{min} = 1.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 3.25, 1.00)
	International: $\mu = 3.20, \sigma = 0.93, \text{min} = 1.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 3.25, 1.00)
Social Symbol	China: $\mu = 3.81, \sigma = 0.85, \text{min} = 1.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 1.00)
	International: $\mu = 3.67, \sigma = 0.74, \text{min} = 1.75, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 3.75, 1.75)
Sense of luxury	China: $\mu = 3.34, \sigma = 0.80, \text{min} = 1.33, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 3.33, 1.33)
	International: $\mu = 3.59, \sigma = 0.74, \text{min} = 1.67, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 3.67, 1.67)
Purchase Intention	China: $\mu = 4.14, \sigma = 0.65, \text{min} = 1.33, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.33, 1.33)
	International: $\mu = 4.04, \sigma = 0.62, \text{min} = 2.00, \text{max} = 5.00$	(5.00, 4.00, 2.00)

Note: μ = mean, σ = standard deviation.

Table 5
Antecedent configurations of quality, design, worthiness, economical, brand sense, and brand emotion for purchase intention.

Model	Antecedent Conditions										Coverage		
	Quality	Design	Worthiness	Economical	Brand Sense	Brand emotion	Raw	Unique	Consistency				
1	(O)	O	●	(O)	O	O	.39(.43)	.01(.00)	.89(.93)				
2	O	O	●	(O)	●	O	.39(.53)	.00(.03)	.86(.94)				
3	O	(O)	●	(O)	O	O	.36(.44)	.00(.02)	.89(.88)				
4	O	O	(O)	(O)	●	(O)	.37(.39)	.02(.03)	.91(.88)				
5	●	(O)	●	(O)	O	O	.34(.46)	.00(.00)	.92(.96)				
6	(O)	O	(O)	●	●	O	.34(.43)	.00(.01)	.95(.96)				
7	O	●	●	O	●	●	.36(.28)	.02(.00)	.94(.93)				
8	●	(O)	●	(O)	●	●	.35(.43)	.01(.00)	.94(.88)				
9	(O)	●	●	(O)	●	●	.52(.38)	.08(.00)	.97(.92)				
10	O	●	(O)	(O)	●	O	.27(.53)	.00(.02)	.93(.96)				
11	●	●	●	O	●	●	.32(.36)	.00(.00)	.98(.96)				

Notes: Solution coverage: 0.77(0.82); solution consistency: 0.84(0.83). ● indicates high membership, O indicates low membership; blank indicates "I don't care". The results on the left are for domestic brands, on the right for foreign brands.

Full-time job + unemployed ● Uni ● married + single ● male ● aged 45 above + age 35 or less ● anniversaries + birthday + festivals ≤ purchase intent of foreign luxury brands (note: ● indicates and, + indicates or)

Study 1 demonstrated that the antecedent conditions for purchasing domestic and foreign brands in some cases were similar but were vastly different in others. To deepen the understanding of brand choices by Chinese consumers, we opted to interview overseas Chinese to gain insights to their perceptions and attitudes towards Chinese luxury brands since they were likely to be familiar with non-Chinese brands. The selected participants needed to be living outside of China but have some knowledge of Chinese luxury brands. The interview was intended to solicit information about which Chinese luxury brands they buy, when (special occasions) and why (motivation) they buy, and their experiences in regard to value perceptions.

5. Study 2

5.1. Methods

5.1.1. Sample and data collection

Participants were recruited from the local Chinese community on the Gold Coast, Australia. A total of 22 interviews were conducted with Chinese consumers to gain insights into their perceptions towards Chinese domestic luxury brands. This number was determined adequate as the information from the interviews achieved saturation and revealed clear patterns (Guest et al., 2006). The interviews were conducted in a coffee shop. Participation was voluntary and a \$20 AUD movie gift card was provided to the participant. Participant ages ranged from 19 (full-time students) to 40 years old (accountants, business owners, tour operators, and sales assistants). Each interview lasted for approximately 30 min. The interview protocol (refer to Table 7) included three sections, exploring: 1) knowledge of Chinese luxury brands, 2) purchase behaviour and brand experiences, and 3) views or opinions of Chinese luxury brands.

6. Results

The results of the interviews indicated that the interviewees were knowledgeable and familiar with Chinese luxury brands. All interviewees were able to select one favourite Chinese luxury brand, which varied across different product categories such as jewellery (Chow Tai Fook 周大福), liquor (Maotai 茅台), fashion (ErDOS 鄂尔多斯), and tea (YuNan PuEr 云南普洱茶).

The findings indicated that cultural symbols, for example, the symbol of dragon and phoenix (龍鳳) representing a happy wedded life, was essential for Chinese luxury brands. The cultural meanings attached to Chinese brands make them more appropriate and suitable for special life and cultural events and ceremonies in China, such as Spring Festival (春

Table 6
Antecedent configurations of complacency, mood lifting, symbol, social acceptance, luxury for purchase intention.

Model	Antecedent Conditions					Coverage		
	Complacency	Mood Lifting	Symbol	Acceptance	Luxury	Raw	Unique	Consistency
1	● (●)	(●)		O	O	.50(.65)	.02(.04)	.85(.88)
2		● (●)	O	O	(●)	.43(.67)	.02(.03)	.89(.91)
3	O	●		(●)	(●)	.47(.60)	.00(.06)	.93(.82)
4	(O)	O (O)		●	(O)	.50(.38)	.01(.01)	.89(.80)
5			● (O)	● (O)	● (●)	.68(.47)	.10(.02)	.87(.90)

Solution coverage: .86(.89); solution consistency: .77(.76). ● indicates high membership, O indicates low membership, blank indicates “I don’t care”.

Table 7
Interview protocol.

Section 1: Knowledge/Familiarity of Domestic luxury brands Question 1: Have you purchased any domestic luxury brands before? If not, can you name a few domestic luxury brands you are familiar with? Question 2: Are there any domestic luxury brands that are special for you? Section 2: Purchase behaviour Question 3: How often do you purchase domestic luxury brands? Question 4: When do you purchase domestic luxury brands? Question 5: Where do you purchase domestic luxury brands? Question 6: Who do you purchase for? Question 7: Can you tell me the reasons why you purchase domestic luxury brands? Section 3: Attitudes and experience of Domestic luxury brands Question 8: In your opinion, what makes domestic luxury brands different as opposed to well-known foreign luxury brands, e.g. Louis Vuitton; Gucci; Chanel? Question 9: Can you tell me any experiences you have had with purchasing/using/wearing domestic luxury brands? Question 10: Are there any special occasions for you to purchase/use/wear domestic luxury brands?
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節) and the Dragon Boat Festival (端午節). The findings suggest that Chinese consumers purchasing Chinese luxury brands have been influenced by family, culture, tradition, and history, more than being driven by conspicuous consumption in order to enhance social status.

An example can be taken from Brain’s interview, in which he stated:

Normally I purchase Lao Feng Xiang at spring festival time because I think that’s good for my parents as New Year gift.

Another example of this was recognised in Ming’s interview:

Because there are two very important festivals in China. The middle autumn festival and the New Year, a spring festival. And that is our way to celebrate. So at that time I would like to buy these brands.

Similarly, Janet also highlighted the importance of culture and history associated with Chinese luxury brands:

I think that because the world culture is changing, we have more Western people move into China, love Chinese culture, and realise the great of Chinese culture. So more people know and want to discover the good part of Chinese culture. So that makes Chinese brand become more and more popular. And the history makes more Chinese, because China have long history. China is famous for its long history and diversity culture.

This study also demonstrated patriotic reasons behind purchasing Chinese luxury brands. An example of this was recognised in the following interviews:

I felt like proud of this product because it is made in China. Yeah, proud of my country and is very pleased. And also give me a lot of confident and that can tell people how to introduce these Chinese luxury brands to my foreign people (Kevin)

It makes me feel like I belong to the group of Chinese people. And I feel like I am showing to the people from different country, let them know that I am from China and want to show them what the Chinese

luxury brands look like, what is the Chinese stuff looks like, and make me feeling like I am standing out and make me feel like I am unique which is living in Australia. Yeah, it is just showing them my real nationality (Cindy).

7. Discussion

This research employed an asymmetrical method (fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis) to identify the antecedent recipes for Chinese consumer intentions to purchase Chinese (domestic) versus international (foreign) luxury brands. Symmetrical analyses were performed to reinforce the findings from fsQCA. Two studies were undertaken. The first examined how multiple luxury value perceptions, special occasions, and demographic characteristics were configured to explain luxury brand (domestic versus foreign) purchase intention among Chinese consumers through an online survey. Interviews were conducted in the second study to explore Chinese consumers’ perceptions of, and attitudes towards Chinese luxury brands. Discussion of these findings is as follows.

7.1. Quantitative study

7.1.1. Product values and purchase intent

Regression results show that specific product values such as functional value (i.e. economic value) and hedonic value (i.e. brand emotion) dimensions were significant predictors of the purchase intent of Chinese luxury brands. By contrast, hedonic values (i.e. brand sense, brand emotion) were the key drivers of purchasing foreign luxury brands. The fsQCA analyses on the relationship between value perceptions and purchase intent demonstrated that 11 configurations of product values explained intention to purchase domestic and foreign brands. Price worthiness with low brand sense and emotion accounted for the intention to purchase domestic brands; whereas brand emotion was the only value/dimension in the intention to purchase a foreign brand.

Both regression and fsQCA indicated that financial value dimensions (i.e. price worthiness and economical) were important for the purchase of domestic luxury brands. However, it was not clear whether hedonic value was the key driver of purchase intent of domestic luxury brands as the regression and fsQCA results were not consistent. For foreign luxury brands, regression and fsQCA were consistent, indicating that hedonic values (i.e. brand sense, brand emotion) were important considerations. The discrepancy between the multiple regression and fsQCA highlights the advantage of using fsQCA to complement regression analyses.

7.1.2. Personal values and purchase intent

Regression results demonstrated that specific personal values such as individual (i.e. mood lifting) and overall luxury value perception (i.e. a sense of luxury) dimensions were important for the purchasing of domestic luxury brands, and individual (i.e. self-complacency, mood lifting) and social value (i.e. social acceptance) dimensions were key drivers for purchase of foreign luxury brands. FsQCA results demonstrated that 8 configurations of personal values explain the intention to purchase domestic brands, and 5 for foreign brands. Social symbol,

social acceptance, and a sense of luxury were the key ingredients for opting for a domestic brand, whereas individual value (i.e. mood lifting) and a sense of luxury explained the choice of foreign brands.

Both analyses (regression and fsQCA) confirmed the importance of the overall luxury value perception (i.e. a sense of luxury) as an influencing choice for domestic luxury brands. However, it was not clear whether social value, as manifested in a social symbol and social acceptance dimensions, influenced the choice of domestic luxury brands, as the results between regression and fsQCA were not consistent. The effect of individual value (i.e. mood lifting) on the purchase intent of a foreign brand was confirmed by regression and fsQCA. However, in regression analyses, the overall luxury value perception was shown to have an insignificant effect on the purchase intent of a foreign brand, contrasting the fsQCA result.

In sum, the financial value (i.e. price worthiness and economic value) and the overall luxury value perception (i.e. a sense of luxury) were important antecedents of the purchase of domestic luxury brands. By contrast, hedonic value (i.e. brand emotion) and individual value (i.e. mood lifting) were significant predictors of the purchase intent of foreign luxury brands. It was noted that social value (i.e. social symbol, social acceptance), although extensively discussed in the luxury brand literature (e.g. Ajitha and Sivakumar, 2017), was not consistent between symmetrical (regression) and asymmetrical (fsQCA) analyses as a significant factor that influenced Chinese consumers' intention to purchase luxury brands (domestic and/or foreign).

7.1.3. Special occasions, demographic characteristics, and purchase intent

The research revealed that there were similarities between Chinese and foreign luxury brands in terms of the special occasions and demographics. Specifically, highly educated, married individuals, either male or female with a highly paid full-time job, tended to purchase domestic luxury brands for their anniversaries, whereas full-time, middle age married individuals tended to purchase foreign brands for their anniversaries. This finding confirms the literature suggesting that people purchase and use luxury products for special occasions (Cowan and Spielmann, 2017; Wang et al., 2010). In this research, anniversaries seem to be the key driver for Chinese consumers to purchase a luxury brand. However, special occasions and demographics were not important key drivers of domestic luxury brand purchase as compared to foreign luxury brands. This finding indicated that as the Chinese consumers were becoming more affluent and sophisticated (Lu and Pras, 2011; Wang et al., 2011), they do not necessarily purchase and use domestic luxury brands for special occasions and events.

7.2. Qualitative study

Despite the concept that made-in-China products are generally of inferior quality, interviewees suggested positive experiences with Chinese luxury brands and often choose to purchase these brands as gifts for friends, colleagues, and elderly family members as a way to show respect and increase family bonding. It was also considered more appropriate to exchange Chinese luxury brands as gifts during important events (e.g. housewarming party). The interviews revealed that Chinese consumers favour domestic luxury brands mainly due to the social and cultural meanings embedded in those brands. The results indicated that Chinese luxury brands were not perceived as being less important than foreign brands. The findings contrast to those in previous research (Walley and Li, 2015; Zhan and He, 2012) indicating that Chinese consumers favour well-known global luxury brands such as LV, Gucci, and Chanel.

8. Implications

The research draws on self-determination and complexity theories to examine the antecedent recipes for Chinese consumers' luxury brand choices by employing both symmetrical and asymmetrical methods. The two methods provide novel insights into the antecedent conditions of

purchasing domestic and/or foreign luxury brands in the case of Chinese consumers. These insights were reinforced by conducting 22 interviews in the second study. Consequently, this research contributes to the relevant branding literature as well as practitioners for identifying optimal marketing strategies to promote the luxury brands to Chinese consumers and for appropriate marketing segmentation.

8.1. Theoretical implications

The findings of this research contribute to the luxury branding literature by examining not only the mainstream global luxury brands, but also domestic brands that are endogenous to the Chinese market. This research demonstrated that there were two different types of consumers, as defined by their demographic characteristics, who tended to purchase foreign versus domestic luxury brands. This is in contrast to previous research which assumed that the Chinese market was homogeneous in relation to their demand for luxury products and brands (Zhang and He, 2012).

While recognising the self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), this research provides a new perspective by removing the boundary between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in relation to the purchase of luxury brands. Self-determination theory has been mainly used in the luxury branding literature to explain why extrinsically, versus intrinsically, motivated consumers would prefer conspicuous versus inconspicuous consumption (Shao et al., 2019; Truong and McColl, 2011). Thus, luxury consumption behaviour tends to be dichotomised into consumers who would prefer luxury brands with explicit (conspicuous) versus subtle (inconspicuous) signals (Berger and Ward, 2010; Wilcox et al., 2009).

This research, by contrast, was not based on setting a boundary between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. FsQCA analyses demonstrated that a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in combination may influence luxury brand purchase intent. For example, the study shows that price worthiness with low brand sense and emotion account for the intention to purchase domestic brands; whereas brand emotion was the only member of intention within the purchase of a foreign brand. Brand sense and brand emotion may be considered as values that are intrinsically oriented as these value dimensions relate to the purchase of a luxury brand that is emotionally rewarding to Chinese consumers. Price worthiness can be extrinsically oriented, as it can be viewed as a feature of the product or brand. It is possible that intrinsic versus extrinsic values might become more dominant, leading to the choice of a certain luxury brand, but it is important to recognise that these two different types of motivations act together in influencing luxury brand choice.

Finally, this research contributes to the branding literature by drawing upon the complexity theory and incorporating a novel asymmetrical method (fsQCA) into Chinese consumer decision making for luxury brands. The results from regression and fsQCA analyses were drawn to identify important antecedents of the purchase intent of domestic versus foreign luxury brands. Inconsistent or contrasting results were revealed in the two approaches to gain accurate and deeper insights into consumer decision making journey and purchase behaviours.

8.2. Practical implications

Practical implications can be drawn from the contrasting findings identified in this study to prior research that suggested that Chinese consumers pursue luxury brand as a symbol of wealth and social status (Li et al., 2015). This research shows that price worthiness and a sense of luxury were key determinants of domestic luxury brand preference, whereas intention to purchase a foreign luxury brand was influenced by brand emotion and mood lifting. These findings are important for luxury brand marketers and provide guidance on what should be focused on in regard to marketing luxury brands to Chinese consumers. The research suggests a need to shift marketing and advertising of luxury brands away from the emphasis on wealth, status, and conspicuous consumption.

Instead, Chinese consumers may be attracted to promotional and communication strategies that focus on enjoyment, mood lifting, and enhancing feelings and emotions through sensory experiences in relation to foreign luxury brands. Domestic luxury brands will also appeal to Chinese consumers when they are considered to provide economic value and offer an overall luxury value perception.

The results that special occasions have minimal influence on purchasing luxury brands in the Chinese market are surprising, nevertheless are important for marketers and business owners. Conventionally one would assume luxury brand purchase shall be prompted by anniversaries and festivals since these products are special on many counts (e.g. price, value). The study shows that these special occasions account for very little effect, and hence cautions marketers to promote luxury brands, both domestic and foreign, as daily luxuries that they need to use and experience as part of their life instead of promoting the concept of luxury based on special occasions.

The findings for the relationship between demographic characteristics and luxury brand purchase indicate that consuming/purchasing expensive products is not necessarily limited to those with high income or wealthy consumers. It is important that marketers are not restricted by earlier assumptions that only consumers who appear to be wealthy, for example, those who have high paying jobs, will be able to afford luxury brands. The marketers of luxury brands must take the situational factors into account when developing marketing programs and strategies. For instance, in China, the family planning policies implemented back in the 1980s may account for luxury brand purchasers with low/no income, who may be the single child of a wealthy family and purchase these products at their parents' expense. Marketing segmentation, targeting and positioning strategies must be developed by considering the unique and unconventional situation in China.

9. Limitations and future research

Despite our best efforts to ensure rigorousness, some limitations must be acknowledged. First, the survey sample was recruited from Shanghai, one of the wealthiest cities in China. This sample section does not represent the Chinese population. The findings from this sample cohort is cautioned for researchers and practitioners. Second, the survey research was conducted in June 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. The crisis may have influenced Chinese consumers' perceptions of luxury brand and purchase intentions. A post-pandemic study should be undertaken for comparison. Third, the interviews were conducted with Chinese participants living in Australia. The nuanced value perceptions between overseas and PRC (People's Republic of China) Chinese may be different. The findings should be interpreted with this difference in mind. Future research may benefit from the inclusion of a mixed sample of Chinese from different regions. Including a non-Chinese sample to investigate their perceptions of Chinese luxury brands may also be more insightful to the branding literature. Fourth, the minimal influence of special occasions on luxury brand purchase may only apply to the Chinese consumers. The connection between luxury brand purchase and low-income earners indicates family planning policy in China may play a role and suggests the study context is important for luxury brand research. Finally, the different and contrasting findings from symmetrical and asymmetrical testings caution researchers not to draw conclusions based on a single method. Deploying both methods provide a wholistic picture on consumers' purchase decisions and behaviours.

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