

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master Degree in Finance from the NOVA - School of Business and Economics.

**REVISITING THE LUXURY FASHION BRANDS' LEGITIMACY
FRAMEWORK – are traditional runway shows still useful?**

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A Project carried out on the Master in Finance Program, under the supervision of: Professor
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I. Abstract

During my summer internship in New York at J. Mendel, a niche luxury fashion brand, I noticed that fashion shows were migrating from the traditional runway format to three different ones. This Work Project focuses on the challenges that luxury brands legitimacy framework has been under and its main objective is to identify the current usefulness of runway shows for fashion brands. After analyzing secondary data, we developed research based on in-depth interviews, fashion show observations and daily life in my internship, having concluded that a clear communication on the purpose of fashion shows is needed, leading to runways not being useful anymore, and that theory has a one-size-fits-all framework that does not apply for smaller, niche luxury brands.

II. Key Words

Luxury, Fashion, Fashion shows, J. Mendel.

III. Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction & Objectives of the Work Project

Luxury fashion is an industry that has captivated me since a young age, starting from following trends on blogs to later aspiring to work in the area. Given this, and albeit being a student from the Masters in Finance, during the first year of my Masters program, I applied to a summer internship in New York for a luxury fashion brand I was very fond of: J. Mendel.

Established in St. Petersburg since 1870, J. Mendel found fame in 1875 when the ruling Romanov family commissioned furrier Joseph Mendel to create a cape for Czar Alexander II's wife. The family-run company continued in the couture tradition and fur savoir-faire of his ancestors with the fifth-generation designer Gilles Mendel transforming the company from a fur atelier into a full-fledged fashion house, launching its first ready-to-wear (RTW) collection in 2002. Based in New York since the 1980s, J. Mendel is known for combining the highest quality materials and impeccable craftsmanship with a modern, award-winning design sensibility. Its signature feminine silhouettes and elegant cuts have become a red-carpet favourite among international royalty and Hollywood stars alike.

My official role as an intern at J. Mendel was Public Relations and Sales intern. I worked as the intermediary between the brand and celebrities, celebrities' stylists and magazine editors, managed the brands' social networks and website, and ensured that the clients' experience at the boutique flagship store was intimate, singular and utmost luxurious. Also, as the end of the internship coincided with the New York Fashion Week (NYFW), my focus shifted from day-to-day responsibilities to the actual organization and preparation of J. Mendel's Spring Summer 2018 RTW collection.

J. Mendel has presented its Autumn Winter (AW) and Spring Summer (SS) Collections in NYFW since 2004. Additionally, the brand was invited in 2016 to present a AW Couture collection as a guest member in the Paris July Couture Show. Since then, the brand chose to pursue a private presentation format for the debut of its RTW collections.

Indeed, the overall format of fashion shows plays exceptional importance for luxury fashion brands, being one of the most important tools to establish and legitimize brands within the fashion industry. In particular for J.

Mendel, fashion shows are a hallmark of luxury status, especially the Couture fashion week participation. However, J. Mendel recently resorted to an alternative format of fashion shows, ditching the conventional runway for private presentations. This conveyed the feeling that the traditional tool was outdated as a way to legitimize the luxury status of fashion brands. Thus, the objective of this Work Project is to study the traditional runway show evolution and understand if it is, in fact, still useful in what concerns fulfilling its main purpose: the legitimization of the luxury status of luxury fashion brands.

It is important to keep in mind that luxury fashion is a sector where it is particularly difficult to collect data. Most of the involved stakeholders, such as clients, cannot be disturbed and/or do not want to be perceived as accessible. Given this, collecting data from a large sample was an impossible task. Even though, we hope that the insights of this Work Project can contribute to increase knowledge in the luxury field.

2. Contextual Background

A) Defining luxury

The concept of luxury is hard to define, existing “as many definitions as there are authors” (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012, p.45). As so, the word ‘luxury’ has been commonly misused. As so, literature presents five approaches through which one can define luxury: (1) luxury’s traditional definition; (2) Luxury as a Distance; (3) Creator’s Light; (4) “New” Social Marker; and (5) New Luxury Conceptualization.

(1) The traditional definition of luxury delimits the concept within a specific set of characteristics, namely reliance on the finest materials, craftsmanship and superior aesthetics. The scarcity and exquisiteness of the luxury good is a paradigm based on: a) the physical rarity of the materials - either because of shortage in the availability of the resources utilized or due to the specific qualified labour to produce it -; b) the multisensory experience surrounding the good; and c) its strong human content – artisanal and craftsmanship associations (da Silveira, 2017). These pillars are essential for a product or service to be considered luxury.

(2) The Luxury as a Distance paradigm depicts the fostered gap between desire and access. It stands for brands working in creating high awareness, many times resorting to advocacy by influencers, while simultaneously restricting access and promoting an ‘artificial’ rarity, through high prices, limited distribution, waiting lists, among

other tools (Kapferer, 2015). It is the gap between high awareness and restricted access that culminates in the legitimization of the status of brands as luxury.

(3) Luxury as the Creator's Light focuses on the luxury status of the brand being build up and supported by the aura of the brands' creator or artistic director. This charismatic persona (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012) developed on the brand's creator or artistic director, results in the differentiation of the luxury brand among its peers, due to the association with the persona, conveying to the brand a particular character and personality. The legitimization of the creator relies on external validation by established and socially relevant authorities in the domain, which not being timeless, is constantly subject to time and events.

(4) The approach of Luxury as a "New" Social Marker shifts the traditional role of luxury as a consequence of social status to the exact opposite: luxury as a driver of social stratification (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). However, this framework has different implications depending on whether we are applying it to the developed or emerging countries. In developed countries, wearing luxury differentiates individuals, where those who own understated brands are perceived as real luxury *connoisseurs*, carrying real symbols of elite in the form of less evident luxury brands; whereas for emerging countries, luxury creates a sense of belonging, where owning specific luxury goods from well-know brands conveys certain high-class status that could not be achieved without the ownership of such item.

(5) Finally, the New Luxury Conceptualization states that a luxury product or service must possess two simultaneous aspects: substance and status. First, the substance aspect provides the individual function of the product or service, where luxury is seen as an individual pleasure, a unique consumer experience. Then, the status aspect provides the social function and is about the perception of luxury as social statement. This perception of luxury can take the form of high profile or low profile social statements. The high profile is luxury for others, as it is about being seen wearing certain luxury items or attending certain events, displaying how one is part of the few that can 'access' such products or experiences. On the other end of the spectrum, the low profile is based on minimalism as the highest statement of luxury, endorsing little to no logos, showing that the person knows,

accesses and experiences such exclusive products or events that only real luxury *connoisseurs* would know about (da Silveira, 2017).

B) Framework used in this Work Project

We acknowledge the interest and relevance of each of these 5 approaches to luxury. However, definition number (3), Luxury as the Creator's Light, is the one that can better support the analysis conducted in this Work Project. We, therefore, define hereafter luxury using this approach.

The word luxury derives from the Latin word 'lux', which means light, and within the Creator's Light paradigm the brand expresses the aura of the creator, the so-called light, which is considered a type of charismatic legitimacy grounded on its exceptionality and genius (da Silveira, 2017). The appeal nourished by the creator around a luxury brand usually generates a lot of visibility, which might translate into many purchases, especially within the brands entry-level products – the more affordable items whose purpose is to create awareness and stimulate desire, such as accessories and collaborations. From a financial standpoint, more sales create more revenues, which are desired and needed. However, the problem with luxury brands is that the more it gets purchased, the more it allows reality to consume the dream, weakening the feeling of distance and exclusivity. "Both rarity and the sense of privilege are destroyed by mass production and booming sales" (Kapferer, 2015).

As so, the more the brand sells, the more the dream needs to be nourished and maintained (da Silveira, 2017). This way, in order to feed the dream, the creator resorts to 'The Griffe', which consists on unique pieces engraved by the creator's signature, perceived as true statements of art recognizable worldwide (Kapferer, 2008).

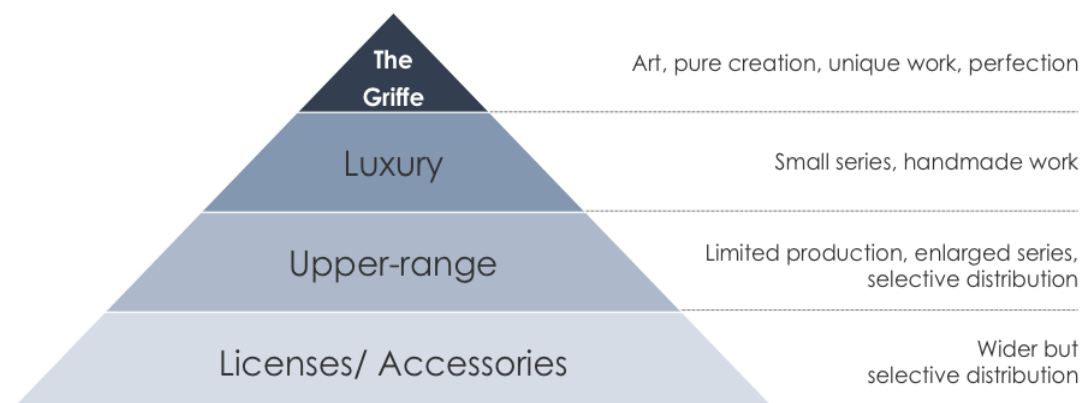


Figure 1 - Luxury as the Creator's Light pyramid framework (Source: Kapferer, 2008)

It is important to note that the aura of each brand, acknowledged in the creator or the current creative director has to be legitimized by credited authorities in the field, from journalists, bloggers and celebrities, to other artists themselves.

Moreover, we chose this approach as most suitable for this Work Project while it being also the most commonly used by fashion brands and, in particular, by the Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton (LVMH) group.

C) Defining luxury fashion

C.1 DEFINING LUXURY IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Until mid 20th century, fashion exclusively belonged to the luxury world as only upper classes could afford buying clothes without driven by the necessity of doing so. However, the 20th century brought about a shift in the relation of fashion and luxury, and they do not mean the same anymore. There is a fundamental difference of fashion and luxury: their relationship with time. Fashion per se is ephemeral – trends come and go. The opposite is for luxury, as it is timeless.

Yet, fashion still shares some aspects with luxury, as not being essential to one's survival and conveying a certain form of differentiation to those who display it (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). Fashion has been historically referred as specific to fashions in clothing, dress, and personal adomment. However, elements of "fashion" also influence other non-fashion products, such as automobiles, furniture, and architectural design among others. In this Work Project, we focus specifically on the clothing-fashion phenomenon, a culturally endorsed style of aesthetic expression in dress and adomment, which is "subject to changes over time within a social system of group of associated individuals" (Sproles, 1974, p.464). Indeed, fashion can be seen as salt is to food, "the indispensable ingredient that brings out the flavours in all treats of life" (Yuchen, 2011, p.1).

Being luxury something special, rare and that conveys status, luxury fashion results from its merger with the concept of fashion. It is about conveying a personal style that distinguishes one from the crowd and simultaneously makes one belong to high-class society. While luxury creates a vertical type of differentiation, fashion creates an horizontal one, grounded in the tendency that humans have to mimic each other, as it allows one to be recognizable as a member of a certain class or tribe. As so, developed societies simultaneously need luxury

and fashion, with luxury creating social stratification, and fashion creating social differentiation that is made personal to each group.

Luxury fashion tells stories about history, cultures and communities, mirrors politics, economics and mentalities, and makes society think about relevant matters on sustainability and humanity. In fact, luxury fashion brands are allowed to express their opinions and views on the world, mostly in great symbiosis with the views of its own designer. This happens because, in contrast with the mass market and fast fashion, luxury brands do not need to please every single person. This gives these brands a greater flexibility to publicly engage on a specific side of a polemic topic, as has been the case with female empowerment (e.g. Maria Grazia Chiuri at Dior), anti-Trump campaigns (e.g. Philipp Plein) and environmental footprint. The case of Stella McCartney perfectly illustrates this trend, as a designer who's an objector of conscience about waste and the environmental impact created by the fashion industry, using only recycled and vegan materials in her collections. Her business is thriving and clients choose the brand not only because they love the collection, but also because they support the causes it stands for.

Although luxury and fashion are different concepts, they overlap in the form of Haute Couture, Couture, Demi-Couture, and marginally in certain RTW designer creations. In these cases, the success of the combination relies on the perfect equilibrium between the brand, covering the luxury side, and the creator, covering the fashion side (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012).

C.2 LUXURY FASHION FRAMEWORKS



Figure 2 - Clothing Industry pyramid framework (Source: da Silveira, 2017, adapted from *Managing Fashion and Luxury Companies*, Corbellini, et al., 2009, p.113)

The fashion industry is divided hierarchically in four main categories: Luxury, Premium Brands, Mass Fashion, and Value&Discount. The Luxury category is itself composed by several levels of this hierarchy, as it is depicted in Figure 2. Given the topic of this Work Project being particularly luxury fashion, only the levels within Luxury will be developed and analysed.

C.2.1 Haute Couture and Demi-Couture

Haute Couture is the purest form of art of dressmaking and literally translates as 'high sewing'. Each piece is meticulously assembled by hand and made-to-measure, resulting in unique garments that are perceived by fashion lovers as the quintessence of luxury fashion. The painstakingly perfect items can take more than 700 hours to create, as each piece is sewn by hand, and usually has exceptionally intricate details that at first might go unnoticed (Collings, 2015). Indeed, Haute Couture is born from the link between art and fashion, and in Couture shows, the garments unveiled are not oriented towards the market but rather displayed as evidence of the creative genius of the artist (Dion&Arnould, 2011).

This form of luxury first appeared as a necessity for high-class Parisians in the 19th century with women resorting to Couture Houses to have exclusive bespoke clothing that would set them apart from the rest of the fashion scene. This initial lavish sphere of exclusivity still surrounds Haute Couture today, with the label being a legal term used only by a very select number of highly regarded designers. In fact, a design house can only legally identify itself as an Haute Couture label if it adheres to the requirements of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture*. Adding to the fact that every single piece is expected to be made by hand from beginning to end, there are four main requisites to be met: a) producing made-to-order-pieces for private clients; b) having an atelier in Paris with over 15 full-time general employees; c) on top of the 15 full-time, 20 full-time technical employees; and d) present 50 plus pieces every season in the January and July Couture Shows (Core, 2015). Beside official members, the *Chambre Syndicale* invites designers each season under the title of guests to participate in the Couture Fashion Show. Despite the term Couture being used interchangeably with Haute Couture, the guests are not allowed to use 'Haute Couture' when referring to their creations, but 'Couture'. Only after 2 years of participation, the guest designers are allowed to become *Grands Couturiers* and refer to their creations as Haute Couture.

The difference between ‘Couture’ and ‘Demi-Couture’ is the recognition by the *Chambre Syndicale* as official members and the pieces being 100% handmade. The term ‘Demi-Couture’ is used to describe exceptional garments created by RTW designers. Here, the garments that would be thought of only as show pieces are regularly produced for wealthy clients. Demi-Couture requires little or no fitting, eliminating the time-consuming aspects of traditional Haute Couture. Couture represents a huge investment for brands, given the intricacy and commitment needed in terms of time and money to produce such collections. However, it is a long-term investment that is less about seeing profit from purchases of the collection than it is about creating and maintaining brand image, raising the designer’s profile, a valuable aspect for luxury fashion brands.

C.2.2 Designer Collections

Designer Collections are constituted by the RTW luxury fashion pieces. These pieces are characterized by a strong creative content along with a high price tag, being designer reputation fundamental for the collection’s success. The fashion show is the main channel of communication chosen to display the garments and, in contrast with classical timeless luxury goods, RTW designer collections are a seasonal business with the Pre-Fall, Fall, Resort and Spring Summer collections being released each year (da Silveira, 2017).

C.2.3 Diffusion Collections

The Diffusion Collections are the ‘young’ and more affordable lines of the designers’ creations. Sometimes these lines can become autonomous labels with strong creative personalities and different targets, such as Miu Miu from Prada, and See by Chloé from Chloé (da Silveira, 2017).

D) Introducing J. Mendel

J. Mendel is a French fur atelier made famous due to its commissions to the Romanov family. From its inception, the boutique was specialized in luxurious furs based on the principles of high quality, unparalleled style and innovative craftsmanship. In the last decade, J. Mendel has migrated from its fur roots to a global luxury fashion brand. Its main features are the use of fur as fabric (see picture in Appendix I) and impeccable RTW collections. The current creative director, Gilles Mendel, became the designer and CEO in 1981 and left Paris for New York City. Ever since, J. Mendel’s feminine sophistication serves as brand’s hallmark, being exclusively sold

in three physical stores worldwide – one owned by the brand in New York, and two in luxury department stores – Harrods in London and Bergdorf Goodman in New York -, plus two online channels – the brand’s one and through Farfetch.

J. Mendel has presented its AW and SS Collections on NYFW since 2004, after being inducted into the Council of Fashion Designers of America in the former year. Additionally, its Couture heritage started in 2007 with the introduction of a Couture atelier, focusing on unique designs for distinguished clients worldwide. Following this, in 2016, the House of Mendel was chosen by the *Chambre Syndicale* to show on the couture AW calendar as a guest member. In fact, Gilles Mendel believes that “the essence of luxury begins with artisanal craftsmanship” and that “creating a couture collection is the ultimate expression of that belief” (Socha, 2016, p.1). However, J. Mendel is considered solely a Couture designer and not an Haute Couture one, as the difference lies on the legal term – a concept explained in the previous section. This way, its collection is mainly RTW with the occasional production of Demi-Couture pieces.

E) Luxury fashion brands’ legitimacy framework and the importance of fashion shows

Luxury fashion brands resort to several tools to legitimize themselves and through them establish and earn status. Being fashion shows the critical point of this research, this Work Project specifically focuses on them as legitimizing tools. In fact, luxury fashion’s most resorted means to legitimize the dream is the fashion show, considered “the most important collective ritual for luxury brands” (Dion&Arnould, 2011). These tend to be condensed in one week per fashion capital per season and are called Fashion Weeks. The designer collections are displayed to buyers, private clients and media, dictating and influencing the trends from then on. The most prominent ones take place in New York, Paris, Milan and London. Fashion shows started with one format and recently other forms flourished, having some designers shifted to new methods of presenting their creations.

Indeed, the current existing formats of fashion shows are: 1) runway show, the classical format where pieces are displayed as the models strut down the catwalk (see for example Carolina Herrera in Appendix II); 2) spectacle show, where the models walk down the runway within an unique setting, in a more entertainment-like approach (see for example Dior in Appendix III); and 3) private presentation, where the pieces are displayed in

static mannequins or, at times, a few live models, either at the room of a special location or at the boutique store (see for example J. Mendel in Appendix IV). The public consecration phenomenon is essential for luxury fashion brands to establish the artistic director's charismatic authority, and thus that of the brand, simultaneously legitimizing creator and creations (Bourdieu and Delsaut 1975).

As so, fashion shows are major symbolic events for brands (Kamitsis, 2006) and as the creations would not be complete without the genius behind them, all successful fashion shows, no matter the format, end with an acclaim of the designer walking the runway and bowing, while the spectators stand up in applause, praised as actors would at the end of their performances. Here, the spotlight is on the creator, on his skills and abilities, on the devotion to the collection that consumed every waking moment of the creator's time (Dion&Arnould, 2011). Indeed, "Something like the fashion show is needed to dramatize and reproduce charismatic authority" (Dion&Arnould, 2011), and as this charismatic authority is not immutable, fashion shows take place twice a year in order to legitimize the 'dream', serving as mediation between the artistic directors and their cherished spectators. In fulfilling this principle of public consecration and raising awareness for the brands, Fashion Weeks have a high coverage and draw a lot of attention to designers.

With photographers and paparazzi marking their presence during these weeks to get shots of fashion editors, celebrities, retailers and bloggers, these became ambassadors of the *fashionista* lifestyle, making luxury fashion staples of personal style, influencing millions worldwide. This way, luxury fashion brands are perceived as advanced cultural agents more than commercial ones, where pieces are considered standalone art themselves, conferring personality to the ones who dare to wear and style them.

This way, the 'artification' trend is a pertinent tool to mention given being intricately aligned with fashion shows as legitimization instruments. Artification is about creating pieces as if they were art and, at times, involves collaborations with art authorities and renowned artists. It has the goal of making a statement in terms of status for the brand. With it, the brand's price and power become indisputable and, at the same time, luxury is strategically perceived as global due to the universality of art (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2016). This makes perfect sense for the luxury sector because the storytelling based on craftsmanship, preciousness and rarity figures the artisan as

central. And artisans, just like artists, “create art for the sake of art, an idealistic search of beauty that reflects emotion” (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2016). Luxury fashion brands draw in this artistic component of luxury to maintain the persona of the creators and artistic directors, as the creators are also presented as art lovers. Building on their connections with art accentuates both their genius and their aesthetic conceptualization (Dion&Arnould, 2011), enhancing the brand.

This shift from the single fashion show format to three different ones conveys the idea that something is changing within the luxury fashion paradigm and that the classic fashion show legitimization tool – the runway show – might not be enough anymore to convey a real status of luxury to brands.

3. Addressing the Work Project Challenge

A) Methodology

In this work project we resorted to a qualitative case study method.

A.1 Why a case study?

A case method was adopted because it permitted the collection of rich qualitative data through participant observation, capitalising on my experience in the field to contribute with new insights and add a different perspective to the matter. The case study format is the most appropriate strategy for this research as this format is meant to understand the investigation scope within its own natural setting, its real-life context, paying attention to the contextual conditions, as they are highly relevant to the investigation (Punch, 1998). This format is often used when the research question has its focus on contemporary events and the experience of the actors is relevant (Iacono et al., 2009). A case study relies on different sources of evidence such as documents or interviews (Yin, 1994). In this work project, we resorted to secondary data analysis, interviews and participant observation of fashion shows and day-to-day work in a niche fashion brand.

A.2 Data collection methods

Secondary Data Analysis

We analysed reports from business-oriented consulting and luxury fashion firms, books from respected authors in this field of study, articles from renowned fashion magazines and teaching notes from related courses.

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews can be very helpful to “find out what is happening [and] to seek new insights” (Robson, 2002, p.59). When it is needed to understand the reasons for the decisions or attitudes and opinions of the research participants, the qualitative in-depth interview is the best approach (Saunders et al., 2009). In this research, the interviews were conducted to important stakeholders in the fashion industry and had the objective of gaining insights about the opinion over the existing fashion show formats and current trends. The interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour 10 minutes and were conducted in English. Given the different types of interviewees, we elaborated three different interview guides adapted to each group. These interview guides can be found in Appendix V. The three different groups of interviewees consist in: internal stakeholders – J. Mendel staff (n=9); clients – specifically J. Mendel’s (n=6); and press – journalists from relevant magazines within the fashion industry (n=8).

Participant observation

Additionally, the findings collected from the participant observation in this case study are based on my intern position for J. Mendel. Since organisations can be viewed as societies with their own customs and practices, participant observation is becoming increasingly popular in research (Walle, 2014). My role as participant was characterized by my involvement in the research process as an insider of the company that serves as support of this Work Project. This way, I attended fashion shows during NYFW to gather information about the current and future trends regarding them. The fashion shows attended and its corresponding formats are presented in the table below and the observation grid utilized can be found in Appendix VI.

Runway (n=4)	Spectacle (n=4)	Presentation (n=3)
Dennis Basso	Alexander Wang	J. Mendel
Jeremy Scott	Derek Lam	Adolfo Sanchez
Prabal Gurung	Ralph Lauren	Rag&Bone
Anna Sui	Michael Kors	

Table 1 - Number of fashion shows attended categorized by format

B) Main Findings

In this section, we sequentially analyse each type of fashion show in order to draw suggestions for the Discussion and Recommendations part.

Runway shows

Positive aspects inferred from the case study

Increase of brand status: Most interviewees emphasize that the essence of runways does not lie in selling the product per se, not being sales the most important aspect when developing a collection. Indeed, from the point of view of J. Mendel's managers, what most matters when debuting a collection is the brand awareness and image conveyed by the brand due to the high media coverage of the format, as sales will derive from the status achieved, being in line with theory. Respondents feel debuting collections through runways contributes to increasing their positive perceptions on the brands.

Coveted environment: Respondents consider runways to be exciting opportunities 'to see and to be seen' where the ones who do not attend feel they are missing out. From my observations, people were mingling and always with their phones broadcasting the event onto their networks. The quote below depicts what respondents feel about runways:

"Very much a social experience, it's a fashion experience. You know, it's the moment that you're looking at the very best that fashion has to offer" (J. Mendel manager, 36-50 years old)

Pieces speak for themselves: Just like great artists' paintings need only a white wall to be hang against, in respondents' opinion, for runway shows to work, the pieces need to speak for themselves, be the essence of the experience, without needing a spectacle around them. Most respondents acknowledged this to be the reason why runways work best for Couture, given it is a form of art.

Suitable for Couture that guides clients towards RTW: The majority of respondents recognized to enjoy runway shows for Couture collections as they are the epitome of luxury, elevate brands and improve the reputation of its fashion Houses. Despite Couture not being directed to the market, J. Mendel's staff pointed that, when developing one unique Couture piece, it will be only a small step later for these clients to start purchasing the regular RTW collection. All groups of respondents agreed on the suitability of the runway format for Couture and in

concordance with respondents' opinions, most brands considered Couture Houses (e.g. Dior) to have maintained the runway format for their Couture shows.

Negative aspects inferred from the case study

Confusing message on what is expected from shows: Most respondents said to leave runway shows with a sense of not recalling the designs and simply being distracted by the environment and rush in which the models strut down the catwalk one after the other.

"I still think there's a place for runway shows but there's not, in my opinion, a place for the madness, the celebrities and Street Style stars. That all I feel that takes away from the designs. And I think the designs are the bottom line, that's the purpose" (Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

Also, from clients' interviews it was possible to conclude that they expect to be able to buy when a collection is presented. Albeit acknowledging the goal of runway shows to be to increase brand awareness and status for the brand, clients want to see the pieces up close and buy the ones they like the most. Through J. Mendel's staff interviews, it was also clear that, although aware of the runway show being a tool of brand promotion, the focus they stressed as most important was converting efforts with the show into sales. As so, it is clear that there is an overall confusion relative to the goal of the runway show, in whether it is for brand awareness, or to sell the collection.

Not properly fulfilling neither brand image nor selling objectives: Adding to the confusion on the two purposes connected with runway shows, neither objective is being appropriately achieved through runways. The public and brands themselves do not see an advantage anymore on holding a runway show instead of other format, as runways are neither making a statement when communicating the brand's identity or increasing awareness, nor giving the audience a buying opportunity and fulfilling the sales objective that most respondents acknowledged to exist. The following quote depicts this issue:

"The runways were very nice but I couldn't see them as buying opportunities... It was more like, socializing opportunities. And when you don't feel like doing that, then going to the fashion show [runway] really has no aim, because you can always just view the collections later, in person or online (...) that's why I always feel it's better to go later [to the store] if you're looking to buy" (J. Mendel client, 18-25 years old)

Indeed, it was pointed how much runways felt as a failed effort on the designer to elevate the RTW creations, as the public could not properly admire the creations in such format. The overall unsuitability is represented below:

“I do think we’re going to see a lot more changes because designers in their mind are thinking that if the fashion show, the purpose of it, is to help them reach that consumer, there are more efficient ways to reach them” (Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

Incentive for designers to ‘play it safe’: Despite the stated belief of runway shows having the main goal of brand sacralisation and promotion, the majority of respondents acknowledged the existence of a significant sales agenda behind the shows. Respondents who work for the fashion industry in particular confirmed this. Respondents also feel that designers will harm themselves if their focus is ‘sales’, because what really matters is the illusion the public creates surrounding the designs. If the focus shifts to designing commercial pieces and re-creating the same designs every season, respondents claimed to stop being inspired by the collections and no longer perceiving the brand as luxury.

Strict schedules: From my observations in runway shows, this format has strict timetables, which limits the schedules of those who want to join. The biggest inconvenient was how, in all 4 runways I attended, the show always started at least 20 to 35 minutes late. This is something respondents confirmed to be recurring. As so, respondents stressed this to be very inconvenient as they have to sit through the entire time in order not to miss the debut, possibly skipping other shows or personal obligations due to these delays.

Inefficient format: Respondents who work for the fashion industry stated that, given clients and press not finding the runway format appropriate to see the designs, brands almost always book re-sees after the shows, in a similar way of private presentations, at brands’ own boutique stores. This ends up being counter-producing and inefficient to all stakeholders involved, amounting the costs brands incur to produce and promote their collections without having an accompanying increase in sales.

Spectacle show

Positive aspects inferred from the case study

Social legitimization and increased brand awareness: Luxury fashion brands need social legitimization and here lies the role of utter importance of spectacle shows. Indeed, most respondents feel brands should fulfil this through a lavish debut of their creations. The following quote provides the confirmation of this overall feeling:

“Every show really is a spectacle kind of by definition. It’s like entertainment but also a way to reveal the clothes. But I think designers choose the most memorable presentations, they really make a statement”
(Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

Memorable event: Most respondents transmit the idea of enjoyment on spectacle shows as entertaining moments, as the quotes below illustrate it:

“Fashion shows [spectacle] are about the hype, the press, you know... the moment... again, the chatter. Seeing what the buzz is, what the vibe is (...) It is really about what it is that we’re doing to entertain the audience. And that’s great” (J. Mendel manager, 36-50 years old)

“(...) the fashion show [spectacle] elevates it, it’s not just hanging in a hanger, you’re actually seeing it on a person and you’re seeing the person walk and everyone’s looking at them and you’re seeing the model bringing it to life. And then you have the lights and the music, it’s just having that high energy you can see the actual full potential of the piece...” (J. Mendel staff, 18-25 years old)

Respondents revealed to be aware that designers are ever more devoting their efforts into to making memorable debuts that will stand out from all others, resorting to many tools to improve the experience, as my observations confirmed, with live bands and/or performers, different and unexpected locations and themed shows. The following quote illustrates the importance of these extra components for respondents:

“Everyone tries to come up with something creative to do, like a cool location or a cool theme, a live band, and things like that (...) those shows that are different is great because it makes it a lot more memorable than just going to the showroom, it makes it exciting” (Fashion editor, 18-25 years old)

Indeed, respondents say spectacle shows captivate them, making them excited and fonder of fashion.

High press coverage and attendance: In my observations, spectacle shows proved to be the highest attended ones, the most covered on online and offline media, and the ones where the complement of innovation between pieces and what surrounded them worked in tandem to elevate the designer’s creations. The example of Alexander Wang’s show depicts this, with over 2000 people filling the streets of Brooklyn, the show being broadcasted live, features on social media and mentions in all major fashion magazines the following day.

Designers show their real essence and unique voice: Most respondents stressed how the creator being actively involved in social causes was a positive point that they enjoyed to see promoted in spectacle shows. Also, according to the interviews and my observations, spectacle shows appeared to be events where designers were more daring and took risks, being creative in the displays of the collection and the overall environment. Respondents recognized this aspect to convey to brands’ spectacle shows a unique setting that is personal to each

brand. Also, spectacle shows make respondents comfortable with the shift of focus of shows from the designs to the environment, as long as it is for a cause they find pertinent.

Negative aspects inferred from the case study

Distracts from main goal: Despite recognizing the big press coverage is a positive aspect for many brands, most respondents feel that there is a lot of distraction on the ambiance surrounding spectacle shows, which leads them to either not being able to do their work or not being able to buy:

“For the brand sometimes it’s better if celebrities are there because it gets people to write about it and draws attention to the show (...) as an editor I do think it can be distracting (...) one show this season people were waiting 40 minutes for Nicki Minaj to arrive. Something like that is where it starts to take away from the job they are all here to do, which is to see the designs (...) So I think that with these recent changes to fashion (...) it has become this source of entertainment for people that I think takes away from the purpose of it” (Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

“(...) during Fashion Week, they’re so busy and... If I was some sort of actress and I knew that me wearing their gown would get me some sort of press and would get them featured in the photographs... but no, I’m just going to pay for the dress and that’s what their getting (...) For buying, I rather window shop than go to a show” (J. Mendel client, 18-25 years old)

As mentioned for runways, there is also a generalized confusion on the role of spectacle shows and the format they have taken. Despite the acknowledged importance of public appraisal, most respondents still believe sales to be an important aspect of shows, wanting to see clothes in greater detail and be given the possibility to admire and even purchase them. Also, although most respondents said to enjoy the innovativeness and creativeness of spectacle shows, those who work as fashion editors indicated great discontentment, saying that it was preventing them from doing their job, as the following quotes illustrate:

“I personally pay to see any artist on stage, but if my assignment is to see the clothes I want there to be no barrier of distraction for that (...) maybe those kinds of theatrical events could live in another context and Fashion Week can become more about the market (...) book performers just for the sake of media coverage or getting attention from people, I think that shouldn’t live in Fashion Week (...) I just hope we can get to a place where we can have theatrical presentations that are more consumer-focus and public-facing and that there is something different for editors who are there to work ” (Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

“Sometimes I would love to focus more on the clothes and not so much the spectacle around it. But I do think with Prabal [Gurung] he’s using that attention he gets from celebrities for a good cause. And to me that makes it worth it” (Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

The last quote mentions the case of Prabal Gurung as making acceptable the show being a bit more about the theatricality and entertainment than the clothes per se. Prabal Gurung is a very good example of the designer’s

role that we describe in section 2 E) as he believes that fashion and politics are not mutually exclusive, using the awareness he receives to show that fashion is not an escape, but a tool for social intervention.

Inappropriate spectacle might harm luxury image: However, something that influences respondents into changing their opinions on brands, far more than their social and political consciousness, is the suitability of the spectacle show. For them, the bottom line is that it has to be something tasteful and appropriate, allowing it to be fun and edgier also. Overall, respondents prefer spectacle shows, but the issue arises when brands go a step too far and disrupt the format, turning it into a party scene that resembles anything but luxury. An example I experienced and was also mentioned by the respondents helps understanding the problematic:

“I don’t see Wang as luxury (...) I feel like the clothes and the client-base to me they don’t really scream class. And to me luxury is more associated with that. I feel like if I spend a lot of money on a piece and if I want to go to an event by that brand I expect it to be tasteful and to people to have a certain level of decorum. And in Wang there’s not that (...) I pay a lot of attention to branding, and I think the branding is not what I would expect from a luxury brand” (Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

Alexander Wang debuted his RTW SS 2018 Collection, which I had the opportunity to observe myself, in an unconventional spectacle approach. The show consisted in 32 models and supermodels – Bella Hadid, Kendall Jenner, Kaia Gerber, among others – on a party bus. The designer closed a main avenue in Bushwick, Brooklyn, to serve as its runway under the name of #Wangfest. Despite 2000 plus people waiting for more than 60 minutes for the spectacle to start, the show started and ended within five minutes. Before arriving to Brooklyn, the bus made two surprise spectacle shows in Manhattan, being the entire bus ride covered through Wang’s digital channels via live-stream. Respondents and international media considered this show as a revamping of the current spectacle formats, many seeing it as improper and unrepresentative of the essence of a luxury brand. Here it is possible to conclude that what harms the image of brands, as respondents demonstrated in the case of Wang, is the way designers behave and not the format per se.

Strict schedules: Same as previously explained for runway shows’ negative aspects.

Private presentation

Positive aspects inferred from the case study

Elevation of brand image by proximity with creator: In a presentation the designer is present, being able to walk the public through the collection, explaining its reasoning and inspiration, which results in a stronger personal connection between the brand and its clients. This point was something I understood as very much valuable in the organization and participation in J. Mendel's private presentation, as part of the staff. Indeed, I observed the interaction of clients with the brand – its representatives and creations - and realized how much the peaceful environment that perfectly embodied the essence of the brand was valued. The quote below describes this idea in detail:

“You actually get a chance to see the designer, to say hi, to walk around the clothes, and they can create a little more of a world for you there versus other shows, which it's just 15 minutes lights on, everyone leaves, you can't see anything else. Here [presentations] you can really get close (...) And I find that designers tend to be more creative in presentations in terms of the setting because they have a few hours where they can have this world created for you” (Fashion editor, 36-50 years old)

Appropriate format for sales objective: Overall, most respondents, mainly clients, showed preference on presentations over other show formats, as they end up going to the store later to see the pieces up-close, touch them and actually buy them. As for fashion editors, they book re-see appointments after Fashion Week following the same reasoning of clients, not to buy but to formulate better constructed opinions on the collections. The quote below develops on this idea:

“I prefer presentations more than I prefer fashion shows. I prefer the models to be lined up, sort of like an exhibition (...) Fashion shows definitely have an impact on what I'm buying for Couture, not so much for RTW” (J. Mendel client, 18-25 years old)

Focus is the clothes: Some designers - called “*fashion purists*” by the interviewees - have decided to change the format in which they presented their collections as they felt the runway and spectacle shows were distracting clients. Given the amount of work and craftsmanship in each piece, designers understood that the creations would not be properly valued within the spectacle show environment nor while ‘rushing by in 30 seconds’. The quote below illustrates why respondents enjoy more presentations than other show formats:

“For someone like J. Mendel, those pieces take so much time to craft and construct, that it's better the format where you can take your time, taking the designs in versus they just rushing past you (...) he creates a lot of beautiful garments that usually get picked up by celebrities for the red carpet and to that end I do feel like it kind of raises the brand to have a lot of theatrics attached to the clothes. I think it's a lot more about appreciating a beautiful gown and deciding from a professional stand point if it's going to work with your

client if you're a stylist, but not necessarily walking away and just remembering a show for the sake of the spectacle of it" (Fashion editor, 26-35 years old)

Being able to touch the pieces, feel the fabrics and observe the intricacy of details is a definitive plus according to respondents and my observations at presentations.

Duration: In presentations everyone is allowed to take the time and walk through each piece at each person's rhythm. Respondents also added that presentations are an enjoyable break in between the rush and hectic calendar of Fashion Week, having days with one show after the other nonstop. In contrast, presentations last longer, allowing everyone to adapt their schedules and stop by whenever and for how long it suits them.

Negative aspects inferred from the case study

Do not create a moment: Most respondents seem to agree that presentations cannot create a moment like other show formats can. The following quote explains this reasoning:

"You can really make a moment happen [in spectacle shows]. If you have a model standing there for three hours you can't really have that moment but if someone major walks down the runway, that's unexpected at the end closing the show, it's like a moment you'll remember versus something that's static (...) you have an unexpected model walking down the runway and people think it's amazing, or it can be a moment where like Cindy Crawford's daughter makes her runway debut... That's a moment... It doesn't mean the same thing in a presentation" (Fashion editor, 36-50 years old)

Not highly covered or attended: As I could observe through my participation in different formats of shows, press coverage during and after Fashion Week is centred on runways and spectacle shows, not presentations. According to respondents, chiefly the ones working as press, the front page and headlines always go to the designers who made a loud statement and took the debut to the spectacle level. And both brands and editors are aware of it, as the quotes below describe:

"If you read the press after fashion week, the things that's on the front page is always the show, it's never a presentation on the front page and it kind of gets lost in the mix of fashion week" (Fashion editor, 36-50 years old)

Indeed, most respondents mentioned that the most senior people at Fashion magazines do not attend presentations. They tend to choose the most visible and exclusive debuts, which are usually spectacle shows or runaways, not presentations. The following quote illustrates this:

"I think what's though when doing something like this [presentations] is you don't have as high-end press as you used to get at the shows [spectacle and runway] where for example the editor-in-chiefs don't go

anymore to presentations and they would to shows (...) fashion week is so busy that it's bound to happen (...) shows are more of a scene, there are photographers, they're on their way to be photographed, or celebrities going to shows, so I think when you do a presentation you still get people from great magazines and bloggers but you're not getting the top of the top, you're getting people that are below" (J. Mendel manager, 26-35 years old)

Less reach to make people fonder of the brand: Respondents show discontentment with presentations as a way to make an impact debuting collections, despite agreeing that it is the best format from the selling point of view. Most agreed that the excitement of being a part of the statement brands make through spectacles or runways makes them more excited about the collections, something a static and understated presentation cannot achieve.

4. Discussion & Recommendations

Inferences on the fashion show format

Over my observations and the interviews conducted, it was possible to understand that respondents are confused on some matters regarding fashion shows' formats and purpose.

In fact, respondents believe the fashion show is supposed to raise awareness and build brand image, just as theory predicts. However, respondents desire the show to have a sales goal, as editors want to see the pieces up-close and touch them, clients want to be able to buy the garments they like the most, and brands want to sell their pieces and increase revenue. As so, respondents feel a misalignment on what they expect from the fashion show and how brands actually present it.

On one hand, on runways and spectacle shows most respondents feel the social scene is distracting and the models rush down the catwalk in a way they cannot really appreciate the creations. Most feel the music and the entertainment to be distracting from the collection presented, which should be the main focus, and state that if they instead wanted to go to a concert they would not be at a fashion show. Yet, the majority of respondents claimed to enjoy the facet of entertainment, saying it improved the way they thought about brands and stressing how much they appreciated to be a part of it. On the other hand, in private presentations respondents feel the format to be more appropriate for the commercial purpose they seek. In such they are able to better understand the collection, many times being walked through by the creator itself. However, presentations are not memorable nor do they create a moment as runways and spectacles do.

Short vs. Long-term efforts

An important reference should be made to brand's 'urge to sell', as, according to luxury theory, luxury brands cannot focus on sales, rather in status and on the exclusivity that the brand represents. However, during my internship at J. Mendel and throughout the interviews conducted, it was palpable the concern brands displayed with their revenues. This has been an issue due to the sequels left by the recent financial and sovereign debt crisis, which profoundly affected consumers and businesses. As so, selling their collections is a concern for brands, making them focus on short-term profitability goals instead of long-term sustainability.

As theory advocates, when luxury brands make long-term efforts of building a reputation of exclusivity and superiority, sales appear not in a first stage, but in a sustainable and durable manner, while short-term sales goals might harm the brand and make it fall out of luxury. However, a point that rules in brands' favour is the fact that most brands mentioned by interviewees and brands I interacted with, have unique pieces, never producing more than three of each garment. These niche brands are more protected over this concern, as even if they increase their sales, the exclusivity conveyed by the brand will still be preserved, as the pieces are, indeed, very much unique.

Meeting reality with theory

From my observations and interviews, I realized the pyramid presented in section 2 B) did not apply indiscriminately to all luxury fashion brands. In fact, the framework differs between big luxury Houses, like Chanel

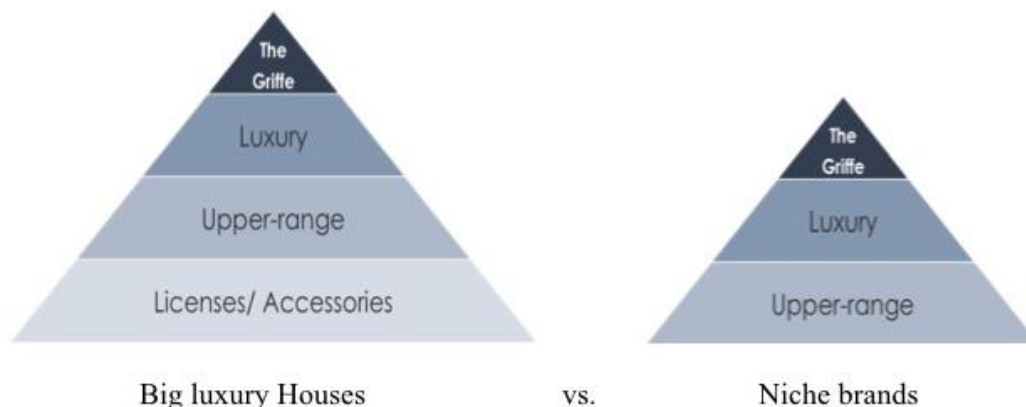


Figure 3 - Pyramid structure comparison Big luxury Houses vs. Niche brands

and Louis Vuitton, who have a complete pyramid, and niche brands, like J. Mendel, who lack a layer in the pyramid. The following figure depicts the different frameworks for each type of brand.

The main difference from one type of brand to the other has to do with how much the brand sells. Given the lack of the bottom layer, most niche brands do not produce, and hence, do not sell as much small higher reach products as big luxury Houses do, not corroding the dream as much.

Confronting our findings with theory, the runway and spectacle show formats prove to be the ones who help in nurturing the dream, whereas private presentations not as much. As so, it is necessary for big luxury Houses to have at least one of the dream-nurturing formats, because the more they sell the further they consume the dream. By selling many small pieces, they erode the mystique of exclusivity and art created around the brand, adding to the necessity of feeding the dream. Nonetheless, niche brands also need to nourish the dream. But, taking the particular case of J. Mendel, the brand is so artistic and exclusive that its dream is mainly based in the materials used and in the person of the creator, representing a different approach to nourish the dream from the way big luxury Houses do. Given J. Mendel is not focused in licensing and accessories, the brand does not need to stage a big and impactful show, given it sells less small products, being the dream less consumed. In fact, in private presentations where Mr Mendel walks clients and press through the collection, explaining its creative process, already represents a way to nourish the dream, as the insights from interviews confirmed. The negative aspects of presentations are downplayed as niche brands do not need the media coverage nor to create a moment as big luxury Houses do.

Future of the fashion show format

Given both brands and public's beliefs, the case study's answer was clear. There is no place anymore for the conventional runway shows in the luxury fashion industry. With runways, brands are neither inspiring consumers and communicating the brand's identity nor presenting the collection to buyers in a proper way. As so, the two formats that emerged, spectacles and private presentations, are the formats that should be resorted to, however differently from what they have up until now.

As luxury brands need public consecration and social appraisal, in order to make the public feel part of the intimate of brands and to make them fonder of their collections, spectacle shows should be used to build brand image by big luxury Houses. As for niche brands, a new format should be used for the same purpose. In fact, niche brands do not need a show as big luxury Houses do, but also need to properly sacralise the creator in a way more

directed towards its creative ability. This way, Fashion Week should be exclusively about building brand image and the communication of such should be made in a manner that no more confusion arises and everyone knows what to expect from this event.

Additionally, as luxury brands are interested in selling their collections and the public wants to have the opportunity to buy and touch the pieces, private presentations would be later used in a consumer-centric approach. As so, a week following each Fashion Week should be implemented just for the commercial objectives: Market Week. Market Week would be directed to selling and displaying the collections in a very understated environment where the garments would shine on their own and be the centre of the event. This way, both theory requirements and real-life needs would be addressed without harming the brands or disappointing consumers.

Long-term sustainability goals would be in line with the spectacle shows at Fashion Weeks, and the sales would surface from the private presentation efforts of Market Week while maintaining the exclusivity and status of brands intact. Indeed, some big and well-established brands have been doing the spectacle show and private presentation tandem for a while, and that is clear for respondents, being Chanel one of the best examples. Chanel has been holding semi-annual memorable spectacle shows, as the Chanel Supermarket for Fall Winter 2015 (see Appendix VII), while presenting the collection after at its boutique store by displaying its creations in a peaceful and static environment. Respondents mentioned that brands like Chanel hold the most exclusive and covetable shows, admiring and perceiving them as special, unique and the epitome of luxury, reinforcing the effectiveness of the combination of formats and clear communication of objectives.

It is important to clarify that Market Week does already exist, at least in New York, as I could experience in my internship there. However, it is not properly communicated nor of general knowledge that such exists. Also, both brands and public are confused with the purpose and formats. As so, this recommendation is not only about the separation of the two weeks, but rather about the proper communication of its separate purposes and its establishment as official events.

Conclusions and contributions of this Work Project

Addressing the Work Project objective “Revisiting the Luxury Fashion Brands’ legitimacy framework”, we conclude that the framework differs between the two types of luxury brands. The answer to the Work Projects question “are traditional runway shows still useful” is no, as runways are not fulfilling none of the objectives that brands confer to fashion shows. As so, the main contributions of this project to theory are:

- 1) The pyramid of section 2 B) is usually the one that makes more sense to justify fashion shows, but it does not always work in the same way for all brands:
 - a) Big luxury Houses need to conduct a spectacle that nurtures the dream but is not going to sell, being more directed to influencers and public, not so much to fashion editors; and a private presentation for selling purposes and proper visualization of the collection afterwards.
 - b) Niche brands do not need to nurture the dream as often, having the presentation already sacralising their creator and allowing the public to see the intricacy and details of its pieces. However, they at times fall short of sacralising and feeding the dream, due to, for example, the small coverage these events have. This way, a new model for niche brands should be found where presentations sacralise the creator in a way more directed towards its creative ability and its way to add value to the art and fashion world, allowing influencers, bloggers, press and public to appreciate its work, while at the same time allowing for a small and steady growth of the brand. The creator needs to focus in its sacralising role, where in this new model he would not be selling but instead he would be elevating the brand.
- 2) Theory says luxury brands cannot focus on profits, as the focus should be on long-term rather than short-term efforts to create sustainability for the brand. This is true but brands need profit to survive and innovate, making the selling purpose of fashion shows fundamental to the state of the art of its creations. This way, the clear separation between Fashion Week and Market Week will allow for this while following the theoretical model of short vs. long-term efforts.

5. Work Project Limitations

In the luxury fashion sector, the collection of data that involves the study and interaction with relevant participants is limited in reach. This happens due to the stakeholders, clients being an important and explanatory

example, cannot be disturbed and/or do not want to be perceived as accessible for matters that are not of great importance to them. Given this, the Work Project was restricted in its primary research aspect. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis pose particular concerns. In fact, subjectivity in the data collection and analysis process is considered one of the main disadvantages of case research. Bias arises from two sources: the influence of the researcher over participants' behaviours and the impact of the researcher's own beliefs (Iacono et al., 2009). Indeed, the last part of the process – reporting – can be difficult as the researcher needs to establish the rigour of the method followed and the validity of the findings (Darke, Shanks & Braodbent, 1998). Furthermore, analysis is a subjective process dependent on the researcher's approach. Hence, the role of the researcher in the study is critical.

Another source of bias can arise from the participant observation feature. Major criticism to it is the potential lack of objectivity, given the researcher not being an independent observer, but instead a participant, and the phenomenon observed being the subject of research. As so, the notion of participant observer presupposes a high degree of emotional detachment from the subject matter, where the objective of the researcher should be clear and solely the conduct of the research itself (Iacono et al., 2009). Additionally, the personal relationship between researcher and informants may also influence the interaction. This is an important parameter to be taken into consideration when conducting the fieldwork and the researcher is required to collect, analyse and display the evidence objectively supported by interpersonal relationships built on trust (Iacono et al., 2009). Such approach ideally leads to the researcher gaining insights without compromising the rigour and objectivity of the study.

Despite these limitations, we tried to mitigate those potential biases when conducting the research.

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**REVISITING THE LUXURY FASHION BRANDS' LEGITIMACY
FRAMEWORK – are traditional runway shows still useful?**

APPENDIX

Mariana Fino Fernandes, 3256

A Project carried out on the Master in Finance Program, under the supervision of Professor
Catherine da Silveira

3rd of January 2018

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Appendix I



Figure 4 - J. Mendel fur manipulation examples



Figure 5 - J. Mendel fur manipulation examples

Appendix II



Figure 6 - Carolina Herrera SS18 runway show example

Appendix III



Figure 7 - Louis Vuitton SS12 spectacle show example

Appendix IV



Figure 8 - J. Mendel SS18 private presentation example

Appendix V

V.I - Interview Guide Internal Stakeholders – Personal in-depth interviews

1. Warm up

We are conducting a research about fashion shows.

1. For this research, we are using a particular technique: the non directive method; it means that I will not ask you specific questions about the subject, as in a standard questionnaire. After the first question that I will introduce now, you will be free to tell me whatever comes to your mind about the subject.
2. If you don't mind, I will record the interview to further analysis.
3. This interview will take from 45 minutes to 1 hour, so take your time and develop your thoughts and reasoning as much as possible.

2. Initial question

Could you please tell me about your experience the last time you organized a fashion show? What went well? What went wrong?

[find out about the whole experience, give space for the person to tell us the story – if the respondent doesn't speak immediately about a couture show, introduce topic of couture and have him/her describe the experience]

3. Topics to be developed

A) The fashion show experience

Which fashion shows the respondent organized/ actively participated and attended? Why? Process of invitations... Motivations... Status... With whom? Differentiating attending as work or as pleasure.

[Opinion (positive + negative aspects) on types of shows; to separate opinions on the show itself (organization, audience, impact, status) and opinions on the collections; to compare with other fashion shows the respondent organized]

B) For those who actively participate in the organization: Which Impact of the fashion show experience do they try to create? For whom? Whom do they try to impact? Why?

C) What do luxury fashion brands mean for the respondent?

Couture? Differentiation? Part of the group? To show?

Low profile? High profile?

D) How does the respondent feel about the influence of media and the actions of fast fashion brands in relation to the luxury brands' intellectual property?

4. Other brands / benchmarks [*J. Mendel or brands spontaneously mentioned*]

Comparison between J. Mendel fashion shows and other brands they worked before.

5. Projective technique [*based on all brands the interviewee mentioned spontaneously*]

If the brand was a party, how would you describe this party? How is the overall environment? What kind of people are there? What is the dress code? How is the atmosphere? Which music is played? Which drinks are being served?

6. Respondent's profile [*try to guess myself*]

Appendix V

V.II - Interview Guide Clients– Personal in-depth interviews

1. Warm up

We are conducting a research about fashion shows.

1. For this research, we are using a particular technique: the non directive method; it means that I will not ask you specific questions about the subject, as in a standard questionnaire. After the first question that I will introduce now, you will be free to tell me whatever comes to your mind about the subject.
2. If you don't mind, I will record the interview to further analysis.
3. This interview will take from 45 minutes to 1 hour, so take your time and develop your thoughts and reasoning as much as possible.

2. Initial question

Could you please tell me about your experience the last time you attended a fashion show? What went well? What went wrong?

[find out about the whole experience, give space for the person to tell us the story – if the respondent doesn't speak immediately about a couture show, introduce topic of couture and have him/her describe the experience]

3. Topics to be developed

A) The fashion show experience

Which fashion shows the respondent actively participated and attended?

Why? Process of invitations... Motivations... Status... With whom? Differentiating attending as work or as pleasure.

[Opinion (positive + negative aspects) types of shows; to separate opinions on the show itself (organization, audience, impact, status) and opinions on the collections; to compare with other fashion shows the respondent attended]

B) Impact of the fashion show experience

Inspiration

Do they buy from the collections they see in fashion show? How long do they have to wait to have the pieces? Process?

Legitimacy

Social experience?

C) What do luxury fashion brands mean for the respondent?

Couture? Differentiation? Part of the group? To show?

Low profile? High profile?

D) How does the respondent feel about the influence of media and the actions of fast fashion brands in relation to the luxury brands' intellectual property?

4. Other brands / benchmarks [*J. Mendel or brands spontaneously mentioned*]

Comparison between J. Mendel fashion shows and other brands they worked before.

5. Projective technique [*based on all brands the interviewee mentioned spontaneously*]

If the brand was a party, how would you describe this party? How is the overall environment? What kind of people are there? What is the dress code? How is the atmosphere? Which music is played? Which drinks are being served?

6. Respondent's profile [*try to guess myself*]

Appendix V

V.III - Interview Guide Press– Personal in-depth interviews

1. Warm up

We are conducting a research about fashion shows.

1. For this research, we are using a particular technique: the non directive method; it means that I will not ask you specific questions about the subject, as in a standard questionnaire. After the first question that I will introduce now, you will be free to tell me whatever comes to your mind about the subject.
2. If you don't mind, I will record the interview to further analysis.
3. This interview will take from 45 minutes to 1 hour, so take your time and develop your thoughts and reasoning as much as possible.

2. Initial question

Could you please tell me about your experience the last time you attended a fashion show? Which brand was it and how was the experience?

[find out about the whole experience, give space for the person to tell us the story – if the respondent doesn't speak immediately about a couture show, introduce topic of couture and have him/her describe the experience]

3. Topics to be developed

A) The fashion show experience

Which fashion shows the respondent attended? And presentations?

Why? Process of invitations... Selection, Motivations... Status... With whom?

Comparison between types of fashion shows?

Differentiating attending as work or as pleasure.

[Opinion (positive + negative aspects) on types of shows; to separate opinions on the show itself (organization, audience, impact, status) and opinions on the collections; to compare with other fashion shows the respondent attended]

B) Impact of the fashion show experience

Inspiration

Do they choose for their editorials/reviews from the collections they see in fashion show?

Legitimacy

Social experience?

What motivates them to write a good or bad review about it

C) What do luxury fashion brands mean for the respondent?

Couture? Differentiation? Part of the group? To show? Only work?

Low profile? High profile?

D) What does the shift from fashion shows to private presentations represent to the respondent?

Personal experience attending one, points of difference, positive and negative aspects, preference

4. Other brands / benchmarks [*J. Mendel or brands spontaneously mentioned*]

Developing on overall shopping experience and/or work-related contact, images and perceptions of the brand, comparisons with other benchmarks and J. Mendel, attendance and environment of fashion shows and private presentations.

5. Projective technique [*based on all brands the interviewee mentioned spontaneously*]

If the brand was a party, how would you describe this party? How is the overall environment? What kind of people are there? What is the dress code? How is the atmosphere? Which music is played? Which drinks are being served?

6. Respondent's profile [*try to guess myself*]

Appendix VI

Approach to the fashion show																					
#obs	Date	Brand	Fashion show format			Number of pieces presented					Duration				Number of attendees					Celebrities	
			Runaway	Spectacle	Presentation	#	1-15	16-30	30-45	45+	min	1-30	31-60	60+	#	1-100	100-200	200-300	300+	Y	N

(continued)

																			Observational Annotations		
Bloggers		Fashion Editors		Photographers		Location					Music				Theme		Decoration	Media coverage		Annotations	Observer
Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Classic venue	Boutique	Hotel	Museum	Other	Pop	Jazz	Electronic	Live	Classic	Y		N	Online		

Table 2 - Observation Grid used to record fashion show observations

Appendix VII



Figure 9 - Chanel FW15 spectacle show