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Luxury Consumption Motivations:

A Cross-Cultural Study Between

France and China

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Abstract:

During the last decade, international luxury brands have been expanding continuously to new markets, transferring the industry's gravity center from West to East. The present research aims at investigating how consumers' motivations for buying luxury products differ in developed and emerging markets and what role culture plays in those differences. More precisely, the paper focuses on two main actors of this industry: France (the first country offering luxury-branded products) and China (hosting the world major luxury consumers). An online questionnaire assessed Status & Conspicuousness, Conformity, Uniqueness, Hedonism and Quality motivations of 95 French and 72 Chinese students. Results were statistically analyzed trough a series of independent-sample t-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests. Conformity appears to be a dominant motivation in China, while Hedonism and Quality motivations prevail in France. Moreover, Uniqueness comes out as equally important in both markets. Cultural orientation was measured trough individuals' self-construal and doesn't have a significant influence in the previous results. The researcher proposes that differences in motivations might alternatively depend on luxury knowledge and on the industry development stage in a country. Further investigation concerning the causes of motivation differences is crucial. Finally, this study derives specific management implications for international luxury brands fighting to increase availability while keeping exclusivity.

Key Words: Luxury, Motivations, Cross-cultural studies, Consumer Behavior, Brands, France, China.

Résumé:

La dernière décennie a été caractérisée par une expansion continue des marques de luxe internationales dans de nouveaux marchés. Le centre de gravité du secteur du luxe a ainsi été transféré vers l'Est. Ce mémoire de recherche a pour objectif de comprendre comment les motivations à la consommation de marques de luxe changent entre pays développés et pays émergents. De plus, le rôle de la culture au sein de ces différences est aussi examiné. L'étude met l'accent sur les principaux acteurs du marché du luxe aujourd'hui: la France (étant le premier pays créateur de produits de luxe) et la Chine (pays d'origine des premiers consommateurs de luxe à l'échelle mondiale). Un questionnaire en ligne a été utilisé pour mesuré les différentes motivations (Élitisme & Ostentation, Conformité, Unicité, Hédonisme et Qualité) de 95 étudiants Français et de 72 étudiants Chinois. Les résultats ont été analysés statistiquement à l'aide d'une série de tests t pour échantillons indépendants et de tests Mann-Whitney U. Conformisme semble être très important pour les Chinois, tandis qu'Hédonisme et Qualité sont des motivations dominantes parmi les consommateurs Français. Unicité est une motivation d'égale importance dans les deux marchés. L'orientation culturelle, mesuré à travers la notion de "self-construal", ne semble pas être une dimension essentielle pour expliquer les différences repérées en termes de motivations. En fournissant une perspective différente, le niveau de connaissance des consommateurs et le niveau du développement du marché dans un pays sont présentés comme possibles causes pour les différences de motivations rencontrés. Une étude plus approfondie de ce sujet est essentiel. L'étude des résultats dérive des implications stratégiques pour les grandes marques de luxe qui essayent constamment d'augmenter l'offre tout en gardant l'exclusivité.

Mots-clés : Luxe, Motivations, Études Interculturels, Comportement du Consommateur, Marques, France, Chine.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Even though 2012 was an economic disaster in Europe, the European luxury brands never had such brilliant results. This paradox demonstrates the immeasurable potential of the luxury industry. Representing only $60 billion in 1990 (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993), this industry was estimated to stand for near €212 billion in 2012, and is expected to reach between €240 and €250 billion by 2015 (Bain & Company, 2012). Europe still represents the biggest proportion of the market (34%), followed by Japan (28%), North America (25%) and Asia Pacific. Moreover, from the twenty-five first luxury groups, seventeen are from the European Union, three are from Sweden, four are from the U.S and one is from Japan (Blanckaert, 2012).

Luxury has been living times of change. Even though it was born in the West, with its global centers in New York, Paris and Milan, we observe a migration of the biggest brands to some Asian countries today. The most successful luxury brands are now strongly present in cities of the orient such as Seoul, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mumbai and Shanghai. Numerous brands export more than 60% of their total production and achieve a global presence; Louis Vuitton, Hermès and Gucci have, respectively, 450, 370 and 300 boutiques all over the world (Blanckaert, 2012). During the last years, the luxury market has been growing at rates superior to 8%, mainly due to emerging markets. Japan was the first developing country to be touched by the luxury boom in the 80's, followed more recently by the BRICS. In 2012, 27% of global luxury purchases were made by Chinese consumers, who currently represent a leading segment for European brands (McKinsey, 2012).

These changes in the market represent a world of opportunities for companies but also a challenge for managers to take the right strategic decisions. In fact, the luxury boom created a need for companies to expand strategically into new markets. To thrive, it is crucial to preserve the brand DNA while adapting to the specificities of the different markets. In marketing terms, managers always need to decide whether to standardize or to adapt the marketing mix (place, product, price, promotion) when expanding internationally. To satisfy their clients' demands, certain companies decide to have their products developed differently depending on the country/region (multinational marketing) while others decide to sell the same product in the same way everywhere (global marketing).

It is thus interesting to understand until what extent consumers from different regions differ in the way they see luxury. Even though some defend that globalization has made the world flatter (Friedman, 2007) and consumers buy the same luxury products all over the globe, the motivations to do so can vary a lot (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Depending on their country of origin, consumers may have different perceptions of the value these products, thus being driven to buy for different reasons. Several authors have already explored this subject, mainly by analyzing attitudes towards luxury consumption in one or more countries (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Dubois, Czellar & Laurent, 2005; Li & Su, 2006; Ruvio, Shoham & Brencic, 2008; Wang, Sun & Song, 2010; Le Monkhouse, Barnes & Stephan, 2012; Shukla, 2011; Zhang a & Kim, 2012). The aim of this paper is to develop the present literature by comparing luxury consumption motivations in France and China. Although these two countries were never compared before, they are today the main actors in this field. In fact, France is the first market offering luxury products, while China is the first country buying them.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

DO MOTIVATIONS TO BUY LUXURY PRODUCTS DIFFER AMONG
FRENCH AND CHINESE CONSUMERS?

This research question has both a strong practical and theoretical relevance. Practically speaking, assessing motivations in cross-cultural contexts enables to identify commonalities and differences, which may be an important input when companies decide on a global strategy. As an example, the identification of Chinese consumers' motivations is important for luxury brands when entering in China but also when selling in other countries, due the rising importance of luxury tourism. In fact, France is the first destination for tourists, holding an advantage of almost 20 million tourists over the United States (2nd touristic destination). Moreover, the number of Chinese travelling has been growing around 19% per year in the

period of 2000-2010, reaching a number of 142 million in 2010 (including Hong Kong)[1]. Finally, theoretically speaking, the literature comparing different countries is still very limited. As Wang, Sun & Song (2010) proposed *"a cross-cultural study between China and other countries may shed more light on how motivation and luxury consumptions differ across cultures".* The present study tries to fill a gap in this research area, by empirically demonstrating that motivations between French and Chinese differ and by deriving specific recommendations for luxury brands.

Firstly, it was important to gain a clear understanding of the concept of luxury and of the Chinese and French market dynamics. Secondly, the motivations chosen for the present study were derived from past literature and empirically tested using an online questionnaire. Finally, based on the results obtained from the quantitative study, we propose several insights on how motivations may affect the strategy of companies.

This research is particularly interesting for international luxury brands facing the challenge of maintaining brand coherence in an industry where equilibrium is never the rule. The implications of this study might be suitable and applicable to countries other than France and China.

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[1] All figures in this sentence from calculations using World Bank Data

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 DEFINING LUXURY – DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

According to Euromonitor (2007), there is no clear definition of the word luxury, with a simple dictionary definition being "*not essential*". It is a relative term, and what one person regards as essential will be another's luxury. The famous saying "*one person's junk is another person's treasure*" illustrates the complexity of this concept.

Historically, luxury was available for very few people and was used to create a social stratification. The aristocracy showed their inherited place in society by spending ostentatiously and thus differentiating themselves from the masses. Social distance was preserved by the sumptuary rules, which prohibited the rich Bourgeois to dress like the Aristocrats. Even though legal stratification disappeared, luxury continued to be used as a way to aspire to a certain social position or to differentiate oneself from the masses. The French market was dominated by a few "maisons" until the 80's. At that time, brands were called by the designers' names, everyone in the industry knew each other, designers "dominated" clients and buying a luxury item required a specific protocol. In the 90's, with the arrival of Bernard Arnault, luxury started to become a profitability driven business, based on enhancing timelessness, jazzing up design and advertise like crazy (Thomas, 2008, p.49). At this stage, multi-brand groups were formed (PPR, LVMH, Richemond, etc…) and international expansion became the rule.

Today, luxury appears as one of the most profitable businesses and is available to a broader target. This word is constantly present in our daily lives with the appearance of magazine columns, TV shows and entire university degrees dedicated to it. There has been a democratization of the luxury industry with some brands trading up and others trading down. In fact, luxury companies started trading down and offering branded products at low price premiums (e.g. Ralph Lauren Polo shirts sold for $9 in outlets). These products offer more prestige than the middle-range products and are sold at prices only slightly above, in order to reach a broader target than the traditional luxury niche. On the other hand, some fast fashion brands use trading up strategies, such as creating collections by well-known designers (e.g. H&M collection designed by the famous Karl Lagerfeld), to give consumers a taste of luxury.

Semantically, the word luxury comes from the Latin word "*luxus*", which was at first an agricultural term defining the herbs that grow spontaneously apart. This provides the idea that a luxury good enables people to stand apart from conventions. Latter, *"luxus"* was defined as indulgence of the senses regardless of cost. This definition transmits the idea of extravagance and excess. However, extravagance and excess are very subjective words that depend a lot on the level of possessions one has. In the limit, one can see a low budget trip as an excess compared to its monthly income.

Economically, luxury brands can be defined as those which price/quality ratio is the highest in the market. McKinsey (1990) defined these brands as the ones that are able to justify higher prices for the same tangible benefit. Nueno and Quelch (1998) defended that luxury brands have a "*low ratio of functionality to price but have a high ratio of situational and intangible utility to price*". In fact, other authors also defend it is very important to take into account the situation and occasion of consumption into the definition of luxury (Yang, Allenby & Fennell, 2002). A soda can be seen as a luxury product by a very thirsty person in the middle of the desert.

Nueno and Quelch (1998) stated that a luxury brand is more than just a premium priced product since it normally shares some common characteristics: a consistent quality across all products in the line, a heritage of craftsmanship, a flavor of its creator's personality, a recognizable style or design, a limited production run, a marketing program combining emotional appeal and product excellence, a global reputation, an association with the country of origin and an element of uniqueness in each product.

According to Chadha & Husband (2006) luxury products are fashionable and high-quality consumer goods made by reputed luxury brands. These products need to be universally accepted and available. This definition overcomes the problem of perceptions and situational context. In the scope of this research, the more traditional definition of luxury will be used; products which are universally accepted as luxury and hold the main characteristics Nueno and Quelch (1998) defined. As an example, luxury brands in the fashion industry could be Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Dior, etc…

2.2 PICTURING THE LUXURY MARKET TODAY

2.2.1 FRANCE: A MATURE PLACE FOR LUXURY

France is the home for the 1st and 2nd biggest luxury conglomerates in the world, LVMH and PPR respectively, as well as for the biggest worldwide cosmetic group, L'Oreal. France is thus a very mature market and the country is often associated with luxury. The Comité Colbert joins 75 brands and has the objective of spreading French luxury throughout the world. French consumers are already very sophisticated and have a deep knowledge about the industry. With the current economic crisis, European consumers are becoming more price-sensitive and are starting to trade down in certain items (McKinsey, 2011). However, according to a survey lead by McKinsey (2011), French are *"fragrance and cosmetics addicts"*. Even though levels of luxury spending in France were at par with the other European countries, consumers spent a lot in luxury fragrances in 2011; 65% of the respondents of McKinsey survey bought luxury fragrances in 2011, compared to only 46% in Italy.

For the purpose of this paper, more than understanding the French consumers, we want to compare them with the Chinese. The major luxury brands were born in France, exported mainly to other European countries and marketed to European consumers. However, the star consumers today come from China, which makes it essential to examine the market's historical evolutions and current dynamics.

2.2.2 CHINA: THE ELDORADO FOR LUXURY BRANDS

During the 80's, the governance of Den Xiaoping imposed a socialist market economy, which represented a turnaround for the luxury industry in China. In fact, the Open Policy of 1978 opened China to the world and the world to China (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Attracted by an emerging class of wealthy individuals and a more liberalized market, luxury brands were able to enter the country in the 90's. However, in the late 90's, China was still an almost inexistent market for international luxury brands, representing nearly zero revenues for the main western players. Only in 2001, when China joined the WTO and confirmed its capitalist position, the luxury market exploded in the country. In 2005, foreign luxury brands didn't need to have a local partner anymore, enabling them to increase their control over their

brand management in the country. Louis Vuitton opened its first store in China in 1992 and the number grew to 37 stores, in 29 cities across mainland China, in 2011. The expansion of Gucci stores was even faster, growing from 6 stores in 2005 to 39 stores in 2011. Hermès quadrupled its stores from 5 in 2005 to 20 in 2011 (Mckinsey, 2011). Today, Chinese consumers account for about 27% of worldwide luxury consumption and are estimated to account to nearly 34% by 2015 (McKinsey, 2012). These movements are transferring the luxury industry center of gravity to Asia. As an example, in 2005, Comité Colbert decided to hold the annual meeting for the first time outside Europe, in Beijing.

The growth lived in the Chinese market is expected to be sustained due to the increase in the number of wealthy consumers, who have a tendency to buy expensive and mostly high-end products. In fact, the number of households with annual disposable income above RMB 1 million will grow at more than 15% until 2015 (Mckinsey, 2012). It is important to notice that the average Chinese millionaire is aged 39, which means 15 years younger than the average elsewhere (The Economist, 2011). In addition, a rising middle class also contributes to the increase in sales of luxury products. The growing purchasing power of women, who represent today 3/5 of the luxury market in China, is another driver for growth. Despite uncertainties about China's economic slowdown, the levels of financial confidence are still extremely high. According to McKinsey (2012), 3/4 of the country's affluent consumers (those with annual household disposable income above RMB 250,000, or US $40,000) believe their household income will increase significantly in the next 3 years. Finally, the gifting tradition remains intact, since it is an important way of nurturing and reinforcing relationships.

France is the preferred destination for Chinese consumers, who often purchase luxury products while travelling. Half of luxury spending from Chinese consumers takes place abroad. Goldman Sachs estimated that Chinese doubled their luxury spending abroad (compared to spending at home) because of the lower prices and better selection opportunities (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Buying abroad enables consumers to avoid the high taxes imposed to this type of products in China. Also, the fall of the EUR against the RMB enables to get the most well known brands at 40% less in Paris. More recently, due to the change in the nation's leadership, consumers are more comfortable buying abroad because they gain anonymity. Finally, Chinese don't like to buy counterfeits and buying in Europe or in the U.S appears as a way of ensuring the purchase of genuine products.

Concerning the domestic market, Shanghai and Beijing are obviously the top destinations for buying luxury. However, developed towns, such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen, or even second and third tier cities, are also increasingly hosting designer-label stores. Today, companies want to increase the control over their distribution in the key markets. A growing number of brands are building their own stores in the best locations and, thus, reducing the role of intermediaries. However, China is a very big market and so companies still need to use agents to reach the secondary locations. Moreover, luxury brands are still highly present in five star hotels retail spaces (Marriot Guangzhou, Ritz Carlton Shanghai, The Palace Hotel Beijing, etc…) because of their initial need to have local partners.

The Chinese domestic market is very concentrated, with about 50% of the sales made by the top 5 five brands of each category (Bain, 2011). Those top brands are all originally from Europe or from the U.S. In the domestic market, watches and leather goods drive the growth and the top brands are Tissot, Rolex, Cartier, Omega and Longines for watches and Channel, Gucci, Hermès, Louis Vuitton and Prada for leather goods. Today, the country of origin effect is still very important for Chinese consumers. There are even examples of western luxury brands that had to stop producing in China because affluent consumers would think the brand didn't have sufficient quality; *The French worker is better than the Chinese one in the mind of the Chinese consumer"* (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Also, the fact that the country was closed to luxury for so long created a need for people to be "re-educated" in terms of fashion. Even though today consumers have the money to buy the products, often they don't know how to match different brand items or what to wear in different occasions. Today, Chinese still trust Western brands because they feel the prestige and status will come from the symbolical mean of the brand (Chadha & Husband, 2006).

As demonstrated, the two countries chosen for this study are strongly interconnected in what concerns luxury. In fact, the Chinese market represents already nearly 20% of French luxury brands' revenues (Marois, 2012) and this percentage is expected to continue to grow. Also, France receives a growing number of Chinese tourists who are sometimes coming just to shop from the most well-known brands. French, or even western luxury brands, may increase profitability if they understand exactly how cultural differences may impact their consumers' motivations to purchase.

2.3 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS?

2.3.1 DEFINING MOTIVATIONS

Individuals have specific aspirations for their lives, making them progress and satisfy their psychological needs. Motivation is a crucial concept since it makes people advance and take decisions in all domains of life. There is an extensive literature analyzing the reasons behind individuals' consumption decisions. Maslow (1943) introduced Maslow's hierarchy of needs which has been widely employed in consumer behavior studies. The author presented physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization needs as a scale of motivations individuals develop throughout life. Consumers' will only be driven by higher needs when they have satisfied the ones in the bottom of the pyramid. Other authors divided motivations into extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations. As an example, Kasser & Ryan (1993, 1996) recognized wealth, fame and image as extrinsic aspirations, while meaningful relationships, personal growth and community contributions were identified as intrinsic ones. Although literature sometimes refers to needs, aspirations and goals, the present paper will always refer to the concept of motivation.

Identifying luxury consumption motivations consists in defining the major reasons which trigger the desire to possess a luxury product. Motivations can be a positive, neutral or negative response to certain influences (Heinemann, 2008). Past literature often presents luxury consumption motivations as the result of individuals' self-orientation and cultural background. Based on these variables, strong differences were found between developed western countries and eastern emerging countries.

2.3.2 FRANCE & CHINA: DIFFERENT CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS

Culture can be described in numerous ways. Authors have constantly proposed new definitions; Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) identified more than 160 definitions for this word. Culture deals with the way people live and may be seen as the sum of language, physical and psychological dimensions (Chaney & Martin, 2007; Borden, 1991). Firstly, language is used to communicate with other people that have the same values and beliefs, by using verbal and non-verbal tools specific to the culture. Secondly, physical dimensions relate to the physical environment and the cultural activities of the people. Thirdly, psychological dimension relates

to knowledge, beliefs and mental activities. These dimensions are developed by the way one is born and raised, the people and environment one encounters and the psychological stimulus one comes across.

Even though some branded products are commercialized all over the world and globalization creates convergent consumer habits and lifestyles, culture is a very important factor to take into account. Hofstede (1980) proposed that different nations have different cultural orientations, which can be measured trough five dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-term Orientation. China and France score very differently in any of the five dimensions proposed by the author. Concerning Power Distance, Chinese accept inequalities within society better than French. Secondly, China is mainly a Collectivistic country (IDV = 20), which means that, when compared to France (IDV= 71), it maintains a higher degree of interdependence among its members. China appears to be a Masculine country (MAS = 66), emphasizing competitiveness among individuals who are supposed to be success oriented and driven. France is a more Feminine country (MAS=43), emphasizing success trough quality of life. China has lower Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI =30) than France but is more Long-term oriented (LTO = 118). In fact, Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity, which can be illustrated by their language, but are very persistent and perseverant.
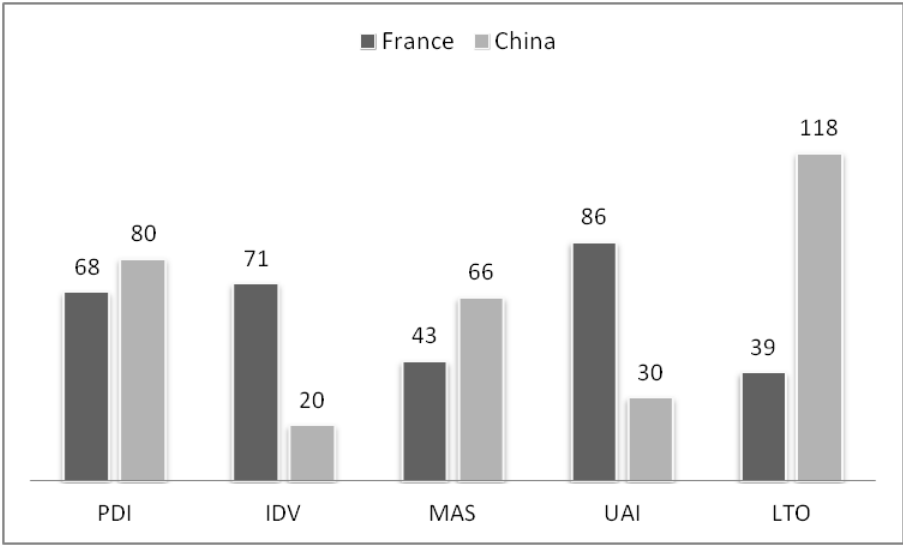

FIGURE 1 HOFSTEDE DIMENSIONS

The dimensions of individualism and collectivism are the most commonly used in cross-cultural research on consumption motivations for luxury. Aaker & Maheswaran (1997) suggested that consumption motivation in collectivistic countries is much linked to the group since people have a need to blend in. On the contrary, the authors state that in individualistic countries the individual will be in the center of motivations because people want to differentiate themselves and become unique. In the present study, we are expected to observe differences in motivations, especially given that France scores 71 in individualism while China only 20.

2.3.3 FRANCE & CHINA: DIFFERENT SELF-CONSTRUALS

According to Triandis (1994), Individualism and Collectivism measures may be too simplistic and, for more accurate analysis, it is better to compare the psychological constructs of private and public self and understand which of them prevail in each country. More precisely, Millan & Reynolds (2011) defend that the notions of Interdependent and Independent self-concepts are better predictors of individual buying behavior because they represent the internalization of Individualism and Collectivism values.

Markus & Kitayama (1991) first presented the Interdependent and Independent conceptions of the self, which characterise how individuals see themselves in relation to others. The authors proposed that people from Individualistic countries (such as France) have characteristics of independence, considering themselves as distinct individuals and naturally separated from others. They are generally *"bounded, unitary, stable, autonomous, individualist, egocentric, self-contained, separate, and detached from the social context"* (Millan & Reynolds, 2011). In fact, literature defends that in Western cultures it is very important to maintain one's own opinion and not conform (Kashima, Yamaguchi, Kim, Choi, Gelfand & Yuki, 1995); the Independent self-concept being thus more often activated.

In contrast, individuals from Collectivistic countries (such as China) are mainly characterised by Interdependent self-concepts and will construct their identity based on relationships and context (Singelis, 1994). The dominance of an Interdependent self-concept will result in *"seeing oneself as part of an encompassing relationship and recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent on and, to a large extent, organized by what the*

actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 227).

These two psychological constructs are part of one's identity and are strongly related to the cultural background, the environment in which one is raised and other situational factors (Trafimow et al., 1991; Triandis, 1994).

Past literature on cultural and self-construal orientation leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: COMPARED TO CHINESE, FRENCH WILL PUT MORE EMPHASIS
ON INDEPENDENT SELF-CONCEPT.

H2: COMPARED TO FRENCH, CHINESE WILL PUT MORE EMPHASIS
ON INTERDEPENDENT SELF-CONCEPT.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) also derived that different conceptions of the self will generate different reasons *"why people initiate, terminate, and persist in specific actions in particular circumstances".* They defend that people with an independent view of the self will be driven by actions that allow them to express their own opinions and traits, while people with an interdependent view of the self will be motivated by initiatives that cultivate relations with others.

Numerous authors have explained differences in luxury consumption motivations trough the analysis of cultural and self-construal orientations. In the next section we present the main motivations for luxury consumption and derive several hypotheses concerning the emphasis given to each motivation by French and Chinese consumers.

2.4 LUXURY CONSUMPTION MOTIVATIONS

2.4.1 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

It is important to understand how the perceptions of luxury evolved in the last centuries. In the 18th century, luxury had majorly a negative connotation and was associated to individual vanity. Adam Smith (1759, p. 256) defended that luxury demonstrations were used by individuals to enhance vanity and often to penetrate in a higher social group. He stated that a man *"(...) sees the respect which is paid to rank and fortune, and wishes to usurp this respect, as well as that for talent and virtues. His dress, his equipage, his way of living, accordingly, all announces both a higher rank and a greater fortune than really belong to him"*.

In the same line of thought, the sociologist Thorstein Veblen defended status as a driving force in society and wealth as primary indicator of it. According to the sociologist, to gain status it was not enough to possess wealth; the wealth should be publicly shown off (Gareth, 2008). Veblen (1899) argued that wealthy people tended to consume highly conspicuous goods to display their achievements to others and to enhance their social status. This theory was very powerful and was developed by several authors in the following decades.

In 1950, Leibenstein developed Veblen's work and presented three extrinsic luxury consumption motivations; he named them the Veblen, Bandwagon and Snob effects. Firstly, the Veblen effect represents a positive relation between consumption motivation and ostentation/price. The Bandwagon effect explains consumption motivations as a need to be part of a certain reference group. Finally, the Snob effect describes consumption motivations as a need to be unique and different from the masses. The two last effects are interrelated since the "Bandwagons" follow the "Snobs" consumption choices and the "Snobs" drop those same choices when the "Bandwagons" want them.

Only in the late 90's, intrinsic motivations for luxury consumption started to be studied. In 1999, Vigneron & Johnson added two intrinsic forms of motivation to the work of Leibenstein; perceived hedonic and perceived functional value. These two forms of motivation are self-oriented and not at all related to others' actions. This was a very important step for luxury consumption behavior theory since it created a more complete approach.

Firstly, hedonic effect arises when a person is motivated by the positive emotions created by the buying process. Secondly, perceived functional value is equivalent to perceived quality and can be described as the safety a luxury product brings in its quality or design (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

From past literature, five main motivations for the consumption of luxury products were found to be crucial: Status & Conspicuousness, Uniqueness, Conformity, Hedonism and Quality. In the next sections we are going to develop on each of these motivations.

Even though materialism is also strongly present in past literature, it will not be treated in this research paper to avoid ambiguity. According to Belk (1985), materialism can be defined as "*The importance consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction*". This concept is characterized by Possessiveness, Nongenerosity and Envy, which means that one gives high importance to owning the product, has aversion to share it and is jealous if someone possesses the same item. In this definition, materialism can be interpreted as a self-centered motivation; people would consume because it's one of their primary goals and creates positive affective states. However, Richins & Dawson (1992) describe materialistic consumption as the key element for status and happiness. In this case, consumers motivated by materialism would prefer products that are publicly visible. Here, materialism appears as a clearly others-related motivation, very close to status and conspicuousness motivation. Given this, materialism can't be defined in a single way and mixes intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, already presented in this section.

2.4.2 STATUS & CONSPICUOUSNESS MOTIVATION

As already stated, Veblen (1899) first exposed the Theory of the Leisure Class and explored the idea that consumers buy luxury products because they are looking for social representation and position. Even though some authors define status and conspicuousness as two separate concepts (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004), the majority of past literature consider them to be closely related. In fact, Chaudhuri & Majumdar (2006) defined conspicuous consumption as the *"wasteful and lavish consumption expenses to enhance social prestige"*,

linking directly the conspicuousness of consumption to a desire to gain status. The need to gain a place in society leads consumers to buy products that can send signals to others about the social rank they have or aspire to have. Bearden and Etzel (1982) proved that publicly consumed luxury products were more likely to be conspicuous products than privately consumed luxury products. Following this reasoning, it is expected that people motivated by Status & Conspicuousness would have a preference for very expensive and recognizable products. In fact, consumers perceive high prices as a positive indicator suggesting a certain degree of prestige (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer 1993).

In Collectivistic cultures the social position can be defined by the consumption patterns of an individual or an entire family. In fact, individuals are strongly judged by the society when culture is based on We-identity and group-esteem (Hofstede, 1980). In China, Face is a very important cultural value and represents "*the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken*" (Goffman 1967, p.5). Face determines an individual's dignity, according to how society evaluates that same individual. In 2005, a survey revealed that 87% of Chinese respondents agreed that saving face was an integral part of their lives (China Youth Daily, cited in Wang, Sun & Song, 2010). These findings illustrate the interdependent nature of Chinese consumers.

Face can be obtained by demonstrating personal qualities or by non-personal characteristics such as status, occupation, wealth and authority. The relevant concept of "face" for this research paper is the one of "mien-tzu", which means having reputation in life trough success and ostentation (Hu, 1944 p.45). To gain face one has to make an effort to obtain admiration from others, which can be achieved through external appearance of rank and wealth (Bond, 1991).

Face can also be seen as a collective aspect due to the importance given to the group in China. Individuals may be judged for their own actions but decisions made by their family/reference group will also affect them. Chinese parents will emphasise "*Don't make our family lose face*" to motivate their children to behave well (King & Bond, 1985). Wang, Sun & Song (2010) expose the importance for Confucian cultures to purchase luxury goods for all members of the family in order to show-off family honour trough wealth.

Gifts, or what the Chinese call *Guanxi*, also represent a way of improving social position in collectivistic cultures. In fact, the more expensive the gifts are, the more recognition the individual will receive. Offering luxury products, such as Rolex, is a very good way to establish good relationships between business men in Asian countries (Ahlstrom, 2009). The donor is honoring the person to whom he/she is giving but is also displaying his wealth and saving "face". Symbolically, luxury goods show esteem for the recipient and transmit the message *"This fine product is appropriate for you"* (Wong and Ahuvia 1998). The luxury brand Dunhill caught this opportunity and, by offering the ideal men's gifts to its customers, became very successful in China. Today, Chinese customers contribute to 1/3 of this brand's total revenues (Chadha & Husband, 2006). Globally, 50% of Chinese luxury purchases are for gifting purposes, which demonstrates the importance they give to others (Chadha & Husband, 2006).

In conclusion, Status & Conspicuousness is related to a desire to appear successful to others. Consumers will be satisfied because of people's reaction to their wealth and not because of the real qualities of the products (Gareth, 2008). This motivation is dominant in Collectivistic societies, where individuals need their peers' acceptance and are majorly characterized by Interdependent self-concepts. Coming back to Markus & Kitayama (1991) work, "*for those with interdependent construals of the self, both the expression and the experience of emotions and motives may be significantly shaped and governed by a consideration of the reactions of others*". In this type of societies there might be an obligation to consume luxury products instead of a personal desire for it. This also leads to the creation of a very positive connotation to luxury consumption in Asia since people are conveying with their social duties. From the past literature analysis, we can thus hypothesize that Chinese will give more importance to status and conspicuousness motivations, when compared to French.

H3: COMPARED TO FRENCH, CHINESE CONSUMERS WILL PUT
MORE EMPHASIS ON STATUS & CONSPICUOUSNESS MOTIVATIONS
FOR BUYING LUXURY PRODUCTS.

Many people desire to gain society's acceptance through consumption choices. Those choices can define who one is and to what group one belongs to. Given that, luxury goods consumption appears as a symbolic marker of the social class that one wants to be associated with (Le Monkhouse, Barnes & Stephan, 2012).

Having a reference group to identify with is a crucial motivation for luxury consumption. People want to conform to certain lifestyles and distinguish themselves from others. Belk's (1988) concept of *"extended self"* suggests that people acquire possessions as part of their identity construction. Individuals probably adapt to different situations, using a prestige brand during the week, to conform to professional status, while using a more modest brand during the weekend, to match social standards. Obviously, someone who is concerned with social integration in more affluent groups may prefer luxury items that are more visible and expensive. However, this dimension is less focused on price as an indicator of prestige and more on the level of acceptance one gets when holding a certain product (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

In Asia, as already seen, Interdependent self is the common rule. The focus is given to the relationship with others, the fitting in and the creation of harmonious relations. People have no hypothesis of being successful without others. The group (e.g. family) is the unit accountable for the society and not the individual itself. Also, group members (family, friends, and people from the same nationality) have the legitimacy to judge individuals. Thus, there is a constant concern for belongingness, reliance, dependency, empathy, occupying one's proper place, and reciprocity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In this type of communities, the Interdependent self serves as tool to merge the individual and the group.

As a consequence of this strong group orientation, individuals in Collectivistic societies (such as China) are under social pressure to conform. Conformity to the group is seen as very positive. It is viewed as an avenue to smooth social relations and maintain harmony in societies (Tran et al. 2008). Li & Su (2007) defended that Chinese will tend to have similar consumption behaviors as their group members and the authors refer a survey lead by Tse (1996) where *"86.1% of a sample of Hong Kong students agreed that their consumption choices (particularly for clothing) were influenced by their reference group,*

compared with 71.3% of the American students in the sample. Also, only 43.5% of Hong Kong students said that they would want to behave differently to stand out, versus 73.6% in the American sample".

Luxury products appear as a connection to the reference group one wants to integrate. As an example, the desire to obtain membership of a certain affluent group will make Asians buy high-end brands in prestigious stores (Le Monkhouse, Barnes & Stephan, 2012). Luxury goods will be used as a way to be immersed in a group and never to stand out from the crowd. From past literature we draw the hypothesis that Chinese consumers will give more importance to this motivation than French Consumers.

H4: COMPARED TO FRENCH, CHINESE CONSUMERS WILL PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON CONFORMITY MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING LUXURY PRODUCTS.

2.4.4 UNIQUENESS MOTIVATION

Sometimes people feel threatened if they are very similar to others; this may be felt as a loss of identity. To overcome this loss, some people will prefer to buy products that are difficult to acquire, demonstrating a preference for rare items and a need for "uniqueness". In fact, the majority of luxury brands respond to this need by having customized products and limited editions.

Buying luxury products might be a way for people to feel inimitable and the scarcity of the product bought will enhance one's self-image by expressing individual taste, by breaking the rules or by avoiding similar existence (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). This effect mixes both personal and interpersonal motives. This motivation, also called "snob" effect, was first presented by Leibenstein (1950) and can occur in two different situations: when a product is launched and one wants to take an advantage by being part of the minority that possesses it, or when one rejects a product because it is hold by the masses (Mason 1981). This motivation is triggered when consumers have the need to take some distance from others' consumption patterns.

Thus, items that are in limited supply have high value, while those readily available are less desirable. Commodity theory suggests that the value or desirability of possessions is stronger, as the scarcity increases. Moreover, the relation between price and uniqueness was also explored (Groth & McDaniel, 1993, p.11) suggesting that if the product is both unique (given its scarcity) and expensive compared to normal standards, it would become even more valuable.

The need for uniqueness is closely related with self-construal dimensions. In Western countries, people are characterised by an Independent self-concept, meaning that personal needs and desires are at the centre of one's existence. Groups exist in order to respond to individual needs. Thus, personal goals are over group goals at all times and people are allowed to participate in the world by expressing their own thoughts, feelings and actions to others (Tsai, 2005). In these types of societies one would not participate in an activity that he/she dislikes just because of family or friends' wishes. People should have freedom to chose their future and be judged by their own merit. Individual freedom is very important because it enables people to live an authentic life by expressing their inner characteristics and meeting each individual's needs (Tsai, 2005). This means that each individual is different and should construct its personal image regardless of how the reference group perceives it. In this type of societies conformity is seen as negative and may be described as *"a lack of personal integrity, a willingness to betray one's personal convictions and taste to gain social advantage, or cowardly fear of other's opinions"* (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Ryff (1989, p.1071) describes the meaning of being psychologically healthy in Western societies as a state in which one is not attached to conventions or looking for others' approval; a state *"in which the person no longer clings to the collective fears, beliefs, and laws of the masses"*.

Bian & Forsythe (2012) defend that U.S consumers are more individualistic and have a greater need for uniqueness than Chinese, who are very concerned with social norms and appropriate behaviors. Moon, Chadee & Tikoo (2008) report that individualism positively affects a consumer's intention to buy a personalized product in an online setting. The luxury market, specially the fashion sector, is dominated by this need, which is translated in the very frequent creation of new collections. Instead of buying the same products as their peers, independent individuals will be motivated to spend money in rare and original products. From

past literature, we draw the hypothesis that French consumers will give more importance to this motivation than Chinese Consumers.

H5: COMPARED TO CHINESE, FRENCH CONSUMERS WILL PUT
MORE EMPHASIS ON UNIQUENESS MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING
LUXURY PRODUCTS.

2.4.5 HEDONISTIC MOTIVATION

Luxury products have an emotional value in addition to their functional utility. Literature affirms that luxury products convey numerous intangible benefits (Dubois & Laurent, 1994). The Hedonistic effect is present when people buy products to arouse feelings and affective states. Roth (2001) developed the term affective consumption to describe a consumption behavior with the objective of achieving a desired emotional state. This can be either buying something to alleviate a bad-mood (recovery, relief) or to achieve better feelings (sensation, fulfillment). Tsai (2005) presents self-directed pleasure, opposing the feelings of bliss, contentment and ecstasy for the self to the relational qualities of caring, love and interpersonal warmth, dominating other-directed pleasure. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) present hedonic consumption as the "*consumer behavior that relates to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of product use*."

In Western cultures, Independent self-construal dominance enables individuals to find self-achievement and happiness. Often, one will engage in consumption to achieve self-pleasure and to fulfil individual desires. The individual may perform self gift giving, which has the objective of fulfilling one's aspirations, dreams and fantasies. Individuals will also easily buy expensive luxury products just because they match their style (Tsai 2005). Puntoni (2001) concluded that people with stronger personal orientation will choose a luxury brand primarily due to the congruity between their internal self and the brand's image. Vigneron and Johnson (2004) stated that, when consuming luxury products, individuals with independent selves will look for self-directed pleasure and their purchase decisions will have nothing to do with pleasing others. Tse et.al (1989) concluded that western developed markets seek more hedonistic experiences than eastern emerging markets. From past literature we draw the

hypotheses that French consumers will give more importance to this motivation than Chinese Consumers.

H6: COMPARED TO CHINESE, FRENCH CONSUMERS WILL PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON HEDONISTIC MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING LUXURY PRODUCTS.

2.4.6 QUALITY MOTIVATION

Superior quality is often seen as a granted attribute of luxury products; people see the price premium and the prestige conveyed by luxury brands as a sign of higher quality. "*Excellent quality is a sine qua non, and it is important that the premium marketer maintains and develops leadership in quality*" (Quelch 1987, p.39). Quality can appear in terms of technology, engineering, design, sophistication or craftsmanship. Brands often attract consumers by the superior performance and excellence of their products. In fact, when Louis Vuitton started its business, the main objective was to provide trunks produced from the highest and more durable materials.

The role of Quality motivation has not been deeply analyzed or subjected to empirical studies, possibly due to the obvious nature of the proposition. Tsai (2005) proposes that Quality motivation is closely related to personal orientation towards luxury-brand consumption. Moreover, Shukla (2012) found that consumers in developed western markets give significantly more importance to price-quality value perception than consumers in eastern emerging markets. Finally, Truong & McColl (2010) explore the idea that individuals with intrinsic aspirations will search more for quality in luxury products than people driven by extrinsic aspirations. Even though there is not a clear agreement about Quality, we may hypothesize that French, being more focused in their own needs, will show stronger Quality motivations than Chinese:

H6: COMPARED TO CHINESE, FRENCH CONSUMERS WILL PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON QUALITY MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING LUXURY PRODUCTS.

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3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

Several authors observed differences in luxury consumption motivations (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Berthon et al., 2009; Wiedmann et al., 2007); this field is widely explored from a theoretical point of view. However, there is still a strong need to test empirically the different motivations people have in order to increase the validity and reliability of the theoretical fundamentals (Tynan et al., 2010). The review of past literature enabled the development of five hypotheses concerning differences in motivations. The model aims at demonstrating that Chinese have higher Status & Conspicuousness (H3) and Conformity motivations (H4), while French, have more Uniqueness (H5), Hedonism (H6) and Quality (H7) ones. In the past literature, these motivations appear to be closely linked to culture and, more precisely, to different self-concepts. It is thus interesting to first test the hypothesis that differences exist in what concerns the Independent (H1) and Interdependent (H2) self-concepts of French and Chinese.
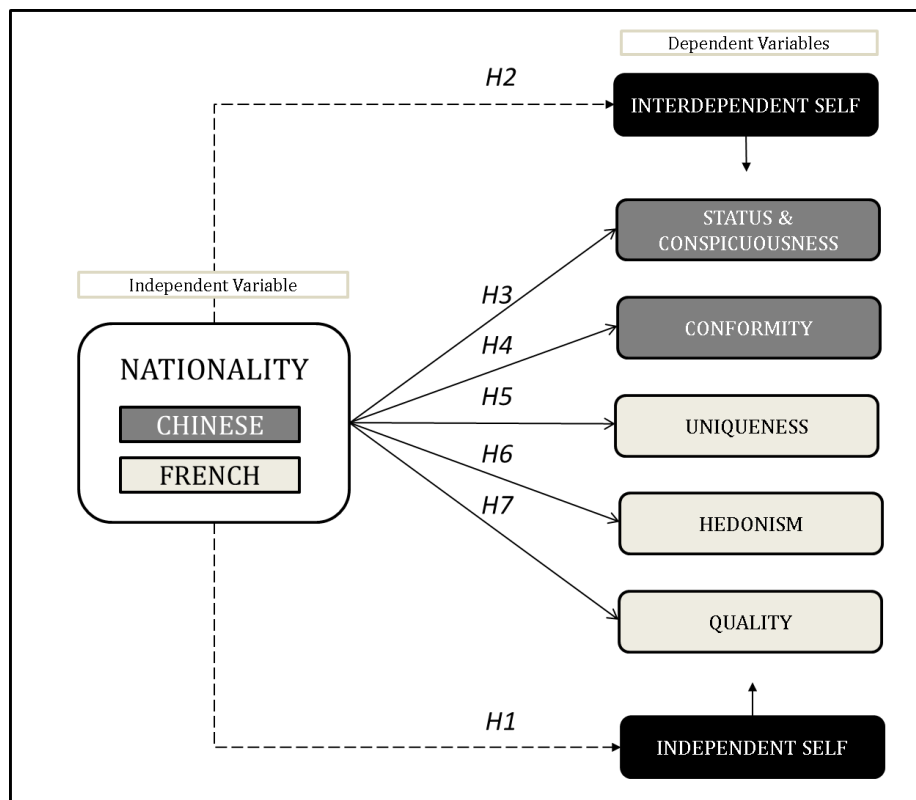

FIGURE 2 THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 DESIGN

In order to address the proposed research question and to test the hypotheses derived from the literature review, a quantitative experiment has been conducted. A questionnaire was designed in order to measure French and Chinese self-construal as well as motivations to buy luxury products.

A Google Form was used to deliver the questionnaire. It is a tool that enables to create a web-based survey and to link it to a Google Spreadsheet, allowing a quicker analysis of the data gathered. The internet obliterates time zones and geographical boarders, a crucial advantage since the aim of the experiment is to reach consumers from two different and distant countries (France and China). Online surveys easily reach a large number of people, reduce the research cost and allow respondents to answer whenever it is suitable for them. The present study deals with purchases of "unnecessary" products, which may cause unease on respondents. However, by using an online survey, respondents didn't have to face an interviewer and anonymity was guaranteed as a first step. The method used to collect data decreased the courtesy and social desirability bias among respondents and, consequently, increase the degree of responses' honesty (Kotler, 2006). In addition, being an online tool makes it very suitable for the sample chosen (internet regular users), increasing the chances of having a high response rate. The answers have been aggregated and statistically analyzed, as it will be further presented.

4.2 MEASURES AND PROCEDURES

The aim of the research was presented in the first page of the questionnaire and anonymity was guaranteed. As explained in the literature review, the definition of luxury may change enormously. In order to assure that respondents had the same concept of "universal" luxury in their mind, some names of luxury Western brands were introduced in the beginning. The initial text from Le Monkhouse, Barnes & Stephan's (2012) questionnaire was used, highlighting luxury brands and their most iconic products: *"Examples of luxury goods might include Channel No 5 perfume, Moet et Chandon champagne, a Lacoste shirt, Gucci*

sunglasses, a Louis Vuitton handbag, Bang & Olufsen Hi-fi system or BMW seven series car…". Finally, a screening question was created to assure that respondents were either French or Chinese.

The second part of the questionnaire measured individual's self-construal. Even though cultural orientation in France and China has been empirically studied by Hofstede, there is little empirical evidence on French and Chinese self-construal. The model presented in the theoretical framework is based on the hypothesis that Chinese will be more characterized by Interdependence while French by Independence. It was thus found crucial to measure respondents' scores concerning Independent and Interdependent self-concepts to better interpret and analyze the differences in motivations.

The questionnaire was thus composed of seven sets of statements, each set analyzing one factor (Interdependent self-concept, Independent self-concept, Status & Conspicuousness, Hedonism, Conformity, Uniqueness and Quality). Sets of two to four sentences were chosen in order to keep the questionnaire short. According to Brent (2011), survey abandon rates increase for surveys that take more than 7-8 minutes to complete (with completion rates dropping from 5% to 20%). The author also demonstrated that "*For surveys longer than 30 questions, the average amount of time respondents spend on each question is nearly half of that compared to on surveys with less than 30 questions*". In total, 22 statements were provided in order to evaluate consumers' cultural orientation and perceptions on luxury motivations. The statements were randomly assorted in order to minimize the respondents' identification of the factors included in the analysis. The respondents were required to rate from 1 to 5 their level of agreement/disagreement with each statement. All measures used a five-point Likert-type response format, with "strongly disagree" (1) and "strongly agree" (5) as boundaries. Likert scales are commonly used in cross-cultural studies of attitudes towards luxury products, being also considered appropriate to use in this research paper.

To increase reliability, all the sets of items were derived from existing measurement scales, having thus been tested by experts' panels, international research teams or by scholar interviews. Given that it is a cross-cultural comparison, it is important to assure conceptual and functional equivalence. In fact, the majority of the items used had already been tested in both Western and Asian countries, using panels of multicultural experts that validated representativeness, specificity and clarity.

Firstly, both Interdependent and Independent dimensions were analyzed. Singelis (1994) proved that individuals are two-sided and that these two constructs shouldn't be treated as a continuum. The items used to measure Independence were derived from Tsai Independent Self-Construal scale (2005):

- *"I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others."* (Ind 1)
- *"I should be judged by my own merit."* (Ind 2)
- *"If there is a conflict between my values and values of groups of which I am member, I follow my values."* (Ind 3)
- *"I enjoy being different from the others."* (Ind 4)

Secondly, two items were derived from Le Monkhouse, Barnes & Stephan (2012) research to measure the Interdependent self-concept:

- *"I am concerned with protecting the pride of my family."* (Int 1)
- *"I recognize and respect social expectations, norms and practices."* (Int 2)

These two items measured the dimensions of both Group Orientation and Face Saving, which were already kept together in other studies (Chung & Pysarchik, 2000; Jin & Kang, 2011). Le Monkhouse, Barnes & Stephan (2012) stated that the items *"used to describe face saving and group orientation should represent the general meaning of the dimension and not be specifically designed within a consumption context"*. As exposed in the literature review, the Interdependent self-construal can be translated by a strong orientation towards the group and a constant concern with face saving. This was the main reason why those statements were chosen to be included in the Interdependent self-concept factor.

Concerning motivations, in order to measure Status & Conspicuousness, items were taken from several scales, including Shukla's (2012) Status and Conspicuousness factors (SC1, SC4), Le Monkhouse Barnes & Stephan's (2012) Conspicuousness scale (SC2) and Wang, Sun & Song (2010) research (SC3):

- *"I buy luxury products to gain social status."* (SC1)
- *"I prefer to buy luxury goods that look expensive."* (SC2)
- *"If I use luxury products, I feel that other people's impressions about me have changed."* (SC3)

- *"Owning luxury goods indicates a symbol of prestige."* (SC4)

Consumers motivated by Status & Conspicuousness will prefer products that look expensive and will buy luxury to exhibit to others. It was decided to take Status & Conspicuousness together since the two are completely interrelated: a consumer driven by Status & Conspicuousness is one that buys luxury products to increase its social status trough the public exhibition of his wealth. Again, for this type of consumers it is not enough to be wealthy; one has to show its wealth in order to gain status and prestige.

Secondly, Conformity motivation items were taken both from Wang, Sun & Song (2010) and Li & Su (2007) works:

- *"The luxury products I consume should match my social status."* (C1)
- *"It is important that others like the products and brands I buy."* (C2)
- *"Sometimes I buy a product because my friends do so."* (C3)
- *"I buy luxury products to feel integrated in a personal/professional circle."* (C4)

Li & Su (2007) defined Conformity Face Consumption as *"a person's susceptibility to group members' opinions during a purchase decision"*, which illustrates what the Conformity factor in this research aims to measure (C1, C2, C3). Moreover, C4 was adapted from the Social Comparison scale of Wang, Sun & Song (2010), which represents a good measure of respondents' malleability to situations and need to merge with others when buying luxury.

For Uniqueness factor, items from the Uniqueness scale built by Shukla (2012) were reproduced (U1,U2) and one item from Le Monkhouse Barnes & Stephan's (2012) scale of Exclusivity (U3) - concept which the authors defined *"as a way to differentiate, rather than affiliate oneself with the group"*- was added to complete the factor:

- *"I often buy luxury goods in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated."*(U1)
- *"I like to own new luxury goods before others do."*(U2)
- *"I buy luxury products to make myself stand out."* (U3)

To measure Hedonism motivations, one item was taken from Le Monkhouse Barnes & Stephan, (2012) Hedonism scale (H1) and the other item from Widemann, Hennings & Siebels (2009) Hedonism/Self-Gift Giving scale (H2):

- *"Luxury goods make me dream and feel excitement."*(H1)
- *"When in a bad mood, I may buy luxury brands as self-gifts for alleviating an emotional burden."* (H2)

Finally, Quality motivations were tested using the three items from Tsai (2005) scale for Quality Assurance:

- *"The product quality superiority is my major reason for buying a luxury brand."*(Q1)
- *"The luxury brand preferred by many people but that doesn't meet my quality standards will never enter into my purchase consideration."*(Q2)
- *"I place emphasis on the quality assurance over prestige when considering the purchase of a luxury brand."*(Q3)

The last part of the questionnaire was used to gather demographics about respondents (age and gender). Three questions were added in order to understand the respondents' exposure to international environments. Travelling and living abroad may influence enormously respondent's culture orientation and, consequently, their self-construal.

- *"Have you ever lived abroad from your country of origin?"*
- *"Have you ever been to Asia?"* (for French respondents only)
- *"Have you ever been to Europe?"* (for Chinese respondents only)

Finally, it was also found important to assess if the respondents are actual luxury consumers. A question measuring the frequency with which respondents are used to buy luxury products was added (Response options were: Never, Less than once a year (e.g. once every few years), Once a year, 2-3 times a year or More than 3 times a year).

4.3 PRETEST

The online questionnaire was firstly distributed to 23 students of several nationalities (both from Asia and Europe) in order to test the time needed to fill it and to identify any mistakes or difficulties. The students did the questionnaire online but were asked to record the time taken to complete the questionnaire and a box was provided to leave comments in order to identify any misleading or ambiguous questions. Some minor errors and misleading expressions could be recognized and rectified. The results from the pretest enabled to have clear, concise, straightforward and non ambiguous statements; characteristics that are crucial for the success of a questionnaire (Maranell, 1974). The students didn't found the questionnaire too long, taking 3 to 5 minutes to complete it.

4.4 SAMPLE

The sample used was a convenience-snowballing sample of students because of its convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. E-mails and Facebook messages were sent to students, enclosing the link to access the Google form. Participants were encouraged to pass the message along to their Chinese and French friends.

Since this study consists of a cross-cultural comparison, it is important to guarantee the maximum homogeneity and equivalence of samples. Students are relatively homogenous in terms of demographics, socioeconomic background and education (Peterson, 2001). Also, university students are most of the times comfortable with answering surveys in English, which avoided the problem of translating the survey into Chinese. Finally, as Dubois, Czellar & Laurent (2005) defended, university students are likely to be actual or, at least, future luxury products consumers. In the case of China, this argument may prove to be even more relevant given that luxury consumers are younger than in other countries. Students are often considered a valid sample for cross cultural studies since they **"*are members of one culture sharing a system of beliefs, values, customs, behaviors and artefacts*"** and "*may serve as surrogates for other groups in the study of culturally-related concept*" (Li & Su, 2007). In fact, students' samples are often used as surrogates (Peterson, 2001) and evidence shows that students may be good substitutes for adult groups in some consumer research (Beltramini, 1983).

Using GPower software, an ideal sample of 88 Chinese and 88 French was suggested to calculate the difference between independent-sample means. However, it is always very difficult to get balanced samples, particularly with snowballing sampling. In reality, a sample of 167 respondents was gathered, composed by 95 French and 72 Chinese. The sample was composed only by students, 60% female and 40% male. It is crucial to notice that 87% of the respondents already had an experience living abroad, which makes this sample very "globalized". Plus, more than 50% of respondents from both nationalities lived abroad for more than 6 months. In terms of traveling, 62% of the Chinese already visited Europe and 42% of the French students already travelled to Asia. Concerning luxury consumptions habits, only 7 % were heavy luxury consumers (buy more than 3 times a year), 14% were moderate luxury consumers (buy 2-3 times a year), 25% were occasional luxury consumers (buy once a year), 36% rarely bought luxury products (less than once a year) and the remaining 18% had never purchased a luxury item. For the purpose of this paper, buying more than 3 luxury items a year is considered heavy consumption because the analysis touches only students and these have generally low sources of income. Indeed, 96% of the respondents were between 18 and 25 years old.

TABLE 1 : SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

		French (n=95)	Chinese (n=72)	Total (n=167)
Gender	Male	40%	39%	40%
	Female	60%	61%	60%
Age	18-25	96%	97%	96%
	25-40	4%	3%%	4%
Luxury Purchasing Habits	Never	12%	26%	18%
	< once a year	35%	38%	36%
	Once a year	28%	21%	25%
	2-3 times year	19%	8%	14%
	> 3 times a year	6%	7%	7%
Experience Abroad (Asia/ Europe)	No	6%	24%	14%
	(6 months or <)	28%	26%	28%
	(6 months or >)	65%	50%	59%
	No	28%	38%	-
Traveling Experience	Yes (< 1 month)	22%	18%	-
	Yes (> 1 month)	20%	44%	-

5. RESULTS

The data collected trough the online questionnaires was compiled and statistically analyzed using SPSS Statistics. The main findings are presented in the following section.

5.1 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

The scale used for this research paper relies heavily on items already used in past studies exploring the same topics. This choice was mainly justified by the limited time frame, the inexistent knowledge of Chinese language and the lack of accessibility to a panel of international experts in the present subject. Given that the items reproduced in this paper were already tested and the researcher's objective was not to reduce the scale proposed, a factor analysis was not performed. However, before testing the different hypotheses, it is still important to make sure that the factors proposed are internally consistent. Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly used tool to measure the interrelatedness of the items and was computed for each factor proposed.

The Cronbach's alphas results are presented in the Table 2. The majority of the factors exposed can be considered acceptable for exploratory research purposes. The results for the Independent-Self (α=0,601), Interdependent-Self (α=0,547), Conformity (α=0,630), Uniqueness (α=0,616), Hedonism (α=0,551) and Quality (α=0,578) prove that the items chosen are all measuring the same underlying dimension. Hair et al. (1998) defend that α=0.6 is sufficient for exploratory research while Litfin et al. (2000) supports that this value may decrease to 0.5 in these type of studies. Given that the Cronbach's Alpha is highly influenced by the number of items in a scale and by the sample size (Cortina, 1993), the above stated factors will be considered reliable enough to be analyzed.

The factor Status & Conspicuousness has an alpha lower than 0.5, which is considered unacceptable. This motivation will not be treated in this paper since the factor is not considered to have the sufficient internal reliability. The items chosen for this construct are probably not measuring the same underlying dimension. In fact, O'Cass & McEwen (2004) defend that these two constructs represent distinct motivations and that *"it would be advisable that the constructs cease being used interchangeably, as this creates confusion in the literature"*. In fact, the combination between Status and Conspicuousness didn't result in a reliable factor in this paper. Further research should be conducted in order to analyze the

interchangeability of these two dimensions. Even though it will not be statistically tested, some considerations about this motivation are presented in the Limitations & Future Research section.

To understand if there is internal consistency it is also useful to look at the Pearson Correlation between the specific items and the sum of the remaining items (a minimum value of 0,3 is usually required). The results are presented in Table 2 and three of the items appear to have a quite low corrected item-total correlation (Int3=0.261, SC3=0.229, H3=0.252). Again, this might be explained by the fact that the questionnaire aimed at gathering a high number of results and thus was kept very short. It was decided to keep these three items in the scale.

Table 2: Scale Analysis

	Mean	Std Dev.	C. Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Independent-Self				**,601**
Ind 1	4,17	,819	,444	
Ind2	4,16	,760	,430	
Ind3	3,64	,913	,323	
Ind4	3,72	,903	,345	
Interdependent-Self				**,547**
Int1	3,96	,874	,378	
Int2	3,69	,819	,378	
Status & Conspicuousness				**,470**
SC1	2,59	1,025	,366	
SC2	2,13	,893	,257	
SC3	3,26	,912	,165	
SC4	3,33	1,003	,253	
Conformity				**,630**
C1	2,71	1,093	,493	
C2	2,99	1,067	,465	
C3	2,68	,988	,371	
C4	2,49	1,058	,316	
Uniqueness				**,616**
U1	2,38	1,096	,468	
U2	2,49	1,236	,419	
U3	2,73	,984	,400	
Hedonism				**,551**
H1	2,98	1,078	,386	
H2	2,44	1,278	,386	
Quality				**,578**
Q1	3,77	1,028	,373	
Q2	3,57	1,116	,389	
Q3	3,45	1,057	,399	

At a first glance, the sample means calculated for self-construal and motivations are in accordance with what was expected by the researcher (see Table 3). On the one hand, French respondents appear to be more Independent than Chinese and to have, on average, higher levels of Hedonism, Uniqueness and Quality motivations. On the other hand, Chinese respondents have, on average, higher Conformity motivations and appear to be more Interdependent. However, a simple comparison of the sample means doesn't identify the real differences between the French and Chinese population. In next section, a series of tests will be conducted in order to explore those differences.

Looking at self-construal scores by nationality, it is observable that Chinese gave, on average, more weight to Interdependence characteristics while French to Independence. This result is in accordance with past research defending that people from Collectivistic countries will emphasize Interdependence while people from Individualistic will emphasize Independence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1980, 1989). However, it is also crucial to conduct a cross-cultural comparison for the two self-concepts.

Concerning the different scores attributed to motivations, it is interesting to observe that both nationalities attributed the highest scores to Quality. However, the second best-scored motivation differed between the two nationalities; for French it was Hedonism while for Chinese it was Conformity. Uniqueness was the motivation to which Chinese gave a lower score, while for French it was Conformity.

TABLE 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Nationality	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.
Independence	French	3,867	4,000	,4648
	Chinese	3,806	3,750	,5247
Interdependence	French	3,692	3,667	,0714
	Chinese	4,028	4,000	,0770
Conformity	French	2,537	2,500	,7304
	Chinese	2,965	3,000	,6329
Uniqueness	French	2,620	2,667	,9295
	Chinese	2,446	2,333	,6713
Hedonism	French	2,867	3,000	1,0605
	Chinese	2,514	2,500	,8193
Quality	French	3,759	3,667	,7306
	Chinese	3,455	3,667	,7286

The correlation matrix presented in Table 4 exposes some surprising results. Firstly, it would have been expected that Interdependence and Independence would be significantly correlated. However, Pearson Correlation is low and not significant. Secondly, findings presented in past literature lead to the prediction that motivations would significantly and strongly correlate with self-construals. Even though some significant relations exist between self-construal and motivations, they are very low. This first analysis points out unexpected findings that will be further developed in the Discussion section.

TABLE 4: CORRELATION MATRIX

	IND_T	INT_T	C_T	U_T	H_T	Q_T
IND_T	1					
INT_T	,127	1				
C_T	,044	,235**	1			
U_T	,137	,186*	,449**	1		
H_T	,086	,127	,270**	,563**	1	
Q_T	,304**	-,016	-,007	0,69	,157*	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In order to conduct a deeper analysis of the results and understand the differences in motivations between Chinese and French, a series of tests comparing the means of the two populations were conducted.

5.3 STATISTICAL TESTS PERFORMED

In this study it was chosen to use both independent-sample t-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests. On the one hand, the independent-sample t-tests are parametric tests which can be defined as the *"a special case of ANOVA for two groups or levels of a treatment variable"* (Hair et al., 1998). On the other hand, the Mann-Whitney U tests are nonparametric tests which compare the median score of the two samples and are considered to be more robust against outliers and heavy-tailed distributions.

In the past literature, there is not full agreement in the predominant quality of one of these tests over the other. Some defend that parametric tests, such as t-tests, are generally found to be more powerful than non-parametric ones; Norman (2010), defends that

"Parametric statistics can be used with Likert data, with small sample sizes, with unequal variances, and with non-normal distributions, with no fear of ''coming to the wrong conclusion''". However, there are controversies and numerous authors defend that Likert Scales are composed of ordinal variables, resulting generally in skewed distributions and, consequently, parametric tests don't represent robust results. As presented in next section, the assumptions needed to perform independent-samples t-tests are not fully met for all the variables composing the study. To overcome this difficulty and increase the robustness of the present results, it was decided to use a "sensitivity analysis" approach. Firstly, independent-sample t-tests were ran for all the different dimensions. Secondly, non-parametric tests were performed in order to compare qualitatively the findings. By reaching the same conclusions, the author was able to prove the credibility of the findings exposed in this study.

5.3.1 INDEPENDENT-SAMPLE T-TESTS

5.3.1.1 ASSUMPTIONS

For a t-test to be considered valid, four assumptions need to be confirmed: independence of observations, inexistence of outliers, normally distributed data and homogeneity of variances.

The independence of observations can be confirmed both for motivations and self-concepts since respondents are either Chinese or French, never being present in the two groups at the same time.

Concerning the inexistence of outliers, an easy way to detect the existence of extreme points is to use boxplots. Examining the boxplot for each of the four dependent motivations (Conformity, Uniqueness, Hedonism and Quality), lead to the elimination of two extreme points (obs. 48 and obs. 119), resulting in a final total sample of 165 responses. The removal of the two extreme points enabled to have a sample without outliers for all motivations and avoided their disproportionate impact in the final results for the motivations' study (see Fig.1, Appendix 2). Concerning the Independent and Interdependent self-concepts, some outliers were found but it was decided not to eliminate them from the sample since it was considered that eliminating a high number of observations could lead to bias in the results (see Fig.1, Appendix 2).

Concerning data distribution, the inspection of the histograms for each of the factors (see Figure 3, Appendix 2) and the observation of Skewness and Kurtosis values (Figure 3, Appendix 2) enabled to validate the normality assumption. In fact, both Skewness and Kurtosis values for the seven dimensions studied fall in the statistical convention range of +2 to -2 (Fig.2, Appendix 2).

Finally, concerning the homogeneity of variances, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was conducted and this assumption was violated for Uniqueness and Hedonism factors. To overcome this violation, the SPSS adjustment for "equal variances not assumed" was used to assess the results for these two motivations (see Table 5).

5.3.1.2 RESULTS

TABLE 5: INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		*T-test for Equality of Means*					*95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	Lower	Upper
Independent	,636	,426	,785	163	,433	,0607	,0773	-,0919	,2133
Interdependent	2,838	,094	-3,178	163	,002	-,3367	,1059	-,5459	-,1275
Conformity	,569	,452	-3,940	163	,000	-,4276	,1085	-,6419	-,2133
Uniqueness	6,929	,009	1,400	162,7	,163	,1746	,1247	-,0716	,4207
Hedonism	9,858	,002	2,412	162,9	,017	,3529	,1464	,0640	,6419
Quality	,161	,689	2,645	163	,009	,3035	,1148	,0769	,5301

The hypothesis that French have a stronger Independent self-concept (H1) was not supported when running the t-tests. There is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis in this case. This result is contradictory with past literature defending that people from Individualistic countries are characterized by a stronger Independent view of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, this result may be linked to the specific characteristics of the sample used in this study and will be further explained in the Discussion section.

Concerning the second self-construal dimension, significant differences were found between Chinese and French in the weight given to their Interdependent self-concept, $t(163)=-3,178$, $p=0,002$. Consequently, the null hypothesis can be disproved - thus supporting the proposed hypothesis that Chinese have a more developed Interdependent self-concept than French (H2). This result is in accordance with past literature defending that individuals from Collectivistic countries are mostly Interdependent. Actually, Li & Su (2007) empirically demonstrated that Chinese consumers are more likely to be influenced by their reference groups than are American consumers.

Relating to Conformity, the results indicate that there is a significant difference between French and Chinese in the importance given to this motivation, $t(163)=-3,940$, $p<0,001$. With 95% confidence level, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, supporting the argument that Chinese have significantly higher Conformity motivations than French (H4). In line with the present results, Wang, Sun & Song (2010) identified *"others' influence"* as one of the main motivations for Chinese consumers to buy luxury products. Also, Zhan & He (2012) observed that Chinese are more driven by social benefits than functional ones when buying luxury. They defend that Chinese are not extravagant buyers and will buy wisely in order to fit into a desired social group. In fact, the authors defend that Chinese consumers are expected to behave in accordance with the different social situations. Concerning the cause for the differences just presented, a very low correlation between Conformity and Interdependence was found ($r = 0,235$, $p <0,05$). It was decided not to further analyze the relation between the two variables and to provide alternative explanations in the Discussion section.

Concerning Uniqueness motivation, it is not possible to refute the null hypothesis - thus there is not enough evidence to sustain H5, which proposed that French hold stronger Uniqueness motivations than Chinese. These findings are contradictory with previous studies predicting that in Individualistic cultures consumers are more driven by Uniqueness aspects than in Collectivistic cultures (Lee & Kacen, 1999; Moon, Chadee & Tikoo, 2008; Yamaguchi, 1994; Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2002). In the present study, the correlation between Uniqueness and Independence is inexistent ($r=0,137$) while, unexpectedly, Interdependence has a positive and significant relation with this motivation ($r=0,186$, $p<0,05$). However, the correlation found is very weak and doesn't justify any further study. These results suggest that

Uniqueness drives individuals to buy luxury, regardless of the self-concept they are characterized by or the culture they are inserted in.

Hedonism motivations were found to be significantly different for the two nationalities $t(162,9)=2,412$, $p=0,017$. With 95% confidence level, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis. This result is aligned with the fact that French respondents attributed the 2nd best scores to this motivation and provides support for the assumption that, when buying luxury products, French look more for hedonistic experiences than Chinese (H6). Actually, Shukla (2012) already provided empirical evidence demonstrating that hedonism-related benefits are important to consumers in Western developed markets but not in Eastern emerging ones. Moreover, Li & Su (2007) confirmed that the hedonic and self-indulgent motivations, often associated with luxury consumption in the Western markets, are not obvious for Chinese consumers. Concerning the cause for these differences, a relation between Hedonism and Independent self-construal appears to be inexistent ($r=0,086$), making further study inappropriate. This lack of correlation is somehow contradictory with Tsai's (2005) findings that *"Independent self-construal predicts the self-directed goals (self-directed pleasure, self-gift giving, congruity with internal self, and quality assurance) of luxury-brand purchase"*. These results suggest that the reasons behind the higher emphasis given to Hedonism when buying luxury should be further developed.

Lastly, a significant difference was found between the two populations concerning Quality motivations, $t(163)=2,645$, $p=0,009$, which sustains the hypothesis that French give more emphasis than Chinese to Quality attributes (H7). Shukla (2012) empirically demonstrated that individuals in developed markets are increasingly interested to purchase products which hold a high price-quality perception. Although Chinese appear to look less than French for Quality attributes, this motivation was the best-ranked among both groups. The relation between Quality and Interdependence is the strongest relation between a motivation and a self-construal but it is still rather low ($r=0,304$, $p<0,001$), leading us to decide not to further analyze this relation. The strong emphasis given to Quality in the two populations will be further studied in the Discussion section.

5.3.2 MANN-WHITNEY U TEST

As stated before, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted in order to assess qualitatively the robustness of the results given by the t-tests. Using this method, significant differences in the emphasis given to motivations were found for Conformity (U= 2.229,500, z=-3,667, p<0,001), Hedonism (U= 4.041,500, z=2,350, p=0,019) and Quality (U= 4.061,000 z= 2,406, p=0,016), supporting H4, H6 and H7, as previously. Moreover, the null hypothesis couldn't be rejected for Uniqueness, meaning that the existence of significant differences between the two populations was not proved for this motivation. Concerning self-construal orientation, the null hypothesis was rejected for the Interdependent self-construal (U= 2.410,000, z=-3,140, p=0,002) but not for Independent self-construal.

This statistical test reaches exactly the same qualitative conclusions of the independent-sample t-tests, reinforcing our research results' strength.

TABLE 6: MANN-WHITNEY U TEST

	Test Statistic (U)	Std Error	Standardized Test Statistic	Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)
Independent	3.596,000	299,326	0,865	,387
Interdependent	2.410,000	295,240	-3,140	,002
Conformity	2.229,500	302,017	-3,667	,000
Uniqueness	3.673,500	301,709	1,115	,265
Hedonism	4.041,500	299,796	2,350	,019
Quality	4.061,000	300,963	2,406	,016

Hypothesis	Tests Results
H1: Compared to Chinese, French will put more emphasis on Independent self-concept.	Not Supported.
H2: Compared to French, Chinese will put more emphasis on Interdependent self-concept.	**Supported.** t(163)=-3,178, p=0,002 U= 2.410,000, z=-3,140, p=0,002
H3: Compared to French, Chinese consumers will put more emphasis on Status & Conspicuousness motivations for buying luxury products.	Not tested due to lack of reliability of the scale.
H4: Compared to French, Chinese consumers will put more emphasis on Conformity motivations for buying luxury products.	**Supported.** t(163)=-3,940, p<0,001 U= 2.229,500, z=-3,667, p<0,001
H5: Compared to Chinese, French consumers will put more emphasis on Uniqueness motivations for buying luxury products.	Not Supported.
H6: Compared to Chinese, French consumers will put more emphasis on Hedonistic motivations for buying luxury products.	**Supported.** t(162,9)=2,412, p=0,017 U= 4.041,500, z=2,350, p=0,019
H7: Compared to Chinese, French consumers will put more emphasis on Quality motivations for buying luxury products.	**Supported**. t(163)=2.645, p=0.009 U= 4.061,000 z= 2,406, p=0,016

6. DISCUSSION

In the literature review, the main arguments presented to explain differences in luxury consumption motivations were related to culture and self-construal. However, the results obtained from the quantitative study did not support the existence of a strong relation between motivations and Interdependent/Independent self-concepts. In the present discussion, the findings are interpreted and some explanations proposed.

Firstly, Individualism/Collectivism at a national level was not reflected in Independent/Interdependent self-construal dominance at individual level. This result is in line with the findings presented by Daab (1991), who proved that significant differences in Individualism/Collectivism may in fact exist within a country. The author showed that, in Poland, factors such as higher education, being a man, living in an urban place or being young lead to higher levels of individualism. In the present study, even though China is considered to be a Collectivistic country, the hypothesis that Chinese would score lower than French on Independent self-construal was not supported. At an individual level, our Chinese sample is probably more individualistic than the average. Nevertheless, it was found that Chinese gave significantly more emphasis to the Interdependent self-construal than French.

The fact that H1 was not supported, while H2 was, reflects the autonomy of the two self-concepts. In fact, the two dimensions were not significantly correlated (r=0,127), sustaining the idea that these conceptions are distinct and not necessarily opposite. In fact, Tramifow, Triandis & Gotto (1991) defended the separation of the two self-concepts by proving that those were programmed in different parts of the memory.

An explanation for the lack of support of H1 is probably related to the choice of having a sample composed by international students. The snowballing sample resulted in a high proportion of Chinese students living away from their home country. Actually, most of Chinese students, who were directly asked to complete this survey, study in France. It is very common for foreign students to develop a bicultural self-system. Cross & Markus (1991) introduced this concept to illustrate the differences in behavior of American and East Asian exchange students. In that study, East Asian students appeared to have more developed Interdependent characteristics but were very identical to Americans in what concerns Independent characteristics. The development of an Independent self-concept was linked to

the students' need to reduce stress and to be merged with the new culture. The results from the present empirical study suggest that Chinese students developed their Independent self-concept in order to minimize cultural shock and to facilitate their integration in a new western culture. As stated before, one's self-concept depends on the cultural background but also on the environment and on other situational factors.

Berry and Kim (1988) developed an acculturation model which presents individuals' ability to change, add and/or retain cultural identity. This model refers to the way in which one adjusts (or not) its self-image when integrating a new culture. Given our results, Chinese might have entered a process of integration, meaning that they developed their Independent self in addition to their Interdependent self. If this is proved to be the case, the results from the present study are in line with the idea that globalization is making the world flatter. In this case, the low correlations obtained between self-concepts and motivations are explained by the fact that our sample is relatively homogeneous concerning the way they position themselves in relation to others.

Another possible explanation for the present findings is that Chinese respondents might have incurred in social desirability bias. Attributing high scores to Independent self-construal statements might also be the result of the importance Chinese give to the group. Studying in western universities, where competitiveness and self-achievement is the rule, Chinese respondents might have felt the need to conform to those social standards. When assessed on potential motivations to buy luxury, the bias might have been reduced by the scenario effect. In fact, students were asked to imagine what would drive them to buy luxury: "*Please answer all the statements even if you are not a usual luxury consumer. If this is the case, please imagine a situation where you are going to buy a luxury item*". This hypothetical setting may have decreased respondents' partiality and resulted in more truthful answers. In this case, the correlation results between self-concepts and motivations are biased and do not reveal the "true" relation between motivations and self-concepts.

One undeniable conclusion from this research is that, whatever the cause, Chinese and French have different motivations to buy luxury products. In fact, the majority of predicted differences in motivations were supported, suggesting that nationality still has a strong influence on luxury consumption motivations. The findings for three motivations were in line with past studies and supported the idea that Chinese are more driven by Conformity, while

French consumers give more emphasis to their personal needs (Hedonism and Quality). However, Uniqueness was found to be equally important for all the consumers. Given that self-construal didn't appear to be related with motivations in the previous section, which are the reasons behind the differences found in this study?

The objective of the following discussion is to suggest alternative causes for the differences exposed in the present research. The aim is not to reject the idea that self-construal and cultural orientation have a role in motivations to buy luxury, but to enrich this field of study. Given that we didn't achieve the expected results, we think it is of major interest to propose other exploratory arguments, which may explain the differences found in motivations of Chinese and French luxury consumers.

A crucial factor that should be taken into account in the interpretation of motivation differences is the knowledge and expertise a country has about the luxury industry. The fact that France is the country where luxury was born, while China received the first brands very recently, may have a crucial role in the motivations of these two populations. In fact, a study lead by McKinsey (2009) reported that over half of Chinese that owned luxury fashion goods in 2009 started buying them only after 2005. Also, most of the respondents were only able to recall one or two luxury brands in each category of products. In this section we relate the differences found in motivations with consumers' knowledge and we propose that different motivations may be linked to different stages of the industry development.

Firstly, the Conformity motivation dominance among Chinese was confirmed, suggesting that being part of a reference group and conforming to its tastes is still a main motivation for these consumers. In past literature, this motivation is found to be linked to the country's specific culture. However, we may also relate it to a lower level of familiarity with the industry and a lack of alternatives in consumers' consideration set. Actually, the luxury industry is very recent in China and consumers, not being experts, will prefer to purchase items from well-known brands that conform to the taste of their reference groups. In fact, choosing products according to one's unique taste might still seem very risky (Thomas, 2008). This argument can be applied to the results obtained from the present study. Even when Chinese are inserted in a more individualistic environment, they might not have the sufficient understanding about the luxury industry (since they were not strongly exposed to it back in China) and feel the need to conform to the tastes of their new individualistic group.

The low luxury expertise may also be illustrated by the fact that most of Chinese consumers reject "made in China" products and often assess products' quality based on symbolic aspects, country of origin or price. Also, Chinese consumers buy heavily abroad to make sure they are not buying counterfeits. Thus, the motivation to conform may be closely linked to the lack of acquaintance with the industry and a strong need of acceptance by a new and unexplored world. This motivation appears to be related with the earlier stages of a market development.

On the contrary, French look more for pleasure than Chinese when buying luxury. This is related to the importance given to the individual in society but might also be related to a higher familiarity with the industry. Being a more developed country, where luxury is implemented for long, individuals are looking for esteem and self-achievement. Having a better knowledge about the industry, individuals feel free to choose what best suits them and to affirm their unique style and taste. In fact, consumers with more luxury expertise are capable of identifying different brands' characteristics and decide what brands better match their own image. Contrary to Conformity, this motivation appears to be related with latter stages of the luxury market development in a certain country.

Quality appears to be the dominant motivation for the two nationalities but higher mean scores were attributed to French consumers. Shukla (2011) defends that Western cultures may be more attracted by Quality due to a stronger knowledge of the market. Even though both Chinese and French want Quality, French consumers are probably more informed about the existence of a wide range of brands which will enable them to decide in a more informed way. They will certainly take into account the production processes techniques, materials or post-buying services while Chinese will be mostly driven by price. Moreover, the higher emphasis put on Quality by French may also be strongly linked to the current economical crisis. Western consumers are now trying to justify the high prices they pay by the perceived higher quality. Even though Quality is important for both nationalities, a latter stage in the luxury industry development might be characterized by a higher number of consumers assessing the Quality attributes of the products.

Finally, Uniqueness motivations loaded similarly for the two populations. This result supports the idea that consumers' preferences globally are becoming more homogeneous (Dholakia & Talukdar, 2004; Levitt, 1983), at least in what concerns Uniqueness motivations for purchasing luxury products. This might be explained by the fact that luxury is directly

associated to exclusive ownership and consumers look for ways to differentiate themselves in a world where all consumption habits and choices are converging. This motivation may be relatively independent from cultural orientation. Exclusivity characterizes luxury products and was proved to increase their value. Lynn (1991), utilized a meta-analysis of 41 previous studies and found that scarcity had a reliable and largely consistent positive effect on value (Gareth, 2008). In fact, most of luxury products become eroded if too many people own them. Finally, the importance given to this motivation is also expected to be related to a latter development stage of the luxury industry. As more luxury brands become available in a country and some companies enter into trading down strategies, luxury as an industry may lose exclusivity in the eyes of consumers. At this stage, it will not be enough for consumers to buy a luxury well-known accessory (e.g. LV handbag) in order to feel unique and a pursuit for more rare products is expected to take place.

This discussion exposes possible explanations for the surprising self-construal results and their respective implications on what concerns motivation differences. Moreover, we suggest that Conformity, Hedonism and Quality motivation differences might be linked to different stages of the industry development while Uniqueness already has an equal importance in both countries. The proposition that some motivations are linked to different knowledge levels of the industry lead to affirm that, in the long-term, French and Chinese may be driven by similar motivations. In fact, luxury industry consumption is booming at an astonishing speed in China and it might be a matter of time for the two markets to be equally developed. Bain & Company (2012) propose that Chinese luxury consumers are looking for less flashy brands and more understatement products, supporting the idea that Chinese market is becoming more sophisticated. In the long-term Chinese are thus expected to decrease their Conformity motivations while increasing Hedonism and Quality ones. Finally, the fact that Uniqueness was found to be similar across the two populations is a first sign of Chinese consumers' sophistication. The same study defends that the more consumers are familiar with the industry the more they will "*discover brands and styles before others do*".

These findings have strong impacts on global luxury brands management which are exposed in next section.

7. MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 UNIQUENESS MOTIVATION: A STRATEGIC GLOBAL CONCERN

The fact that Uniqueness is a motivation equally present in the two populations of this study has a strong impact in terms of management for both markets. This finding leads us to defend that luxury brands should practice a "marketing de l'offre" in order to develop their perceived Uniqueness attributes. Luxury brands should not focus on responding to consumers' needs but on creating new needs! This strategy transmits the image of Uniqueness that consumers are looking for. Due to the Chinese market boom, luxury brands need to ensure availability while maintaining exclusivity (Bain, 2011). Given that Chinese consumers are less knowledgeable, it may be easier (and cheaper) to transmit a unique image in this market. Nevertheless, luxury brands should build a global strategy and not harm mature markets in favor of emerging ones.

Firstly, in order to maintain the scarcity of the products, luxury brands need to have a strong control over the entire value chain. As an example, control over distribution is essential to avoid overexposure of the brand. In the past, most European luxury companies entered the U.S market by licensing their brands which created problems in brand image consistency (e.g. Dior). In fact, it was very difficult for European companies to control how their products were being distributed in the U.S, resulting in luxury products sold with high discounts in department stores or even in outlets. European luxury brands had to buy back their licenses and incurred in very high costs. Today, companies entering China and other emerging markets need to take past experiences into account and make sure that licenses are only issued when truly necessary.

It is also important for luxury brands to question themselves about the target rates of penetration and diffusion they want to achieve in new markets. Even though China is a very big market, luxury brands need to have a careful strategy when penetrating it. Companies constantly work to maintain their fantasy image and opening too much stores, or stores in the wrong locations, might be a risk for long-term sustainability. Kapferer (2012) defends that true luxury brands should sell products in a limited way to avoid becoming fashion brands. Today, focusing on the biggest cities appears to be a smart strategy for European luxury brands. According to McKinsey (2013), it is predicted that 600 cities will represent 65% of

the luxury industry growth by 2025. Moreover, ¾ of these cities will be situated in emerging countries. Paris is the fourth city for luxury and is expected to become the seventh by 2025, while Shanghai is the twenty-sixth today and is expected to become the third by the same time.

Luxury brands should also be very reticent in what concerns the recent trend of trading-down the products and creating sub-brands that are more accessible. Even though companies try to separate the different sub-brands, having a more accessible line confers an idea of mass market and decreases the perceived uniqueness of the mother brand, reducing its value. On the contrary, a successful strategy is to create limited editions in order to increase the rarity of the products. This may be achieved in different ways, including producing a limited number of items, personalizing products or using special processes such as handwork.

Finally, since luxury consumers are driven by Uniqueness, they will want to feel unique during the purchasing experience. In practical terms, managers need to assure that consumers have a customized service when entering the stores. In fact, it is essential that salespeople assist one customer at the time and that customers do not wait long to be helped. This implies that managers need to choose not only the right people but also the right number of sales assistants, which may depend on the season as well as on the store turnover.

7.2 A MARKET WHERE DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS NEED TO COEXIST

Even though Uniqueness is a common motivation for French and Chinese, observing the differences in other types of motivations was crucial to better understand the luxury market dynamics nowadays. As we have seen, French and Chinese give a different importance to certain motivations due to culture but also probably due to different levels of luxury market awareness. Luxury brands need to create a balance to respond efficiently to the needs of both markets. They face today a double challenge consisting of penetrating the new markets without disregarding the mature ones. Facing a dichotomous market with very heterogeneous consumers, luxury brands need to have a strategy to maintain brand coherence while gaining acceptance in cities as different as Paris and Shanghai.

Chinese consumers are more driven by conformity motivations than French. In fact, Chinese are not supposed to stand out from the crowd and the social and political environment of the country can sometimes be at the origin of this motivation. In fact, consumers were specially driven by conformity due to the recent elections in China. In fact, with the presence of some political instability the major part of the Chinese wealthy consumers decided to shop for luxury abroad. Thus, managers need to take into account this type of events that may seriously impact the consumption in certain countries.

Moreover, this dominance of conformity motivation may be explained by a lack of knowledge about the market and a need for safety. Given this, it is crucial for French brands to focus on retail excellence and customer service. Having the right people selling the right products to Chinese, both in China and in foreign countries, is a strategy to respond positively to consumers' expectations for conformity. Well-known brands are investing in having Chinese salespeople in the most touristic places in order to make these consumers more at ease when buying. Salespeople should have the sensibility to understand what type of products match each customer profile. However, brands face constraints since sometimes Chinese consumers want to have a truly European purchasing experience and French may prefer to have salespeople from their own culture.

Given that higher Conformity motivation may be the result of luxury unfamiliarity, companies should avoid delocalizing their production. In the case of China, the country of origin is still more important than for western countries (Godey, Bruno, et al., 2012). The reference to the COO is crucial to convey a suitable image of the products (e.g. France stands for l'art de vivre) and guarantee quality. Some luxury brands that tried to implement a delocalization strategy had to stop it because consumers were not comfortable to buy luxury products "made in China" (e.g. Armani).

Given the need to conform, luxury brands in China will only be successful when they are truly well-known. It is very important for French brands to be present online, in particular in Chinese social media. In a survey lead by Bain & Company (2012), 79% of the Chinese respondents stated that the first internet source of information they use when buying luxury is social media. To feel confident about their purchasing decisions, Chinese customers will

search for products online and analyze the opinions of family and friends before buying. Even though e-commerce has still a minor role in China, it may also be a way of creating excitement and brand recognition. Given the importance of the online channels, brands need to manage very carefully the public relations and ensure that they are not being overexposed.

Finally, brands in China need to gain consumers' awareness but most importantly they need to communicate the values of tradition, experience and heritage. Even though differences in quality motivations were found between French and Chinese consumers, quality was the motivation that ranked higher in both populations. Communicating the "savoir-faire" of the brand is a way to gain trust from Chinese consumers that don't have a large knowledge about this market. Exhibitions, such as "Louis Vuitton Voyages" and "Culture Chanel" held in Beijing in 2011 are good examples of initiatives taken by well-known French brands. Chinese preference for Conformity and Quality may also explain the reason why Chinese luxury brands are not successful yet. In fact consumers still rely on the western quality and do not want to take risks

7.2.2 FRENCH DEMAND NEW FORMS OF LUXURY

McKinsey (2013) presented self-pleasure as the first motivation for European consumers and this is in line with the present study. The dominance of hedonism motivation is translated in a stronger demand for luxury services in Europe. The survey lead by McKinsey concluded that 25% of the European respondents were ready to decrease their consumption of luxury goods in order to consume more luxury services. These findings suggest that today there is place for the luxury industry services to expand in the more mature markets, including France.

Moreover, according to the same report, the Hedonism motivations are translated into the demand for classic, wearable and durable products. In fact, our empirical study also concluded that French consumers were more driven by Quality than Chinese, meaning that for them durability will be a key driver in the purchasing decision. Given that French are more knowledgeable about the industry, a communication based on the products' quality and materials might be a very successful strategy for French and other European markets.

8. LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings presented in this research are somehow different from what was anticipated from past literature. Some of the hypotheses were not supported, leading to the introduction of alternative factors explaining luxury motivation differences, which are certainly worth to be included in further empirical research. In fact, this study represents a great potential for new fields of study. However, as in any empirical study, limitations need to be acknowledged and results should be interpreted in light of those.

Firstly, concerning the scale development, a confirmatory factor analysis should be conducted in order to assure a stronger reliability of the scale employed in the present study. Even though the items reproduced were tested and used in past empirical studies, a different combination may produce different results. In fact, the items composing the Status & Conspicuousness factor appeared to have an unacceptable internal consistency, leading to the decision not to further explore it. To overcome this limitation, future studies should use a broader scale development process. Starting with a larger number of items is essential to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis. Also, the collaboration of multi-cultural research teams would have enabled to confirm functional and conceptual equivalence of the items. Moreover, the assistance of an experts' panel would guarantee the validity of the scale. However, this was not feasible in the current study, due to considerations of time and cost. Finally, some authors propose that ideally researchers should use factors with Cronbach's alpha superior to 0.7 (Nunally, 1994; DeVillis, 2003; Kline, 2005). However, for the exploratory purpose of this study the lower alphas don't appear as a severe limitation.

The questionnaire was not submitted to back translation. Although our sample is expected to be bilingual, this process would have strengthened the reliability of the questionnaire. Another concern related to the questionnaire design is the possibility of Scalar Inequivalence. This is related to the fact that individuals from different countries might rate the questions in a consistent way, which will affect the validity of the measures. Finally, as it was already mentioned before, social desirability bias might have originated unexpected results. However, it is very difficult to avoid this type of respondents' bias.

Another concern is related to the sample size and characteristics. Although a minimum sample of eighty-eight Chinese and eighty-eight French (GPower) was ideal, the final sample

gathered was unbalanced. A research gathering a higher and equal number of respondents would harmonize the findings of this study. Moreover, the sample was composed by students, the majority between 18 and 25 years old. The extension of cross-cultural results obtained from students' samples might be questioned by the argument that there is a greater similarity in the values of teenagers from different cultures than in the values of teenagers and older people from the same country. Students represent a subset of luxury consumers and are not representative of all consumers in a culture. Another limitation related to the sample used is the limited purchasing power of students. However, the objective of this study was mainly to explore the reasons behind individuals' ambition to buy luxury. The questionnaire was designed to measure intentional behaviors rather than actual ones, being strongly focused on perceptions. Knowing that motivations might not directly result in purchasing decisions, further research might be developed in this area.

The results from self-construal dimensions proved that there is a need to develop a model that integrates both national culture, demographic aspects (social class, age, education, income, etc…) and psychological variables (self-construals). In fact, Tsai (2005) stated that future research should develop an *"empirical model explicating the interactive effects of social orientation and personal orientation on luxury-brand purchase value in the international luxury-brand market"*. Although this study covered the two most important countries in the luxury arena today, the results may not be valid for all other countries. In fact, this study should be treated as a pilot one and research assessing additional countries is required.

The inexistence of relations between motivations and self-concepts in this study made it crucial to identify alternative factors contributing to the differences found. It would be very interesting to see further investigation identifying the role of knowledge in luxury consumption motivations. This would to enable to recognize trends in developed and emerging markets and, ultimately, understand if a motivations pattern does exist. Although we didn't analyze Status & Conspicuousness, this motivation, in addition to Conformity, may be associated with first stages luxury industry development. China lost its traditional stratification and people needed to find a new way to rank individuals within society. In their book, Chadha and Husband (2006) observe that wealth is the new fashion statement, symbolising each one's place in society. However, taste is still not part of the equation

because luxury products are still very new in the Chinese market. Symbols, in contrast, are crucial because it is often difficult for Chinese to read and pronounce western names such as Christian Dior or Louis Vuitton. As Yu Lei observes *"If you want to be part of "high status" society, then you need something on your exterior to let others know" (*Chadha & Husband, 2006). This lack of knowledge about the industry results in "symbolic" consumption, which will be certainly recognised by others. According to some authors, this trend touches not only the affluent but also the ones with low salaries. In fact, some consumers cut a lot in "necessary" items such as food in order to be able to buy a LV handbag. In fact Chadha & Husband defend that China is still in the "show-off" phase, focusing mainly in acquiring symbols of wealth and displaying economic status. I believe that China is already between the *"fit in"* and *"way of life"* stage described by these authors. In fact, as demonstrated by this paper, they still give a high importance to conformity but the trend will be to move towards hedonism motivations.

Lastly, a downside is linked to the type of analysis executed, which didn't go beyond comparing independently the sample means. It was decided not to present a MANOVA on motivations because there was no homogeneity of variances for all the factors and Quality was not correlated with the other motivations. Concerning the self-construals, the fact that the correlation was also low (r=0,127) lead us to also choose to do separated independent-sample t-tests. Finally, given the inexistent/low correlations between motivations and self-concepts no causality studies were conducted to explain the causes of differences in motivations. Further investigation on the topics presented above will also result in an increase of statistical complexity of future studies.

9. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to assess until what extent French and Chinese consumers differed in the importance they gave to Status & Conspicuousness, Conformity, Uniqueness, Hedonism and Quality when buying luxury products. A quantitative study was conducted and results revealed that Chinese consumers give higher emphasis to Conformity motivations, while French are mostly driven by Hedonism and Quality. Uniqueness appears as a commonly important motivation for the two populations.

At the beginning of the research, it was proposed that cultural orientation, measured at individual level trough self-construal, would be the main cause for potential differences in motivations. However, the use of an international students' sample, resulted in unexpected similarities concerning the way respondents see themselves in relation to others. Correlations between motivations and self-construals were very low, rejecting the initial idea that Interdependence and Independence would explain the variation in consumption motivations. Alternatively, we suggest that knowledge and the luxury development stage in a country may influence motivations. In an earlier stage, consumers are driven by Conformity and look mainly for safe choices. They are more averse to risk and avoid at any cost making a *"faux pas"*. Conspicuousness & Status would also be a dominant motivation in this stage, which Chadha & Husband (2006) entitled as the "show-off phase" of a country. However, as consumers gain knowledge about the existing brands and expand their consideration set, they will be more confident about their own choices and will be able to better assess the Quality of the different products. In this later stage, Hedonism and Quality become predominant motivations. Also, consumers may be increasingly driven by Uniqueness as luxury becomes a less limited concept in their mindset. This alternative framework is presented in a very exploratory stage and needs to be empirically and cross-culturally tested.

Consumers from emerging markets are becoming increasingly sophisticated and buying heavily. In a world where purchasing habits are converging, it seems crucial to identify how motivations will evolve in emerging markets and design strategies accordingly. Although it is still not the case, in the future Western luxury brands may face competition from emerging markets. In fact, China is living acceleration rates never seen before and one might question if, in the long-term, the evolution from the "made in China- made by China- made for China" will take place.

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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11. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: ONLINE SURVEY

Page 1 - Introductory Text

Thank you very much for your help in this study. It forms part of my Master thesis for the Double Degree program between Católica-Lisbon and ESCP-Europe.

The present survey aims at understanding your perceptions on luxury products. Your responses will be compiled, statistically analysed and anonymously reported, and will not be, in any way, linked to you as a participant.

This survey aims at accessing only FRENCH and CHINESE consumers and will not take more than 5 minutes!

Examples of luxury brands might include Chanel,Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Hermès, Moet et Chandon, Cartier, BMW, Mercedes- Benz, etc.

Nationality:

○ French

○ Chinese

Page 2: Personal Assessment

Please indicate your level of disagreement/agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others.	○	○	○	○	○
I should be judged by my own merit.	○	○	○	○	○
I am concerned with protecting the pride of my family.	○	○	○	○	○
If there is a conflict between my values and values of groups of which I am member, I follow my values.	○	○	○	○	○
I recognize and respect social expectations, norms and practices.	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being different from the others.	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate your level of disagreement/agreement with the following statements.

Please answer all the statements even if you are not a usual luxury consumer. If this is the case, please imagine a situation where you are going to buy a luxury item.

	Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
I buy luxury products to gain social status.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The luxury products I consume should match my social status.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often buy luxury goods in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Luxury goods make me dream and feel excitement.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The product quality superiority is my major reason for buying a luxury brand.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I prefer to buy luxury goods that look expensive.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I like to own new luxury goods before others do.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The luxury brand preferred by many people but that doesn't meet my quality standards will never enter into my purchase consideration.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate your level of disagreement/agreement with the following statements.

These are the last statements I'll ask you to evaluate!   Please answer all the statements even if you are not a usual luxury consumer. If this is the case, please imagine the situation where you were going to buy a luxury item.

	Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
If I use luxury products, I feel that other people's impressions about me have changed.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I buy luxury products to make myself stand out.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sometimes I buy a product because my friends do so.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
When in a bad mood, I may buy luxury brands as self-gifts for alleviating an emotional burden.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I place emphasis on the quality assurance over prestige when considering the purchase of a luxury brand.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Owning luxury goods indicates a symbol of prestige.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I buy luxury products to feel integrated in a personal/professional circle.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Page 5: Personal Information

To end the questionnaire I just need some basic information about you.

Age:
○ 18-25
○ 26- 40
○ 41-60
○ >60

Gender:
○ Female
○ Male

Have you ever lived abroad from your country of origin?
○ No
○ Yes, (for 6 months or less)
○ Yes, (for more than 6 months)

For Chinese: Have you ever travelled to Europe? For how long?
Only answer this question if you are CHINESE.
○ No
○ Yes (< 1 month)
○ Yes (> 1 month)

For French: Have you ever travelled to Asia? For how long?~
Only answer this question if you are FRENCH.
○ No
○ Yes (< 1 month)
○ Yes (> 1 month)

How frequently do you buy luxury products?
○ Never
○ Less than once a year (e.g. once every few years)
○ Once a year
○ 2-3 times a year
○ More than 3 times a year

Page 6: Confirmation Page

Your response has been recorded. Thank you very much!

Sofia

FIGURE 1: OUTLIERS ASSESSMENT - BOXPLOTS
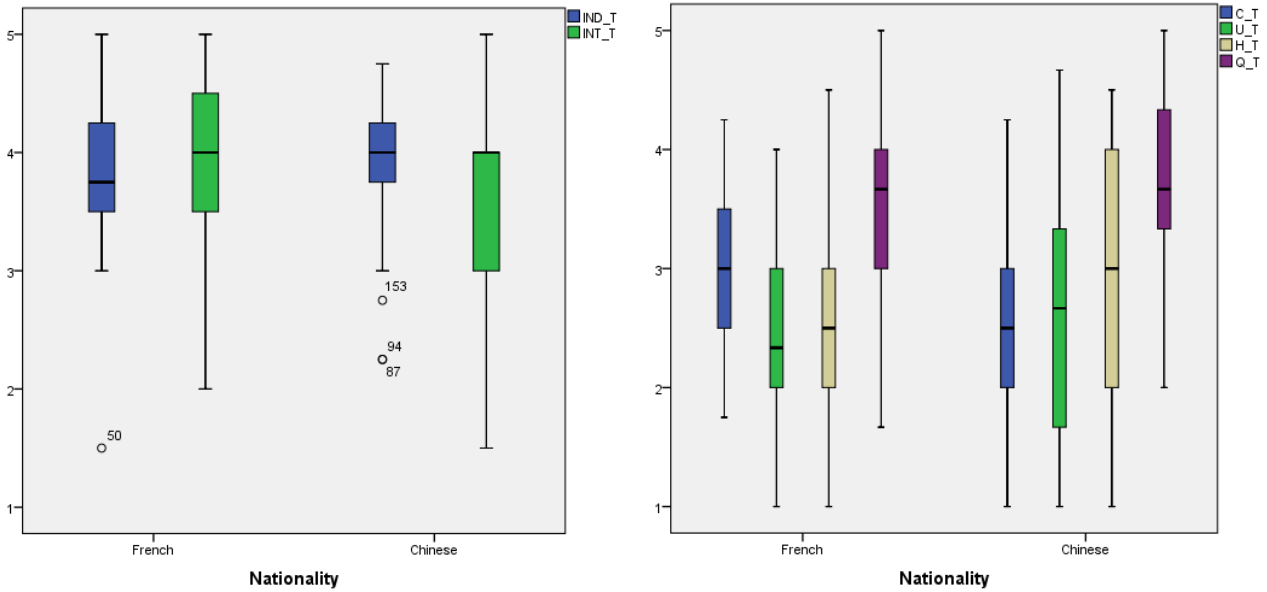
FIGURE 2: ASSESSING SKEWNESS & KURTOSIS

		IND_T	INT_T	C_T	U_T	H_T	Q_T
N	Valid	165	165	165	165	165	165
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		-1,034	-,497	-,145	,305	,178	-,238
Std. Error of Skewness		,189	,189	,189	,189	,189	,189
Kurtosis		3,120	,258	-,542	-,321	-,869	-,217
Std. Error of Kurtosis		,376	,376	,376	,376	,376	,376
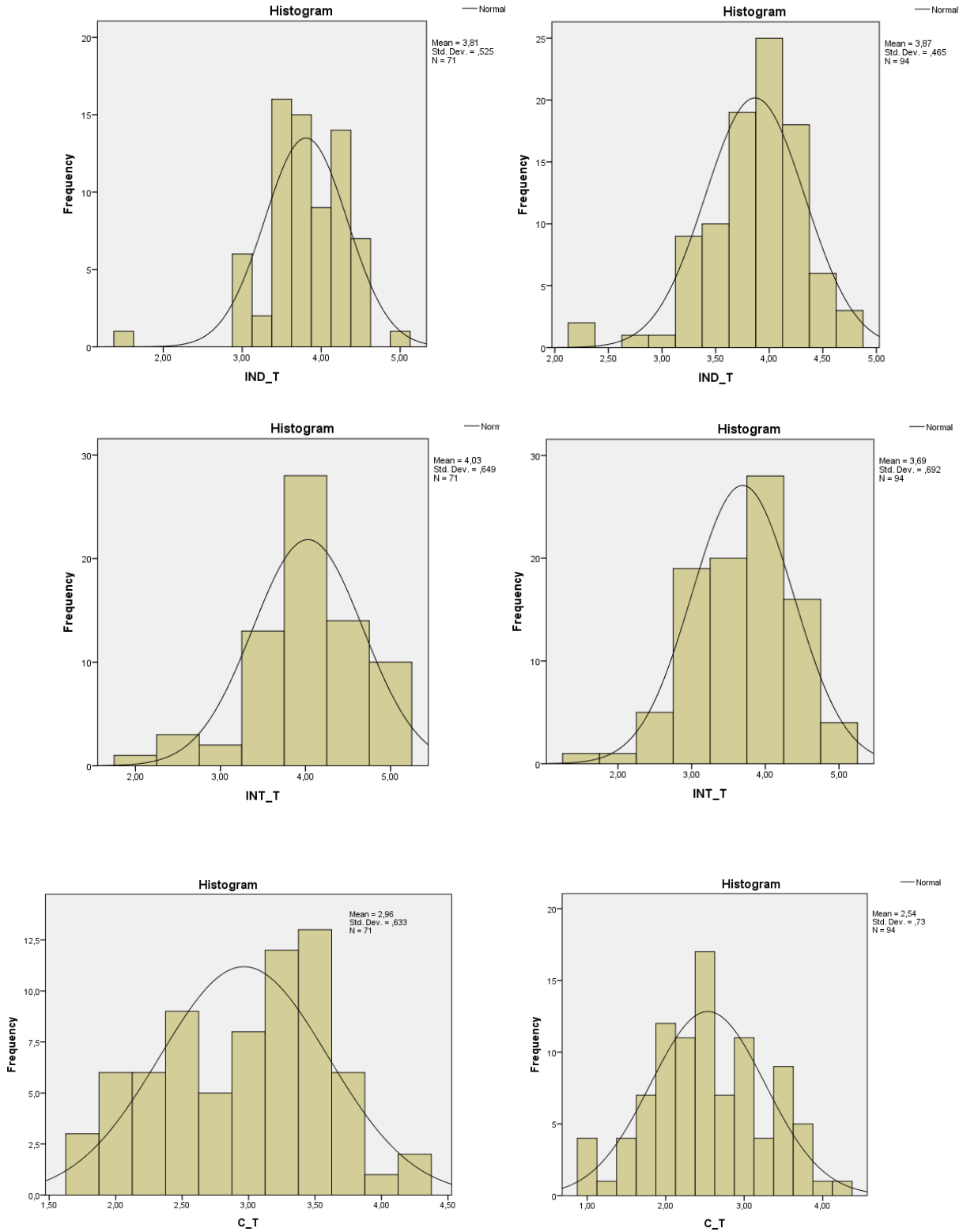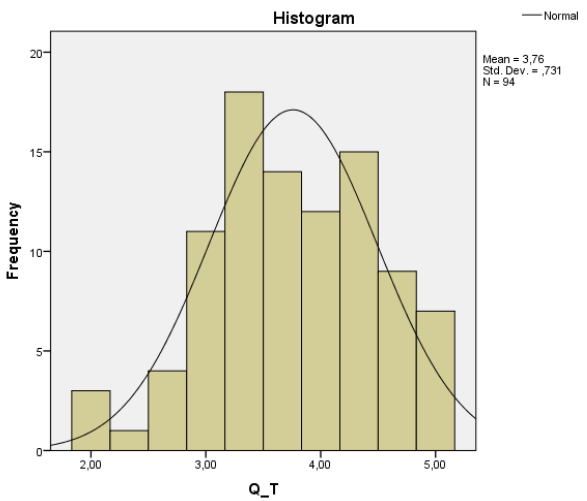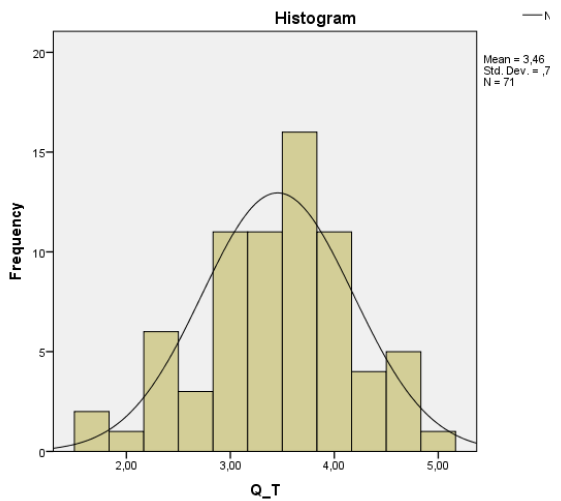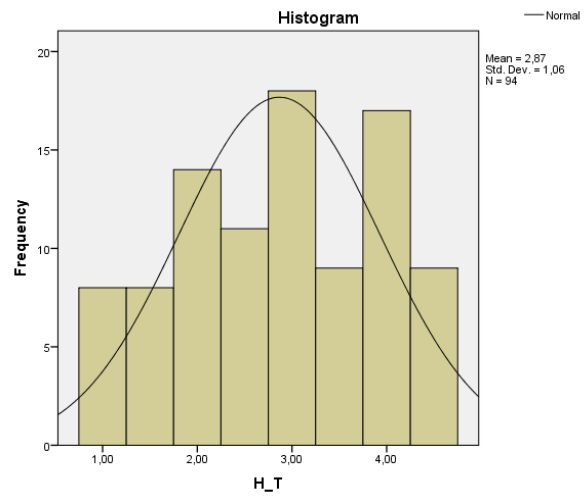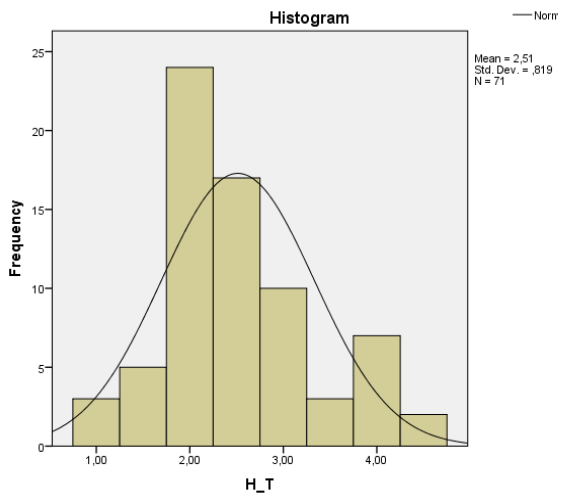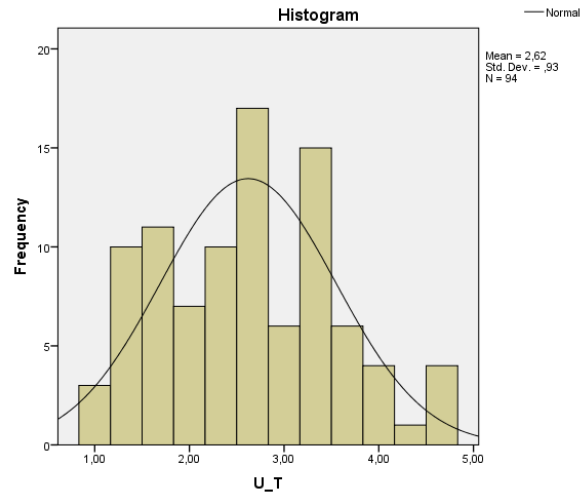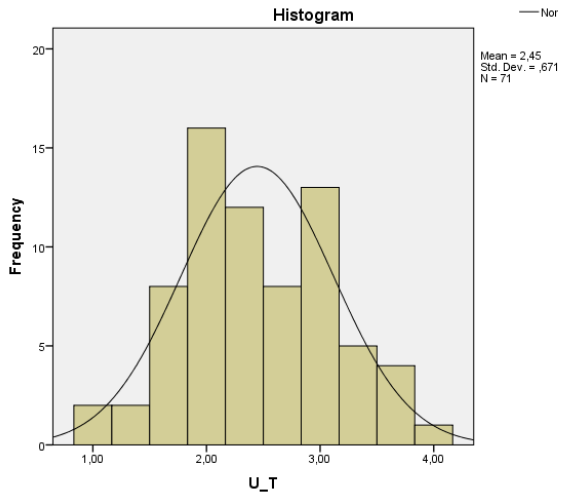
Déclaration sur l'honneur

Je, soussignée, **Maria Sofia de Souza Coutinho Nunes de Almeida**, certifie sur l'honneur que je n'ai rien plagié dans le travail ci-joint, ce qui signifie que je suis le seul auteur de toutes les phrases dont le texte est composé. Toute phrase ayant un autre auteur que moi a été mise entre guillemets, avec indication explicite de sa source. Je suis conscient(e) qu'en contrevenant à la présente règle je transgresse les principes académiques reconnus et m'expose aux sanctions qui seront prononcées par le conseil de discipline.

J'atteste également que ce travail n'a jamais été présenté dans le cadre d'études antérieures à ESCP Europe.

S'il s'agit d'un travail réalisé dans le cadre d'études effectuées en parallèle, je dois le préciser.

Les propos tenus dans ce mémoire n'engagent que moi-même.

Fait à Paris le 13 Mai 2013