

# **An exploratory study on establishing an Irish Luxury Fashion Brand**

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A Research Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree  
of MSc Marketing, Institute of technology Sligo.

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## Declaration

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The work of this dissertation 'an exploratory study on establishing an Irish luxury fashion brand' represents the research carried out by Shauna O' Sullivan under the supervision of Suzanne Ryan and does not include work by any other party, with acknowledged exception.

Signed:

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Shauna O' Sullivan

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who have been a huge support throughout my five years in college. In particular my mother Imelda and father Brian as they have been a huge support during this process and my sister Roisin. Also to my closest friends who have made my years in college the best years of my life, Catherine, Antoinette, Aoife, Elaine, David, Eugene & Mickey Jo. Thanks for everything.

## Acknowledgements:

*It's your attitude not your aptitude that's determines your altitude -*

In presenting this dissertation I would like to acknowledge the assistance of several persons for their support and influence during my dissertation journey.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Suzanne Ryan for her outstanding patience, support and advice. I couldn't off asked for a better supervisor and without your guidance and support this would not have been possible.

I would like to also thank my family in particular my mother Imelda and father Brian as I would not have had the opportunity to do a Masters without your help and I would like to thank you for being so understanding. Your constant support has been a huge motivational factor and you encouraged me every step of the way.

To the participants who took the time to help me conduct my research, I really appreciated your help. Finally, to all my classmates who were very good at motivating and helping each other out, it has been a hard but memorable year.

## **Abstract:**

Ireland is not taken seriously for its fashion and there is no internationally recognised fashion designer. (MacCabe, 2012) states 'all the things the "Irish" are known for, fashion is not high on the list. There are a number of premium Irish fashion brands from Irish fashion designers such as Orla Kiely however these are not perceived as luxury. This research is with particular emphasis on the how an Irish fashion designer can establish a luxury Irish fashion brand and the ways by which International success can be realized. It is clear that a problem lies somewhere in relation to the Irish fashion industry and its lack of success and this will be investigated in this study. In solving the research problem it was necessary to determine the characteristics of luxury fashion brands while also examining consumers and designers perceptions of luxury fashion brands and the Irish fashion industry. Furthermore it was important to determine the methods which can be used by an Irish fashion designer to create a luxury fashion brand

This is an exploratory study and so qualitative research methods were deemed best suitable. Five telephone interviews were conducted with Irish fashion designers throughout Ireland to uncover trends, attitudes and motivations in the Irish fashion industry. Six focus groups were conducted with female consumers of luxury fashion brands who were aged between twenty eight and sixty five years. Purposive sampling was used for both qualitative methods.

The main findings reflected that there are many problems within the Irish fashion industry which makes it very difficult for an Irish designer to develop a successful fashion brand. Funding is a major problem and the findings showed that there is no support for designers from the Irish government. The UK have the British council of fashion designers which supports up and coming designers, a support group like this is needed in Ireland to help the talented designers shine. Designers feel they do not have the business skills needed to establish their own business and there is a lack of business subjects taught in fashion schools. There are no manufacturing facilities in Ireland so from these problems it can now be understood why there is no Irish luxury fashion brand. The characteristics of luxury fashion brands have been determined and some new ones have been discussed. Finally a model which will aid designers to build a luxury fashion brand was developed from the research findings.

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## **List of abbreviations:**

RoI – Republic of Ireland

FG – Focus group

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## **1.1 Introduction:**

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine how Irish Fashion designers can build an international luxury fashion brand. At present Ireland has no internationally recognised fashion designer. (MacCabe, 2012) states ‘all the things the “Irish” are known for, fashion is not high on the list. There are a number of premium Irish fashion brands from Irish fashion designers, Orla Keily, Natalie B Coleman and Jennifer Wynne however these are not perceived as luxury brands. This research is with particular emphasis on the international development of a luxury Irish fashion brand and the ways by which International success can be realised. Firstly an outline plan and structure of the research will be given in this chapter. The research problem and objectives will also be stated in this chapter. This will be followed by the rationale which will include literature on the Irish fashion industry as well as global luxury fashion brands. Justification for the research will then be discussed and then finally a conclusion will be drawn up.

## **1.2 Rationale:**

America has great designers like Vera Wang and Marc Jacobs, England has Alexander McQueen and Burberry, Australia has Camilla & Marc, France has Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, Italy has Versace and Prada, Ireland however, does not have a world-recognised luxury fashion brand. Irish women have similar tastes in fashion than those in Europe and the USA however Ireland is not taken remotely serious for their fashion compared to the likes of France, Italy, the UK and the USA. There is no disrespect intended to those involved in the Irish fashion industry, however even they would have to admit that they come in behind the craic agus ceoil, smiling eyes and dancing feet, Bono, Michael Flatley, Sinéad O’Connor and the Corrs, even behind Aran jumpers – although they could, at a stretch, be classified as ‘fashion’ (MacCabe, 2012).

At present no internationally recognised luxury Irish fashion brand has emerged from Ireland and there is very little research as to what the reason is for this. There are a number of premium Irish luxury fashion brands in existence however outside of Ireland these are not well recognised or seen by consumers as prestige brands such as Burberry and Chanel. Patrick Cabasset, co-fashion director of the French magazine L'Officiel, who attended Dublin Fashion Week and the embassy show in Paris, said he noticed a definite style in the Irish work. The Irish fashion designers principal market is the U.K. "*The tastes of the British buyers undoubtedly make themselves felt here.*" While that orientation could be a stumbling block in seeking a global market, Cabasset said it can be overcome and "*what I saw seemed sufficiently encouraging to merit development*" (Treacey, 2012).

There are some fantastic Irish fashion designers who have emerged in recent years such as Emma Manley, Natalie B Coleman, Sorcha O' Raghallaigh, Orla Kiely and JW Anderson to name but a few. These can be described as premium Irish fashion brands. A Gucci bag may have the same tangible functions as, take for example a bag from premium Irish brand Orla Kiely but commands a much higher price. An Orla Kiely handbag can be purchased for €228 - €368 (Kiely, 2013) whereas a Gucci bag costs €620 - €2000 (Gucci, 2013). This price gap points to that the Gucci bag has intangible properties such as reputation and image as well as tangible properties as quality and craftsmanship. Premium brands are brands that aspire to become a luxury brand but their marketing mix is targeted towards a mass market (Onkonkwo, 2007). The main difference between premium and luxury products is that luxury is tied to the social hierarchy whereas premium goods are simply better goods, they are the best in class products, after examination of their comparative performance. Luxury is elsewhere and is seen as even better than premium (Kapferer 2011). The real characteristics of a luxury fashion brand must be studied in order to get a better understanding as to why Irish fashion brands are not receiving as much recognition as those of British, French and Italian designers.

Post World War Two, Dublin was the fashion capital of the world thanks in no small part to our politically dubious neutrality. Lace, wool and linen were in high demand. Then came the resurgence of French couture and the inevitable Irish relegation (Licentiate, 2013). It is known that French designers hold a majority of the luxury fashion market (Huisic, 2009). The

approach they use is completely different from that of US designers, or Italian designers. US designers grew in the 1970s, Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren among them, defining a more leisure-oriented casual elegance as the American style (Chadha and Husband, 2006). A completely new fashion dimension was added to the fashion equation by these American brands. The image and lifestyle that the brand projected was an important factor, it was no longer just the design of the product. While the Americans were master marketers of luxury fashion, the Italians were excellent at creating the right kind of buzz, another powerful tool in spreading the luxe culture. It came naturally to them, with flamboyant figures like Gianni Versace creating as much news as his clientele of princesses, stars, and high-society women. Italy rose rapidly and today Milan is as much a fashion centre as Paris (Chadha and Husband, 2006).

Millward Brown Optimor's, create an annual list of the world's most powerful brands each year. They implement brand analysis for many different international companies and in 2012 the top ten most powerful luxury brands in the world are presented below in table 1.0

1. Louis Vuitton, \$25.9 billion, up 7%
2. Hermes, \$19.1 billion, up 61%
3. Rolex, \$7.17 billion, up 36%
4. Chanel, \$6.7 billion
5. Gucci, \$6.4 billion (down 14%)
6. Prada, \$5.7 billion (first time in top 10)
7. Cartier, \$4.8 billion
8. Hennessy, \$4.6 billion
9. Moet & Chandon, \$4.2 billion
10. Burberry, \$4.09 billion

**Table 1.0 Millward Brown Optimor's 2012**

As seen above they ranked the companies according to their brand value and on the first place Louis Vuitton is found with a brand value \$25.9 billion dollars which is up 7% from the 2011



analysis. The company focus on its heritage as a travel brand and it has always helped them to retain its core customers. The Louis Vuitton brand is part of one of the biggest brand groups in the world which is the Moët, Hennessy – Louis Vuitton (LVMH) which has over 60 brands. The LVMH (2011) financial documents showed that fashion and leather goods created the largest revenue for the group earning and they accounted for €8712 million.

The luxury brand market is seen as very valuable in Asia according to (Chadha and Husband 2006). With the rising economy in Asia over 80 billion is created from the luxury brand market in Asia. On the second place which had a brand value of \$19.1 billion dollars which is up 61% from the 2011 analysis. Hermes has a focus on luxury handmade leather bags and on its heritage. There are brands from France, Italy, the UK and the USA on this list. It is clearly evident from the table 1.0 above that there is no Irish fashion brand on this list and it would be great to see one on this list in the next few years.

There is huge potential for the Irish economy to create revenue in the Luxury fashion sector. According to Hines (2007) *“Luxury brands have been a significant part of France's economy, and are valued at €11.7 billion which is 82% of luxury brands are exported to Europe, USA and France”*. The luxury and premium fashion industry is an important force in the whole fashion market and in the current model of fashion consumption. The brands in these segments have made great efforts in terms of their designs and marketing efforts. Different aspects of their communication strategies and operations are used in finding out who their consumer is. Fashion is an integral part of many people's lives and they use fashion products to express themselves and their personality. The luxury and premium brands do not only sell products, they also sell dreams, aspirations and more importantly a certain lifestyle that customers are intrigued to buy into. Consumers are able to express their own personality, lifestyle and aspirations when buying into parts of these lifestyle concepts (Edberg, 2010). It is important for Irish designers who are eager to create a successful luxury fashion brand to have an understanding of what it is that makes consumers all over the world want to be associated with their particular brand.

In Ireland the industry is largely un-promoted and un-quantified meaning that the majority of talent has to leave the country to find work. *“There does seem to be a resistance to fashion; it*

*isn't perceived as something serious," according to (O'Brien, 2012). "There is no question that we have the talent. But there is a pervasive old-fashioned notion that fashion is frivolous and silly. But we can see with the work of the British Fashion Council, the government there has realised fashion could be really good for Britain, and it's really coming in behind the industry and supporting it" (Ness, 2012). Sinéad Doyle, who is known for setting up her eponymous womenswear label in Dublin in 2008 feels that the Irish fashion industry is not taken seriously. "In London, people have become really aware of the amount of money the fashion industry pumps into the UK but it's still seen as quite frivolous here" (MacCabe, 2012)*

It is felt that Irish fashion designers have a lot to learn when it comes to building their fashion brand to be a global success. The United Kingdom and Ireland are seen as quite similar when it comes to fashion. *'With similar fashion tastes to those of the UK, our temperate climates and cultures, we have much in common when it comes to fashion choices'* (UKTI,2013) and yet world recognised Luxury fashion brands have emerged from the UK such as Alexander McQueen, Mulberry and Burberry. It was only in 1992 that British designer Alexander McQueen 'burst onto the fashion stage'. This is the reason one must question the reasons for which Ireland have not yet had a world recognised luxury fashion brand. It is not easy to build a luxury fashion brand, but it is not impossible. Stella Mc Cartney is known as a luxury fashion brand and her brand has only been launched in the last few years. A signature style of sharp tailoring, natural confidence and sexy femininity was immediately apparent in her first collection and after only two collections, in 1997, she was appointed the Creative Director of Chloe in Paris and enjoyed great success during her tenure. Stella McCartney launched her own fashion house under her name in a partnership with Kering as a 50/50 joint venture and showed her first collection in Paris in October 2001 (McCartney, 2013)

A recent article published in the Sunday Business Post states that the Irish fashion industry is in desperate need of a cohesive strategy from government that would promote Irish fashion as a worldwide brand, according to those working in the sector. Irish designers say that building an international Irish fashion brand would show that fashion isn't just about frocks, but a serious business that contributes to the wealth of the nation (Ness, 2012). Irish fashion

designer Natalie Coleman agrees. *'It would be nice to get a little bit more support'* (MacCabe, 2012)

The majority of Irish design talent have had to leave the country to get better opportunities in countries such as Great Britain, Italy, France and the USA. Design graduates are faced with two choices, stay in Ireland and struggle to stay afloat in a small, quickly diminishing industry; or go abroad and find their footing in a well-established and supported industry (MacCabe, 2012). The economic and social impact of the British fashion industry including wholesale, retail and manufacturing, along with financial services and tourism has been quantified at €21 billion. In Ireland the industry is largely un-promoted and un-quantified. The government like that of Britain need to realise that fashion could benefit to Ireland in terms of economic and social impact. "There does seem to be a resistance to fashion; it isn't perceived as something serious," says Irish designer Peter O'Brien. "There is no question that we have the talent. But there is a pervasive old-fashioned notion that fashion is frivolous and silly (Ness, 2012). Irish milliner Philip Treacy was very successful in 2012 as his accounts show his fashion firm recorded profits of £110,585 (€128,066) last year (Deegan, 2013). Another example is the Irish designer Louise Kennedy who "has been one of Ireland's most successful designers over the past three decades, and new figures show that accumulated profits at Ms Kennedy's Signum Ltd rose by 88pc, or €146,963, to €313,116 in the 12 months to the end of December 2011" (Deegan, 2013). Louise Kennedys brand is a premium fashion brand and these figures show just how much potential revenue fashion could create in Ireland.

The Lipstick index is a term coined by Leonard Lauder, chairman of Estee Lauder. It is an indication of the current state of an economy. It is based on the theory that when consumers face an uncertain and possibly threatening financial future they turn to inexpensive indulgences. Estee Lauder has noticed that during economic downturns sales of lipsticks go up, while other, more expensive beauty products or accessories experience a downturn. Lately, the lipstick theory hasn't been holding up. Lipstick sales on the decline since 2007 continued to fall in 2010, according to the latest data on the product released by market research firm Mintel. That throws lipstick out the window in the hunt for measures of recessionary spending in the Great Recession. (Wolveson, 2011). While nail art has been

dominating beauty news during the on-going fashion week season, a recent report by the NPD Group revealed the nail category grew by 67% in the US in 2011. In the UK, make up enjoyed an almost 9% rise in 2011, with releases from the likes of Lancôme, Dior, YSL and Chanel seeing interest particularly roused in the lipstick category at the start of the year. As a result of the current economic problems in Ireland it may be more difficult for Irish Fashion designers to build a global luxury fashion brand.

It must be noted that in 2011 the profits for Brown Thomas an Irish fashion store which sells luxury branded goods doubled to 5.3 million and so it is evident that there is a market for luxury fashion brands in Ireland. This also shows that the Irish economy is improving and people are still purchasing luxury fashion goods. In 2012 there was a 13% rise in profits to 6.6 million. (Hancock,2013).\_Department stores such as Brown Thomas and the recently arrived Harvey Nichols have traded up, offering very willing consumers a range of luxury names never before seen on Irish soil. And the number of boutiques springing up in towns and suburbs also is having a marked effect on how Irish women shop, mixing foreign brands with local labels (Treacy, 2012). This is proof that there is a market for luxury fashion in Ireland and this one of the reasons Irish fashion designers should aim to create luxury fashion brands.

The total European market for clothing was estimated at €296bn in 2002, and the four largest European markets are (in order of size) Germany, Italy, the UK and France. Ireland was ranked 16th, valued at €3.0bn (Intertrade Ireland, 2005). Figures from Mintel predicted the clothing retail market in the Republic of Ireland would grow in value in 2012 from €2.95bn to €2.97bn, and retailers were reporting that trade was steady (Faukner, 2012). The Mintel clothing report 2007 lists many key strengths of the Irish clothing market. These are

- Uncertainty in the clothing market means that brands have had to develop methods to try and influence and control market trends. Celebrity endorsement is perhaps the most high-profile manifestation of this.
- Greater fashion awareness than ever before.

- Women are more fashion conscious than men, however men have been on the receiving end of targeted media such as men's magazines *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *GQ*.
- Anecdotal evidence that Irish consumers are becoming more materialistic and are now more willing to spend higher proportion of their income on clothing.
- Greater brand awareness, fuelled by interest in celebrity lifestyles.

Paris, London, Milan and New York hold very famous fashion weeks which are well known throughout the world. "To date, the Irish fashion week has generated revenues of €3 million, or \$3.8 million, which is small compared with the sales produced during the big four fashion weeks." (Treacy, 2012) This could benefit the Irish economy a great deal if the Irish fashion industry became more known and successful in the fashion world. TGI data highlights that a high level of Irish consumers are interested in fashion, and feel it is important to be well dressed. This will help to sustain sales within the market. (Mintel, 2011)

The researcher will focus on women as research shows that it is women who account for a large proportion of the luxury consumer market; however men and children are also important luxury consumers. (Okonkwo 2007) According to (Okonkwo 2007) "four out of every five luxury purchases are either made by women or are controlled by women". In 2011 the value of the womenswear market in Ireland was €2.4bn and the menswear market was €1.3bn. 65% proportion of clothing sales in 2011 were womenswear and menswear was 35% proportion of the sales (Faulkner, 2012). Frank (2002) states that the reason why shopping is very important in a woman's life is because shopping can provide them with self-sense and a place to make decisions of their own. Women consider shopping to be important in their life because they are able to have their own personal space and a sense of self (Frank, 2000). This may be the reason luxury brands are targeting females more than males. According to a Mintel 2012 report carried out on Irish women's changing lifestyles Clothes shopping is an enjoyable activity for Irish women "ROI women are more fashion-conscious than NI women, and all women more so than their male counterparts. Aside from enjoyment, women are driven to shop by a desire to look well-dressed and, for some, to stand out from the crowd. The appeal of designer brands seems to be waning for all women, although RoI women remain more convinced of their merits" (Mintel, 2007). It is also stated in this report that

*'Older women are more likely to buy less cheap clothing, and prefer to buy into quality'* and so this must be taken into consideration when choosing the age group of the sample for this research.

### **1.3 Justification of the research:**

The purpose of this dissertation is to identify the methods which can be used by an Irish fashion designer to establish an Irish luxury fashion brand. It is evident from the above literature that there are premium Irish fashion brands but no Irish fashion brand exists which has a luxury status.

The justification of this study primarily stems from the lack of exploratory literature specific to the topic at hand. There remains a limited amount of research conducted on the Irish fashion industry and the reasons for which no luxury fashion brand has been established in Ireland. This study is an exploratory study into the Irish fashion industry. There has been no prior research found that relates specifically to creating a luxury fashion brand in Ireland and improving the status of the Irish fashion industry. Therefore there is a gap in literature on this particular topic.

Furthermore there is huge potential to create large revenue from having a successful fashion industry in Ireland and this puts a greater importance on this study. According to Hines (2007) *'Luxury brands have been a significant part of France's economy, and are valued at €11.7 billion which is 82% of luxury brands are exported to Europe, USA and France'*. The Irish government must realise that this is an extremely important sector to the overall well-being of Ireland and its recovery during the financial downturn and must provide more support to Irish fashion designers. Having a luxury Irish fashion brand would enable for Ireland to be taken more seriously for its fashion.

The research topic is of strong relevance at present and will be extremely beneficial to Irish fashion designers who are unfamiliar with the area of brand building and how to create a luxury fashion brand.

#### **1.4 Research question:**

To determine “*Methods which can be used by an Irish fashion designer to create an international luxury fashion brand*”.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand.
2. To assess the perceptions of consumers' of luxury fashion brands.
3. To establish a model, which can be used by Irish fashion designers to create an International luxury fashion brand.

#### **1.5 Outline plan and structure:**

This dissertation comprises of five chapters. This section explains the layout which will be used in this dissertation. The chapters include, introduction, methodology, literature review, analysis of data and finally conclusions and recommendations.

#### **Chapter 1: Rationale**

The aim of this chapter is to define the research problem and the objectives of this study. The rationale behind completing this study and the justification and need for research on the topic under research will be outlined. This chapter will also compare the Irish fashion industry with countries that have successful luxury fashion brands such as France, The United Kingdom, Italy and the United States. A time scale will be included in this chapter which includes the

proposed plan of action and progress for the dissertation. In this chapter the Irish fashion industry will be discussed and the absence of an Irish luxury fashion brand will be highlighted

## **Chapter 2: Literature review:**

This chapter will then build on this knowledge and it will include theories on the topic being researched. The foundation literature and core literature and the key issues surrounding them will help to provide an in depth synopsis. The purpose of this chapter is to obtain an outlook on luxury fashion brands and the luxury fashion brand industry through secondary data. Foundation literature will be studied which will include the concept of branding and a brief history of luxury fashion brands. The definition of a luxury brand will be presented and the difference between a luxury and premium brand will be discussed. Immediate core literature will then be presented which will discuss building a brand, the marketing and communication mix and luxury fashion consumers. Gaps and issues in the literature will be discussed and the need for empirical research will be presented.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology:**

Following on from this is the methodology chapter which will investigate the methodology used in the current study. The sampling technique which is being used in this study will also be discussed. The researcher plans to only use qualitative research methods for this study as it is an exploratory study. The research will be completed by conducting focus groups using a purposive sampling method. Participants must be consumers of luxury fashion brands however the location which they are from is not considered important for this research as long as they live in Ireland. In depth interviews were carried out with Irish fashion designers for this study. It is also important to note that ethical awareness will be taken into account when carrying out the research.



#### **Chapter 4: Analysis of the results:**

This chapter will present the findings and analysis from the research. All the research findings will be analysed and compiled in the findings and analyses chapter. An in-depth analysis of the research findings in relation to the objectives of the study will be provided in this chapter. The key issues and trends which will have developed from the research will be used to develop conclusions on each of the objectives. There will be visual diagrams used in this chapter in order to make it easier for the reader to understand. Further areas of research will be discussed. Finally the limitations of this research will be presented.

#### **Chapter 5: Write up of the findings**

This is the final chapter and conclusions and recommendations for the objectives lined out in this chapter will be presented. The final chapter aims to add a more meaningful and relevant conclusion to the research that has been conducted previously and further areas of research will be discussed. The aim of these conclusions and recommendations will be to identify methods which can be used by an Irish fashion designer to create a luxury fashion brand.

## 1.6 Timeline:

February 2013	Work on the rational chapter. Meet with supervisor.
March 2013	Begin work on the Literature review chapter.
April 2013	Gathering results and keeping up to date with secondary data research and updates for the rational chapter and literature review. Meetings with supervisor.
May 2013	Work on Rational, Literature review and Methodology chapter. Contact fashion designers and organise participants for the focus groups.
June 2013	20 <sup>th</sup> June is a key day. Get Literature Review, Methodology and Rationale chapters completed by this date. Also Questions for interviews must be prepared by this date.
July 2013	Focus groups and Interviews will be carried out during this month. Editing and write up
August 2013	This month will be used to complete the analysis of results and the findings and conclusions chapters as well as the abstract. The whole research project will be put together.
September 2012	The first draft will be handed up on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> of Sept and any corrections to be made will be done by the 16 <sup>th</sup> of September.

**Table 1.1 Timeline**

## **1.7 Conclusion:**

The aim of this chapter was to provide a background understanding to the research topic as well as the rationale behind choosing this topic for this research study. This chapter also acted as an introduction to the next chapter which is the literature review. This study is an exploratory study into the Irish fashion industry. There has been no prior research found that relates to specifically to creating a luxury fashion brand in Ireland and improving the status of the Irish fashion industry. Therefore there is a gap in literature on this particular topic. The research problems and objectives of the research were clearly defined as part of this chapter. This chapter also included a detailed timeline which is an outline for the timescale of the study and a detailed plan and structure was discussed.

# Chapter 2 :

# Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to obtain an outlook on luxury fashion brands and the luxury fashion brand industry through secondary data. Within this chapter a complete review of the foundation and immediate literature will be discussed and analysed in relation to the research topic. Following this the gaps/issues found in the literature will be highlighted and the need for empirical research will be highlighted and the need for further empirical research will be highlighted in conjunction to the gaps within the literature. Additionally a brief synopsis of the proposed methodology for addressing each of the research objectives will be discussed.

## 2.2 Review of foundation literature:

### 2.2.1. Brand:

According to the (American Marketing association 2012) “*a brand is a name, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies seller’s goods from competitors*”. Similarly (Kotler, 1999) describes a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitor. As a result of globalisation and increased competition in it is now more important than ever that a brand being viewed as more than just a list of features, a logo or a slogan. (Ross and Harridine, 2007) describe a brand using a more customer orientated approach stating that it is a recognisable product, service, person or place augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values, which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition” (Ambler 1992) characterizes a brand as the promise of the bundle of attributes that someone buys and provides satisfaction. When

Coco Chanel uttered her famous line, “Luxury must be comfortable, otherwise it is not luxury” (Barry, 1964), she had the consumer in mind, not the management of luxury brands.

Within the luxury goods industry it is vital to have excellent branding strategies in place and to be different from competitors (Okonkwo 2007). Luxury brands are possibly one of the purest examples of branding. The brand and its image are often key competitive advantages that create enormous value and wealth for organisations (Keller, 2008). The discussion of brands and branding must convey a subtle meaning and messages (Unity Marketing, 2004). In regard to fashion and branding the first designer who gained status was Charles Frederick Worth. In order to develop his brand Charles signed each of his creations as they were works of art. He also labelled his creations with his own name in 1871 which allowed him to establish himself as a brand. (Eurbanista, 2009).

### **2.2.2 History of luxury fashion brands:**

Back in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a strict social class system defined society and royalty and aristocracy reigned supreme. It was during this period that several luxury and prestige brands such as Louis Vuitton, Burberry and Chanel were launched. Designers such as Christian Dior and Guccio Gucci designed clothes, luggage and leather goods exclusively for the noble men and women of society. Their work was an art form that took several weeks and sometimes months to produce and this was all a part of the “luxury and prestige” experience. It was normal during this period, to dress in one brand from head-to-toe. (Okonkwo, 2010),

The luxury market has developed rapidly in the last fifty years, as our society has changed in a number of ways (Okonkwo, 2007). Globalisation has resulted in the internationalisation of luxury fashion brands and this has also led to increased competition. Many luxury fashion brands from all over the world now compete against each other. Brand presence is very important for luxury fashion brands and even though they are small it is important that they

are present everywhere in the world. Over the last thirty years, the luxury sectors have grown in a remarkable way in terms of economic factors. Luxury sales are flourishing where there is high economic growth due to the emergence of the new-rich people (Kapferer, 2006).

A number of other factors have also resulted in changes to the luxury sector. In recent years a mass class of wealthy people have emerged the world over. At the beginning of the century, luxury consumers were a small segment of the population who all looked the same. In the last three to four decades however, a vast amount of wealth has been amassed by individuals due to several economic, social, and technological breakthroughs (Okonkwo, 2010).

A sea of luxury brands have recently emerged and this has affected the high entry barrier that the industry guarded for centuries. It has also given luxury consumers more choice than ever before. Finally the rapid growth of digital, information and communications technology has given consumers more variety in luxury product offering, easier access to view the choices and lower switching costs especially on the Internet. This has empowered the consumers to become more individualistic, experimental and bold enough to mix luxury and high-street fashion in one outfit; something that their mothers and grandmothers would have considered a taboo in the past. Verdicts latest research estimates that the global market for luxury products will be worth about 325 billion Euros in 2012. (Tungate, 2008)

### **2.2.3. Definition of luxury and luxury fashion brands:**

It is firstly important to distinguish between luxury and fashion. A fashion brand has to be creative and come up with new ideas, new concepts, and new products every season in order to attract the interest of the consumer. As the brand develops classical models that sell year-round, become permanent best sellers with a signature style, and the brands status moves from fashion to luxury (Schwedt, Chevalier, Gutsatz 2012).

Luxury is a word many fashion brands would die to be characterized by. The concept of 'luxury' is commonly used with different and often contradicting meanings. Danet, Stucky,

Feldmeth, Hales and Ricca from Interbrand (2008) provide an ultimate, in-depth definition of a luxury brand. They state that a luxury brand must:

*i. Sit within a tier of a consumer-facing category that seemingly demonstrates price insensitivity.*

*ii. Show that being expensive is of neutral or even positive impact to their image.*

*iii. Demonstrate that perceived price has a low role among drivers of purchase” (Interbrand, 2008).*

According to (Okonkwo 2007) luxury means exclusivity, craftsmanship and uniqueness and justifies sky-high prices. Similarly (Tynan, McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2009) state that the term ‘luxury brands’ identifies high quality, expensive and nonessential products and services that are perceived by consumers as rare, exclusive, prestigious, and authentic and that offer high levels of symbolic and emotional value. A luxury brand can also be defined as images in the head of the customer which interrelate to a high price, good quality, aesthetics, uniqueness and other non-functional associations (Heine, 2011).

A key factor in creating luxuriousness is related to how well the brand performs in relation to fulfilling an emotional fantasy as oppose to physical realism according to (Danzigner, 2005) This expresses how important it is for a brand to deliver the luxury feeling to customers and also shows how it is the attributes which make up the brand which is the key differentiator between a luxury brand and a non luxury brand.

#### **2.2.4: Types of brands:**

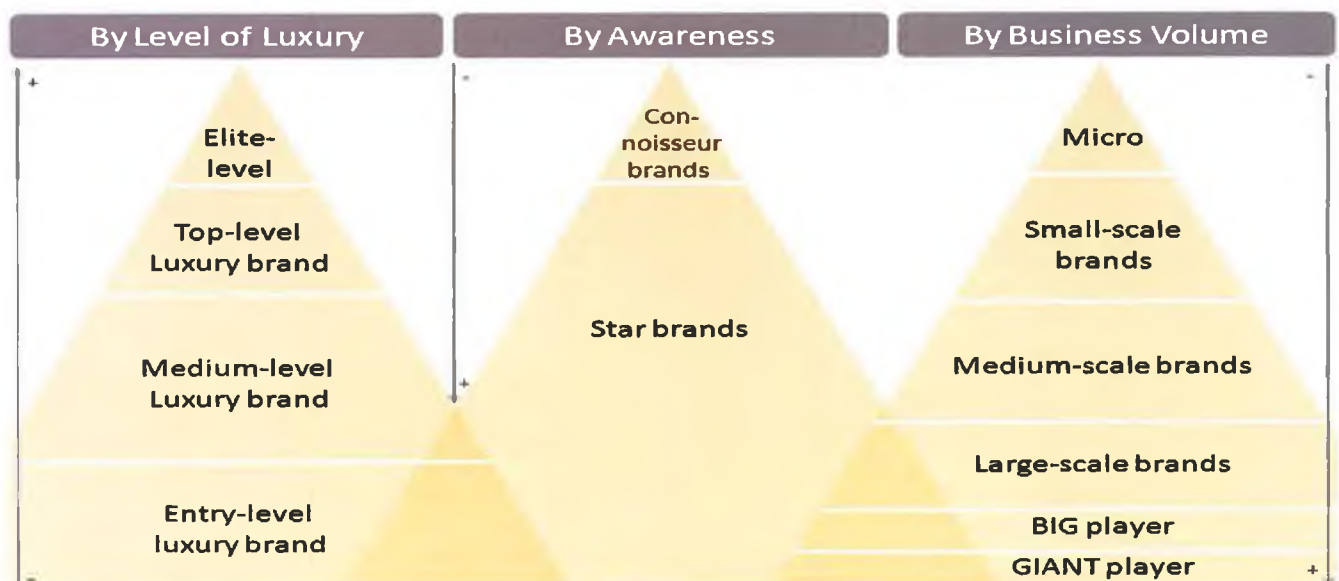
Brands can be divided into three separate categories according to (Okonkwo, 2007). These three categories include luxury and prestige brands, premium brands and finally mass fashion brands. Luxury and prestige brands are viewed as the highest form of craftsmanship and



product quality and these brands are not mass marketed. An example of this kind of brand includes Chanel or Hermes. Premium brands are brands that aspire to be a luxury fashion brand but the marketing mix is targeted more towards a mass market. High end brands or designer brands are other terms which can be used to describe these premium brands. that Premium brands can be sub categorized into high premium brands such as Calvin Klein, medium premium brands such as Lacoste and Low premium brands such as Zara and H&M. Mass fashion brands are the mass marked apparel that can be purchased from supermarket chains such as Walmart (Okonkwo, 2007).

There are four different levels of luxury brands as oppose to three according to (Heine, 2011). Luxury brands can be differentiated by brand awareness and the brands business volume as seen below in (figure 2.0). It is vital for this particular study to have a clear understanding of these different levels in order to realise that Ireland does not have a luxury fashion brand.

There are brands which are climbing up the luxury ladder. These include English fashion brand Burberry as a result of being repositioned some years ago (Phan et al. 2011) as well as high-potential brands, such as the German chocolatier Leysieffer, which has the potential to enter the luxury segment in the future, and once-upon-a-time luxury brands, such as Calvin Klein, who have ruined their luxury image (Kapferer and Bastien 2009). The different types of luxury brands by level of luxury, awareness and business volume can be seen below in figure 2.0.



**Figure 2.0** Types of Luxury Brands by Level of Luxury, Awareness and Business Volume (Heine, 2011)

Elite-level luxury brands are the niche brands which are found at the top of the top segment. These brands determine the benchmark of the best quality and highest exclusivity within their category. Puiforcat, for instance, is an elite-level luxury brand within the silverware segment (Marguier 2007). These brands target the ‘clientèle de connaisseurs’, who do not just possess the necessary financial resources but also a ‘culture intellectuelle’ (Lombard 1989). Richard Mille created the hyper-luxury segment of tourbillon watches beyond 500 000\$, (Kapferer & Bastien, 2008)

Top-level luxury brands are established beyond doubt as leading luxury brands. Examples include Cartier and Louis Vuitton. These brands are recognised internationally and are expensive products; they have those characteristics of luxury fashion brands. There is currently no Irish fashion brand which can be viewed as a top level luxury brand which is seen to have these 6 characteristics which are High level of price, aesthetics, quality, uncommonness, extraordinariness and having a symbolic meaning (Heine, 2012).

Medium-level luxury brands are widely recognized as members of the luxury segment, but are a step behind the forefront of luxury. Examples include Dolce & Gabbana, Escada and Moschino. (Heine, 2011). It is at this level that Irish designers such as Orla Keily and Natalie

B Coleman are currently at. An Orla Keily handbag can be purchased for €228 - €368 (Keily, 2013) whereas a Gucci bag costs €620 - €2000 (Guicci, 2013). This price gap points to that the Gucci bag has intangible properties such as reputation and image as well as tangible properties as quality and craftsmanship. These brands are well recognised however they are not seen as Top level luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton (Heine, 2011).

Entry-level luxury brands rank just above the premium segment on the lowest luxury level, they are not even generally recognized as members of the luxury segment. These brands would be stores like Penney's, Top Shop, River Island as the products that are sold in these stores are affordable and therefore they do not have the rarity characteristic and high price that it takes to have a luxury status (Heine, 2011)

As seen above in figure 2.0 luxury brands can also be differentiated by their awareness which makes the either a connoisseur brand or a star brand. Luxury brands enjoy a very high brand awareness which is both aided awareness and top of mind awareness. Luxury fashion brands are known throughout the world as a result of the internet as well as the advertisements which are seen by people all over the world in Magazines, on TV. These brands are known as star brands and they strive for awareness even beyond their target market and audience. They want people everywhere to recognise the brand. Star brands include brands such as Louis Vuitton, Burberry and Dior (Heine, 2011). *"If people would fail to recognize the brand and thereby the value of a Rolex wristwatch, part of its value would be lost"*, (Kapferer and Bastien 2009).

Star brands can be differentiated into three different categories depending on how well they are known. Little stars are brands which strive for high awareness, however they are not well known. Examples include Asprey (UK fashion brand)

Big stars are brands which have achieved a high level of awareness and are well known. These brands are not rated as highly as the likes of Chanel and are somewhat behind the global stars. Examples of big starts include Chloé, Fendi and Moschino.

Global stars are recognised internationally and these include brands such as Louis Vuitton and Rolex. Irish fashion designers should aim to create a global star brand.

(Heine, 2011) uses the example of the brand, Goyard, which is a French manufacturer of luggage, when describing a Connoisseur brand. This type of brand serves a niche market and does not use much advertising. Instead the brands are usually recommended through word of mouth.

### **2.2.5. Premium Fashion Brands:**

As discussed previously, there is a difference between premium and luxury brands. Luxury is not premium and premium is not luxury. They are two unrelated categories catering to different market segments according to (Roumeliotis 2012). The characteristics of a luxury fashion brand are exclusivity, scarcity, innovation, premium prices, high quality, product craftsmanship, precision, outstanding customer service, powerful advertising, core competence, iconic product designs, the personality of the founder, and these help in distinguishing premium brands from luxury fashion brands. It is clear from figure 2.0 above that the major characteristics can be considered as dimensions, which range from a minimum level which are non-luxury brands to a maximum level that corresponds to the highest form of luxury brands. Premium brands rate higher on these dimensions than medium-level brands, but they are still rated below luxury brands. While premium brands still remain down-to-earth and cannot lose sight of the value-for-money ratio, luxury brands are reaching exceedingly reasonable levels in the major luxury dimensions, and some of them even work on topping the current top-of-top luxury level. The differentiation between luxury and premium brands is mainly a matter of degree, which makes it difficult to draw a clear line, especially between top premium brands and entry-level luxury brands.

(Heine, 2012) states that premium brands are those brands like Polo Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger that aspire to be luxury and prestige brands but their marketing is geared more to, as a term, an affluent mass market or mass-luxury brands, (Roumeliotis 2012). Premium brands are more affordable and so they are less desirable as they are not unique. One other key differentiator between these two types of brands is that while premium brands focus especially on functional characteristics, luxury brands put much more effort into creating symbolic meaning (Heine, 2012). A luxury brand is more about prestige and appearance – it's about pedigree and social stratification. As objects of desire, they stand out as aspirational to all but a few souls. These crucial elements keep these products exclusive on purpose. Premium, on the other hand, stands for performance, value added, state-of-the-art, craftsmanship, and timeless design according to (Roumeliotis 2012).

#### **2.2.6 Characteristics of a luxury fashion brand:**

Luxury fashion brands are very distinguished from each other, but they all have the concept and the characteristics of prestige and status in common. Characteristics of luxury fashion brands are: exclusivity, scarcity, innovation, premium prices, high quality, product craftsmanship, precision, outstanding customer service, powerful advertising, core competence, iconic product designs, the personality of the founder, exclusive retail locations, the brands name and visual symbols associated to the brand and its history. (Okonkwo 2007, Hines and Bruce 2007). Luxury fashion brands are only available in selected stores in order to increase the rarity factor.

The first determinant of a luxury good is the quality of the item. Here, the quality level has to be perceived as considerably higher than the quality level of comparable goods. This determinant refers to all aspects of a product, including materials used are the best of their class, the manufacturing process meets the highest standards of the industry and the accompanying services are excellent (Nueno; Quelch, 1998).

Price is a characteristic of luxury fashion brands as these brands offer products which belong to the most expensive products of their category. As a result of these highly priced products, luxury fashion products must be of a very high quality. In the eye of the consumer a high price often stands for high quality – a perceived relationship that is often used to justify expensive purchases (Bagwell; Bernheim, 1996). The products offered from luxury fashion brands must be everlasting top-of-the-line products, which won't be disposed of even after long utilization or defect, but rather repaired and which often even gain in value over time, (Heine 2011).

Luxury fashion brands all have their own uniqueness and are quite different from each other which make them extraordinary. The first determinant of a luxury good is the quality of the item. Here, the quality level has to be perceived as considerably higher than the quality level of comparable goods. This determinant refers to all aspects of a product, including materials used are the best of their class, the manufacturing process meets the highest standards of the industry and the accompanying services are excellent (Nueno; Quelch, 1998).

A concept closely related to luxury brands is the 'rarity principle meaning that the prestige of the brand gets eroded, if too many people own the products. This Rarity Principle is suggested by (Dubois, Paternault and Mason 1995), and it states that luxury brands must maintain brand awareness at high levels and limit brand diffusion to certify exclusivity and prestige. Many Luxury fashion brands offer the customization and personalisation of products to their consumers and this increases the degree of rarity and (Okonkwo, 2007) states that this strategy enhances the feeling of uniqueness and exclusivity for customers, who want to stand out from other people or to be told as they are from higher class. This scarcity can also originate artificially when producers intentionally limit their production volumes. In addition to the product volumes available, (Kapferer, 2009) stresses the fact that the exclusivity of luxury products roots in the manufacturing process and that these products are mainly handcrafted or semi-handcrafted. Finally, exclusivity also refers to the chosen channel strategy (Dubois et al., 2001).

Another determinant of a luxury fashion brand is aesthetics. A luxury product is often attributed to be tasteful, elegant or fashionable. Thus, luxury goods fulfil an additional

function for the consumer. For example, wearing a Hermès handbag identifies the person who carries the item as elegant, since the brand is known for its French chic and elegant designs. Beauty and self-indulgent pleasure are strong factors that lead to the desire for Luxury fashion.( Kapferer and Bastien, 2009) state that to ensure longevity of these artefacts the aesthetics must be remain classic over time, and with consistency and stability (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). The brand must embody a world of beauty and elegance. These brands must also be symbolic and stand for "the best from the best for the best" according to (Heine 2011). The service experience which customers receive when purchasing a luxury brand is also an important factor. Polysensuality refers to the material of the product and, especially, the point of sale where the customer wants to experience the exclusivity with all human senses (e. g. Peck; Wiggins, 2006).

## 2.3 Review of immediate/core literature:

### 2.3.1 Building a strong luxury brand:

Luxury brands take years to build and possess a unique and distinctive brand personality (Kapferer, 2008). Building a strong brand is important. In the luxury world, a strong brand is more than important, it is vital, (Baicoianu, 2012). The luxury brand translates the essence of the product, the heritage, the history, into one's desire to own it. To launch a brand, you have to be careful how you build it and with whom. If you launch at the top, you can always extend the brand down – Mercedes, for example. But if you start at the bottom, you'll find it very difficult to claw your way up, (Winn, 2003)

(Urde 1999) presents Brand Orientation as another brand building model that focuses on brands as strategic resources. According to the brand orientation model, '*the starting point*

*for a process of brand building is to first create a clear understanding of the internal brand identity. The brand then becomes a strategic platform that provides the framework for the satisfaction of customers' wants and needs"* (Urde 1999). Brand equity and brand identity with a company's direction, strategy and identity are integrated in (Urdes 1999) brand building model. "In a brand-oriented organization, the objective is -within the framework of the brand- to create value and meaning. The brand is a strategic platform for interplay with the target group and thus is not limited to being an unconditional response to what at any moment is demanded by customers" (Urde 1999).

Additionally, in a later article, (Urde 2003) mentions that the brand building a two part process which includes internal and external factors. He defines the internal process as that used primarily to describe the relationship between the organization and the brand, with the internal objective being for the organization to live its brands. The external process is that concerned with relations between the brand and the customer, with the external objective of creating value and forming relationships with the customer.

(Keller 2001) uses the Customer based brand equity model when discussing how to build a strong brand, and he states that building a strong brand involves four steps. These four steps according to Keller include, firstly establishing the proper brand identity which involves establishing the breadth and depth of brand awareness. Secondly, the importance of creating the appropriate brand meaning through strong, favourable and unique brand associations. The third step is to elicit positive and accessible brand responses and finally t is important to create brand relationships with customers that are characterized by intense active loyalty. To achieve these four steps it is vital to establish six brand building blocks. These six building blocks include brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, brand judgements, brand feelings and brand resonance. Brand salience relates to the awareness of the brand. Brand performance relates to the satisfaction of customers' functional needs. Brand imagery relates to the satisfaction of customers' psychological needs. Brand judgments focus on customers' opinions based on performance and imagery. Brand feelings are the customers' emotional responses and reactions to the brand. Brand resonance is the relationship and level of identification of the customer with a brand.



(Keller 2000) states that the top brands in the world excel at ten different traits and these traits are what make these brands so successful. These ten traits are shown in figure 2.2 below.

1. The brand excels at delivering the benefits customers truly desire.
2. The brand stays relevant.
3. The pricing strategy is based on customers' perception of value.
4. The brand is properly positioned.
5. The brand is consistent.
6. The brands portfolio and hierarchy makes sense.
7. The brand makes use of and coordinates a full range of marketing activities to build brand equity.
8. The brand is given proper support, and that support is sustained over the long run.
9. The company monitors sources of brand equity.
10. The brands manager understands what it means to customers.

**Table 2.0 Top ten traits ( Keller 2001)**

Irish fashion designers in the Irish fashion industry can learn from these ten traits and apply them to their own brands in order to build a brand strategy.

According to (Kotler and Armstrong 2007) there are also 4 major decisions which can be seen below in figure 2.1. These must be taken into account in order to create a strong and powerful brand. These differ from those of (Keller 2001) and are as follows:



**Figure 2.1 brand building( Kotler and Armstong 2007)**

### 2.3.2 Brand Promise and Equity:

Brands create promises for customers, by promoting values through communication and the products that the customer has already experienced. If a brand has to be built and the product is not yet in the market, or is still unknown, the promise is the starting point for the establishing of the luxury company. The promise will be tested by the customers themselves, who will contribute to building brand equity if they think that the product has been good enough to maintain or, better, exceed the promise. (Aaker 1991) has argued that a brand personality contributes to brand equity. It has been said that this may lead to a more positive evaluation of the brand by the consumer. Also, by buying a fashion brand similar to the consumer's actual personality, he/she is communicating something about him/herself (Aaker, 1999; Keller, 1993). One key to successful brand building is to understand how to develop a brand identity, to know what the brand stands for and to effectively express that identity (Aaker, 1996).

There have been discussions over the years, and some confusion, about the concepts of brand equity and what brand equity in fact is. (Melin, 1999) describes in terms of the two research orientations brand management and consumer behaviour and the need to integrate these two to find the true brand equity. (Melin, 1999) states that one need to merge the consumer perspective of the brand (consumer behaviour) and with the owner perspective (brand management). (Okonkwo 2009) only describes the consumer focus and presents it like this; it is the sum of the distinctive qualities a brand possesses over time and results in continuous demand and commitment to the brand. The stipulated question is simply; who likes you? Now, from the owner perspective one could state the question; how do I get consumers to like me?

### 2.2.3 Customer Based Brand Equity

According to Keller (2001,) companies can develop strong brands only if the brand development process includes the following steps: (1) establishment of proper brand identity, (2) creation of the appropriate brand meaning, (3) extraction of the right brand responses, and (4) building of appropriate brand relationships with customers.

(Keller 2001) introduces six building blocks which are part of the Customer Based Brand Equity pyramid which can be seen below in Figure 2.4. Those building blocks are: salience, performance, imagery, judgment, feelings and resonance.

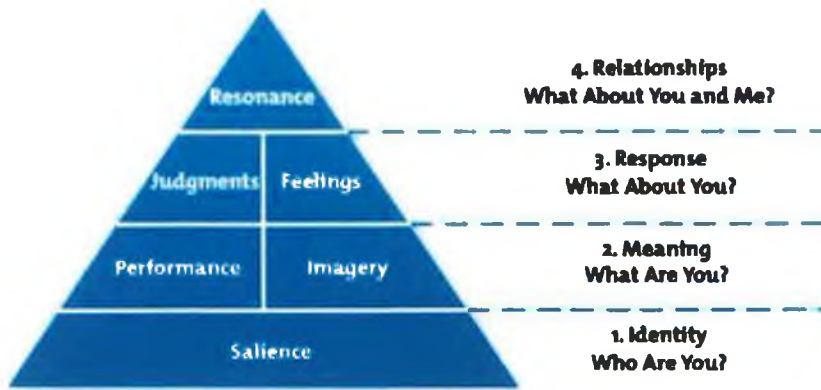
Establishment of brand identity is based on the brand salience which refers to brand awareness. Consumer is aware of the brand existence if he/she is able to recall and to recognize the brand. The main criteria for brand identity, according to Keller, are depth and breadth of brand awareness (Keller, 2001,).

The next step is the brand meaning which is divided into brand's performance and brand imagery. Brand performance as one of the building blocks refers to the basic purpose of the product itself, functionality, or the ability to satisfy customers' needs. This characteristic of a product is its intrinsic facet. The other building element, brand imagery, is developed from the extrinsic property of a product itself and it is connected to the possibility that the product will satisfy customer's psychological and social needs.

Brand meaning needs favourable, strong and unique associations (Keller, 2001). The third step, i.e. brand responses step is defined as the way customers respond to a brand. Responses are divided into brand feelings and brand judgments. Brand judgment is the combination of brand imagery and brand performance in the minds of the consumers. Brand feelings are customers' emotional reactions to the social currency brand evokes (Keller, 2001). Brand responses lead to the positive and accessible reactions of consumers.

Lastly, brand relationship is defined as the relationship between the customer and brand, and it is related to personal identification of the customer with the brand. Brand resonance as a building block of brand relationship is defined as the depth of the psychological bond between the customer and the brand which results in loyalty. Criteria are the intense and active loyalty (Keller, 2001).

A strong brand satisfies all the above-mentioned criteria. The most powerful block is brand resonance. Therefore, the strongest brands will be those to which customers become so attached that they, in effect, become evangelistic and actively seek means to interact with the brand and eagerly share their experiences with others (Keller, 1993).



**Figure 2.2 Customer based brand equity model Keller, (2001)**

### 2.3.4 Brand identity:

Brand identity is defined as consumers' perception of a brand and reflects a set of associations the consumers hold in their minds when thinking of a brand (Didier & Cindy, 2010). The brand identity answers questions such as, what features would the brand have as if it was a person? What is the brand culture, physical features, values and personality? For example, Chanel's identity is portrayed as being sophisticated and elegant (Gautier, 2011). Brand identity consists of the following six things. Personality which refers to the features a brand would have, if it was a person. Physique which includes the features, symbols & attributes of the products. Culture which is related to the set of values and principles which the brand have. Relationship which refers to the way in which a brand connects to its consumers. Reflection which is related to the image of the consumers of the brand. Self-Image which refers to the internal mirror of consumers as users of the brand (Kapferer 2008).

### **2.3.5 Brand experience:**

To build a strong brand and maximize its equity, marketers ensure that customers have the right type of experiences with their products and services and accompanying marketing strategies so that the desired thoughts, feelings, images, beliefs, perceptions, and opinions become linked to the brand (Keller, 2010). It is important to make it difficult for clients to purchase luxury products (Kapferer and Bastien, 2008). The luxury brand is something that has to be earned. Customers will have a greater desire if the products are inaccessible, whether actual or most often virtual. With luxury there is a built-in time factor which refers to the time spent searching, waiting and longing. This is so far removed from traditional marketing logic, which does everything to facilitate quick access to the product through mass distribution, with its self-service stores, self-checkout systems, the internet, call centres and introductory offers. Luxury has to know how to set up the necessary obstacles to the straining of desire, and keep them in place (Kapferer and Bastien, 2008)

### **2.3.6 Brand and Brand positioning:**

In relation to brand and brand positioning (Kapferer and Bastien 2008) disagree with (Kotler and Armstrong 2007) and they state that when managing a luxury brand one must forget about 'brand positioning and instead worship brand identity. Similarly (Baicoianu 2012) states the concept of brand positioning is not applicable to the luxury market. Luxury shoppers choose the brand that best reflects who they are, and how they want to be perceived by society. Each luxury brand brings a unique character, an identity that cannot be replicated or compared. In consumer marketing, at the heart of every brand strategy you will find the concept of positioning, of the 'Unique Selling Proposition' and 'Unique and Convincing Competitive Advantage'. Every classic brand has to specify its positioning vis-à-vis a set of competitors it has chosen. Positioning is the difference with these other brands that creates the preference (Kapferer, 2008). According to (Okonkwo 2009), luxury brands, and aspiring

premium brands, are striving to occupy a position of high-end, expensive, prestigious and well-crafted in the consumers mind. This is common for all luxury brands and is easily reached and upheld. This concept is called the broad level of positioning. The brands individual differences for example designs; origin or other unique factors are expressed through the narrow level of positioning (Okonkwo, 2009). The aim of all this is to have the consumer place the brand in the right place in their mind and therefore facilitate decision making, for example when looking to buy.

### **2.3.7 Brand name:**

(Labeaga et al, 2007) argues that the brand name is what influences consumers' overall quality perceptions of the product. The brand name is one of the most powerful sources of identity. There is power in the name of every brand due to the fact that it is the way the consumer value. (Okonkwo 2009) also feels that brand name selection is important and when analysing luxury brands he begins by asking the question, what is your name? The brands concept is the sum of collected expression through its name, origin, story, history, visual image, logo, colours, shapes, language and offerings. Luxury fashion brands are very distinguished from each other, but they all have the notion and the characteristics of prestige and status in common. Gucci's double G symbol is not only a symbol, it is also an homage to the founder Guccio Gucci, hence the initials GG, and its illustrious history. The Burberry check is one of the most noted visual images of the recent times and the Louis Vuitton take on the colour combination brown and khaki has become one with the brand. (Okonkwo, 2007) argues that the brand name is not only the most visible but also a very powerful manifestation of the brand and it is also said to tell us a lot about the origin of the brand.

### **2.3.8. Brand development:**

As a brand starts locally and develops it needs to do things correctly from the outset. According to (Chevalier & Mazzalovo 2010) a strong creator and a strong business person are required in order to help the brand develop. A unique style must be developed by the creator however it is suggested that the creator should have someone close by who can be relied upon to take care of the business development and channels that develop into areas that translate into sales without constraining the designer's creativity. It is important to have a presence in cities around the world in order to develop a brand (Chevalier & Mazzalovo 2010). To sell accessories and handbags requires a strong name and a strong ready to wear line. To be able to develop and promote a strong ready to wear line requires the volume obtained through sales of handbags and accessories (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2010). It is important that most products are priced very highly so they are not accessible for all however to have cheaper products available which are priced higher than similar products in the same category (Kapferer and Bastien, 2008). They give the example of a made-to-measure trunk at around \$ 150 000 from Louis Vuitton to also have more affordable products like a Louis Vuitton key ring at \$ 150. It is all about the items living up to the brand and this may mean that they are significantly more expensive than equivalent products from other sources. (Aaker 1996) suggested that for the brand that is currently operating very well, extension will be the best option because of its existing brand's associations, perceived quality, and prominent awareness. The rationales behind are that it would be an exploitation of the firm's current assets applying to new market and new product line, and also reduction of cost and risk of entering new business.

### **2.3.9 Avoiding pitfalls:**

There are four ways in which fashion brands that are tied to designers can avoid pitfalls (Henderson, 2004). It is important to firstly iconize the personality of the brand. The easy chic of Chanel no longer springs directly from the hand of coco but from the essence of her spirit. Secondly, (Henderson, 2004) suggests that fashion brands must plan for succession. It is vital to build the brand so that it outlasts the person. Diversity is very important, and while



a fashion brand is building on the strength of a personality, additional attributes must be included that will carry the brand beyond the key designer. Lastly (Henderson 2004) explains how important it is for the success of the fashion brand that the person behind the brand does not get accused of anything illegal or scandalous.

### 2.3.10. What makes a brand endure? :

Hermes is the world's second largest brand and there are 4 steps which are inspired by Hermes and which can serve as a foundation for any brand. Firstly brands must build a product with a promise. Customers are paying very high prices and they look for high quality products. Quality is so important when it comes to Luxury products. Companies may not have the ability to produce hand crafted products at scale however they must have high quality products. Advertising is important however but if the first priority is not the belief, passion, and unwavering commitment to the quality of the product and the promise it delivers, creating an enduring brand will be all the more challenging, (Perlis 2012).

Secondly Luxury brands must be able to innovate and integrate while staying true to the brands promises in order to create an enduring brand. Perlis states that Hermes has always remained relevant while being committed to the tradition of “making things the old fashion way. Hermes started out as a business which made harnesses for carriages and after automobiles were invented the brand then began creating handcrafted leather goods. This is what they are famous for today and they still make this history relevant to what they do today.

The third step which can be learnt from Hermes is to practice consistency. When asked about the secret of the Hermes' success, CEO and U.S. President Robert Chavez said, *'We are consistent. We don't do drastic styles or make sudden changes.* They do not reduce the price of the products or hold sales. As things change and products evolve, it is vital that companies commit to their brand promise. Hermes has protected its brand promise through the years by

making very wise and careful decisions. Hermes is one of the oldest primarily family-owned businesses in France and they refuse to licence the brand. The original Hermes logo, palette, and fonts remain on the classic Duc Carriage with Horse logo and the Hermes orange packaging are iconic to the brand

The final step which brands can take to create an enduring brand is to establish an experiential currency. Experiential currency is describes as the value which is the customer receives when a brand establishes an experience as a medium of exchange. Experiential currency is not fixed, but rather exists dynamically between the customer, the product, and the experience the union provides. (Perlis, 2012). Every time the brand promise is actualized it increases. Brands are flourishing at breakneck speed, those that endure are those that will be successful as well as capitalize and be a part of people's lives (Perlis, 2012)

### **2.3.11 Consumption of luxury:**

Luxury purchases have two aspects which include indulging in one's pleasure which is luxury for self and demonstration of success which is luxury for others (Kapferer and Bastien, 2008). (Vigneron and Johnson 2004) differentiate between non-personal and personal-oriented perceptions. Non-personal-oriented perceptions refer to perceived conspicuousness, uniqueness and quality. Personal orientated perceptions refer to status seeking and appearance motives when purchasing luxury goods. Personal orientated purchasing is 'motivated by a desire to impress others. The ability to pay particularly high prices is seen as consumption that is primarily concerned with the flamboyant display of wealth (Dubois and Duquesne 1993). The latter will cease to be the major drivers in Europe and in the United States. The brands which can prove the exclusive qualities of their products, their undeniable heritage and their unique experience, will bounce back first. In emerging countries however, the driver will still be to demonstrate that one is not poor anymore: luxury for others will remain dominant (Kapferer and Bastien, 2008). (Keller 2009)

further argues that one of the psychological attributes of luxurious brands is their emotional valence, the feelings they evoke. He identifies emotions such excitement, warmth and fun. As (Tomkins 1984) pointed out, mans' interaction with the world is based on an emotional substrate, that is all of our perceptions and behaviours have an emotional component.

Humans are overwhelmingly emotion-based decision makers, and neurobiologists have found emotional reactions to brand-related stimuli are processed 80-percent faster than cognitive reactions (Beyer 2011). What does that mean to the fashion industry, especially the luxury segment? (Beyer2011) If a brand does not engage its customers on a deeply personal and emotional level the customer may lose loyalty and love for the brand (Beyer 2011). In today's fashion world, loyalty is the glue that allows for brands to be successful .forces brands

(Mihailovich 2009) suggests that 12 steps to build luxury brand as if building a love story, to obtain long lasting relationships between customers and the brand.

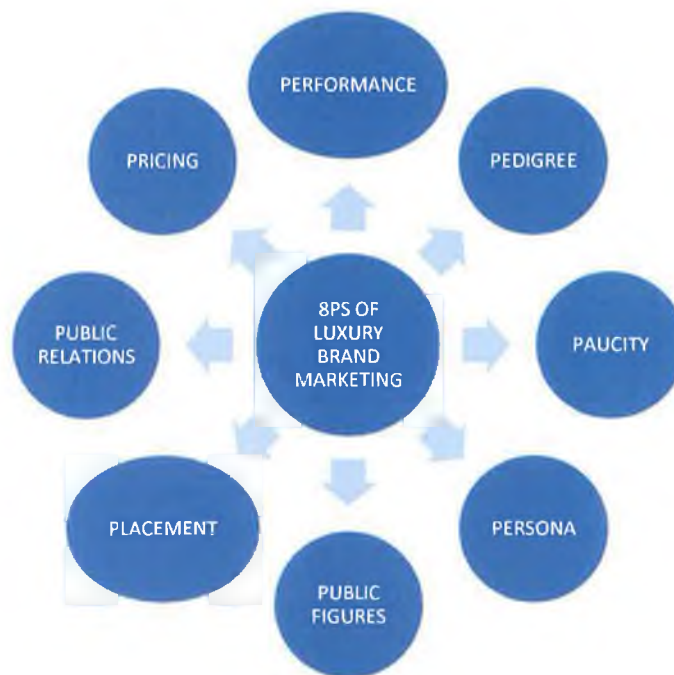
Step 1: You're gorgeous	The rules of immediate attraction
Step 2: Getting interested	Showing and declaring receptiveness
Step 3: Getting to know you	Where you are from / Where you live
Step 4: Who's in your past?	Your history / How you got where you are today
Step 5: Meet the family and friends	Liking those closest to you
Step 6: Are we right for each other?	Let the head have its say
Step 7: Can I trust you?	I need to rely on you
Step 8: I want you	Consuming passions
Step 9: Soulmates	We share many values
Step 10: I love your touch	A personal touch throughout
Step 11: I love you	I'm committed happily and totally engaged
Step 12: Happily ever after	Constant desire / Lasting memories

**Table 2.1; 12 steps to building a luxury brand (Mahailovich 2009)**

These steps portrait the journey of the brand through time from the very beginning of introduction to the point of becoming favourite brand in consumers' mind, in comparison to having a relationship with someone right from getting to know, gaining trust, and loving wholeheartedly (Isarankura, 2011)

### 2.3.12 The 8 p's of Luxury Brand Marketing:

Rohit Aora, Strategic Planning Director, Bates Pan Gulf (BPG Group), had a very interesting paper recently which identifies the 8p's of luxury marketing which are said to make luxury brands desirable. These 8p's are present below in figure 3.4.



**FIGURE 2.4 The 8 PS of luxury fashion (Aora,2012)**

Performance refers to the delivery of superior experience of a luxury brand at two levels, first, at a product level and second, at an experiential level. Pedigree refers to the extraordinary history that turn in to an inseparable part of the brand's mystique. Paucity refers to the dilution of luxury character which can occur if there is over- revelation and distribution of a luxury brand. The persona of a luxury brand is largely a result of firstly, its distinctive projection plus consistency of its applications across consumer touch-points and

secondly, the brand communication through its advertising. The use of celebrities in advertising campaigns has in recent years been employed as one of the marketing mixes in luxury brand advertising and they still continue to gain attention, credibility and impact. A recent example of this was Brad Pitt who was the face of Chanel for their Christmas 2012 advertising campaign.

Aora describes PR as a sophisticated branding machine for maintaining on going relevance and dialogue with the luxury consumer, especially so in fashion, technology and seasonal trends driven categories. PR can be used at a tactical level by the brand to generate buzz & convey the brand news, point of views of inspirers and influencers and also as a crucial support for brand activation such as the fashion weeks. Placement refers to the retail branded environment which in luxury branding is all about heightening the consumer's brand experience and amplifying the brand aura. Pricing plays a quite a big role in the way consumers perceive luxury brands according to (Aora 2012) .The price range in which the brand operates in allows customers to generate a mental luxury stature or image. (Aora 2012) states that the 8 P's may not be a 'universal methodology', yet they do present a strong analytical "toolbox" to audit and leverage the brand potential. That said, a pragmatic approach must be underlined, as the situation and challenges would differ from brand-to-brand and market-to-market.

(Winsper, 2007), however presents a more customer focused 6ps of Luxury Marketing which are, people, product, passion, pleasure, purpose and price. Both (Winsper 2007) and (Aora 2012) agree that price is a very important factor in Luxury marketing however they have different views when it comes to the other factors which allow luxury marketers to better understand their customers. (Winsper 2007) states that people will increasingly rely on strong personal relationships that differentiate their trusted networks associated with mass offerings from larger, non-exclusive networks associated with mass offerings. The ways to help forge bonds with affluent consumers include participation in the charitable, social and cultural events that they support.

Luxury products must embrace six key characteristics if they are to be considered to be luxuries by the consumer (Winsper 2007). These six qualities are heritage, integrity, price, scarcity, and superfluousness or non unity. Passion refers to how passionate customers are towards a brand and product and customers share this passion in a variety of ways. Blogs are becoming very popular and luxury marketers need to be aware of what is happening online. Good and bad news can travel fast. Pleasure derived from luxury consumption comes from the experience. A luxury experience implies an emphasis on senses and emotion and luxury marketers need to ensure that their customers have the opportunity for sensory connection with their products and so emotional appeals must be considered when creating marketing campaigns (Winsper.2007). Although luxury may be excessive it is important that it serves a purpose. Luxury customers will place weights on the importance of pleasure vs purpose.

Price is an important factor in relation to luxury marketing (Aora 2012, Winsper, 2007). Money does matter to the wealthy that spend rationally, even if they spend a quite a large sum (Winsper 2007). Pricing plays a quite a big role in the way consumers perceive luxury brands according to (Aora 2012) .The price range in which the brand operates in allows customers to generate a mental luxury stature or image. It is vital that luxury brands price themselves right. Setting the price lower than the consumer expectation and willingness to pay can potentially harm the brand value, whereas setting the price to high can result in potentially not giving the customer enough justification to go ahead and purchase the product. (Kapferer & Bastien, 2008) suggest that Luxury fashion brands should raise the prices of their products continuously in order to increase demand A reasonable price is a price that appeals to reason, and therefore to comparison. They state that luxury is ‘superlative’, not comparative’ and so to be reasonable is also to reduce the object to its tangible dimension and to deny the intangible. By increasing prices, bad customers are lost, however now the brand suddenly becomes dazzlingly attractive to people who would previously not have given you a second glance.

In recent years there has been a challenging economic environment and more demanding customers which has resulted in the importance of a good pricing strategy. Luxury-brands must, justify their price through the interplay of Aora’s 8P’s and Winspers 6PS which have been mentioned above and can be seen in figure 2.5.This will enable these luxury brands to

keep up and maintain a higher perceived value. Sales promotions are different when it comes to luxury brands. It is very rare that a luxury brand will resort to sales and discounts, most add more value to the purchase by giving a free gift with a purchase, gift-certificates or rebates for the next purchase, multiple item discounts, online or email exclusives, more loyalty points, no shipping and handling charges by online retailers. Luxury brands also use the channel of luxury retailers like Harvey Nichols, Saks 5th Avenue who offer annual sales by offering them slightly lower prices

Many luxury brands are now creating an extension into a secondary line with relatively lower price points. There are many examples of this which includes Giorgio Armani's - Armani Exchange, Roberto Cavalli's - Just Cavalli, Prada's - Miu Miu, Alexander McQueen's - McQ lines.

### **2.3.13. Marketing a luxury fashion brand:**

The main purpose of communication in luxury is not to generate immediate sales, as it is in the classic market, but instead to, first of all, create the notion of a dream surrounding the luxury brand and, secondly, to continuously recharge it to uphold the brand's value as luxury (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009) and they argue however that "without awareness there is no dream". When luxury brands are using marketing, they are selling more than the products. The luxury brands attract customers as they get them to believe that it is something special with their items, such as a long way back story and the founder or different creators (Daye, & VanAuken, 2009).

Regarding luxury from a marketing perspective, an important part of luxury consumption is to communicate messages and affinities to the customers, as the amount of consumables increased (Blennow ,2007). Luxury brands are mixing the different marketing tools in order to reach all of their customers. (Frings ,2008). Word of mouth is a great way for Brands to gain recognition The customers, who have a great store experience in terms of finding the

right product and excellent customer service, are eager to spread the interpretations to friends and family' (Ibid, 2012) 'Brands such as Abercrombie and Fitch are known for using scent and music to sell their brand.

Social media is becoming an important part of advertising luxury fashion brands 'The social media have become a valid form of advertising for the luxury brands as the sales in stores, e-commerce and regular traffic to the brands own homepages have increased' (Urs, 2009). In 2011, 70 % of the social media campaigns within the luxury industry failed and the reason was due to the small amount of engagement by the companies. When the luxury brands engage fans and followers, they will gain credibility and influence (Ransom. 2011). Agreeing with this, (Mondon, 2009), states that the social media are not only a marketing strategy in the world of fashion; it also focuses on the fashion behaviour of the users in order to define the upcoming trends. The label or the brand will get higher awareness the more open, proactive and social it is in the different tools of social media. The Social media has totally changed the way fashion conscious people pick up the latest trends within the fashion industry. The general reference when speaking about social media is online platforms and websites, which makes a connection between the industry of fashion and their customers possible. Where positioning the brand online is highly important as relating to specific designers and fashion labels will increase how the network will be used. The social media are not only a marketing strategy in the world of fashion; it also focuses on the fashion behaviour of the users in order to define the upcoming trends. The label or the brand will get higher awareness the more open, proactive and social it is in the different tools of social media, (Mondon, 2009)

Aora (2012) states that PR has a major role to play in image proliferation of the luxury brand which influences the public's opinion. It also helps to convey other supporting messages and attributes of the brand which cannot be captured in advertising but are important factors in creating the brands personality, mystique and emotional values. Aora describes PR as a sophisticated branding machine for maintaining on going relevance and dialogue with the luxury consumer, especially so in fashion, technology and seasonal trends driven categories. PR can be used at a tactical level by the brand to generate buzz & convey the brand news,



point of views of inspirers and influencers and also as a crucial support for brand activation such as the fashion weeks.

Celebrities are often spotted in luxury branded pieces during awards ceremonies and big events. The reaction of this will probably be that the consumers have that celebrity as a favourite, will buy the items as well. (Wolbers, M, 2009). Celebrity endorsement is the use of a well know person to promote a company or a product brand (Pinkton and Broderick, 2004). According to (Okonkwo, 2006) celebrity endorsements transfer the personality and status of the celebrity in terms of wealth, distinctiveness and success directly to the brand. Brad Pitt is face of the new Chanel advert. 'The big thing is to have the right people seen to be using and loving your brand', (Winn, 2003). Luxury brands use less in your face advertising tools and they instead may dress a celebrity for a red carpet appearance, use product placements within movies and television programmes. Aura suggests that this strategy attempts to remove the appearance of "selling" while still promoting the product by making it seem as a part of the celebrity's lives, thereby positively affecting consumer's attitudes, brand value & purchase intention.

One cannot talk about fashion marketing and luxury and premium marketing in particular without mentioning the international, and national, fashion magazines such as Vogue, Marie Claire, Elle to name a few as well as Irish fashion magazines such as Tatler and U. Their editors and staff are a great force in deciding what the consumers like and hence buying any given season. Fashion magazines, provide that complementing environment and aesthetics for luxury brand to advertise in print media

#### **2.4. Identification of key issues and gaps:**

One of the main issues and gaps with regard to the literature would be the lack of research available on this topic. With reference to literature available based on the Irish fashion industry and on branding specific to Irish companies and the Irish market. The majority of the

literature is based on the fashion capitals such as the UK, France, Italy and the USA as well as China where the luxury goods market is rapidly growing. Much of the information available on the Irish fashion industry was sourced from newspapers as a result of the lack of available literature for this study.

In addition to this there are very little reports based on Irish consumers and statistics about the Irish fashion industry. Mintel reports are the only related reports and these are quite hard to access. There was a generous amount of information available luxury fashion industries in the UK and France. It was quite difficult to get statistics based on the Irish fashion industry. Mintel reports were the only reports available which had information relevant to this particular study.

The third issue/gap in research is based around the hypothesis as there is lack of awareness and understanding of how to build a luxury fashion brand. Many of the models which have been developed by (Keller 2001, Kotler & Armstrong 2007, & Aaker 2001) are based on building a brand in general and do not focus on luxury fashion brands.

This particular study was focused on the consumers of luxury fashion products in Ireland and on Irish fashion designers. This study could be researched from a different angle using fashion figures from the well-known fashion capitals such as London, Paris and Milan. It would be interesting to see what the perception would be outside of Ireland to compare both.

## **2.5. Identification of the need for Empirical Research:**

Improving the fashion industry in Ireland would allow for a huge increase in revenue and boost the Irish economy. According to Hines (2007) “Luxury brands have been a significant part of France’s economy, valued at €11.7 billion. 82% of luxury brands are exported to

Europe, USA and France”. It may just take one Irish fashion designer to take the plunge to develop a luxury fashion brand and this could entice others to do the same. Obviously it takes time to build a luxury fashion brand however nothing is impossible. Stella Mc Cartney is seen as a luxury fashion designer and she only launched her brand in 1995. A signature style of sharp tailoring, natural confidence and sexy femininity was immediately apparent in her first collection and after only two collections, in 1997, she was appointed the Creative Director of Chloe in Paris and enjoyed great success during her tenure. Stella McCartney launched her own fashion house under her name in a partnership with Kering as a 50/50 joint venture and showed her first collection in Paris in October 2001 (McCartney, 2013).

## **2.6 How the specific research will be addressed:**

There has been limited research carried out on this particular topic and so it is necessary to carry out exploratory research in order to get a better understanding of the topic being discussed. (Domegan & Fleming 2003) states that it is useful to use exploratory research when the research question is vague or when there remains uncertainty about the dimensions or characteristics of the research problem.

This study is intended to provide insight and understanding into the topic and so qualitative research was chosen in order to gather the relevant information from the consumers and designers in question. Qualitative research will be used in the form of focus groups and interviews to address the research problem and objectives outlined in the introduction chapter of the study. Qualitative research methods will allow for a deeper understanding of the Irish fashion industry and it will help to create a model which Irish fashion designers can use to create an international luxury fashion brand. The perception of the Irish female consumers of luxury fashion brands will be studied. This sample is purposive as participants had to be female and aged between 28 and 65 years old. Telephone interviews were also held with Irish fashion designers. This sample chosen was also purposive as the interviewees had to be Irish

fashion designers. It would not have been sufficient to use quantitative research to retain this kind of information, hence the amount of data is not a significant variable, but the quality of the data collected is of great importance (Bryman, 2004).

Focus groups will be carried out in order to achieve objective one which is to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand from the Irish consumer's perspective. Objective two which aims to access the perceptions of consumers of luxury fashion brands will also be solved using focus groups. This will allow for a deeper understanding of the Irish fashion industry and luxury fashion brands. The researcher will carry out a total of six focus groups which will include between 6 – 8 participants. The questions used in the focus groups will be structured and the same questions will be asked in each focus group. The sample will be women aged between 28 and 65 who are consumers of luxury fashion brands. Results of both the interviews and focus groups will be discussed further in chapter 4 and there will be visual aids included to make the results easier to understand. The transcripts for both the interviews and the focus groups can be viewed in appendix C and G.

Objective three will be solved using the telephone interviews with Irish fashion designers. A total of five telephone interviews were conducted. The participants will be referred to as Designer A, B, C, D and E in the analysis and finding chapter. The interviews will aim to create a better understanding of the Irish fashion industry. The interviews will be structured as the researcher hopes that the interviewees will be given the exact same context of questions. The questions asked will be specific and it is hoped that this will allow for a wide range of answers to be gathered.

## **2.7 Conclusion:**

This chapter provided a review of the foundation literature namely brands, the history of luxury fashion brands, the types of brands such as premium brands, entry level brands and

the characteristics of luxury fashion brands. The immediate literature which is associated with the research and also reviewed in this chapter; this research included the different ways to build a strong brand, discussions about brand equity, brand name, brand experience, the 8ps of luxury fashion. Without awareness there is no dream. There are many tools which can be used to market a luxury brand and this is also discussed. Following this, gaps in the research was discussed and the need for further research was addressed. It was found that there was a significant lack of research carried out on the Irish fashion industry. Finally a brief outline of how the research will be conducted was provided stating that qualitative research will be used to explore the three objectives of the study. The following chapter which is the methodology chapter will look at the proposed methodology for the research in more detail.

# **Chapter 3: Methodology.**

### **3.1 Introduction:**

The aim of this chapter is to discuss in detail the methodology design of this research study and to justify the use of qualitative research methods. Interviews and focus groups will be used and both methods will be discussed and justified as to why they were appropriate for this particular study. Following this it will be stated how each research method will help to solve each research objective and a brief summary of how the primary data will be analysed will also be presented. Finally any ethical issues and limitations of the methodology will be discussed.

### **3.2 Justification of the Research:**

When initiating a research process one must first decide what research approach to choose in order to determine what methods to apply to answer the research question and purpose. There are two distinctive research approaches a researcher can choose between, qualitative and quantitative (Bryman, 2008).

It is necessary to carry out exploratory research as at present very little research has been carried out on this particular topic. It is important to get a deeper understanding of the topic being discussed. The research study is exploratory in nature and aims to explore the research problem and its objectives in order to provide useful insights and understandings. Qualitative research methods were chosen in order to gather the relevant information from the consumers and designers in question. (Domegan & Fleming 2003) states that it is useful to use exploratory research when the research question is vague or when there remains uncertainty about the dimensions or characteristics of the research problem.

Qualitative research methods in the form of in depth telephone interviews and focus groups was chosen in order to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand, to assess the perceptions of the consumers of luxury fashion brands and finally to establish a model for an International luxury fashion brand which can be used by Irish fashion designers. Qualitative

research methods enables the researcher to examine the attitudes, feelings and motivations of the product users so it was felt that qualitative research was more suited to this particular research. Qualitative research is especially strong in describing and exploring phenomena and generating tentative explanations. Furthermore, qualitative research is very helpful in adding new dimensions of understanding (Patton, 2002). Secondary data such as journals, books and newspaper will be used to discover the information that already exists on this topic.

In-depth telephone interviews were carried out. The interviews were conducting with five Irish fashion designers in order to learn of their experiences of building a fashion brand in Ireland and to gather their view on the Irish fashion industry. These Irish fashion designers have extremely busy schedules and so it was felt that telephone interviews were the most suitable technique to use. Another reason for which telephone interviews were chosen was that many of the designers have moved to London for better opportunities or were in foreign countries due to production and manufacturing. Telephone interviews enabled for a wider geographical region to be covered. Telephone interviews allows questioning to be guided as you want it and you can clarify points that need to be made clearer much more easily than in something like a mailed questionnaire (Frey & Oishi 1995). According to (Novick, 2008) the telephone interview is an accepted and well-studied approach for qualitative data collection.

A total of six focus groups were held which involved participants who were Irish consumers of luxury fashion brands. Focus groups allow for an in-depth understanding of the motivations and feelings of consumers (McDaniel & Gates 2007). For this particular research the motivations and feelings of consumers of luxury fashion brands had to be assessed and so it was felt that focus groups were the most suitable technique to use in order to achieve this objective.

Purposive sampling was used for both the focus groups and the in-depth telephone interviews as it was vital that the fashion designers were Irish and had created a brand in Ireland. For the focus groups the participants had to be consumers of luxury fashion brands in order to understand and be able to discuss the questions being asked.



### 3.3 Qualitative Research:

According to (Denzin and Lincoln 1994), qualitative research focuses on interpretation of phenomena in their natural settings to make sense in terms of the meanings people bring to these settings. Qualitative research involves collecting information about personal experiences, introspection, life story, interviews, observations, historical, interactions and visual text which are significant moments and meaningful in peoples' lives.

(Patton 2002) defined qualitative research as attempting to understand the unique interactions in a particular situation. The purpose of understanding is not necessarily to predict what might occur, but rather to understand in depth the characteristics of the situation and the meaning brought by participants and what is happening to them at the moment. The aim of qualitative research is to truthfully present findings to others who are interested in what you are doing. Qualitative research is suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting of activity from the perspective of the research participants. This approach implies an emphasis on exploration, discovery and description.

Qualitative	Quantitative
Words	Numbers
Point of view of participants	Point of view of researcher
Researcher close	Researcher distinct
Theory emergent	Theory testing
Process	Static
Unstructured	Structured
Content understanding	Generalising
Rich in depth	Hard reliable data
Micro	Macro
Meaning	Behaviour
Natural setting	Artificial setting

**Table 3.0 Differences between qualitative and quantitative research**

As seen above in table 3.0 qualitative research methods are used to gain a better understanding and meaning of a particular research problem and as the aim of this study is to better understand the Irish fashion industry and how to build a luxury fashion brand qualitative research was best suited to gain the information necessary to achieve the objectives. Table 3.0 shows that qualitative research allows for rich in depth information to be gathered and for this study rich in depth information is needed.. The focus of this research study is quality and the aim is to find out the how's and why's and so again it can be seen from table 3.0 that qualitative research methods are best suited for this particular study.

### 3.3.1. In depth interviews:

One of the qualitative methods of research used was the in-depth interview. Six interviews were conducted with Irish fashion designers throughout Ireland to uncover trends, attitudes and motivations in the Irish fashion industry. The experiences of building a fashion brand in Ireland and their views on the Irish fashion industry were questioned. The results from each interview were then compared and contrasted to determine the methods that can be used by an Irish fashion designer to create a luxury fashion brand.

Frey and Oishi (1995) define an interview as "a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions and another answers them" This allows the researcher to gain information on a particular topic or a particular area to be researched. (Carson et el 2002) states that in depth interviews are useful as they allow the researcher to 'get inside the head' of the interviewee and uncover their true feelings and motivations. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. According to (McNamara, 1999) interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses. There are different ways to perform an interview, such as through personal contact, phone or online (Hulten, 2008). The interviews will be held via telephone It was felt that telephone interviews would be less time consuming for the interview participants and it would enable for a wider geographical region to be covered as many Irish fashion designers have moved to the UK. . Telephone interviews involve phoning a sample of respondents and

asking them a series of questions. Telephone interviews are becoming increasingly popular and are probably one of the most efficient methods for collecting data quickly.

### 3.3.2: Focus groups:

The second qualitative method used was focus groups. A total of six focus groups were conducted with Irish consumers of luxury fashion brands in order to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand and to assess the perceptions of consumers' of luxury fashion brands.

The reason that focus groups were the chosen research method is because focus group methodology is useful in exploring and examining what people think, how they think, and why they think the way they do about the issues of importance to them without pressuring them into making decisions or reaching a consensus. According to (Kitzinger 1995), a well-known focus group researcher, the focus group method is an 'ideal' approach for examining the stories, experiences, points of view, beliefs, needs and concerns of individuals. Focus group interviewing is particularly suited for obtaining several perspectives about the same topic. The benefits of focus group research include gaining insights into people's shared understandings of everyday life and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation.

Focus groups can be described as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic or topics. At the simplest level, a focus group is an informal discussion among a group of selected individuals about a particular topic (Wilkinson 2004). Focus group research is among the most widely used research tools in the social sciences. In the past it was associated with market research where it was considered the predominant form of qualitative research (Advertising research foundation, 1985). The reasons for which focus groups were chose are Focus groups are now used extensively across a wide range of disciplines. The use of a focus group can be research methodology method can be justified

into four main points. These include collection of information, depth of understanding, flexibility and group understanding. It is felt that a focus group is also a suitable research method to use as it suits the timescale and budget. The focus group will include 6 -8 individuals and the participants will be individuals who fit the sample which is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

### **3.4 Research Procedures:**

For this study purposive sampling was used and it was decided to focus on Irish fashion designers who have created a fashion brand in Ireland in order to get a deeper understanding of the Irish fashion industry. For the focus groups the participants selected were females who were luxury consumers, and aged between twenty eight and sixty five in order to identify the characteristics of luxury fashion brands and also to find out their perceptions of luxury fashion and the Irish fashion industry. It was decided that telephone interviews and focus groups were the most suitable research methods to use in order to achieve the objectives of this study.

A total of five telephone interviews were conducted during the month of July 2013 with a number of Irish fashion designers. Results of these interviews were then compared and the conclusions were drawn.

Secondly, six focus groups were conducted in the months of June and July 2013.

#### **3.4.1 Interview procedure:**

As mentioned previously due to the busy schedules which Irish fashion designers have it was difficult to conduct face to face interviews and so all five interviews were conducted via

telephone. The main objective of these interviews was to find out about the experiences of each designer in building a fashion brand in Ireland and to get a better understanding of the Irish fashion industry in order to establish a model for an International luxury fashion brand which can be used by Irish fashion designers. Conducting these interviews helped to gain a better understanding of the research problem. The dates and the times of the interviews with Irish fashion designers can be seen below in table 3.1.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Designer A	02/07/2013	6.00pm (20 minutes)
Designer B	09/07/2013	3.45pm (25 minutes)
Designer C	11/7/2013	4.30pm (30 minutes)
Designer D	21/7/2013	5.00pm (25 minutes)
Designer E	29/07/2013	3.30pm (30 minutes)

**Table 3.1 times and dates of interviews**

In qualitative research, the sample is small and not chosen randomly. Rather, the choice of a sample is purposeful (Patton, 1996). Irish fashion designers who have experience of creating a fashion brand in Ireland and working in the fashion industry were the chosen sample. Age and gender were not important when choosing participants for the interviews. Firstly, emails were sent to suitable designers from April to June requesting a short interview with them. The respondents then took part in the telephone interviews in the month of July. The Irish fashion designers chosen were those who have created a fashion brand and have experience of working in the Irish fashion industry. These participants will be identified as designer A, B, C, D and E. All respondents were asked the same set of questions which were designed to learn about their experiences of the Irish fashion industry. The designers who were involved included designers who had fashion collections and milliners who design hats.

The personal interview begins with an interviewer approaching the respondent. Over 50 emails were sent to designers however due to their busy schedules many were unable to be involved and a large some did not respond to the email. The first concern was to ensure the full co-operation of the interviewee. The designers were sent an email which stated a brief explanation of the study and how the respondent could help. In the email the designers were

made to feel that both the study and his/her responses are important. After gaining a number of the respondent's co-operation, the attention then turned to the data collection instrument. The data collection procedure helped to standardise the data. The required questions in the proper sequence and using the correct wording were asked. The interviewer encouraged the respondents to provide additional information if an initial response is vague or overly brief. The telephone interviews ended with the interviewee thanking the respondent.

There is a lack of standard techniques or rules for qualitative research interviews and so (Kvale 1995) stresses the importance of advance preparation and interviewer competence. There are however standard choices of methods to be made at the different stages of an interview investigation. These are presented through the seven stages of an interview investigation (Kvale, 1995) which can be seen below in table 3.4:

1. Thematizing
2. Designing
3. Interviewing:
4. Transcribing.
5. Analysing:
6. Verifying
7. Reporting

**Table 3.2: Seven stages of an interview (Kvale, 1995)**

The seven stages of interview investigation which can be seen above in table 3.4 was followed when carrying out the telephone interviews. In relation to thematizing the purpose of the investigation was formulated and the concept of the topic to be investigated was described before the interviews start. This was followed by the designing stage which refers to the importance of planning the design of the study, and involves taking all seven stages into consideration before the interview starts. The next step according to (Kvale, 1995) is the interview stage. After planning the design of the study and considering all seven stages the telephone interviews were then conducted with the Irish fashion designers. The next stage is

transcribing and this stage involved preparing the interview material for analysis. This transcript can be viewed in appendix c. The next stage as seen in table 3.3 is analysing the data. It was decided, on the basis of the purpose and topic of the investigation, and on the nature of the interview material, which methods of analysis were best suited to this particular study. The next stage as seen in figure 3.4 is generalising. This involved ascertaining the generalizability, reliability, and validity of the interview findings. The final stage involved reporting which entailed communicating the findings of the study and the methods applied in a form that lives up to scientific criteria, takes the ethical aspects of the investigation into consideration, and this must result in a readable end product ( Kvale, 1995).

In order to manage the interview, throughout the interview the researcher follows the rules of good interviewing (Armstrong 1985). The interviewer must firstly use small encouragers like a murmur of understanding or yes. It is important to maintain eye contact and smiles during pauses as if expecting the interviewee to continue. It is also advised to ask non directive questions for example, ‘could you please elaborate?’, ‘Can you give me an example?’ Lastly it is important to use an active listening technique.

The interviews were carried out in a quiet office which had a telephone with a speakerphone which enabled the researcher to record the interviews. The office was quiet and there was no other individual’s in the office while the interviews were taking place as it closed at 3.

The questions which were asked in the interviews were drawn up taking into consideration (Kvale 1995) types of interview questions. The beginning of the interview included some introducing questions such as ‘What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland’? These were followed by some direct questions for example ‘do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it’? Finally some indirect questions were asked such as ‘In your opinion, are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand’? Interviews can have one of two basic structures. They can be either structured or unstructured. The interviews carried out were structured and there was a set list of 11 questions. Closed or structured interviews are defined by (Nichols 1991) as a

social survey where "the range of possible answers to each question is known in advance. Often, possible answers are listed on the form so that the interviewer simply marks the appropriate reply in each case. This approach is much more standardised using a prearranged list of answers for the respondent to choose from. There is little freedom for flexibility, due to the fixed question order. Each person is given the same questions therefore being uniform (Wimmer and Dominick 1997). This has its advantages in that the information is easily quantifiable and allows the responses to be compared.

### 3.4.2 Focus groups Procedure:

There were five focus groups conducted in total and these were made up of women aged between twenty eight and sixty five years of age who were consumers of luxury fashion brands. The focus groups were conducted in the months of June and July as seen below in table 3.3 The focus groups took place between the hours of 6.00 pm and 8.00pm as these times best suited the participants as they all worked during the day apart from two participants who were off for the summer as they were teachers. Four of the focus groups were conducted above Modern Décor store in an unoccupied house which is located in the centre of Monaghan town. This location was very suitable for the focus group meetings as it was convenient for the participants to get to as it was in the centre of Monaghan town and it was also easy to find. There were parking facilities for all participants. The atmosphere was very peaceful and this allowed for the focus group discussions to flow. The participants were offered tea and nibbles during the focus group discussions. While conducting the focus groups in Cavan, a close friend who works in the Radisson Hotel kindly organised a meeting room for me to conduct the focus groups in. This location was also very suitable as the Radisson hotel is located just outside Cavan town and is well-known which meant that it was easy to find for the participants. There were suitable parking facilities. The room was spacious and the atmosphere was quiet and relaxing which was perfect for conducting the focus groups. The dates and times of the focus groups can be seen below in table 3.3.



Focus Group 1:	June 28 <sup>th</sup> 2013	6.15pm	Monaghan	90 mins
Focus Group 2:	July 1 <sup>st</sup> 2012	6.00pm	Monaghan	95 mins
Focus Group 3:	July 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2013	6.30pm	Cavan	85 mins
Focus Group 4:	July 4 <sup>th</sup> 2013	6.00pm	Monaghan	75 mins
Focus Group 5:	July 7 <sup>th</sup> 2013	7.00pm	Cavan	90 mins
Focus Group 6:	July 11 <sup>th</sup> 2013	6.15pm	Monaghan	80 mins

**Table 3.3 Dates times and locations for focus groups:**

As seen below in figure 3.4 .any planning decisions had to be made prior to conducting the focus groups which involved the study design, how data will be collected and analysed,. Other things that had to be planned included the location in which the focus groups were to take place, sourcing equipment for the data processing, and transport and incentives for the field team must also be planned. The steps shown in figure 3.4 were followed when preparing the focus group research.

Step 1:	<b>Plan the entire focus group discussion study</b>
Step 2:	<b>Decide what types of groups are needed</b>
Step 3:	<b>Select moderator and field team</b>
Step 4:	<b>Develop facilitator's guide and format for recording responses</b>
Step 5:	<b>Train field team and pre-test instruments</b>
Step 6:	<b>Prepare for individual focus group discussions</b>
Step 7:	<b>Conduct the focus group discussions</b>
Step 8:	<b>Analysis and interpret the focus group discussion results</b>

**Table 3.4 8 steps when conducting focus group research**

When preparing for the focus groups a set of research questions were drawn up, which would enable the focus groups to run smoothly and to consider the successful means of recruiting appropriate participants. According to (Krueger and Casey, 2000) this is the most critical phase of conducting the focus group as it determines the success of the focus group. In trying to gather participants for the focus group it is important for the participants to represent the proportionate sample of the target audience in which the research study is aimed at. The

participants were sourced by advertising in local boutiques in Monaghan town and Cavan town. This letter to seek participants can be seen in appendix G.

The concept of a sampling frame is closely related to the population. It is defined as the list of elements from which the sample is actually drawn (Emory and Cooper, 1991). The focus-groups were based on a non-probability sample. This sampling approach provides the opportunity to select the sample intentionally and to reach members of the population that are difficult to identify. (Saunders et al. 2009). For this research purposive sampling was used as participants had to be women aged between twenty eight and sixty five as research shows that it is women who account for a large proportion of the luxury consumer market; however men and children are also important luxury consumers. (Okonkwo 2007).

The questions were carefully selected in order to solve the research objectives and all questions were open ended to allow conversation to flow. The research split the questions into four different sections. These were general questions about luxury fashion brands, marketing of luxury fashion brands, Price in relation to luxury and finally the Irish fashion industry.

The researcher was the moderator of the focus groups, and was assisted by an observer who took notes and arranged the recording. A prepared guide was used to ask very general questions of the group. It was felt that six focus groups were needed in order to get good coverage of responses to the set of topics. Each session lasted between 60 to 90 minutes but this varied with each focus group. A critical element of the focus group is the moderator. It is vital that the moderator does not bias the participant's responses. In order to avoid this risk it was vital to have a rigorous framework and a plan in place prior to holding the focus groups. Suitable questions were drawn up in order to gather the relevant information needed.

When analysing the data collected from the focus group the first step is to have the entire interview transcribed. The researcher listened back to each of the focus group recordings and transcribed the interviews writing out word for word quotes. This was done on the day of the

focus groups when it was fresh in the researchers head. The content of the focus group discussion was then examined and the meaning and its particular implications for the research question at hand discovered. The researcher followed the 5 steps presented in table 3. when analysing the data from the focus group. These 5 steps are seen below in table 3. 5.

1. Data Grouping
2. Information Labels
3. Knowledge (Findings)
4. Theory
5. Implications

Table 3. 5 Hoak, 2013

Firstly the respondent's answers were grouped to each question. Answers were organised and clarified into categories. These categories included general information, marketing of luxury fashion brands, pricing in relation to luxury fashion and the Irish fashion industry. The information was developed by then labelling each group of answers. The researcher then asked how did the information gathered answer the objectives? These were the findings. Theory based on this evidence was then developed and this allowed the researcher to develop a model for Irish fashion designers to use when creating a luxury fashion brand. Please refer to appendix H to view the focus group transcripts.

### 3.5 Research analysis:

The aims of the research methods were to solve the following three objectives from a designer and consumer perspective;

1. To identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand.
2. To assess the perceptions of consumers' of luxury fashion brands.
3. To establish a model which Irish fashion designers can use to develop an International luxury fashion brand.

Objective one was solved by analysing the focus groups and presenting the findings. Diagrams were used to make it easier for the reader to understand the findings. The focus group contained specific questions to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand and to identify what factors were important to consumers when purchasing a luxury fashion brand. It is very important to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand as these will help in developing a better understanding of how luxury brands and products can actually be created.

Objective two was also solved using the findings from the focus groups. Again specific questions were asked in order to assess the perceptions of consumers' of luxury fashion brands and to find out what their perceptions were of the Irish fashion industry.

Objective three was solved using both the interview and the focus group analysis. This was so that the model could be established based on both the consumers of luxury fashion brands and the designers who would be creating the brand. The interviews with Irish fashion designers contained specific questions that would help to get a better understand of the Irish fashion industry and to better understand why there is no luxury fashion brand in Ireland at present. Secondly the focus groups asked customers what is important when buying luxury fashion products, where is best to advertise and useful information which could be used to help an Irish fashion designer build a luxury fashion brand.

### 3.6 Ethical issues:

The research being conducted involves people and the researcher will be handling personal information and as a result of this there are a number of ethical considerations which cannot be ignored. It is extremely important to be ethical when gathering data from members of the public. A checklist which includes ethical issues was used when completed the research. It was vital ensure that the privacy of people involved in the focus groups and the interviews was not violated. Therefore the respondents of both have been kept anonymous and any personal information was treated with a duty of care. All participants in the research will be over 18 years of age. The fashion designers will be referred to as designer A, B, C, D and E. There were four main ethical issues which were taken into account when carrying out interviews. These include, reducing the risk of unanticipated harm, protecting the interviewee's information, effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study, and reducing the risk of exploitation (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Steps will be taken to ensure that all participants involved in the research will not be deceived about the research and its purposes. This will be ensured by explaining to the participants the purpose of the research and what its objectives are. The confidentiality of data relating to all research participants will be maintained. The data will not be shared with any other parties. Once the data has been collected, steps will be taken to ensure that the names of all research participants are not identifiable.

Ethical considerations for focus groups are the same as for most other methods of social research (Homan 1991). When selecting and involving the participants for the focus groups, the researcher ensured that information about the purpose and uses of participants' contributions were explained. The researcher was honest at all times and participants were kept informed about the expectations of the group and topic. The researcher ensured that no participants were pressured into speaking. A particular ethical issue that was considered in the case of focus groups was the handling of sensitive material and confidentiality given that there will always be more than one participant in the group, Gilbert (1997). The Respondents who took part in the focus groups will be referred to as Respondent 1 – 6 to avoid their

privacy being violated. The moderator clarified each participant's contributions and this was also shared with the others in the group as well as with the moderator. Participants were all asked to keep what they heard during the focus group confidential.

### 3.7 Limitations:

Due to the time, scope and cost of the project, it is impossible to interview a large number of designers. They are very busy and there are many who were willing to take part in the research but were just so busy they did not have time. One of the designers I interviewed had to do the interview from Bali as she was over there working on her production so this is just one example of how busy they are. Other designers had fashion shows to launch their autumn collections coming up in September and so were very busy getting ready for these. Therefore, further research could be carried out on more Irish fashion designers.

Qualitative research is not without its weaknesses and limitations. Misuse or misunderstanding the capabilities of qualitative research is commonplace. Project-ability is not possible as the analysis is subjective and deals with a small sample size. Another common misconception is the expectation that qualitative research will always produce definitive conclusions. In reality, the results will not always provide definitive conclusions, and may only provide enough information to establish a firm basis for decision making (Answers Research, 2011)

The quality of the research with the focus group is the inherent subjectivity of the results. Results can be more easily misjudged than the results of other data collection methods. The unstructured nature of the responses makes coding analysis and interpretation difficult.

In some focus groups, certain personalities of the participants (such as dominant and aggressive personalities) may influence the group discussion (Hollander 2004). Finally there is a danger of the decision maker considering the findings as conclusive evidence, rather than exploratory information. Results obtained from the focus groups depend heavily on the skills of the moderator.

Telephone interviewing can have some limitations. Firstly only a limited amount and detail of information can be collected. A good rule of thumb is to keep interviews approximately

fifteen to twenty minutes long as respondents are unlikely to stay on the phone for a longer period unless they are highly interested in the subject. Telephone interviews must be short, simple and interesting.

There are a number of risks that may occur when carrying out interviews. Telephone interviewing can have some limitations. Firstly only a limited amount and detail of information can be collected. A good rule of thumb is to keep interviews approximately fifteen to twenty minutes long as respondents are unlikely to stay on the phone for a longer period unless they are highly interested in the subject. Telephone interviews must be short, simple and interesting. The researcher was very careful when selecting questions to ensure that the research objectives would be solved. Eleven open ended questions were asked in each of the telephone interviews in order to limit the risk of respondents losing interest.

A second difficulty is the potential for interviewer bias. The rephrasing of the interviewer's tone of voice or physical appearance may influence the response. Interviewers may unknowingly inject bias into the respondent's answers. Another difficulty with the personal interview is that the respondent is not anonymous and may therefore be unwilling to provide confidential information or answers to sensitive questions on a one to one basis. To minimize these risks, the interview questions were pretested to ensure that they were clear and easy to understand, and also to ensure that they covered all necessary areas and were free from bias that could possibly sway the respondent's answers. The interviews were carried out using the

Personnel interviews are often impractical to conduct over wide geographical regions for reasons related to time and cost. A second difficulty is the potential for interviewer bias. The rephrasing of the interviewer's tone of voice or physical appearance may influence the response. Interviewers may unknowingly inject bias into the respondent's answers. Another difficulty with the personal interview is that the respondent is not anonymous and may therefore be unwilling to provide confidential information or answers to sensitive questions on a one to one basis.

### **3.7 Conclusion:**

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research methods used in the study. As this was an exploratory study, qualitative research was used as it was felt this was most suitable for the research. Interviews and focus groups were the two methods chosen as these included both designers and consumers. The use of both interviews and focus groups were explained and justification for using these methods was given in this chapter. A research analysis was given detailing how the procedures would aim to solve the research objectives as discussed in chapter 1. This was followed by the ethical issues which were considered when completing this research and the limitations to the research were then discussed before concluding the methodology chapter.



# Chapter 4: Findings and analysis.

## 4.1 Introduction:

Following on from the methodology, the analysis of the data which has been collected from the focus groups and interviews will be discussed. The findings of the focus groups and interviews will be compared to the research objectives which were outlined in chapter three. These findings enabled the research question ‘to determine the methods that can be used by an Irish Fashion designer to create a Luxury fashion Brand’, to be answered. The first part of the analysis focuses on the perceptions that Irish consumers have of Luxury fashion brands and the Irish fashion industry. This information was gathered from the focus group. The set of questions asked can be seen in the appendices. A total of six focus groups were carried out with a total of thirty four respondents. The second part of the analysis deals with the perceptions of Irish fashion designers and this information was gathered using telephone interviews. Finally, the main findings will be used in order to determine the methods which can be used by an Irish fashion designer to create a Luxury fashion brand.

## 4.2 Profile of respondents:

Both the Interviews and focus groups were carried out on respondents from Ireland. The focus groups included participants from Monaghan, Cavan, Limerick and Kildare. Twelve respondents were from Cavan, seventeen were from Monaghan, two were from Limerick and one was from Kildare and two from Dublin. Purposive sampling was used when selecting the participants. Participants were women aged between twenty eight and sixty five years of age, and were consumers of luxury fashion brands.

The sampling procedure used for the interview was also a purposive sample. The respondents were Irish fashion designers who had experience of creating a fashion brand in Ireland however age and gender were not important for this particular study. These designers

included fashion designers and milliners who have established fashion brands in the Irish fashion industry.

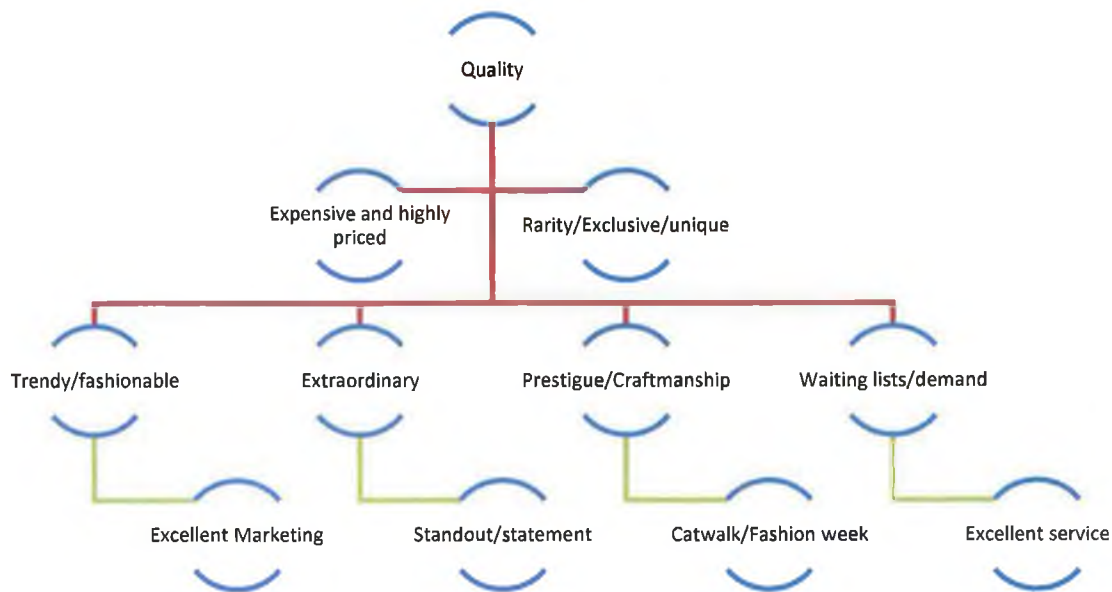
Regarding the focus groups the response rate was quite high with 6 participants showing up for 5 of the focus groups. For one of the focus groups only 4 respondents showed up. Refer to appendix E to view focus groups participants. It was quite difficult to get respondents for the interviews and this is shown in appendix D.

### 4.3: Key issue one – Findings and analysis:

**Objective one: Identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand.**

In order to achieve this objective focus groups were conducted. The focus group respondents were asked open ended questions in relation to luxury fashion brands. It was vital to identify what Irish consumers of luxury fashion brands identified as the characteristics of luxury fashion brands as this would later help to develop a model which Irish fashion designers can use to create an international Luxury fashion brand.

To establish the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand the respondents were asked to name three words that come to mind when they think about luxury fashion brands. The most popular words stated are shown in figure 4.0 below with the most popular characteristics being stated at the top of the hierarchy.



**Figure 4.0 Characteristics of Luxury fashion brand.**

From the findings it was evident that there are many characteristics which Irish fashion designers must recognise in order to be perceived as a luxury fashion brand. All participants mentioned that superior quality was a very important factor when purchasing luxury fashion products. Quality is shown at the top of the hierarchy diagram as this was the most popular characteristic mentioned by the focus group participants.

Participants referred to expensive products and high prices when characterising a luxury fashion brand. It was evident that the participants were willing to pay high prices' in order to get high quality products. In the eyes of the participants a higher price stands for a higher quality product. The price of luxury products must be much higher than that of comparable products.

*'Having a high price sets it apart from premium brands and makes it exclusive', (FG4, Respondent 1)*

Craftsmanship was also mentioned by a number of participants during the focus groups. This relates to superior quality. The products must be perfect as they are very highly priced and customers do not want even the tiniest flaw.

*'I expect great quality products with no faults and a life time investment when I purchase luxury fashion products,' (FG4, Respondent 6)*

It was evident from the focus groups that exclusivity is a vital factor which helps to characterise a luxury fashion brand. High prices means that not everyone can afford to purchase luxury products and as a result they are more unique and scarce. Participants felt that it is vital that luxury products are quite rare and unique and this is one of the main reasons they choose to purchase luxury fashion brands. Participants also mentioned that it is not possible to purchase luxury fashion brands in every shop and the stores which they are available in are quite selective. This also helps to make the products more unique as it is more difficult to access them

*'Not everyone will have the luxury branded goods. They are highly priced and less accessible so more unique' (FG6 Respondent 4). A respondent also stated 'You can't just buy luxury brands everywhere; they are only in selective store and usually bigger cities. I have to travel to purchase luxury items but it is worth it' (FG2, participant 2)*

Excellent service is also a feature which many of the participants felt characterised a luxury fashion brand. The participants expect to be provided with an excellent service when purchasing luxury products. This service is not the usual service you would receive when shopping for premium brands it is a really enjoyable experience.

*'The experience when you are shopping for luxury branded items is very personal and you feel like a celebrity. You feel like they care about you' (FG5, Respondent 1).*

Waiting lists were mentioned by participants as another determinant of the characteristics of luxury products. It was evident from the focus groups that waiting lists make purchasing luxury fashion products exciting and creates a desire amongst customers. Waiting lists show that the products are quite scarce and this makes them more exclusive. Waiting lists were not mentioned in previous literature as a characteristic of luxury fashion brands and so it is very important to note how they help to determine a premium brand from a luxury fashion brand.

*'Sometimes when releasing a new product they have waiting lists. I was on a waiting list for a new Hermes bag a few years ago I had to travel to France to buy it but it makes it very exciting' (FG6 respondent 3). Similarly one responded stated that 'You might have to be put*

*on a waiting list to buy a luxury item this wouldn't usually happen in a store like Penney's. There are sometimes only a limited number of the items made'* (FG2 Respondent 4)

Fashion week and catwalks were also discussed by focus group participants as a characteristic of luxury fashion brands and the participants loved learning about what the new trends are for each season and look forward to the various fashion weeks around the world.

*'I love fashion week, I look forward to it each year it gets you excited about the new collections. I look in magazines mostly at images of fashion week and to see what has been on the catwalks'* (FG5 Respondent 1).

Luxury fashion products must stand out and be statement pieces according to a number of participants in the focus groups. The material of the products must be excellent quality and their designs must be trendy and fashionable.

*I want to feel proud wearing the product it must look great,* (FG5, Respondent 6)

The marketing campaigns which are used by luxury fashion brands were said to be of a much higher quality than those of premium brands. It is vital that Irish fashion designers create excellent marketing campaigns to be perceived as a luxury fashion brand.

*'Luxury fashion brands have excellent marketing campaigns. They make you have a desire for the products. They really stand out on glossy magazine pages and the adverts often have well known models or celebrities'* (FG2 Respondent 5). Another participant felt that *'Marketing campaigns really stand out and are more professional than those of premium brands. For example if you were to compare a Chanel advert with a River island one it would be very different. Even if you compared it with a Tommy Hilfiger advert it stands out and gives a more classy image'* (FG5, Respondent 5).

Participants stated that luxury fashion brands must be extraordinary. Everything from the packaging to the service to the product must be excellent. These little things are what make consuming luxury products special. The packaging is not just an ordinary paper bag which you would get when purchasing in River Island for example it is top quality.

*The packaging they use is really special and luxurious but the image for each luxury brand is unique* (FG5, respondent 1). Another participant described that *'Even the bags you get when you purchase an item are better quality than the paper one's you get when purchasing from*

*the high street stores. It just shows how much detail and effort goes into portraying good brand image'* (FG4 Respondent 5).

Finally the products must be trendy and fashionable to be perceived as luxury according to the participants of the focus groups.

*'The pieces must be elegant and glamorous. They are investments so the quality and materials used must be very good quality'* (FG2 respondent 5) and similarly another participant stated that *'the products must be unique and make me feel like a celebrity when I wear them* (FG5, Respondent 2).

Brand identity is defined as consumers' perception of a brand and reflects a set of associations the consumers hold in their minds when thinking of a brand (Didier & Cindy, 2010). Respondents were asked *"Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?"* in order to see if they view all luxury brands in the same way. The participants of the focus groups mainly shared the opinion that luxury fashion brands have the same characteristics such as uniqueness, expensive prices and high quality. They feel that they advertise in the same ways such as on glossy pages of magazine however they do not share similar characteristics in terms of image and identity. Each brand is unique and they are associated with different things.

*'The products are all very desirable and there is a rarity factor and there advertisements make you have a desire for the products but they are all different'* (FG5 respondent 6) Similarly FG respondent 4 stated that *'I think luxury fashion brands all have their own unique image Louis Vuitton is more focused on luggage and Burberry is more about outdoor wear'*. Another participant mentioned that *'You can't buy luxury products in any store they are picky with their distribution, their images and identity is very different with each luxury fashion brand like no two have similar advertisements'* (FG5 respondent 5).

When asked “*What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?*” the respondent’s top answers are shown in the diagram below. The three most popular which are Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Burberry are shown in red. From this it is clear that the respondents understand the difference between premium and luxury brands. These brands are also the top brands in the Millward Brown Optimor’s 2012 which is shown in the introduction chapter in table 1.0. This is a list of the top 10 most valuable luxury brands in the world. The findings show that the participants did not mention any Irish fashion brand when as the question stated above.



**Figure 4.1 Luxury fashion brands**

Respondents were asked ‘*What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands?*’ This question was asked in order to better understand why these individuals choose luxury brands over premium brands. The diagram below shows the top answers stated by participants in the focus groups.





**Figure 4.2; The differences between luxury and premium brands**

As shown above in figure 4.2 there are many factors which participants felt determine a luxury fashion brand from a premium fashion brand. Craftsmanship makes luxury fashion brands more unique and exclusive.

FG4 respondent 1 stated that *'Luxury fashion is more exclusive than premium brands. They take more time to make and it shows as the quality is always excellent'* Another participant FG4 respondent 4 stated that she felt *'Many of the luxury brands have iconic products like Chanel no 5 perfume, premium brands wouldn't really have iconic products'*.

Referring to the service FG3 Respondent 6 stated that *'The service is always brilliant and there is always a warranty but no faults really ever occur as the quality is so high'* with another respondent from FG3 respondent 1 stating *'The service you receive when purchasing a luxury branded item is more personalised you feel special'*.

Many members stated that quality and price was very different between premium and luxury brands. FG1 respondent 1 *'When I think of luxury brands I think of celebrities, status and quality. Compared to stores like Penney's and even Topshop the material and quality is a lot*

*better even though the price is higher*'. Another participant also mentioned that *'When you pay for a luxury product you feel as good as the clothes you are wearing. If I was in a Penney's tracksuit I would feel underdressed if I was in a luxury branded tracksuit I would feel much better even if it is just around the house or for running into town'* (FG1, Respondent 2). Similarly one participant mentioned *'It is rewarding buying designer products. When you buy in a high street store it is more like you are buying because you need the clothes you may not fall in love with them'* (FG4 Respondent 1).

Another major difference is Luxury fashion brands are more unique. They are highly priced and available in selected stores only which makes them less accessible.

FG1 respondent 4 stated that *'Everyone can buy premium products they are so much cheaper and more people wear the same thing, but they don't last as long. Buy cheap buy twice'*

Another participant also stated *'You can't just buy luxury brands everywhere, they are only in selective store and usually bigger cities I have to travel to purchase luxury items but it is worth it'* (FG3 respondent 2).

The findings also showed that luxury brand marketing campaigns differentiate luxury from premium brands as for luxury brands the advertising campaigns are of a much higher quality, are classier, more unique and stand out more than the advertisements premium brand advertisements.

*'The marketing campaigns really stand out for luxury brands they are unusual and eye-catching and always great quality'*. (FG6 respondent 4). Another difference as stated by another respondent was that *'Luxury fashion brands are more desirable than premium as "The high prices make the brands less accessible. This makes the products more unique'* (FG2 respondent 5)

The characteristics of luxury fashion brands from the perspective of Irish consumers of luxury fashion brands is very similar to that of the definition which (Okonkwo, 2007) uses to describe luxury. Characteristics of luxury fashion brands are: exclusivity, scarcity,

innovation, premium prices, high quality, product craftsmanship, precision, outstanding customer service, powerful advertising, core competence, iconic product designs, the personality of the founder, exclusive retail locations, the brands name and visual symbols associated to the brand and its history. As shown in figure 4.0 and 4.2 these characteristics were mentioned by the participants in the focus groups. The participants also mentioned other characteristics which were not mentioned in the previous literature and were new to the literature. These included waiting lists, fashion weeks, catwalks, extraordinariness, stand out and statement pieces and finally trendy and fashionable products. It is vital for Irish fashion designers to be aware of these characteristics in order to build and be perceived as a luxury fashion brand.

(Okonkwo, 2007) also states that Luxury fashion brands are very distinguished from each other, but they all have the concept and the characteristics of prestige and status in common. The participants felt that the image and identity of luxury brands is communicated in a distinct, clear and consistent way. Luxury brands share the same characteristics however the findings showed that each brand has a unique image and identity in the eyes of the consumer.

#### 4.4 Key issue 2: Findings and analysis

**Objective two: To assess the perceptions of consumers of luxury fashion brands.**

It was important to assess the perceptions of the Irish consumers of Luxury fashion brands for this study to better understand their purchasing habits and learn of their views on the Irish fashion industry. To gain insight into this a number of questions were asked in relation to marketing of luxury fashion brands, Shopping for luxury fashion brands, the price of luxury and finally a few questions were asked about the Irish fashion industry when carrying out the focus groups.

Participants were asked 'why do you think people have a desire to buy luxury fashion brands'. There was a variety of responses which are shown in figure 4.3 below.



**Figure 4.3 Reasons people have a desire to buy luxury fashion products.**

Many of the participants mentioned that the excellent service experience is what entices people to purchase luxury fashion items

*'The experience is something else. It brings out the best in people and puts a smile on their faces'.* Similarly another participant stated *'It's a great experience buying luxury products; it feels like a weekend away in a hotel. There is a real feel good factor about it'* (FG5, Respondent 5)

It was also felt by a number of participants that purchasing luxury brands was status related *'I think many people like to portray that they are successful in life and wearing luxury brands shows that they are successful. I think it is like a car, if you are doing well you want a BMW or a Mercedes'* (FG3 respondent 3). Another participant felt the same stating *'Wearing luxury brands gives the impression that people are rich and successful'* (FG1 Respondent 3)

A number of respondents felt that people have a desire to purchase luxury goods for personal gain and to reward themselves.

*'I think it's more a personal objective, people buy so that they feel good in themselves'*(FG5 Respondent 5). Similarly another respondent stated *'I feel really good in luxury brands, it helps with my confidence and I think this is why many people buy these goods'* (FG6, Respondent 2).

It was also mentioned that some people feel that some people purchase luxury goods in order to look like a celebrity.

*'I think people want to be more like celebrities and better than others'* (FG6 Respondent 6).

High quality was also another factor considered to be a reason in which people purchase luxury fashion brands.

*'The quality of luxury goods is far better than high street products and they are worth the money, they last for ages and they don't go out of date easily'* (FG2 Respondent.5) Similarly one respondent stated. *'I think that the goods are such good quality and last so long so people prefer to buy them'*, (FG6 Respondent 5)

When asked *'how does purchasing a luxury brand make you feel'* all respondents answered with very positive responses.



**Figure 4.4 feeling when purchasing luxury brands**

The above diagram figure 4.4 shows the different emotions that Irish consumers of Luxury fashion brands feel when they purchase a luxury fashion product.

The most popular emotion felt when purchasing a luxury fashion product was happiness. Overall eleven respondents out of the total 34 mentioned the word happy when asked this question. This feeling of happiness is related to the experience of purchasing a luxury product. FG2, respondent 3 stated that *'There is something about the experience when buying a luxury product it's different to that of buying in Penney's. It makes me really happy'*. Similarly FG1 respondent 2 stated that *'I love the feeling after buying a luxury item and having the branded bag on your shoulder it makes me feel happy and excited to wear it'*. A particular quote which helps to get an understanding of the happy feeling purchasing a luxury product can bring is one from FG5 participant 6, who stated that *'I feel like it is Christmas day and your opening a present you love. It's that kind of excited happy feeling'*

The second most popular emotion felt when purchasing a luxury fashion product was a boost in confidence. A total of nine participants felt confident when they purchased a luxury

fashion product. *'I love wearing my new clothes, or strutting around in my designer shoes. If you feel bad about your image it gives you a good boost, you feel you look better'* (FG4 participant 4). Another participant stated *'I feel good in myself and I feel like I walk taller and have more confidence'* (FG5 respondent 4). Another response which stood out was *'I feel really powerful and confident, it's great to reward yourself with luxuries and you just feel so good when wearing the products'* (FG6 respondent 1)

This was followed by a feeling of excitement. Seven participants out of thirty four stated that they felt excited when purchasing a luxury fashion product. *'I can't explain the feeling I get butterflies sometimes, it's like you fall in love with a piece of clothing a pair of shoes or a bag. You look after them like they are a child and wear them with pride'* (FG2 respondent 6)

Seven participants also stated that purchasing luxury fashion products makes them feel successful and proud that they are able to afford to buy these brands. One participant stated *'I feel proud of myself that I am able to treat myself and I work hard so I feel I deserve it'* (FG6 respondent 5) Another similarly said *'I feel successful and happy; it's great that I can buy the things I love'* (FG2 respondent 3). FG4 respondent 5 describes how it makes her feel successful *'I grew up wanting and dreaming of owning some of the items I now do and that's a great feeling'*

Finally, it was also stated that purchasing luxury products creates a feeling of uniqueness and the individuals feel stylish. Two participants said that they felt stylish when purchasing a luxury fashion brand. *'I feel fashionable and stylish; you know the clothes are designed by the best so you feel great'* (FG5 respondent 3). Another participant FG6 respondent 3 described that *'I feel like I am a new person it makes me feel unique and special'*. Similarly one participant also stated *'It makes me feel different to others, I kind of feel like a celebrity for a while'* (FG4 respondent 3).

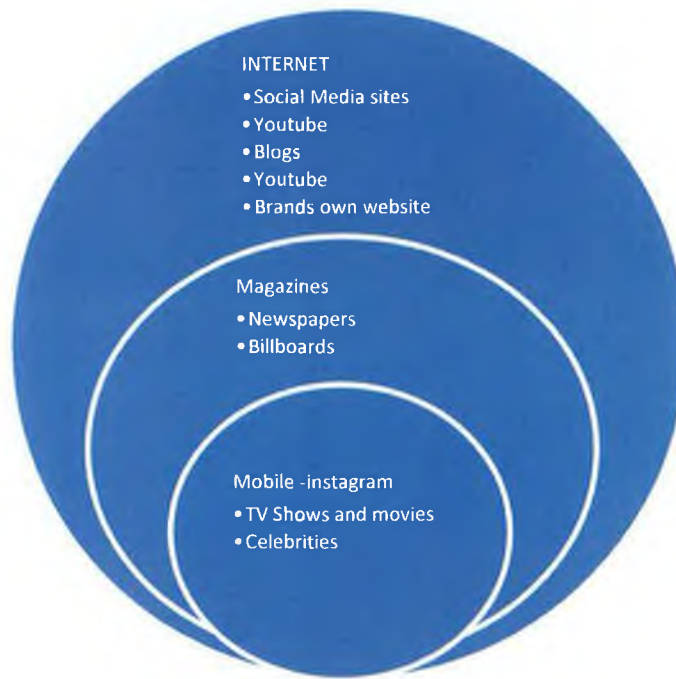
There was only one respondent who felt a negative feeling when purchasing a luxury fashion brand' This was FG6 participant 6 who stated '*Sometimes I feel guilty that I am spending so much money on clothes but I do work hard*'

Luxury purchases have two aspects which include indulging in one's pleasure which is luxury for self and demonstration of success which is luxury for others (Kapferer and Bastien, 2008). The findings agree as the reasons for purchasing included satisfying oneself and looking good in the eyes of others.

Most participants agreed that buying luxury products is an artificial need however a large number of the participants said they feel they deserve it, or it makes them feel good. '*I have kids and what they need obviously is more important than me having luxury branded items but I do work hard and at the moment I am able to buy them so I will*' (FG6 respondent 2). Similarly another respondent said that '*it's not the most important thing in life to own luxury branded clothes and bags and shoes but as long as you work hard and are able to afford them I think it's important to treat yourself*' (FG5 respondent 2). Another participant also felt '*it's not really a need it's more of a want. I would describe it as an artificial want I only want it because I know it's pricey and not easy to afford*' (FG3 Respondent 1). Finally one other respondent stated '*I think it is more important to be healthy and have the basics but when you have these it is nice to treat yourself*' (FG3 Respondent 6).

Marketing of luxury fashion brands was discussed during the focus groups' discussions. This was to discover how participants were made aware of luxury fashion brands and how they informed themselves about fashion, what the new trends are and viewed Luxury fashion brand advertisements. The participants referred to the different marketing techniques stated below in figure 4.5 when discussing the marketing of luxury fashion brands.





**Figure 4.5 Marketing a luxury fashion brand.**

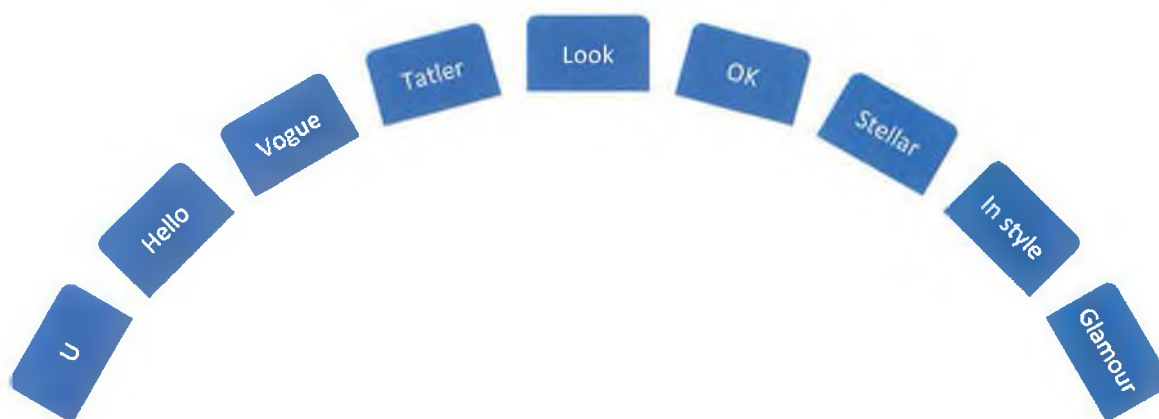
As seen in figure 4.5 the findings showed that Magazines, Billboards, TV shows, movies, internet, social media channels and blogs, luxury fashion brand websites, and phone apps such as instagram were the marketing tools which the participants viewed luxury fashion brand advertisements and followed the latest fashion trends. It was evident from the focus groups that traditional marketing methods such as magazines and Billboards are most popular amongst the 40+ consumers of luxury fashion brands.

*'It's great to use social media to target younger customers but luxury fashion brands must not forget older people like me. I am 57 so I am not great with technology'* (FG6 Respondent 4).

Social media channels such as twitter and YouTube, Blogs such as 'So sue Me' and phone apps such as Instagram were becoming very popular ways for younger consumers to follow trends and view luxury fashion brands collections. Social media is a very popular

*'I love looking up fashion weeks on YouTube it is better than just seeing the picture in the magazine, you can see how the material flows and how to wear it best but I do read the magazines'* (FG5 Respondent 3). Similarly one respondent stated *'The internet has allowed the world to become a smaller place and we can now see what celebrities are wearing and follow trends easily. You can now see where the products are available and who the designer is. It's more instant and effective'* (FG1 Respondent 2)

The participants were asked what fashion magazines do they usually read and the diagram below shows the most popular magazines amongst Irish luxury fashion consumers. As popular as internet is becoming all participants still read fashion magazines.



**Figure 4.6 magazines**

All participants agreed when asked *'Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines is a good marketing tool'* that publishing in fashion magazines was a successful way of marketing luxury fashion brands as the adverts stand out and are unusual and eye catching. The older participants were more reliant on fashion magazines as they do not seem to use social media.

*I am 55 so magazines are a great way for me to follow trends I am not into social media'* (FG3 participant 1) Similarly FG4 participant 4 stated *'I am not great with technology'*

The younger participants however used a mixture of traditional and social media tools to follow trends. *I think it's important that luxury fashion brands use a mixture of traditional*

marketing such as fashion magazines but also move with the times and have pictures on Instagram, twitter and Facebook '(FG3 participant 1).

A large number of the participants stated that the advertisements in magazines stand out as they are so unusual and are eye-catching on the glossy magazine pages. *'I think luxury fashion brands, marketing campaigns in magazines are great they are really eye catching'* (FG3 Respondent 4) Similarly one respondent stated *'Advertising in fashion magazines really stands out the adverts are always good quality like you expect luxury fashion items to be so I think it works'* (FG4 Respondent 3)

The findings also showed that it is enjoyable to sit down and read a magazine and it is a great way to keep up with new trends. *'Fashion magazines are a great way to relax and read about what's new and dream about what new luxury item you hope to purchase next'* (FG3 Respondent 2). Another respondent stated *'I always buy fashion magazines to see what is the latest handbags, shoes and fashions'* (FG2 Respondent 5)

In relation to PR all participants were in agreement that it was vital that the luxury fashion brand had good public relations. The findings show that people like to hear good things about the brand and bad PR would have a negative effect on their loyalty towards the brand. Many of the respondents stated that they liked when brands were making efforts to be more environmentally friendly. *'It's nice to see brands like Gucci taking steps to be more environmentally friendly'*. (FG2 Respondent 6). One respondent gave the example that *'Stella mc Carthney , Alexander Mc Queen and Gucci have pledged to be more green in recent years this is great as I would be against plastic bags and wastage so I would like to think they kept this promise'* (FG4 participant 1)

Findings showed that participants also liked to hear about luxury brands sponsoring events and supporting the community. *'It is great to see brands sponsoring events. I saw Louis Vuitton sponsoring sailing events'*. (FG5 participant 3) A participant also stated *'I like to hear these luxury brands are involved with charities'*. (FG6 Respondent 3)

It was evident from the focus groups that bad PR can result in customers losing respect for the brand. Findings also showed that celebrities can have an affect on the brands image if they were to be related to negative PR, A participant stated *'bad PR can affect your opinion of the firm, when Galantino was arrested and charged he was let go straight away from Dior but I read that sales still dropped so it's important to hear positive stories'* (FG2 Respondent 1). Similarly one respondent stated *'a lot of brands use celebrities now and I think they need to be wise about who they chose'* (FG4 Respondent 1)

Celebrities are often spotted in luxury branded pieces during awards ceremonies and big events. The reaction of this will probably be that the consumers have that celebrity as a favourite, will buy the items as well. (Wolbers, M, 2009). Celebrity endorsement is the use of a well know person to promote a company or a product brand (Pinkton and Broderick, 2004). According to (Okonkwo, 2006) celebrity endorsements transfer the personality and status of the celebrity in terms of wealth, distinctiveness and success directly to the brand. In order to find out if using celebrity endorsements entices Irish consumers to purchase luxury fashion brands the participants were asked *'How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?'* There was a variety of answers both negative and positive in relation to using celebrities to boost sales.

Many of the participants mentioned that it is important that the brand chooses a celebrity who will not affect the image of the brand. *I think it's great to use celebrities if they suit the image of the brand. Tulisa would be a bad match for a luxury brand, Angelina Jolie would be very suited and she has a good reputation'* (FG5 participant 3).

FG6 participant 1 expressed her concerns stating *'I think it can be risky for brands to use celebrities nowadays. Many celebrities are involved in drugs and if caught it could damage the brand'*

Another negative effect of using celebrities is that they look extremely well and the customer may not feel they look as well as the celebrity One participant stated *'I think I would prefer if they used normal people in adverts it would make you feel less insecure'*.(FG5 participant 6)

There were also participants who thought using celebrities was a great idea. *'Nowadays it's easy to see what celebrities are wearing on social media sites, the internet and magazines so yes I think people would be more likely to buy if they saw a celebrity with the product'* (FG3 participant 2)

The main advice to fashion brands when using celebrity endorsements is put simply by FG4 participant 2 who stated *'I think if the celebrity understands the core values of the brand it will be successful'*. The celebrity must understand the core values of the brand and have a good reputation in the eyes of the consumer. The findings show that many consumers are influenced by celebrities as nowadays it is easy to follow what celebrities are wearing using sites such as twitter and apps such as instagram, and copy their image.

There is no big fashion week in Ireland and it is very small compared to London Milan and Paris and so to get a better understanding if fashion week was important for Irish consumers they were asked *'Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?'* All participants had a love for fashion week and they enjoyed looking up the new trends in magazines and many stated how they now use social media tools such as the YouTube and Instagram to check out images from fashion week and to follow the new trends.

Fashion weeks create a buzz about the brand and makes luxury fashion consumers excited *'Yes I love fashion week, I look forward to it each year it gets you excited about the new collections. I look in magazines mostly at images of fashion week and to see what has been on the catwalks'* (FG5 respondent 1) Similarly another participant stated *'it really hypes up fashion and you really want to own the pieces and can't wait for them to be in store'* (FG6 Respondent 5).

Many participants use the internet to view catwalk shows and images and videos from fashion week. *'I would look up fashion bloggers to follow the latest trends as they usually*

*write up about these and the brands usually have clips from the show on YouTube'* (FG1 respondent 1)

It is clear that luxury fashion brands must use a mixture of both traditional marketing tools such as billboards and magazines as well as new marketing tools such as social media. The internet is extremely popular with the younger participants of the focus groups and so this marketing tool must not be ignored. It gives Irish designers the potential to reach a very large audience and it is very convenient for customers. Instagram which is a picture phone app was mentioned in the focus groups as a way to follow fashion and trends. This was not mentioned in the literature and so it is important that Irish designers keep up with new technologies as there are always new apps being developed for iPhones and androids and mobile marketing is becoming very popular. Instagram had not been mentioned before in previous literature and so this is a new marketing tool which fashion designers must consider when marketing. It allows for fashion consumers to view new trends from their mobile phones.

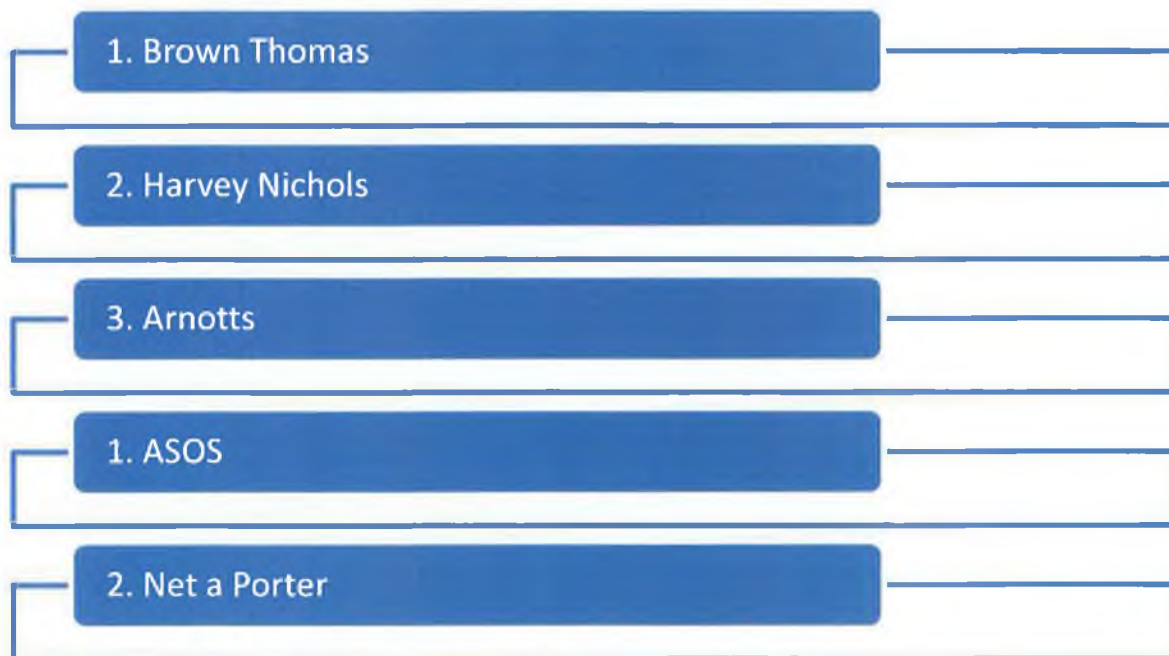
Blogging is also a great way to hear about new trends according to the participants this was also a tool which was not mentioned in the previous literature. If using celebrities to endorse the brand the designer must be extremely careful when selecting the person as they must fit with the brand image and understand the brand promise. Good PR is essential. The participants loved hearing good things about brands and it made them more willing to purchase and trust in the brand. The findings showed that fashion weeks are important to the participants and to be recognised as a luxury fashion brand Irish designers must have show's at the big fashion week events.

Shopping for luxury fashion brands was discussed in depth during the focus groups. Online shopping is becoming very popular in Ireland. The findings showed that many participants enjoyed buying in store when purchasing luxury fashion brands as they really loved the experience and service they receive when buying in stores such as Brown Thomas. It was mentioned during the focus groups that the experience and service you receive when buying a luxury service makes purchasing luxury brands enjoyable and so many people prefer to travel to make a purchase rather than buying online. *'I prefer to shop in store, the experience is brilliant,* (FG1 participant 3). Another participant similarly stated *'In store, the experience*

*and service is always excellent'* (FG3 Respondent1) One respondent also felt the same stating *'In store, it is good to see the products in real life'* (FG3 Respondent 2)

Previous literature showed that consumers purchased mainly in store. This was evident from the findings however it was clear that online shopping was becoming increasingly popular and a number of participants stated that for convenience they would buy online as they did not have time to travel to Dublin. The focus groups were held in Monaghan and Cavan and so many participants stated that they had to travel to Dublin to purchase these products. One participant stated *'I buy online; I don't really have time with work to get to Dublin'*. (FG6, Respondent 3) Similarly another respondent stated *'I buy online, it saves you traveling to Dublin or Galway'* (FG6 Respondent 1).

The findings showed that the most popular fashion stores and online shopping websites are shown below in figure 4.7.



**Figure 4.7 Popular stores**

The findings from the research showed that the participant's knowledge and awareness of luxury brands had increased as a result of the internet. The participants were asked '*Has your awareness about the luxury brands increased due to the use of internet and online shopping?*' One respondent stated '*Yes social media has gotten so big in the last few years it is great way of seeing new products and looking at images. Its free to which is great*' (FG6 participant 3)

The increase of online designer stores had also impacted on the awareness of Irish consumers in relation to Luxury products. '*I always look on Asos they have a designer section and it's great to see new and up and coming luxury brands that I may not have read about in magazines*' (FG5 respondent 6).

It is evident that internet is a great way of increasing awareness. The internet would be a great way for an Irish fashion designer to grow their brand in the luxury fashion market. Blogging is also becoming extremely popular and so it is important to contact bloggers who can promote brands on their blogs. '*I follow the fashion bloggers they are great at keeping you up to date on what's the best bags and shoes to buy and what dresses and clothes are popular with celebrities so I think my awareness has definitely increased*'(FG3 participant 3)

As evident in previous questions which related to social media, the older participants rarely use the internet. FG4 participant 5 falls into the older age group and she discussed how she doesn't use computers much, '*my daughter would use Facebook and twitter and shop online I'm not good with technology*'.

Marketing of luxury fashion brands is moving more toward the internet however it is vital to target the older age group by using traditional media methods. Magazines are popular amongst consumers of luxury fashion and the most popular magazines were listed above in figure 4.6. New findings show that the internet is now becoming extremely popular amongst the younger generation of luxury consumers. Instagram and blogging had not previously been mentioned in the literature however these were discussed during the focus groups as methods to follow fashion.



The pricing of luxury products was discussed during the focus groups. Participants of all six focus groups agreed that price was a very important factor when purchasing a luxury fashion branded product. Having a high price gives the brand a certain status. *'The price must be high so that everyone isn't walking around looking the same. It would be like buying a top in Topshop or Penneys, it wouldn't stand out and everyone would have it'* (Fg5 respondent 1).

Similarly one participant described how important a high price is, stating that *'the price has a lot to do with the status if it was cheap and affordable anyone could buy it so it wouldn't be a luxury'* (FG6 participant 6). One respondent gave a wonderful example stating *'I think with brands like ralph Lauren the jumpers are around 200 euro and they are nice but everyone can afford them so I wouldn't view this as a luxury brand the price has to be high'* (FG5 respondent 6). It is clear from the research that the price must be high in order for the brand to be unique

The participants in all the focus groups were regular consumers of luxury fashion products and they are used to paying very high prices. The participants were asked *'what do you expect when they pay such a high price for luxury products.'* The four top answers are shown in figure 4.8.



**Figure 4.8 Price expectations**

The findings showed that products must be of excellent quality as they are priced so highly.

*'High quality so I can keep for my children in years to'* (FG5 Respondent 4)

When paying a high price many of the participants expected the products to be trendy and fashionable. *'I expect to receive fashionable trendy items which are good quality'* (FG3 Respondent 5)

Having a high price makes the products more unique according to the participants. This is very important aspect for consumers as they do not want everyone to have their luxury fashion purchase. One respondent stated *'Price makes it more exclusive not everyone can afford it so it has the rarity factor'* (FG1 Respondent 3).

The service must make the consumers feel special as it was evident from the focus groups that this was very important to the participants when purchasing luxury products. *'The service must be great it is my favourite part of buying the products,* (FG5, Respondent 3)

Participants were then asked questions in relation to the Irish fashion industry. The participants in the focus group were unaware of any Irish luxury fashion brand. Some were able to name Irish fashion designers however they were aware that these designers have collections which are affordable and therefore the respondents related to these Irish fashion brands as premium.

Participants were asked if they would like to see a Luxury *Irish* Fashion brand. 100% of the participants said they would love to see an Irish luxury fashion brand. These findings show that there is a demand for an Irish luxury fashion brand in Ireland and if one was developed it was felt by participants that this would give great potential to improve the Irish fashion industry if

One participant stated that *'More Irish people would be interested in fashion and want careers in this industry if someone was really big and successful- at the minute it doesn't have the big name it needs'*. Similarly another participant also stated *'Ireland isn't known for*

*its fashion so this could make that change and we need to make fashion more important in Ireland'. One participant also felt that 'the Irish fashion industry needs a boost, there are loads of talented designers I read about them in Irish fashion magazines and newspapers but they just aren't seen as luxury' (FG3 respondent 6). Another also stated 'Yes it would be super so many people in Ireland love fashion so they would have a great following. They need to advertise in glossy magazines and make the brand look luxurious and create a desire for their products to be as good a Chanel' (FG4 participant.*

Quality is so important when it comes to luxury products and participants stated how important it is for an Irish designer to have excellent quality products when creating a fashion brand. *'People pay for quality so the main things are that the products are high quality and unique. If an Irish designer wanted to be a luxury brand they need to offer customers this' (FG6 respondent 2)'*

Many of the respondents had different views on why Ireland does not have a luxury fashion brand. They seemed surprised by the questions as if they had never really thought about this topic previously. *'Fashion is only becoming more important in recent years in Ireland so, maybe this is a reason why there is no luxury fashion brand' (FG1 participant 1). Another participant also stated 'I think they need to get away from what everyone else is doing and be more unique and have quality items at the minute Irish designers all have affordable products'(FG5 Respondent 1). Another respondent felt 'I think it is just that fashion isn't seen as one of Ireland's greatest things so it would be good if we could make fashion bigger here' (FG3 Respondent 1)*

There were a lot of new findings gained in relation to the perceptions Irish consumers have of the Irish fashion industry. No previous study had been carried out on this particular topic and so it was interesting to discover that Irish luxury fashion consumers would love to see a luxury fashion brand emerging from Ireland. 100% of participants stated that they would love to see a, Irish designer creating a successful luxury fashion brand. The findings showed that participants felt that this would greatly boost the Irish fashion industry as it was evident from the focus group findings that at present they did not think that the Irish fashion industry is successful. Only a handful of participants could name an Irish fashion designer yet when asked to name luxury fashion brands the names of brands rolled off their tongues. It is

necessary that something is done to greatly improve the Irish fashion industry. Just one brave Irish fashion designer could make the difference and inspire other Irish designers to be more ambitious and give it a go. The participants were unaware of why there is a gap in this market in Ireland and so this will be discussed further in the interviews with Irish fashion designers and will be presented further on in this chapter.

## 4.5 Key issue 3 – Findings and analysis

To establish a model that can be used by Irish fashion designers to create a luxury fashion brand.

### Difficulties in creating a fashion brand in Ireland:

To get a better understanding of how the designers became interested in fashion designing and created their brands they were asked *'What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland?'*

Designer A explained *'I did a 'Start your Own Business' course plus a short course on vat/tax and I applied to Leader for some start-up funding. I also did a business plan'.*

Designer B stated that *'After attending the Galway Races, I became passionate about hats. Each year I would promise to make my own hat for the following year. Finally as a New Year's resolution in 2010, I decided to take up a new 'hobby' – I began taking millinery courses. I became addicted to creating pieces! I would make a piece, photograph it, put it on Facebook – People seemed to love my work. I then created a public business page on Facebook for my designs. Between Facebook and word of mouth, my business took off and has thankfully been thriving since!'*

Designer C described *'Before I finished my undergraduate degree at NCAD I spent a lot of time researching, finding out what area I was interested in. I did markets where I sold my scarves. I began to build up my online presence with my online portfolio and blog. I approached the Irish Design Centre in Dublin with my graduate scarf collection. They were interested in stocking the collection and I have worked with them since. The designers all started off their careers very differently'*

Designer D *'Firstly I attended a 'Start Your Own Creative Business' course with the county Enterprise Board and made a business plan to mark out targets and objectives. I then got branding and website designed following this I designed my first collection and proceeded to sell to boutiques'*.

Designer E *'I was fortunate enough to win fashion student of the year 2011. The prize included a year mentoring with Eddie Shanahan and AIB bursary award of €2,500. I designed and made a bridal collection which was showcased at the golden egg fashion show 2013 in Galway. I interned with a bridal company after I graduated from college to gain more experience'*.



**Figure 4.9 Main difficulties when creating a brand in Ireland.**

Very little research has been carried out previously to discover the main difficulties Irish fashion designers face when creating a fashion brand in Ireland and the interviews have allowed for a deeper understanding as to what these main difficulties are. The Fashion designers were asked ‘*what were the biggest difficulties were when creating a fashion brand in Ireland?*’ Each designer had different views on the difficulties of setting up a fashion brand in Ireland. These are shown above in figure 4.9 and are discussed further below.

Designer A stated that funding was one of the main problems she faced, ‘*there is no government support or agencies such as in the UK where you have the British Fashion Council, Fashion East etc. There is no manufacturing in Ireland and you do not have the skill set for sample machinists, production and so on*’.

Designer B stated that ‘*The main difficulties are how you can develop a brand that delivers something different and unique to you*’.

Designer C had no major difficulties when creating her brand and she spoke about how she has been very lucky *'With a lot of hard work and support, my business has flourished since I began. I take one day at a time (And pray that it keeps going the way it is going!)*'

Designer D stated that *'I found that breaking in to the market in Ireland was challenging. I found approaching retailers to buy into the brand was quite challenging as they have to trust that you will come up with the goods, deliver on time and that you won't disappear after one season. Resources are poor, for example, fabrics all have to be imported, and manufacturing for the most part must be done abroad'*.

Designer E *"There are no manufacturing facilities in Ireland."*

The designers were asked *'what marketing tools they use to market their brand?'* The methods they are shown in figure 4.10 below.



**Figure 4.10 – Marketing tools used by Irish designers.**

Designer A explained that she has an excel file where she adds buyers, stores, stylists, bloggers, fashion journalists, and she also uses a press and sales agency in Holland. She

stated *'for AW14 I will have an agent doing Sales in Australia and Europe and have also attended trade shows in Berlin and Paris'*.

Designer B stated that *'For previous collections I have had work professionally photographed and as a result my work was featured in a number of magazines. I found this method shockingly expensive. As I also freelance as a graphic arts designer I designed a number of catalogues for my collections and worked with an Irish model, Aoife Walshe, on a number of photo-shoots'*

Facebook is Designer C's number one marketing tool. *'Over the past three years, I have built up over 11,000 followers on my page. I update it regularly with good quality photographs – I am lucky to receive lots of positive feedback – It is growing daily'*.

Website, social media (Facebook/twitter) are used by designer D, I also get product shots done each season to be used for press.

Designer E stated *'I use word of mouth and wedding magazines'*.

It was important to find out where the designers sell their brands. They were asked *'Where do you sell your brand and who do you see as your target customers?'*

Designer A explained *'I sell in 15 countries and see women from 18 -80 in NATALIEBCOLEMAN maybe a silk printed scarf or one of the python handbags that I am expanding on later this year'*.

Designer B stated *'I sell my hats & headpieces through many boutiques across Ireland and the UK. I also sell from my own studio'*.

Designer C has sold her brand from the Irish design centre.



Designer D discussed how she sells to boutiques across Ireland, North and South. *'My target customer is 30-50 year old professional woman'*.

Designer E *'I have commissioned pieces for clients aged between 18-28.'*

The findings showed that none of these Irish fashion designers sold their brands in the top stores which were discovered from the focus group research and can be seen above in figure 4.7.

The Irish fashion designers were all asked *'Do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it?'* The findings showed that it is difficult to build a brand anywhere in the world but there is a lack of support here in Ireland for fashion designers.

*'No, fashion is difficult for everyone it does not have anything to do with been Irish'*  
(Designer A)

Designer B believed if *'you're good at what you do, your quality of work is high, your pricing is right and you're willing to work any amount of hours necessary, you will flourish'*.

Designer C said *'Absolutely. It's hard anywhere. Hard work and constant dedication is needed and a lot of money to start up at the start too'*.

Designer D described *'It takes a huge amount of dedication to build a fashion brand in Ireland (or anywhere for that matter). In a global context, Ireland is not regarded as a country of cutting edge design, however I feel that this is changing and as the world becomes smaller (with internet, social media etc.) Irish designers are increasingly gaining credit for*

*innovative design and are holding their own with other top designers all over the world. I feel that as an Irish designer, it is important not only to design for the domestic market, but to think of the market as being international'.*

Designer E *'yes it is hard. You have to have money to set up your label or be willing to be poor for a while and 100% dedicated to setting up your label even if it takes years'.*

The findings showed that it is difficult to create a fashion brand anywhere in the world not just in Ireland however it was stated by one of the participants that it is a bit more difficult here because Ireland is not taken seriously for its cutting edge design. Again as very little research has been carried out prior to this study it was interesting to gather the perceptions of the Irish designers on building a brand in Ireland. It was evident that Irish designers are gaining more credit which gives hope for a luxury Irish fashion brand to be developed. It is clear that it will take a huge amount of dedication and innovation to be successful and the designer must cater for the international market and not just the domestic market.

It was in some cases a touchy subject when I asked *'How do you feel Ireland is perceived for its fashion in comparison to countries such as France and the UK who have designers such as Chanel and Burberry'*

Designer A stated that *'It is pointless to compare as Ireland to these other countries as it is a totally different country and has a different culture and history. I believe Ireland is very respected for its designers who have moved abroad and also its craft skills. It is of no benefit to compete with a major fashion city, Ireland should concentrate on celebrating fashion in a different way that is viable with our heritage'.*

Many of the designers felt that Ireland isn't taken seriously for its fashion. Designer B stated that *'I think Ireland is not as highly regarded in terms of fashion compared to the UK and France. I think Irish designers such as Simone Rocha and Una Burke who are based in London are thought of as being UK designers'.*

Designer C was very lucky to work with Louis Vuitton for almost five years. She stated that *'they are an incredible brand with a long history. While these are huge names which grace the front covers of Vogue magazine etc., it's important to remember we have many talented and renowned designers here in Ireland too – hat designer Philip Treacy, and fashion designer Louise Kennedy'*

Designer D, *'Historically countries such as UK and France have produced some of the world's best known designers and these countries continue to invest hugely in the industry. The scale of the fashion industry in Ireland is smaller and was better known for its manufacturing, more so than design. I don't feel that Ireland has the same recognition in the fashion industry as the aforementioned countries, however this is changing as Ireland and Irish fashion designers are increasingly getting acknowledgement for innovative, cutting edge design'*.

Designer E *'I don't think that the Irish fashion industry is not taken seriously. There are loads of fashion designers however none have become as big as these brands. Hopefully in the next few years this could change'*

The findings show that the Irish fashion industry is missing something special. It is clear that Ireland is not seen as a fashion capital like the UK or France and it does not seem to be taken seriously. The scale of the Irish fashion industry is said to be much smaller however it was also evident from the findings that there are many talented designers from Ireland. Many have moved to the UK however for better opportunities.

There is clearly a lot of talent in Ireland and so the designers were asked *'There are many talented designers in Ireland, do you feel they get enough recognition?'*

Designer A stated that *'I think fashion is a difficult industry and that cream always rises to the top wherever anyone comes from.'*

Designer C felt that *'Within Ireland there is always a good amount of publicity given to Irish designers. The recognition Irish designers get within Ireland is good, but internationally it could be better. Irish programmes such as Expose constantly promote Irish design. Irish newspapers and magazines plug new Irish talent and even recently Irish Stores like Brown Thomas have collaborated with Irish artists for the displays in the shop windows on Grafton Street in Dublin'*

*'There are many different types of talented designers in Ireland. Each designer is offering something different. I feel that within certain contexts, designers do get good recognition, however in many cases it is up to the designer to promote and create public awareness of their work. This is the only way to get recognition as a designer'* (Designer D).

Designer E *'I think they do get recognition in Ireland but not enough outside'*

The designers were asked *'Do you feel that Ireland needs a luxury fashion brand such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen or Dior to boost the fashion industry in Ireland?'*

Designer A said *'In order to become a house hold name luxury brand you need to have this immense backing and finance behind your label and it would not be an Irish owned company, there are not the resources in Ireland for this or the fashion business knowledge or interest. Of course an Irish designer could be at the helm of a brand been funded by a large company as many of them already work for these houses'*.

Designer B stated *'That would be the dream!'*

Designer C *'As far as I am concerned there is no major fashion industry in Ireland. There are very few fashion industry related opportunities available to fashion/textile designers in Ireland. The industry in Ireland could never compare to the industry in London but I think that's ok. It's an unfair comparison. London is one of the main cities for fashion, Ireland just*

*so happens to be situated relatively close to London so it is natural that we compare our city to London. But if we look at what the fashion Industry is like in Glasgow or Edinburgh or Manchester I would say our fashion industries are doing just as well'*

Designer D *'Ireland has several luxury fashion brands which are not of the same size or scale as Chanel, McQueen, Dior. Of course having a designer of this size or scale would boost the industry here. Thankfully there are Irish designers such as Orla Kiely making this kind of mark in the industry, which is putting the spotlight on other Irish designers'*.

Designer E *'I don't know if Ireland will ever be a fashion capital. I know a few people who have taken their fashion careers abroad to London, Barcelona and New York'*.

The interviewees were asked if there *'are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand? Again since very little research has been carried out on the fashion industry this allowed for a clearer understanding of the opportunities available to Irish fashion designers. The findings showed that there is very little support for Irish fashion designers and it is sad to discover that much of the talent is moving away for better career opportunities. This had been mentioned briefly before in previous literature and it was stated that The majority of Irish design talent have had to leave the country to get better opportunities in countries such as Great Britain, Italy, France and the USA. Design graduates are faced with two choices, stay in Ireland and struggle to stay afloat in a small, quickly diminishing industry; or go abroad and find their footing in a well-established and supported industry (MacCabe, 2012). The findings from the interviews agree with the previous literature. This is a huge problem for the Irish fashion industry.*

Designer A said that *'There are not many opportunities in Ireland for fashion designers'*.

Designer B stated that *'a lot of young designers are leaving Ireland in hopes of getting more experience so they are moving away. As I talked about before it is only natural for designers to think of moving to London for more available opportunities. I would hope that designers*

would consider returning when setting up/growing their brand but many feel, myself included, that the opportunities available in London are far greater and easier to access than those within Ireland'

Designer C stated 'a bit of both I think! Some choose to give it a go here and some head overseas'

Designer D 'There are some opportunities in Ireland to grow a fashion brand, however I do feel that other countries such as the UK invest hugely in new fashion brands. This gives them a fast route to international market (for example NewGen in London Fashion Week) which is a huge boost to designers who are trying to grow their brand. Unfortunately for this reason, many Irish designers are moving away from Ireland to grow their brand'

Designer E stated 'I don't know if Ireland will ever be a fashion capital. I know a few people who have taken their fashion careers abroad to London, Barcelona and New York'.

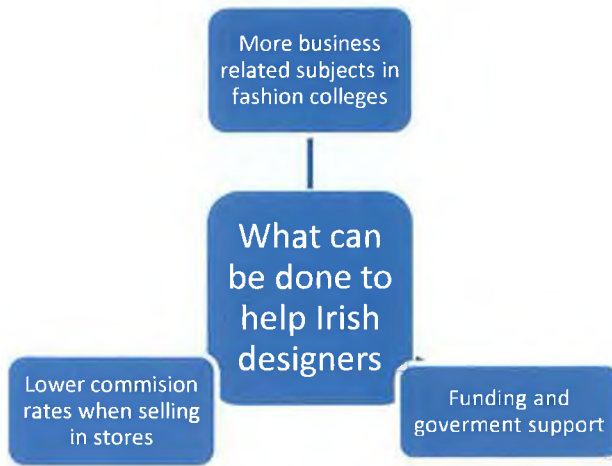
The designers were asked 'Do you feel that Irish designers receive enough support in the form of grants etc. from the government?' It has been discovered already in the interviews that the designers feel that there is a lack of government support and unlike the UK there is no fashion council to support designers.

Designer A and designer B said that 'No, there is little support available'

Designer C stated 'For young Irish designers there should be more government led initiatives for funding for business start-up'.

Designer D felt 'The support from Enterprise Boards is crucial to the development of fashion brands in Ireland and I feel that there is definitely more room for practical support in the form of trade show grants etc. These would help Irish designers to establish their brand outside of Ireland. This would improve export figures and in turn, help to boost the Irish economy'

Designer E *'No as far as I am aware the government don't give any funding to the designers*



**Figure 4.11-Help for Irish designers**

When the Irish fashion designers were asked *'was there anything that could be done to help fashion designers?'* As seen above in figure 4.10 there were a number of problems within the Irish fashion industry. Funding was the main theme from the answers however there was also some other suggestions.

Designer A stated that *'government funding would be appreciated and acknowledging that to show at LFW etc. costs up to €20,000 and each sample collection costs on average €10,000 plus trade shows, look books, travel, photo shoots, press on top of that. Without personal or Government funding it is very difficult'*.

Designer B suggested that *'Within art/design colleges I think business studies needs to be introduced as an optional but available extra study. Shops stocking young Irish design need to lower commission rates to make it easier and more profitable for young Irish designers who are only starting out to stock their collections in high end boutiques and shops'*.

Designer C was very lucky so far with her fashion brand and career and so she did not have any suggestions in relation to this question.

Designer D felt that *'there is definitely more room for practical support in the form of trade show grants etc.'*

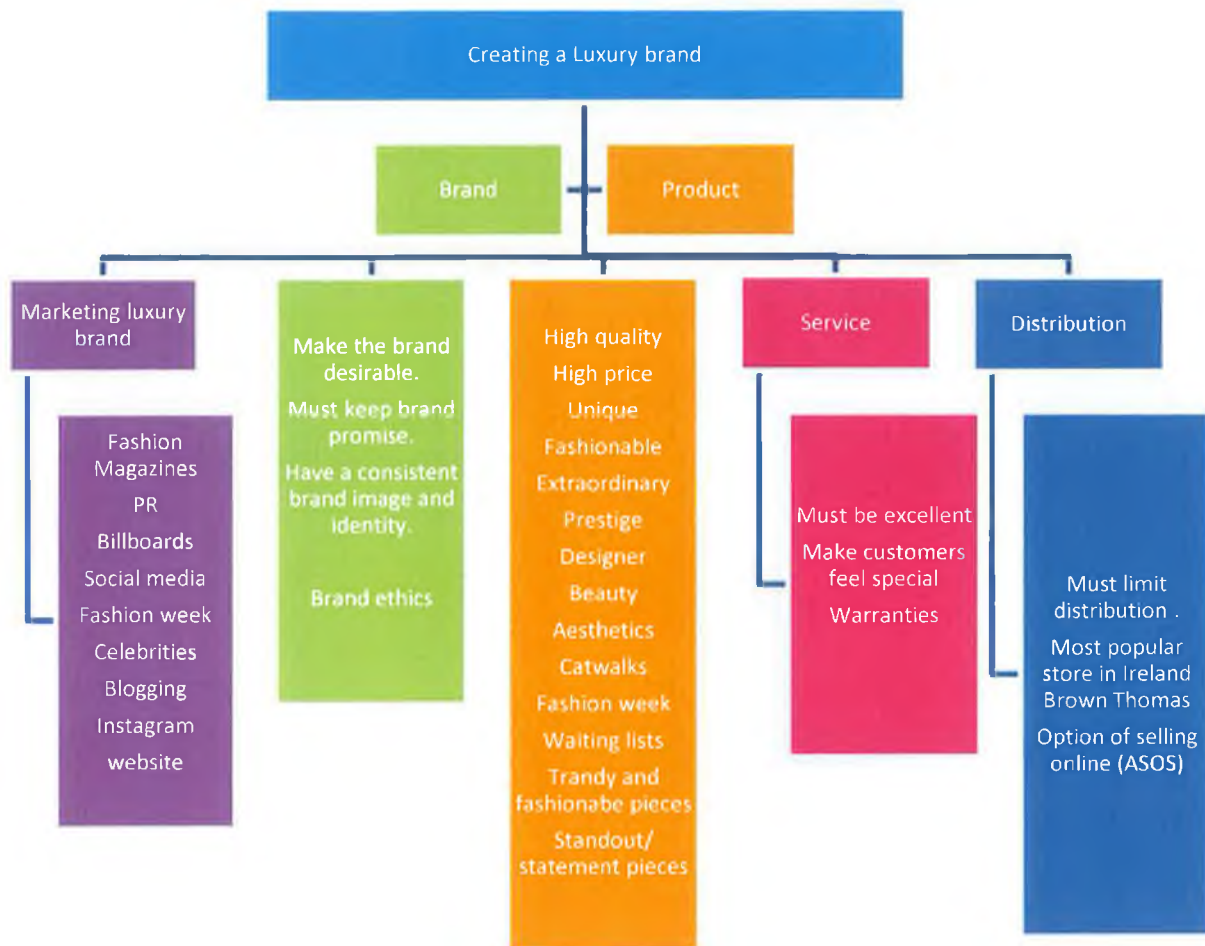
Designer E *'No as far as I am aware the government don't give any funding to the designers'*.

New findings show that there is a lot that can be done in order to help Irish fashion designers in Ireland. They do not receive any funding from the government and it is evident that this is a major problem within the Irish fashion industry. Secondly it has been discovered that designers feel that more business related subjects should be taught at fashion colleges to give designers the skills need to set up their own business. There is no fashion council in Ireland to support designers and it would be a great help for designers if one was set up. Manufacturing facilities also need to be improved greatly. These findings have not been stated before in previous literature and so a deeper understand of what can be done to help Irish designers has been gained.

The findings from the focus groups, interviews and examined literature has been inputted into this figure and it is essential that Irish fashion designers follow this method to create a brand which will be perceived as luxury. This model focuses on building the brand and creating luxury products. Studying previous literature on brand building enabled for a deeper understanding of how to build a strong brand and this is shown below in green. Secondly by achieving objective one \*which was to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand a more detailed understanding was gained and also new characteristics were discovered. These characteristics are included in the diagram in the orange, pink and blue and will allow the fashion designer to create products which will be perceived as luxury as they should take into consideration the characteristics listed. As the service experience was so important to the participants it is shown in pink how the fashion designer can ensure that their customers receive an excellent service. Distribution is shown in blue in the diagram and this is because fashion designers must understand how important it is to be selective when choosing where to



sell their products as it was evident from the focus groups that it is important to make luxury goods hard to access. Finally the purple section of the diagram represents the marketing techniques Irish fashion designers should use when advertising their brand. Marketing of luxury brands was discussed during the focus groups and the diagram was based on the main findings. This is shown below in Figure 4.12 and is discussed further below.



**Figure 4.12 Model to establish a luxury Irish fashion brand.**

Figure 4.12 shows how a luxury fashion brand can be created. The figure is colour coded and includes how to market a luxury fashion brand (purple), the determinants of a strong brand (green), the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand which must be followed when creating and designing luxury products (orange) the luxury service experience (pink) and finally the distribution of luxury fashion products.

In relation to characteristics this model includes the characteristics which Irish fashion consumers have identified as luxury. These include High quality, high price, rarity, fashionable, extraordinary, designer, aesthetics and prestige. In order to be perceived as a luxury brand the products must show these characteristics. New characteristics have emerged from the research; these include fashion weeks, catwalks, trendy and fashionable products, celebrities and waiting lists. When creating products Irish designers must take into account these characteristics as this is what will enable for their brand to be perceived as luxury

The findings showed that it is extremely important that luxury fashion products are highly priced in order to show they are of a high quality. As a result of the high prices the products will not be accessible to all individuals and this makes the items more unique and have the rarity factor which Irish consumers love. It must be a symbol of beauty which also is related to aesthetics. Fashion designers must provide superior quality goods and charge high prices if they want their brand to be perceived as luxury.

In relation to marketing the brand must create marketing campaigns which will help to create a brand that will be desired by consumers. Without awareness there is no desire and so it is so important that the marketing campaigns are suited to the luxury fashion consumers. The findings showed that the participant's, enjoy reading fashion magazines and feel that the luxury advertisements really stand out on the glossy pages of magazines. The younger consumers love looking up new trends using social media tools such as Facebook, blogs, twitter and YouTube. Mobile Apps are also becoming huge and instagram was another way which Irish consumers followed the latest trends. The designer must use a mixture of both in order to reach all ages and target a large market segment. This will also help them to create awareness of their brands worldwide.

In relation to the service that luxury consumers desire when purchasing the products, there are a number of ways in which the designers can ensure it makes them feel special. Service was discussed a lot in each focus group and this was a major reason that the participants loved buying luxury fashion products. An excellent service must be provided to their customers and staff selling the brand must be trained to provide such a service.

In relation to distribution many consumers travel to Dublin and bigger cities to purchase luxury fashion products. It is important that designers limit the stores where they sell their products as this portrays a luxury brand image. It also makes the products less accessible and so they will be more desirable as they are unique.

When building the brand there are a number of things which must be considered as shown in the green in figure 4.12. The brand image should build an emotional link with customers. The brands communicate their image through advertising, aesthetics and product design. The brand image must be consistent with the brand meaning. This will allow for consumers to have a relationship and trust for a particular brand. If the brand is using a celebrity to be the face of the brand they must understand the brand meaning in order to sustain a good brand image.

It was evident from the focus groups that luxury brands have the same characteristics however they have completely different images and identity. For an Irish fashion designer to create a luxury brand they must create a brand which has its own unique aesthetics which include the logo, monogram, trademarks and if they use specific colours. Brand identity refers to the brand culture, physical features, values and personality. This is linked with brand image. The finding's reflects Aakers brand equity model.

Brand ethics are becoming more important and this is relevant for luxury brands. Many participants in the focus groups said they loved hearing of luxury fashion brands being ethical and taking steps to protect the environment. They also liked to hear of brands sponsoring events such as Louis Vuitton sponsoring sailing events. This is good for brand image.

To conclude the main findings reflected that there are many problems within the Irish fashion industry which makes it very difficult for an Irish designer to develop a successful fashion brand. Funding is a major problem and the findings showed that there is no support for

designers from the Irish government. The UK have the British council of fashion designers which supports up and coming designers, a support group like this is needed in Ireland to help the talented designers shine. Designers feel they do not have the business skills needed to establish their own business and there is a lack of business subjects taught in fashion schools. There are no manufacturing facilities in Ireland so from these problems it can now be understood why there is no Irish luxury fashion brand. The characteristics of luxury fashion brands have been determined and some new ones have been discussed. Finally a model which will aid designers to build a luxury fashion brand was developed from the research findings.

#### **4.6: Reiteration:**

In summary the focus group findings have shown that there is a niche market in Ireland in regard to luxury fashion brands. It is evident from the focus group findings that Irish consumers would love to see a luxury fashion brand which is Irish and they would love to see Ireland been taken more seriously for its fashion as this would meet easier access to luxury products as more luxury brand stores would locate here. Many of the designers interviewed felt it was unfair to compare the Irish fashion industry to that of Ireland however some were more understanding stating it would be a dream to have successful luxury brands in Ireland.

It is clear that Irish consumers of luxury fashion brands feel that the main characteristics of luxury fashion brands are seen as, quality, high prices, great customer service experience, craftsmanship, rarity, fashionable pieces. They also mentioned new characteristics which were not present in previous literature which included catwalks, celebrities, statement pieces which stand out with luxury fashion brands. In order to create a luxury fashion brands Irish designers need to produce a brand and products which have these characteristics.

Irish consumers prefer to purchase luxury fashion brands in stores as oppose to online shopping. They really enjoy the service experience. The most popular stores are Brown Thomas, Harvey Norman and Arnotts. It was evident however that online shopping is

becoming more popular as it is very convenient and this was not mentioned in previous literature.

Purchasing a luxury fashion brand makes Irish consumers feel happy, excited, confident, successful and unique.

Irish consumers are very fond of reading fashion magazines however it is clear that social media is also become a very popular way to keep up with fashion trends. Irish fashion designers need to use a mixture of marketing methods in order to reach their target audience. Good PR is essential and bad PR would result in losing consumers. Good PR can be achieved by being environmentally friendly, doing good in the community and sponsoring charities and local events for example. There was some newness in relation to marketing and this was an increase in social media tools, app on mobile phones such as instagram and blogging.

There were many new findings discovered in relation to the Irish fashion industry and a deeper understanding was developed from the research. It is clear that many Irish designers find it difficult to create a successful fashion brand in Ireland. There is very little support for these fashion designers and the facilities are very poor. Creating a luxury fashion brand requires a lot of investment and as the Irish government do not provide support to Irish fashion designers many are moving away for better opportunities. The UK government support the UK fashion industry and so it is easier to launch a fashion brand here. If the Irish government were to support the Irish fashion industry they could reap the benefits of huge boost to the economy in return. In the UK “Fashion directly contributes nearly £21 billion to the UK economy. It also has an indirect economic impact, in encouraging spending in other industries, of over £16 billion. That equals a total impact of £37 billion” Tillman, H (2012).

There are poor manufacturing facilities available in Ireland so designers are forced to manufacture their products elsewhere like Designer A, who was in Bali while carrying out the interview.

The fashion industry in Ireland needs to be promoted more in order to be better recognised. It would be advised that that a long term cross-sector strategic plan is created to fund and build on Dublin and other Irish Fashion Week's in order to gain more respect for the Irish fashion industry. Getting luxury fashion brands involved would enable Ireland to grow as a fashion capital. From the focus groups it was evident that Irish consumers of luxury fashion follow fashion weeks and they get very excited about the new trends and collections on show so this is an area the Irish fashion industry must improve on.

The findings from this research also highlight that there is a need for Higher Education courses in fashion to contain greater entrepreneurial content as evident in the interviews that the designers felt this would be very beneficial. This would enable designers to have a better knowledge of how to create their own brand and start their own business.

#### **4.7 Conclusion:**

Within this chapter the main findings from the primary research were presented and discussed. Firstly a profile of the respondents who participated in the focus groups and interviews was given and the sampling procedure was discussed. The findings were then explained using the three research objectives. This was aided with the use of diagrams. Finally a reiteration of the main findings of each objective was the drawn up.

# **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations.**

## 5.1 Introduction:

The aim of this dissertation was to determine the methods which can be used by an Irish fashion designer to create a luxury fashion brand. The study was conducted in the Republic of Ireland. In order to answer the research question, it was necessary to evaluate not only the consumers perceptions of luxury fashion brands and the Irish fashion industry but also to assess the perception that Irish fashion designers have of creating and working within the Irish fashion industry. It was also important to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand.

Therefore, the conclusions and recommendations of this chapter are based upon the findings and analysis of the research gathered throughout this study, from secondary research in the form of a literature review and primary qualitative in the form of focus groups and in-depth telephone interviews. Limitations of the research and further research will also be presented in this chapter

## 5.2: Key issue 1 – Conclusion and Recommendations

To identify the characteristics of a Luxury fashion brand.

Luxury brands are evaluated by consumers based on the characteristics of luxury and so it was important to identify the characteristics of a luxury brand when conducting the focus group research. Previous literature had stated that the characteristics of luxury fashion brands are: exclusivity, scarcity, innovation, premium prices, high quality, craftsmanship, precision, outstanding customer service, powerful advertising, core competence, iconic product designs, the personality of the founder, exclusive retail locations, the brands name and visual symbols associated to the brand and its history (Okonkwo 2007 and Hines and Bruce 2007). The findings from the focus groups showed that the participants agreed with many of these characteristics and they referred to superior quality, rarity, high prices, trendy/fashionable, extraordinary, excellent customer service, prestige/craftsmanship, waiting lists, catwalks, fashion week, excellent marketing campaigns, and standout/statement pieces.



During the focus groups there were a number of new characteristics mentioned by the participants. The new characteristics stated included fashion weeks, catwalks, celebrities, trendy and fashionable products, statement/stand out pieces and extraordinariness.

The designer must produce products which are superior quality as this was the characteristic which was mentioned most frequently during the focus group meetings. To achieve this it is recommended that the designer uses materials and fabrics which are of a very high quality and choose a well-known production and manufacturing facilities when producing their creations. The products must be flawless and of an extremely high quality. If the products are not superior quality then the brand will simply not be perceived as luxury. The findings showed that participants view purchasing luxury products as a high involvement purchases and so they expect excellent quality as they are paying high prices for the products.

Price was also one of the most important characteristics of a luxury fashion brand. The price range in which the brand operates in allows customers to generate a mental luxury stature or image and so it is recommended that the designers understand how to price their products right. Irish designers must be careful when setting the prices of their creations if they want to be perceived as luxury then the price must be high. Setting the price lower than the consumer expectation and willingness to pay can potentially harm the brand value, whereas setting the price to high can result in potentially not giving the customer enough justification to go ahead and purchase the product. Without a high price, the goods are accessible to all individuals which means they are not scarce and so they will not be perceived as luxury. High prices, high quality and rarity were the top 3 characteristics mentioned by participants so one cannot stress enough how vital it is the price is high as it relates to both quality and rarity. The findings showed that consumers are willing to pay a high price for superior quality products.

It is highly recommended that Irish fashion designers use selective distribution channels. They must only sell their products in selected stores or websites. If they wish to be perceived as luxury they need to sell in stores such as Brown Thomas and Harvey Norman which were the most popular stores amongst participants of the focus groups. These stores sell other luxury products and so this will aid in developing a luxury status.

Participants related to waiting lists when discussing the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand. Waiting lists can also be related to the rarity factor. It shows that there are only a limited number of the products in the world and this makes the customer feel they are buying something really special. It is recommended that the designers limit their stock so that there will be a demand and desire for the products. Waiting lists also aid in creating a buzz about the new products being released.

It is vital for Irish fashion designers to ensure that customer service is of an excellent standard. The services surrounding each luxury brand can be viewed not only as an essential part of the products themselves but also as a differentiator for the brand. Customer service was one of the top reasons for which participants loved buying luxury products and so it is recommended that Irish fashion designers are aware of how important the service experience is in relation to brand success. It is recommended that employees who will be selling the brand are educated on the brand's promise and meaning and have excellent customer service skills.

Many of the participants referred to fashion weeks when discussing the characteristics of luxury fashion brands. It is recommended that Irish fashion designers get involved in the major fashion weeks as this will help the brand to be perceived as luxury and will create brand awareness internationally.

Participants identified luxury fashion brands as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Burberry, Stella McCartney, Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and Alexander McQueen. These brands were similar to those listed as the top 10 brands according to (Interbrand 2011). The findings showed that participants had very little awareness of Irish fashion brands. It is vital that changes are made. Irish fashion designers who aspire to be as successful as those luxury brands mentioned above must ensure that they are aware of the characteristics of luxury fashion brands and develop their products based on these.

It was evident from the findings that the participants expect to purchase trendy and fashionable pieces when purchasing luxury products and this was referred to as one of the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand by a number of participants. Another characteristic mentioned was standout and statement pieces. It is recommended that the designer is always innovative when creating luxury products because it was evident from the focus groups that the pieces must make the customer feel special and like a celebrity. They are willing to pay high prices in order to look good and stand out.

Participants identify a luxury brands from a premium brands in a number of ways. It is important to note that participants identify luxury brands based on their characteristics and when discussing how they distinguish between luxury brands and premium brands they mentioned a number of the characteristics which have been discussed above. The participants stated that the quality of luxury fashion products is much more superior to that of premium products. They also distinguish between luxury and premium brands based on the price. They expect to pay higher prices for luxury fashion brands. The service which you receive when purchasing luxury goods is also a major difference between the two brands. When purchasing luxury fashion products the participants described the service as '*more personalised you feel special*'. Another major difference is that luxury fashion brands are more unique. They are highly priced and available in selected stores only which makes them less accessible and scarce. The marketing campaigns for luxury brands are also very different to those of premium fashion brands and the findings showed that the participants felt that luxury advertising is of a much higher quality than that of premium brands and they stand out more. Luxury brands also use celebrities to endorse their brands. Other differences mentioned included detailed packaging and carrier bags was also discussed as another differentiator between luxury and premium. There is so much detail and effort put in to luxury products. It is recommended that the designer is aware of what distinguishes a luxury brand from a premium brand.

To conclude the focus group findings have enabled for the characteristics of luxury goods to be identified. A number of new characteristics which are not present in previous literature have been identified. These include trendy and fashionable products, standout and statement pieces, catwalks, fashion weeks, celebrities and extraordinariness. As well as these new

characteristics the main characteristics which are superior quality, high prices, rarity and prestige are also essential in order to be perceived as a luxury fashion brand. In order to prosper as a luxury fashion brand, the product offering must be enriched, the products must be expensive, there must be a focus on uncompromising quality and service, and finally the business must be run based on the needs of the truly affluent customer.

### 5.3: Key issue 1 – Conclusion and Recommendations

To assess the perceptions of Irish consumers of Luxury fashion brands.

It was important for this particular study to assess the perceptions of Irish consumers of luxury fashion brands in order to get a better understanding of their views on the Irish fashion industry and also about luxury brands in general and what their purchasing patterns were when buying luxury products. The focus group also allowed for a better understanding of the marketing of luxury fashion brands in order to view the best methods Irish fashion designers can use if creating a luxury fashion brand. Also questions related to the pricing of luxury products were asked in order to understand why consumers are willing to pay such high prices for luxury products. The focus groups allowed for sufficient research to be gathered in relation to the above topics.

The findings showed that the participants feel that luxury fashion brands each have their own unique image and identity and they are all known for different things. The image and identity of luxury brands is said to be communicated in a distinct, clear and consistent way. It is recommended that Irish fashion designers which relate to their brand image and promise in their advertising and marketing. The findings showed that luxury brands each have their unique identities and so the designer must think carefully about the image they want to portray to customers and use this in their marketing campaigns. They must stand out and be unique in order to be viewed as luxury

Previous literature stated that the ability to pay superior prices is seen as consumption that is primarily concerned with the flamboyant display of wealth and showing off (Dubois and Duquesne 1993). From the focus group discussions the findings showed that participants felt that individuals purchase luxury fashion brands for self-satisfaction, to treat oneself and for status. It was evident that luxury is a huge motivator for many of the participants and they work hard so that they can reward themselves with luxury products. This was not mentioned in previous literature and it is felt that this is important for the designer to note as they must create products that can make the consumer feel rewarded after they make a purchase. Another reason people purchase luxury products was said to be for personal satisfaction. Wearing luxury products makes many individuals feel great and more confident and as a result of this they are delighted when they purchase luxury products. It was also felt that some individuals buy luxury products as they feel that it boosts their status and they are perceived as successful by others however only a small number of participants stated this and the majority purchased as a reward or for personal satisfaction.

When the participants were asked how they feel when they purchase luxury fashion brands the main emotions felt were, happy, excited, successful, stylish and unique. It is highly recommended that the designer's create luxury products and ensure that an excellent customer service is received by the customer. This will enable for their customers to experience these emotions. This can also be achieved by ensuring the quality of the products is extremely high and that the designs are trendy, unique and chic.

Marketing of luxury fashion brands was also discussed during the focus groups research. The findings showed that participants seen luxury brands advertised on billboards, fashion magazines, social media sites such as YouTube, blogs, twitter & websites, celebrity endorsements and finally phone apps such as Instagram. It was evident that older consumers of luxury fashion brands were more aware of the traditional methods of marketing such as magazines and billboards whereas the younger participants loved using a both magazines and social media to view new trends and to watch catwalk shows from the different fashion weeks. Social media is a quick way of viewing the new collections and trends and it is great

because it is a cheap method for designers to use. In order to reach all ages of consumers it is recommended that in relation to advertising Irish designers must use a variety of traditional marketing techniques such as magazines and billboards however they must use internet and social media channels the findings showed that these are becoming increasingly popular. The research findings reflect that “Luxury brands are mixing the different marketing tools in order to reach all of their customers”. (Frings ,2008).This will allow for the brand to reach out to all age groups and grow awareness of the brand throughout the world.

It is also recommended that if the designer is using a famous figure to endorse the brand, the individual must be chosen very carefully in order to fit with the brand image and to ensure that the brand image is not negatively affected. It was evident that many individuals do look up to celebrities and copy their look and image and are inspired to wear what they are seen in. There were a number of individuals who did not agree however and they would not be influenced by a celebrity, they only buy products if they like them personally. It was also shown in the findings that magazines are the most popular tool that participants use for keeping up with new trends. Luxury fashion brand adverts were said to stand out as they are printed on a glossy pages within these magazines. The findings also showed that fashion week is very important to the participants who are all big lovers of labels and fashion. Fashion week made them really excited and they loved viewing what the next big trends were going to be. Fashion weeks are an excellent way of promoting collections and so to be recognised as a luxury brand Irish designers must invest in creating collection to show at these events. It would also be a great boost to the Irish fashion industry if big fashion brands were involved in the Irish fashion weeks.

There was a mixture of responses when participants were asked if they preferred to shop online or in store. It was clear that the excellent customer service experienced when purchasing luxury products is very enjoyable for luxury consumers. This was the main reason that in store shopping was more popular than online shopping amongst the participants. Brown Thomas, Harvey Norman and Arnotts were the three most popular stores where consumers purchase luxury products. There were also a number of participants who purchased online for convenience and this seems to be becoming very popular as many of the luxury stores are located in the major cities and so purchasing online saves travelling. It is

recommended that designers sell their products both online and in store to satisfy all customer needs. It is also recommended that designers limit the stores where they choose to sell their collections. The products must be difficult to access as this creates the rarity factor and makes the products more unique and this is what customers view as luxury. Asos and Net a porter were the main websites which luxury consumers use to purchase luxury fashion brands. If the Irish designer could sell on these sites as well as selling from the brands own website then this would cater for those who do purchase online and it would also create brand awareness as these websites are used by luxury consumers worldwide.

It was evident from the research that the participants would absolutely love to see a luxury Irish fashion brand being developed. The participants feel that they would enjoy purchasing a luxury fashion product even more if it was Irish. If a successful luxury Irish fashion brand was developed in Ireland this would allow for a boost to the Irish fashion industry and hopefully would allow Dublin to be seen in the future as a fashion capital.

To conclude, the focus groups findings have allowed for a deeper understanding of the perception of the consumer in relation to the pricing and marketing of luxury fashion products and preferred shopping methods for these products. The main findings showed that each luxury brand is seen to have the characteristics of luxury but are unique in terms of brand image and identity. In relation to marketing a mixture of both traditional and social media marketing techniques are recommended as this will enable the designer to reach a wider target market. At present shopping for luxury products is done mainly in store as the experience is enjoyed by many however it is recommended that the designer also sells online as online shopping is becoming increasingly popular and many participants stated that it was more convenient. Designers must limit the distribution of their brand to make it unique and scarce. The respondents expect to pay high prices in return for high quality products, excellent service and for unique product. The designer must be careful when selecting the price, to be perceived as luxury the price must be high. Finally it was clear that the participants would love to see an Irish luxury fashion brand being established. They feel it will boost the Irish fashion industry.

## 5.4: Key issue 3 – Conclusion and Recommendations

To establish a model which Irish fashion designers can use to create a Luxury fashion Brand.

The interview findings showed that the main difficulties in setting up a fashion brand in Ireland is that there is no government support for fashion designers or agencies such as the British council of fashion designers which is a huge help for designers in the UK. It was also evident that there are no manufacturing facilities in Ireland so this is another major difficulty for fashion designers. In general it is hard for designers to create a fashion brand that is unique to them. Approaching the retailers to sell your products and to trust in you was also an issue when developing a fashion brand. There was no previous literature available to identify the main difficulties of creating a fashion brand in Ireland. These findings allow for a better understanding as to why there is no luxury Irish fashion brand.

Creating a luxury fashion brand requires a lot of investment and as the Irish government do not provide support to Irish fashion designers many are moving away for better opportunities. The UK government support the UK fashion industry and so it is easier to launch a fashion brand here. If the Irish government were to support the Irish fashion industry they could reap the benefits of huge boost to the economy in return. In the UK “Fashion directly contributes nearly £21 billion to the UK economy. It also has an indirect economic impact, in encouraging spending in other industries, of over £16 billion. That equals a total impact of £37 billion” Tillman, H (2012). It is recommended that the benefits of having a successful fashion industry in Ireland should be promoted and discussed more with figures from the government as there is huge potential of improving the Irish economy.

The findings from this research also highlight that there is a need for Higher Education courses in fashion to contain greater entrepreneurial content as evident in the interviews that the designers felt this would be very beneficial. This would enable designers to have a better knowledge of how to create their own brand and start their own business.



Many of the interviewees felt they did not have the necessary business skills to launch their fashion brands and so a number of them have completed start your own business and finance courses to learn these skills. It would also help designers if shops stocking young Irish designs lower their commission rates to make it easier and more profitable for young Irish designers who are only starting out to stock their collections in high end boutiques and shops. It is recommended that designers partake in an evening business course which would enable them to learn the skills to run a business.

From the interviews it is evident that Irish designers would love to see a luxury fashion brand being established in Ireland. Designer D stated *'Ireland has several fashion brands which are not of the same size or scale as Chanel, McQueen, and Dior. Of course having a designer of this size or scale would boost the industry here.'* Some of the designers being interviewed felt that it was unfair to compare Ireland's fashion industry to London. Others such as Designer E were very honest and stated *'I don't think that the Irish fashion industry is not taken seriously. There are loads of fashion designers however none have become as big as these brands'*. It is clear from the interview finding that it may be unfair to compare Ireland to fashion capitals such as the UK and France however a previous report stated that United Kingdom and Ireland are seen as quite similar when it comes to fashion

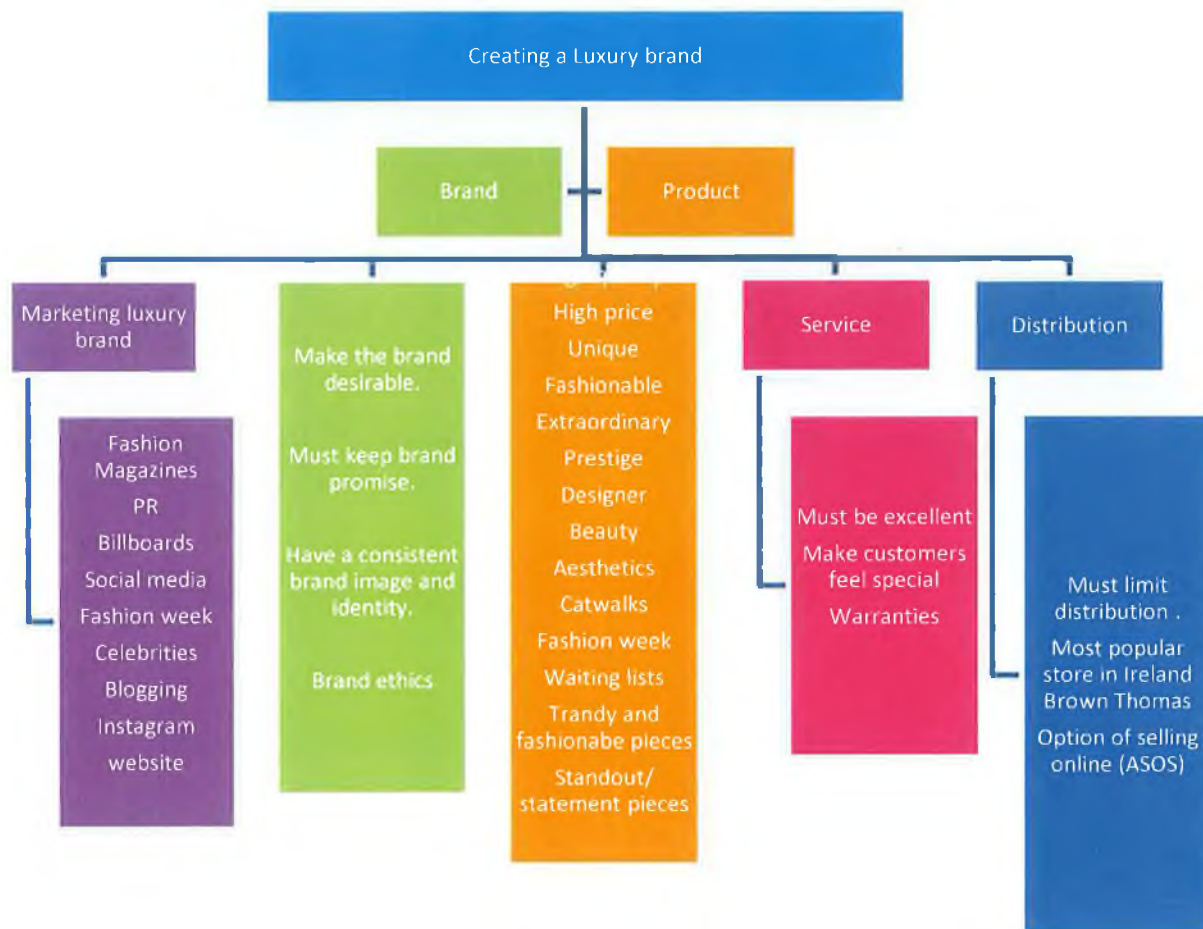
The interview findings show that there is not much support in Ireland for Irish designers and as a result of this many are moving away in order to create better opportunities for themselves in the UK and other European countries. Designer B *'a lot of young designers are leaving Ireland in hopes of getting more experience so they are moving away'*. As I talked about before it is only natural for designers to think of moving to London for more available opportunities. I would hope that designers would consider returning when setting up/growing their brand but many feel, myself included, that the opportunities available in London are far greater and easier to access than those within Ireland. Something has to be done to help Irish fashion designers.

The designers seemed hopeful that the Irish fashion industry was improving and many referred to designers such as Orla Kiely and Philip Treacey that are becoming well known

throughout the world. Designer D also feels that Ireland is not as recognised as a fashion industry when compared to the UK and France; however this is changing in Ireland as Irish fashion designers are increasingly getting acknowledgement for innovative, cutting edge design. These names were also mentioned by the participants of the focus groups which show that some Irish designers are finding success however these names are not luxury.

The findings showed that the Irish designers mainly used social media tools to advertise their brands. As discovered when carrying out the focus groups it is vital to also use traditional marketing tools such as magazines and billboard posters. This is the only way that Irish fashion designers can reach all ages. Irish consumers are very fond of reading fashion magazines however it is clear that social media is also become a very popular way to keep up with fashion trends. Irish fashion designers need to use a mixture of marketing methods in order to reach their target audience. Good PR is essential and bad PR would result in losing consumers. It is recommended that the designers don't just use social media tools alone for their marketing as it was evident from the focus groups that older consumers prefer to read magazines.

The findings of the focus groups and interviews allowed for a model to be established in order to aid an Irish fashion designer aspires to be successful and to create a luxury Irish fashion brand. The model includes what characteristics are needed for the brand to be perceived as a luxury brand, the service which needs to be provided to customers must be excellent. The shops which the collections are sold in must be selected carefully and as a result of the increase in online shopping it is advised to also offer customers the choice to purchase online. In relation to the brand itself, it is vital that the brand has a unique image and identity; the brand must keep its brand promise and be ethical. The brand must be marketed using a mixture of marketing tools such as magazines and social media. This is reflected in the diagram below:



**Figure 5.0 Model to build a luxury fashion brand.**

The model to build a luxury fashion brand as seen above in figure 5.0 was developed using the information gathered from the previous literature, the interviews with Irish fashion designers and the focus groups. As we can see figure 5.0 above there are many things which a designer must consider when establishing a luxury fashion brand. From the focus group findings the main characteristics of a luxury fashion brand were discovered. There were also a number of characteristics mentioned which had not been discussed in previous literature. It was vital for this study to identify the characteristics of a luxury fashion brand so that Irish fashion designers will be able to create their products and their brand based around these characteristics. If the Irish fashion designer does not include these characteristics when creating their brand and products then the brand will simply not be perceived as a luxury fashion brand.

As discussed in objective one the price of the products must be high in order to create the perception of quality and to make the brand more unique as it will be less accessible to all individuals.

Marketing is presented in the purple in figure 5.1. Without awareness there is no desire and so it is so important that the marketing campaigns are suited to the luxury market. The findings showed that the younger participants used social media to keep up with fashion trends and to follow brands whereas the older participants used traditional marketing materials such as magazines. As a result of this it is recommended that the Irish designer uses a mixture of both social media and traditional marketing tools in order to reach all of their target market. New findings showed that phone apps such as instagram and social media such as blogging are becoming increasingly popular and are new ways of creating awareness for their brands/

It was discovered in the findings that service is an extremely important part of purchasing luxury products. It is highly recommended that Irish designers are aware of how to provide their customers with an outstanding service and make them feel special. This can be ensured by educating sales staff where the products are been sold about the brand. It is vital to provide an excellent service as this is also a characteristic of a luxury brand and is one of the main reasons consumers purchase luxury fashion brands.

In relation to distribution it is recommended that Irish designers only sell their products in selected stores and it is also advised that they make their collection available online via a personal brand website, or popular fashion sites such as ASOS which has a luxury brand section and Net a porter which sells many luxury brands.

Previous literature helped to get a better understanding of how an Irish fashion designer can build a brand. In order to build a successful brand it is shown in the purple in figure 5.1 what

is important when building a brand. It is important that the brand image builds an emotional link with customers. The brands communicate their image through advertising, aesthetics and product design. It is also recommended that the fashion designer ensures that the brand image is consistent with the brand meaning. This will allow for consumers to have a relationship and trust for their fashion brand. It is highly recommended that if the Irish fashion designer decides to use a celebrity to be the face of their brand or wear their products they must ensure that the public figure understands the brands meaning. This will help the designer to sustain a good brand image. Finally it is also recommended that the designer makes the brand values extremely clear and reflect this in all marketing activities in order to build an emotional link with customers.

The findings showed that luxury brands have the same characteristics however they have completely different images and identity. It is recommended that the Irish fashion designer creates a brand which has its own unique aesthetics which include the logo, monogram, trademarks and if they use specific colours. Brand identity refers to the brand culture, physical features, values and personality. This is linked with brand image. The finding's reflects Aakers brand equity model. The Irish designer must make their brand stand out by creating a unique logo or monogram.

Brand ethics are becoming more important and this is relevant for luxury brands. It is highly recommended that the designer creates a good brand image by should ensuring that the products and packaging used for their collection and products is recyclable for example or they are involved in doing something good in the community.

To conclude the findings have shown that there is a lack of support for designers in Ireland when creating a fashion brand. This is in relation to government funding and also the lack of a fashion council. The manufacturing and production facilities are also said to be very poor and many designers do not have the skills and knowledge needed to set up their own business. Figure 5.1 has been developed using the previous literature studies, the focus group findings and the interview findings. It is important that when creating a luxury fashion brand the designer follows this diagram as it refers to how to build the brand itself, the marketing

and advertising of the brand, the distribution of the products, the characteristics of luxury fashion brands and creating an excellent customer service experience for the consumer. The characteristics of a luxury fashion brand have been discussed in detail and the luxury and the brand itself should be built based on these characteristics as are how consumers identify if the brand is luxury or premium.

## 5.5 Limitations

Due to the time and scope of this dissertation there are some areas that were not covered and require further investigation;

Firstly it was not possible to conduct focus groups with consumers of luxury fashion brands from all over Ireland and individuals who lived in Monaghan and Cavan were chosen as the sample for this particular study. Luckily there were some participants involved who were from Limerick and Kildare so this allowed for a better view but for future research a different geographic should be used.

Secondly, it was not possible to interview a large number of Irish fashion designers as they are extremely busy and in the summer months working on their autumn winter collections. Anything can happen in the fashion world and one designer stated that “I'm afraid I've had a pretty disastrous few weeks with serious production problems with my metal finisher that has put the whole future of my business in jeopardy. I've even had to let my PR representative in London go so I'm afraid it's not the best time to talk about my business, at the moment it always just ends in tears!” The researcher found it quite difficult to get interviewees. This is shown in the appendix D.

For this study Irish fashion designers were chosen as the interviewees in order to get a deeper understanding of the fashion industry from their point of view. It is felt that in the future it would be great to gather the views from figures who are involved in the fashion industry in

the UK or France to get a different aspect on the study and the views of fashion figures from outside of Ireland.

## 5.6: Further Research

The first issue/gap in research is based around the hypothesis as there is lack of awareness and understanding of how to build a luxury fashion brand. Many of the models which have been developed by (Keller 2001), (Kotler & Armstrong 2007) & (Aaker 2001) are based on building a brand in general but are not specific to luxury. A model has been developed which will help designers to create a luxury fashion brand this can be further developed for future research.

In recent years luxury fashion brands have begun to advertise using social media. Social media was very popular among the younger participants and they used social media sites such as Youtube and Twitter to follow fashion brands and new trends. Blogging is also very new and so there is a lack of literature available on this aspect of marketing for luxury fashion brands. Further studies into these methods of advertising should be carried out.

This particular study was focused on the consumers of luxury fashion products in Ireland and on Irish fashion designers. This study could be researched from a different angle using fashion figures from the well-known fashion capitals such as London, Paris and Milan. It would be interesting to see what the perception would be outside of Ireland to compare both.

One of the main problems Irish designers experienced was lack of support and funding from the Irish government. This problem could be further examined.

There is also no fashion council in Ireland to support Irish fashion designers. The UK fashion council gives excellent support and advice to designers creating brands in the UK and it would be interesting to interview members of this group in order to see how they perceive the Irish fashion industry and if they could give some advice to the Irish fashion designers.

Another problem Irish designer's experienced was the lack of business related subjects in fashion colleges. These are needed in order for the designers to be able to develop a business. It would be interesting to investigate the courses offered to students who attend fashion colleges as it was evident that there is very little business subjects offered to students it would help to discover if this is one of the reasons for which no luxury fashion brand has emerged from Ireland.

The model which is shown above in figure 5.1 should be tested and developed further.

It would also be interesting to carry out this research using the sample of male luxury fashion consumers as men because men are in recent years becoming more into their image and how they look.

## **5.7 Conclusion:**

This chapter provided conclusions and recommendations for each of the three objectives which are outlined in the introduction in regards to the research problem. From the findings gathered it is clear that there is the talent needed to create a luxury fashion brand in Ireland however with this comes many difficulties the biggest which is funding and manufacturing facilities. Many Irish fashion designers are moving away for better opportunities and something has to be done to change this or Ireland will lose a large number of its talented designers. As stated a good fashion industry will enable for a large boost to the Irish economy. The government really needs to do something to help Irish fashion designers. A model was established which includes the methods which can be used by an Irish fashion



designer to create a luxury fashion brand. Furthermore, the chapter concluded by stating the limitations of the research and areas where future research is needed.

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# Appendix A.

## Appendix A List of Designers who took part in the interview:

- Natalie B Coleman
- 
- Aisling Duffy
- 
- Jennifer Wynne
- 
- Jane Mc Kenna
- 
- Niamh O Niell



# Appendix B.

## **Appendix B – Interview questions.**

1. What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland?
2. What are/were the main difficulties if any in building your fashion brand in Ireland?
3. What marketing tools do you use to market your fashion brand?
4. Where do you sell your brand and who do you see as your target customers?
5. Do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it?
6. How do you feel Ireland is perceived for its fashion in comparison to countries such as France and the UK who have designers such as Chanel and Burberry
7. There are many talented designers in Ireland, do you feel they get enough recognition?
8. Do you feel that Ireland needs a luxury fashion brand such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen or Dior to boost the fashion industry in Ireland?
9. In your opinion, are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand?
10. Do you feel that Irish designers receive enough support in the form of grants etc from the government?
11. Is there anything you feel that can be done to give Irish designers more support?

# Appendix C

# Appendix C – Interview transcripts.

## **1. What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland?**

I did a 'Start your Own Business' course plus a short course on vat/tax and I applied to Leader for some start up funding. I also did a business plan.

## **2. What are/were the main difficulties if any in building your fashion brand in Ireland?**

Funding, there is no government support or agencies such as in the UK where you have the British Fashion Council, Fashion East etc. There is no manufacturing in Ireland and you do not have the skill set for sample machinists, production and so on.

## **3. What marketing tools do you use to market your fashion brand?**

I have an excel file where I add buyers, stores, stylists, bloggers, fashion journalists etc, I also have a press and sales agency in Holland. For AW14 I will have an agent doing Sales in Australia and Europe and I attended trade shows in Berlin and Paris.

## **4. Where do you sell your brand and who do you see as your target customers?**

I sell in 15 countries and see women from 18 -80 in NATALIEBCOLEMAN maybe a silk printed scarf or one of the python handbags that I am expanding on later this year.

## **5. Do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it?**

No, fashion is difficult for everyone it does not have anything to do with been Irish.

## **6. How do you feel Ireland is perceived for its fashion in comparison to countries such as France and the UK who have designers such as Chanel and Burberry**

It is pointless to compare as Ireland is a totally different country and has a different culture and history. I believe Ireland is very respected for its designers who have moved abroad and also its craft skills. It is of no benefit to compete with a major fashion city, Ireland should concentrate on celebrating fashion in a different way that is viable with our heritage.

## **7. There are many talented designers in Ireland, do you feel they get enough recognition?**

I think fashion is a difficult industry and that cream always rises to the top wherever anyone comes from.

## **8. Do you feel that Ireland needs a luxury fashion brand such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen or Dior to boost the fashion industry in Ireland?**

No, this question is not valid within the fashion industry in Ireland, all these companies mentioned above are owned as are all the fashion houses by a few companies.

In order to become a household name luxury brand you need to have this immense backing and finance behind your label and it would not be an Irish owned company, there are not the resources in Ireland for this or the fashion business knowledge or interest.

But of course an Irish designer could be at the helm of a brand been funded by a large company as many of them already work for these houses.

**9. In your opinion, are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand?**

There are not many opportunities in Ireland for fashion designers.

**10. Do you feel that Irish designers receive enough support in the form of grants etc from the government?**

No, there is little support available.

**11. Is there anything you feel that can be done to give Irish designers more support?**

As I said above, government funding would be appreciated and acknowledging that to show at LFW etc costs up to €20,000 and each sample collection costs on average €10,000 plus trade shows, look books, travel, photoshoots, press on top of that. Without personal or Government funding it is very difficult.

## **Designer B – Aisling Duffy:**

**1. What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland?**

Before I finished my undergraduate degree at NCAD I spent a lot of time researching, finding out what area I was interested in. I did markets where I sold my scarves. I began to build up my online presence with my online portfolio and blog. I approached the Irish Design Centre in Dublin (Powerscourt) with my graduate scarf collection. They were interested in stocking the collection and I have worked with them since.

**2. What are/were the main difficulties if any in building your fashion brand in Ireland?**

The main difficulties is how you can develop a brand that delivers something different and unique to you. Like the UK Ireland has a lot of talented young designers and every year more designers graduate from college. You really have to just keep working and never lose that momentum.

**3. What marketing tools do you use to market your fashion brand?**

For previous collections I have had work professionally photographed and as a result my work was featured in a number of magazines. I found this method shockingly expensive. As I also freelance as a graphic arts designer I designed a number of catalogues for my collections and worked with an Irish model, Aoife Walshe, on a number of photoshoots.

**4. Where do you sell your brand and who do you see as your target customers?**

In the past I have sold my collections at the Irish Design Centre. At present I have nothing stocked there as I took a break to complete my MFA in Textiles at The Edinburgh College of Art. Right now I want to set up a shop online to have access to a larger, international market.

5. Do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it?

Absolutely. Its hard anywhere. Hard work and constant dedication. And a lot of money to start up at the start too.

6. How do you feel Ireland is perceived for its fashion in comparison to countries such as France and the UK who have designers such as Chanel and Burberry

I think Ireland is not as highly regarded in terms of fashion compared to the Uk and France. I think Irish designers such as Simone Rocha and Una Burke who are based in London are thought of as being UK designers.

7. There are many talented designers in Ireland, do you feel they get enough recognition?

Within Ireland there is always a good amount of publicity given to Irish designers. The recognition Irish designers get within Ireland is good, but internationally it could be better. Irish programmes such as Epose constantly promote Irish design. Irish newspapers and magazines plug new Irish talent and even recently Irish Stores like Brown Thomas have collaborated with Irish artists for the displays in the shop windows on grafton street in Dublin.

8. Do you feel that Ireland needs a luxury fashion brand such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen or Dior to boost the fashion industry in Ireland?

As far as I am concerned there is no major fashion industry in Ireland. There are very few fashion industry related opportunities available to fashion/textile designers in Ireland. The industry in Ireland could never compare to the industry in London but I think that's ok. Its an unfair comparison. London is one of the main cities for fashion, Irealnd just so happens to be situated relatively close to London so it is natural that we compare our city to London. But if we look at what the fashion Industry is like in Glasgow or Edinburgh or Manchester I would say our fashion industries are doing just as well.

9. In your opinion, are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand?

I think a lot of young designers are leaving ireland in hopes of getting more experience are moving away. As I talked about before it is only natural for designers to think of moving to London for more available opportunities. I would hope that designers would consider returning when setting up/growing their brand but many feel, myself included, that the oppostunities available in London are far greater and easier to access than those wothin Ireland.

10. Do you feel that Irish designers receive enough support in the form of grants etc from the government?

For young Irish designers there should be more government led initiatives for funding for business start up.

11. Is there anything you feel that can be done to give Irish designers more support? Within art/design colleges I think business studies needs to be introduced as an optional but available extra study. Shops stocking young Irish design need to lower commission rates to make it easier and more profitable for young Irish designers who are only starting out to stock their collections in high end boutiques and shops.

## **Designer E- Jennifer Wynne**

### **1. What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland?**

After attending the Galway Races, I became passionate about hats. Each year I would promise to make my own hat for the following year. Finally as a New Years resolution in 2010, I decided to take up a new 'hobby' – I began taking millinery courses.

I became addicted to creating pieces! I would make a piece, photograph it, put it on facebook – People seemed to love my work. I then created a public business page on facebook for my designs. Between facebook and word of mouth, my business took off and has thankfully been thriving since!

### **2. What are/were the main difficulties if any in building your fashion brand in Ireland?**

I have been very lucky – With a lot of hard work and support, my business has flourished since I begun. I take one day at a time (And pray that it keeps going the way it is going!)

### **3. What marketing tools do you use to market your fashion brand?**

Facebook is my number one marketing tool. Over the past three years, I have built up over 11,000 followers on my page. I update it regularly with good quality photographs – I am lucky to receive lots of positive feedback – It is growing daily.

### **4. Where do you sell your brand and who do you see as your target customers?**

I sell my hats & headpieces through many boutiques across Ireland and the UK.

I also sell from my own studio – Along with my ready to wear collection, I have a bespoke order service . Clients come to me with a particular outfit which they would like a head-piece to compliment. When designing a hat, I considers elements such as shape of face, skin colouring and hairstyle. It is important to design the perfect piece as the wearer's personality and style must be reflected.

### **5. Do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it?**

I believe if you're good at what you do, your quality of work is high, your pricing is right and you're willing to work any amount of hours necessary, you will flourish!

### **6. How do you feel Ireland is perceived for its fashion in comparison to countries such as France and the UK who have designers such as Chanel and Burberry**

I was very lucky to work with Louis Vuitton for almost five years – They are an incredible brand with a long history. While these are huge names which grace the front covers of Vogue magazine etc, it's important to remember we have many talented and renowned designers here in Ireland too – Hat Designer Philip Treacy, Fashion Designer: Louise Kennedy etc

7. **Do you feel that Ireland needs a luxury fashion brand such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen or Dior to boost the fashion industry in Ireland?**

That would be the dream!

8. **In your opinion, are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand?**

A bit of both I think!

9. **Do you feel that Irish designers receive enough support in the form of grants etc from the government?**

No there isn't a lot of support for designers.

10. **Is there anything you feel that can be done to give Irish designers more support?**

## **Designer D – Niamh O Niell**

Niamh O'Neill

1. **What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland?**

Firstly I attended a 'Start Your Own Creative Business' course with the county Enterprise Board and made a business plan to mark out targets and objectives. I then got branding and website designed following this I designed my first collection and proceeded to sell to boutiques.

2. **What are/were the main difficulties if any in building your fashion brand in Ireland?**

I found that breaking in to the market in Ireland was challenging.

I found approaching retailers to buy into the brand was quite challenging as they have to trust that you will come up with the goods, deliver on time and that you won't disappear after one season. Resources are/were poor, for example, fabrics all have to be imported, manufacturing for the most part must be done abroad.

3. **What marketing tools do you use to market your fashion brand?**

Website, social media (facebook/twitter), I also get product shots done each season to be used for press.

4. **Where do you sell your brand and who do you see as your target customers?**



I sell to boutiques across Ireland, North and South.

Target customer is 30-50 year old professional woman.

**5. Do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it?**

It takes a huge amount of dedication to build a fashion brand in Ireland (or anywhere for that matter). In a global context, Ireland is not regarded as a country of cutting edge design, however I feel that this is changing and as the world becomes smaller (with internet, social media etc.) Irish designers are increasingly gaining credit for innovative design and are holding their own with other top designers all over the world.

I feel that as an Irish designer, it is important not only to design for the domestic market, but to think of the market as being international.

**6. How do you feel Ireland is perceived for its fashion in comparison to countries such as France and the UK who have designers such as Chanel and Burberry**

Historically countries such as UK and France have produced some of the world's best known designers and these countries continue to invest hugely in the industry. The scale of the fashion industry in Ireland is smaller and was better known for it's manufacturing, more so than design. I don't feel that Ireland has the same recognition in the fashion industry as the aforementioned countries, however this is changing as Ireland and Irish fashion designers are increasingly getting acknowledgement for innovative, cutting edge design.

**7. There are many talented designers in Ireland, do you feel they get enough recognition?**

There are many different types of talented designers in Ireland. Each designer is offering something different. I feel that within certain contexts, designers do get good recognition, however in many cases it is up to the designer to promote and create public awareness of their work. This is the only way to get recognition as a designer.

**8. Do you feel that Ireland needs a luxury fashion brand such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen or Dior to boost the fashion industry in Ireland?**

Ireland has several luxury fashion brands which are not of the same size or scale as Chanel, McQueen, Dior. Of course having a designer of this size or scale would boost

the industry here. Thankfully there are Irish designers such as Orla Kiely making this kind of mark in the industry, which is putting the spotlight on other Irish designers.

**9. In your opinion, are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand?**

There are some opportunities in Ireland to grow a fashion brand, however I do feel that other countries such as the UK invest hugely in new fashion brands. This gives them a fast route to international market (for example NewGen in London Fashion Week) which is a huge boost to designers who are trying to grow their brand. Unfortunately for this reason, many Irish designers are moving away from Ireland to grow their brand.

**10. Do you feel that Irish designers receive enough support in the form of grants etc from the government?**

**11. Is there anything you feel that can be done to give Irish designers more support?**

See answer 10.

## **Designer E – Jane Mc Kenna**

**12. What steps did you take when launching your own fashion brand in Ireland?**

I was fortunate enough to win fashion student of the year 2011. The prize included a year of Mentoring with Eddie Shanahan and A.i.b. Bursary award of €2,500. I designed and made a bridal collection which was showcased at the golden egg fashion show 2013 in Galway. I interned with a bridal company after I graduated from college to gain more experience.

**2. What are/were the main difficulties if any in building your fashion brand in Ireland?**

There is no manufacturing facilities in Ireland.

**3. What marketing tools do you use to market your fashion brand?**

I use word of mouth and wedding magazines.

**4. Where do you sell your brand and who do you see as your target customers?**

I have commissioned pieces for clients aged between 18-28.

**5. Do you feel that it is difficult for Irish designers like yourself to enter the fashion world and flourish in it?**

Yes it is hard. You have to have money to set up your label or be willing to be poor for a while and 100% dedicated to setting up your label even if it takes years. I will commission pieces for clients now and then but realistically im happier working with children in the art department.

**6. How do you feel Ireland is perceived for its fashion in comparison to countries such as France and the UK who have designers such as Chanel and Burberry?**

I don't think that the Irish fashion industry is not taken seriously. There are loads of fashion designers however none have become as big as these brands. Hopefully in the next few years this could change

**7. There are many talented designers in Ireland, do you feel they get enough recognition?**

I think they do get recognition in Ireland but not enough outside.

**8. Do you feel that Ireland needs a luxury fashion brand such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen or Dior to boost the fashion industry in Ireland?**

It would really boost the Irish economy if there was a big fashion brand from Ireland that would be great.

**9. In your opinion, are there good opportunities for Irish designers in Ireland in relation to fashion or are many moving away from Ireland to grow their brand?**

I don't know if Ireland will ever be a fashion capital. I know a few people who have taken their fashion careers abroad to London, Barcelona and New York.

**10. Do you feel that Irish designers receive enough support in the form of grants etc from the government?**

No as far as I am aware the government don't give any funding to the designers.

**11. Is there anything you feel that can be done to give Irish designers more support?**  
More funding and more business lectures in college. When studying I knew how to be a great designer not a business woman.

# Appendix D

## **Appendix D: Reasons why some designers could not participate:**

**Merle O Grady:**

Hi Shauna,

Thanks so much for your email. I'm afraid I've had a pretty disastrous few weeks with serious production problems with my metal finisher that has put the whole future of my business in jeopardy. I've even had to let my PR representative in London go so I'm afraid it's not the best time to talk about my business, at the moment it always just ends in tears!

Sorry I can't be more helpful at this time and the very best of luck with your research.

Warmest wishes,

Merle

**Nina Divito:**

Hi Shauna

I'm afraid Nina is away and she won't be back for over a month. She is getting married abroad. The best thing to do is email again in a month's time and she'd be more than happy to help then. Best of luck with everything.

Kindest Regards

Emma

**Philip Treacey:**

Hi Shauna,

Thanks for your email.

Unfortunately Philip is now away for a month so he won't be able to undertake your interview. I'm sorry we couldn't make it happen.

All my Best and good luck for everything.

Alessandra

**Lucy Downes**

Dear Shauna,

I would be happy to answer your questions, as your email is so gracious. We are under pressure this month.

Could you phone me next month? the number is 01 667 56 53.

With best regards,

Lucy Downes

Designer and Director

**Sophie Rieu**

Hi Shauna,

Thank you for your email. I m sorry I have no time to answer questions at the moment and until the week of 9th Sept, would you be so kind and re-contact me then and we could arrange a phone interview?

Best regards

Sophie Rieu

**Colin Horgan:**

Hi Shauna ,

I am soooooo sorry! I don't think I will be able to help you as things on my side are beginning to pile up and there isn't every enough I can get done in a day! I really want to give you long answers and right now I don't think I can. I am so sorry! If you ever need me todo a phone interview after September then I would love to do it!

So sorry again,

Wishing you all the best with your Thesis.

Colin.



# Appendix E

# Appendix E – focus group participants.

**Group 1:** Aoife Mc Adam  
:Roisin O’ Sullivan  
:Jennifer Hursonf  
:Lorraine Melhafy.

**Group 2:** Sarah Quinn  
Laura Quinn  
: Suzie Corbitt  
: Hannah Mc Cooley  
:Tara Cullen  
:Nuala Duffy

**Group 3:** Imelda O Sullivan  
Margaret Kane  
Monica Corr  
Carmel Thornton  
Bridie Mc Adam  
Frances Farrell

**Group 4:** Andrea Boyd.  
Nicola Boyd

Emily Mallon

Melissa Graham

Amber Reid

Nadine Reid

**Group 5:** Sinead Mc Kenna,

Emer Mc Kenna

Donna Evans

Roisin Mc Adam

Rose Evans

Rossa Mc Kenna

**Group 6:** Patricia O Sullivan

Margie O Sullivan

Mary Siggins

Amy Siggins

Marie O Sullivan

Lucy O Sullivan



# Appendix F.



Recognise the brands above? Do you desire luxury fashion products? If so I would you be interested into in participating in a focus group in which luxury fashion brands will be the main topic. This is as part of my dissertation which I am doing as part of my Masters in marketing so I would be so grateful for your time and input. If interested please call me on 086 -2488821.

Thanks

Shauna O Sullivan

# Appendix G

## **Appendix G: Questions for Focus Groups:**

### **General Questions about luxury fashion brands:**

1. What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?
2. Can you name 3 words that come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?
3. Are there any Irish luxury fashion brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury fashion?
4. Why do you think people have a desire for luxury products?
5. How does purchasing a luxury fashion item make you feel?
6. Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?
7. Do you consider luxury products as an artificial need?
8. How important is it to you the customer that a brand communicates the same image and identity in photos and other marketing tools??
9. What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands in terms of image and identity?
10. Is the promise the brand makes to you important?

### **Marketing of luxury brands:**

1. Where do you see luxury fashion brands advertisements?
2. How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?
3. Which fashion magazines if any would you read?
4. Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines are a measurement tool of a luxury brands success?
5. How important are the public relations for the luxury brands?
6. Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?

### **Shopping for luxury brands:**



1. Has your awareness about the luxury brands increased due to the use of internet and online shopping?
2. Where do you (the customer) shop for luxury items the most?
3. Do you prefer to purchase luxury products online or in a store?

**Price**

1. Do you think having a higher price gives the brands a certain status?
2. What do you expect when you purchase a luxury product at a high price?

**Irish fashion:**

1. Would you like to see a luxury Irish fashion brand?
2. What are the main reasons Ireland has not a luxury fashion brand do you feel?

# Appendix H

## **Appendix H: Focus group scripts:**

### **Focus group 1:**

**Q1: What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Guicci Prada Dior

Resp 2: Michael Kors, Stella Mc Carthney and Burberry.

Resp 3: Louis Vuitton, Versace, Prada.

Resp 4: D&G , Alexander Mc Queen, Valentino

**Q2. Can you name 3 words that come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: One of pieces, Rare, high price.

Resp 2: Unique, exclusive, high quality

Resp 3: Fashionable, Quality, Rarity, Desirable

Resp 4: Expensive, Unique

**Q3: Are there any Irish luxury fashion brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury fashion?**

Resp 1: No I can't think of any

Resp 2: No gosh none come to mind.

Resp 3: No I don't know any

Resp 4: Philip Treacy the hat designer is all I can think of. They royal family wears them.

**Q4: Why do you think people have a desire for luxury products?**

Resp 1: It's a status thing and people want to show off their wealth so they buy luxury products.

Resp 2: Wearing luxury brands make me feel superior to other people.

Resp 3: Wearing luxury brands gives the impression that people are rich and successful.

Resp 4: I agree I feel proud when I wear luxury branded items.

**Q5. How does purchasing a luxury fashion item make you feel?**

Resp 1: It makes me feel stylish and confident.

Resp 2: I love the feeling after buying a luxury item and having the branded bag on your shoulder it makes me feel happy and excited to wear it.

Resp 3: You cant wait to get home and try it on its so exciting.

Resp 4: It makes me feel happy and I feel excited to wear it.

**Q6 Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?**

Resp 1: Luxury marketing stands out more so than that of premium fashion brands. They are more exclusive. This is similar amongst all Luxury fashion brands in their advertising.

Resp 2: No I think that they are different for example Guicci and Chanel are portray very different images.

Resp 3: They are all high quality and expensive and you expect this when you purchase any luxury fashion brand.

Resp 4: They all stand out more than adverts from Zara and H&M. I have never seen an advert for Zara.

Resp 1: I feel that luxury brands are aimed at people who have a high disposable income however their advertisements make normal people have a desire to own the products. The advertisements are more desireable than those of premium brands.

**Q7 Do you consider luxury products as an artificial need?**

Resp 1: Yes I think they are an artificial need but having them makes me feel better.

Resp 2: Yes they are an artificial need definitely. You don't need fashionable clothes you need food and water but when you work hard and earn money you have the right to buy whatever you want to make you feel good.

Resp 3: No I feel I deserve to buy luxury products I work hard.

Resp 4: It is an artificial need but I love buying luxury products.

**Q8 How important is it to you the customer that a brand communicates the same image and identity in photos and other marketing tools??**

Resp 1: I think it is really important, you are paying a high price so it is essential that you get the exact same product that is promised and shown in advertisements.

Resp 2: You are paying a Lot of money so it is important the products are good quality

Resp 3: Buying luxury products is an investment and it is very important that they are of a high quality and the same as what we see in magazines and billboards.

Resp 4: Yes the company must keep its promise.

**Q9: What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands in terms of image and identity?**

Resp 1: When I think of luxury brands I think of celebrities, status and quality. Compared to stores like penneys and even topshop the material and quality is a lot better even though the price is higher.

Resp 2: When you pay for a luxury product you feel as good as the clothes you are wearing. If I was in a penneys tracksuit I would feel underdressed if I was in a luxury branded tracksuit I would feel much better even if it is just around the house or for running into town.

Resp 3: I think its ok to mix and match high street with luxury branded products but I do think that luxury items are more desirable. It's quality and not quantity with luxury brands. When you go into brown Thomas you buy less for your money and it's a big investment. You get better use out of your product.

Resp 4: Everyone can buy premium products they are so much cheaper and more people wear the same thing ,but they don't last as long. I always say buy cheap buy twice.

**10. Is the promise the brand makes to you important?**

Resp 1: Brand promise is very important. Companies should stand by their brands. If I am buying Chanel makeup I would hope it is not tested on animals.

Resp 2: Yes if spending money on a handbag it should be real leather.

Resp 3: Yes the brand must deliver on their promise.

Resp 4: Yes not so long ago penneys was accused of using child labour when making their products and I feel that Luxury Brands would not be involved in things like this because I am paying so much money. If they were I would not buy from them.

## **Section 2: Marketing of luxury brands:**

### **1. Where do you see luxury fashion brands advertisements?**

Resp 1: Magazines like look and stella

Resp 2: magazines and the internet like twitter and fashion blogs

Resp 3: Billboards and Tv shows like the Kardashians.

Resp 4: Celebrity bloggers are very popular now like so sue me blog, On the internet you can see what celebrities are wearing.

### **2. How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?**

Resp 1: yes I feel I would because I like to afford what they can afford and wear so that people think oh she looks like them.

Resp 2: I wouldn't buy them just because a celebrity was endorsing the product or was wearing it.

Resp 3: Using celebrities helps to get the fashion message across because people look up to celebrities and want to be like them and have what they have.

Resp 4: It's a very smart marketing tool because people follow different celebrities and want to be like them.

### **3. Which fashion magazines if any would you read?**

Resp 1: Tatler ,Stellar

Resp 2: Look, Hello, Vogue

Resp 3: In style, cosmopolitan

Resp 4: Vogue and Ok

**4. Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines is a good marketing tool for luxury fashion brands ?**

Resp 1: Yes it portrays a good image and they are on glossy pages which stand out and make the brand more desirable.

Resp 2: Yes it grabs attention.

Resp 3: It allows companies to get their latest trends out their first before others can copy them.

Resp 4: Yes it is important that they advertise in magazines because a lot of luxury products are not available in smaller towns in Ireland and mostly cities so it reaches everyone.

**5. How important are the public relations for the luxury brands?**

Resp 1: Using the example of child labour I mentioned earlier if I heard a luxury brand was involved in this I wouldn't purchase from that brand.

Resp 2: PR gives the company a good reputation in general as it gives them a good reputation. The environment is really important to a lot of people these days so it is important that companies don't be involved in anything that damages the environment.

Resp 3: It is important to me that companies do good and are involved in charities.

Resp 4: Yes when a company is linked to a charity it makes you feel like your money is going towards a good cause.

**6. Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?**

Resp 1: I would look up fashion bloggers to follow the latest trends as they usually write up about these and the brands usually have clips from the show on youtube.

Resp 2: I watch the tv show on rte xpose they always show clips from fashion weeks.

Resp 3: I would look at what is on the catwalk in magazine.

Resp 4: they now show clips on youtube I would mainly look up the different fashion weeks here.

### **Section 3: shopping for luxury fashion brands:**

#### **1. Has your awareness about the luxury brands increased due to the use of internet and online shopping?**

Resp 1: Yes I get emails all the time from different brands letting me know whats new and if there is any offers.

Resp 2: I sometimes get letters or a postcard in the post from different brands to let me know whats new. The internet has allowed the world to become a smaller place and we can now see what celebrities are wearing and follow trends easily. You can now see where the products are available and who the designer is. Its more instand and effective

Resp 3: I shop on ASOS a lot and they seem to be providing a lot more luxury brands than they use to.

Resp 4: Yes the fashion blogging has increased a lot in the last few years and there is a lot of fashion pages on twitter and facebook.

#### **2. Where do you (the customer) shop for luxury items the most?**

Resp 1: Brown Thomas

Resp 2: BT2 is also good and Harvey Nichols

Resp 3: Selfridges in London if I am away.

Resp 4: I would mainly buy online instead of traveling to Dublin or Galway to bt. I would buy of asos and a company's own website.

#### **3. Do you prefer to purchase luxury products online or in a store?**

Resp 1: You know when you buy online it will be good quality and the sizes are usually very accurate but I do prefer to shop myself.

Resp 2: Sometimes I have problems when I buy online not with the products mainly because I am short and what looked well on the model is too long on me.



Resp 3: I prefer to shop in store, the experience is brilliant.

Resp 4: I like to try on the products and I hate the waiting when you order online.

#### **Section 4: Price**

Resp 1: I would say because the products are unique and better quality. Not everyone will have them.

Resp 2: Products are such a high quality.

Resp 3: they use quality materials like real silk real leather and real fur unlike knock off brands.

Resp 4: Yes it's the quality you pay for.

#### **2. What do you expect when you purchase a luxury product at a high price?**

Resp 1: It's important that price is high so that not everyone can buy the products.

Resp 2: It is good to compare prices online and in shops but a high price shows its real and high quality.

Resp 3: Price makes it more exclusive not everyone can afford it so it has the rarity factor.

Resp 4: I pay high prices because I Know I am getting great quality goods.

#### **Irish fashion:**

##### **3. Would you like to see a luxury Irish fashion brand?**

Resp1: Yes I think it would allow Ireland to be taken more seriously for fashion. The fashion weeks here are nothing compared to London Paris New York and Milan. There is no buzz so something has to be done to make Irish designer more successful.

Resp 2: Yes like when you go to France and Italy and go shopping you see the streets lined with designer stores its different in Ireland. If there was a luxury fashion designer I think more luxury brands would pay attention and show interest in opening stores up here. It would be great iif Dublin was more like London.

Resp 3: Yes to know that you are paying high prices , getting quality goods but supporting an

Resp 4: Yes I think the Irish fashion industry needs a boost, there are loads of talented designers I read about them in Irish fashion magazines and newspapers but they just aren't seen as luxury.

**Q2. What are the main reasons Ireland has not a luxury fashion brand do you feel?**

Resp1: I think Ireland needs to focus more on fashion have a better fashion week and more fashion events to be taken more seriously.

Resp 2: I think that magazines like U and stellar need to promote Irish fashion as well as the likes of Chanel and Dior.

Resp 3: Yes I think there is a lot of Irish designers out there they need to market themselves more and work more on getting recognised.

Resp 4: Yes many Irish celebrities wear dresses from Irish designers but I think its important that international celebrities are sent pieces by these Irish fashion designers to get the brand more recognised.

**Focus Group 2:**

**6 participants – Sarah, Laura, Suzie, Hannah, Tara , Nuala**

**General questions:**

**Q1: What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Valentino, Alexander Mc Queen

Resp 2: Chanel, Burberry, Louis Vuitton

Resp 3: Versace, Chanel, Marc Jacobs

Resp 4: Louis Vuitton, Yves Saint Laurent

Resp 5: Jimmy Choo, Chloe, Louis Vuitton.

Resp 6: Burberry, Mulberry, Chanel

**Q2: Can you name 3 words that come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1 : Classy, expensive, quality

**Resp 2:** Heritage, French, Italian

**Resp 3:** Fashion week, One off pieces, extraordinary

**Resp 4:** Unique, show off, high prices

**Resp 5:** Investment, Celebrities, unique

**Resp 6:** quality, fashionable, designer, extraordinary

**Q3. Are there any Irish luxury fashion brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury fashion?**

**Resp 1 :** Orla Keily but I wouldn't consider her up there with Louis Vuitton for example.

**Resp 2:** Philip Treacey is well known but he only designs hats.

**Resp 3:**No I can't think of any Irish designers that are really famous.

**Resp 4:** No none really come to mind for me.

**Resp 5:** No none come to mind for me.

**Resp 6:** John Rocha but his collection is affordable.

**Q4: Why do you think people have a desire for luxury products?**

**Resp 1 :** I feel I am emotionally attached to some of the luxury brands.

**Resp 2:** I work hard and I buy luxury items to treat myself and cheer myself up.

**Resp 3:** I think many people like to portray that they are successful in life and wearing luxury brands shows that they are successful. I think it is like a car if you are doing well you want a BMW or a Mercedes.

**Resp 4:** Yes I also think it is a lot to do with status but I personally buy luxury goods as they make me feel really good and confident in myself.

**Resp 5:** The quality of luxury goods is far better than high street products and they are worth the money, they last for ages and they don't go out of date easily.

**Resp 6:** There are a lot of dress hire shops now where any ordinary person can rent a dress for a special occasion which would cost thousands to buy. I think people are following

celebrities more due to apps like instagram and many buy or rent luxury items to feel and look like a celebrity.

**Q5. How does purchasing a luxury fashion item make you feel?**

**Resp 1 :** I feel confident when I buy a luxury item that is on the arms of celebrities or in glossy fashion adverts.

**Resp 2:** I feel really happy and excited. I buy luxury items for self -fulfilment I don't really care what people think to be honest.

**Resp 3:** There is something about the experience when buying a luxury product it's different to that of buying in Penneys. It makes me really happy.

**Resp 4:** I feel good in myself. (confident)

**Resp 5:** I feel like I have achieved what I want in life and it motivates me to keep working hard so I can always afford luxury brands.

**Resp 6:** I can't explain the feeling I get butterflies sometimes, it's like you fall in love with a piece of clothing a pair of shoes or a bag. You look after them like they are a child and wear them with pride.

**Q6: Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?**

**Resp 1:** Price and unique products.

**Resp 2.** High quality products and price is usually very high.

**Resp3:** Generous warranties on products so you know quality is good.

**Resp4:** The packaging is always very detailed.

**Resp5:** The high prices make the brands less accessible. This makes the products more unique.

**Resp6:** Yes I agree this makes the products have the rarity factor.

**Q7. Do you consider luxury products as an artificial need?**

**Resp 1:** My family are most important to me but I make sure they have all they need and then I treat myself. I wouldn't say it is a need but I am addicted to buying luxury items.

**Resp 2:** I love being fashionable so I would say it is a need for me. To be happy I need to feel good about myself so I need to dress the best I can.

**Resp 3:** I think the fact that not everyone has luxury fashion items makes me want them more. I feel happy when I wear these brands so I think in a way I do need them and it's not an artificial need.

**Resp 4:** I work hard and I think it is rewarding to treat myself. I wouldn't say I need to so yes it would be an artificial need for me.

**Resp 5:** Yes it's an artificial need but I can't imagine not shopping in brown Thomas.

**Resp 6:** The adverts make you really want the products so I would say it's more of a want than a need.

### **8. What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands in terms of image and identity?**

**Resp 1:** Luxury fashion is more exclusive than premium brands. They take more time to make and it shows as the quality is always excellent.

**Resp 2:** The price and quality are the main differences.

**Resp 3:** You have to go to bigger cities to buy luxury brands. The stores that you can buy these brands in are limited.

**Resp 4:** You might have to be put on a waiting list to buy a luxury item this wouldn't usually happen in a store like Penney's. There are sometimes only a limited number of the items made.

**Resp 5:** Luxury fashion brands have excellent marketing campaigns. They make you have a desire for the products. They really stand out on glossy magazine pages and the adverts often have well known models or celebrities.

**Resp 6:** The items are more unique and more expensive than premium brands.

### **Q9: Is the promise the brand makes to you important?**

**Resp 1:** Yes it is important that the brand fulfils its promise. The items must be great quality and unique.

**Resp 2:** Yes definitely they must be trendy, unique and really good quality.

**Resp 3:** Yes they must have the glamour factor that we expect from these luxury brands.

**Resp 4:** Yes the items must be high quality and standout.

**Resp 5:** Yes the pieces must be elegant and glamorous. They are investments so the quality and materials used must be very good quality.

**Resp 6:** Yes its important they keep their promises, Gucci went green a few years ago this was one of their promises I heard about so it is good that they show interest and keep this promise.

### **Marketing of Luxury goods:**

#### **1. Where do you see luxury fashion brands advertisements?**

**Resp 1;** Magazines, social media sites

**Resp 2:** Billboards, Internet, Movies

**Resp 3:** Youtube, magazines, newspaper.

**Resp 4:** Social media, TV,

**Resp 5:** Fashion blogs, magazines

**Resp 6:** Celebrity endorsements, magazines

#### **2. How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?**

**Resp 1;** It can be risky for the business if something bad happens the face of the brand it can have a bad effect on the brand. When I hear of the incident of John Galliano saying racist remarks to a couple in a café in France I was a bit put off investing in the Dior brand. It was good that they got rid of him.

**Resp 2:** I think its very smart for brands to use celebrities but the celebrity must be the right fit. Nicole Kidman for Chanel was a good fit.

**Resp 3:** Emma Watson was the face of Burberry this made me more interested in the brand.

**Resp 4:** I wouldn't buy something just because I seen a celebrity with it so I don't think its important.

**Resp 5:** I think seeing a celebrity with a product would make me want to have it. It would make me feel special.

**Resp 6:** I think if the celebrity understands the core values of the brand it will be successful.

### **3. Which fashion magazines if any would you read?**

Resp 1; Hello, Glamour

Resp 2: Look, OK

Resp 3: U, Tatler

Resp 4: Stellar, Vogue

Resp 5: OK, Tatler

Resp 6: Vogue, Hello

### **4. Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines is a good marketing tool for luxury fashion brands?**

**Resp 1;** Yes I would read fashion magazines regularly to keep up to date with trends.

**Resp 2:** Yes it's a great way to see what the new trends are this season but I think internet and social media is also very important tools.

**Resp 3:** Yes I do buy fashion magazines and the ads really stand out on the glossy pages but I think it's important to have a twitter and facebook account.

**Resp 4:** I think it is a good way of reaching people like myself who live in Monaghan and can't just go into Brown Thomas or Harvey Norman to see what's new each season so magazines help me to keep up to date with new styles.

**Resp 5:** Yes I always buy fashion magazines to see what is the latest handbags, shoes and fashions.

**Resp 6:** Yes I think it is a good way of advertising to customers and creating a desire.

### **5. How important are the public relations for the luxury brands?**

Resp 1; Yes bad PR can affect your opinion of the firm, when Galantino was arrested and charged he was let go straight away from Dior but I read that sales still dropped so its important to hear positive stories.

Resp 2: Yes good Pr is very important when you are paying a high price you expect the company to be good to society.

Resp 3: Yes it's important that celebrities who wear the brand have a good image.

Resp 4: Yes if I heard that a luxury fashion brand was using child labour I would not purchase from them.

Resp 5: I think that luxury fashion brands need to always be classy and have positive PR.

Resp 6: It would be disappointing to read or hear of luxury fashion brands doing wrong I wouldn't want any of their products if I heard anything bad.

**6. Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?**

Resp 1; Yes in magazines or on Youtube it's great to see what is new.

Resp 2: I use social media to look up these images.

Resp 3: I mostly would buy fashion magazines.

Resp 4: I would watch tv shows and look online. They are important.

Resp 5: I would use social media.

Resp 6: I would use magazines. They are important every wants to see whats new.

**Price**

**1. Do you think having a higher price gives the brands a certain status?**

**Resp 1:** Yes having a high price sets it apart from premium brands and makes it exclusive

**Resp 2:** Yes if it wasn't highly priced buying it wouldn't be as rewarding.

**Resp 3:** Yes it makes it stand out and more desirable than premium brands.

**Resp 4:** Yes the price helps to separate it from premium and high street brands.

**Resp 5:** Yes it feel like I am buying a luxury brand if the price wasn't high.

**Resp 6:** Yes it wouldn't be unique everyone would own it if it was low prices.

**2. What do you expect when you purchase a luxury product at a high price?**

**Resp 1:** Good service, quality, stylish products

**Resp 2:** Unique products, good quality

**Resp 3:** To feel great and happy, good experience and service.

**Resp 4:** confident, satisfied sophisticated, great quality

**Resp 5:** Quality Goods, good craftsmanship

**Resp 6:** Great experience when buying, good quality no faults and life time investment.

Irish Fashion industry:

**4. Would you like to see a luxury Irish fashion brand?**

**Resp1:** Yes it would be great to have a Luxury Irish fashion brand it would make other designers work towards this as well.



Resp 2: Yes it would be great to see a successful designer coming from Ireland there are a few like Philip Treacy who is known worldwide but we need a fashion brand who sell bags clothing and shoes.

Resp 3: Yes most Irish designers are premium brands and their pieces are affordable. They need to be classier and use better materials.

Resp 4: Yes it's all about quality and status if an Irish designer could create a trendy brand I would definitely purchase the products and pay high prices.

Resp 5: Yes it would be great to see Irish fashion designers create luxury fashion brands, it would help the economy as well if they were successful and internationally recognised.

Resp 6: Yes it would be super so many people in Ireland love fashion so they would have a great following. They need to advertise in glossy magazines and make the brand look luxurious and create a desire for their products to be as good a Chanel.

Resp1: I think fashion is only becoming more important in recent years in Ireland so ,maybe this is a reason why there is no luxury fashion brand.

Resp 2: Maybe with the state the economy is in designers don't think there is a market. People always want luxury products though so I think they should go for it.

Resp 3: Yes I would say they don't realise there is a market.

Resp 4; After they leave college they may not be able to afford to design and just work in the fashion industry instead.

Resp 5: Im not sure why.

Resp 6: I think it is just because Ireland isn't known for its fashion.

### **Focus Group 3:**

Participants: Imelda, Bridie, Frances, Monica, Margaret, Carmel. (40 – 65)

#### **General questions:**

#### **Q1: What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Chanel Burberry

Resp 2: Alexander Mc Queen , Guicci

Resp 3: Dior, Prada, Louis Vuitton.

Resp 4: Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Alexander Mc Queen

Resp 5: D&G, Lamboutin, Burberry

Resp 6: Stella Mc Carthney, Chanel

**Q2: Can you name 3 words that come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Unique, exclusive, rarity

Resp 2: Waiting lists, Designer

Resp 3: Fashionable, Quality, unique

Resp 4: Extravagant, extraordinary ,expensive

Resp 5: Pricey , Success, beauty

Resp 6: Celebrities, Models, Extraordinary

**Q3: Are there any Irish luxury fashion brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury fashion?**

Resp 1: No I can't think of any that I would say have luxury status

Resp 2: No there is premium one's like Emma Manley but they are affordable.

Resp 3: No can't think of a luxury one there are none.

Resp 4: No Ireland doesn't have a luxury fashion designer.

Resp 5; No just affordable one's like Orla Keily.

Resp 6: No I can't either.

**Q4: Why do you think people have a desire for luxury products?**

Resp 1: To be fashionable and stand out from the crowd.

Resp 2: To treat themselves and feel good about themselves.

Resp 3: I would say that it is to look good and feel good.

Resp 4: Not everyone can afford luxury brands so it's a sign of success.

Resp 5: It's a great experience buying luxury products, it feels like a weekend away in a hotel. There is a real feel good factor about it.

Resp 6: The products are unique and desirable. Celebrities wear them and you feel special wearing them.

**Q5: How does purchasing a luxury fashion item make you feel?**

Resp 1: I feel happy and confident. Sometimes you need to treat yourself to feel special.

Resp 2: I feel successful and happy, it's great that I can buy the things I love.

Resp 3: I feel like I am dreaming, the products are just so perfect.

Resp 4: I feel like a celebrity and I feel trendy.

Resp 5: I feel fashionable and stylish, you know the clothes are designed by the best so you feel great.

Resp 6: I feel like I look good and am more confident.

**Q6: Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?**

Resp 1: They use good quality materials that last forever.

Resp 2: The items are not affordable you have to work hard to afford them.

Resp3: They have an expensive image and they are unique.

Resp4: The price is high and the quality is excellent.

Resp5: The adverts and packaging add to the luxury image.

Resp6: The service is always brilliant and there is always a warranty but no faults really ever occur as the quality is so high.

**Q7: Do you consider luxury products as an artificial need?**

Resp 1: Well it's not really a need it's more of a want. I would describe it as an artificial want I only want it because I know its pricey and not easy to afford.

Resp 2: Yes I agree you always want what you can't have. You just work towards affording it is like a goal I set myself I work hard and reward myself.

Resp 3: I feel I need to buy luxury goods. They make me who I am and give me confidence.

Resp 4: I don't need luxury goods but I do want them. They make me so happy.

Resp 5: Once you experience the actual experience of buying luxury brands I think it becomes addictive.

Resp 6: I couldn't imagine not buying luxury brands. They make me motivated to be successful in life.

**Q 8. What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands in terms of image and identity?**

Resp 1: I suppose buying a luxury item is a high involvement purchase. It isn't the same as going into penney's to buy a handbag for 12 euro you are investing a lot of money into these items.

Resp 2: You can't just buy luxury brands everywhere, they are only in selective store and usually bigger cities. I have to travel to purchase luxury items but it is worth it.

Resp 3: The price and quality are much higher in luxury brands.

Resp 4: The service you receive when purchasing a luxury branded item is more personalised you feel special.

Resp 5: The items you buy from luxury brands last far longer, the quality is great.

Resp 6; Luxury fashion items are more exclusive than premium brands, not everyone will have them.

**Q 9. Is the promise the brand makes to you important?**

Resp 1: Yes these brands promise us beautifully crafted clothes, bags and hats and this is what we expect from them.

Resp 2: Yes it is important, Burberry promises good quality functional outer wear, this is why I buy this brand if they didn't offer me these products I wouldn't love the brand.

Resp 3: The promise the brand makes is important, luxury brands promise glamour and it is important you feel glamorous when wearing these brands as they are so expensive.

Resp 4: Many brands use their heritage when making a brand promise. It is important that they do so.

Resp 5: Yes they must offer customers what they promise, glamorous and trendy pieces which we feel great in.

Resp 6: Yes it's very important I spend a lot of money and trust in the brand.

### **Marketing luxury fashion brands:**

#### **Q1: Where do you see luxury fashion brands advertisements?**

Resp 1; Magazines, Billboards

Resp 2: Newspapers, magazines, Twitter

Resp 3: Internet, Magazines

Resp 4: Print advertising , Tv

Resp 5:Celebrity endorsers and Internet

Resp 6: Magazines, social media sites

#### **2. How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?**

Resp 1; Yes people look up to and follow celebrities so I think it's a great idea to have celebrities endorse the brand.

Resp 2: Nowadays its easy to see what celebrities are wearing on social media sites, the internet and magazines so yes I think people would be more likely to buy if they seen a celebrity with the product.

Resp 3: I think the celebrity must suit the brand for it to work like for example you wouldn't have John and Edward represent a luxury brand like Dior.

Resp 4: Yes I think as long as the celebrity is a good role model then it will entice people to purchase.

Resp 5:Yes if the celebrity has a great fashion sense people will see the product as desirable and want it.

Resp 6: I wouldn't buy it just because I saw a celebrity in it, they are very skinny and petite and I don't think I would feel as good in it if I saw it on a celebrity.

#### **3. Which fashion magazines if any would you read?**

Resp 1; Tatler, OK

Resp 2: Hello, Vogue

Resp 3: U, Tatler

Resp 4: OK, Hello

Resp 5: Glamour, Elle

Resp 6: Look, Stellar

**Q4: Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines is a good marketing tool for luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1; I think its important that luxury fashion brands use a mixture of traditional marketing such as fashion magazines but also move with the times and have pictures on Instagram, twitter and facebook..

Resp 2: Yes I follow Burberry on twitter and they had a tweet fashion show before where they tweeted every image before it was shown on the catwalk but I still read magazines.

Resp 3: Yes I am 55 so magazines are a great way for me to follow trends I am not into social media.

Resp 4: I think luxury fashion brands, marketing campaigns in magazines are great they are really eye catching.

Resp 5: I love looking up fashion weeks on Youtube it is better than just seeing the picture in the magazine, you can see how the material flows and how to wear it best but I do read the magazines.

Resp 6: I always read fashion magazines to follow the latest trends.

**5. How important are the public relations for the luxury brands?**

Resp 1; Yes I like to hear of brands running charity events and fashion shows to raise money.

Resp 2: At fashion week it is important they chose respectable celebrities to sit at the front row.

Resp 3: Yes bad PR would affect me buying the brands products.

Resp 4: Yes a brand must be involved with good causes and be honest.

Resp 5: Yes a luxury brand must have a great reputation.

Resp 6: Yes I like to see brands doing good like going green etc,

Resp 1; Yes a lot of brands use celebrities now and I think they need to be wise about who they chose.

**6. Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?**

Resp 1; Yes I love fashion week, it creates a huge buzz and excitement to see new styles.

Resp 2: Yes it's great to see what's in this season, I look up the images in magazines.

Resp 3: Yes it's a great way to see the collections.

Resp 4: Yes and now they are so easy to follow you can look them up on twitter and youtube and instagram.

Resp 5: Yes I always buy magazines to follow the new trends and especially around fashion weeks.

Resp 6: Yes it's so easy to watch fashion week shows online now and see images in magazines

### **Shopping:**

#### **1. Has your awareness about the luxury brands increased due to the use of internet and online shopping?**

Resp 1: Yes I think the internet has made it much easier to check out the designers collections you can do it at the click of a button before you visit a store.

Resp 2: Yes its great way to keep customers more aware of whats happening and whats available and when the collection is on sale and where. There is no luxury fashion stores in Monaghan so it's a very easy way to buy goods if I can't get up to Dublin.

Resp 3: Yes I follow the fashion bloggers they are great at keeping you up to date on whats the best bags and shoes to buy and what dresses and clothes are popular with celebrities so I think my awareness has definitely increased.

Resp 4: Yes many fashion week catwalk shows are shown on youtube now so this is a great way to see what is going to be in stores.

Resp 5: I don't buy online or use youtube or social media much only if my daughter was showing me something online so no I don't think it has changed anything for me.

Resp 6: I think mobile apps like instagram are great too I always look up images on this

#### **2. Where do you (the customer) shop for luxury items the most?**

Resp 1: Online on net-a-porter or ASOS

Resp 2: On the brands own website

Resp 3: On Ebay, Net-a-porter or Bt

Resp 4: BT and Harvey Nichols.

Resp 5: Arnotts, Brown Thomas

Resp 6: BT2 and Arnotts

**3. Do you prefer to purchase luxury products online or in a store?**

Resp 1: Both

Resp 2: In store, the experience and service is always excellent.

Resp 3: Both

Resp 4: Both

Resp 5: In store, I like to see what I am buying.

Resp 6: Online, I don't really have time with work to get to Dublin.

**Price**

**3. Do you think having a higher price gives the brands a certain status?**

Resp 1: Yes I wouldn't expect a luxury good to be reasonably priced if it was everyone would have it and it wouldn't feel special.

Resp 2: Yes without a high price it wouldn't have a luxury status.

Resp 3: Yes people are willing to pay these prices to stand out and be unique and stylish.

Resp 4: Yes I expect to pay for the quality of the goods.

Resp 5: Yes it needs to be expensive so that it is more rare and unique.

Resp 6: Yes price portrays that the product is high quality.

**4. What do you expect when you purchase a luxury product at a high price?**

Resp 1: Quality, exclusive product

Resp 2: Good experience and service. Love for the product and trust in the brand.

Resp 3: Unique products, good quality, excited feeling

Resp 4: Good quality, great service

Resp 5: Fashionable trendy items which are good quality.

Resp 6: good quality product.

**Irish fashion industry:**

**5. Would you like to see a luxury Irish fashion brand?**



Resp1: Yes I think it would allow Ireland to be taken more seriously for fashion. The fashion weeks here are nothing compared to London Paris New York and Milan. There is no buzz so something has to be done to make Irish designer more successful.

Resp 2: Yes like when you go to France and Italy and go shopping you see the streets lined with designer stores its different in Ireland. If there was a luxury fashion designer I think more luxury brands would pay attention and show interest in opening stores up here. It would be great iif Dublin was more like London.

Resp 3: Yes I would love to see luxury Irish fashion brand in the future. It's crazy that there hasn't been any yet. England has Burberry we need a brand to be proud of.

Resp 4: Yes to know that you are paying high prices , getting quality goods but supporting an Irish brand would make the experience even better.

Resp 5: Yes I would be happier buying luxury fashion pieces if I knew they were made and designer here in Ireland.

Resp 6: Yes I think the Irish fashion industry needs a boost, there are loads of talented designers I real about them in Irish fashion magazines and newspapers but they just aren't seen as luxury.

#### **6. What are the main reasons Ireland has not a luxury fashion brand do you feel?**

Resp1: I think it is just that fashion isn't seen as one of Irelands greatest things so it would be good if we could make fashion bigger here.

Resp 2: More adverts and marketing of Iirsh fashion designers.

Resp 3: Maybe the fashion colleges need to teach them how to create luxury brands they may only have focused on premium.

Resp 4: I think they need to gain respect and recognition to be a luxury brand.

Resp 5: yes if they have good quality products they can achieve recognition.

Resp 6: If there was a bigger emphasis on fashion week it's not a serious thing here.

#### **Focus Group 4:**

Participants : Andrea, Nicola, Emily, Melissa, Amber, Nadine ( 25 -35)

#### **General questions:**

**Q1: What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Chanel, Dior

Resp 2: Louis Vuitton, Prada

Resp 3: Balenciago, Hermes

Resp 4: Alexander Mc Queen, Burberry

Resp 5: Guicci, Burberry

Resp 6: Fendi, Coach

**Q 2. Can you name 3 words that come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Designer, Unique

Resp 2: Quality material, Attention grabbing

Resp 3: Wow, Beautiful

Resp 4: Expensive, extravagant

Resp 5: High prices, heritage

Resp 6: High quality, beauty

**Q3 Are there any Irish luxury fashion brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury fashion.**

Resp 1: No there is no high end Irish fashion brand that comes to mind.

Resp 2: No Ireland needs a Luxury fashion brand

Resp 3: Emma Manley is a label I have seen in few stores but the prices were reasonable compared to Burberry and Chanel.

Resp 4: No I can't even think of an Irish designer.

Resp 5: John Rocha is an Irish designer

Resp 6: Orla Keily was in the paper recently, Mini used her design on the roof of their cars but her bags are around 400ish.

#### **Q4 Why do you think people have a desire for luxury products?**

Resp 1: I think buying luxury brands makes people feel special and like they are somebody.

Resp 2: Yeah it really boosts your confidence when you buy an expensive product, you feel proud walking out of the store.

Resp 3: Yes I agree when I buy in Penney's I want to hide my bag but when I have bought something in Brown Thomas I am happy to walk around with my BT bag.

Resp 4: You are treated with respect when buying luxury products, you are not just another customer they make me feel special and I think this is why a lot of people buy luxury products.

Resp 5: Yes the experience is something else. It brings out the best in people and puts a smile on their faces.

Resp 6: I think buying luxury items is a success thing it makes you feel you are successful in life.

#### **Q5: How does purchasing a luxury fashion item make you feel?**

Resp 1: I feel content and successful I suppose.

Resp 2: I feel proud, I feel like I work hard and I need something to show for it. (success)

Resp 3: It makes me feel different to others, I kind of feel like a celebrity for a while.

Resp 4: I love wearing my new clothes, or strutting around in my designer shoes. If you feel bad about your image it gives you a good boost, you feel you look better.(confident)

Resp 5: I feel successful. I grew up wanting and dreaming of owning some of the items I now do and that's a great feeling.

Resp 6: Yes I feel good about myself, the main reason I buy luxury brands is for the satisfaction I get from them.(confident)

**Q6 Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?**

Resp 1: Many luxury brands are only available in selective stores.

Resp 2: Yes and I think many brands have flag ship stores, they all have a different image and identity though.

Resp3: They all communicate using catwalk shows, celebrity endorsements but no fashion show is the same.

Resp 4: I think luxury fashion brands all have their own unique image Louis Vuitton is more focused on luggage and Burberry is more about outdoor wear.

Resp5: Each luxury fashion brand has its own unique image.

Resp6: The adverts are always high quality but no I think each brand portrays a different image.

**Q7: Do you consider luxury products as an artificial need?**

Resp 1: I just enjoy buying and wearing luxury items it's not a need but I enjoy it and it makes me feel good.

Resp 2: I love standing out from the crowd and wearing designer labels makes me content. I think it is an artificial need but I don't know if I could feel as good in high street or premium brands.

Resp 3: I think that health and having a home are priority, owning designer labels is a need.

Resp 4: I think that I have become so use to buying luxury brands it is just part of who I am it would be hard to change but if I was struggling to own the basics I would do without.

Resp 5: Yes it is an artificial need I just love the quality of the materials on your skin.

Resp 6: Yes I think it is more of a want and desire than a need.

## **8. What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands in terms of image and identity?**

Resp 1: The experience when you are shopping for luxury branded items is very personal and you feel like a celebrity. You feel like they care about you.

Resp 2: Price and quality is higher, the products stand out and are unusual.

Resp 3: The materials used when making the products are great quality, they feel good on your skin. You don't get that as much with premium brands.

Resp 4: Many of the brands have iconic products like Chanel no 5 perfume premium brands wouldn't really have iconic products.

Resp 5: Even the bags you get when you purchase an item are better quality than the paper one's you get when purchasing from the high street stores. It just shows how much detail and effort goes into portraying good brand image.

Resp 6: The service is brilliant in luxury stores there is no experience like it.

## **9. Is the promise the brand makes to you important?**

Resp 1: Stella mc Carthney , Alexander Mc Queen and Gucci have pledged to be more green in recent years this is great as I would be against plastic bags and wastage so I would like to think they kept this promise.

Resp 2: Luxury brands promise great experiences and I think they deliver on this promise it is important that they keep their promise.

Resp 3: Yes it is very important that the brand does what it says it does and offers good quality products.

Resp 4: Yes buying luxury products is a high involvement investment and it is vital that you are satisfied.

Resp 5; Yes I expect the brand to offer glamorous and trendy pieces.

Resp 6: Yes I expect that the brand keeps their promise, I want what I see in their adverts and social media links.

Marketing:

**1. Where do you see luxury fashion brands advertisements?**

Resp 1; Print advertising, magazines

Resp 2: Social media, internet

Resp 3: Magazines, Billboards

Resp 4: Instagram, Social Media sites

Resp 5: Magazines, Tv, newspapers

Resp 6: Celebrity endorsements

**2. How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?**

Resp 1; It can be risky for the business if something bad happens the face of the brand it can have a bad effect on the brand. When I hear of the incident of John Galliano saying racist remarks to a couple in a café in France I was a bit put off investing in the Dior brand. It was good that they got rid of him.

Resp 2: I think its very smart for brands to use celebrities but the celebrity must be the right fit. Nicole Kidman for Chanel was a good fit.

Resp 3: Emma Watson was the face of Burberry this made me more interested in the brand.

Resp 4: I wouldn't buy something just because I seen a celebrity with it so I don't think its important.

Resp 5: I think seeing a celebrity with a product would make me want to have it. It would make me feel special.

Resp 6: I think if the celebrity understands the core values of the brand it will be successful.

**3. Which fashion magazines if any would you read?**

Resp 1; Vogue, Instyle

Resp 2: U, OK, Hello

Resp 3: Vogue, Instyle, Stellar

Resp 4: Instyle, Image ,(irish times magazine)

Resp 5: Look, U

Resp 6: Stellar , Tatler

#### **4. Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines are successful marketing tool for luxury fashion brands ?**

Resp 1; Yes I think even though a lot of marketing is online luxury fashion brands need to keep advertising in magazines for older consumers like me.

Resp 2: Fashion magazines are a a great way to relax and read about whats new and dream about what new luxury item you hope to purchase next.

Resp 3: Advertising in fashion magazines really stands out the adverts are always good quality like you expect luxury fashion items to be so I think it works well.

Resp 4: Yes it's great to use social media to target younger customers but luxury fashion brands musn't forget older people like me. I am 57 so I am not great with technology.

Resp 5: I love reading fashion magazines I think it's a great way to advertise luxury brands.

Resp 6: People who love fashion buy these magazines so yes it's a great way to advertise.

#### **5. How important are the public relations for the luxury brands?**

Resp 1; Yes a lot of brands use celebrities now and I think they need to be wise about who they chose.

Resp 2: Yes a good reputation is vital for a luxury brand.

Resp 3: Yes its great to see brands getting involved and helping charities etc.

Resp 4: Yes if a brand had a negative image it would have a negative effect on its customers.

Resp 5: Yes I trust the brand when I see good PR stories.

Resp 6: Yes good PR is essential for any brand not only luxury brands.

#### **6. Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?**

Resp 1; Yes I love looking at the images it makes me excited and motivated to save.

Resp 2: Yes they can be so creative they are very interesting to watch.

Resp 3: Yes I think they make the products more desirable.

Resp 4: Yes I love watching the fashion week catwalks online they are very entertaining.

Resp 5: Yes I would buy magazines to view the images from fashion week. Its also great to see who is attending and what they are wearing.

Resp 6: Yes I would love to go it's a pity there isn't a big fashion week in Ireland .

#### **Shopping:**

**4. Has your awareness about the luxury brands increased due to the use of internet and online shopping?**

Resp 1: Yes so many people shop online now it has made me more aware of what's available. Sometimes you don't see the whole collection in the shop.

Resp 2: Yes the websites are always up to date.

Resp 3: there are loads of fashion bloggers now and they do a great job of creating awareness of brands and new designers.

Resp 4: Yes I think internet keeps me up to date on what celebs are wearing as well so yes.

Resp 5: No I don't use computers much my daughter would use facebook and twitter and shop online.

Resp 6: I am the same I don't like buying online.

**5. Where do you (the customer) shop for luxury items the most?**

Resp 1: Harvey Nichols , Arnottes

Resp 2: Brown Thomas

Resp 3: Brown Thomas and bt2

Resp 4: Brown Thomas

Resp 5: Asos and brands own website

Resp 6: BT and Arnotts and Harvey Nichols

**3. Do you prefer to purchase luxury products online or in a store?**

Resp 1: In store, the service is excellent you feel like a celebrity.

Resp 2: In store, I love taking a trip to Dublin and browsing in BT2. It's a great service.

Resp 3: In store, I agree the service makes you feel great and it's good to try on the product.

Resp 4: In store, the products are pricey so I like to see what I am paying for,

Resp 5: In store, I think things can look different online.



Resp 6: Online, it's so handy.

### **Pricing:**

#### **5. Do you think having a higher price gives the brands a certain status?**

Resp 1: Yes having a high price sets it apart from premium brands and makes it exclusive

Resp 2: Yes if it wasn't highly priced buying it wouldn't be as rewarding.

Resp 3: Yes it makes it stand out and more desirable than premium brands.

Resp 4: Yes the price helps to separate it from premium and high street brands.

Resp 5: Yes it feel like I am buying a luxury brand if the price wasn't high.

Resp 6: Yes it wouldn't be unique everyone would own it if it was low prices.

#### **6. What do you expect when you purchase a luxury product at a high price?**

Resp 1: Good service, quality, stylish products

Resp 2: Unique products, good quality

Resp 3: To feel great and happy, good experience and service.

Resp 4: confident, satisfied sophisticated, great quality

Resp 5: Quality Goods, good craftsmanship

Resp 6: Great experience when buying, good quality no faults and life time investment.

### **Irish fashion industry:**

#### **7. Would you like to see a luxury Irish fashion brand?**

Resp1: Yes it would be great to have a Luxury Irish fashion brand it would make other designers work towards this as well.

Resp 2: Yes it would be great to see a successful designer coming from Ireland there are a few like Philip Treacy who is known worldwide but we need a fashion brand bags clothing and shoes.

Resp 3: Yes most Irish designers are premium brands and their pieces are affordable. They need to be classier and use better materials.

Resp 4: Yes it's all about quality and status if an Irish designer could create a trendy brand I would definitely purchase the products and pay high prices.

Resp 5: Yes it would be great to see Irish fashion designers create luxury fashion brands, it would help the economy as well if they were successful and internationally recognised.

Resp 6: Yes it would be super so many people in Ireland love fashion so they would have a great following. They need to advertise in glossy magazines and make the brand look luxurious and create a desire for their products to be as good a Chanel.

### **1. What are the main reasons Ireland has not a luxury fashion brand do you feel?**

Resp1: Media and fashion magazines focus more on international brands.

Resp 2: Yes if Irish designers are to be successful worldwide then they need to be very well known here first.

Resp 3: Yes they need a lot of recognition in Ireland to grow.

Resp 4: If they are recognised in Ireland then tourists may become aware of the brand and help it grow in America and Europe so it is important Irish media helps these designers.

Resp 5: I think that we many designers move away to start their fashion careers because fashion isn't taken seriously here.

Resp 6: I think designers here don't use really high quality materials.

### **Focus Group 5:**

Participants: Sinead, Emer , Rossa , Roisin, Donna, Rose

#### **Q1: What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Burberry, Guicci

Resp 2: Chanel, Hermes

Resp 3: Prada, Louis Vuitton

Resp 4: Alexander Mc Queen , Yves saint Laurent

Resp 5 Chanel, Dior

Resp 6: Burberry, Stella Mc Cartney

**2. Can you name 3 words that come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Prestigious , Expensive

Resp 2: High prices, High quality

Resp 3: Designer, Extravagant

Resp 4: Status, Different

Resp 5: Desirable, Trendy, Rarity

Resp 6: Unique, high price, great quality

**3. Are there any Irish luxury fashion brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury fashion.**

Resp 1: No I can't think of a luxury Irish fashion brand.

Resp 2: Sorcha O Raillaigh is well known she designed a dress for lady gaga I read in a magazine but I haven't seen anything on her recently.

Resp 3: I follow Natalie B Coleman on twitter she seems to be becoming well known but her clothes are reasonably priced.

Resp 4: No I'm not really aware of an sorry.

Resp 5: John Rocha but his clothes are not expensive.

Resp 6: There is a designer from Monaghan she was on the late late show her name is Helen steene.I havn't really heard of many others.

**4. Why do you think people have a desire for luxury products?**

Resp 1: When buying luxury goods I think that the experience can be so good you feel so special and a lot of people get addicted to the experience.

Resp 2: Yes I agree buying luxury items gives you a thrill.

Resp 3: The marketing that the luxury brands use make the products so desirable and you really feel that you have to buy it.

Resp 4: I think many people like buying luxury goods to make people think they are successful in life.

Resp 5: I think it's more a personal objective , people buy so that they feel good in themselves.

Resp 6: I think nowadays people work hard and they buy these expensive items as a reward. I do myself anyway I feel I deserve it.

**Q5. How does purchasing a luxury fashion item make you feel?**

Resp 1 : I feel proud and successful. It's really a reward for myself.

Resp 2: I feel really happy and excited. I buy luxury items for self -fulfilment I don't really care what people think to be honest.

Resp 3: The experience makes you feel like you are appreciated as a customer, I be so happy leaving the store.

Resp 4: I feel good in myself and I feel like I walk taller and have more confidence.

Resp 5: I feel great, excited to wear it and proud of myself.

Resp 6: I feel like it is Christmas day and your opening a present you love. Its that kind of excited happy feeling.

**Q6. Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?**

Resp 1: The packaging they use is really special and luxurious but the image for each luxury brand is unique.

Resp 2: I think brands have different images they each stand out but for different reasons.

Resp3: The price is high and the products are unique, but their advertising and images are different.

Resp4: The marketing is always top class, but you never see the same adverts they are all unique.

Resp5: You can't buy in any store they are picky with their distribution, their images and identity is very different with each luxury fashion brand like no two have similar advertisements.

Resp6: The products are all very desirable and there is a rarity factor and there advertisements make you have a desire for the products but they are all different.

**Q7: Do you consider luxury products as an artificial need?**

Resp 1: Yes it is an artificial need but at the same time I love being able to buy luxury items it makes me feel good.

Resp 2: Yes it's not the most important thing in life to own luxury branded clothes and bags and shoes but as long as you work hard and are able to afford them I think it's important to treat yourself.

Resp 3: I think it is a need for me, I feel more confident and successful when I dress in luxury brands and I don't think I would feel so good in high street brands like Zara or Penney's.

Resp 4: I think it's a way of life. You fall in love with the brand and become a loyal customer but it is an artificial need it makes you happy and that's why you want it.

Resp 5: Yes I agree once you experience buying luxury products it is hard to go back to buying from highstreet brands. It is an artificial need.

Resp 6: Yes it's an artificial need it is more of a want than a need.

**Q.8 What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands in terms of image and identity?**

Resp 1: The experience when you are shopping for luxury branded items is very personal and you feel like a celebrity. You feel like they care about you.

Resp 2: Price and quality is higher, the products stand out and are unusual.

Resp 3: You feel really confident in designer goods I don't get this feeling in premium brands.

Resp 4: It is rewarding buying designer products. When you buy in a high street store it is more like you are buying because you need the clothes you may not fall in love with them.

Resp 5: marketing campaigns really stand out and are more professional than those of premium brands. For example if you were to compare a Chanel advert with a River island one it would be very different. Even if you compared it with a Tommy Hilfiger advert it stands out and gives a more classy image.

Resp 6: The price and quality are the biggest differences.

**Q9: Is the promise the brand makes to you important?**

Resp 1: Yes if the brand didn't keep their promise I would lose trust in the brand. I wouldn't be a loyal customer.

Resp 2: Yes the brand must deliver a great service experience and have high quality and trendy products.

Resp 3: Yes the products I buy must make me feel glamorous.

Resp 4: The products must be unique and make me feel like a celebrity when I wear them.

Resp 5: Yes the brand must do what it says it will to keep the trust of its customers.

Resp 6: The materials used must be what they say they are, when you are paying high prices you want good quality.

**Marketing Luxury Goods:**

**1. Where do you see luxury fashion brands advertisements?**

Resp 1; Magazines, social media sites

Resp 2: Billboards, Internet, Movies

Resp 3: Youtube, magazines, newspaper.

Resp 4: Social media, TV,

Resp 5: Fashion blogs, magazines

Resp 6: Celebrity endorsements, magazines

## **2. How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?**

Resp 1; I think it would make me feel successful if I could wear what a celebrity can wear. I often rent from dress hire stores which allow you to rent very expensive dresses for around 100 euro for a night. You feel really special.

Resp 2: I would have to really like the celebrity to care about what they were wearing.

Resp 3: I think it's great to use celebrities if they suit the image of the brand. Tulisa would be a bad match for a luxury brand, Angelina Jolie would be very suited and she has a good reputation.

Resp 4: Yes it is important the brand picks very wisely who they have endorsing their brand. Kate Moss was involved in drugs so I wouldn't buy anything she is involved in.

Resp 5: I think it's good to see celebrities in adverts it catches your attention.

Resp 6: I think I would prefer if they used normal people in adverts it would make you feel less insecure.

## **3. Which fashion magazines if any would you read?**

Resp 1; Glamour, OK

Resp 2: Look, Hello

Resp 3: U, Tatler

Resp 4: Vogue, U

Resp 5: Stellar, Vogue

Resp 6: U, Look

## **4. Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines is a good marketing tool for luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1; Yes I would often purchase what I have seen in fashion magazines.

Resp 2: I always look through fashion magazines to see what is on show for the latest season trend.

Resp 3: Not only are the fashion weeks and catwalk show images shown in fashion magazines its so handy to be able to see the stockists and where yo can buy the items.

Resp 4: Yes it is very handy that you can see how much the item you like is and where its available. The adverts themselves stand out so much.

Resp 5: You can't miss a luxury fashion brand advertisement on a glossy magazine page.

Resp 6: Yes its where I notice fashion brand adverts the most.

## **5. How important are the public relations for the luxury brands?**

Resp 1; yes I am against things like childlabour etc. I think it is vital brands do their best to have good social responsibility.

Resp 2: Yes it's nice to see brands like Stella Mc Cartney caring about the environment and reducing packaging.

Resp 3: Its great to see brands sponsoring events. I saw Louis Vuitton sponsoring sailing events.

Resp 4: Yes bad press would make me unwilling to buy products depending on the story of course.

Resp 5: Yes adverts and PR should be positive and anyone involved in the brand should be role models.

Resp 6: Yes I think we expect nothing bad from luxury brands.

#### **6. Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?**

Resp 1; Yes I love fashion week, I look forward to it each year it gets you excited about the new collections. I look in magazines mostly at images of fashion week and to see what has been on the catwalks.

Resp 2: Yes it's great to see what's in this season. I look up the images in magazines and on social media sites like twitter but that is just recently.

Resp 3: Yes it's very easy now to see what is the new trends. Nearly all the shows are on facebook or in magazines.

Resp 4:Yes instagram is really good to see the images from fashion weeks or magazines. It makes you excited and creates a buzz about the new collection.

Resp 5:Yes I always buy magazines to see what's new.

Resp 6: Yes I would watch them on youtube it is amazing the work that goes into them they are always eyecatching

Shopping for luxury brands:

#### **6. Has your awareness about the luxury brands increased due to the use of internet and online shopping?**

Resp 1: Yes I think I can follow trends more easily on social media sights now.

Resp 2: Yes luxury fashion brands are on twitter noe so I follow them and I can see whats new, any news that is happening with the brand.



Resp 3: Yes you can check the brands website to check out the collection and you get the option to sign up for the news-letter which are great way of keeping up to date.

Resp 4: Yes some brands like Burberry have used twitter during their catwalk shows. It makes you feel like you are there in the crowd.

Resp 5: No I never buy online but maybe that's because I am older.

Resp 6: I always look on Asos they have a designer section and it's great to see new and up and coming luxury brands that I may not have read about in magazines.

#### **7. Where do you (the customer) shop for luxury items the most?**

Resp 1: Brown Thomas and Harvey Nichols.

Resp 2: Brown Thomas.

Resp 3: Brown Thomas.

Resp 4: Online on the brands own website, ASOS or net-a-porter.

Resp 5: Selfridges in London if visiting or BT and BT2.

Resp 6: Harvey Nichols.

#### **Do you prefer to purchase luxury products online or in a store?**

Resp 1: In store, like to try on the products.

Resp 2: Online, there is always a better selection.

Resp 3: Online, it's so convenient.

Resp 4: In store, I hate waiting on a package I am unlucky with online shopping.

Resp 5: In store, I like to see if it fits ok or that I love it before buying.

Resp 6: In store, the goods are highly priced so I would be afraid of buying online

#### **Price:**

#### **Do you think having a higher price gives the brands a certain status?**

Resp 1: Yes the Price must be high so that everyone isn't walking around looking the same. It would be like buying a top or handbag in topshop and not standing out.

Resp 2: Yes it wouldn't feel special if it was lowly priced.

Resp 3: I wouldn't feel excited buying the product if I knew everyone could afford it and have it.

Resp 4: Luxury products are investments they wouldn't be if the price was low.

Resp 5: Yes the price has to be high to have a luxurious image and respect.

Resp 6: Yes I think with brands like ralph Lauren the jumpers are around 200 euro and they are nice but everyone can afford them so I wouldn't view this as a luxury brand. The price has to be high.

### **7. What do you expect when you purchase a luxury product at a high price?**

Resp 2: Authenticity, great service and happy after sales.

Resp 3: the service must be great it is my favourite part of buying the products

Resp 4: High quality so I can keep for my children in years to come

Resp 5: Must be top quality and the service must be great I must feel special

Resp 6: I want to feel proud wearing the product it must look great

Resp 1: Good quality, great service.

### **Irish Fashion industry:**

#### **8. Would you like to see a luxury Irish fashion brand?**

Resp1: Yes there is a huge gap in the market for a luxury fashion brand from Ireland I would love to see one soon.

Resp 2: Yes I think more Irish people would be interested in fashion and want careers in this industry if someone was really big and successful. At the minute it doesn't have the name it needs.

Resp 3: I think that an Irish luxury fashion brand is needed in Ireland , it would be very successful. Brown Thomas is so busy with people buying luxury goods each day if there was Irish designers who could provide quality prints and designs like Guicci and Alexander Mc Queen it would be great

Resp 4: Yes I would love to see an Irish fashion designer doing well.

Resp 5: Ireland isn't really seen as big into fashion so this would really make a change.

Resp 6: Yes I think a lot of people would love to see a luxury fashion brand that is Irish we need to make fashion more important in Ireland.

**9. What are the main reasons Ireland has not a luxury fashion brand do you feel?**

Resp1: I think they need to get away from what everyone else is doing and be more unique and have quality items at the minute Irish designers all have affordable products

Resp 2: Yes and they need to sell in stores where other luxury brands are like BT and online as well.

Resp 3: Yes if they are on social media sites and have a website they can reach a wider audience.

Resp 4: I think fashion isn't taken seriously here in Ireland its kind of more like wolly jumpers, Guinness not fashion.

Resp 5: I don't know if they have the facilities and funding to become so successful.

Resp 6: It's hard to know where the problem lies.

**Focus Group 6:**

Participants, Patricia, Margie, Mary, Marie, Amy, Lucy.

**Q1: What brands come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1: Alexander Mc Queen, Mulberry, Chanel

Resp 2: Chanel, Burberry, Prada

Resp 3: Versace, Lamboutin, Marc Jacobs

Resp 4: Louis Vuitton, Yves Saint Laurent

Resp 5: Chanel, Hermes, Chloe

Resp 6: Burberry, Stella McCartney

**Q2: Can you name 3 words that come to mind when you think about luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1 : Rarity, expensive prices, Quality

Resp 2: Heritage, French, Italian, quality

Resp 3: Fashion week, One off pieces, Celebrities

**Resp 4:** Unique, show off, high prices, statement

**Resp 5:** Investments , Celebrities, craftsmanship

**Resp 6:** quality, fashionable, catwalk, quality.

**Q3. Are there any Irish luxury fashion brands that come to mind when thinking of luxury fashion?**

**Resp 1 :** John Rocha but I wouldn't consider him up there with Louis Vuitton for example.

**Resp 2:** No none really come to mind for me.

**Resp 3:**No I can't think of any Irish designers that are seen as luxury brands.

**Resp 4:** There is loads of Irish designers but they are affordable collections.

**Resp 5:** No none come to mind for me, brown Thomas were supporting irish designers in their store but the items were reasonably priced.

**Resp 6:** No none have a luxury status.

**Q4: Why do you think people have a desire for luxury products?**

**Resp 1 :** I feel I have a loyalty to some of the brands and it's a love for the brand , I really trust that the products are good quality,

**Resp 2:** I feel really good in luxury brands, it helps with my confidence and I think this is why many people buy these goods.

**Resp 3:** I think it portrays an image that you are wealthy and successful.

**Resp 4:** Yes I also think it is a lot to do with status but the experience and service is so enjoyable.

**Resp 5:** I think that the goods are such good quality and last so long,

**Resp 6:** I think people want to be more like celebrities and better than others.

**Q5. How does purchasing a luxury fashion item make you feel?**

**Resp 1 :** I feel really powerful and confident, it's great to reward yourself with luxuries and you just feel so good when wearing the products.

**Resp 2:** I feel happy and rewarded. I work hard and it makes it worthwhile when you can treat yourself. (success)

**Resp 3:** I feel like I am a new person it makes me feel unique and special.

**Resp 4:** I feel satisfied. You are treated so well by staff in the stores. It's a great feeling.

**Resp 5:** I feel proud of myself that I am able to treat myself and I work hard so I feel I deserve it.(success)

**Resp 6:** Sometimes I feel guilty that I am spending so much money on clothes but I do work hard.

**Q6: Are there any similar characteristics in terms of image and identity among the luxury brands?**

**Resp 1:** They all have an expensive image.

**Resp 2:** Products are very high quality. The price reflects this.

**Resp3:** Sometimes when releasing a new product they have waiting lists. I was on a waiting list for a new Hermes bag a few years ago I had to travel to France to buy it but it makes it very exciting. I don't think luxury fashion brands have the same image or identity they are all known for their own styles and they all have a unique image.

**Resp4:** They all advertise in a similar way. The glossy magazines and very eye catching billboards but their advertisements are all very unique.

**Resp5:** You are treated very well by staff when buying any luxury branded product they all provide an excellent service.

**Resp6:** they all have a rarity factor but the luxury fashion brands all have a different image. Louis Vuitton and Burberry for example are completely different.

**Q 7. Do you consider luxury products as an artificial need?**

**Resp 1:** I am so use to buying luxury brands now that I would find it difficult to go back to not having the best and good quality products but it is an artificial need.

**Resp 2:** Well I have kids and what they need obviously is more important than me having luxury branded items but I do work hard and at the moment I am able to buy them so I will.

Resp 3: I think it is more important to be healthy and have the basics but when you have these it is nice to treat yourself.

Resp 4: I feel it is more of a want, I suppose I don't really need to buy these luxury items but it makes me happy.

Resp 5: Yes it is an artificial need, but the products are so desirable when I see them in magazines and online I want them.

Resp 6: Yes it's an artificial need I just love the feeling of owning and wearing luxury brands.

**8. What do you think are the biggest differences between luxury brands and ordinary brands?**

Resp 1: Everything, the packaging, the experience, the service, quality.

Resp 2: The price and quality are the main differences. The Distribution like you can't buy luxury brands in any town or store they are only in selective stores.

Resp 3: The price but the that's because the quality is so good. You get a long warranty as well with leather bags etc,

Resp 4: Not everyone will have the luxury branded goods. They are highly priced and less accessible so more unique. The craftsmanship on some of the products is perfection.

Resp 5: The marketing campaigns really stand out they are unusual and eye-catching and great quality.

Resp 6: The prices are higher and the goods are more desirable.

**Q9: Is the promise the brand makes to you important?**

Resp 1: Yes the brand must stick to its promise.

Resp 2: Yes definitely the products are expensive so they must be unique and really good quality and stylish.

Resp 3: Yes they must be excellent quality that we expect from these luxury brands.

Resp 4: Yes the items must be unusual.

Resp 5 : Yes the brand must be trusted.

Resp 6: Yes its important they keep their promises, they must use great materials.

### **Marketing of Luxury goods:**

#### **1. Where do you see luxury fashion brands advertisements?**

Resp 1; Tv, Billboards

Resp 2: Magazines, Posters and billboards

Resp 3: Internet, social media sites, youtube

Resp 4: Youtube, TV, Magazines

Resp 5: Instagram, Youtube , social media ,magazines

Resp 6: Magazines, billboards

#### **2. How do you feel about using celebrities as a marketing tool for luxury brands?**

Resp 1; I think it can be risky for brands to use celebrities nowadays. Many celebrities are involved in drugs and if caught it could damage the brand.

Resp 2: I agree but I think if they pick a good public figure it can boost sales. Beyonce can do no wrong she would be a great endorser for any brand.

Resp 3: Instagram is huge and you can follow your favourite celebrities so I think it's great to have celebrities wearing luxury brands it makes you want them even more.

Resp 4: Yes you feel very special if you own something a celebrity has been spotted in.

Resp 5: I would follow many celebrities on twitter and they often tweet showing what theya re wearing I love seeing whats new in and how it looks so I like when a brand uses celebrity endorsers.

Resp 6: I need to like the product myself I wouldn't buy it just because a celebrity has worn it

#### **Q3. What magazines do you read?**

Resp 1; Tatler, OK

Resp 2: Stellar, Hello

Resp 3: Glamour, Elle

Resp 4: OK, Stellar

Resp 5: U, Glamour

Resp 6: Elle, Stellar

#### **Q.4. Would you say that publishing in fashion magazines are a successful marketing tool for luxury fashion brands?**

Resp 1; Yes they really stand out in fashion magazines they are great quality adverts.

Resp 2: Yes I would always buy fashion magazines and I always notice the luxury brand adverts.

Resp 3: Yes they are so unusual the adverts they stand out.

Resp 4: Yes I love looking at the adverts in magazines especially if they have a free sample of perfume or something.

Resp 5: Yes they stand out.

Resp 6: Yes they look great on the glossy pages.

### **5. How important are the public relations for the luxury brands?**

Resp 1; yes it's good to hear and read good things about the brand.

Resp 2: Yes it's nice to see brands like Gucci taking steps to be more environmentally friendly.

Resp 3: I like to hear these luxury brands are involved with charities.

Resp 4: Yes it would make me loose trust in the brand if I heard bad stories.

Resp 5: Yes adverts and PR should be positive.

Resp 6: Yes I like to see companies doing good in their communities.

### **6. Are fashion weeks important? Do you look up pictures and videos from fashion week to see what the new trends are?**

Resp 1; Yes fashion week is great because we can see what are the new trends for the next season.

Resp 2: Yes I would look up the images online mostly it's so easy to do.

Resp 3: Yes its great because it allows designers to show off their designs and lets the customers get excited.

Resp 4: Yes it creates a buzz about the brand.

Resp 5: Yes it really hypes up fashion and you really want to own the pieces and can't wait for them to be in store.

Resp 6: Yes the fashion shows can be so unusual as well they are really good to watch.

## **Shopping:**

### **8. Has your awareness about the luxury brands increased due to the use of internet and online shopping?**

Resp 1: Yes it's great when luxury brands are using social media its' so easy to follow trends.



Resp 2: Yes social media has gotten so big in the last few years it is great way of seeing new products and looking at images. Its free to which is great.

Resp 3: Yes I thing online shopping makes you more aware of new designers.

Resp 4: I don't shop online much.

Resp 5: I mainly use magazines when looking at what's new.

Resp 6: I love instagram.

**9. Where do you (the customer) shop for luxury items the most?**

Resp 1: Harvey Nichols , Arnottes

Resp 2: Brown Thomas

Resp 3: Brown Thomas and bt2

Resp 4: Brown Thomas

Resp 5: Asos and brands own website

Resp 6: BT and Arnotts and Harvey Nichols

**10. Do you prefer to purchase luxury products online or in a store?**

Resp 1: Online, it saves you traveling to Dublin or Galway.

Resp 2: Online, I just don't get much time to shop.

Resp 3: In store, I love the service.

Resp 4: In store, I like trying on the goods.

Resp 5: Instore, it is good to see the products in real life.

Resp 6: In store, I just don't like using computers.

**Price:**

**8. Do you think having a higher price gives the brands a certain status?**

Resp 1: Yes the price needs to be high to make the brands luxurious. Everyone would have the latest handbag and it wouldn't be exciting to own it if it was affordable.

Resp 2: Yes if the price wasn't high it wouldn't be as rewarding to treat myself to the products.

Resp 3: The price makes the products exclusive it must be high.

Resp 4: Yes if the price wasn't high then it would be like penney's everyone would be wearing the same things and it wouldn't be exciting to own luxury products.

Resp 5: Yes if it was cheap you would get the impression the quality is poor and it's a premium brand.

Resp 6: Yes the price has a lot to do with the status if it was cheap and affordable anyone could buy it so it wouldn't be a luxury.

**9. What do you expect when you purchase a luxury product at a high price?**

Resp 1: Quality and the service

Resp 2: Treated like a celebrity when purchasing

Resp 3: great service and feel good on your skin.

Resp 4: Good quality, great service

Resp 5: Quality is the most important factor and exclusivity

Resp 6: Unique products, Good quality

**Irish Industry:**

**10. Would you like to see a luxury Irish fashion brand?**

Resp1: Yes now is a great time too, Irish bloggers are always promoting irish fashion designers I think if there was someone who can great really good quality items people will pay the prices.

Resp 2: Yes I agree people pay for quality so the main things are that the products are high quality and unique. If an Irish designer wanted to be a luxury brand they need to offer customers this.

Resp 3: Yes we never really hear much about Irish designers it would be great to see them doing well

Resp 4: Yes but they will need to have a lot of money and there seems to be little opportunity here.

Resp 5: I agree I think they would need help , like a grant or something.

Resp 6: Yes would be great to see.

**11. What are the main reasons Ireland has not a luxury fashion brand do you feel?**

Resp1: I have read about a lot of Irish designers winning competitions but they just don't seem to want to be in the luxury market.

Resp 2: Yes I think designers just don't realise Irish people crave luxury brands.

Resp 3: There is a great love for penney's in Ireland and this may scare designers that these cheaper stores are more popular than luxury stores but they need to realise people who work hard want expensive products.

Resp 4: I think they must go to France Italy or the UK where fashion is taken seriously.

Resp 5: Yes in the UK fashion designers get funding to help them they don't here as far as I am aware.

Resp 6: Yes I think they just need better quality goods and better marketing.