PhD thesis

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Impact of Self-Construal, Individualism-Collectivism, and Subjective Social Status on Attitude Towards Luxury A Cross-Cultural Study

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A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Business School

Middlesex University London

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research is carried out by me for the purpose of the PhD program at Middlesex University London and has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification to any other academic institution.

Nneka Alaita-Felix

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"So, then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy". Roman 9:16

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ABSTRACT

This thesis empirically investigates the impact of an individual's independent and interdependent self-construal, individualism versus collectivism, and subjective social status on consumer attitude towards luxury. Past studies have recognised the important role culture plays in the luxury consumption behaviour across cultures, especially via attitude toward luxury. Cross-cultural differences based on macro-level cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism have been widely used among academics and practitioners in examining cultural influences on consumer behavioural outcomes. However, there is a lack of consensus on the generalisability of individualism and collectivism based on cultural factors within a given culture. Evidence of within-country variation and between-country similarities of cultural issues that affect luxury consumption tend to weaken the explanatory role of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension.

Some researchers posit that studies of cultural phenomena at the macro level may not adequately account for the variations within cultures. Instead, the self-construal (individual-level) cultural orientation may provide a better explanation by accounting for the psychological dimensions of the observed cross-cultural differences in behaviour. Other researchers have emphasized the importance of examining the influence of culture at both the individual level and macro-level culture on consumer behaviour. Despite the different views, research on cultural influences continue to be limited to individualism and collectivism framework. More specifically, when the research interest is on the impact of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer behaviour, research studies often focus primarily on singular cultures or nationalities.

Therefore, the present thesis aims to contribute to knowledge by examining the influence of self-construal in a cross-cultural context, and, simultaneously, examine the mediating role of individualism, and collectivism on self-construal effects on consumer attitudes toward luxury. A quantitative research method was applied. Survey data were collected from a non-student sample collected from three country samples of the relevant nationality who identify as and have always lived in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. After performing data cleaning procedures, 935 usable responses from the three countries were analysed using a multi-group structural equation model to examine the conceptual model and proposed hypotheses.

The findings suggest that the individual-level and macro-level cultural orientation significantly impacts consumer attitudes toward luxury. Interdependent self-construal had a positive

influence on attitudes toward luxury across cultures. The results reveal an indirect effect of interdependent and independent self-construal on attitudes toward luxury in India, but not in the United Kingdom and Nigeria. These findings extend knowledge from previous research by providing a better understanding of potential cultural differences and consumer motives and attitudes toward luxury consumption from a cross-cultural perspective. Whereas past studies have largely focused on the influence of subjective social status on health and well-being with very little attention to its effect on consumption, the present study contributes to the literature by focusing on the effect of subjective social status on consumer behaviour. The findings indicate that interdependent self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury are moderated by subjective social status in Nigeria, but not in the United Kingdom and India. This thesis offers luxury marketers increased insight into how they can influence consumers' luxury attitude formation process and decisions in a cross-cultural context focusing on the consumer segments they should target and match with their brand communications. The limitations of the study, as well as the suggestions for future research, are presented.

Keywords: Culture, Independent Self-construal, Interdependent Self-Construal, Individualism, Collectivism, Attitude towards luxury, Subjective Social Status, Cross-Cultural

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, luxury consumption and luxury brand marketing and management have generated increased interest in both academic and marketing domains. Luxury brands represent a substantial sales category of consumer products globally. The global luxury market has maintained a substantial growth rate in the past few decades even during COVID-19 pandemic. The global luxury market increased between 13% -15% reaching 1.14tn euros in 2021 (Yao, Hu, and Du, 2022). Major luxury markets usually domiciled in developed markets have since been expanded to include the emerging markets (Christadoulides and Wiedmann, 2022). The increasing prosperity of the emerging markets has led to a paradigm shift with these markets emerging as high-growth rate markets for luxury products (Kumar et al., 2019). Luxury consumption is present in both individualistic and collectivist cultures and markets which has increased competition among luxury brand marketing globally making luxury items accessible to a wider audience. Hence, luxury consumption is no longer exclusively for the rich, elite and higher social class individuals but has since included individuals irrespective of which social class they belong to leading to a substantial growth in overall luxury consumption. For example, a closer examination of luxury consumption figures across cultures show that income disparities do not necessarily explain the variations in luxury consumption (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). Given the dynamic growth of the luxury market fuelled by the rise of the emerging markets, a clearer understanding of factors that drive cross-cultural variations in consumer motivations and attitude towards luxury consumption and what accounts for such variations is required to inform marketing strategies for global luxury marketers and researchers. Luxury consumption can be instrumental for individuals to reflect their individual or social goals; however, these goals are not consistent across market segments because luxury is subjective in nature and depends on each individual's perception of indulgent value (Bian and Forsythe, 2012). Prior research (e.g., Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Gentina, Shrum and Lowrey, 2016; Shukla and Purani, 2012) on luxury consumption attitudes which are based on macro-level cultural orientations have failed to offer consistent outcome regarding how macro-cultural factors influence consumer motivations towards luxury (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). Even though there a few studies that capture the influence of individual level culture on consumer luxury attitude formation, the impact of consumer self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury has not been clearly addressed in previous research. The present study

seeks to provide a better understanding of how consumer attitude is impacted by the effects of individual level culture of self-construal orientation on luxury consumption across cultures. an area that has provided little or no research. From a practical point of view, this study also seeks to offer luxury managers a deeper understanding on how to segment and better serve their markets.

The role of culture on consumer behavioural outcomes especially via luxury consumption has been clearly emphasized in extant studies (e.g., Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bharti, Suneja and Chauhan, 2022; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Ko, Costello and Taylor, 2019). Even when the same consumers purchase the same products this does not necessarily imply that the factors driving such consumption motives are the same for consumers across diverse cultures. National or macro-level cultural distinctions of individualism and collectivism have been widely employed in the cross-cultural examination of the influence of culture on consumer behaviour, especially via attitude towards luxury consumption (Ko et al., 2019; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). However, some studies (e.g., Hennigs et al., 2012; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Ko et al., 2019; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019) have pointed out the limitations of macro-level cultural distinctions in offering meaningful and consistent results regarding how culture influences consumer attitude towards luxury consumption These studies (e.g., Kastanaskis and Voyer, 2014; Ko et al., 2019; Schwartz, 2014; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019; Taras et al., 2016) argue that the existence of between-country similarities and within country variation in terms of cultural values hinders the explanatory power of macro-level culture or national differences between individualism and collectivism.

Individualism and collectivism can co-exist in all cultures making it problematic in predicting individual-level behaviour without stereotyping cultural distinctions across cultures (e.g., Kim et al., 2001; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). These studies further argue that to provide a better understanding of an individual behaviour, examining culture at the individual level would provide a more precise identification and understanding of cultural differences, particularly on how culture impacts intrinsic human processes (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). This thesis builds on these limitations, by investigating the influence of the individual-level cultural orientation of independent and interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) on consumer attitude towards luxury. On the other hand, some studies (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kacen and Lee, 2002; Kim et al., 1996) have also emphasized the importance of investigating the influence of culture at the macro-level or national level as well as at the individual level due to the co-existence of individualism and collectivism to some degree in all cultures which could

potentially explain unique consequences of cultures on attitude and behaviours. Triandis (1994 p.42) points out "All of us carry both individualist and collectivist tendencies; the difference is that in some cultures the probability that the individualist selves, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviours will be sampled or used is higher than in others". Therefore, this thesis incorporates in the research model the individual-level and macro-level cultural influences by the simultaneous investigation of independent and interdependent self- construal and individualism and collectivism framework on consumers' attitude towards luxury.

Focusing on luxury consumption, the independent and interdependent self-construal plays a dominant role in the way consumers from both individualistic and collectivistic cultures consume luxury to either portray their individuality for personal reasons or to consume luxury for social status and socially oriented reasons (Bakir, Gentina and de Araújo Gil, 2020; Ko et al., 2019; Lee, Bae, and Koo, 2021; Millan and Reynold, 2014; Wang et al., 2022). The differences between social and personal orientation motivation towards luxury consumption have been shown to originate from an individual's independent or interdependent self-construal (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). This suggests that some consumers tend to focus on their independent self, self-related, or internal domain goals which emphasize their personal and unique attributes and expression of personal tastes when engaging in luxury consumption.

In contrast, some individuals focus on their interdependent self, others' opinions and reactions, and interpersonal domain such as how their external persona appears in society and on conformity to group membership when engaging in luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, more specifically, firstly, the objective of this thesis is to offer empirical evidence to determine whether the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitudes towards luxury varies across cultures. Secondly, to examine the explanatory role of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension on the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury. Examining these relationships can provide important practical implications for luxury branding strategies both within and across cultures because it is suggested to offer and highlight insights into which cultural characteristics and motivations that can affect luxury consumers' consumption attitudes. Luxury managers, advertisers, and marketers can be advised to emphasize the most effective appeal in their brand communications and strategies to target consumers with the specific individual-level (independent and interdependent self-construal) and macro-level (individualism and collectivism) cultural characteristics which are valuable for segmenting consumers both within and across countries. Lastly, this thesis examines the

moderating influence of subjective social status specifically to determine whether the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury varies depending on high and low social status individuals.

Consequently, this thesis is expected to further expand previous literature and theory development on attitudes towards luxury consumption by showing that independent and interdependent self-construal serves as an important source of individual difference in consumers' luxury attitude formation process. In addition, individualism and collectivism dimensions can also provide an explanatory role in the relationship between self-construal and attitude towards luxury and consumer behaviour literature. Furthermore, this study deepens the current understanding of subjective social status in the context of attitudes toward luxury consumption which is a relatively under-investigated area of research. Specifically, by aiming to extend past studies showing consumption for status signalling among high social class individuals and consumption (Wang et al., 2020) and the link between self-construal and luxury consumption.

This chapter is structured as follows. This chapter presents an overview of the thesis and to advance its justification, it is divided into six sections. Section 1.2 discusses the background of the research following this, section 1.3 discusses the research aim and specifically states the research objectives and questions in section 1.4. Subsequently, in sections 1.5 and 1.6, the methodological processes adopted for the thesis are explained and data analysis processes are also discussed briefly. Finally, the expected research contributions both theoretical and managerial contributions are presented in Section 1.7 and the outline of the thesis, leading to the conclusion of the chapter is presented in section 1.8.

1.2. Research Background

The global luxury industry continues to increasingly expand in the past few years during the past twenty years reportedly tripled worldwide (Bain and Company, 2022; Euromonitor, 2021). Despite the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic which has severely disrupted the global luxury industry substantially and quickened a channel shift to e-commerce (Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020). Data still shows that luxury products and brands sales spiked despite its worst dip in history during the pandemic and thus regardless of the overall negative economic effects of COVID-19, slowing GDP growth, the market could reach 360-380 billion Euros by 2025 (Bain and Company, 2022). Even though the luxury market globally currently is projected to grow by 21% in 2022, reaching €1.4 trillion (Bain and Company, 2022). Past

studies have attributed the resilience of luxury product consumption worldwide even during economic downturns to its symbolic and subjective nature and more importantly its cultural relativity (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bharti, Suneja and Chauhan, 2022; Becker, Lee, and Nobre, 2018; Pillar and Nair, 2021).

With the advent of globalization, technological advancement, mass media, and increased immigration, more individuals are now interacting with more than one culture (Pusaksrikit and Kang, 2016). However, the subjective attribute of luxury creates difficulties in defining and measuring culture. One category of relativity is cultural relativity where divergent cultural framings regarding luxury consumption drive ambivalent consumer attitudes (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018). The variations in consumption means what is accepted in one culture may not be considered in another culture even if it is the same product consumed (Belk, 1999; Dubois, Laurent, and Czellar, 2001; Hennigs et al., 2012; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). In measuring national cultural differences, the individualism and collectivism cultural dimension have been traditionally adopted to explain general differences across diverse cultures which is based on the ranking of where each country falls on the Hofstede (1980) cultural dimension (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Wang and Waller, 2006; Triandis, 1988). Individualism pertains to cultures in which the ties between individuals are loose, i.e., everyone is expected to look after themselves. In contrast, Collectivism refers to cultures in which individuals are integrated into strong-bonded, cohesive groups to which individuals feel strong bonds throughout their lifetime (Hofstede, 1991).

Classifications based on the cultural variability of individualism and collectivism have been highly relevant and may help to explain multifaceted differences amongst cultural groups in consumer behaviour, including perceptual and cognitive differences (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). For example, the effects of individualism and collectivism cultural on consumers' responses to brand images (Torelli et al., 2012), prices (Bolton et al., 2010), persuasion effects (Aaker and Maheswaran, 1997), impulsive buying behaviour (Kacen and Lee, 2002), and luxury consumption behaviour (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Ko et al., 2019; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Wang and Waller, 2006). However, recent studies (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kacen and Lee., 2002; Kim et al., 2001; Singelis and Brown, 1995; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019) advocating the importance of examining the influence of culture both at the cultural and individual level indicated that reliance on cultural level differences only to explain individual behaviour is limited. Possible reasons attribute to the fact that cultures are not evidently homogenous because individualist and collectivist attributes can exist in all cultures. This means that individuals within a particular culture may vary to the extent that their individualist

or collectivist values or the way they conceive of themselves is sampled is higher than in others (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Triandis, 1994). Moreover, in the literature, evidence of between country similarities and within-country variations in terms of cultural values exists, even within relatively homogenous cultures, individuals may vary substantially in the extent to which they identify with and practice cultural values and norms (Kaasa, Vadi and Varblane, 2014; Schwartz, 2014; Taras and Steel, 2009; Taras et al., 2016; Taras, Steel and Kirkman, 2016; Vignoles et al., 2016). These limitations consequently may weaken the explanatory power of cultural level influences, especially in luxury consumption where there are many similarities across luxury segments across and within cultures (Hennigs et al., 2012; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). This might be the reason some cross-cultural studies based on individualism and collectivism influences have produced conflicting results on how culture affects consumer luxury consumption behaviour (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). For example, some studies found that, across cultures, individualism and collectivism values had no significant cultural difference in the motivation towards luxury (e.g., Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Gentina et al., 2016; Hennigs et al., 2012;). Other studies, on the other hand, found significant differences in similar cultures (e.g., Shukla and Purani, 2012; Shukla et al., 2015). Another group of studies identified no meaningful influence of individualism and collectivism values on luxury attitudes exists across cultures (Godey et al., 2013; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012).

Taken together, these results raise the question of whether cultural level influence with a limited account of the individual level (micro or the psychological level) characteristics can explain accurately the impact of culture within and across culture in consumer behaviour. Specifically, because individualism and collectivism dimensions also consist of self-representation (self-construal), the major norms, values, and beliefs that individuals are socialised in which can influence consumer behaviour (Vignoles et al., 2016). Combined with the existence of individualism and collectivism in all cultures and some consumers even within relatively homogenous cultures may vary substantially in their practice of cultural values and norms (Kaasa et al., 2014; Taras et al., 2016; Vignoles et al., 2016). This highlights the importance of investigating both cultural-level and individual-level factors that influence luxury consumption to fully understand the influence of culture on luxury consumption behaviour (Ko et al., 2019).

Luxury consumption is an inherent and enduring part of a culture or society and shared by different consumers across cultures and thus not a new phenomenon (Cristini et al., 2017). The concept of luxury can be described as products whose ratios of functional utility to price are low and the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). Despite the growth of academic research on luxury consumption, the concept of luxury has

remained difficult to define and arrive at a consensus on what constitutes a luxury product or brand because luxury has remained relative, subjective and context specific (Ko et al., 2019; Michaelidou, Christodoulides and Presi, 2022). Nevertheless, several researchers agree on the fact that luxury satisfies both psychological and functional needs (Tsai, 2005; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). The role of culture in the consumption of luxury is a phenomenon that spans across cultural and national boundaries, as such the same luxury products and brands are often cross-culturally marketed and the demand for luxury can be argued to be globally consistent. However, past studies have questioned the assumption of global markets and have argued that consumers' cultural context needs to be considered in order to better understand consumer's motivations, attitudes, and behaviour, especially in regard to the luxury consumption process (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bharti et al., 2022; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Cultural differences will continue to be one of the influencing factors in the consumption of global brands and a source of differentiating markets globally (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Ko et al., 2019; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Even when consumers across different cultural contexts and countries consume the same luxury product, this does not imply that the motivation for consuming luxury will be the same.

Culture is a complex concept that is difficult to study because it is hard to measure objectively, and it is equally difficult to measure subjectively especially as it is rooted in human behaviours. Culture as an important influence on human behaviour is usually reflective of the individual's cultural value system which is internalized over time as individuals are socialized as members of a group (Luna and Gupta, 2001). For example, culture influences individual decision-making processes, preferences, how the world is perceived, and what actions are to be taken based on decisions made (Luna and Gupta, 2001; McCort and Malhotra, 1993). In addition, culture influences consumer cognition (Aaker and Maheswaran, 1997) and behaviour and motivation for consumption (Belk et al., 2003; Ko et al., 2006; Ko et al., 2019). The differences in motivation that exist between consumers from different cultures and national boundaries are therefore important considerations for practitioners and marketers. Traditionally several past studies have widely used the individualism and collectivism framework to account for these macro-level cultural differences in cultural variability across cultures assuming that cultures are homogenous in terms of norms, beliefs, and attitudes (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Wang and Waller, 2006). Recent studies have argued that individual-level culture provides a better understanding of the cultural influences on consumer behaviour because cultures at the national or macro-level may not adequately portray substantial variations within and across cultures (Kim et al., 2001; Matsumoto, 2003; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019).

This study focuses on the effects of self-construal orientation as an individual-level cultural variable on attitude towards luxury consumption. Self-construal is conceptualised as a constellation of thoughts feelings and actions concerning the relationship of the self to others and as distant from others (Singelis and Brown, 1995). The construal of self is closely linked to cultural norms and values and is important in explaining an individual's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Such that independent self-construal individuals are characterised as autonomous, distinct from group, independent and focus more on uniqueness, individual achievements, and accomplishments. On the other hand, interdependent self-construal individuals focus on connectedness, and conformity and give priority to group goals and harmony. However, these two conceptualisations of the self as either independent or interdependent can co-exist in individuals and cultural orientation affects the development of accessibility of either one of the self-construal on consumer behaviour (Singelis, 1994).

In terms of luxury consumption, the demand for luxury products is no longer limited to developed countries (mainly individualist culture) but has since expanded to new rich emerging countries (mainly collectivist culture) fuelled by the rising income levels of the emergent global middle class (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012). The growth in the global market for luxury products has elevated competition among luxury brands whereby the brands are trading themselves down to accommodate a broader range of consumers across different cultures. Because luxury products can be instrumental for consumers to achieve their social or individual goals and this may vary between consumers and cultural contexts (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). This means that the factors driving the consumption of luxury behaviour among consumers in individualistic and collectivist cultures can differ considerably (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Ko et al., 2019; Pillar and Nair, 2021; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Although, some researchers (e.g., Hofstede, Steenkamp, and Wedel, 1999) argue that the globalization of consumer culture will lead to homogeneous luxury perceptions and impact the same on purchasing intentions and behaviour. Other researchers (e.g., Bharti et al., 2022; De Mooij, 2004; Ko et al., 2019; Sharma, 2010; Wang et al., 2022) suggest that culture still has a significant influence on consumers' perceptions leading to differences that arise in purchasing behaviour in individualistic and collectivist cultures (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) and thereby leads to a focus of attention on the cultural influences driving luxury consumption behaviour across and within cultures.

Furthermore, hierarchy, in terms of objective social status or social class just like status consumption is a fundamental aspect of every society and one of the driving factors is the demand for consumers to portray their high social class in society through status items they acquire (Chen et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020). In addition to the objective social status which is exhibited by individuals' rank in society in terms of education, occupation, and income (Kraus et al., 2012), these individuals equally have a perception of their social status ranking in society that is their subjective social status. Several past studies have pointed out that the influence of an individual's subjective social status on consumption behaviour tends to be a more consistent predictor of social cognitive outcomes compared to objective social status (Adler et al., 2000; Belmi et al., 2020). This is because the subjective perception of an individual's ranking has the advantage of being malleable making it a useful driving factor in investigating causal relationships (Wang et al., 2022). Past studies have mostly focused on subjective social status effects in the domains of health and well-being (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Adler and Marmot, 2003; Rarick et al., 2018; Singh-Manoux, Wolff et al., 2010). This study aims to extend this research field by exploring the effect of subjective social status on consumer behaviour via consumers' attitudes toward luxury consumption.

1.2.1. Importance of Self-Construal Effects on Attitude towards Luxury Consumption

Self-construal is described as the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals that differ in terms of how individuals define or view themselves in terms of as independent or interdependent in relation to others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Two types of self-construal have been identified in literature namely, the independent and interdependent self-construal in which the main difference between them is how the individual makes meaning of the self in relation to others. An independent self-construal is defined as a bounded, unitary, and stable self that is separate from social contexts (Singelis, 1994). Individuals with an independent self-construal tend to focus on their personal attributes such as goals, freedom, and uniqueness in reference to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others (Wang and Wang, 2016). In contrast, an interdependent self-construal can be described as a flexible or variable self that emphasizes an individual's connectedness with others (Singelis, 1994). Individuals with an interdependent self-construal tend to focus more on external attributes such as maintaining relationships and keeping harmony within their groups, more sensitive to their social environment (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). These two conceptualizations of self-construal can coexist within an individual (Aaker and Lee, 2001; Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Pusaksrikit and Kang, 2016) and

can vary within and across cultures leading to individual differences in self-construal that can be assessed (Singelis, 1994). Generally, in the literature, individualistic cultures typically promote the development of independent self-construal, on the other hand, collectivistic cultures promote interdependent self-construal (Cross et al., 2011).

Self-construal has been highly influential in the field of cross-cultural psychology and influences numerous psychological outcomes (Cross et al., 2011; Vignoles et al., 2016) such as consumer goals (Yang et al., 2015), how they respond to price/ quality judgments (Lalwani and Shavitt, 2013), self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman, 2005), thinking styles (Cross et al., 2011; Gudykunst and Lee, 2003). Self-construal effects have been connected to the consumption and marketing of luxury owing to its highly symbolic properties to either create a sense of affiliation or differentiation from others (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Ko et al., 2019; Seo, 2015; Shukla and Purani, 2012;). In other words, luxury consumption can either be socially or personally motivated and these motivations have been originally traced back to an individual's independent and interdependent self-construal (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). This means luxury consumption is likely to vary depending on a consumer's self-construal. Consumers with an interdependent self-construal might likely engage in luxury consumption if the item demonstrates their social relationships and norms and serves as a status symbol (social orientation). In contrast, independent self-construal individuals might likely engage in luxury due to their urge to differentiate themselves from others (personal orientation) (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Based on the above discussions, independent and interdependent self-construal are likely to drive consumers' luxury consumption for different reasons (Escalas and Betman, 2005).

Although researchers have suggested that self-construal drives consumption decisions and consumption patterns (Stathoupoulou and Balabanis, 2019), over the past few decades a few studies (e.g., Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Gil et al., 2012) have investigated the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption. Firstly, none of these studies have examined self-construal effects in light of the mediating influence of individualism-collectivism and moderating effects of subjective social status. Secondly, these studies were limited in their explorations of the effect of self-construal on luxury consumption focusing on within-country variations in individualistic culture (e.g., Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014) and collectivistic culture (e.g., Shaikh et al., 2017; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Gil et al., 2012). The focus of the investigation was primarily on within-country variations in individualistic and collectivistic countries leaving out any

possibility of between-country similarities. A review of the literature reveals evidence of within-country variations and between-country similarities, especially in luxury consumption where there are many similarities among luxury segments cross-culturally (Hennigs et al., 2012). Owing to the large concentration of consumers within a given country, issues regarding whether national culture impacted the relationship between self-construal and attitude toward luxury remains largely unaddressed (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). This thesis responds to the call for research focusing on cross-cultural consumer attitudes towards luxury (Ko et al., 2019; Pillai and Nair, 2021). This study introduces unique perspectives from varied national cultures to highlight the importance of the degrees to which various domains of self-construal are prominent in three countries with divergent cultures. UK, India, and Nigeria (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). In other words, this study shows that although consumers across cultures may have similar motivations toward luxury, the motivations differ between independent and independent self-construal. No study to date has investigated the impact of an individual's self-construal on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context. In addition, the investigation of the effect of self-construal on attitude in light of the mediating effect of individualism-collectivism and the moderating effect of subjective social status in a cross-cultural context has not been examined. This points to a gap in the literature (GAP 1). Given the call for research as mentioned in the discussion above, this study undertakes a theoretical study that attempts to examine a cross-cultural comparison of the effect of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context.

1.2.2. Importance of the Mediating Role of Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism and collectivism cultural dimensions have been widely employed to better understand the influence of culture on consumer behaviour (Eastman et al., 2018; Lam, Lee and Mizerski, 2009). Several past studies widely use individualism and collectivism cultural dimensions to explain differences in social behaviour between cultural perspectives of the concept of self (Wang and Waller, 2006). Collectivism emphasises more on individuals rather than a task and the reverse happens for individualism (Triandis, et al., 1988). Specifically, this means collectivism places great emphasis on the views, needs, and goals of groups rather than oneself, great readiness to cooperate, and emotional attachment with group members. On the other hand, individualism encourages self-reliance, gives priority to personal goals over group goals, and can be seen as positively correlated with an emphasis on personal achievement (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis et al., 1988). Individuals are socialised in terms of collectivism and

individualism based on cultural values, beliefs, and norms (Cross, 1995; Gudykunst et al., 1996). Trandis (1995) defines individualism as a social pattern that consists of individuals who see themselves as autonomous and independent and motivated by their own preferences, goals, and needs over relationships with others. In contrast, collectivism consists of individuals who see themselves as an integral part of collectives such as family or co-workers and are often motivated by norms and values imposed by groups and emphasize their connectedness with the in-groups. These social patterns are expected to influence individual behaviour through their influence on responsiveness to normative influence, need or lack of need to suppress internal beliefs to act appropriately (Wang and Waller, 2006; Kacen and Lee, 2002). Given that the characteristics of individualism focus on being unique, resisting pressure, and expressing their traits, while collectivism focus on conformity and express connectedness to groups, these characteristics may have consequence on a consumer's independent self-construal which focuses on separateness of others might influence individualism which in turn influences the individual's behaviour. On the other hand, interdependent self-construal largely places importance on connectedness with others might influence collectivism which in turn influences the individual's behaviour (Cross et al., 2011; Singelis, 1994). Not many studies have examined the mediating influence on individualism and collectivism on consumer behaviour in the luxury sector (Ko et al., 2019). This is despite the fact that personally and socially oriented value perceptions of luxury consumption are culture driven (Hennigs et al., 2012; Ko et al., 2019) and luxury consumers are found to rely on cultural signals relating to personal or social influences when engaging in luxury (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Ko et al., 2019). This study highlights the role of individualism and collectivism in luxury consumption, with both constructs tapping into the positive role of culture. Thus, this study throws light on the impact of self-construal on these culture related constructs and in so doing, provides a nuanced understanding of the effect of self-construal on attitude towards luxury consumption. Together, these contributions extend the literature on self-construal theory and luxury consumption.

Moreover, in terms of luxury consumption, the literature reveals that an individual's cultural and psychological characteristics concerning their self and relations to others influence the individual's intention and consumption of luxury. For example, even if consumers from different cultures consume the same luxury product, the motivation for consuming luxury products may vary across cultures (Bain and Forsythe, 2012; Ko et al., 2019; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Wong and Ahuvia, 1996). Consequently, individualism and collectivism might be influenced by independent and interdependent self-construal and in turn influence luxury consumption attitude. Despite this importance, not many studies have attempted to assess the connection between self-construal and luxury consumption attitudes from the perspective of

the mediating role of individualism and collectivism dimension. This points to another gap in the literature (GAP 2).

1.2.3. Importance of the Moderating Effect of Subjective Social Status

Subjective social status refers to the perception of an individual's ranking in terms of others in society which depends on the individual's material resources (Quon and McGrath, 2014; Operario, Alder and Williams, 2004). In other words, the subjective assessments of the social economic status or objective social status individuals make in relation to others (Rarick et al., 2018). Traditionally, objective social status is assessed from the perspective of the objective indicators of an individual's socioeconomic status such as educational level, material resources, and occupation (Kraus et al., 2012; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). These objective empirical factors of social status may have radically different relative values in different contexts. In contrast, because subjective social status is an individual perceived social status in comparison with others in society, it may provide a more meaningful way of measuring the influence of social status on social psychology (Kraus, Piff and Keltner, 2009). Subjective social class may also offer a more stable predictor of the psychological and behavioural characteristics of an individual (Adler et al., 2000; Belmi et al., 2020; Kraus, Piff, and Keltner, 2009). A possible explanation may be explained by the reason that subjective social status has the advantage of being malleable, making it a useful means of examining causality (Wang et al., 2022). For instance, the implications of having an Ivy league degree are different from that of other schools, however, in a measure of education status, both levels of education would be coded the same (Operario, Alder and Williams, 2004).

In terms of consumption of products, in order to exhibit social status, consumers can improve their social standing through the consumption of consumer products such as luxury products that symbolise and confer status for the individual and significant others, especially in environments where few can afford them (Eastman et al., 2018; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Luxury products are positioned as being high class and associated with high prices thereby consuming such products can serve as a status signalling symbol (Jaikumar, Singh, and Sarin, 2018). Therefore self-expression, social pressure, and social comparison may likely influence consumers' luxury behaviour (Davari et al., 2022; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). From a review of past literature, the desire for status is a universal human motive (Anderson, Hildreth and Howland, 2015; Eastman et al., 2018; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Hence,

past studies have suggested that regardless of the individual's social status they are likely to engage in conspicuous consumption (Wang et al., 2022).

While high social status individuals can improve upward mobility of social class by accumulating wealth, engaging in high social prestige occupation and higher educational level, in contrast, for the majority of lower-class individual, it is difficult to improve their social status by above means. They rather seek alternative means to improve their social status. Consuming products with status symbols easily provide that means for such individuals. From the perspective of compensatory consumption, individuals will compensate themselves through consumption when they experience threats to important aspects of the self or ignored due to the contradiction between their inner needs and their real situation (Mandel et al., 2017). In such situation, they may compensate by purchasing and consuming products that signal status in the threatened domain (Mandel et al., 2017). On the other hand, higher social status individuals define themselves in terms of material success and social ranking, which provides them the ability to differentiate themselves from lower social status individuals (Wang et al., 2022).
Hence compared to lower social status individuals, higher social status or social class individuals have been reported to exhibit a greater desire for wealth and status leading to a "having more-wanting more" phenomenon (Du et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020).

It is reasonable to expect high social class individuals to consume conspicuously to portray their high status compared to lower social status consumers. Previous studies on subjective social status or social class have mostly focused on subjective social status effects in the domains of health and well-being with limited attention to its consequence on consumption (e.g., Adler and Marmot, 2003; Adler et al., 2000; Rarick et al., 2018; Singh-Manoux Wolff et al., 2010). This is despite the fact that luxury consumption behaviour is social status driven (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019) and luxury consumers are found to rely heavily on their sense of affiliation or differentiation signals to improve their social standing (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). For this reason, the present study explores the influence of subjective social status on consumer luxury consumption. However, no study to date has empirically tested this impact on the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury. This study aims to fill the research gap (GAP 3). No study to date has empirically examined the moderating effect of subjective social status on the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury. Testing the moderating effect of subjective social status on consumers' independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury is important because individuals with high and low subjective social status may differ in the way they conceive of themselves in the light of luxury consumption behaviour. Individuals with higher subjective

social status have generally been reported to possess greater levels of luxury consumption intention which can then potentially influence their luxury consumption behaviour (Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, the moderating effects of subjective social status are likely to impact the effect of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury.

1.3. Research Aim

The aim of the present thesis is based fundamentally on the avoidance of ecological fallacy, assuming that all cultures are the same in terms of values, self-identities, and behaviour despite variations between and across cultures found in the literature further impacting generalizing macro-level cultural findings on consumer behaviours (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019; Taras et al., 2016). Moreover, the importance of investigating the influence of culture both at the macro-level and individual level culture on consumer behaviour and specifically in this thesis context, via luxury consumption has been emphasized (Ko et al., 2019). In response, this study explores the simultaneous examination of the influence of self-construal (individual level) and individualism and collectivism cultural dimension (macro-level) cultural differences on consumer attitude towards luxury. In doing so, this thesis provides a deeper understanding of the influence of culture on luxury consumption attitude with an eye on extending knowledge on cross-cultural studies on luxury consumption beyond the typical macro-level cultural differences. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand to what extent the influence of self-construal on attitude toward luxury varies depending on an individual's subjective social status.

Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to determine the influence of self-construal and the explanatory role of individualism and collectivism model on attitude towards luxury. In addition to exploring whether the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury varies depending on an individual's subjective social status.

To achieve the research aims above, this thesis specifically focuses on the following research objectives:

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To examine the influence of Independent Self-construal and Interdependent Self-Construal on consumer attitudes toward luxury in a cross-cultural context.

2. To examine the mediating role of Individualism and Collectivism on the influence of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal on consumers' attitude toward luxury in a cross-cultural context.

3. To examine to what extent the effects of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury is stronger for individuals with high subjective social status when compared to lower subjective status individuals in a cross-cultural context.

1.5. Research Methodology

To achieve the research objectives and questions from a methodological perspective, this thesis takes a positivist philosophical position. This study recognises the existence of an objective or independent reality beyond the observer's view and realises that reality can never be known perfectly. Thus, focusing on objective facts or knowledge gathered from observations involving hypotheses testing and findings deduced from statistical analysis (Collis and Hussey, 2014), a quantitative approach is employed in this study to analyse the data collected through an online survey questionnaire.

From a methodological viewpoint, to establish the cross-national validity of the proposed conceptual framework, data samples are collected from three countries (the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria). Firstly, the three countries were selected because they offer culturally distinct research grounds that differ in terms of Individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 2001) to allow testing of the external validity of the conceptual framework. The three countries differ on the individualism index: The United Kingdom ranked highest (89), while India (48) and Nigeria (30) ranked low. Second, the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism has been shown to influence consumer attitudes toward luxury following past studies findings (e.g., Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Pillai and Nair, 2021; Shaikh et al., 2017). Moreover, several studies have employed the United Kingdom and India as exemplars of individualist and collectivist cultures respectively to study consumers' attitude towards luxury (e.g., Ajitha and Sivakumar, 2017; Pillai and Nair, 2021; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Nigeria was selected because it consists of a diverse population of many different cultures (Taras et al., 2009), increasing disposable income and changing lifestyles of the middle-class population make them an attractive market prone to luxury consumption (Aksoy and Abdulfatai, 2019). Furthermore, the three countries' selection because they are likely to provide sufficient variability in terms of the individual-level cultural orientation of self-construal orientation adopted in this thesis facilitating the assessment of cross-cultural comparability of the proposed conceptual model.

A non-student sample was collected from a crowdsourcing online platform through the Amazon MTurk online platform following numerous past studies (e.g., Evans and Bang, 2019; Gonzalez-Jimenez, Fastoso, Fukukawa, 2019; Manyiwa, 2020; Steelman, Hammer and Limayem, 2014) that have been widely regarded as a reliable source of diverse participants. Respondents in this study were emailed a short description of the questionnaire by Amazon MTurk and those that signified interest in participating and having passed the screening questions proceeded to the actual online-based questionnaire hosted externally through a hyperlink. The research stimuli selected are based on critical literature and following past studies (Jhamb et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Yim et al., 2014). In order to ensure the cross-national comparability of attitude towards luxury and relevance to the respondents, the selected stimuli are perceived similarly in regard to status or prestige and have familiarity and usage. In this study, the choice of luxury watches and jewellery product category is justified by the finding in previous research studies which reveal that these luxury product categories are significantly more stereotypical when culture and gender are considered (Jhamb et al., 2020; Hudders and Pandelaere, 2012; Kastanaskis and Balabanis, 2014; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). Subsequently, after the preliminary study, the main questionnaire was developed, and a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study was conducted using 160 respondents (United Kingdom 47, India 52, and Nigeria 61). The pilot study was conducted to ensure that all the constructs in this study (i.e., independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, individualism, collectivism, subjective social status, and attitude towards luxury), adopted from existing literature, have adequate construct reliability. The construct reliability of all the study constructs measured in the pilot study was tested using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 24.0).

Following the pilot study, the main study data was collected. From a total of 935 questionnaires collected 221 were British, 319 Indian, and 395 Nigerian. The scales used have all been developed and validated in previous studies. An initial data analysis using SPSS version 24.0 was employed for this purpose on the main study questionnaire which was performed to ensure data accuracy and prepare the data statistically before assessing the proposed research measurement model. In order to assess the measurement model and to test the reliability and validity of measures used in this study, the confirmatory factor analysis was conducted (Byrne 2010). The confirmatory factor analysis was chosen over the exploratory factor analysis because all measures used in this study are established measurement scales and some prior knowledge of the structure of the latent variables is known as suggested in prior research (Kline 2015). In addition, cross-national measurement equivalence assessment (measurement

invariance) and common method variance (CMV) analysis were tested using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS, version 24.0) and subsequently, after assessing the measurement model validity with CFA, the structural equation modelling (SEM) is applied to test the hypotheses.

1.6. Expected Contributions

This thesis contributes to the theoretical and practical knowledge of self-construal theory. The expected theoretical contributions and managerial implications are explained in detail below.

1.6.1. Expected Theoretical Contributions

The expected theoretical contribution of this thesis offers a deeper understanding of a cross-cultural model for attitudes toward luxury consumption by providing an integrative perspective that encompasses self-construal theory, the mediating role of individualism and collectivism, and subjective social status literature to predict how consumers' independent and interdependent self-construal drives attitude towards luxury consumption. In doing so, this study uniquely contributes to each of these research streams, by offering enriching theoretical insights into consumer behaviour toward luxury and international marketing literature. Moreover, according to Ko et al. (2019), more cross-cultural investigations are needed to provide an in-depth understanding of how consumer behaviour is impacted by their culture. More specifically, the authors note that the lack of consensus on whether individualism and collectivism and other cultural influences affect consumers' attitudes toward luxury is under investigation. Having heard this call for research, this study expects to contribute significantly to understanding the consumer's luxury consumption formation processes in a cross-cultural context. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, to date there is no study that provides a comprehensive cross-cultural model which simultaneously examines both individual-level and macro-level cultural influence on consumer attitude towards luxury.

The main contribution of this study will be the development of a comprehensive cross-cultural model that explains the how the effects of self-construal drives consumer attitude towards luxury consumption in the light of the mediating factor of individualism-collectivism as well as the moderating effect of subjective social status on the relationship between self-construal and attitude towards luxury. Overall, this study will provide a new theoretical insight into the literature on cross-cultural research, self-construal theory and attitude towards luxury

consumption literature. Previous studies have suggested that self-construal drives consumption patterns and consumer decisions (Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020, Millan and Reynolds, 2014). A comprehensive model does not exist in the literature that shows how independent and interdependent self-construal drives consumer attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context. Though, a few studies (Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017) have explored the examination of independent and interdependent self-construal on luxury consumption, none of these studies mentioned (see Appendix 2.2) have examined self-construal effects in light of the mediating influence of individualism-collectivism and moderating effects of subjective social status. Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) drawing from a self-construal perspective investigated variations in luxury consumption within an individualist culture, while some other studies (e.g., Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Shaikh et al., 2017) examined the role of independent and interdependent self-construal on luxury consumption within a collectivist culture. These studies focused on the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption in either collectivistic or individualistic culture neglecting the possibility of any between-country similarities and within-country variations which remain unaccounted for in a cross-cultural context. Research has shown many similarities in luxury consumption across cultures (Hennigs, 2012) and the existence of within-country variations and between country similarities in terms of cultural values (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). Luxury consumers are more heterogeneous than the country level differences literature suggests and this has important consequences for researchers and practitioners. Thus, examining the effect of self-construal on luxury consumption by comparing the independent and interdependent self-construal effects in the light of individualism, collectivism and subjective social status in individualistic and collectivistic cultures is expected to contribute to the extant literature on self-construal theory and luxury consumption.

This thesis is also expected to contribute to the literature on individualism and collectivism dimension by providing empirical evidence on a deeper understanding of how individualism and collectivism framework influences the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal orientation and attitude towards luxury consumption. Not many studies have examined the mediating role of individualism and collectivism dimension, despite the fact that culture has a penetrating influence on consumer behaviour and expanding research finds that culture is becoming more diffused with commonalities found across cultures in terms of cultural variables (Craig and Douglas, 2006; Eastman et al., 2018). Moreover, luxury consumption behaviour is culture driven, even though the same luxury product is consumed across cultures, the factors driving them may not be similar (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and

Ahuvia, 1998). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is among the first to demonstrates the mediating role of individualism and collectivism on the relationship between self-construal and attitudes towards luxury. Not many studies have examined the mediating influence on individualism and collectivism on consumer behaviour in the luxury sector (Ko et al., 2019). This is despite the fact that personally and socially oriented value perceptions of luxury consumption are culture driven (Hennigs et al., 2012; Ko et al., 2019) and luxury consumers are found to rely on cultural signals relating to personal or social influences when engaging in luxury (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Ko et al., 2019). This study highlights the role of individualism and collectivism in luxury consumption, with both constructs tapping into the positive role of culture. Thus, this study throws light on the impact of self-construal on these culture related constructs and in so doing, provides a nuanced understanding of the effect of self-construal on attitude towards luxury consumption. Together, these contributions extend the literature on self-construal theory and luxury consumption.

Furthermore, this thesis is expected to contribute to knowledge by further expanding previous research and theory development by empirically investigating whether subjective social status serves as an important individual-level variable in its moderation of the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury. Together these contributions extend the literature on the self-construal theory and luxury consumption.

1.6.2. Expected Managerial Implication

The main practical contribution this thesis provides will be an in-depth understanding of the luxury consumer to enable marketers and practitioners to garner insights for segmenting consumer markets and selecting target messages that match with their brand positioning strategies. For instance, the findings of this thesis show that individuals with a dominant interdependent self-construal orientation positively influences attitude toward luxury consumption across cultures. Therefore, marketers targeting such consumers can be advised to design effective marketing strategies that stress conformity, social image, and popularity (bandwagon) brand messages that enable the consumers to believe that using their brand allows them to enhance their social status in society and identify with their preferred group.

Secondly, the insights from the study can benefit advertisers and luxury marketers on how to communicate with consumers through targeted messages that has a positive effect on their luxury brand attitude. Therefore, to target these consumer segments such as interdependent self-construal consumers and to stimulate their attitude towards luxury and willingness to

purchase luxury brands, appealing interdependently oriented messages such as marketing communications emphasizing the enhancement of consumers' social standing, conformity, and affiliation to certain social groups and how the use of luxury improves their social identity will be more persuasive and effective when directed towards these consumers. In contrast, appealing independent-oriented messages are likely to serve as a demarketing tool in inducing interdependent self-construal consumers to avoid luxury consumption. Consequently, when developing brand marketing strategies, practitioners should consider incorporating these insights to establish their brand loyalty, strength, and success in their brand management.

1.7. Structure of Thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters Figure 1.2 offers an overview. Each chapter includes an introduction, a brief description of the chapter's content, and a summary of the main points. These seven chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1: Thesis introduction and overview of the Study

This chapter provides an overview of the research background and briefly outlined the conceptual foundation of this thesis. It offers a summary of the self-construal and individualism and collectivism research and gaps in the literature. It outlined the research objectives, research questions, the proposed methodology, and the expected contributions of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter discusses in detail the comprehensive review of all the constructs adopted in this thesis including theories and approaches in the focused research areas of this thesis. The chapter starts by presenting an overview of the conceptualisation and measurement of culture and then presents its importance in the consumer behaviour. Chapter 2 then goes on to offer a literature review on the macro-level and individual-level concept of culture that is the individualism versus collectivism and self-construal orientation respectively. Additionally, research studies related to the influence of culture on luxury consumption motivations and attitude is analysed. The importance of subjective social status on self-construal and attitude towards luxury analysed. The chapter highlights the gaps and limitations related to the field of the scope of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework

Based on the relevant and existing theoretical frameworks, this chapter proposes the conceptual model. This chapter discusses the conceptual framework and the theoretical underpinning that guides the thesis by connecting the thesis to existing knowledge in the fields of the effects of culture on luxury consumption attitude by introducing the constructs of self-construal and individualism and collectivism to the understanding of consumer attitude towards luxury consumption in a cross-cultural context. In addition, 12 hypotheses are developed and are empirically tested.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research approach and methodology employed to collect and analyse the data. This chapter discusses and justifies the research philosophy and data collection techniques adopted to achieve the research aims and objectives. The methodology includes explaining the data collection and sampling techniques, justification of the context of study, operationalisation and measurement scale discussed in the conceptual framework. The measurement scales employed have been validated in previous studies. The chapter also discusses cross-cultural equivalence (measurement invariance), data analysis approach and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: Pilot Study Results

This chapter outlines the steps taken and results of the data analysis of the pilot study that focuses on selecting luxury product stimuli for the main study survey questionnaire. Moreover, this chapter provides the procedure and the results of the pilot study of the main study questionnaire. The implications for the main study survey research instrument is considered

Chapter 6: Data Analysis

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the empirical assessment of the research framework of various research findings that are obtained from the data collected and the statistical methods employed with respect to the 10 hypotheses. This chapter provides the data cleaning, descriptive analysis for the respondents, and the results for the reliability and validity of the measurement scales and provides statistical analyses of the hypotheses of the conceptual framework. The chapter explains the findings analysed in a logical sequence to enable examination of the results with an overview of the hypotheses results presented.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter discusses the research findings, accessing and interpreting the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable and evaluating if the results supported the proposed hypotheses of this thesis. In addition, relating the research findings to the literature within the field.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The chapter presents the summary of the main conclusions, key findings that can be drawn from the results and details the theoretical contribution and managerial implication that come out of the research. The limitations identified in this thesis is discussed and the thesis concludes with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Existing studies on luxury consumption have mainly been investigated based on macro-level cross-cultural differences implicitly assuming that cultures are homogenous in terms of norms, values and consumer behaviour. Research have suggested that the individual-level cultural orientation of self-construal drives consumption decisions and consumption patterns (Stathoupoulou and Balabanis, 2019). In the luxury consumption context, a few studies (Gil et al., 2012; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017) have investigated the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption. This thesis building on these past studies (Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017) recognises the existence of between-country similarities and within country variation especially in luxury consumption where there are many similarities across luxury segments cross-culturally (Hennigs et al., 2012). Given that all cultures are not evidently homogeneous because individualism and collectivism can exist in all cultures, this means that individuals may vary substantially in the extent to which they identify with and practice cultural values and norms (Taras, Steel and Kirkman, 2016). Owing to this, the issues regarding whether national culture impacted the relationship between self-construal and attitude toward luxury is not accounted for. This thesis responds to the call for cross-cultural research on luxury consumption (Ko et al., 2019; Pillai and Nair, 2021) to close the gap in the literature by examining whether the impact of self-construal on luxury consumption attitudes varies depending on independent and interdependent self-construal across cultures in light of firstly, the mediating role of individualism-collectivism to reinforce the causal mechanism via which self-construal impacts on attitude towards luxury. Further, this study introduces subjective social status as a moderator on self-construal effects on luxury consumption. The existing research on self-construal research on luxury consumption as shown on Appendix 2.2 has not covered these areas of investigations before.

Specifically, this chapter provides a literature review on four main areas of research including all constructs employed in this thesis which are the self-construal orientation, individualism and collectivism framework, the concept and attitude towards luxury, and subjective social status. This chapter comprises seven sections. Section 2.1 provides a brief introduction and outline of the chapter. Section 2.2 discusses an overview of the concept of culture and the measurement of culture. It also provides a literature review on individualism and collectivism cultural dimensions and their shortcomings in the literature also discussed. Followed by section

2.3 which provides a review of the literature on the overview of how self-construal theory, its psychological influence on consumer behaviour and its relationship to individualism and collectivism. Section 2.4 discusses the concept of luxury, and attitude towards luxury consumption, this section also provides overview of different values and motivation for luxury consumption attitude. While Section 2.5 and 2.6 discusses culture and self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury. Furthermore, section 2.7 provides a discussion on subjective social status and finally, a summary of the chapter is presented in section 2.8.

2.2 Concept of Culture

Culture is one of the most complex concepts to describe. It is rooted in anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and psychology and plays an important role in the way individuals behave in every aspect of their existence (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The significance of culture has become obvious in many disciplines, despite this, there is little agreement to the definition of culture (Matsumoto and Juang, 2022; Smith et al., 2013; Taras et al., 2009, 2016). The focus on the cognitive characteristics of culture informs cross-cultural and marketing research and enables similar features to be extracted from the widely cited definitions (Smith et al., 2013). The word culture has been defined in many ways and the many definitions focus on different aspects of culture depending on different disciplines. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) reviewed one hundred and sixty-four distinct definitions of culture even though more recent reviews have shown that the number is still increasing (Hofstede, 2001).

Hofstede (2001 p.9), defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." He argues that individuals share the same attributes representing their cultural and mental programming of the mind in which their values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions behaviour, and perceptions of these individuals are shared in the same historical period or region (De Mooij, 2004). This definition summarizes the understanding of past studies' definition of culture as collectively shared. For example, House et al. (2005) defined culture as shared beliefs, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations of key events that originate from collective experiences and are transmitted across generations. In the same way, Berry (1992) defined culture as the shared way of life of a group of people. Shavitt et al. (2008, p. 1103) assert that culture includes "shared elements that provide standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting among those who share a language, a historical period, and a geographical location." Markus and Kitayama (2010, p. 422) further contend that "the word culture is a stand-in for a similarly

untidy and expansive set of material and symbolic concepts … that give form and direction to behaviour [and that] culture is located in the world, in patterns of ideas, practices, institutions, products, and artifacts." Hofstede (2001) defined culture based on the earlier works of Geertz (1973) and anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952). According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952 p.181) "culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; cultural systems may on the one hand be considered as product of action, on the other as conditioning element of further action". Similarly, Geertz (1973, p.89) defined culture as a "historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes towards life".

According to Taras et al. (2009) from a meta-analysis of several definitions of culture, concluded that despite the numerous existing definitions, some similar elements can be found in most of them. Firstly, culture can be regarded as a complex multi-level construct that consists of values as the core of culture, while symbols, practices, and artefacts represent the outer layer of culture (Hofstede, 1988; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2011). Secondly, culture is shared among individuals in a given population. Thirdly, culture is relatively stable and lastly, it is formed over a relatively long period. Recent literature has therefore adopted cultural values in cross-cultural studies and has often used culture and cultural values interchangeably, especially in psychology and management. In summary, in this thesis culture represents a shared set of distinct practices, assumptions, artefacts and values that are formed and retained over a long period of time by a group of people.

2.2.1. Emic and Etic View of Culture

From the review of the literature, it indicates that when investigating the role of culture for international research purposes and social cognition purposes, two schools of thought or approaches can be adopted that is the 'emic' and the 'etic' approaches (Craig and Douglas 2005; Malhotra, Agarwal, and Peterson, 1996; Morris et al. 1999). The emic view of culture tends to assume that culture is understood majorly as an interconnected system and that thought and behavioural phenomena are unique to individual cultures and hence can be used in identifying and understanding complicated truths within individual cases (Craig and Douglas 2005; Headland et al. 1990; Morris et al. 1999; Smith et al. 2013). The emic perspective of culture

can be seen as when an individual resides within a particular culture to be able to truly comprehend and appreciate the nuances of that culture, because an outsider's perspective that is the etic view may never fully capture what it really means to be part of the culture (Morris et al., 1999). For example, the emic perspective comes from members within a culture who have an insider view regarding the ongoing in their community that can enable the explanation of the relationship between situations and outcomes that is unknown by outsiders (Choi and Totten, 2012; Raymond et al., 2010).

On the other hand, the etic view of culture is concerned with identifying and linking cultural practices to antecedent factors that may not be important to the members within a particular culture (Headland et al., 1990; Morris et al., 1999). As such the view of culture from an etic perspective is beneficial as it enables comparisons to be made across diverse or multiple cultures and national borders which differ contextually. Moreover, the comparison of the different cultures provides a deeper and broader cross-cultural concept and assesses commonalities and generalizes about individual outcomes across different cultures (Craig and Douglas 2005; Morris et al. 1999). With the etic approach, it can be assumed that the phenomena being examined are universal, and therefore findings can establish their validity everywhere (Headland et al. 1990; Malhotra et al. 1996; Smith et al. 2013). In other words, the etic perspective tends to be objective observations made by individuals outside of a particular culture being investigated and are able to see diverse viewpoints or perspectives to enable providing explanations from a broader perspective of the ongoing in that culture (Maheswaran and Shavitt, 2000). Although the emic cultural approach is concerned and focuses on the understanding of individual cultures based on local interpretations within a certain cultural group, it does not fit with the research aim and objectives of this thesis (Craig and Douglas 2005; Ryan et al. 1999). The present study falls within the etic perspective of culture that recognises that there are universal concepts that can be measured, and generalisations made across cultures (Craig and Douglas, 2005). This thesis focuses on examining the cross-cultural understanding of the process of consumer attitude towards luxury formation, which includes a range of tests of cross-cultural invariance. Thus, the current study draws upon the etic view of culture.

Table 2.1 Assumptions of Emic and Etic Perspectives and Associated Methods

Features	Emic/Inside View	Etic/Outside View
Defining assumptions and goals	The behaviour described as seen from the perspective of cultural insiders, in constructs drawn from their self-understandings.	The behaviour is described from a vantage external to the culture, in constructs that apply equally well to other cultures.
	Describe the cultural system as a working whole	Describe the ways in which cultural variables fit into general causal models of a particular behaviour
Typical features of methods associated with this view	Observations are recorded in a rich qualitative form that avoids the imposition of the researchers' constructs.	Focus on external, measurable features that can be assessed by parallel procedures at different cultural sites.
	Long-standing, wide-ranging observation of one setting or a few settings	Brief, narrow observation of more than one setting, often a large number of settings
Examples of typical study types	Ethnographic fieldwork; participant observation along with interviews.	Multi-setting survey; cross-sectional comparison of responses to instruments measuring justice perceptions and related variables
	Content analysis of texts provides a A Window into indigenous thinking about justice	Comparative experiment treating culture as a quasi-experimental manipulation to assess whether the impact of particular factors varies across cultures

Source: Morris et al. (1999, p.783)

2.2.2. Measuring Culture

Culture is a complex and intricate concept that is difficult to study because it is hard to measure objectively, and it is even equally difficult to measure subjectively, especially as it is embedded in human behaviour. Past empirical studies on cross-cultural differences have been to a great extent traditionally qualitative in nature, focusing on the investigation of the external layers of culture such as cultural practices (Taras, Rowney and Steel., 2009). However, with the emergence of globalization and immigration, the focus has shifted from cultural practices to cultural values, attitudes, and behaviour favouring quantitative approaches to measuring culture (Taras et al., 2016). Specifically, from the advent of the publication of Hofstede's (1980) seminal book, Culture's Consequences, the focus has shifted to cultural values (Taras et al., 2009). Moreover, from the review of literature on cross-cultural studies in psychology, management, and other related disciplines, the studies generally focus on assessing cultural values by means of self-response questionnaires to empirically measure culture quantitatively (Caprar et al., 2015).

Definition of culture as an independent variable needs to be unpacked to allow cultures and cultural orientations to be compared and contrasted moreover a set of measures is required to enable the researcher to distinguish various cultural orientations (Smith et al., 2013). Cross-cultural studies often use nationality as an indicator for cultural orientation and in order to gain more insights into culture, cultural orientation is used to test and interpret culture (Smith Vignoles and Bond., 2013). Possible reasons for using nationality as an indicator of an individual's culture is because citizens or residents of a given country are subject to the same shared history and have similar values that are the values shared amongst citizens of one country and most likely are different from those of another country. Members within a particular country are governed by the same political, economic, and societal policies in many aspects of their way of life within the same national borders. In addition, the quality and cost of life, media, and entertainment are often most likely comparatively homogenous within countries. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect values to cluster within national borders since the elements that greatly affect values are localized comparatively. Furthermore, since national and economic and development indicators such as international trade, foreign direct investments, gross domestic product, and other related indicators are measured and tracked at the national level, it may be feasible to use country-level cultural indices to examine the cultural values of a group of people. Peterson and Smith (1997, p. 934) summarise that "the link between nation and culture tends to occur because people prefer to interact with other people and be guided and politically government by institutions consistent with their values." Countries can thus be proxies for cultures as a result of national institutions and shared values which further perpetuate shared values (Taras, Steel and Kirkman., 2016).

However, in the literature, some weaknesses in using countries as stand-ins for culture or cultural value have been indicated because several countries do not consider the diversity of individuals or conditions within a given national border. For example, a southern Nigeria in terms of religion may have a different set of cultural orientations than a northern Nigerian. In addition, the cultural orientation of Americans and Canadians may have more similarities than differences (Taras et al., 2016). Hence even though national-level elements traditionally connect cultural values within national borders, it is increasingly becoming weaker because cultural convergence is beginning to weaken cultural differences among countries (McSweeney, 2002). Migration and international travel are rapidly increasing as a result of the cost of technology and communication becoming cheaper and education becoming increasingly international for instance online study becoming prevalent in many nations. In addition, so many countries' national borders were not drawn along tribal and ethnic boundaries causing

more variations in nation states. For instance, the republic of Nigeria was founded by colonists by amalgamating both the northern and southern colonies to form modern-day Nigeria by their British colonialists. The influence of tribal and ethnic histories more often supersedes national interests and institutions, and different cultures can be present within such national borders in some other countries including Nigeria (Taras et al., 2016). In support of this concern, some studies (e.g., Au and Cheung 2004; Steel and Taras, 2010; Taras et al., 2009, 2016) have revealed substantial within-country variance in cultural values.

Moreover, a meta-analysis of studies that adopted Hofstede's cultural dimension framework found a substantial amount of variance in cultural values orientation within national borders compared to the insignificant amount of variance in between countries cultural values (Gerhart and Fang, 2005; Steel and Taras, 2010).

Cultural orientation refers to culturally relevant individual-level characteristics such as individual values, self-construal, and/or beliefs that can be found within and across cultures and societies (Matsumoto and Juang, 2016; Sharma, 2010). Cultural orientation as a subjective element of culture and an individual-level phenomenon allows individuals to interpret their socio-cultural environment to accept or reject the processes in their daily lives (Matsumoto and Juang, 2016; Schwartz, 1994; Smith et al., 2013). However, it is worth noting that the term "Cultural dimension" is distinct from cultural orientation. Cultural dimension characterizes culturally relevant macro-level or national-level cultural values that are collective social views (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2005). The Hofstede (1980) cultural dimensions framework has been widely adopted in cross-cultural research and models of culture. With a large database from more than seventy countries, Hofstede (1980) originally established four distinct dimensions that would differentiate variations in culture namely power distance, masculinity versus femininity, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and long-term versus short-term orientation. Hofstede (1980) established these dimensions to characterise variations found in culture on the national or broad cultural level, in other words, the analyses were based on a cultural level or as he termed it ecological level instead of an individual level of explanation (Hofstede, 1980). Among the cultural dimensions in the Hofstede (1980) framework, individualism versus collectivism has drawn the most attention, and popularity and is one of the most cited cultural dimensions of cultural variability identified in cross-cultural psychology (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Kagitcibasi, 1997; Smith et al., 2013; Taras et al., 2009, 2014). In the literature, the cultural dimension of individualism versus collectivism is widely used to explain the general differences between Eastern and Western perspectives of culture and the self (Wang and Waller, 2006).

2.2.3. Hofstede Cultural Model

Past studies have attempted to examine and quantify different aspects of cultures with limited success Hofstede's (1980) Cultures Consequences explored how to measure and quantify culture. Thus, to have a better understanding of how to measure culture and its impact on consumption and behaviour, culture needs to be unpacked using adaptive models into various dimensions (Hoft, 1996). Cultural models can be referred to as patterns of basic problems that have resultant effects on the functioning of groups and individuals such as the relation to authority, dilemmas of conflict and dealing with them and the conception of self, including ego identity (De Mooji and Hofstede, 2010). Traditionally, cultural models have been used to explain humanity, and provide a theoretical framework for research, analysis, and design of cross-cultural issues. Cultural models are conceptualised to investigate what is known, unknown and yet to be known and can be used to compare similarities and differences between two or more cultures, and sub-cultures by using cultural dimensions as can be seen in Trompenaar's culture model. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011), cultures can be seen as a system to share meanings values beliefs, and norms. The authors used a three-onion layer model to conceptualise the cultural model and these three layers can influence actions and behaviours of individuals. In addition, the GLOBE model (House et al. 2005). The model explores the profound and complex cultural influence related to leadership, organisational effectiveness, human conditions, and competition in the societies. In other words, the globe model focuses on understanding cultural values and leadership attributes. The model is a long-term programmatic research and continuous study of cultural issues (Hanges, Dorfman and Javidan (2013).

As an extension of the Hofstede model, the globe model developed nine cultural dimensions identified as future orientation, performance orientation, human orientation, assertiveness, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and gender egalitarianism. Finally, the Hofstede model (Hofstede 1980, 2001; Hofstede and Hofstede 2005) developed a series of dimensions that could be used to assist in describing the nature of a national culture that have resultant effect for the functioning of groups and individuals. Hofstede (1980) constructed a multinational survey focused on the personal values of employees related to work which mostly influenced the development of cross-cultural research (Smith et al., 2013). This survey comprises of a huge database of employees from more than 70 different countries, conducted around 1968 and again in 1972. Based on the

results of the survey, Hofstede (2005) noted that the existence of some aspects of cultural differences across nations such as the degree of dealing with inequality, the degree of individuals integration within groups, and the differences of the social roles between men and women. The cultural model originally comprised of four dimensions that would differentiate cultural variations namely, power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity versus femininity. Among all the dimensions, individualism versus collectivism garnered the most attention in cross-cultural comparisons and is still the focal point till date (Smith et al., 2013). A reason for the widespread use of Hofstede's classification of culture lies in the fact that the model was developed for analysing consumer behaviour. Whilst using the Hofstede model, the manifestations of culture that are relevant for consumer behaviour must be selected and interpreted. Hofstede established these cultural dimensions to characterise national variations in other words analyses where based on a cultural level as he termed it "ecological level" rather than an individual explanation (Hofstede, 1980).

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the differences in acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty in different cultures. According to Hofstede's (1983, p. 625) uncertainty avoidance is "the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created beliefs and institutions to try to avoid these". The author argues that cultures varied on their willingness to tolerate ambiguous outcomes and specifically measured uncertainty avoidance with the three factors such as employment stability, rules orientation and stress at work. Cultures of high uncertainty avoidance are characterised with a need for rules and formality to structure life translating into the search for a truth and belief (De Mooj and Hofstede, 2011). In an effort to reduce this level of uncertainty, strict laws, rules and regulations are adopted and implemented. Such societies are as a result of high uncertainty avoidance are risk averse and do not readily accept change. In contrast, low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more tolerant of opinions that differ from what they are accustomed to and have few rules as possible.

Power Distance which indicates the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions, organizations and societies expect and accept that power is distributed equally. According to Hofstede's (1983 p. 625) power distance refers to how "society deals with the fact that people are unequal" or "the degree to which an individual prefers to be told what to do and how by persons in higher power positions than themselves" (Madlock, 2012, p.172). high power distance cultures respect the authority of hierarchy and accept the inequality of power. Everyone has their rightful positions in a social hierarchy and an individual's social status is made clear so that others can show proper respect (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011; Swaidan,

2012). In these high, power distance societies status-based relationships become easier to form and as a result relationship on status-based outcomes are stronger (Samaha, Beck, and Palmatier, 2014). On the other hand, in low power distance societies, "people in positions with legitimate decision-making power are more likely to share their power with those in lower power positions" (Madlock, 2012, p. 170).

Masculinity versus femininity indicates the different focus on nurturance and assertiveness in various cultures and captures the extent to which masculine values prevail over feminine values in a society. If the dominant values focus on material resources, success, and achievement the society can be termed as masculine society (Hofstede and Bond, 1984). Masculine culture is characterised by the desire to stand out, competitiveness and functional orientation. However, if the dominant values are caring for others and focusing on quality of life, the society is considered to be high on femininity or low on masculine society. Feminine societies are characterised by benevolence, reciprocity, and a communal orientation (Hofstede et al., 2010). consumers in masculine societies are relatively more likely to be assertive, stand out to express their uniqueness in contrast, feminine culture consumers are more likely to rely on subjective norms and reference groups.

Long-term Orientation is the extent to which a society demonstrates a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a short-term point of view (De Mooj and Hofstede, 2011). Long term orientation is the cultural dimension of valuing time holistically (long-term) versus now (short term) view. Cultures high in long-term orientation are characterised by perseverance, ordering relationships by status and observing this order and having a sense of shame (De Mooj and Hofstede, 2011). Long term orientation implies investing in the future, value planning, hard work and perseverance. On the other hand, cultures low in long-term orientation are characterised by stability, personal steadiness, pursuit of happiness rather than the pursuit of peace of mind (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). Consumers in such societies are more likely to resort to status consumption to seek gratification by signalling their uniqueness (Shen, Qian and Jiang, 2018)

Individualism versus Collectivism refers to the extent to which members of a culture are integrated into social groups or have more separate identities. In collectivist societies members from birth onwards tend to be incorporated into strong, cohesive in-groups whereas in individualist societies the ties between members are loose, and everyone is expected to after themselves (Matsumoto and Juang, 2022; Smith et al., 2013; Taras et al., 2014). Individualism

versus collectivism is widely used to explain the general differences between eastern and western perspectives of culture and the self (Wang and Waller, 2006).

2.2.4. Individualism and Collectivism

The cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism has been widely employed in cross-cultural psychology research, management, and related fields to investigate differences across diverse cultures (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Kagitcibasi, 1997; Taras et al., 2014). Triandis (2001) suggested that the subjective cultural component comprising, norms, values, categorization, and associations are important factors influencing social behaviours. On this basis, cross-cultural comparisons can reveal useful insights into assumptions, psychological theories, and consumer behaviours which usually tend to vary across different cultures (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Kagitcibasi, 1997).

Individualism and collectivism have been used to explain, and predict differences in cognition, socialization, self-concepts, attitudes, values, and behaviours (Kagitcibasi, 1997; Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeier, 2002). Past literature on Individualism and collectivism often differentiates national and cultural groups from each other using macro-level cultural general differences between Individualism and collectivism (Fiske et al., 1998; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995; Wang and Waller, 2006). Hence, Individualism and collectivism as cultural variables are concerned with the relationship of the individual to the collective (Singelis, 1994). Triandis (1993) defined Individualism and collectivism as cultural syndromes that reflect shared beliefs, norms roles values, and attitudes found among individuals who share specific histories, geographical regions, and the same language. The author pointed out that the central theme of collectivism is the conception of individuals as aspects of collectives or groups whereas the central theme of individualism is the conception of individuals as autonomous from groups (Triandis, 1993). Accordingly, Hofstede et al., (2005, p. 76) summarised the distinction between individualist and collectivist societies as "Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty."

Individualism gives precedence to personal goals over in-group goals. The main emphasis of individualism is the assumption that individuals are independent of one another. Hofstede

(1980) defined individualism as a focus on rights above duties, a focus on oneself and immediate family, basing one's identity on one's personal accomplishments, and an emphasis on self-fulfilment and personal autonomy. Schwartz (1990) defined individualistic societies as consisting of narrow primary groups and negotiated social relations, with specific obligations, contractual and expectations focusing on achieving status. On the other hand, collectivism places importance on subordinating personal goals to those of the in-group (Triandis, 1988). The main emphasis of collectivism is the assumption that groups stick together and mutually obligate individuals. Although sometimes seen as the simple opposite of individualism, it is probably more accurate to conceptualize individualism and collectivism as macro-level views that differ in the issues that they make salient (Kagitcibasi, 1997). According to Schwartz (1990), collectivist societies are communal societies characterized by diffused and mutual obligations and expectations based on assigned statuses. In these societies, the individual is a component of the social units, these social units with common goals and common values are centralized, making the in-group the key unit of analysis (Triandis, 1996). Thus, collectivism is oriented toward in-groups such as family, religious, ethnic or other groups and away from out-groups (Hui, 1988; Oyserman, 1993; Triandis, 1996).

Based on the review of past studies on individualism and collectivism, Triandis (1996) indicated that both dimensions can be easily discerned according to four characteristics namely, how individuals define the self as either independent or interdependent. The importance of relationality, the priority of personal and group goals, and finally the emphasis on norms and attitudes as the key factor for social behaviour. Firstly, regarding defining self, individualism suggests creating and maintaining a positive sense of self, feeling good about oneself, personal success, and having unique personal attitudes and opinions (Fiske et al., 1998; Oyserman et al., 2002; Trandis et al., 1995). In contrast, collectivism focuses on group membership as a central aspect of identity (Kim, 1994; Markus and Kitayama, 1991), and valued personal traits reflect sacrifice for the common good and maintaining harmonious relationships with close others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, 1993; Triandis, 1996).

Secondly, individualism suggests that reasoning, judgment, and causal inference are mostly oriented toward the individual rather than the social context or situation because the decontextualized self is assumed to be stable and the self that assumes social information is not bound to social context. In contrast, social context, roles, and situational constraints figure prominently in collectivists' causal reasoning and perception. Memory is likely to contain richly embedded detail and meaning is contextualized (Morris and Peng, 1994).

Thirdly regarding well-being, individualism implies that the attainment of one's personal goals is an important source of well-being and life satisfaction (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). In contrast, for collectivism life satisfaction is derived from successfully carrying out social roles, obligations, and restraint in emotional expression, rather than expressing personal feelings, which is likely to be valued as a means of ensuring in-group harmony (Kim, 1994; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Lastly, regarding relationality, individualists need group memberships and relationships to attain self-relevant goals, however, relationships are costly to maintain (Kagitcibasi, 1997; Oyserman, 1993). Individualists leave relationships and groups when the costs of participation exceed the benefits and create new relationships as personal goals shift. In other words, individualists usually apply equity to norms to balance relationships' costs and benefits. Thus, relationships and group memberships are not permanent and non-intensive (Kim, 1994). In contrast, collectivism implies that important relationships and group memberships are ascribed and fixed, boundaries between in-groups and out-groups are important, stable, and close-knit, and in-group exchanges are based on equality (Kim, 1994; Morris and Leung, 2000; Triandis, 1996;).

Individualism and collectivism have been found to explain cultural differences in individual behaviour (Kagitcibasi, 1997), for example, conflict resolution (Leung et al., 1992), family resolution (Kim, 1997), communication styles (Holtgraves, 1997) and communication styles (Gudykunst et al., 1996). Individualism and collectivism help comprehend cross-cultural differences in luxury consumption (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Eastman et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Furthermore, cultural variation in individualism and collectivism has been used as the fundamental assumption for some other theories such as self-construal theory (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

The dimensionality of individualism and collectivism has been argued based on whether or not individualism and collectivism are two separate dimensions or constructs (Li and Aksoy, 2001). Traditionally, Hofstede (1980) argued that individualism and collectivism can be considered as the opposite end of a single cultural dimension, in other words, the underlying assumption here is that the dimension can be measured using the same set of scale items (Wagner, 1995). According to Hofstede (1980), individualism is defined as a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate family only, and collectivism as a tight social framework in which individuals differentiate between ingroups and outgroups, expecting their ingroups to look after them in exchange they are obliged to be loyal to them. Despite the fact that Hofstede (1980), provided two apparently separate definitions for individualism and collectivism, the author still interpreted both as an

opposite pole of one continuum which implies that the two dimensions were at the end of the same continuum referred to as unidimensional construct in other words, low collectivism can be functionally equivalent to high individualism (Oyserman et al., 2002; Taras et al., 2014).

However, a growing number of studies (e.g., Li and Aksoy, 2001; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Matsumoto et al., 1996; Singelis, 1994; Taras et al., 2013; Trandis, 1994, 1996; Triandis and Gelfand, 1998) have all challenged the unidimensional interpretation of individualism and collectivism arguing that individualism and collectivism differ from each other and assumes orthogonality between them. The authors also noted that an individual ranking score on the collectivism continuum is independent of the individual ranking score on the individualism continuum. Therefore, it can be assumed that an individual can simultaneously score low or high on both dimensions. Some other researchers (e.g., Kim et al., 1994; Li and Aksoy, 2007) argue that as multidimensional dimensions, both individualism and collectivism differ from each other and may co-exist in all cultures. Such that, an individual can possess collectivist tendencies on one occasion and possess individualist tendencies on another (Kim et al., 1996; Matsumoto, Kudoh, and Takeuchi., 1996). Trandis (1996), identified salient characteristics such as interdependence, sociability, and ties to the family for collectivism, in contrast, to competition, self-reliance, and hedonism for individualism. In another study, variations in collectivist and individualist attitudes were found in various relationships such as between parents, spouses, co-workers, and family members (Matsumoto et al., 1997). Furthermore, Li and Aksoy (2007) empirically examined the dimensionality of individualism and collectivism in a cross-cultural study, and the findings revealed and confirmed that collectivism and individualism separately represent distinct cultural dimensions. Collectivist cultures are predominantly found in non-western cultures and individualist cultures are found in western (Cross et al., 2011; Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

2.2.5. Current State of Individualism and Collectivism Research

Individualism and collectivism cultural dimensions have been widely adopted by numerous studies in explaining cultural variability in cross-cultural psychology (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2001; Wang and Waller, 2006). Members of a society are often presumed to orientate toward either individualism or collectivism dimension. Past studies have widely used these cultural dimensions to explain describe and predict cultural differences in values, cognition, socialization communication, behaviour, and self-identity (Kagitcibasi, 1997; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Oyserman et al., 2002). For example, in conflict resolution (Leung, Fernández-

Dols and Iwawaki., 1992), family resolution (Kim, 1997), communication styles (Holtgraves, 1997) and communication styles (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1996). For attitude behaviour relationship (e.g., Bagozzi et al., 2000; Greg et al., 2002; Kacen and Lee, 2002) found that this relationship is stronger in individualist cultures when compared to collectivist cultures. Furthermore, cultural variation in individualism and collectivism has been used as the fundamental assumption for some other theories such as self-construal theory (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Generally, individualist traits are used to describe individuals from Western cultures or countries, on the other hand, collectivist traits characterize individuals from non-western cultures or countries. Notwithstanding, the usefulness of individualism and collectivism in explaining macro-level differences in cultures, following the critical review of the literature, findings have revealed very limited empirical evidence for its explanatory potential (Voronov and Singer, 2002). Possible reasons might be because several past studies in cross-cultural psychology most often adopt countries or ethnic groups as cultural entities, which in turn neglects sources of variation that may be found across and within cultural contexts. This implicitly assumes that cultures are homogenous in terms of values and consumer behaviour (Matsumoto et al., 1996; Taras et al., 2009, 2016; Van de Vijver and Leung, 2000). Another reason stems from the fact that on one hand, Hofstede (2001) argues that his cultural dimensions framework characterizes macro-level culture or ecological-level variations rather than individual-level explanations. on the other hand, Hofstede (2001) warns that his cultural dimensions analyses were based on cultural-level findings and that the characteristics captured at the cultural level were only suitable for cultural-level analysis, but not for characterizing individuals or individual-level aspects of culture (De Mooij, 2013). Despite Hofstede's (2001) warnings, the influence of culture on consumer behaviour has been generally investigated by cultural comparisons examined based on macro-level cultural characteristics often relying on Individualism and collectivism (Stathoupolou and Balabanis, 2019).

Measuring culture at the macro-level might not adequately depict substantial variations within some cultures, because even within relatively homogenous cultures individuals vary substantially in the extent to which they practice cultural norms and values. For example, Taras et al. (2016) note that a meta-analysis using Hofstede's cultural orientation framework revealed evidence of a significant amount of within-country variance in culture when compared to the variance of cultural values between countries. Similarly, Oyserman et al. (2002) meta-analysis of empirical studies on individualism and collectivism found that at the macro-level distinctions, only one percent of the variance in individual-level individualism scores is

explained, while about more than ninety percent of the variance in individualism was unexplained by the macro-level/country differences. When cultural-level analyses of individualist and collectivist culture are performed, the cultures may not show a predominant cultural tendency because individualism and collectivist cultural tendencies can exist in all cultures (Trandis, 1994, 1996). According to Triandis (1994 p.42), "All of us carry both individualist and collectivist tendencies; the difference is that in some cultures the probability that individualist selves, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviours will be sampled or used is higher than in others". In support of this view, some individuals within a broad culture may define their self-construal differently. In addition, Leung et al. (2005, p. 368) observe that "research examining relationships between culture and individual outcomes has not captured enough variance to make specific recommendations that managers need with confidence". Furthermore, Kashima (1989) points out that it is problematic to test causal explanations of individual behaviour based on macro-level explanation because the psychological processes that link culture to individual behaviour should be tested to determine causal explanations (Kim et al., 2001).

Despite these limitations, the individualism and collectivism framework have been applied to both macro-level cultural models when describing individual-level cross-cultural research confoundedly which has produced a lot of inconsistencies in the literature (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007; Oyserman et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2013). In light of these arguments, therefore, to better understand behavioural outcomes in a variety of contexts, it is important to investigate the influence of culture at the macro cultural level and individual level psychological level of culture (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kacen and Lee, 2002; Kim et al., 2001; Singelis and Brown, 1995). Some recent studies (e.g., Kitirattarkarn, Araujo and Neijens, 2019; Stathoupoulou and Balabanis, 2019) have begun to examine the effect of the individual-level psychological dimension of culture on behaviour, arguing that the limited focus of cultural level generalizations is no longer adequate for investigating cultural differences that can be found in individual behaviour. Failure to consider within-country cultural variations can easily lead to the overgeneralization of personality attributes because countries are typically made up of individuals from different backgrounds and ranking in a social hierarchy (Green et al., 2005). Moreover, Kastanakis and Voyer (2014) suggest going beyond the individualism and collectivism framework in studying cross-cultural differences because the focus is largely on the macro-level rather than the individual-level distinctions. The authors explain that examining culture at the individual level would provide a more precise identification and understanding of cultural differences, particularly how culture influences

intrinsic human processes. Therefore, the present study addresses the above limitations in literature by adopting the Markus and Kitayama (1991) self-construal individual-level view of culture as the most important self-schemata for differentiating individual-level culture where the interdependent and independent self-construal influences cognition, emotion, and behaviour (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014).

2.3. Self-construal Theory

Markus and Kitayama (1991) first introduced the word “self-construal” in describing the ways that western primarily individualistic cultures and non-western primarily collectivist cultures define and make meaning of the self. Self-construal generally refers to how individuals define or view themselves and make meaning of the self in relation to others (Cross et al., 2011).

Accordingly, Singelis (1994), defined self-construal as ‘the constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning one’s relationship to others, and the self as distinct from others (Singelis 1994, p. 581). Markus and Kitayama, (1991), noted that there are only two of many possible ways of conceiving of the self, identified as independent and interdependent self-construal in which the main difference between the two self-construal is the belief one holds regarding how the self is related to others. The different self-views affect what people "believe about the relationship between the self and others and, especially, the degree to which they see themselves as separate from others or as connected with others" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). Similarly, Agrawal and Maheswaram (2005) notes that the aspects of self-identity and of self-knowledge that contribute to viewing oneself as a separate individual versus as part of a group lead to an individual’s accessible self-construal. This different construal of the self is salient to the individual’s perceptions, evaluations, and behaviours (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Trandis 1989).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed that Eastern or non-western cultures emphasize an interdependent view of the self, whereas Western cultures promote an independent construal of the self. The authors described interdependent self-construal as closely connected to social context, they are flexible and place emphasis on interpersonal relationships thereby acting based on expectations and social norms, rather than personal wishes and preferences. Important goals for an interdependent self-construal individual would be to fit in and maintain harmony with significant others. On the other hand, independent self-construal is defined as bounded, unitary, stable, and separate, from the social context. A person with an independent self-construal would strive for uniqueness, self-expression, and self-actualization, pursuing his/her

own goals and making autonomous decisions based on their own thoughts and feelings (Singelis, 1994).

The seminal paper by Markus and Kitayama (1991) played a significant role in the field of social psychology, by drawing attention to and providing tools for theorizing about cultural diversity (Cross et al., 2011). The Self-construal theory provided a fundamental connection between culture and individual psychological processes, consequently bringing about emerging knowledge for macro-level cultural differences in individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1995). In theorizing cultural differences in terms of interdependent and independent self-construal, this would generally account for differences in emotion, cognition, and motivation because socialization differences across cultures have been thought to explain differences in an individual's self-construal (Park and Levine, 1999; Trandis, 1989). In light of this, cultural values, norms, and beliefs, are significant factors in shaping an individual's concept of self especially the extent to which they conceive of themselves as separate from others and connected with others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Consequently, understanding the dominant or accessible independent or interdependent self-construal in different cultures will provide meaningful insights in cultural variations in numerous psychological outcomes including wellbeing, cognitive styles, social anxiety, self-esteem, communication styles, self-regulation, and pro-social behaviour (Cross et al., 2011; Gudykunst and Lee, 2003; Matsumoto, 1999; Smith et al., 2013; Vignoles et al., 2016).

2.3.1. Independent Self-construal

An independent self-construal is defined as a "bounded, unitary, stable" self that is separate from social context (Singelis, 1994, p. 581). The constellation of factors constituting the independent self-construal stresses, internal thoughts, abilities, and feelings, emphasizes promoting own goals; expressing oneself and being unique and being direct in communication (Singelis, 1994; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Individuals who emphasize their independent self-view see themselves as independent and invariant across contexts. This relatively stable organization of traits and attributes finds expression in behaviour, which tends to be consistent across different situations (De Mooij, 2010). When thinking about themselves, individuals with a highly developed independent self-construal will be more inclined to be concerned with personal attributes, characteristics, abilities, and goals the reference to thoughts feelings, and actions of others (Wang and Wang, 2006). Likewise, when thinking about others, individual

attributes and characteristics of others are considered rather than contextual or relational factors (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994).

For individuals with high or well-developed self-construal, showing one's uniqueness is fundamental in gaining self-esteem through expressing their self-identities and affirming their internal attributes which are responsible for regulating behaviour (Kanagawa et al., 2001; Milan and Reynolds, 2014). Being considered mature is shown as being the same person who communicates assertively and is consistent across situations (Cross et al., 2011). Interpersonal relationships are also important to independent self-construal individuals however, significant others are mainly important for how they can benefit the individual. For instance, significant others are used as a source of social comparison for confirming one's internal traits and uniqueness. Past studies (e.g., Cross et al., 2011; Markus and Kitayama; 1991; Sharkey and Singelis, 1995) noted that western cultures are prototypical cultures that promote the development of independent self-construal.

2.3.2. Interdependent Self-construal

An interdependent self-construal is defined as a "flexible, variable" self that emphasizes one's connectedness with others (Singelis, 1994). The interdependent self-construal can be defined as "seeing oneself as part of an encompassing relationship and recognizing that one's behaviour is determined, contingent on and, to a large extent, organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). The constellation of factors constituting the interdependent self-construal emphasises, external public attributes including roles, relationships, and statuses; belongingness and fitting in; occupying individuals' proper place or adjustments with others and actions appropriate for social situations and being indirect in communication (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Pusaksrikit and Kang, 2016; Singelis, 1994). Individuals who emphasize their interdependent selfconstrual are more likely to act essentially in conformity to the expectations of others and social norms rather than with their internal attributes (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994).
In addition, they tend to take into consideration placing importance to others' needs and adjusting to the group (Cheng and Lam, 2013; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Tynan et al., 2010). When thinking about themselves and others, individuals with a highly developed interdependent self-construal have a sense that the self and others are intertwined that is both the self and others are not separated from situations but rather are shaped by them (Singelis et al., 1995). Adjusting to various situational contexts and harmonious relationships are sources

of self-esteem for such individuals. Hence, they tend to communicate indirectly and pay attention to others feeling (Gudykunst et al., 1996).

Further, unlike individuals with independent self-construal, interdependent relies on their relationship with others and contextual factors to regulate behaviour (Markus and Kitiyama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Past studies (e.g., Cross et al., 2011; Markus and Kitayama; 1991; Sharkey and Singelis, 1995) have noted that non-western cultures are prototypical cultures that promote the development of interdependent self-construal. In sum, interdependent self-construal is primarily related to its social environment, highly responsive to contextual influences, and dependent on others (Singelis and Brown, 1995). The individuals gain approval and maintain harmonious relationships by attending and adjusting behavioural responses to contextual indications eventually forming the basis of their positive self-regard (Aaker, 1999; Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Table 2.2. Summary of key differences between Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal

Feature	**Independent Self-Construal**	**Interdependent Self-Construal**
Definition	Separated from social context	Connected with social context
Structure	Bounded, unitary, stable	Flexible, Variable
Tasks	Be unique, Express self, realise internal attributes, promote own goals and be direct	Belong, fit-in, occupy one's proper place, engage in appropriate action, promote others' goals and be indirect
Role of others	Self-evaluation: reflected appraisal and others important for social comparison,	Self-definition: relationships with others in specific contexts define the self
Self-esteem	Ability to express self, validate internal attributes	Ability to adjust, restrain self, maintain harmony with social context
Key features	Internal, private thoughts, abilities and feelings	External, public roles, statuses and relationships

Source: Markus and Kitayama (1991)

2.3.3. Orthogonal Nature of Self-Construal

There are considerable debates surrounding the dimensionality of an individual's construal of self (e.g., Cross et al., 2011; Levine et al., 2003; Singelis, 1994). Several past studies have widely conceptualized the independent and interdependent self-construal as opposite poles of the bipolar one-dimensional construct (Aaker et al., 2000; Hofstede 1990; Kitayama et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2021; Schimmack et al., 2005). However, rather than representing a bipolar construct, some recent studies (e.g., Aaker and Lee, 2001; Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Oyserman et al., 2002; Polyorat Alden and Alden 2005; Singelis, 1994; Singelis and Brown, 1995) have all argued for its orthogonality and co-existence in individuals. These studies are in support for the two dimensionalities of the self-construal construct where high independent self-construal cannot be presumed to be equivalent to low interdependent self-construal. Conceptually, Trandis (1989) explains that an individual self consists of three components namely, the private self in which the cognitions involve the behaviour of the individual, the public self which concerns the others' view of the self and the collective self, comprising the cognitions of the self-embedded in the collective. These three components of self, form interrelated cognitions from which an individual sample a social situation generally affected by culture and situational tendencies (Trandis, 1989).

Sampling the public and collective suggests interdependent tendencies and is usually encouraged by a collectivist culture where the development of cognitions points towards the group or collective. In contrast, the private self encourages cognitions that define individual traits and the self primarily samples independent tendencies. The sampling of the cognitions of the self, influenced by culture and situational tendencies has also been empirically supported (Singelis, 1994). For instance, Trafimow, Triandis and Goto (1991) found that cultures significantly influenced the type of cognitions produced and explains that the private collective cognitions are stored separately in memory. The authors found that individuals in collectivist cultures produced more collective cognitions compared to the individualist culture individuals who produced more private responses. In Cross and Markus's (1991) cross-cultural study, support for the two dimensionalities of the self-construal was found in their study of stress and coping behaviour. The results revealed collectivist culture participants had better developed interdependent self-construal compared to the individualist culture participants. Even though the results reported similar development of independent self-construal, the ability to cope with independent situations reduced stress and was represented by a more developed independent self (Cross and Markus, 1991).

Singelis (1994) developed the self-construal scale, one of the most widely used measurement scale to measure the strength of independent and interdependent self-construal separately across and within cultures (Gonzalez-Hector et al., 2019; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Su, Lee, and Oishi., 2013). The results reveal that the two dimensions are distinct and vary both within and across cultures. Further, the result showed that the varying strength of the different construal of self is enabled according to the cultural background of the individuals. In another line of inquiry, the two construal of the self can co-exist within an individual that is an individual may possess both independent and interdependent aspects of self but may differ in the relative strength of an individual aspect which invariably leads to the individual differences found in self-construal (Aaker and Lee 2001; Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Escalas and Bettman, 2005).

2.3.4. Self-construal and Individualism versus Collectivism

Cultural influences such as values, beliefs, practices, and institutions shape the way individuals define their self, and others as well the relationship between the self and others (Hofstede, 1980,1991; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Through the socialization processes and influences many cultures emphasize the separateness or connectedness of the individuals (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Hofstede, 1980,1991; Triandis, 1989). Individualism and collectivism play a salient role in the conception of the self as either independent or interdependent (Kaycee and Lee, 2002; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994; Singelis and Brown, 1995).

For members of an individualist culture, the normative tasks emphasize uniqueness and express their individuality while resisting social pressures. Therefore, individuals in individualist cultures most likely will define and enable an accessible independent construal of self (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). For these individuals with an independent self-construal, they are characterized as a bounded entity, separate from group memberships and relationships, while their main attributes are personal abilities, preferences traits, and behaviours (Cross et al., 2011; Singelis, 1994).

On the other hand, members of collectivist cultures construct themselves generally by the aspects of their relatedness of the individual to others and their social memberships and roles (Hofstede, 1980; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Trandis et al., 1988). Therefore, individuals in collectivist cultures most likely will define and enable an accessible interdependent construal of self in which the fundamental characteristic is an individual's relationship with significant

others and in-groups (Trandis, 1989). The tasks for these individuals with interdependent self-construal are to conform or fit in, promote group goals, and maintain harmony with the relationships therefore their thoughts, feelings and behaviours depend mostly on their relationship with group memberships and significant others. However, this does not mean that individuals with interdependent self-construal do not possess personal or internal characteristics, traits, or preferences unique to the self, rather these personal aspects of the construal of self are not primary in shaping behaviour in many situations in collectivist cultures. More so, for social behaviours in these collectivist cultures, the independent or internal aspect of the self has a lesser or minor influence when compared to the interdependent self-construal of the individuals (Kashima et al., 1995; Trandis, 1989)

In both individualist and collectivist cultures, the self plays an adaptive role in navigating the social environment hence, the self-construal can help individuals cope with culturally assigned situations and tasks. Even though both the interdependent and independent self-construal can co-exist in each individual from an individualist or collectivist culture however, perceptions, decisions, and behaviours are influenced by which self-construal is accessible or dominantly influenced by culture (Cross et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2001; Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009; Singelis, 1994; Singelis et al., 1999) and its effects on behaviour can be separated (Singelis and Brown 1995).

Past studies (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2001; Singelis, 1994; Singelis and Brown, 1995) have tested the relationship between culture and self-construal. Some findings consistent with the matched relationship between culture and self-construal were reported. For example, Park and Levine (1999), found that cross-cultural differences on interdependent self-construal and independent self-construal and corresponding culture in mainland U.S., Korea, and Hawaii, were matched as expected. Singelis and Brown (1995) found that respondents' culture was matched with the corresponding self-construal as expected. The Asian Americans were more interdependent and less independent than the white Americans. Similarly, Sharkey and Singelis (1995) study also reported that Asian Americans (Korean, Chinese, Filipino, or Japanese) were more interdependent and less independent than white Americans. Interestingly, because the two data collected in these two studies above were in the Hawaii context, it is not clear whether the Asian Americans in Hawaii can be considered an exemplar of Asians in collectivistic Asian countries (Park and Levine, 1999). In the context of luxury consumption (e.g., Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) found that the attitude toward consuming luxuries varies between individualist and collectivist cultures with respect to independent and interdependent self-construal respectively. Nevertheless, some mixed results were revealed in

investigating culture and self-construal (e.g., Cross, 1995; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1996; Oetzel, 1998). Gudykunst et al. (1996) concluded that the means for self-construal across American, Australian, Japanese, and Korean cultures does not reflect the cultural tendencies usually linked with the four cultures as expected.

In general, individualism and collectivism measures explain differences at the cultural level and the independent and interdependent self-construal explains differences at the individual level (Cross et al., 2011; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The self-construal is predominantly developed and accessed in an individualistic cultural context, emphasizes personal or individual-centered cultural attributes such as self-direction, hedonism, and achievement of personal success tend to have the independent self-construal more accessible (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Millan and Reynolds, 2014). In contrast, individuals socialized in collectivist cultures which emphasize group-related cues such as harmony, sense of belonging, respect for traditions, moderation, and thrift, the interdependent self-construal tends to become more accessible (Singelis et al., 1999).

2.3.5. Effect of Self-construal on Behaviour

The construal of self is important in explaining individuals' perceptions, evaluations, and behaviours (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Numerous studies have connected interdependent and independent self-construal to a variety of psychological outcomes for example, consumers' goals (Yang et al., 2015), how consumers respond to price/ quality judgements (Lalwani and Mal, 2013), self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman, 2005), thinking styles (Cross et al., 2011; Gudykunst and Lee, 2003), the persuasiveness of various advertising appeals (Agrawal and Maheswaran 2005). Cultural differences based on independent and interdependent self-construal have been well-established in literature (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2001; Singelis, 1994). Kim et al. (2001) found that self-construal did differ across cultural groups and investigated on the effect of self-construal on predisposition towards argumentativeness and communication apprehension. The findings showed that US respondents had the highest independent self-construal orientations, followed by Hawaiian and Korean respondents respectively. And the interdependent self-construal orientation was highest in Korea, Hawaii, and the US, respectively in the expected proposed order. Similarly, Singelis and Brown (1995) found that Hawaii respondents from European backgrounds were more independent and less interdependent than those from Asian backgrounds. In another study, Lee, and Pounders (2019) study concludes that personal goals,

such as autonomy, are more important for those with an independent self-construal, compared to those with an interdependent self-construal (Kitayama et al., 2004). In contrast, individuals with an interdependent self-construal place more importance on goals that help them fulfil obligations to relevant others such as family to create and maintain a harmonious relationship (Cross et al., 2011; Kitayama et al., 2004).

In consumer behaviour research, self-construal has been linked to individual behaviour in which consumers tend to purchase products that reflect their identity or personality thereby communicating who they are or stand for through symbols and objects (Sirgy,1982). Sirgy (1982) notes that the knowledge acquired from self-concept studies can contribute to explaining, describing, and predicting social behaviour. For instance, Agrawal and Maheswaran (2005) argues that advertisement appeals consistent with the predominant construe of self, led to more favourable brand evaluation under high brand commitment. Their findings were supported for both chronically accessed independent and interdependent self-construal for example, interdependent self-construal participants that accessed information related to and evaluated collectivist advertising appeals were more favourable. Escalas and Bettman (2005) study focus on how self-construction goals differ depending upon a consumer's self-construal and proposed that depending on a individuals independent or interdependent self-construal, the impact of ingroup and outgroup brand usage will differ. The findings show a stronger self-brand connection for brands with images that are congruent with those of an ingroup. The positive effect of the ingroup self-brand connections is consistent with both self-determination goals for those with independent self-construal and assimilation goals for consumers with interdependent self-construal whereas, a negative effect of outgroup brand associations on self-brand connections was stronger for independent consumers than for interdependent consumers. The differential effect observed from the outgroup association is due to stronger self-differentiation goals with more independent self-construal (Kampmeier and Simon 2001). Similarly, Swaminathan et al. (2007), in explaining the importance of consumer-brand relationships in promoting tolerance in the face of negative brand information on brand equity, argue that depending on a consumer's independent and interdependent self-construal, consumer brand attitude changes and can affect brand equity in the face of exposure negative brand information. The results show that when self-concept connection is high, consumers tend to disapprove and discount the negative information, this effect is more significant for consumers with independent self-construal. They further, argue that brand country-of-origin connection plays a significant role in promoting tolerance in the face of adverse brand information, this effect tends to be stronger for consumers with interdependent self-construal orientation.

From an interdependent self-construal perspective, some researchers explain that advertising appeals emphasizing in-group benefits, tend to be more persuasive and elicit more positive brand evaluations (Aaker and Schmitt, 2001; Wang et al., 2022), brand attitudes and attitudes toward the ad (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005; Wang and Mowen, 1997) in consumers with dominant interdependent than independent self-construal. In another study, Millan, and Reynolds (2011, 2014) found that interdependent self-construal relates positively to a preference for affiliation meaning of clothing. Lee and Kacen (2000) found that interdependent self-construal also relates positively to group affiliation and therefore reasons for purchasing products in both planned and impulse purchasing scenarios.

From the perspective of luxury consumption behaviour, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) in a conceptual study incorporates the self-construal orientation into luxury consumption across cultures argue that the origins of the distinction between personally oriented and socially oriented consumption behaviour of consumers can be traced to an individual's independent and interdependent self-construal (Gudykunst and Lee, 2003; Marcus and Kitayama, 1991; Tsai, 2005; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Therefore, consumers with predominant independent selfconstrual tend to lean more towards a personal orientation of luxury consumption. In contrast, consumers with dominant interdependent self-construal seek the social impact of their luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Tsai's (2005) personal orientation towards luxury the consumption model identifies the independent self-construal as an antecedent for personally directed consumption goals such as self-gift, self-directed pleasure, quality assurance, and congruity with the internal self which consequently leads to a personal orientation towards luxury consumption.

2.4. Concept of Luxury

Luxury has different meanings for different individuals. This is reflected in the lack of consensus on how to define luxury. Dubois et al. (2005) argue that the term luxury is derived from the Latin word 'luxus' which connotes indulgence, excessive lifestyle, luxuriousness, and opulence. Over the past decades, luxury has originally been aligned with elitism, prosperity, and dominance through the acquisition of non-necessities (Brun et al., 2008). Traditionally, luxury describes products that are in short supply which implies they are solely within the reach of the wealthy and privileged elite in the society (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). In this regard, the concept of luxury is based on the traditional conspicuous consumption way of using price, self-consciousness, uniqueness, quality, and extended self as indicators of traditional luxury

(Chandon et al., 2013; Christodoulides et al., 2009; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). It should be noted that consumers have recently shifted to value luxury in such a way as to experience and achieve personal contentment through its use (Tsai, 2005; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004).

Despite the growing research on luxury, from a review of the literature, the concept of luxury has been difficult to define, subjective, relative, and context-specific, and to date, it does not have a universally accepted definition (Chattalas and Shukla, 2015; Ciornea et al., 2012; Heine, 2009; Ko et al., 2019; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Phau and Prendergast (2000) notes that luxury has a unique identity, customer loyalty and distinctiveness. Vigneron and Johnson (2004) indicate that luxury means the top of the class of prestigious brands and Fionda and Moore (2009) suggest that luxury evokes a sense of exclusivity, high price, and consumer awareness of the luxury brand. What constitutes luxury may vary depending on the situation for instance, for some individuals, an economy flight ticket for a weekend getaway to a budget domestic destination might be considered a luxury, while the threshold for flying and what constitutes a luxurious holiday might be set considerably higher for some wealthy individuals. In addition, a bottle of an inexpensive and common product like coca cola might be considered luxury if one is thirsty in a desert.

Luxury in its origins as traditional or old luxury was used to describe the attributes, qualities, and features of a product mostly derived from status and prestige and the attitudes of the wealthy classes. (Kovesi, 2015). With the advent of globalization, the ever-more connected world, and the growing demand for prestige products and services at affordable prices luxury goods have become less scarce, and more readily assessable by the masses leading to the redefinition of the concept of luxury (Kapferer and Bastien, 2017). This means that luxury is becoming increasingly commonplace in new markets among new consumers and thus it is being referred to as the new luxury (e.g., Kapferer and Laurent, 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Truong et al., 2009). In contrast to the traditional characteristics defining luxuries such as aesthetics, sensuality, uniqueness, and quality (Berthon et al., 2009), the new luxury implies that luxury is no longer unique or too exclusive, inaccessible, or too unreachable any longer (Eisend et al., 2017). Invariably, this has led to the democratization of luxury resulting in mass luxury and emergency of alternate conceptualizations of luxury have emerged. These include unconventional luxury (Thomsen et al., 2020; Rosenbaum et al., 2021), collaborative luxury consumption (Pantano and Stylos, 2020), and “masstige” (Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan, 2020), which challenge key characteristics of traditional luxuries, such as being expensive and

exclusive and have extended themselves to affordable offerings through innovations, expansions, and media-driven (Cristini et al., 2017).

Likewise, in the past few decades, these changes have become visible whereby a variety of luxury products is affordable and available to meet the needs of individuals with moderate means (Okonkwo, 2009). The global luxury industry continues to increasingly expand in the past few years and the number of luxury consumers during the past twenty years has reportedly tripled worldwide (Bain and Company 2022). Despite the Covid-19 pandemic which has changed the global luxury industry substantially and quickened a channel shift to eCommerce (Roggeveen and Sethuraman, 2020), data shows that luxury products and brands sales spiked despite its worst dip in history during the pandemic, reaching 288 billion Euros in value in 2021 and the first quarter of 2022 (Bain and Company, 2022). Thus, regardless of the overall negative economic effects of COVID-19, slowing GDP growth, the global luxury market could reach 360-380 billion Euros by 2025 (Bain and Company, 2022). Additionally, the global luxury market is forecasted to grow at an annual compound rate of 6.4% between 2020 and 2025 (Statista, 2020). Past studies have attributed the resilience of luxury brands during economic downturns to their symbolic nature and conspicuous consumption (Hassan et al., 2015; Kapferer, 2017). The global luxury marketing industry has then had difficulty ensuring that adequate perceived value of luxury among consumers is maintained. Thus, to understand the luxury market, the meaning of luxury remains desirable to define and measure the degree to which a given product is a luxury (Ko et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the word “luxury” and the measurement of luxury is highly subjective in nature and there is no clear meaning, and it is difficult to understand (Godey et al., 2012). Further, Vigneron and Johnson (1999) conclude that luxury is quite a slippery term to define as a result of its strong involvement in individual cognition and value recognition from others.

When focusing on the luxury consumer, Heine (2010) argues that luxury is a relative term that could refer to almost anything or nothing depending on the individual. According to Ko et al (2019), there are many different forms of luxury definition, ultimately a product classification as luxury versus non-luxury is usually dependent on the consumer perception of the value offered by the product or brand in question. Different cultures or context has their idea of luxury owing to their fluidity (Nwankwo, Hamelin and Khaled, 2014). Tynan, McKechnie and Chhuon (2010) argue that because luxury products exist at one end of a continuum with nonluxury products, thus the judgment of where non-luxury ends and where luxury starts will depend on the consumers. In the Oxford dictionary, the word “luxury" comes from the Latin word "*Luxus*",

which means over-indulgence, extravagant living, sumptuousness, opulence, and luxuriousness. Similarly, Dubois et al. (2005) argue that luxury is a derivative of the Latin term '*Luxus*', which infers luxury as an indulgent, excessive lifestyle with a connotation of luxuriousness and opulence. The emergence of luxury through the ages has existed in many different forms and was closely linked with elitism, prosperity dominance, and the adoption of non-necessities over time in both old Western and Eastern countries (Brun et al., 2008; Dubois and Laurent, 1994). Generally, luxury referred to products that were in short supply, with considerable access restrictions, which resulted in them being solely within the realm of the privileged elite in society (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). The terms, luxury, luxury goods, and luxury brand all share similar definitions and conceptually overlap with one another.

From an academic perspective, researchers describe 'luxury' as the top category of prestigious brands (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Wiedmann et al. (2007) further defined luxury as the highest level of prestigious brands that include different types of physical and psychological values. The luxury concept generally defines a conceptual and symbolic dimension rather than a category of products and encompasses values that are strongly related to socioeconomic context and cultural elements (Wiedmann et al., 2007, 2009). Luxury is used as a social stratification tool and social marker to reinforce a hierarchy and therefore they are recognized as a symbol of personal and social identity (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Okonkwo, 2009; Vickers and Renand, 2003). Since there is no consensus or clear characteristics that describe the meaning of luxury between luxury practitioners and academics, this has consequently led to the debate as to what constitutes a luxury brand. Owing to the fluidity of the concept, every culture or society has its own idea of what luxury is (Nwankwo et al., 2014). According to Nueno and Quelch (1998), luxury brands are those whose ratios of functional utility to price are low and the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high. Hence, luxury can be both the inherent quality of a product and the non-material qualities conveyed by the brand.

From previous literature, Berthon et al (2009) conceptualize and define luxury in terms of its constituents in three dimensions: functional/objective, experimental/subjective (individual), and symbolic/collective (social) dimensions. The functional dimension consists of exquisite material embodiment and craftsmanship, impressive performance, and high functionality. The experimental dimension relates to the individual subjective value, in other words, the consumers' personal hedonic value of the brand. The symbolic element has two aspects which are the value a luxury brand signals to others and the value it signals to the consumer or signaller. Similarly, Vickers and Renand (2003) argue that classifying luxury and non-luxury products will depend on the degree to which they exhibit a distinctive mix of the three

dimensions of instrumental performance which includes functionalism, experientialism, and symbolic interactionism. The latter two dimensions of experiential symbolic dimension and interactional symbolic dimension provide self-enhancement, status, emotional pleasure, and social concepts while non-luxury goods belong to the functional symbolic dimension or externally generated need (Vickers and Renand, 2003). Thus, the authors conclude that luxury goods are more important to satisfy both personal and social identity. Recently, some studies (e.g., Lageat, Czellar, and Laurent, 2003; Tynan et al., 2010) have pointed to the idea of a luxury brand being co-created by the brand owner and the consumer through experiential consumption. How consumers feel consuming luxury, the lively moment within which the luxury brand is experienced, and the look and the sound of luxury are paramount in forming part of the brand's luxury image, as luxury is valued for its lived experience. According to Kapferer and Bastien (2017), a luxury brand should have strong personal and hedonistic characteristics.

Although no consensus on the definition of luxury exists in luxury marketing literature so far in the literature (Tsai et al., 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2009), there is a consensus that luxury products provide both traditional or functional needs and psychological needs linked to the perceived characteristics of the product such as quality, aesthetics, scarcity, and elitism (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). However, when examining this definition, the psychological benefits such as self-esteem and social recognition are significant in distinguishing a luxury from a non-luxury brand (Vickers and Renand, 2003; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; 2004).

Research on consumer luxury consumption motivations should therefore be investigated under the assumption that consumers can acquire both personal experience value and social function value by purchasing and consuming luxury (Tsai et al., 2013). Consequently, this thesis follows the luxury definition according to Tynan et al. (2010, p. 1158), which refers to luxury in a consumption context as "high quality, expensive and non-essential products, and services that appear to be rare, exclusive, prestigious, and authentic and offer high levels of symbolic and emotional/hedonic values through customer experiences."

2.4.1. Luxury Value Perceptions

Several past researches (e.g., Wiedmann et al., 2009) have suggested a little consensus has been made on the dimensions of luxury perception owing to its subjective nature and how the perception of value influences consumer purchasing attitude and behaviour. Value can be defined as the overall assessment of the subjective worth of a product or service when all

relevant evaluative criteria are considered (Zeithaml, 1988). Luxury brands fit into this definition because consumers primarily acquire luxury for its social and personal outcomes (Shukla, 2012). According to the literature, consumers purchase luxury primarily for its symbolic characteristics to exhibit their individuality and social motives (Wilcox et al., 2009). Therefore, the distinct luxury brand image coupled with its scarcity value can meet consumers' need for uniqueness and its ability to also symbolize and strengthen group affiliations and social classifications.

The perceptions of luxury have been shown through research to lie between objective elements or subjective images and experiences produced in the consumer's mind which are most likely influenced by their sense of aesthetics and indulgent value (Berthon et al., 2009; Maman, Larraufie, and Kourdoughli, 2014; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). For example, Dubois and Czellar (2002), through in-depth interviews found that luxury was linked to subjective ideas of comfort, beauty, and as well as objective perceptions of a luxurious lifestyle. That means the perception of luxury can be a result of their perceived premium quality, limited accessibility, reputation, and/or recognizable style. Accordingly, from a recent literature review, the personal and social orientation luxury value perceptions have been particularly identified by many studies (e.g., Tsai, 2005; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998;). Many luxury consumers most often exhibit consumption values which include both social and personal values (Hennigs et al., 2012, 2015; Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Klarmann, 2012.).

Focusing on luxury brands or products, Vigneron, and Johnson (2004) proposed a brand luxury index scale to identify two major dimensions of perceived luxury value perceptions for luxury brands that should be taken into consideration when capturing the meaning of luxury brands. They are the personally oriented perceptions or motives which comprise perceived hedonic value and perceived extended self. On the other hand, the interpersonal-oriented perceptions or motives comprise the perceived conspicuous value, perceived unique value, and perceived quality value. According to the literature, Vigneron, and Johnson (1999) classified consumers from the two dimensions based on the extent to which they are conscious of others' opinions, inner thoughts, and feelings. That is to say, consumers who scored high on the personal oriented brand luxury index scale purchased luxury brands to satisfy their emotional values and product quality desire. In contrast, consumers who scored high on the interpersonal-oriented brand luxury index scale purchased luxury brands to show these items to others. Furthermore, Vigneron and Johnson (1999) state that the personal dimension is consumer driven whereas the

interpersonal dimension is price sensitive. The personal-oriented perceptions originate from luxury consumption that includes:

The perceived extended-self value perceptions can be referred to as the social value associated with luxury (Wiedmann et al., 2009). This implies that luxury products can act as a symbolic marker of the social class which consumers wish to be associated with. Thus, by acquiring luxury products, consumers are trying to express the luxury brands' symbolic value on their personal identity (Belk, 1988; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). According to Belk (1988) extended-self theory explains that individuals invest their self-identity in possessions that are "a major contributor to and reflection of our identities" (p. 139). In other words, consumers consider their products to be part of themselves and they use them to communicate their identity to significant others (Hudders, 2012). For example, in order to distinguish themselves from the masses some consumers express their self-identities by choosing less popular brands when consuming luxuries (Berger and Ward, 2010; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Whereas some other consumers tend to buy popular conspicuous luxury products to conform to those they admire. A study by Li, Daugherty and Biocca, (2001) examines a product through image interactive technology and found that most of the respondents indicated that they experienced a feeling of personal involvement with the virtual product.

The perceived hedonic value perception refers to the emotional values relating to purchasing the luxury product and therefore is connected to aesthetic beauty and sensory gratification (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004). Hedonic value captures affective states that can be experienced through personal fulfilments and rewards, in other words, luxury products possessions are likely to provide intangible benefits, such as aesthetic beauty and sensory pleasure, thus from buying to consuming the luxury product may bring about personal pleasures, emotional desire feelings, and enjoyment (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019; Wiedmann et al., 2007, 2009; Dubois and Laurent, 1994). Consequently, consumers were observed to be increasingly seeking hedonic value in luxury (Kapferer and Valette-Florence 2016), in particular, because hedonistic value satisfies the private self, primarily consumers who emphasize the importance of the internal self are likely to consider hedonic experiences to serve as a major motive for luxury consumption (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998).

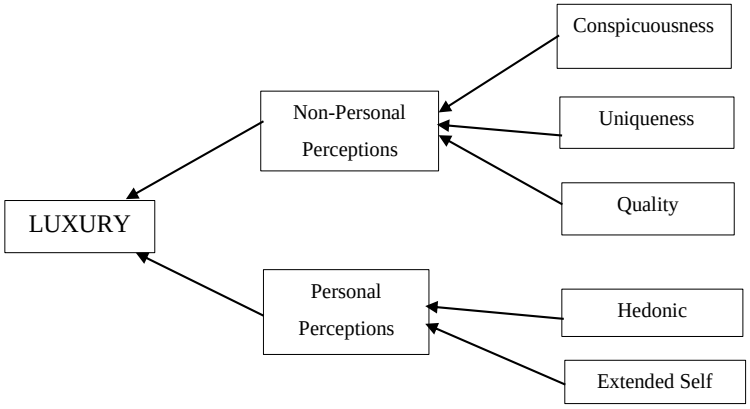
The interpersonal-oriented perceptions originate from luxury consumption that includes:

The perceived unique value perception refers to 'an individual's pursuit of difference relative to others achieved through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's personal and social identity' (Tian and

McKenzie 2001 p.172). Consumers acquire luxury products that are often scarce, rare, and exclusive in an attempt to differentiate themselves from others and improve their public appearances and status (Dubois and Duquesne 1993; Shukla, 2012). Some consumers may decline to consume a particular luxury product when the product is popular (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2007, 2009).

The perceived conspicuous value perception underlines the consumption process which is primarily focused on the display of wealth and consumption in the public context (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Eastman and Goldsmith (1999) defined conspicuous consumption as a motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing by consuming conspicuous products that symbolize status for both the individual and the relevant others. Wiedmann et al. (2007) stated that luxury products are significant to individuals seeking to improve their social status and build social presence (Shukla, 2011). The perceived quality value perceptions focus on the utilitarian values of a luxury brand that represents a consumer desire for superior product attributes or characteristics (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004). According to Quelch (1978, p.39), "Excellent quality is a *sine qua non*, and it is important that the premium marketer maintains and develops leadership in quality". Consumers associate luxury products with premium brand quality so that they can perceive more value from the products (Aaker, 1991). Therefore, premium, or high-quality products are associated with social recognition and status which influences luxury purchase decisions (Phau, Sequeira and Dix, 2009). In addition, Premium quality is presumed to be an intrinsic attribute in all luxury brands (Kapferer and Bastein, 2009; Lee et al., 2018) and is primarily a key attribute that differentiates a luxury product from a non-luxury product (O'Cass and Frost 2002; Wiedmann et al., 2009).

Figure 2.1 Personal and Interpersonal Luxury Perceptions



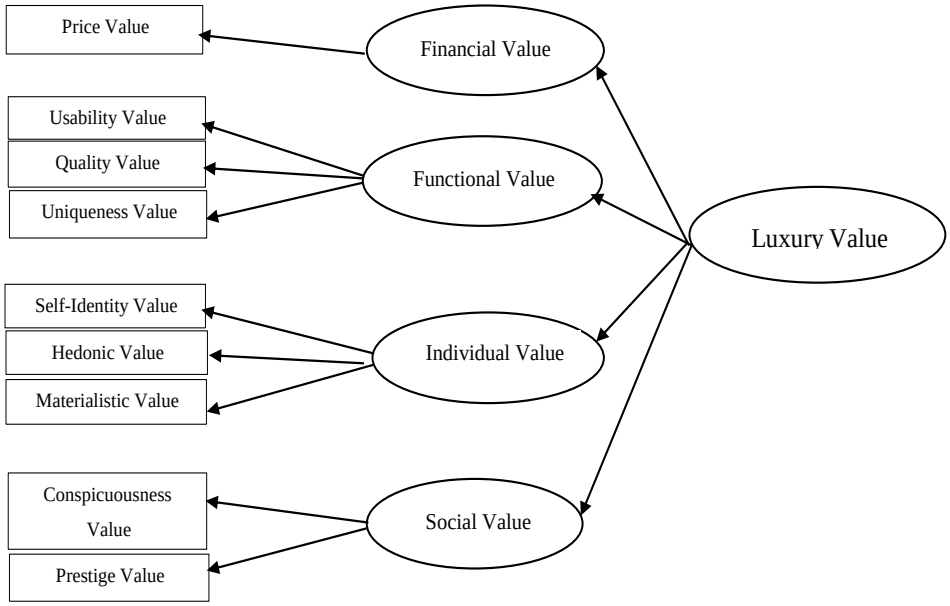
(Adapted from, Vigneron and Johnson, 2004)

Wiedmann et al (2007) extended the Vigneron and Johnson (2004) framework of measuring luxury products by conceptualizing four dimensions of luxury that are interrelated to each other namely the functional, individual, financial, and social value.

Specifically, the functional value perceptions which comprise of the quality value, unique value, and usability value refer to the basic and core benefits derived from uniqueness, reliability, quality, durability, and usability (Smith and Colgate, 2007; Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991). Consumers expect a luxury product to be unique, usable and of good quality such that they can perceive more value from it (Wiedmann et al., 2009). The individual value comprises the hedonic value, materialistic value, and self-identity value which contribute to a consumer's self-identity construction. the financial value which is the price value includes direct monetary aspects and finally, the social value comprises the prestige value and conspicuous value which includes attributes garnered from consuming luxuries in a social situation (Wiedmann et al., 2007). Vigneron and Johnson (1999), note that even though these luxury value dimensions can operate independently, they can interact with each other and have different impacts on each consumer's luxury value behaviour. Similarly, Wiedmann et al. (2007) argue that subjective individual value and situational circumstances may influence the perception of the luxury brand such that different sets of consumers would have different luxury value perceptions for the same luxury brands. In addition, these consumers would integrate the four luxury perceptions from different perspectives even though the overall luxury value of the brand may be perceived equally (Wiedmann et al., 2007).

In this light, past studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2018; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Tsai, 2005, Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004; Wiedmann et al., 2007, 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) conclude that the perceived luxury value of consumers towards luxury products highlights several important indicators of luxury value such as firstly, luxury products are acquired by consumers for their functionality and higher quality compared to non-luxury products, second, luxury value perceptions possess a social dimension that considers both self and the others in acquiring luxury products. Lastly, the importance of the personal dimension of luxury relating to pleasure and experiences cannot be over-emphasized in the overall assessment of perceived luxury value.

Figure 2.2 Luxury Value Dimension Model



(Adapted from, Wiedmann et al., 2007)

2.4.2. Attitude Towards Luxury Consumption

Due to luxury products' highly symbolic properties, they can create a sense of affiliation with other consumers or aid to differentiate consumers from other consumers (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012, 2014; Leibenstein, 1950; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Thus, some consumers use a variety of luxury brands and products in a relational pattern to integrate socially with groups of consumers who publicly display them. While other consumers seek to consume new, scarce, novel, or unknown luxuries in a contrast creating patterns to distance themselves from other

consumers and ultimately satisfy their need for uniqueness (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Symbolic motivations arise from the desire for social prestige and status and are reflected in a consumption pattern that expresses meaning regarding identity, personal taste, and status (Berthon et al., 2009; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2021). Invariably, when any product or service is consumed as a symbol in this case luxury product, it is valued based on the social status and power it represents when compared with other symbols, rather than the product attributes per se for example, the cost of the luxury product itself (Berger and Ward, 2010; Berthon et al., 2009; Han, Nunes and Drèze, 2010; Shukla and Purani, 2012).

Luxury products are used as symbols of an individual's success and as such, their public display enhances the individual's prestige and social status. However, in economics, the dominant utilitarian view has traditionally ignored the problem of symbolism and rather views consumption generally as determined by the law of demand and supply. In that reasoning, economists believe that consumers' spending decisions occur in isolation and independently of other actors in the market (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). In contrast, Veblen (1899) in his classic essay on the theory of the leisure class, was the first to note that, as consumers' wealth increases and spreads across more societies, the desire to satisfy subsistence needs does not drive consumer behaviour anymore rather, a significant proportion of the consumption of goods was shaped by the desire to attain esteem, secure, and affirm social status. He further reasoned that the rich within society engaged in consumption with the intention to generate 'invidious comparisons', while the poor turned to 'pecuniary emulation'", which suggests behaviour that tries to replicate the consumption of higher social classes and consequently drives some individuals to consume conspicuously (Veblen, 1899).

Leibenstein (1950) extended this argument providing insights into the three major types of motivational drivers that attract consumers' desire to engage in luxury consumption. The author highlights the importance of external effects on utility that is functionality derived due to factors other than the quality characteristics in the product, in other words, the value consciousness consumers derive from certain products is emphasized depending on the product's price level or when other consumers take some form of action related to increasing or decreasing the product consumption. Further, Leibenstein (1950) differentiates the outcomes of these actions into "Veblen", "snob" and "bandwagon effects"; and conceptualizes the snob effect as the opposite of the "bandwagon" effect, where the demand for a product decrease when others consume it or increase their consumption of the product. Thus, the snob effect gives importance to a product only when very few people buy or consume the product and therefore represents

the consumer's desire to be unique, exclusive, and different. Finally, the Veblen effect is conceptualized as when some consumers increase their consumption of a product when the price of the product increases. However, from past research (e.g., Das et al., 2021; Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020; Shaikh et al., 2017; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Tsai et al., 2013), two distinct consumption effects are relevant for understanding consumers' luxury consumption motivations which are namely, snob and bandwagon effects motivation towards luxury consumption.

2.4.2.1. Bandwagon Luxury Consumption Attitude

The bandwagon effect refers to the propensity of a consumer to adopt the viewpoint of most consumers even when or if their own viewpoint is different from the majority (Barrera and Ponce, 2021; Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020; Bindra et al., 2022; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012; Shaikh et al., 2017). Bandwagon consumption then occurs when consumers purchase a particular luxury product to obtain recognition from their own group or associate themselves with a group which in turn triggers additional demand in the luxury market (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2020; Chaudhuri and Majumdar, 2006) in other words, bandwagon effect influences the consumer when they are more focused on social values such as belongingness and social approval (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014).

Leibenstein (1950), explains "by the bandwagon effect, we refer to the extent to which the demand for a commodity is increased due to the fact that others are also consuming the same commodity" (Leibenstein, 1950, p. 189). Therefore, the bandwagon effect represents the desire to buy a product in order to get "into the swim of things"; in order to conform with the people, they wish to be associated with; in order to be fashionable or stylish; or in order to appear to be "one of the boys" (Leibenstein, 1950, p. 189). Bandwagon consumers are more willing to change their attitudes to meet the requirements of any group they want to join. Invariably, the consumption behaviour of other luxury consumers is significant especially in the case of bandwagon consumption since the luxury value is being co-created and reinforced by the complex interactions between the various social groups including the consumers and brand communities (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012; Tynan et al., 2010). These relevant others pay more attention to socially endorsed products and view this as a symbolic signal of group membership and a sense of belonging to the relevant status groups (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012). This results in the increasing popularity of the product and consequently triggers positive network effects in other words, the bandwagon effects provide additional functionality to

consumers due to the fact the relevant others are purchasing and using the socially endorsed product and thereby encouraging more consumers associated with bandwagon motivation (showing mass acceptance for such luxury products) to engage in luxury consumption (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2021; Shaikh et al., 2017). Some past studies have found support for this type of luxury consumption. For instance, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012) study found that social status plays a significant role in luxury purchase intention that is motivated by conformity to a reference group. Moreover, in a study among luxury brand consumers, consumers tend to buy popular luxury brands to gain social approval by displaying the products or gain recognition from the group they belong to (Tsai et al., 2013).

Bahri-Ammari et al. (2020) notes that the consumer level of materialism and tendency to compare themselves with others plays a major role in a "bandwagon consumer" who desires to affiliate with others and purchases luxury goods as visible evidence of their claim to higher ranking in the social hierarchy. The authors further noted that for the materialist consumer, the ability to transmit prestige, success, and status to the group to which they feel they belong is the most significant desire for luxury consumption. Das et al. (2021), found that consumers with dominant creative choice with strong feelings of psychological entitlement, which is a feeling of being special, receiving more praise, and having more resources purchase bandwagon luxuries to exhibit their uniqueness even though they are usually involved in social comparison before that purchase intention. Thus, the consumer prefers to exhibit their uniqueness using bandwagon luxury items that are in keeping with conformist consumers. Furthermore, Cho, Kim-Vick and Yu (2022), findings showed that the need for uniqueness and bandwagon effect showed a positive significant effect on Gen Z purchase intentions and consumers' attitudes toward luxury which is influenced by their tendency to seek popular luxury fashion to gain acceptance from their reference group. The consumers through following the trends and popularity of luxury products enjoy their conspicuous consumption, gain social recognition, express their public self-image, and exhibit their success by using luxury fashion goods ((Kang and Ma, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012; Park, Rabolt and Sook Jeon, 2008).

2.4.2.2. Snob Luxury Consumption Attitude

In sharp contrast to bandwagon effect consumption, snobbish consumers cease buying a luxury good when many other people begin owning it. The popularity of the product consumption discourages functionality for this group of consumers and demand decreases (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). The snob effect consumption refers to people's desire for unique products

and is driven by the urge to differentiate oneself from others through the uniqueness of the individual's consumption (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2021; Tian and McKenzie, 2001). Tian et al. (2001 p.53) defined a manifestation that measures the snob effect as "the loss of interest in, or discontinued use of, possessions that became commonplace to move away from the norm and re-establish one's differentness." Leibenstein (1950), in examining the demand curve for snob consumption concluded that consumer demand decreases as the number of people buying a product increase. Such relative scarcity reinforces a luxury good's desirability to this segment (Parker and Lehmann, 2011). Luxury products can become a tool to convey uniqueness due to their characteristic of scarcity, therefore, attracting consumers with a high desire for uniqueness (Shukla, 2012). For example, due to the high brand recognition of luxury products, they are used to affirm distinctiveness and express individual characteristics which are achieved by being an early adopter of the new product (Kumar et al., 2020; Hennigs et al., 2012; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) note that others luxury consumer behaviour towards luxury consumption plays a major role for consumers that seek snob motivation. The significant others, in this case, enhance the value of the product when they do not desire to own the product in contrast the value is decreased when the significant others increase the product consumption. Snobbish consumers will avoid luxury products when other significant others are involved in the same consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014) and search for other unique alternatives as the negative network effect take effect (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2021).

Network effect or network externalities theory suggests that the value individuals ascribe to products is impacted by additional users of the products or service (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2021). Leibenstein (1950) argues that consumption of luxury products is dependent on others within the network, in support, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) and Berthon et al. (2009) argue that symbolic motivations characterized by the desire for status and social prestige are derived from luxury consumption driven by network effects. Furthermore, research in social psychology and consumer behaviour emphasizes the significant role of social comparisons and the strong influence of reference groups on consumer luxury consumption attitudes (Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels, 2009). Consumers actively engage in social comparisons and tend to dissociate themselves from the masses to establish a distinct self-image and social image to portray their uniqueness in their willingness to consume luxuries (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2021).

2.5. Culture and Luxury Consumption Behaviour

Following past literature, researchers (e.g., Bharti et al., 2022; Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012) have argued that it is problematic to explain consumer preferences and behaviour in one culture based on the understanding of another due to distinct psychological value associations (Hofstede et al., 2010; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Cultural differences have been one of the important factors influencing the consumption of global brands specifically because consumers in different cultures purchase products and services for different reasons even when they buy the same products (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Ko et al., 2007; Ko et al., 2019; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Wang et al., 2022). Luxury consumption spans national boundaries in such a way that the same luxury products are often marketed cross-culturally which implies that the demand for luxury products is consistent across different global markets. Even though this raises the question of whether cultural influences have any significance to the consumption of luxuries, some studies have in contrast questioned the assumption of global luxury markets. These studies (e.g., De Mooji 2014; Phau and Prendergast, 2000) emphasize that cultural variables are significant influences on consumer behaviour and sources of differentiation between global markets. Likewise, past studies have indeed recognised the significant role of culture in luxury consumption behaviour (e.g., Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bharti et al., 2022; Ko et al., 2019; Pillar and Nair, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). These studies argue that cultural contexts need to be taken into consideration when attempting to understand consumer motivations and behaviour toward luxury consumption. For example, cultural values have been found to influence consumer behaviour with the assumption that an individual is most often a reflection of their cultural orientation (Mourali, Laroche and Pons, 2005); Laroche et al., 2004; Luna and Gupta, 2001). Such that even when consumers from different cultures consume the same luxury product, it does not necessarily mean that the motivation for luxury consumption will be the same (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998).

In the literature, consumers from cultures that are predominantly individualist are argued to purchase luxury products for self-directed pleasure in which the consumers tend to concentrate on personal benefits such as hedonic pleasure apart from utilitarian benefits (Shukla et al., 2015; Shukla and Purani, 2012). On the other hand, collectivist consumers purchase luxury products to gain social status, prestige, and representation from the acquisition and consumption of luxury products is one of the major motivating factors that influence the desire to engage in luxury (Pillai and Nair, 2021; Eastman et al., 2018; Shukla, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Goldsmith, Flynn, and Eastman, 1996). In collectivist cultures,

consumers face the added pressure to imitate consumption trends and are likely to have a stronger affinity towards conspicuous and status consumption when compared to their counterparts in individualist western cultures (Bharti et al., 2022; Shukla, 2010). De Mooij (2017) indicated that a collectivist culture when compared with an individualist culture scored higher in social consumption motivation and lower in personal consumption motivation. Wong and Ahuvia (1998), noted that consumers in collectivist cultures may attach more value and social significance to acquiring materialistic products compared to consumers in individualist cultures. As such Sharma (2010) observed that despite the declining affinity towards materialistic tendencies in individualistic cultures, materialism is growing in collectivist cultures. Bian and Forsythe (2012) explored whether cultural influences make a difference in motivation for luxury consumption across cultures. The findings reveal that attitudes toward luxury products served important social functions impacting both affect and behaviour across the American and Chinese participants.

In another study, Shukla, and Purani (2012) examined the impact of luxury value perceptions across individualistic and collectivistic markets and found that considerable cross-national variations existed. For example, British consumers consider self-directed expressive/symbolic values, and their overall luxury value perceptions are significantly impacted by functional or utilitarian value perceptions. On the other hand, Indian consumers consider other-directed expressive/symbolic values and use simpler selection criteria for measuring luxury brand value compared to British consumers. Christodoulides et al (2009) examined different motivations towards luxury across cultures using the Vigneron and Johnson (2004) brand luxury index scale in Taiwan and compared the results with the original Australian sample used by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and found that the meaning of luxury differed across culture for example, the perceived uniqueness value was not so significant for the Taiwan market compared to the Australians. Furthermore, Aliyev and Wagner (2018) investigated whether price-related luxury dimensions influenced luxury purchase intention among collectivist consumers and on the other hand whether the consumer-driven dimension influenced luxury purchase intention among individualist consumers. The findings revealed that collectivists perceived the pricecontrolled luxury dimensions such as quality and conspicuous stronger when compared to individualist consumers. Whereas for consumer-driven dimensions, the results were inconsistent for luxury value perceptions. Hedonic value had a more significant effect among individualist consumers compared to collectivist whereas uniqueness and extended-self value is perceived similarly across cultures. For instance, through luxury possessions, collectivists may conform to and

replicate significant affluent groups while individualists may extend themselves through luxury acquisitions (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Belk 1988).

In light of these discussions, it is important to note that in the literature several studies (e.g., Dubois et al., 2005; Gentina, Shrum, and Lowrey, 2016; Godey et al., 2013; Le Monkhouse, Barnes and Stephan, 2012; Shukla, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012) that have been based on macro-cultural distinctions of individualism and collectivism "have failed to offer meaningfully consistent results regarding how culture affects people's motivations to buy luxury items" (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019, p. 298). For instance, some studies (Dubois et al., 2005; Godey et al., 2013; Le Monkhouse, Barnes, and Stephan, 2012;) found that, across cultures, luxury values had no significant cultural difference in the motivation towards luxury. While some other studies (e.g., Gentina et al., 2016; Hennigs et al., 2012) indicate that even though all the luxury values investigated are significant in all cultures, they tend to vary in strength in different cultural contexts. In addition, some other studies (e.g., Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Shukla et al., 2015), have identified some differences in the value consumers attach to luxury consumption but cannot detect a clear cultural pattern even within similar cultures. When focusing on uniqueness value, a personally oriented luxury dimension (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) across cultures some inconsistent results have been revealed for example, while Gentina et al (2016) results indicate that uniqueness value is more important in individualist cultures, in contrast, Bian and Forsythe (2012), found that against their predictions, collectivist Asian consumers more strongly preferred uniqueness luxury value compared to the individualist American counterparts. Likewise, Aliyev and Wagner (2018) contrary to their predictions did not find sufficient support for uniqueness motivation in individualist cultures. Furthermore, Shukla's (2012) study reveals partial support for uniqueness value orientation in an individualist culture, specifically the findings were significant only to British consumers and not their American counterparts. While Godey et al (2013) point out that uniqueness-seeking does not differ between individualist and collectivist cultures in their study.

In addition, when focusing on social or interpersonal luxury values that consumers seek in luxury purchase and consumption, inconsistent results have equally been revealed. Shukla and Purani, 2012), indicated that the other-directed symbolic value of luxuries plays a significant role in both collectivist and individualist cultures, while conspicuous luxury value has been shown to be significant in both collectivist and individualist cultures (Shukla, 2012). On the other hand, Hennigs et al. (2012) reveal no clear cultural pattern for the influence of social value in luxury consumption behaviour. In another study, Shukla et al. (2015) findings revealed

that even in cultural similar contexts, such as collectivistic markets, consumer value perception for other-directed symbolic dimensions a type of social luxury value differed significantly. Chinese and Indian consumers' other-directed value is significantly related to luxury value perception whereas for Indonesian consumers who are generally regarded as collectivist cultures are influenced by self-directed symbolism in seeking and consuming luxury products (Shukla et al., 2015). Taken together, these results established that cultural differences at the macro level, with a limited account of the individual level (micro or the psychological level) characteristics, cannot explain accurately the impact of culture within and across culture in consumer behaviour due to the evidence of within-country variation and between country similarities in terms of cultural values (Taras and Steel, 2009; Taras, Steel and Kirkman, 2016) which may weaken the explanatory role of macro-level cultural distinctions typically evidenced in luxury consumer segments (Hennigs et al., 2012; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). In support, Ko et al. (2019, p.411) pointed out that "As luxury markets expand internationally, more cross-cultural research is needed to better understand how consumers' behaviour is impacted by their culture. The lack of consensus on whether individualism vs. collectivism and other cultural factors matter to luxury consumers' needs additional study, as are the circumstances under which national culture makes a difference." Building on this, the present thesis investigates the influence of culture on luxury consumption attitude by including the examination of an individual-level cultural distinction of self-construal orientation for a better identification of cultural differences and understanding of how culture interacts with human processes (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). Given that, collectivism and individualism have been shown to exist in all cultures, predictions based on macro-level distinctions may pose problems when predicting individuals' behaviours (Gudyskunt et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2001; Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019) in this case via luxury consumption. This implies that all cultures are not evidently homogeneous thus individuals may vary substantially in the extent to which they identify with and practice cultural values and norms (Taras, Steel and Kirkman, 2016). Appendix 2.1 provides details on the review of the current studies on individualism and collectivism and luxury consumption

Furthermore, some useful insights into the impact of culture on consumer motivation towards luxury consumption can be gained from the conceptual study by Wong and Ahuvia (1998) where the insights from an individual self-construal are introduced in the cultural model. The authors argue that culture influences consumer motivations for luxuries, particularly when compared between individualistic and collectivistic societies. They propose that consumers within individualistic cultures, who are predominantly of independent self-construal (Markus

and Kitayama, 1991) would be expected to consume luxuries generally for their pleasing properties or intrinsic pleasure. In contrast, consumers within a collectivistic culture which favours the interdependent construal of self, consume luxuries in order to conform to social norms, and hierarchy, for their public meanings and place their emphasis on conspicuous luxuries to be visible. Further, they claim that "the Western rationality inherent in most consumer theories needs to be re-interpreted through the eyes of Eastern reality" (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998 p.436).

2.6. Self-Construal and Attitude towards Luxury Consumption

Research in cultural psychology has a significant role to play in understanding the influence of individual-level characteristics of culture such as self-construal orientation and on how these might shape the understanding of the consumption of luxuries (Bakir et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Cross et al. (2011) summarized that interdependent self-construal individuals can be mainly found in collectivistic cultures where individuals seek to maintain a social connection with others and recognize themselves as a part of society while prioritizing social groups. Even though these interdependent self-construal individuals also have internal opinions, personalities, and abilities, these internal attributes are voluntarily controlled and understood in social relationships and situations. In contrast, independent self-construal individuals can be mainly found in Western (individualist) culture, where the individuals express their rights, unique desires, and abilities. More so, their self-view tends to be independent and autonomous perspective while significant others are just subject to comparison with themselves. Thus, they prioritize individuals over groups and improve themselves through comparison with others (Cross et al., 2011). These distinctive self-views can have an impact on consumers' cognition, values, and goals (Lee and Pounders, 2019; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). For example, when consumers make a purchase and repurchase decision in this case, luxury consumption, interdependent self-construal, and independent self-construal are affected by public-based evaluations and self-based evaluations respectively (Bakir et al., 2020; Lee and Pounders, 2019; Lee et al., 2021).

Past studies (e.g., Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wiedmann et al., 2007; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) suggest that luxury consumption is driven by either personally or socially oriented luxury consumption motives. The emergence of these orientations can be traced to a consumer's self-construal as either independent or interdependent (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) which plays a significant role in understanding the personal and socially oriented motive for luxury

consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). The extended-self theory suggests that the self is extended to include objects or experiences that define people and their social roles: these become "extended" parts of the self (Belk, 1988). In other words, the self can be extended into possessions, where consumers can shape and strengthen their identity through possessions, which in turn reflect the ideal self. Likewise, self-congruity theory explains that consumers tend to purchase items that match any corresponding dimensions of their self-image that is consumers tend to purchase and use products related to themselves to enhance, expand, and complement their self-image (Sirgy, 1982, 1985). A product or brand enables individuals to express their self-concept which means that a product or brand reflects one's self-construal either interdependently or independently (Cross and Madson, 1997; Wang, 2013; Yuan et al., 2016). Thus, individuals who have different self-concepts have different psychological motivations for luxury consumption behaviour. Particularly, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) found that consumers with interdependent self-construal are associated with bandwagon effect consumption to conform with other consumers' consumption while those with independent self-construal tend to engage in snob consumption to differentiate themselves from others, consumers with an interdependent self-construal show more affiliation towards the social utility of luxury consumption while, independent self-construal consumers exhibit a personal orientation in luxury consumption, focusing on self-expressive goals.

Lee et al. (2021) explore the effect of materialism on conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury products and shows that for independent self-construal, consumers are influenced by internal motives such as the need for uniqueness desire to enhance their value by consuming inconspicuous luxury that characterizes sophistication and subtleness rather than conspicuous products with popularity. In contrast, interdependent self-construal consumers influenced by external motives lead to conspicuous luxury consumption (bandwagon consumption) in other words they buy popular luxury products to gain others' support. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2022) found that independent self-construal positively impacts the relationship between self-consistency and luxury symbolism that is the consumers consume brands congruent with their personality and self-image. Whereas the interdependent self-construal positively impacts social approval and luxury symbolism, which implies that consumers tend to transfer symbolic value to social approval perception which is important in gaining their loyalty (Wang et al., 2022).

Based on the foregoing discussions on the important role of independent and interdependent self-construal in influencing luxury acquisition and consumption, the discussions show that consumers' independent and interdependent self is enhanced through the consumption of luxuries, however, some mixed results have also been indicated in the literature. For example,

mixed results have been found concerning the relationship between independent self-construal and attitude towards luxury. While consumers with independent self-construal place importance on being unique and distinct from others, this independence can be expressed through the consumption of prestigious luxury products that others cannot afford (Bakir et al., 2020). In contrast, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012), showed a negative correlation between independent self-construal and status consumption. “In line with the Leibenstein (1950) mathematical demonstration, the signalling value of a luxury good disappears (for the person with a higher need for uniqueness) when people own this; that is, when this luxury eventually becomes a mass symbol.” Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012, p.1405).

Focussing on interdependent self-construal effects on consumers’ luxury attitudes, even though past studies (e.g., Aghaei et al., 2014; Bakir et al., 2020; Gentina et al., 2014) have found a positive relationship between interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury. Others have shown mixed results concerning this relationship. For instance, previous findings have suggested a negative correlation between independent self-construal and social consumption motivations which implies that in contrast, interdependent self-construal will be positively related to social consumption motivations (Clark, 2006). Moreover, interdependent self-construal individuals think of themselves in relation to others and define the self and others as highly connected (Singelis, 1994). However, contrary to this expectation, Gil et al. (2012) found a negative correlation between social consumption and consumers’ attitude toward luxury, a possible explanation is that luxury consumption is related more to personal values and not the desire to impress others by acquiring prestigious brands. In another study, Jebarajakirthy and Das (2020) found that interdependent self-construal does not have a direct positive influence on status consumption indicating that consumers’ tendency for relationships with others and consideration for others’ goals did not influence their attitude towards luxury directly however, from the authors’ findings social comparison fully mediated the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury. This implies that interdependent self-construal promotes social comparison which in turn enhances the consumers’ attitude toward consuming status and luxury terms (Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020). On a related line of argumentation but without luxury consumption, Millan, and Reynolds (2014) noted that unexpectedly, the influence of self-defining others does not translate to the consumption sphere regarding the preference for affiliation meaning of clothing, the findings reveal that interdependent self-construal preferred self-expressive and hedonic clothing which expresses their identity given their main focus on others rather than on oneself.

Taken together, these mixed findings guided this study's aims to answer the research question of whether there are differences between the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury brands across cultures. Existence of within-country variations and between country similarities can be found in luxury segments (Hennigs et al., 2012). The investigation of self-construal and luxury consumption will help to better understand the cultural differences and similarities in consumers' independent and interdependent self-construal attitudes toward luxury in a cross-cultural context. Despite this, past studies on self-construal (e.g., Gil et al., 2012; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020) have examined the role of differences in self-construal within individualist or collectivist culture neglecting the issues regarding whether national culture impacted the relationship between self-construal and attitude toward luxury. Appendix 2.2 provides details on the review of the current studies on independent and interdependent self-construal and luxury consumption.

2.7. Subjective Social Status

The importance of subjective social status as a predictor of the main domains of psychological outcomes has been documented by past studies (e.g., Chen and Paterson, 2006; Demakakos et al., 2008; Kraus et al., 2009; Operario et al., 2004). In this study, the influence of SSS on explaining the relationship between self-construal on luxury consumption is investigated.

According to Davis (1956), subjective social status can be defined as ''a person's belief about his location in a status order''. Subjective social status can be more broadly defined as the perception of an individual's place in the socioeconomic structure (Jackman and Jackman, 1973; Quon and McGrath, 2014). From a theoretical standpoint, subjective social status explains variances over and above more objective measures of socioeconomic status (Adler et al., 1994; Operario et al., 2004). In other words, the subjective social status concept is wider than that of an individual's relative social standing in a society based on research on income inequality (Singh-Manoux et al., 2003).

Traditionally, social status has been measured with objective indicators of socioeconomic status (SES). Objective socioeconomic status can be described as the material conditions of life that individuals indulge in such as access to educational opportunities, personal financial resources, and occupation (Kraus et al., 2009). However, in the literature, recent reviews have highlighted intrinsic problems in measuring social status using objective indicators (Adler et al., 2000; Belmi et al., 2020; Kraus et al., 2009). It is not clear how the measures of objective social status combine to yield a single measure of social class such as family wealth, and education (Kraus

et al., 2009). For example, it has proven difficult to determine social status differences between individuals with relatively equal objective SES. In measures of education, the implication for one's life opportunities of having received a degree from an Ivy League school is different from the receipt of a degree from a local college, but in standard measures of educational status, both would be coded the same (Singh-Manoux et al., 2003). Furthermore, measures of objective SES have typically depended on population estimates that may be outdated (Liu et al., 2004). Hence, the validity of objective SES has been problematic in capturing the complexity of SSS. This suggests that perceptions of one's position in the socioeconomic hierarchy have important implications for numerous psychological outcomes, on the basis that subjective ratings represent more precise characteristics of social economic status not accessible through objective measures such as income, occupation, and education (Singh-Manoux et al., 2003; Adler et al., 2000).

Recent research on the subjective social status on health-related outcomes suggests that subjective social status includes social ranks in relation to others in the social hierarchy and this feature of including others is uncounted for by objective measures of social status (Adler et al., 2000; Kraus et al., 2009; Singh-Manoux et al., 2003). This implies that the rank-based approach to subjective social status shows that lower subjective social status individuals tend to show poorer health (Singh-Manoux et al., 2003), guided by this revelation the MacArthur Scale of subjective social status (Goodman et al., 2001) was developed to measure participants' ranks relative to the comparison of individuals on a scale of one to ten rungs on a ladder to indicate the individuals perceived ranking within a social hierarchy relative to comparison individuals (e.g., Goodman et al., 2001). More so, in the literature it has been found that the measures of subjective social status are only moderately correlated with objective social status across several past studies, suggesting this rank-based scale of SSS is likely to independently predict social class-related outcomes (Adler et al., 2000; Goodman et al., 2001; Kraus et al., 2009). In Ostrove et al (2000) study, they found that subjective social status is related to health independent of objective social status. The authors' results found significant associations between subjective status and self-rated health among all ethnic groups providing a clearer link to health outcomes than the mixed results obtained for objective social economic indicators. Hence, SSS may be regarded as a more stable predictor of psychological and behavioural outcomes as the measures have the advantage of capturing subjectivity as a potential index of how the external realities of socioeconomic status are internalized (Adler et al., 2000).

Subjective social status assessment is likely to reveal both individuals' current social positions and their past positions which are an assessment of their past evaluation of economic,

socioeconomic, and educational background inclusive of their prospects. Therefore, their subjective beliefs about social status can be more consistently and strongly related to prosocial behaviour and health outcome compared to objective indicators of social status (Adler et al., 2000; Chen and Williams, 2018). Therefore, social class in each society can be a source of ranking related to status and social power in terms of its capability to garner respect from others and exert influence on others (Dubois et al., 2015). Social class refers to status differences between an individual and others in social life, which can be determined by an individual's material resources and self-perception of their status in society (Kraus et al., 2009). Thus, when individuals reveal that they are of low subjective social status, they are indicating that they have fewer resources and are of subordinate rank in comparison to others.

According to Kraus et al (2009) study, the findings report that lower-class individuals because of their lower ranking in relation to others because of little personal control were more likely to explain a wide range of social outcomes and emotions in terms of contextual causes rather than dispositional causes. Thus, these low-class individuals are shaped by the environment which puts constraints as a result of limited resources facilitating interdependence in the social contexts (Carey and Markus, 2016; Stephen et al., 2012). Moreover, individuals with high social class tend to have a stronger need to have a high rank, dominance and prestige, dominance, and in society, compared to individuals with low social class (Belmi et al., 2020). On the other hand, individuals with relatively high subjective social status or social class are influenced by their environment which allows them to strive for control and agency, thereby facilitating independence in the social contexts and permitting an individualistic focus on their own goals (Kraus et al., 2012; Stephen et al., 2012). Thus, this class-related contextualism may likely extend to other domains of social recognition (Kraus et al., 2009).

Individuals can aspire to be in a higher social class by accumulating wealth, being educated, and engaging in occupations with high social prestige (Corneo and Jeanne, 1997). Whereas for most lower social class individuals, improving their social status through the above indicators is quite difficult although, products with the status symbol can be easily acquired through status consumption. Status consumption can be conceptualized as when individuals "strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize status both for the individual and surrounding significant others" (Eastman et al., 1999, p. 42). Since luxury goods are associated with a high price and are positioned as being of high social status or class, the consumption of such products can serve a status-signaling function (Wang et al., 2021). Past researchers have suggested possibilities concerning whether lower subjective status or class or higher subjective status or class individuals are more likely

to engage in conspicuous consumption. According to the self-categorization theory (Turner and Reynolds, 2012), the self can be defined and categorized in terms of personal and social identities. Individuals with higher subjective social status or higher social classes define and categorize themselves in terms of social ranking and material success and which enables them the ability to differentiate themselves from lower social class individuals. Higher social class individuals compared to their lower social class individuals, have reported a greater desire for status-seeking and wealth, which in turn leads to a "having more–wanting more" phenomenon (Wang, Jetten and Steffens., 2020.). Thus, it can be suggested to expect that higher subjective social status individuals may be more motivated to consume conspicuously to represent their superior status compared to others (Wang et al., 2022). On the other hand, when individuals perceive subjectively their social class as low, they may rely on consumption as a tool to cope or resist psychological threats that make up their status with compensatory consumption (Zheng, Baskin, and Peng 2018; Chen et al., 2022).

From the perspective of compensatory consumption theory, individuals will compensate themselves through consumption when they are threatened or ignored due to the conflict between their inner needs and the real situation of the individual (Mandel et al., 2017). According to the compensatory consumer behaviour model, when people experience self-discrepancies, they engage in compensatory consumption which can help them restore their self-discrepancies (Wang et al., 2022). For example, some consumers build or try to maintain their identity by purchasing and consuming products with a desirable symbolic value which can help them make up the differences from other social class members (Shrum et al., 2013; Mandel et al., 2017). Therefore, exploring the effects of subjective social status on attitudes toward luxury consumption can enrich and expand previous theoretical and research findings. Keeping in mind that consumption of status and luxury products is likely to vary depending on consumers' independent and interdependent self-construal. Individuals with independent self-construal might engage in luxury consumption because of their desire to differentiate themselves from others in society and thus consuming luxury can indicate their social status, class, and differences. Whereas interdependent self-construal consumers are likely to engage in luxury consumption if the product is recognized and accepted as a status symbol demonstrating their social relationships, norms, and obligations. To maintain their status and relationships within their social circle, they are likely to stress their identity through products with the status symbol or conspicuous consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012). Based on the above discussions, depending on the level of an individual's subjective social status, this is likely to impact the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude

towards luxury. Considering that knowledge of the influence of subjective social status on the relationship between self-construal and luxury is limited, indicating a gap in the literature, this study will attempt to extend the literature in this area by investigating whether the influence of subjective social status moderates the independent and interdependent self-construal effects on consumer attitude towards luxury.

2.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the conceptualization of the individual level (self-construal) and macro-level measurement of culture and how it influences attitude toward luxury consumption. According to Ko et al. (2019 p.411) "As luxury markets expand internationally, more cross-cultural research is needed to better understand how consumers' behaviour is impacted by their culture. The lack of consensus on whether individualism vs. collectivism and other cultural factors matter to luxury consumers' needs additional study, as are the circumstances under which national culture makes a difference".

This chapter reviewed the concept of culture and provided the different definitions of culture and measurements of culture. From the review of the literature, there are many definitions of cultures that exist, and this thesis follows the definition by Hofstede (2001:9) who defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." This follows several past studies who conclude that one common feature of culture is that it is collectively shared in terms of beliefs, values, identities, interpretations of key events that originate from collective experiences, and is multi-level and relatedly stable (House et al., 2005; Taras et al., 2009;). In order to measure culture, past studies have widely employed macro-cultural differences across cultures to identify differences between several cultures assuming that most cultures are homogenous in terms of norms and behaviour. Hofstede (1980) framework has been widely adopted in cross-cultural research and models of culture in which the individualism versus collectivism has drawn the most attention, and widely used to explain the general differences between eastern and western perspectives of culture and the self (Wang and Waller, 2006). However, from the current state of research on individualism and collectivism, some studies have pointed out that it is problematic to generalise culture based on macro-level cultural distinctions which implicitly assumes that all culture are homogenous in terms of norms, belief, and attitude. Hence, this study incorporates the individual level culture of self-construal orientation to account for differences in behavioural outcome to provide a better understanding of the influence of culture on individual behaviour. Moreover, this chapter discussed a detailed review of the conceptualisation of the

independent and interdependent self-construal, dimensionality of the self-construal as a multidimensional construct rather than bipolar opposites of the same construct. This chapter additionally explored the differences in the characteristics of the different type of self-construal and detailed the characteristics of individuals with an independent self-construal in contrast to those individuals with an interdependent self-construal and highlighted its impact on behaviour especially via luxury consumption.

In addition, a detailed review of the concept of luxury as subjective and context-specific making it difficult for scholars to arrive at a consensus definition of what constitutes luxury and luxury value perception was discussed in detailed. However, recent studies have revealed that apart from consuming luxury to impress others, personally oriented motive in addition to social motives have been shown to make up luxury value perceptions. Hence the personally and socially oriented consumers towards luxury have been shown in the literature to correspond to personal and social luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). The emerging differences between personal and social motives towards luxury consumption has been traced to an individual's independent and interdependent self-construal (Tsai, 2005; Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels, 2007; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998) and the influence of consumers' self-construal on attitude towards luxury is suggested to vary across cultures.

Furthermore, this chapter presented a review of the literature on subjective social status, the conceptualization, and how it differs from objective social status indicators of income, occupation, and education. The importance of subjective social status on the relationships between self-construal and attitude toward luxury is highlighted even though very limited research has been carried out in this area of research. The following chapter offers the conceptual framework and provides an in-depth discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the formulated hypotheses of the present study.

CHAPTER 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

3.1. Introduction

This chapter builds on the literature outlined in the previous chapter to lay the research framework's foundations. The study's conceptual framework emphasizes the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal within and across cultures and the explanatory role of individualism and collectivism framework on consumer attitudes towards luxury. Additionally, an individual's subjective social status is examined as a moderating factor to explore and explain the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumers' attitudes toward luxury. Based on these identified relationships, the research hypotheses were proposed. Figure 3.1 presents the conceptual framework of this study, which is founded on the constructs explained in the previous chapter.

Existing studies on luxury consumption have mainly been investigated based on macro-level cross-cultural differences implicitly assuming that cultures are homogenous in terms of norms, values and consumer behaviour. Research have suggested that the individual-level cultural orientation of self-construal drives consumption decisions and consumption patterns (Stathoupoulou and Balabanis, 2019). In the luxury consumption context, a few studies (Gil et al., 2012; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017) have investigated the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption. The proposed model building on these past studies (Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017) recognises the existence of between-country similarities and within country variation especially in luxury consumption where there are many similarities across luxury segments cross-culturally (Hennigs et al., 2012). Given that all cultures are not evidently homogeneous because individualism and collectivism can exist in all cultures, this means that individuals may vary substantially in the extent to which they identify with and practice cultural values and norms (Taras, Steel and Kirkman, 2016). Owing to this, the issues regarding whether national culture impacted the relationship between self-construal and attitude toward luxury is not accounted for. This thesis responds to the call for cross-cultural research on luxury consumption (Ko et al., 2019; Pillai and Nair, 2021) to close the gap in the literature by examining whether the impact of self-construal on luxury consumption attitudes varies depending on independent and interdependent self-construal across cultures in light of firstly, the mediating role of individualism-collectivism to reinforce the causal mechanism via which self-construal impacts on attitude towards luxury. Further, the model introduces subjective social status as a moderator on self-construal effects on luxury consumption. The existing

research on self-construal research on luxury consumption as shown on Appendix 2.2 has not covered these areas of investigations before.

3.2. Conceptual Framework

In the literature, several studies have pointed to the significant role of culture in consumer behaviour, especially via attitude toward luxury consumption (Pillai and Nair, 2021; Bharti et al., 2022; Ko et al., 2019; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Traditionally, studies have widely used cultural level distinctions based on individualism and collectivist values to explain how cultural differences influence consumption behaviour especially via attitudes towards luxury (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). These investigations based on macro-level cultural comparisons implicitly assume that cultures are homogenous in terms of norms, values and consumer behaviour. For instance, several studies in the field have typically assumed cultural orientations of societies and national borders based on the ranking of where countries fall on the Hofstede (1980) cultural dimension of individualism. This may be problematic as evidence of within-culture variations exists (Taras et al., 2016). In addition, recent studies (e.g., Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019; Ko et al., 2019) have revealed that there may be problems in generalising findings from models of macro cultural level on luxury consumption behaviour. In this light, expanding literature on the individual-level distinction of culture suggests that examining culture at the individual level would provide a more precise identification and understanding of cultural differences, particularly how culture influences intrinsic human processes (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Kim et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2002; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). Thus, it is expected that incorporating the individual-level culture of independent and interdependent self-construal and the cultural orientation of individualism and collectivism (that is the culture in which the consumer is socialized) in the research model can both significantly predict a more accurate outcome regarding consumer behaviour (Kacen and Lee, 2002; Kim et al., 2001) and via luxury attitudes especially as luxury products are highly symbolic objects (Ko et al., 2019; Hennigs et al., 2012; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019).

Existing research on consumer attitudes towards luxury has linked the self-construal theory as a major driver of variations in the consumption of luxury attitudes. The concept of self-construal is important because luxury consumers tend to use luxury products to construct and enhance their self-concept (Wang et al., 2022). Luxury consumer segments are attracting increasing interest among researchers and practitioners. Despite the tremendous contributions of cross-cultural research to theory and practice factors that impact luxury consumption in

cross-cultural contexts remain unclear to researchers and luxury practitioners. Luxury consumption literature suggests that the reason for consuming luxury is either for social or personal orientation toward luxury (Wiedmann et al., 2007; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). The distinction between the personal and social orientation in consumer motivation for luxury has been traced to an individual's independent and interdependent self-construal (Wiedmann et al., 2007; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Self-construal distinguishes between independent and interdependent self-construal which have a significant effect on individuals' cognition, emotion, and motivation (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). As such these effects are likely to extend to the consumption sphere specifically in this study context via luxury consumption (Kastanaskis and Balabanis, 2014; Wang et al., 2022; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). A few studies (Gil et al., 2012; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017) examined the role of self-construal on luxury consumption. Consumers differ concerning perceiving their self as interdependent or independent of others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). These studies highlight the importance of studying the impact of self-construal on luxury consumption. Specifically, they show that independent and interdependent affect luxury consumption behaviour revealing within-country variations in luxury behaviour (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Given, the evidence of within-country variations and between-country similarities in the literature, especially in luxury consumption where there are many similarities across luxury segments cross-culturally (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019) examining the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption across cultures is important. The focus of this study is to close the gap in the literature by examining whether the impact of self-construal on luxury consumption attitudes varies depending on independent and interdependent self-construal across cultures. Additionally, the mediating role of individualism-collectivism and the moderating effect of subjective social status on the influence of self-construal luxury plays a crucial role in the attitude formation towards luxury consumption.

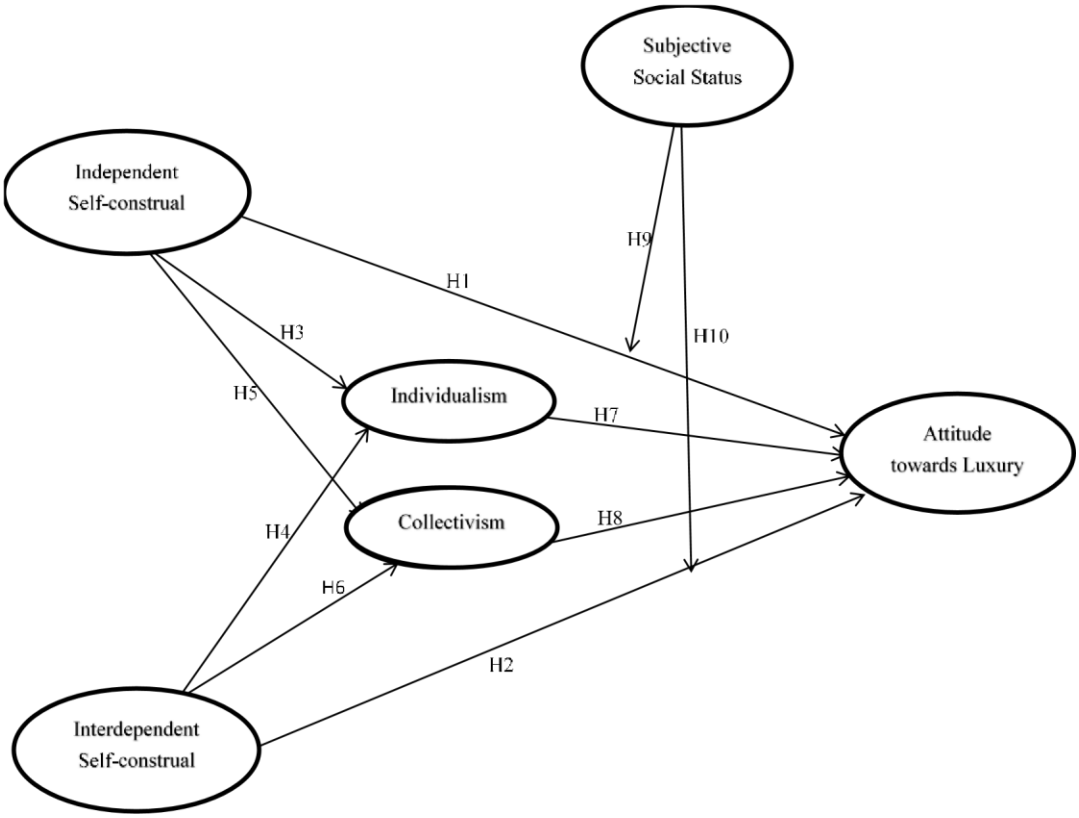


Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework

3.3. Influence of Self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury

Previous studies have shown the important role of self-construal in luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Ko et al., 2019; Shaikh et al., 2017). Self-construal is defined as "a constellation of ideas, feelings, and behaviours concerning the self as related to others or the self as distinct from others" (Singelis et al., 1999, p. 316). The self-construal theory distinguishes between the independent and interdependent self-construal, and the impact of the distinct selves on differences in individual behaviour (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Consumers with a primarily independent self-construal focus on the private self, and personal goals and are sensitive to information and stimuli that are personal and ignore others related stimuli (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Lee and Pounder, 2019; Torelli, 2006). On the other hand, consumers with a primarily interdependent self-construal focus on the social self, are more publicly self-conscious, and sensitive to information and stimuli that direct their attention to the relationships with others and the social environment (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). In the literature, even though the independent and interdependent self-construal can co-exist in every individual, only the dominant self-construal regulates an individual's behaviour (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005; Singelis, 1994).

Consumers' attention to luxury products is a growing phenomenon. Brand attitude refers to consumers' willingness to constantly respond and show a desirable or undesirable reaction towards a particular brand (Lu et al., 2021). Attitudes are not innate; they are learned and can be changed or created through marketing strategies. The literature on luxury consumption has distinguished attitudes towards luxury in individualist and collectivist cultures from the perspective of self-identity construction focusing on consumers' individuality for the hedonic value of luxury which is reflected in luxury products' superior quality and craftsmanship (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018). On the other hand, from the perspective of social identity construction focusing on extrinsic motives of the role of luxury as a social marker allows consumers to achieve higher social standing (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Shukla, 2012; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Some studies (e.g., Bharti et al., 2022; Gil et al., 2012; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012, 2014; Pillar and Nair, 2021; Shaikh et al., 2017) have empirically investigated the relationship between luxury consumption and self-construal because the self-construal focuses on individual's propensity to focus on social connections or not. Thus, owing to the highly symbolic nature of luxury, consumers acquire them primarily to reflect either their individual or social goals (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). In the literature, these goals which are either personally or socially oriented have been traced to an individual's independent and interdependent self-construal (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Tsai, 2005; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). For example, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) proposed that consumers would consume luxuries mostly for their pleasing properties or would consume luxury in order to conform to social norms and hierarchy while placing their emphasis on the visible properties and public meaning of luxury. Consumers create, enhance, and communicate their self-image by acquiring products related to the self (Claiborne and Sirgy, 2015; Sirgy, 1982), and the self can be extended into possessions via luxury consumption, where the consumers can regulate and strengthen their self-image (Belk, 1988).

In a similar way, the theory of impression management (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 2019) explains that consumers are affected by their internal drive to create a favourable social image through their possessions, a behaviour inherent to luxury consumption (Tsai, 2005). Consumers therefore can enhance their social image through either the instrumental (other-directed value) or expressive (self-directed value) self-presentation impression management (Shukla, 2012; Shukla et al., 2015; Tsai, 2005). These dimensions can be related to the personal and social orientation toward luxury consumption (Shukla, 2012). Therefore, it is expected that both independent and interdependent self-construal consumers will enhance their self-image by engaging in luxury consumption across cultures.

3.3.1. Influence of Independent Self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury

Consumers with a primarily independent self-construal pay more attention to the private self, personal goals, and internal traits that are sensitive to information and stimuli that focus on their selves and ignore other relations (Lee and Pounder, 2019; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Torelli, 2006; Brewer and Gardner, 1996). For these individuals, others are just subject to comparison with themselves and therefore tend to prioritize their own goals over groups and improve themselves through comparison with others (Lee et al., 2021; Cross et al., 2011). In addition, their private self which relies more on feelings in making decisions and judgments is more important in regulating behaviour which appears more consistent across different contexts (Lee and Pounder, 2019; Sung and Choi, 2012). In other words, consistent expression of stable motives, attitudes, personality traits, and outcomes form the main foundation of construing themselves (Sung and Choi, 2012; Cross et al., 2011).

The independent self-construal should relate positively to traits that are personally oriented rather than socially motivated focusing on self-expressive goals (Bakir et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). The emergence of the consumption motives of luxury geared towards satisfying the self has gained grounds in recent times despite the buying to impress notion (Shukla, 2012; Tsai, 2005; Wiedmann et al., 2009). According to Gil et al. (2012), individuals high in independent self-construal rely more on internal understanding and less on social pressure thereby giving less importance to the socially motivated aspect of luxury consumption. Tsai (2005) demonstrated that personally directed consumption goals lead to a personal orientation toward luxury consumption influenced mainly by independent self-construal congruity. Consumers want to improve, complement and expand their self-image by acquiring and consuming products related to their independent self (Sirgy, 1987). The self can then be extended into possessions whereby consumers can enhance and strengthen their self-identity through luxury purchases that reflect the self (Belk, 1988).

The need to construct a personal identity that is separate from others is particularly important for individuals who use luxury products to establish their personal identity (Gil et al., 2012) which is in line with independent self-construal individuals who also seek to differentiate themselves from others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Milan and Reynolds, 2014). This view supports Belk (1988) extended-self theory, which explains that the independent self is reinforced through acquiring and using unique and exclusive luxury products to serve as an extension of their independent and unique self-identity. In the literature, some empirical studies (e.g., Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Lee et al., 2021; Milan and Reynolds, 2014; Tsai, 2005;

Wang et al., 2022) have all shown a positive influence of an independent self-construal on luxury consumption behaviour. Contradictory to the idea that independent self-construal tends to drive individuals to seek self-enhancement (Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009), some of these consumers may not typically buy luxury products to boost their self-promotion because they may feel pride in themselves and focus more self-expressive activities (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005; Wang et al., 2022). In another study, Gentina et al. (2016) demonstrates that during adolescence individuals affirm their independence by desiring luxury brands that appeal to the mass consumers in order to conform to their peer groups and gain social approval.

Drawing from past findings even though some inconsistent results exist, independent self-construal consumers are likely to place importance on self-expression, uniqueness, and the promotion of personal goals. In addition, they tend to align symbolic benefits through luxury consumption to demonstrate individual success and enhance their internal self (Wiedmann et al., 2007). Therefore, to clarify this relationship between independent self-construal and attitude towards luxury across cultures, this study examines the relationship between luxury consumption and independent self-construal and formulates the following hypothesis.

H1: Independent self-construal has a positive influence on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context.

3.3.2. Influence of Interdependent Self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury

Consumers with a primarily interdependent self-construal focus mainly on the social self, are more publicly self-conscious, and sensitive to information and stimuli that direct their attention to relationships with others and the social environment (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The important tasks for individuals with dominant interdependent self-construal are conformity to social norms, promotion of others' related goals, forming warm relationships with others, and conforming to their social groups.

This indicates that interdependent self-construal individuals are typically connected to social contexts such that they tend to adhere to social values, norms, and group successes (Cheng and Lam, 2013). Moreover, they derive satisfaction and self-worth from pleasant and rewarding relationships with others while avoiding behaviours that disrupt these relationships (Millan and Reynolds, 2011, 2014). In other words, significant relationships with social groups guide their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, and they derive much of their self-esteem from establishing fulfilling harmonious relationships with close others (Markus and Kitayama, 1991), and this is likely to be transferred to their consumption behavioural responses.

The decisions and purchasing behaviours of interdependent consumers tend to conform to the expectations of others in their social group, in order to maintain a bond and avoid displaying social differences from the group (Shaikh et al., 2017; Millan and Reynolds, 2011, 2014; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Accordingly, consumers with interdependent self-construal are likely to conform with others through the purchase and display of luxury products because luxurious products bring about psychological benefits such as social recognition, and prestige which serve as a status symbol to demonstrate social relationships, norms, and obligations (Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Millan and Reynolds, 2014; Pillai and Nair, 2021; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). These consumers have been found to score highly in materialism, public meaning, and preference for public or visible possessions such as luxury brands. Consequently, they tend to care more about the social function of luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998).

Conspicuous luxury products are those that depend on the consumption behaviour of others hence, consumers highly susceptible to norms tend to conform through memberships and aspirational groups using popular luxury products to enhance the self (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012). O Cass and McEwen (2004) argues that consumers use conspicuous brands to display social status and to gain social approval from their reference groups and significant others who see the brands. This view is congruent with the theory of impression management which emphasizes the internal drive of consumers to engage in luxury purchases to create a favourable social image and enhance their social standing (Pillai and Nair, 2021; Tsai, 2005; Goffmann, 1959). The instrumental aspect of impression management theory focuses on product acquisition for the purpose of social influence and intangible rewards such as social identity and status (Bharti et al., 2022; Pillai and Nair, 2021; Shukla, 2012). The primary motives behind the instrumental dimension of impression management are social salience and social identification (Tsai, 2005). Hence this dimension can be linked to the socially oriented motive for luxury consumption (Shukla, 2012). Social-oriented motives mean that consumers desire to display their consumption to others and wish to impress others by their ability to pay for prestigious brands and in turn, this motivation makes them more aware of social cues related to brand consumption (Gil et al., 2012; Escalas and Betman, 2005). For instance, Clarks (2006) findings demonstrate that social consumption motivation positively influences and predicts prestige sensitivity which in turn brings about an interest in luxury consumption. Relatedly, Clark et al (2007) note that consumers pay attention to social comparisons enabling their status-seeking.

Some studies have empirically demonstrated that the socially oriented motive as in the case of bandwagon effect luxury consumption can be attributed to the interdependent self-construal (e.g., Lee et al., 2021; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Millan and Reynolds, 2014; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). For instance, some studies (e.g., Bakir et al., 2020; Gentina et al., 2014; Gil et al., 2012) found that individuals particularly during adolescence increasingly rely on new significant others, in a quest to enhance their interdependent self in purchasing luxury products as a tool to display and define themselves. Lee et al (2021) study, notes that consumers with interdependent self-construal, enhance their value by acquiring popular luxury products to gain others' support. Further, the authors found that the link between social consumption and conspicuous luxury choice is stronger for consumers who have interdependent self-construal. Particularly, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012) study, demonstrated that interdependent self-construal is associated positively with socially motivated luxury consumption (bandwagon effect). Further, Schultz and Jain (2018) showed a positive relationship between the interdependent self and conspicuous luxury consumption.

Considering that interdependent self-construal individual stresses belongingness to a group, acting as part of an in-group, and the need to conform to others' consumption behavioural responses (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005; Singelis, 1994; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Hence, they derive their motivation from the external environment and have a strong desire in terms of affirmation seeking and social approval from social groups to enhance or maintain their self-identity (Le Monkehouse et al., 2012; Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009) and focus more on the social function of luxury (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Accordingly, it is expected that consumers' interdependent self-construal will influence luxury consumption attitude across cultures since their view of the self is to a large extent defined by their social or inter-personal relations, therefore:

H2: Interdependent self-construal has a positive influence on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context.

3.4. Self-Construal and Individualism versus Collectivism

Based on the characteristics of the independent and interdependent self-construal and the characteristics of the cultural orientation of individualism and collectivism, this research proposes that the independent and interdependent self-construal will have a positive influence on the cultural orientation of individualism and collectivism which is discussed in this

following section. Individualism-Collectivism has been widely used to explain cultural differences in behaviour from the perspective of the concept of self (Wang and Wang, 2006). Trandis (1995) defines individualism as a social pattern that consists of individuals who see themselves as autonomous and independent. These individuals are usually motivated by their own preferences rights and needs and give priority to their personal goals over relationships with others. In contrast, collectivism consists of individuals who see themselves as an integral part of collectives such as family or co-workers. Collectivists are often motivated by norms and values imposed by groups and give priority to group goals, and they try to emphasize their connectedness with the in-groups. These social patterns are expected to influence the individual through their influence on responsiveness to normative influence, need or lack of need to suppress internal beliefs to act appropriately (Kacen and Lee, 2002; Wang and Waller, 2006). The normative tasks for individuals in individualist cultures are to stand out, be unique, and perceive themselves as autonomous with distinctive features striving for singularity (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, 2010). This consequently influences a well elaborated independent self-construal individual (Kacen and Lee, 2002; Wang and Waller, 2006). Independent self-construal individuals want to be authentic which means they place the highest value on personal goals, uniqueness over conformity, and individual freedom to express the self and place less emphasis on group membership. Kacen and Lee's (2002) found that consumers with dominant independent self-construal are more prone to impulse buying under the influence of individualism cultural dimension. On the other hand, collectivist cultures lead people to be humble, conform to and attend to others' needs and consider how their actions reflect in-group images and collective well-being (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The individual's freedom is evaluated in terms of cost and benefit to the group resulting in maintaining harmonious relationships (Wong and Ahuvia, 1988) as a well elaborated interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Trandis, 1989). The interdependent self-construal tends to differentiate themselves from others, focus on personal gains and achievements and pay more attention to intrinsic focused goals (Aaker and Lee, 2001; Lee et al., 2021; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Sung and Choi, 2012).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that consumers from western or individualist cultures tend to conceptualize the self as a relatively independent, self-contained, and autonomous entity. Whereas consumers from collectivist cultures place more emphasis on relationships and obligations within social groups, in-groups, seek to maintain self-esteem (Hofstede, 2001), and "their identity is based on the strong and cohesive in the group to which they belong" (Sun, Horn, and Merritt, 2004, p.319). Consumers from eastern or collectivist cultures, tend to

conceptualize themselves, more through relationships with members of their external environment including family friends, and relatives (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Wang and Waller, 2006).

Focusing on luxury, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) posits that consumers of collectivist culture mostly conform to social norms and hierarchy, placing their emphasis on visible luxuries for their public meaning. Whereas an individualist culture tends to consume luxuries for their pleasing properties. In addition, the authors argue that for those with independent self-construal mostly found in individualists, their inner self comprising of their tastes, preferences personal values, and abilities is most significant in regulation behaviour.

However, as individuals in individualist cultures learn major social values of their culture and different ways, they are expected to construe themselves, they may not just learn one set of values or just a single way to construe themselves because individualism and collectivism tendencies do exist in all cultures and the individuals within each culture may identify their identity differently (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Triandis, 1996). According to Triandis (1994), "All of us carry both individualist and collectivist tendencies; the difference is that in some cultures the probability that the individualist selves, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviours will be sampled or used is higher than in others" (p. 42). In line with this discussion, given that individualism and collectivism can co-exist in all cultures, it is expected that interdependent and independent self-construal will be positively related to both individualism and collectivism in a cross-cultural context. Therefore, this study seeks to clarify these relationships by proposing the following hypotheses:

H3: Independent self-construal effects have a positive influence on individualism cultural dimension in a cross-cultural context.

H4: Interdependent self-construal effects have a positive influence on individualism cultural dimension in a cross-cultural context.

H5: Independent self-construal effects have a positive influence on the collectivism cultural dimension in a cross-cultural context.

H6: Interdependent self-construal effects have a positive influence on the collectivism cultural dimension in a cross-cultural context.

3.5. Influence of Individualism and Collectivism on Attitude towards Luxury

The cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism has been widely used to explain differences in consumer behaviour between non-western and western cultures (Hofstede and Minkov, Pallant, 2010; Wang and Waller, 2006). Countries that score high on individualism countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America place a high value on personal goals, individual freedom, and self-expression. The individuals view themselves as autonomous, and independent and tend to distinguish themselves from their reference groups. On the other hand, countries that score low on individualism cultural dimensions that is collectivism such as India and China tend to focus on group goals and cooperation within ingroups to enhance their sense of belonging (Bharti et al., 2022). The literature suggests that consumers from individualist cultures are motivated by personal needs, goals, and self-esteem enhancement and focus less on in-group norms, goals, and consequences (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1989; Sun et al., 2004). In addition, individualism is positively correlated with self-gratification where consumers tend to place emphasis on personal achievement, physical attractiveness, material possessions, personal happiness, and success (Hofstede and McCrae, 2004).

Luxury product consumption is primarily engaged in reflective personal goals as individuals express their individuality such as the need for uniqueness or to reflect social goals as individuals exhibit their social standing or status to others with attributes such as self-monitoring (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Lee et al., 2021; Wilcox et al., 2009). This implies that consumers in both individualist and collectivist cultures purchase luxury brands to display their social standing or their individualities (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Regardless of whether luxury consumption differs by culture, the motives for acquiring the same luxury product differ by culture (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Wang et al., 2022). For example, since individualist culture emphasizes independence and personal initiatives (Hofstede, 1991), consumers are more concerned with self-enhancement to demonstrate their uniqueness (snob effect). On the other hand, collectivist culture is more closely bound together sharing common norms and values such as common interests and agreed upon social practices (Hofstede, 1991).

The consumers are more concerned with belonging and fitting in with others and are likely to engage in more self-monitoring and portray social standing encouraging bandwagon effect consumption (Aliyev and Wagner 2018; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Giovannini et al., 2015; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012; Shaikh et al., 2017; 2014; Bian and Forsythe, 2012). Since

collectivist cultures place emphasis on collective identity and maintenance of social group esteem they emphasize public reputation through the display of luxury brands (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Hofstede, 1991) and choose product brands to maintain face (Le Monkhouse et al., 2012; Li and Su, 2007). Thus, consumers tend to associate brands with prestige and social hierarchy more than individualist culture consumers because owning luxury brands portray their social standing position, the reference group to which they belong, and the ability of luxury brands to symbolize wealth arousing positive attitude toward these brands (Park et al., 2008). Whereas in an individualist culture, the consumers desire to emphasize the uniqueness and pursue self-actualization (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Hofstede,1991; Li and Su, 2007). Owing to luxury brands being inherently scarce and rare they can serve as a tool to display uniqueness (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) and can communicate intrinsic values to individualist consumers (Park et al., 2008). Thus, it is expected that self-expression attitudes toward luxury brands will have a greater impact on purchase intentions for luxury brands among individualist consumers (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012).

Prior studies have found a positive link between subjective norms and purchase intention in the context of collectivistic societies (Jain et al., 2017). A study by Huang and Wang (2018) concluded that subjective norm mediates the impact of conspicuous value on the purchase intention of name-brand products among Chinese consumers. Indian consumers put great emphasis on their relationship with others and are motivated to use luxury items to impress others (Jain and Khan, 2017). Lee et al. (2018) findings reveal that collectivist consumers place greater emphasis on subjective norms in luxury purchase intentions compared to individualist consumers. In another study, Bagozzi et al. (2000), found that subjective norms have a significant influence on purchase intentions among collectivist cultures consumers who tend to identify more strongly with referent groups than consumers in individualists' cultures, while, in individualist cultures, internal attitudes primarily influence consumer purchasing intentions. Furthermore, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) posits that consumers within an individualist culture would consume luxury mostly for their pleasing pleasure whereas consumers within a collectivist culture would conform to social norms placing their emphasis on visible luxuries and their public meanings. Shukla (2012) found that the need for uniqueness played a stronger role in luxury purchase intentions for individualist culture consumers in comparison to their collectivist culture counterparts. This implies that attitude towards a behaviour likely influences individualist culture consumers compared to collectivist culture consumers.

Therefore, it is expected that:

H7: Individualism has a positive influence on attitude toward luxury in a cross-cultural context.

H8: Collectivism has a positive influence on attitude toward luxury in a cross-cultural context.

3.6. Moderating Effects of Subjective Social Status

Subjective social status might moderate the strength of the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumers' attitudes toward luxury. Subjective social status can be described as the subjective assessments' individuals tend to make regarding their objective social status relative to others (Kraus et al., 2012; Quon and McGrath, 2014; Rarick et al., 2018; Snibbe and Markus, 2005). An individual's objective social status is derived from their material resources and is measured using objective indicators such as education, income, and occupation (Adler and Snibbe, 2003). The objective social status only considers empirical factors such as income or level of education, these factors may have significantly different relative values in different contexts. However, subjective social status is an individual's subjective perception of their socioeconomic standing measured by their subjective ranking in society in comparison with others (Snibbe and Markus, 2005). This may provide a more meaningful way of measuring the influence of social status on behavioural characteristics (Chen et al., 2022). Notwithstanding, previous studies have largely focused on the effects of subjective social status in the domains of health and well-being (Alder et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2021) with limited attention to its impact on consumption attitudes. From the perspective of subjective social status, this study expands research on its influence on self-construal and attitude towards luxury by examining how high and low subjective social status individuals vary depending on the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury.

The pursuit of status is a universal motive for individuals, since luxury items are linked with a high price and positioned as high-class items, consuming such products can serve as a status signalling function (Wang et al., 2021). Previous studies suggest that upper-class or low-class individuals are more likely to engage in luxury consumption and may differ in response to luxury consumption. The self is defined and categorized in terms of social and personal identities (Turner and Reynolds, 2012). Individuals from higher social status define and categorize themselves in terms of social ranking and material success which provides them the ability to differentiate themselves from lower social class individuals. Higher subjective social status individuals in comparison with their low-class counterparts have reported a greater desire for status and material success leading to a "having more-wanting more" phenomenon (Wang et al., 2020). Because luxury products tend to be more prestigious and expensive than non-luxury products (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004), people with higher social status might be more

likely to acquire and consume them compared to low social status individuals (Du et al., 2022). Chao and Schor (1998) found that individuals who had more education, higher income, and lived in urban cities had more tendency to engage in status consumption and hence more propensity to pursue luxury consumption. Moreover, high social-status individuals tend to have a stronger need to have dominance, prestige, and higher rank in society compared to their low social-status counterparts (Belmi et al., 2020). For individuals from a lower class, it is difficult to improve their social status through accumulating material success, occupations with higher prestige, however, goods with status symbols are easily acquired through consumption. From the perspective of compensation consumption, individuals will compensate themselves through consumption when they are threatened due to a contradiction between their needs and their actual situation (Mandel et al., 2017). In this context, luxury items signal status to others to compensate for the lack of higher status. Consequently, since luxury products tend to be more prestigious and expensive than non-luxury products (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004), independent and interdependent self-construal consumers with higher social status are more likely to engage in luxury consumption compared to low social status individuals (Du et al., 2022). It is expected that individuals with high social status can alter the strength of the relationship between the influence of self-construal on attitude towards consumer luxury consumption. Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated

H9: Independent self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury is stronger for consumers with high subjective social status than for low subjective social status in a cross-cultural context.

H10: Interdependent self-construal effects on attitude toward luxury is stronger for consumers with high subjective social status than for low subjective social status in a cross-cultural context.

3.7. Mediating Role of Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism-Collectivism is one of the most widely used dimensions of cultural variability in explaining behavioural attitudes across cultures (Wang and Waller, 2006) thus the personal and social motive of attitude toward luxury is implicated. Individualism-Collectivism has been shown as a fundamental factor that shapes social behaviours and, in this light, can reveal meaningful insights into consumer behaviours that may vary from culture to culture (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Individualism places a high value on personal goals, self-expression, and individual freedom. Members of individualist cultures view the self as autonomous and independent. In contrast, collectivism tends to focus on group goals and

cooperation within groups to strengthen their belongingness. Individuals see themselves as part of collectives such as community and family ((Bharti et al., 2021; Triandis, 2001). In individualist cultures like the United Kingdom, status differences are expected as the individuals demonstrate their unique personal identities but in collectivist cultures like India, status symbols or luxury items would be valued for their ability to signal the social identity of the group (Eastman et al., 2018).

The dimension of individualism-collectivism can be linked to consumers' need for conformity a significant motivation for luxury consumers (Yim et al., 2014). The need for conformity aligns with an interdependent self-construal suggesting a more connected way to conform and fit in with significant others (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018). Thus, the degree of interdependence and need for affiliation and belongingness to a group could be higher in collectivistic than individualistic culture because collectivists place high value on interdependence more than individualism (Eastman et al., 2018). The literature identified two possible consumption attitudes in which consumers may be involved in luxury consumption. Consumers with interdependent self-construal are more focused on fitting in and the bandwagon effect of luxury whereas, consumers with interdependent self-construal may be more focused on self-enhancement to demonstrate their uniqueness and the snob effect of luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Thus, self-construal might drive individualism-collectivism which in turn influences consumers' attitude towards luxury. Though individualism-collectivism tendencies are an important dimension influencing individuals' decision-making and behaviours (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018), studies have not yet attempted to assess the link between the self-construal and luxury consumption attitude from the perspective of individualism-collectivism. Individuals with the independent self-construal value their freedom and individuality and thus are more inclined to show their uniqueness and independence as with the cultural cues of individualist societies by engaging in luxury consumption. On the other hand, interdependent self-construal also drives individualism-collectivism. Interdependent self-construal consumers define their self-identity by placing a high value on conforming to others and belongingness to social groups (Escalas and Bettman, 2005). As a result, they are likely to purchase status or luxury items that demonstrate their belongingness and affiliation with others in their society (Wang et al., 2022; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Given that individualism and collectivism can exist in all cultures, this indicates that interdependent self-construal individuals also rely on individualism and collectivism dimension which in turn drives their attitude towards luxury. Based on this, it is plausible to hypothesise the following

H11. Individualism and collectivism mediate the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context.

H12. Individualism and collectivism mediate the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context.

Table 3.2. Summary of Research Hypotheses

H1	Independent self-construal has a positive influence on attitude towards luxury.
H2	Interdependent self-construal has a positive influence on attitude towards luxury.
H3	Independent self-construal effects have a positive influence on the individualism cultural dimension.
H4	Interdependent self-construal effects have a positive influence on the individualism cultural dimension.
H5	Independent self-construal effects have a positive influence on the collectivism cultural dimension.
H6	Interdependent self-construal effects have a positive influence on the collectivism cultural dimension.
H7	Individualism has a positive influence on attitudes toward luxury.
H8	Collectivism has a positive influence on attitudes toward luxury.
H9	Subjective Social Status moderates the influence of independent self-construal on consumers' attitudes toward luxury.
H10	Subjective Social Status moderates the influence of interdependent self-construal on consumers' attitudes toward luxury.
H11	Individualism and Collectivism mediates the influence of Independent self-construal on attitude toward Luxury
H12	Individualism and Collectivism mediates the influence of Interdependent self-construal on attitude toward Luxury

3.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the conceptual framework of this study and formulated ten hypotheses. The ten hypotheses are summarised in table 3.1 and propose to allow testing of the relationships between the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal, the explanatory role of the individualism and collectivism framework on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context to address this thesis research problem. The discussions of the proposed hypotheses with regard to relevant literature was a summary of the arguments presented in the previous chapter and how this study seeks to clarify these relationships mentioned earlier. Some of the hypotheses had clear support in the literature while some had mixed or inconsistent findings or had limited research done in the field to draw conclusions from. Nevertheless, to achieve the

research objectives, the next chapter discusses the research design and the most appropriate methodological approach required for empirical examination to test these hypotheses.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological process for data collection and analysis of data strategy. Having explored and presented the relevant theoretical foundations fundamental to the conceptual framework, this chapter describes the methods employed for data collection in order to test the hypothesized relationships. Section 4.2 discusses the research philosophies and research approach in terms of justification using quantitative methods. Section 4.3 discusses the overview of the quantitative and qualitative research methods, justification of the research approach, and strategy. Followed by Section 4.4 which presents the data collection processes such as sample frame, sample size considerations, and the target population. Section 4.5. presents the research instrument development and administration such as cross-cultural data equivalence, the questionnaire design, the measurement scales used, and research instrument administration. In addition, Section 4.6 presents the data analysis strategy employed with a focus on the benefits of structural equation modelling, assessment of the structural model, and data reliability and validity. Finally, section 4.7 presents the ethical considerations and section 4.8 presents the chapter summary.

4.2. Research Philosophy

A research philosophy reflects the assumptions about knowledge and the nature of that knowledge in reality, involving the way through which a researcher perceives the world (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Collis and Hussey, 2014). Before selecting an appropriate research philosophy, it is essential to understand the philosophical perspectives linked to the research because it gives guidance on ways the proposed study should be carried out in fulfilling key research objectives. furthermore, it provides an avenue for selecting appropriate research methods, research strategies, and design.

Business and management research are mainly based on Positivism and interpretivism research philosophies which represent distinct ways individuals make sense of the world around them and the knowledge produced (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). These can be described from theories about the nature of the reality that is being investigated in research (ontology) and about how knowledge of this reality is produced and justified (epistemology).

Ontology is mainly concerned with assumptions about the nature of reality, reflecting the researchers' subjective views of the world (Saunders et al., 2019). The way a researcher

advances the research objectives are indicative of ontological assumptions. Conversely, epistemology is concerned with how things are known to be true and measured. In other words, it is concerned with assumptions about what should be or is acceptable and logical to knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The contribution to knowledge reached by research is indicative of epistemological assumptions.

4.2.1. Interpretivism

Interpretivism is concerned with exploring the complexities of social phenomena by achieving an understanding of how research subjects view the world around them (Saunders et al., 2019). Interpretivism assumes that reality is subjective and that social phenomena are parts of individuals' minds and interpretations. Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) point out that individuals are seen as a significant influence in social contexts, thus they cannot be studied without examining their own behaviours and perceptions of the world. The authors also indicated that social phenomena are diverse and multifaceted, therefore general findings cannot completely explain them all. Interpretivists believe reality and the world are subjective. In other words, the world is socially structured, defined, observed, and considered by people and society (Saunders et al., 2019). Hence, the understanding of social phenomena may differ depending on or based on the individual's perspective, experiences knowledge, and the analysis of the research objective. Interpretivist pays more attention to exploring and discovering knowledge about how behaviour occurs through findings and developing appropriate methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Therefore, interpretivism concentrates on building and developing conceptual models or theoretical constructs. This is determined through interaction between the researcher and the subjects using qualitative measurement to explain social phenomena based on a relatively small sample size (Collis and Hussey, 2014).

4.2.2. Positivism

Positivism can be defined as the social world that exists externally, and its properties should be measured through objective measures, rather than inferring subjectively through reflection, intuition, or sensation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2019). Positivism has been the most widely used paradigm in marketing, management, and psychology research (Collis and Hussey, 2014) however, some alternative methods have been used recently. For example, in marketing, positivism concentrates on differentiating principles that characterize consumer

behaviour (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Therefore, positivism focuses on objective facts or knowledge, gathered from observations assumed to be reality such as testing of hypothesis and finding logical deduction proof derived from statistical analysis (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Bryman, 2004). A positivist view is a social world that is objectively observed and seen as externally existing and hence requires researchers to be objective and independent. Furthermore, when analysing and exploring factors such as consumer motivations and behaviours, this can be isolated and substantiated and the result accepted if it is logical, validated, and can be empirically tested. Relatedly, deduction is a widely used research technique by researchers before testing a hypothesis.

Deduction involves two phases which are namely building a conceptual model and developing theoretical constructs (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Afterward, the researcher investigates these concepts to determine the most significant ones appropriate for the proposed study then measure the model and tests the hypotheses. Positivists, therefore, tend to use large sample sizes to produce precise, objective, and quantitative data (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Furthermore, positivism takes a structural approach to conduct research through a clear definition of the research objectives and hypotheses to select the most appropriate research methods in order to analyse data collection effectively. Therefore, the positivist position is adopted as a guideline for the research techniques of the present thesis. The present study follows a deductive approach concentrating on testing hypotheses deduced from existing theoretical knowledge using quantitative methods of data collection. This is in line with previous studies testing the influence of culture on attitude towards luxury (e.g., Shukla and Purani, 2012; Wang et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2018; Aliyev and Wagner, 2018)

4.3. Research Strategy

4.3.1. Quantitative Research Method

The quantitative paradigm is generally linked to the positivist philosophy (Saunders et al., 2019). Positivism can be applied to gain an understanding of human behaviour and attitudes. This originates from an objective ontology and a positivist epistemology. The ontological perspective of the quantitative approach recognizes that objective reality is independent of human judgments and feelings. Conversely, the quantitative epistemology approach asserts that the researcher and the research are totally independent units (O'Gorman and MacIntosh, 2015). Hence, the researcher collects data about the objective reality and searches for causal

relationships among the data collected to create generalizations taking a neutral stance. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), the deductive approach is mainly used by quantitative methods which can guide the research development through an explanation for example use of statistical methods to analyse data. Hence it is grounded in statistical analysis such as hypothesis testing, questionnaires, and experiments and the focus in this study is empirically testing proposed hypotheses.

Some of its strengths are it is easy to measure similarities and differences between different research categories, several factors can be compared, such as demographics, and consumer attitudes. Moreover, researchers can get reliable findings by researching a small number of research objects instead of a large population (Singh, 2007). Additionally, quantitative research provides convenience to compare, measure and analyse data to improve the objectivism of the study. It ensures generalizability by using large sample sizes which are generally considered more representative of the population, quick data collection, and less time-consuming data analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, while this method is more rigorous given that it is easier to check reliability, and validity and generalize findings, the researchers may overlook an important occurrence due to the research focus on testing hypotheses instead of developing one.

4.3.2. Qualitative Research Method

The qualitative paradigm is primarily associated with the philosophy of interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2019). From an ontological perspective, the reality is dependent on the researcher's mind that reality is subjective and diverse, and the theories and patterns are identified in the process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The research subject and the researcher are related interactively. Hence, findings are jointly created within the context of the research, and findings are described based on the perception and interpretation of the researcher stemming from the interests and values of participants' interpretations.

Accordingly, the main purpose of qualitative research is to examine and discover patterns and meanings of research objects to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being examined from the standpoint of the research's participants (Saunders et al., 2019). Unlike quantitative methodology, the qualitative method uses the inductive approach by gathering information through conversation, observation, and analysis of the research objective. The researcher strives to understand the point of view of a small number of participants instead of testing hypotheses. Hence data samples are investigated based on their ability to offer valuable

insights, not on their generalizability and representativeness. They can provide more detailed information on human behaviour because it is focused on exploring cognition and meanings of the specific phenomenon than measuring or quantifying it. Some of the main techniques are ethnography, case studies, and narrative research such as observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups (Saunders et al., 2019). Despite the advantages of qualitative research, the knowledge created may not be generalized to other contexts because the findings are related to the small data sample adopted in the research (Singh, 2007). Furthermore, it is time-consuming in terms of collection and analysis of data.

4.3.3. Justification of Quantitative Research Approach

From a philosophical perspective, the study will adapt to positivism and follow a quantitative method approach. Firstly, the study focuses on investigating the impact of self-construal and cultural orientation of individualism and collectivism on attitudes towards luxury in a cross-cultural context. Thus, the decision to use the quantitative methods is mainly based on the research aims and objectives. The quantitative method is useful and accurate when extending the existing theories underlying the proposed conceptual framework and is consistent with the positivism philosophy which is compatible with the deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2019; Bell et al., 2019). Practically, it is used to investigate causal relationships and significance between different variables and more particularly to falsify or verify a theory or hypothesis. From an existing theory perspective, hypotheses are formulated to be tested and causal relationships are built based on the data collected for the purpose of contributing to future theory development (Saunders et.al, 2019).

This study aims to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Following the review of the literature (Chapter 2), a conceptual model was developed for empirical validation (Chapter 3). The quantitative research method is employed to test hypotheses by investigating causal relationships between the study variables to determine the cross-cultural generalisability of the conceptual model. From the perspective that reality is objective, a quantitative approach is adopted to test theories, which constitutes the most appropriate data-collection tool.

Quantitative research methods enable this study to provide cross-national comparability statistical evidence on the strengths of the relationships between the variables (Hair, Gabriel and Patel, 2014; Mullen, 1995). It enables the researcher to investigate the comparability of the

data, to allow for meaningful comparison when predicting causal relationships between the influence of self-construal on luxury attitudes in cross-cultural contexts.

Further, having reviewed several past literatures on the influence of self-construal and culture on attitudes towards luxury (e.g., Wang et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Bakir, Gentina, and Gil, 2020; Gil et al., 2012; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012, 2014), these studies to date have employed quantitative methods and widely used survey questionnaire. Thus, the quantitative research method is the most appropriate for the present study.

4.3.4. Cross-Sectional Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design which involves using a snapshot respondents' behaviours, beliefs and other variables of interest of a population at a specific point in time. The respondents or subjects in a cross-sectional study are chosen from an available population relevant to the study research objectives. Once the participants are chosen, data is collected and the associations between the outcome and exposure is examined. Cross-sectional designs remain the widely used designs for many studies in business and other fields that rely on survey methods (Spector, 2019). These studies can employ a single or multiple wave with different respondents in data collection (Wang and Cheng, 2020). While some studies make inferences based on analysis of repeated cross-sectional data collected at successive point in time, many studies draw inferences based on a single cross-sectional data collection. Cross-sectional data can be gathered using quantitative or qualitative approaches. They are cost effective and efficient compared to experimental and longitudinal designs by distributing a survey to a convenient sample. Many cross-sectional studies sampling strategies draws respondents from a target population relevant for the research study. The benefits include collection of data from a large pool of respondents for comparisons, it provides insights into variables of interest which is vital in understanding the influence of a phenomena within a given population of interest and can reveal how variables are associated with others by testing of hypotheses about relationships between variables. While helpful, cross-sectional design are susceptible to multiple sources of bias that lead to wrong estimations of the relationship between variables of interest (Wang and Cheng, 2020). For example. In selection bias when the sample does not represent the population or in information bias when respondents provide socially acceptable answers. These limitations have been considered in this study.

4.3.5. Research Strategy Overview

Research strategy refers to the appropriate procedures employed by a researcher to collect data efficiently and effectively for the conduct of a research. A research strategy is methodologically connected to the research philosophy and research approaches employed including methods selected for collecting data and analysing the data (Saunders et al., 2019) besides its importance in answering the research aim and objectives. From the research conceptual model, specific latent variables have been linked to investigate its usefulness in understanding the effect of independent and interdependent self-construal and mediating role of individualism and collectivism of self-construal on consumer attitudes towards luxury. In addition to the dependent, independent, mediating variables, psychological moderating variables have been included in the conceptual model of the present study specifically, subjective social status on the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury consumption. Based on the research design of this study, a survey questionnaire is deemed appropriate and employed to investigate the causal relationships between all variables. Questionnaires are widely adopted in research strategy within the marketing and business discipline and are mostly associated with positivism and deductive reasoning (Saunders et al., 2019; Hulland et al., 2018).

The questionnaire for the present study was designed and administered through survey monkey software which was distributed online through their platform a widely used and well-known online market research agency. In the literature, the benefits of online questionnaires have been stated by numerous researchers and practitioners (Malhotra, Birks, and Wills, 2013; Brace, 2013; Malhorta and Birks, 2007; Nardi, 2018). Consumers are suggested available and more tolerant to administered online questionnaires compared to face-to-face (Hulland et al., 2018). This is because online questionnaires create the flexibility of where and when to complete the questionnaires for respondents. With the flexibility to begin and come back to the survey at another time to complete it and with more time to complete the questionnaire can help boost the overall response rate. In addition, Albert et al (2008) state that the internet is a highly efficient and effective medium for communicating with respondents. The advantages of online questionnaires will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Nevertheless, regarding the benefits of useful insights both in theoretical and managerial implications provided by survey questionnaires, researchers are required to pay attention to the design and administration of online questionnaires for accurate findings and meaningful conclusions. In this light, most of the criticisms arising from this method, have been related to

the context of the population, description of the sampling, and construct measurement (Hulland et al., 2018). However, this study has taken consideration of these steps to avoid inaccurate findings and conclusions by firstly, in the choice of context: As indicated previously, the study aims to test a set of hypotheses on the relationships between different variables. Therefore, this study has selected the appropriate context of the study by setting specific selection questions before administering the questionnaires to ensure that the hypotheses formulated are constructively investigated. These questions included participants who identify and possess the study's chosen target nationality and have always lived in these countries namely the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. Consumers who have bought at least any luxury item in the last six months (prior to the date of the questionnaire completion) and consumers who are aged 18 and above. The respondents targeted were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) a well-known and widely used professional online research agency, thus ensuring the quality of the data obtained. The justification for the selection of this study's context is discussed in detail in the context of the study section (4.6.3).

The sampling description was taken into consideration. According to Nardi (2008), a clear description of the sample is important for analysing the data and the generalizability of the conclusions. Hence, the sampling procedures adopted, and the target population are described in more detail and justified later in this chapter. Furthermore, the reliability and validity of the measurement constructs were tested. In order to do this, the study included attention check questions in the questionnaire given its effectiveness in ensuring scale validity (Kung et al., 2018), the questionnaire was pre-tested prior to conducting the main study, the research instrument used multi-item scales and all the scales have been previously tested in past studies and tested across cultures. Furthermore, the study controlled for common method bias following Podsakoff et al. (2003) and Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012) recommendation procedures. A more detailed account of the steps considered before the design and administration of the study research instrument questionnaire is discussed in this chapter.

4.4. Data Collection

4.4.1. Online Survey Questionnaires

Survey questionnaires are commonly associated with deductive reasoning and are mainly the most widely used research strategy within the marketing and business management disciplines (Hair et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2013; Saunders et al., 2019). Following the quantitative approach of this study, a questionnaire technique is employed to investigate the similarities and

differences in the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Specifically, it helps understand the feelings, attitudes, and behaviours of consumers and evaluate the effectiveness of certain factors on the behavioural intentions specified in this study. Questionnaire design differs depending on the research objectives and questionnaire administration. In the recent past, the main technique for survey administration was by mail, face-to-face or telephone interviews, and online questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2019). However, the use of online questionnaires has grown significantly in marketing research with the advancement of technology and is likely to continue in the future (Saunders et al. 2019). Hulland et al. (2018) argue that consumers are more available and receptive to taking online questionnaires compared to telephone and face-to-face questionnaires in marketing research.

Following previous studies (e.g., Hulland et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2013; Saunders et al., 2019) and the research objectives of the present study, an online questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate method and adopted for several reasons: online surveys have all the advantages of a self-administered research instrument and there is a consensus that online studies deliver valid results (Comley, 2007). The use of online surveys offers a timely, effective and can greatly reduce research costs in collecting large data volumes (Malhotra et al., 2013). The absence of an interviewer reduces social desirability, raises respondents' honesty level, and can increase the response rates to questions such as income (Brace, 2013). This method has the potential to increase the geographically spread and dispersed population data samples and the risk of missing values can be reduced by the research since the online self-administered questionnaire can be programmed to prevent participants from moving on to the next page without answering all questions in previous pages (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Online surveys are still lacking in covering a general population because some individuals and geographical locations still lack access to steady internet, however, these surveys are practical when sampling from specific online populations (Saunders et al., 2019).

4.4.2. Context of Study

The hypotheses were tested using consumers from the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. The three cultures were selected because they provide culturally distinct research context allowing the testing of the external validity of the research model and secondly, they are likely to provide substantial variability that allows the testing of the individual-level psychological characteristics of the culture used in the present study.

Firstly, according to Hofstede (2012), the three countries differ significantly in regard to the individualism index: the UK ranked high (Individualism score = 89), India (Individualism score = 48) and Nigeria (Individualism score = 30) ranked low. It is important to consider these differences because they are likely to influence the impact of self-construal on attitude towards luxury. Several past studies (e.g., Ajitha and Sivakumar, 2017; Pillar and Nair, 2021; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Shukla et al., 2015) have adopted India as a collectivist culture and is one of the largest emerging markets with a growing luxury consumption. Shukla and Purani (2012) employed India and UK as examples of collectivist and individualist cultures respectively to study luxury consumption. Nigeria is selected as an emerging market with segments of the population prone to luxury consumption. (Aksoy and Abdulfatai, 2019). Changing lifestyles and the spending power of the middle class in Nigeria is increasing leading to a substantial increase in disposable income and makes them an attract segment for luxury purchase and consumption (Aksoy and Abdulfatai, 2019).

Nationality is a good proxy for defining culture (Steenkamp 2001) because nations "are the source of a considerable amount of common mental programming of their citizens" (Hofstede 1991, p. 12). Nationality can be an indicator that its citizens are of mostly the same certain culture and will share a similar history, language, or identity. Specifically, the United Kingdom has generally been described as an individualist culture where it is likely that the dominant self-construal that guides the self-concept of an individual is largely independent whereas, India and Nigeria are considered collectivist cultures where it is likely that the dominant self-construal that guides the self-concept of an individual is largely interdependent (Cross et al., 2011; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Smith et al. 2013). Moreover, individualism and collectivism tendencies are present in all cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1996), therefore it is expected that individuals within the three cultures possess both individualist and collectivist cultural characteristics which are likely to provide substantial variability that allows testing the effects of individual-level cultural characteristics independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury within each culture. In sum, the use of these three countries allows the testing of individual-level variable effects within each country to determine whether a different country explains additional variance for an analytically rigorous approach in terms of country selection (Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson, 2006). Hence, in this study, only respondents who possess relevant nationality and have always lived in the UK, India and Nigeria were included.

4.4.3. Target Population

The population of the study consisted of adult luxury consumers aged above 18 years old. This group is considered educated and brand conscious and has the means with which to purchase and consume luxury items (Shukla, 2011). Respondents were selected via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) a well-known and widely used online research agency in academic and marketing research. Before administering the questionnaire, respondents were screened to ensure they were 18 years and above, in order to capture the views of non-student respondents from the context of the study. The screening question ensured that respondents who were born that is their place of birth and place of residency that is where they have lived most of their lives in either culture in other words, they identify as either British Indian or Nigerian only completed the questionnaire. The place of birth and residency of the respondents was considered because it will enable the present study to gain insights into respondents' cultural background such as how their self-identity, values, and beliefs may impact on their luxury consumption attitude. This knowledge is expected to provide valuable insights in examining cultural differences in attitudes towards luxury. Thus, respondents who indicated a different cultural identity were not administered the questionnaires. Additionally, respondents were asked if they have bought any luxury item in the past six months to allow the study capture views of only those with luxury consumption experience (Wang et al., 2022).

4.4.4. Sampling Frame

Sampling methods can be typically classified as probability and non-probability sampling. Several studies have argued in favour of probability sampling over non-probability sampling as the latter is more likely to indicate a more accurate representation of the population of interest (). However, probability sampling has been referred to as “a luxury afforded to few cross-cultural researchers” (Cavusgil and Das, 1997 p. 80), hence, non-probability sampling has been widely employed in marketing and business research (Reynolds et al., 2003). Even though widely adopted, it is important not to overlook some of its criticisms. Non-probability sampling has been indicated to often lead to homogenous samples that are recruited from a subgroup of the population. Hence the results from these sampling can be critiqued due to its lack of generalizability as a result of their non-presentation of the overall population (Wilson, 2012). The sampling frame employed for this study, although not a perfect representation of an overall population, the samples are demographically more diverse than the traditional nonprobability samples which are most often based on student samples (Mason and Suri, 2012).

The sampling frame for this research is adult respondents from 18 years above from United Kingdom, India and Nigeria. Non-students have previously been used in a number of studies of luxury (e.g., Pillai and Nair; Shukla and Purani, 2012). The study recruited respondents from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing online platform to perform human intelligence tasks such as translations, web-based designs, and filling out questionnaires. The respondents recruited were rewarded fifty pence after completing the survey task. MTurk is a data collection recruiting only individuals above 18 years old to perform tasks mentioned above. Numerous past studies (e.g., Evans and Bang, 2019; Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2020; Manyiwa, 2020; Mosteller and Poddar, 2017; Steelman et al., 2014) have widely regarded MTurk as a reliable source and the participants are substantially more diverse compared to typical student samples as those obtained via the traditional research data source. The validity of MTurk as a data source is further supported by Mason and Sur (2012) who reported that the internal consistency of self-reported demographics on Mturk is high. Moreover, Mturk has been widely used in recent business and marketing studies published in top-rated journals (e.g., Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2019; Yan and Muthukrishnan, 2013). To ensure inclusion of non-student respondents, the study added screening questions if you had purchased a luxury item in the past six months to capture views of real consumers to further strength the study rather than student samples used in earlier studies (Shukla and Purani, 2012). Moreover, Mturk online platform is frequented by individuals aged 18 and above who are relatively employed and have a high education attainment of participants with a bachelor degree and more (Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2020).

In marketing research, using online survey panels for data collection has become widely popular as a research instrument (Malhotra et al., 2013). Online survey panels have been shown to be an efficient and valid research method (Duffy et al., 2005). A large number of respondents who voluntarily complete surveys during their leisure time minimizing cooperation issues can be achieved using online panel surveys (Malhotra et al., 2013). This method has also been found to lower costs connected to finding appropriate participants and raising response rates (Curwin et al., 2013). MTurk service is not free, but it is less expensive than more traditional methods such as the researcher traveling to collect data, hence it offers cost savings and quicker response time. Considering, the advantages of using an online panel, MTurk was employed for data collection for the present study.

4.4.5. Sample Size Considerations

Several past studies (e.g., Saunders et al., 2019; Bell et al., 2019) suggest that the selection of a sample size selection should be regulated by key criteria involving the types of data analysis techniques, the heterogeneity of the target population, the number of variables in the model and the availability of resources that is money and time. For the present study, 935 questionnaires were gathered online from the UK, India, and Nigeria respondents. The population of this study is considered heterogeneous as it represents the British, Indian, and Nigerian cultures which is a relatively large population. Besides the heterogeneous nature of the British, Indian and Nigerian sample, the present study employed structural equation modelling, specifically covariance-based SEM, which uses a large-sample technique for data analysis (discussed later in this chapter). The impact of sample size considerations is more problematic when evaluating some criteria of confirmatory factor analysis used in this study compared to exploratory factor analysis. For instance, a small sample size produces non- convergence solutions and negative variance estimates (Muijs, 2004). Beyond that, an extremely large sample may reveal considerable differences between the observed and parameter estimates (Muijs, 2004). For normally distributed data, Chou and Bentler (1990) suggest a ratio as low as 5 cases per variable this would be sufficient when latent variables have multiple indicators. A widely suggested rule of thumb is a sample size of 10 to 20 respondents per observation parameter to be sufficient sample size. Hence, Kline (2012; 2016) recommends that a sample size should be sufficiently large, a minimum of 200 cases or more per observations depending on the complexity of the model. Similarly, in the case of CB-SEM, a minimum of 200 observations is required to prevent problems related with non-convergence (Reinartz, Haenlein and Henseler, 2009). Hair et al. (2005, 2010) suggests that a ratio of 10 respondents per parameter is deemed more appropriate for a sample size to be significant in statistical terms. As a rule of thumb, when employing a CB-SEM structural equation model (Kline, 2016; Malhotra et al. 2013) is a sample size of minimum 150 cases to offer satisfactory statistical power. This is recommended because the correlation coefficients among variables are less consistent among smaller samples, using a large sample size can reduce sampling error substantially and larger samples can be generalized (Pallant, 2010). Following the rule of thumb for CB-SEM statistical analysis of over 200 samples for each country (Kline, 2016) and previous cross-cultural studies (e.g., Pillai and Nair, 2021; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012) on attitude towards luxury, this study targeted a final sample size of over 200 usable samples from each of the three countries for a total of 935 respondents (UK-221, India- 319, Nigeria- 395) which was considered sufficient and meeting the sample size criteria to test the hypotheses of the study.

This study was conducted in two stages. The pilot study and the main study. After deciding on the luxury stimuli from the review of the literature, a pilot study was developed. Several past studies have suggested conducting a pilot study before the main study survey is administered (Zikmund et al., 2010). According to Patton (2002), the sample size of a preliminary or pilot study should be at least 20 participants. A pilot study is used as a small-scale version or trial run before the main study and a sample size of 10% of the main study is considered appropriate to run a pilot study (Connelly, 2008). Pilot testing can identify weaknesses that can reflect reliability, the validity of measurement construct, and potential problems which may impact the administration of the final questionnaire. After examining the pilot study (see section 5.), the main study was conducted. The main recommendation is that the sample size of the main study should be larger. This is recommended because, larger samples can be generalized more effectively compared to those from smaller samples of less than 100 respondents and the correlation coefficients of variables are less consistent with smaller samples (Pallant, 2010). Hence, for the main study, a sample size of more than 200 respondents from each of the three cultures was collected for the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria.

4.5. Research Instrument Development and Administration

4.5.1. Cross-Cultural Data Equivalence

When collecting data samples from more than one country as in the present study, researchers need to evaluate whether an etic or emic approach is considered more appropriate (). The emic approach assumes that attitude and behaviour are unique to the individual culture and thus concerned with identifying and understanding the specific context of the country. On the other hand, the etic approach focuses on identifying and investigating universal attitudes and behaviours irrespective of individual culture and is thus more concerned with generalizations based on single culture (Craig and Douglas, 2005; Morris et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2013). Although the emic approach focuses on understanding specific culture, it does not fit the research aim of the present study which focuses on testing a conceptual framework to determine the impact of both individual-level and macro-level cultural influences on consumers' attitudes towards luxury.

In the literature, international cross-cultural studies widely adopt the etic approach emphasizing the development of measurement scales that are comparable across cultures and countries. This study falls within the etic approach which considers and recognizes that there are universal attitudes and behaviours that can be measured. Hence, in line with the etic approach,

measurement scales that have been previously validated in a cross-cultural context were employed in this study. Furthermore, since the present study follows a theoretical approach, equivalence measures are important to examine the cross-cultural generalisability of the conceptual model. The validity of the measurement of the underlying measures increases as the equivalence level increases and the generalization of the conceptual model (Craig and Douglas, 2005; Matsumoto and Van de Vijver, 2011; Reynolds et al., 2003). According to Craig and Douglas (2005), two main equivalences, construct and measure equivalence must be taken into consideration which is discussed in more detail in this section.

4.5.1.1. Construct Equivalence

Construct equivalence ensures that the constructs to be studied are evaluated similarly regardless of cultural setting (Malhotra et al., 2013). Functional and conceptual equivalence was controlled for in this study. According to Craig and Douglas (2005), functional equivalence refers to whether a particular product or behaviour serves the same function across cultures. Cross-cultural studies measuring consumer behaviour in the context of a functionally non-equivalent product may produce non-valid results. Any associated differences may be a result of functional non-equivalence of the purchase or product rather than due to cultural differences (Craig and Douglas, 2005). Hence the present study controls for functional differences through careful application of the same product category in this case luxury watches and jewellery for all British, Indian, and Nigerian respondents in the survey. Conceptual equivalence refers to whether a concept's meaning is the same in different cultures or contexts (Craig and Douglas, 2005). The study adopts measurement scales of self-construal, individualism/collectivism, subjective social status, and attitude towards luxury scales that have been previously validated in a variety of cross-cultural contexts. Hence, there is an underlying similarity for the constructs to be applicable to each of the cultural contexts confirming conceptual equivalence exists. Moreover, the study assesses post-data collection issues of construct equivalence by reliability and validity tests (Hult et al., 2008). Furthermore, a pilot study of the questionnaire was carried out to identify any unclear, impolite, or difficult to understand questions and feedback provided regarding the language, structure, and duration of the questionnaire.

4.5.1.2. Measure Equivalence

After establishing construct equivalence, cross-cultural researchers need to consider measure equivalence (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). This process ensures that the same operationalised constructs are equivalent across cultures. Measure equivalence entails three factors namely, translation, calibration, and metric equivalence. Translation equivalence entails the written or spoken forms of language in scales and the questionnaires employed (Malhotra et al., 2013). This is to ensure all items have the same meaning for all respondents (Saunders et al., 2019). Since this study involves three different countries with English as the official language translation is unlikely to be a concern in this study. Calibration equivalence is related to the category used to explain visual stimuli that are the same across cultures, for example, shape, colour, and quality (Craig and Douglas, 2005). The visual stimulus was not used in the present study to reduce potential calibration non-equivalence concerns. Metric equivalence refers to whether scaling procedures is equivalent across different context, which is often dependent on the type of scales used in the relevant field of study (Hult et al., 2008; Craig and Douglas, 2005). From a review of past relevant literature on self-construal, Individualism and collectivism, and attitude towards luxury, the findings show that the Likert scale is widely used because it is suitable for attitudinal measurement and cross-cultural research, and an odd numbered category is normally used and seven-point Likert scale is highly recommended (Malhotra et al., 2013). With an odd number Likert scaling, the middle position can be generally adopted as the neutral such as "neither agree nor disagree" (Malhotra et al., 2013). Additionally, a seven-point Likert scale is generally well suited for studies that employ structural equation modelling (SEM) to investigate inter-relationships among different measures as in the present study (Bollen, 1989).

Further, prior studies (e.g., Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998; Mullen, 1995) suggests that the best approach to establish metric equivalence is by multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA). The authors point out that MGCFA is the most versatile and powerful approach to testing cross-cultural measurement invariance. Measurement invariance refers to whether when studying phenomena under different conditions, the measurement operations yield measures of the same magnitude (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). MCGFA tests measurement invariance by setting restrictive cross-group constraints and comparing the more restricted model with less restricted models to assess changes in the model fits for significance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). Thus, in the present study, MCGFA was conducted to verify metric equivalence assessed by constraining every factor loading to be equal across the cultures in this case, United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria data samples, and exploring whether

the model fit of the constrained model significantly differed from the baseline model which is unconstrained that is all factors were set free. Even though full metric invariance is rarely verified in cross-cultural studies, partial metric invariance is at least acceptable (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998)

4.5.2. Research Instrument (Questionnaire Design)

This section presents a detailed discussion of all scales used in the main study survey questionnaire. Questionnaire design is an important factor in research methodology (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019,). In order to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives, the researcher must ensure that the questionnaire collects accurate data needed. According to Saunders et al. (2019), questionnaire designs can affect response rate, validity and reliability of the data can be affected by the question design. Thus, in order to increase the response rates, validity and reliability of the data, several factors must be taken into consideration before and while developing the questionnaire. These factors include, clear layout of the questionnaire, careful design of individual questions, coherent explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire, pilot testing and carefully planned and executed administration (Saunders et al., 2019).

In developing the questionnaire for the current study, all the construct scales used in the questionnaire have been previously validated in several studies, hence reducing the likelihood of potential issues with the validity and reliability of the data. Each construct had multiple items, even though single items usually have considerable "uniqueness or specificity in that each item seems to have only a low correlation with the attribute being measured and tends to relate to other attributes" (Churchill, 1979, p.66). They are likely to have inbuilt measurement rent error and the response gathered by such single item scale may not be reliable (Churchill, 1979). To measure the responses, the scales were all measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). According to Saunders et al (2019), the Likert scale is a survey measurement technique in which questions based on how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement or series of statements are answered by respondents. Generally, Likert scales ranging from four to seven-point are used in research studies, even though there are minimal differences between a five-point and seven-point Likert scale in terms of mean values and variance, more point scale response option may result in lower skewness (Dawes, 2008). Thus, this study adopted the seven-point Likert scale.

The research survey questionnaire (as shown in Appendix B) is divided into six sections. The questionnaire is divided into the following five sections using closed-ended questions: (1) Individualism and Collectivism (2) Independent and Interdependent Self-construal (3) Attitudes towards luxury (4) Subjective Social Status and (5) Demographics. The mediating variables were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire primarily to improve the reliability and validity of the data collection. The mediators where ordered this way to engage participants with more neutral questions in this case individualism and collectivism before introducing the independent variables to encourage more thoughtful and honest questions and subsequently help reduce response bias. In this case, the order of the questions flows in a logical sequence starting with simple questions before moving to more complex questions. In addition, to avoid a possible "lead effect" after the respondent had read and answered the attitude measures and another consideration was to get answers on culture earlier when the respondent was relatively less tired. Furthermore, as standard good practice in survey research indicates to ask the most important questions as soon as possible whilst they are focused and have energy. The independent variables were placed next to improve the logical flow as it entails more sensitive and complex questions to reduce conditioning effect, where earlier questions influence how later ones are answered. How respondents answer questions related to the mediating variables might be influenced if the independent variables were introduced first. The demographic information (gender, occupation, age, education, and income) was placed at the end and the questionnaire to improve the response rate (Borque and Fielder, 2003) While demographic questions are usually unaffected by order effects, questions about opinions and attitudes are more susceptible to them. The questions are written in English reflecting the official language of the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria.

Before administering the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted, an assessment of content and face validity is carried out to ensure validity and reliability of the scale items. Hinkin (1998) suggests that a clear link is needed between the theoretical constructs and the items being assessed. Furthermore, the author suggests that when the items have undergone validity assessment, it is important that the data sample is representative and free from common method bias. Malhotra et al. (2003) suggests that the participants in the pilot test should exhibit similar background characteristics close to respondents to be recruited for the main study data collection. For this study, respondents were selected based on those who possess relevant nationality and have always lived in the UK, India, and Nigeria and are above 18 years old which is same as the background characteristics of the main study.

4.5.2.1. Self-Construal Scale

The Singelis (1994) scale was used to measure an individual's independent and interdependent self-construal. This follows previous studies that have shown good construct and predictive validity of the scale across several countries (Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2019). However, some previous studies (e.g., Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014) have measured the independent and interdependent self-construal within the same country also showing good reliability and validity. Singelis (1994) scale has a total of 24 items, 12 items each measuring the interdependent (α= 0.74) and an independent self-construal (α = 0.70) on a sample of n=160. It measures self-construal on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). The self-construal measurement scale was chosen because a dominant Interdependent self-construal or independent self-construal can exist within and across cultures (Cross, 2011).

Table 4.1. Measurement items of Independent Self-Construal

Items
I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood
Speaking up during a meeting is not a problem for me
Having a lively imagination is important to me
I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards
I am the same person at home that I am at everywhere
Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me
I act the same way no matter who I am with
I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am
I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects
My personal identity independent of others is very important to me
I value being in good health above everything

Source Singelis (1994)

Table 4.2 Measurement items of Interdependent Self-Construal

Items
I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact
It is important to me to maintain harmony within my group
My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me
I would offer my seat in a bus to a pensioner
I respect people who are modest about themselves
I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in
I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments
I should take into consideration my family advice when making education/career plans
It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group
I will stay in a group if they need me even when I'm not happy with the group
If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible
Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument

Source: Singelis, (1994)

4.5.2.2. Individualism and Collectivism Scale

The Li and Aksoy (2007) scale are used for measuring Individualism/Collectivism. It was applied in their study to investigate individualism and collectivism variables. The scale has a total of 16 items on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and each of the 2 cultural dimensions was indicated by eight items. All scales in their study demonstrated acceptable composite reliability indices showing good reliability. Furthermore, each scale confirms individualism and collectivism represent a different construct with two dimensions. Giving evidence for the conceptualization of individualism and collectivism as separate constructs and validity were established across cultures in their study.

Table 4.3 Measurement of Individualism Cultural Dimension

Items
I'd rather depend on myself than others
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others
I often do "my own thing"
My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.
It is important that I do my job better than others.
Winning is everything.
Competition is the law of nature.
When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.

Source: Li and Aksoy, (2007)

Table 4.4 Measurement of Collectivism Cultural Dimension

Items
If a friend gets a prize, I would feel proud.
The well-being of my friends is important to me.
To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
I feel good when I cooperate with others
Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.
It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.

Source: Li and Aksoy, (2007)

4.5.2.3. Attitude towards Luxury Scale

Dubois and Laurent (1994) attitude towards luxury scale was employed in this study which fits the scope of this study. The measurement scale includes an interest in luxury and an evaluative attitude toward luxury. This scale has been used by past studies (e.g., Dubois, Czellar and Laurent, 2005; Dubois, Gil et al., 2012; Laurent and Czellar, 2001). The scale has 12 items and items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale.

Table 4.5 Measurement of Attitude towards Luxury

Items
Luxury is old-fashioned
Luxury is pleasant
I buy luxury watches and jewellery primarily for my pleasure
I don't know much about the luxury world
I could talk about luxury products for hours
I would not feel at ease in a luxury watch and jewellery shop
People who buy luxury products try to differentiate themselves from others
People who buy luxury products seek to imitate the rich
Luxury is flashy
Luxury makes me dream
Those who buy luxury products are refined people
The luxury products we buy reveal a little bit about who we are

Source Dubois and Laurent, (1994)

4.5.2.4. Subjective Social Status Scale

MacArthur Scale was used to measure subjective social status. Social status is a ranking of individuals in society based on affiliation to a group or family. Every individual is ranked by every other individual in society. Subjective social status is measured using Adler et al. (2000) scale. The subjective social status measure can be administered verbally, in addition to visually as in prior work (Operario et al., 2004). Respondents were asked to place themselves on an imaginary social ladder on a 10-point scale, which has been widely used as a measure of subjective social status. A higher score indicates that an individual perceives herself as higher social status (Adler et al. 2000).

Participants are instructed to.

"Think of a ladder with 10 steps representing where people stand in the United Kingdom. At step 10 are people who are the best off: those who have the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs. At step 1 are the people who are worst off: those who have the least money, least education, and the least respected jobs or no job".

Respondents are to place an "X' on the step that they felt most represented their relative standing. Source Alder et al. (2000)

4.5.2.5. Control (Demographic) Variables

The present study used different demographic variables as control variables which have been shown to influence psychological and macro-level cultural characteristics tested. The demographic variables were gender, income, education, and age. Past studies (e.g., Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019; Hung et al., 2011; Dubois and Duquesne, 1993) have found that income is a factor driving luxury purchase intentions. Additionally, some past studies (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann, 2013; Anido Freire, 2014), show a more positive attitude and intentions to purchase luxury brands, for women compared to men. Meyers-Levy, (1988) in support suggests that a more positive attitude arises from the interdependent compared to the independent orientation of women. Subsequently leading to a value of several aspects of luxury such as uniqueness, quality, and social value more than men (Wiedmann et al., 2009). Thus, controlling for gender will enhance the validity of the results. Similarly, age has been shown to influence the self-construal dimension. Past studies (e.g., Kim, 2005; Zhang and Shrum, 2009) reveal a positive relationship between interdependent self-construal and age.

4.6. Data Analysis Approach

This section presents the data analysis approach used in this study. The data analysis started with the initial analysis such as data cleaning to ensure data accuracy, preparing the data statistically for further analysis (Malhotra, Birks, and Wills, 2013), measurement invariance testing reliability and validity assessment, and structural equation modelling to examine the inter-relationships among constructs (Hair et al., 2010). The stages were completed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 and IBM SPSS Amos version 24.

4.6.1. Structural Equation Modelling Rationale

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is one of the most important data analysis techniques widely employed in marketing and business research. Structural equation modelling (SEM) aims to explore and assess relationships between independent and dependent variables. Hair et al., (2010 p. 634) describe SEM as “a family of statistical models that seek to explain the relationships among multiple variables”. SEM is a multivariate technique that is primarily used to test certain hypotheses derived from theory (Hair et al., 2010; Malhotra et al. 2013; Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). In using the SEM technique, latent constructs are designated as dependent (i.e., endogenous) and independent (i.e., exogenous) (Hair et al., 2017). There are

two types of application that can be considered when considering SEM namely, covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and variance-based partial least squares (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2010, 2017; Reinartz et al., 2009). While these procedures vary in terms of statistical methods (Hair et al., 2017), researchers have argued that neither of the two methods is better than the other in providing valid and reliable results. Nevertheless, the appropriateness of either of the two methods depends on the research aim and objectives, method, and data properties (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009). SEM comprises one or more regression equations through which the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable is analysed and interpreted (Byrne, 2010). Based on this, SEM differs from the traditional multivariate methods such as regression models which are incapable of assessing or correcting measurement error considering that errors in the independent variables disappear while on the other hand, SEM clearly estimates the error variance coefficients (Iacobucci, 2009).

Some of the benefits of using SEM include examining both observed and unobserved (latent) variables which traditional multivariate methods are unable to access given that the data analyses using the traditional methods are mostly based on observed measurements (Hair et al., 2017; Kline, 2015). Firstly, this study undertakes a theoretical standpoint in an attempt to determine the impact of self-construal (independent and interdependent self-construal) on explaining the cultural orientation of individualism and collectivism on consumers' attitude towards luxury consumption in a cross-cultural context namely the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria) with an aim of exploring the relationships between these variables.

Another advantage of SEM over other methods is its usefulness in investigating the relationships between different variables on the basis that one dependent variable can cause another at the same time. The overall conceptual model rather than coefficients individually can be tested to investigate direct and indirect relationships among variables tested in the present study. SEM is established based on two models firstly, a measurement model through confirmatory factor analysis is validated, and secondly, a structural model through path analysis is estimated for a full SEM model (Bagozzi, 2010). The measurement model diagnoses poor model fit and reduces issues related to multicollinearity. Accordingly, the reason behind this two-step approach is to validate a previously established set of latent variables, which are incorporated into a proposed theoretical model (Hair et al., 2017). In other words, the SEM seeks to confirm the consistency of the theoretical model and the estimated model based on the overall model fit. Therefore, the measurement models and structural models particularly the CB-SEM must be theory-driven, which is crucial for the model development and modification. CB-SEM assesses model parameters to reduce the differences between the covariance matrix

and the empirical covariance matrix indicated by the conceptual model (Ritcher et al., 2016). Furthermore, SEM can compare the three groups of datasets in this study (i.e., UK, India, and Nigeria), which is useful for this study to determine the cross-cultural generalisability of the research model. Following previous studies (e.g., Pillar and Nair, 2021; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Yim et al., 2014), SEM was adopted to examine the influence self-construal on consumer attitudes toward luxury consumption.

SEM analyses can be performed with various packages such as LISREL, AMOS, M-Plus, etc. However, AMOS has been gaining popularity because all commands are presented in a graphical interface rather than computer codes or syntax and it generally has a user-friendly interface (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, AMOS can interface with the SPSS package used in this study for minor analyses and have the capacity to deal with complex and large dataset making it a useful tool for this study. This study adopted a full SEM model which is a combination of the measurement model that relates the variables to the constructs, and the structural model that relates various constructs to each other (Kline 2013; Malhotra et al., 2013; Hair et al., 2010). Thus, Amos version 24.0 was chosen to conduct the SEM analyses in the present study.

4.6.2. Initial Analysis

Initial analysis of the data involved conducting data screening and cleaning to check the accuracy of the data and increase the integrity as this may affect the validity of the result (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). This process should be considered and solved before the main data analysis. This study tests relationships between variables using structural equation modelling. However, before conducting a multivariate technique of structural equation modelling in the proposed research model, there is a need to test the assumptions that the score distribution on the variables is normal and high correlation appears between variables (Kline, 2015). Thus, this study tested the assumptions of normality and multicollinearity. Normality is the extent to which the distribution of the collected data follows a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2010). Its corresponding shape (i.e., skewness, or the symmetry of distribution, and kurtosis, or the peak of the distribution) is a symmetrical curve with the greatest frequency of scores in the middle and smaller frequencies towards each extreme (Kline, 2015). Multicollinearity refers to the high correlation between variables and often occurs when multiple predictors in a regression model show a strong correlation greater than 0.8 (Hair et al., 2010). As such, multicollinearity might influence the regression coefficient, the model's

predictive ability, and statistical tests (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, this study assessed multicollinearity by variance influence factors (VIF) and tolerance value (Hair et al., 2010).

4.6.3 Assessment of the Measurement Model

4.6.3.1. Measurement Model

In structural equation modelling (SEM), a model is developed based on theory (Kline 2015; Jarvis et al., 2003). The SEM model conceptualizes each variable as constructs or latent variables measured by one or multiple indicators or observable variables (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model in which there are straight arrows from latent variables to their respective variables, there are straight arrows from the error terms to their respective variables, and an unmeasured covariance between possible pairs of latent variables is conducted in this study to assess whether the measurement model fits reasonably well and the item/indicators best measuring the latent variables retained in the model (Kline, 2015). Hence, once the model is validated, the next step is to establish a structural model.

The measurement model validity depends on achieving acceptable levels of the goodness of fit measures and constructs validity assessment (Hair et al., 2010). The model fit is established after the model evaluation to specify the similarity between the observed covariance matrix and estimated covariance (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). A model fit can be tested by using the goodness of fit indices. Hair et al. (2010) suggested that for a sample size of this study, the thresholds of acceptable model fit indices consist of a significant Chi-square ($\chi 2$) value or CMIN in AMOS, an acceptable fit for the model is the normed chi-squared ($\chi 2/df$) less than the threshold of three, a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) greater than .9. Further, a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of less than .07. Even though there is no consensus by some SEM researchers on the specific model fit indexes to present in an SEM analysis, at least four criteria should be considered when assessing the measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2010).

Specifically, the Chi-square ($\chi 2$ or CMIN in AMOS). For a good model of fit, the chi-square value should not be significant because a significant CMIN means the specified model covariance structure is significantly different from the observed covariance matrix. Therefore, if a model's chi-square is <.05, the research model is rejected by this criterion (Hair et al., 2010; Hu and Bentler, 1999). The normed chi-square is indicated as CMIN/DF in AMOS. This is the chi-square fit index divided by the degree of freedom in order to make it less dependent on

sample size. Kline (2015) states that an acceptable relative chi-square should be less than or equal to 3.0, although some scholars argue for a relative chi-square value to be less than or equal to 2, some other scholars argue that values as high as 5 can be considered a model adequate fit (Bollen, 1989; Schumacker and Lomax, 2004).

The comparative fit index (CFI) compares the null model with the existing model fit which assumes that the unobserved (latent) variables in the model are uncorrelated. That is the CFI compares the observed covariance matrix with the covariance matrix predicted by the model and compares the null model with the observed covariance matrix to ascertain the lack of fit percentage accounted for between the null model to the researcher SEM model. CFI varies from 0 to 1, CFI close to 1 indicates a very good fit which a recommended cut-off value of greater than or equal to 9 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) which indicates that 90% of the covariances in the data can be reproduced by the specified model. The CFI is among the measures least affected by sample size. The root means square of approximation (RMSEA) is a "parsimony adjusted index" with a formula that includes a built-in function that corrects for model complexity. There is a good model fit if the RMSEA is less than or equal to .05, and an adequate fit if less than or equal to .08. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested a cut-off of RMSEA less than or equal to .06 for a good model fit, while Kline (2015) suggests values less than or equal to .08 as a reasonable fit. RMSEA mostly does not require comparison with a null model and one of the fit indices is less affected by sample size, although for the smallest sample sizes, it overestimates goodness of fit (Fan et al., 1999). Table 4 illustrates the measures of fit indices used in this study.

Table 4.6 Summary of Model Fit Indices

Model Fit Indices	Description
Chi-square (χ2)	Chi-square value calculates the extent of discrepancy between the fitted covariances matrices and the sample. Significant results at the .05 threshold would represent a good model fit (Hair et al. 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999).
Normed Chi-square (χ2/df)	This is the Chi-square (χ2) divided by the degree of freedom (df) to make it less dependent on sample size (Kline, 2005). This is the recommended good fit if the χ2/df value is less than 3.0 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	It compares the existing model fit with a null model which assumes that the latent variables are uncorrelated. It gauges the % of lack of fit from the null to the research model. A CFI ≥.90 is generally acceptable, which indicates that 90% of the covariation of data can be reproduced by the given model (Hair et al. 2010; Tabachnick and Fidell 2013).
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	It considers the model complexity and compares the normed chi-square for the estimated and null model. A TLI ≥ 0.9 is generally acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999).
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	This is a parsimony-adjusted index that approximates the non-central chi-square distribution. It is the discrepancy per degree of freedom with a 90% confidence interval and indicates how well the model fits the population covariance matrix. A good model fit is a value below .07 (Hair et al. 2010).

4.6.3.2. Common Method Variance

Common method variance (CMV) has been shown to have a significant effect on a constructs items' reliability, validity and the covariation between latent constructs resulting in a systematic measurement error and can further bias the estimates of the accurate relationships among constructs (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012; Williams, Hartman and Cavazotte, 2010).

In marketing research, two widely used techniques have been identified to control for method bias (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2003; 2012; Williams et al., 2010). Firstly, the impact of CMV is limited through procedural remedies such as the methodical design of the research strategy and secondly through statistical techniques (e.g., Pillai and Nair, 2021; Bakir et al., 2020). The procedural measures were aimed at reducing common method biases following Podsakoff et al., 2003 recommendations such as checking all scale items for ambiguities and improving them where necessary and subsequently assuring respondents of anonymity to minimize common method bias.

Since the present study measured the independent and dependent variables in the same questionnaire survey, CMV concerns may arise (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To address any potential concerns, this study applied both procedural and statistical techniques to minimize the impact of CMV. Firstly, Harman's single-factor test was employed. This test requires loading all the measures in a study into an exploratory factor analysis, with the assumption that the presence of CMV is indicated by the emergence of either a single factor or a general factor accounting for most of the covariance among measures (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 889). The authors characterize the Harman single factor test as a diagnostic technique that "actually does nothing to statistical control for (or partial out) method effects" (p. 889). Further, they argue that the emergence of multiple factors does not indicate the absence of CMV and recommend against the use of this test. All variables were loaded onto a single factor and constrained so that there is no rotation (Podsakoff et al., 2003). If the new factor explains more than 50% of the variance, then common method bias may be present. Secondly, a common latent factor (CLF) test was adopted. A new common variable factor is introduced such that all observed items are related to it and all the paths are constrained to be equal (Williams et al., 2010). The standardized regression weights from the unconstrained and constrained model after adding the CLF were compared for each item. If the difference between both standardised regression weights is larger than 0.2 CMV is in existence.

4.6.3.3. Data Reliability and Validity

Reliability analysis and validity analysis are of central concern for data analysis, especially for cross-cultural research (Craig and Douglas 2005; Malhotra et al., 2013). Reliability refers to the extent measures make results consistent when the same constructs are measured under different situations (Malhotra et al., 2013). Cronbach's coefficient alpha or Cronbach's alpha is the most widely used estimator of the reliability of tests and scales. Items with a Cronbach alpha value of .60 or less indicate unsatisfactory reliability (Pallant, 2010). Recently, the Cronbach alpha has been criticized as being a lower bound underestimating the true reliability of measures hence the widely used estimator is the composite reliability, which is usually calculated in conjunction with structural equation modelling (Peterson and Kim, 2013). Scales are reliable if the composite reliability scores for all the constructs exceed the cut-off value of 0.7 (Nunnally and Berstein, 1994).

Validity analysis refers to the extent to which the survey instrument was designed to measure what it set out to measure (Hair et al., 2010). Validity is assessed to determine whether the study

accurately makes inferences about whether a test measures what it seeks to measure conceptually or the question it seeks to answer. Although many forms of validity assessments have been used to test research quality, construct validity is used mainly for both positivist and quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2019). Hence, construct validity examines the extent to which the study measures what it intended to measure and is done by evaluating convergent validity and discriminate validity (Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the scales positively correlate to indicators pre-specified to measure the same construct in other words the extent to which two measures of the same concept are correlated (Malhotra et al. 2013). It is achieved when all factors loading from a construct are statistically significant (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Discriminant validity refers to whether the construct is different (discriminant) from other constructs (Craig and Douglas 2005; Malhotra et al. 2013). To determine the discriminant validity, the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) is compared against the correlations of the other constructs. Each latent variable should be larger than the latent variable correlations. The study's reliability and validity assessment are presented in the next chapter.

4.6.4. Assessment of the Structural Model

After assessing the measurement model validity with the CFA, the next step is to apply SEM to test the various hypotheses in other words how the latent variables/constructs are related to each other (Hair et al., 2010). In the structural model, independent variables (exogenous construct) and the dependent variable (endogenous construct) imply that it is predicted by other constructs in the model and specified. Hence, only the structural path parameters and prediction errors are measured (Kline, 2015). There is no depiction of either measured variables or the factor loadings as constructs have been assessed in the measurement model using CFA to adequately access their measures (Kline, 2015). Consequently, a full SEM model is a combination of the two models noted above: the measurement model that relates the variables to the constructs and the structural model that relates various constructs to each other (Kline 2015).

4.7. Ethical Considerations

According to Saunder et al. (2019), research ethics can be described as the standards of behaviour that guide the conduct of research in relation to the rights of those being researched

or are affected by the research. When individuals are studied, the research goal and materials, how much time and effort are required of these individuals, what is expected of the consenting respondents, how data are to be gathered, the ultimate purpose of the study, and whether it will be published among other conditions should be taken into consideration (Gregory, 2003). Transparency and authenticity regarding the ethical considerations of research are important, especially in enhancing the outcomes of the research, controlling sensitive topics, and guaranteeing professional affiliation and management (O'Gorman and Macintosh, 2015). In the present study, the data for the online survey were collected using the MTurk online survey panel. Once the online survey was deployed, MTurk sends out invitations to a select group of participants recruited from the online platform who are asked whether they would like to participate in the survey hosted by survey monkey through a cover note written by the researcher describing the survey, how data will be used and how much time it will take to complete the survey. The prewritten cover sheet also indicates that respondents' participation is fully voluntary, and they may stop answering questions at any time. Hence when participants agree to participate by taking the survey, their agreement is considered to be a suggested online informed consent. All correspondence between the potential participants and the researcher was conducted in anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity means that the participants' names are not attached to the questionnaires, or any unique identifiers used. Confidentiality refers to how data are handled, especially in controlling others' access to their information (Holland, Sieber and Tolich, 2015).

Participants recruited in the study were anonymous and none of the questions included in the study were questions that would permit the participants to be identified by the researcher. The risk involved in the study is minimal since this was administered online, and participants must be 18 years old and above among other codes and practices. By strictly adhering to all the codes and practices according to Middlesex University Business School policy, all the ethical considerations laid out by the university were met by the present study. Before proceeding with the collection of data, an ethics application form was completed carefully and submitted to the Ethics Committee of Middlesex University ethics committee. The application form provided detailed information on the methods employed in the research, such as the number of participants likely to be recruited, where the research will take place, the data collection process, and additional ethical and risk issues considerations and declarations. The information resulting from the online survey is solely used for academic purposes and will not be shared with any third party. Before administering the online survey questionnaires for the pilot study

and main study, all questions and processes were examined by the Middlesex University ethics committee and ethical approval was granted on 19 October 2020.

4.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology adopted in the current study. Firstly, the research philosophies and approaches were explained including the justification of the positivism philosophy, and quantitative research approaches employed in the present study were examined. Therefore, the study used quantitative methods to verify the study's formulated hypotheses to explore cause and effect, using an online survey questionnaire designed through survey monkey software and distributed by amazon mechanical Turk (MTurk) an online panel. This was the most convenient data collection strategy in this study due to its numerous advantages including ease of use, time and cost savings, and data quality compared to other traditional data collection techniques.

This study targeted luxury consumers who identify and are from the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria and are above 18 years old. Before administering the pilot study and the main questionnaire, a preliminary study review of the literature was conducted to choose a comparable stimulus with which the British, Indian, and Nigerian respondents identify. A detailed discussion of the review of literature for the preliminary study of choosing the stimulus and the pilot study of the main study survey questionnaire. Subsequently, a measurement instrument was designed based on scales, whose psychometric properties have been validated by previous academics. Common method biases were considered, and procedures recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003, 2012) were followed. After the pilot study administration, the main questionnaire was developed without needing further revision. The sample size for the main study is 935 participants that is United Kingdom (212), Indian (219, and Nigerian (365) respondents, determined by using the requirements of the statistical technique used to analyse data.

Regarding the data analysis phase, four main processes were conducted in this study. The initial analysis included data cleaning and verifying assumptions of multivariate techniques to reduce potential concerns about low quality and ensure data accuracy. Common method variance assessment and measurement equivalence were examined to ensure the instruments measure what it is intended to without biases and all the contexts responded to the questionnaire in the same way. In this study, the hypotheses testing was conducted by full structural equation modelling that is the measurement model was established before proceeding to the structural

model. Using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the measurement model validity was tested and once a satisfactory model fit was established, the hypotheses testing was conducted through the structural model. Finally, the advantages of using SEM were detailed and research ethics was observed before the administration of the research instrument. All correspondence between the potential respondents and the researcher was conducted in anonymity and confidentiality, hence the survey questionnaire did not contain any questions that would permit the researcher to identify the respondents. In the present study, the findings from the online survey will be only for academic use and will not be passed on to organizations or individuals. In the next chapter, the data analysis approach and processes will be presented and discussed in more detail.

CHAPTER 5. PILOT STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the preliminary study, as well as the pilot study for the main questionnaire. The objective of the preliminary study was to select the final stimuli with which the British, Indian, and Nigerian respondents have the same familiarity and usage in terms of a luxury product or item which is in line with previous research suggestions (e.g., Jhamb et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Yim et al., 2014). The chapter is divided into the following sections. Section 5.2 presents the justification of the Luxury product stimuli. Section 5.3 presents information on the procedure taken to design and evaluate the questionnaire, followed by the results of the pilot study and the implications for the main study. Lastly, the chapter conclusion and the implications of these results for the main study is presented in Section 5.4.

5.2. Luxury Stimuli

In the present study, in order to assess the respondents' attitude towards luxury effects, the dependant variable was measured by focusing on the usage of a specific category of luxury, and in this study, luxury wristwatches and jewellery were selected to represent luxury consumption following previous research suggestions (e.g., Jhamb et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Yim et al., 2014). Fionda and Moore (2009) distinguished four categories of luxury that are traditionally classified namely: fashion, perfumes and cosmetics, wines and spirits, and luxury wristwatches and jewellery. However, more recently, luxury professionals and business-school academics have added categories such as luxury cars and holidays (Fionda and Moore, 2009). In this study, the choice of luxury watches and jewelleries product category is justified by the finding in previous research studies which reveal that these luxury product categories are significantly more stereotypical when culture and gender are considered (Hudders and Pandelaere, 2012; Jhamb et al., 2020; Kastanaskis and Balabanis, 2014; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). The choice of luxury watches as stereotypical luxury products to measure attitude towards luxury is due to their high symbolic properties that they provide to consumers in terms of both functional and psychological benefits (e.g., Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004, Wiedmann et al., 2012; Yim et al., 2014). Apart from their high-quality, craftsmanship and exclusivity, luxury watches can be used as a symbol of success, status, and achievement. Moreover, luxury wristwatches are typically universal in size and are not gender-specific (Kastanakis and

Balabanis, 2012; Kluge and Fassnacht, 2015). For example, young luxury consumers perceive luxury wristwatches as a status symbol rather than a mere utility product to conform to belongingness to the status groups they belong to or to differentiate themselves from other status groups (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Sonawane, 2018). Luxury consumers tend to find a significant difference in the quality of luxury wristwatches in terms of luxury and non-luxury products and brands in comparison to any other product categories (Jhamb et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2012; Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann, 2013).

Luxury products have two major dimensions of perceived luxury value perceptions that should be taken into consideration when capturing the meaning of luxury brands. They are the personally oriented perceptions or motives and the interpersonal-oriented perceptions or motives in which the luxury wristwatches category can satisfy luxury consumers (Jhamb et al., 2020). According to Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014), following interviews with luxury practitioners and their expert advice, luxury managers indicated that luxury wristwatches are probably the most symbolic luxury category because they are mechanical instruments which apart from the importance of their utilitarian function, they are a highly artistic item that can satisfy the hedonic dimension of luxury consumption. Additionally, because luxury wristwatches are one of the most archetypical categories among luxury products, they can be typically seen as representation of luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Furthermore, in choosing the luxury product category, this study additionally considered the definitions from past studies which define luxury item or product for instance, Phau and Prendergast (2000) defines luxury brands as prestigious, familiar, popular, and expensive, jewellery and luxury wristwatches has been perceived to be high class (O'Cass and Frost, 2002) and these products are consumed to enhance an individual's self-image and status (Hennig et al., 2012; Ko et al., 2019; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). Consequently, this study adopts luxury wristwatches and jewellery as the luxury stimuli for the attitude toward luxury effects in the research questionnaire.

5.3. Pilot Study Rationale

A pilot study is used as a small-scale version or trial run before the main study and a sample size of 10% of the main study is considered appropriate to run a pilot study (Connelly, 2008). The pilot collects a small number of responses and offers an opportunity for preliminary testing of the hypotheses that leads to more precise hypotheses in the main study. It often addresses and reduces the number of unanticipated problems because of the opportunity to treat and

overcome the problems the pilot test reveals (Saunders et al., 2019). Further, pilots can identify weaknesses that can reflect the reliability of the measurement construct and potential problems which may impact the administration of the final questionnaire. A pilot study is the most inexpensive indicator used to predict the success of a research survey and project, by ensuring that the questionnaire operates well, and the respondents can clearly follow the instructions and encounter no difficulty in understanding and answering questions (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019). A pilot study is especially important for research based on the self-completion questionnaire that a researcher or interviewer employs to clarify respondents' potential confusion (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019).

As suggested by various researchers (Gonzalez-Jimenez et al., 2019; Zikmund et al., 2010) a pilot test of the questionnaire for the main study was conducted. The objective of the pilot test was to assess and improve the questionnaire to limit any potential drawbacks due to problems with language ambiguities or the questionnaire structure thus improving the validity and reliability of the research instrument (Churchill, 1995). Even though all the measures in the present study were adopted from existing literature, a pilot study was conducted before the main study as suggested by past studies (Saunders et al. 2019; Zikmund et al., 2010). The pilot study serves to provide the researcher with an idea of whether the questionnaire appears to make have face validity, and how long it takes to complete the questionnaire and further enables the researcher to improve the questionnaire resulting from problems with ambiguous wording unclear instructions, and poor word phrasing (Bell et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2019).

5.3.1. Procedure of Pilot Study

This section provides an overview of the procedure used to carry out the pilot testing of the questionnaire before the main study questionnaire administration from the respondents in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. In order to assess the structure, the clarity of instructions, identify questions with ambiguous wording and phrasing and determine how long it will require to answer the questions, an online questionnaire was employed to carry out the pilot study research instrument. The statistical software used to perform the pilot study was the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) v.24.0. The pilot study was conducted in May 2021 by using an online questionnaire hosted by Survey monkey. All the scales used in the pilot study questionnaire have been previously validated in several past studies, thus reducing the likelihood of potential issues and concerns with reliability and validity. Moreover, it was

important to ensure that the questionnaire had no defects that might have compromised its reliability and validity in terms of flow, wording, structure, and instructions.

Before pilot testing, a questionnaire Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005) recommends conducting personal interviews to gather feedback on the questionnaire. Following these recommendations, personal interviews with five research students were conducted to gather feedback on the questionnaire regarding any potential issues and concerns that may arise. In addition, feedback was also gathered from six luxury consumers who have identified themselves as either British, Indian, and Nigerian which is a representative of the present study's target population. Following this, the highlighted potential concerns such as occupational level, income level across the three groups, and education classifications in the demographic information section were improved on. Having improved on the question and no potential concerns, a pilot test was conducted using the same online platform (MTurk) that was used in the main study to administer the survey instrument. MTurk was chosen for this study because it has been previously validated by previous studies (see Section 4.3.1) for the justification of MTurk online platform. The pilot study sample size comprised 47 British, 52 Indians, and 61 Nigerians responses. Therefore, a total of 160 survey questionnaires were collected in the pilot study which meets the guidelines of the minimum pilot study sample size of 20 responses (Patton, 2002). In addition, following past research suggestions (e.g., Hult et al., 2008), and the present study's research aim, the respondents in the pilot study answered the same screening question and are of the same target population as those in the main study to ensure that the pilot study was more meaningful. The details of the targeted main study sample population justification are presented in Section 4.4.3 The respondents in the pilot study were first provided with a short description of the questionnaire from MTurk and those interested in participating in the pilot study proceeded through a hyperlink to the actual online questionnaire hosted externally by Survey Monkey.

5.3.2 Results of Pilot Study

The pilot study questionnaire was posted on the MTurk online platform following the same procedure used in the main study research instrument administration. A total of 160 survey questionnaire responses (i.e., 47 British, 52 Indian, and 61 Nigerians) were collected in the pilot study, which specifically had the same characteristics as those in the main study to ensure that the pilot study was more meaningful. In order to analyse the questionnaires, first data screening was carried out by checking whether all respondents fulfilled the target population sample's

inclusion criteria, secondly, respondents' attention was checked based on the attention check question included in the questionnaire and finally, the assessing of the reliability of the measurement scales by the Cronbach's alpha was carried out.

First, after all screening questions excluded some respondents, nonetheless, checking through the descriptive statistical details of each of the sample across the three groups showed that they all met the sample requirements. Therefore, no data needed to be excluded for further analysis, leaving a total of 47 British respondents, 52 Indian respondents and 61 Nigerian respondents. For the attention check, following Oppenheimer et al. (2009) suggestions, an attention check question was included in the questionnaire to assess whether the respondents are actually reading the questions and not simply clicking through the questions. The following questions were incorporated in the middle or halfway through the survey: "I hope this survey is interesting and I still have your attention" and "To show me that I still have your attention", please select "5" below (Slightly Agree). Out of the entire 160 respondents, none selected option 5 (Slightly Agree), indicating that they were paying attention and reading the questions. These findings from the pilot study indicate that although no respondents were excluded from further analysis, the attention check questions were retained in the further main study survey questionnaires to check respondents' attention and potential issue as fatigue and running through the questions while answering the questions and further affecting the results.

For the reliability of the measurement scales, even though all the scales employed in the pilot study have been previously validated in several past studies (see Table 5.1.) nonetheless, the present study decided to assess the reliability of each measurement construct scale in the context of the present study. In order to test the reliability, the Cronbach's alpha was used. In assessing the reliability of measurement scales for pilot study, Cronbach's alpha is the widely used tool (Hair et al. 2014; Kline 2015; Nunnally 1978; Pallant, 2010). Cronbach's alpha is used to assess the consistency of the study measurement scale (Hair et al., 2010). The results of the pilot study revealed that almost all scales had excellent scores greater than the recommended cut-off point of .70 (Kline, 2005; Bowling, 2014). Specifically, the individualism scale (.52) from the British sample measurement scale and the attitude towards luxury scale (.67) from the Nigerian sample had an alpha value below the recommended cut off of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). As recommended from past studies, an alpha value of .50 or .60 can still be considered as acceptable reliability (Bowling 2014; Nunnally 1978; Pallant, 2010).
Considering that previous studies have indicated acceptable Cronbach's alphas for these scales, the results of the individualism measurement construct from the British and the attitude towards luxury from the Nigerian data measurement scale may have been a result of the influence of

the small sample size used in the study's pilot study. Individualism and attitude towards luxury were retained for the main study survey questionnaire following past studies' suggestions of an alpha value of .50 or .60 can still be considered as acceptable reliability (Bowling 2014; Nunnally 1978; Pallant, 2010). Table 5.1 presents an overview of Cronbach's alpha, which was conducted by using the specialist software application SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Table 5.1 Pilot Study Reliability Result

Construct	**Number of items**	**Cronbach Alpha**		
		UK	**India**	**Nigeria**
Independent self-construal	12	.83	.82	.85
Interdependent Self-construal	12	.88	.85	.80
Individualism	8	.52	.73	.75
Collectivism	8	.90	.87	.80
Attitude Towards Luxury	12	.70	.83	.67

5.3.3 Insights and Implications of Pilot Study Results

Overall, respondents across the three countries, the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria were familiar with luxury wristwatches and jewellery and no respondent reported being confused by the pilot survey structure and questionnaire's instructions or encountering any ambiguous questions, or word phrasings. Therefore, no changes regarding wording and structure were made to the questionnaire to improve its clarity and flow. Even though no respondent chose the attention check questions option indicating there was no potential problem of respondents running through the questions or clicking through the answers and experiencing fatigue while answering the questions, this study retained the attention check questions for the main study survey questionnaire. In terms of the measurement scales measuring the conceptual model constructs, the findings of the reliability analysis indicated that the respondents' engagement and interest were not lost. Accordingly, no major modifications were made to the main study's survey questionnaire and a further pilot test was considered unnecessary.

CHAPTER 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collection based on studies across three cultures, the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. This chapter is structured as follows: Section 6.2 presents information on the initial analysis of the main study data collection including the normality test and multicollinearity. The initial analysis was conducted to ensure data accuracy before assessing the proposed research model. Section 6.3 offers an overview of the respondents' demographics and Section 6.4 presents discussions of the measurement model analysis including measurement invariance, reliability, and validity checks, using Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS). Section 6.5 presents the assessment of the structural model analysis using multigroup structural equation modelling and subsequently, the hypotheses results are presented in Section 6.7, and a summary of the chapter is presented in Section 6.8.

The main study data was collected from an online panel that was hosted by Survey Monkey following the procedure used in the pilot study via a structured questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale. Data were collected across three countries, the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria within a five-week period between October and mid-November 2021. After performing the data screen procedures explained below, a total of 935 usable responses were collected from the three countries: 221 responses from the United Kingdom, 319 from India, and 395 from Nigeria. The data were cleaned before proceeding to analyse the data set by examining data input accuracy, missing values, and normal distribution checks.

6.2. Data Collection Screening

6.2.1. Normality Distribution

To access the normality of the distribution of scores for the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria datasets, Kline (2015) suggests a variable is normally distributed if its Skewness and kurtosis is less than three and kurtosis value less than ten. Skewness indicates the measure of the symmetry of the distribution (Pallant, 2010) which could either be positive skewness or negative skewness. Conversely, kurtosis refers to the relative peakedness of a data distribution (Pallant 2010). None of the skewness values were outside the -3 to +3 range and the kurtosis value was more than 10 (Kline, 2015). The range of the skewness and kurtosis values for the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria datasets fell within the acceptable range and thus can be considered to be mostly normally distributed (Table 6.1)

Table 6.1 Normality test for UK, India, and Nigeria

Construct	Item	Skewness			Kurtosis		
		UK	INDIA	NIG	UK	INDIA	NIG
Independent Self-Construal	IND6	-1.065	-1.580	-1.040	1.215	1.868	1.138
	IND9	-.504	-.759	-.727	-.556	-.252	.106
	IND10	-.775	-1.090	-.768	.700	.609	.383
	IND11	-1.086	-1.522	-.860	1.409	.215	.542
	IND12	-1.066	-2.094	-.1.180	.768	.975	1.620
Interdependent Self-Construal	INT1	-1.156	-2.003	-1.359	1.082	5.578	5.578
	INT2	-1.230	-2.041	-1.293	1.522	4.938	4.938
	INT5	-1.569	-2.066	-.798	1.017	5.894	5.894
	INT6	-.582	-.749	-.987	.203	-.081	-.081
	INT9	-.853	-.974	-.956	.560	.973	.827
Individualism	INDI1	-1.519	-1.217	-1.543	1.188	.233	1.649
	INDI2	-1.193	-.916	-1.156	1.414	-.271	1.351
	INDI3	-1.095	-1.259	-1.278	1.505	.960	1.713
	INDI4	-1.088	-1.462	-1.104	1.061	1.316	1.410
	INDI5	-.790	-.961	-1.010	.711	-.053	.646
Collectivism	COL4	-.885	-1.308	-1.158	.849	1.409	1.941
	COL5	-.770	-1.425	-1.115	-.174	1.636	.960
	COL6	-1.254	-1.363	-1.181	1.238	.124	1.754
	COL7	-.767	-1.418	-.950	-.227	.613	.642
	COL8	-.717	-1.152	-1.338	.231	.586	1.589
Attitude Towards Luxury	LUX6	-.065	.434	-.348	-1.085	-.881	-.853
	LUX7	-.561	-.415	-.807	-.485	-.865	-.012
	LUX8	-.448	-.093	-.937	-.520	-1.087	.281
	LUX9	-.462	-.393	-.838	-.465	-1.014	.179

6.2.2. Assessing Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity can pose a problem of the strong correlation between multiple predictors in the model by limiting the regression size value making it difficult to understand the approximate contributions of individual independent variables (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013). Following past studies, tolerance impact and calculating variance inflation factors (VIF) have

been suggested in checking multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). VIF value indicates whether a predictor has a strong linear relationship with other predictors, thus VIF value greater than 10 indicates the presence of multicollinearity (Field 2012; Pallant, 2010). On the other hand, tolerance refers to the variability of independent variables not explained by other independent variables (Hair et al., 2010). The test of multicollinearity in the present study revealed the highest VIF to be less than 10 and showed no tolerance value was less than 0.1. The results (table 6.0) showed the highest VIF value of 1.44 and a tolerance value of .956 for the United Kingdom dataset, the highest VIF value of 1.131 and a tolerance value of .979 for the India dataset, and the highest VIF value of 2.419 and a tolerance value of .992 for the Nigeria dataset. Therefore, this study posed no concerns regarding multicollinearity.

Table 6.2 Multicollinearity check

Construct	Tolerance			VIF		
	UK	India	NIG	UK	India	NIG
Independent Self-Construal	.956	.926	.515	1.046	1.080	1.940
Interdependent Self-Construal	.935	.884	.538	1.070	1.131	1.860
Individualism	.879	.979	.992	1.137	1.021	1.008
Collectivism	.695	.943	.413	1.440	1.060	2.419
Social Status	.813	.901	.931	1.231	1.109	1.075

6.3. Demographic Characteristics

This section presents the details of the demographic variables, the frequencies, and the percentages of various variables such as gender, sex, age, occupation, education and household income presented in Table 6.1.

The dataset revealed that 23.1%, 17.9% and 15.7% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years old in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria respondents respectively, while 26.7%, 49.5%, and 29.9% of the respondents were aged between 26 and 34 years old for United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria respondents respectively and 38.0%, 29.8% and 48.1% of the

respondents were aged between 35 and 49 years old for United Kingdom, India and Nigeria respondents respectively, The sample revealed that 52.9%, 52.7% and 46.6% of the sample respondents were males in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria respondents respectively, while 47.1%, 47.3% and 53.4% of the sample respondents were males in the United Kingdom, India and Nigeria respondents respectively. The most frequently selected category for educational level is 43%, 53.9% and 52.7% for a bachelor's degree in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria respondents respectively, followed by 34.8%, 39.5% and 32.4% for a master's degree in United Kingdom, India and Nigeria respondents respectively, while 8.1%, 3.4% and 4.6% selected PhD degree for United Kingdom, India and Nigeria respondents respectively. For occupation, 31.7%, 29.5%, 30.4% of the sample respondents most frequently selected intermediate Managerial in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria respectively.

Past studies (e.g., Pillai and Nair, 2021; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019) on luxury consumption and behaviour have pointed out that luxury purchase intention and consumption is a universal motive for every individual in terms of age, gender and income. For example, Stathopoulou and Balabanis (2019) considered participants from all income levels except the poorest for US participants. Shukla and Purani (2012) study employed a mall intercept method in the UK and India. Moreover, it has been suggested that the democratization of the luxury requires a sample from the wider population including occasional luxury consumers (Dubois & Laurent, 1998; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012). Therefore, conducting an online survey is not likely to pose a problem with representativeness and generalisability of the study in the UK, India and Nigeria population. The rest of the demographic variables is presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3. Demographic Variables

		United Kingdom (n=221)	India (n=319)	Nigeria (n=395)
Gender	Male	52%	52.7%	46.6%
	Female	47.1%	47.3%	53.4%
Age Group	18-25	23.1%	17.9%	15.7%
	26-34	26.7%	49.5%	29.9%
	35-49	38.0%	29.8%	48.1%
	50-59	10.4%	2.5%	4.8%
	60 and Over	1.8%	0.3%	1.5%
Education	Bachelor	43%	53.9%	52.7%
	Masters	34.8%	39.5%	32.4%
	School Leaving	8.1%	3.4%	4.6%
Occupation	Most frequently selected	31.7% (Intermediate Managerial)	29.5% (Intermediate Managerial)	30.4% (Intermediate Managerial)
	2nd Most frequently selected	21.3% (Higher Managerial)	27.3% (Supervisory/Clerical)	20.3% (Higher Managerial)
	3rd Most frequently selected	15.8% (Casual/Part-time Worker)	15.8% (Higher Managerial)	13.4% (Supervisory/Clerical)
Income	Most frequently selected	34.8% (Over £50000)	33.9% (Under 500000INR)	28.4% (Under ₦1,000,000)
	2nd Most frequently selected	22.6% (£30000 - £50000)	32.9% (Under 500000INR)	19.7% (₦2,000,000-₦3,999,999)
	3rd Most frequently selected	14.0% (£20000 - £29999)	10.7% (Under 500000INR)	17.5% (₦1,000,000-₦1,999,999)

6.4. Assessment of the Measurement Model

The measurement model is a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model which assesses the latent variables and their indicators or unobserved variables using the goodness of fit measures. Most of the model modifications occur in the measurement stage because misspecification can occur here and is important to be correct (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). Once the

measurement model is valid and reliable, only then can the estimation of the structural model be tested. The procedure for establishing the measurement model, modifications, and final model fit indices is reported.

6.4.1. Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to the multiple-group research model simultaneously with 935 participants (221 United Kingdom, 319 India, and 395 Nigeria) and five latent variables included in the measurement model. They are Independent self-construal (INDSC), Interdependent self-construal (INTERSC), Individualism (INDI), Collectivism (COL), and Attitude towards Luxury (LUX). For a sample of this size, Hair et al. (2010) suggested a threshold of acceptable model fit for indicators consisting of a significant value for chi-square (χ^2), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of at least 0.9, Comparative fit Index (CFI) greater than 0.9, a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) less than 0.7 and a normed chi square (χ^2/df) less than 0.3. Initial results of the CFA of the measurement model demonstrated an unsatisfactory goodness-of-fit measure such that CFI and TLI were all below recommended threshold which could be due to within-construct error covariance, between construct error covariance or cross-loading among constructs see Table 6.4. In order to establish an acceptable fit, the standardised loadings for all latent variables should be high loadings on the intended latent variable and most likely above 0.5 this is to assess the extent to which a latent variable is measured well by its indicators (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 6.4 Summary of Measurement Model Fit 3-Group Model

	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Criterion			<3	>.90	>.90	<.07
3-Group Model	8281.55	1264	6.55	.74	.72	.077

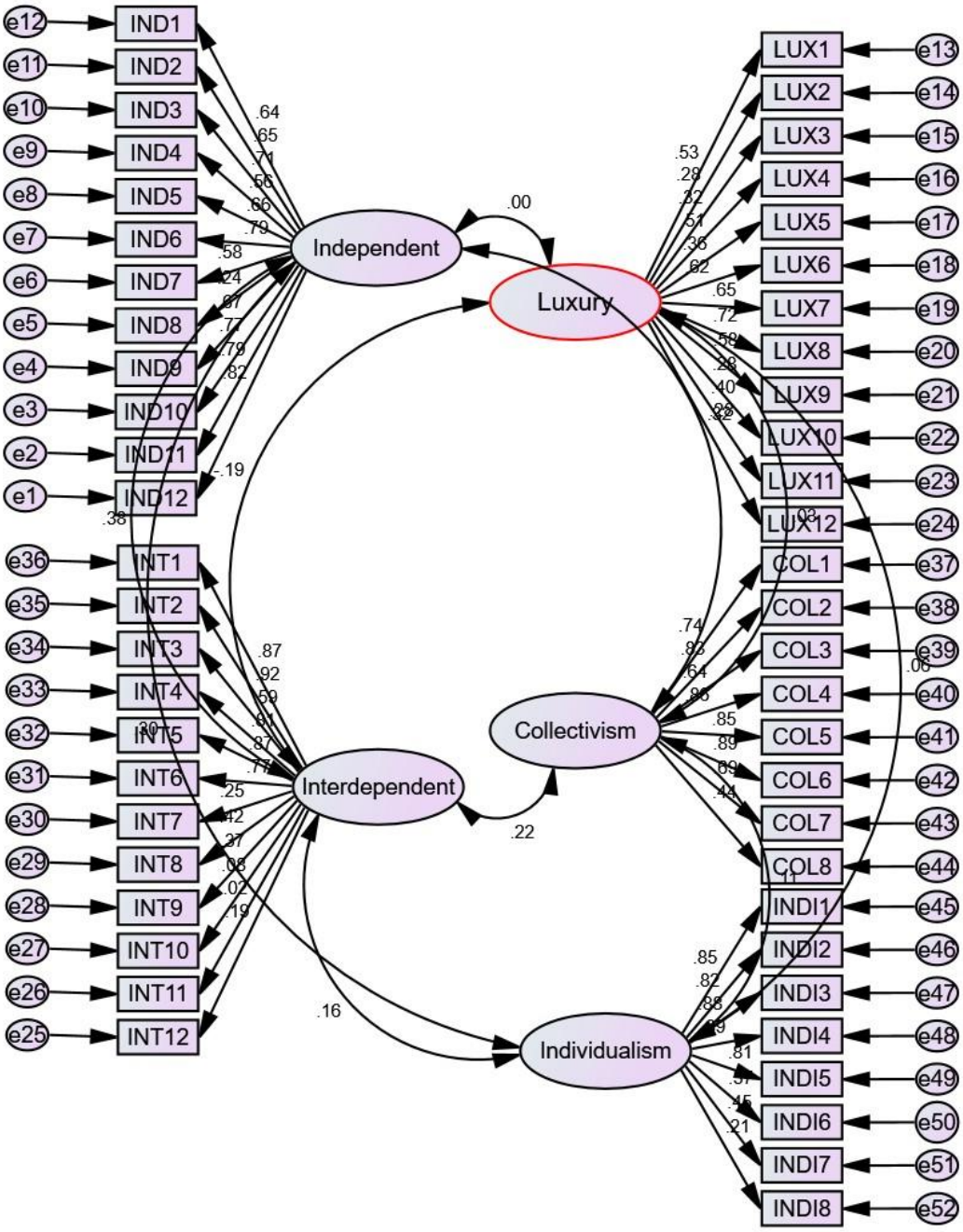


Figure 6.1 Initial Measurement Model

Before the modification indices were examined again in the next run, some standardised outer loadings for items regarding all the latent variables, INDSC, INTERSC, INDI, COL, and LUX exhibited factor loadings lower than the acceptable threshold of 0.5. The indicator items with loadings below 0.5 were slated for deletion in order to increase the level of model fit as suggested by Hair et al. (2010). They are independent self-construal, IND7, IND8, IND9, IND10, IND11, and IND12, interdependent self-construal INT7, INT8, INT9, INT10, INT11, and INT12, individualism, INDI6, INDI7 and INDI8, collectivism COL3, COL7, and COL8,

Attitude towards luxury, LUX5, LUX7, LUX8, LUX9, LUX10, LUX11, and LUX12. After these items were deleted, the revised CFA model achieved a good level of fit. The results were chi-square (χ^2) = 1766.79, degree of freedom (df) = 930. In terms of overall fit, the CFI =.95, TLI = .95, and RMSEA = .03. All the factor loadings for this measurement model are significant (p value < .000). The results indicated the model met the rule of thumb suggested by Hu and Bentler, (1999), showing a good fit (Tab 6.5). After deleting items, each construct had at least 3 indicators to form a composite measure in the model (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Although the deleted items were dropped in the next run, this did not alter the meaning of the construct. Since the study adopted reflective measures and while considering the measurement theory behind reflective measures in which the construct causes changes in the value of the items, however, in contrast in a formative model the latent construct is determined by the combination of its indicators item and variation in the construct does not cause a change in the indicator item measured. Thus, for reflective measures variation in the construct causes variation in the indicator items this means the items can be interchangeable, adding or dropping an item does not change the conceptual meaning of the construct by measuring the construct sampling a few relevant indicators underlying the construct domain (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The relevance of the individual items may vary across context and the sample data may reveal that some items do not reflect the construct in the context concerned (Jarvis et al., 2003). Thus, as the construct causes the value of the indicator items, the empirical evidence can reveal a flaw in the indicator concerned and not in the measurement of the construct overall (Jarvis et al., 2003). Since the items have a large degree of overlap, deleting items is not expected to severely impact the content and face validity, as long as each latent variable has a minimum of three indicators (Finn and Wang, 2014). Therefore, exclusion or inclusion of one or more indicators does not alter the content validity of the construct. The content validity is assessed empirically based on convergent and discriminant validity and established based on theoretical considerations as well. The results of the present study showed a indicating good convergence and discriminant validity. Moreover, internal consistency and reliability is ensured by assessing AVE, Cronbach alpha, factor loading. Subsequently, after deleting items, each construct had at least three indicators to form a composite measure in the present study (Jarvis et al., 2003). The revised model has twenty-seven indicators namely: six indicators for independent self-construal (INDSC), six for interdependent self-construal (INTERSC), five for collectivism (COL), five for Individualism (INDI), and five indicators for attitude towards Luxury (LUX) as shown in figure 6.2 and Table of model fit measures for individual sample shown in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5 Summary of Modified Measurement Model 3-Group Model

	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Criterion			<3	>.90	>.90	<.07
3-Group Model (modified)	1766.79	930	1.9	.95	.95	.03

The summary of each group model fit is presented in Table 6.6 below

Table 6.6 Measurement Model UK, India and Nigeria

	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Criterion			<3	>.90	>.90	<.07
UK	674.64	310	2.18	.92	.91	.07
India	487.36	310	1.57	.96	.96	.04
Nigeria	604.27	310	1.95	.96	.96	.06

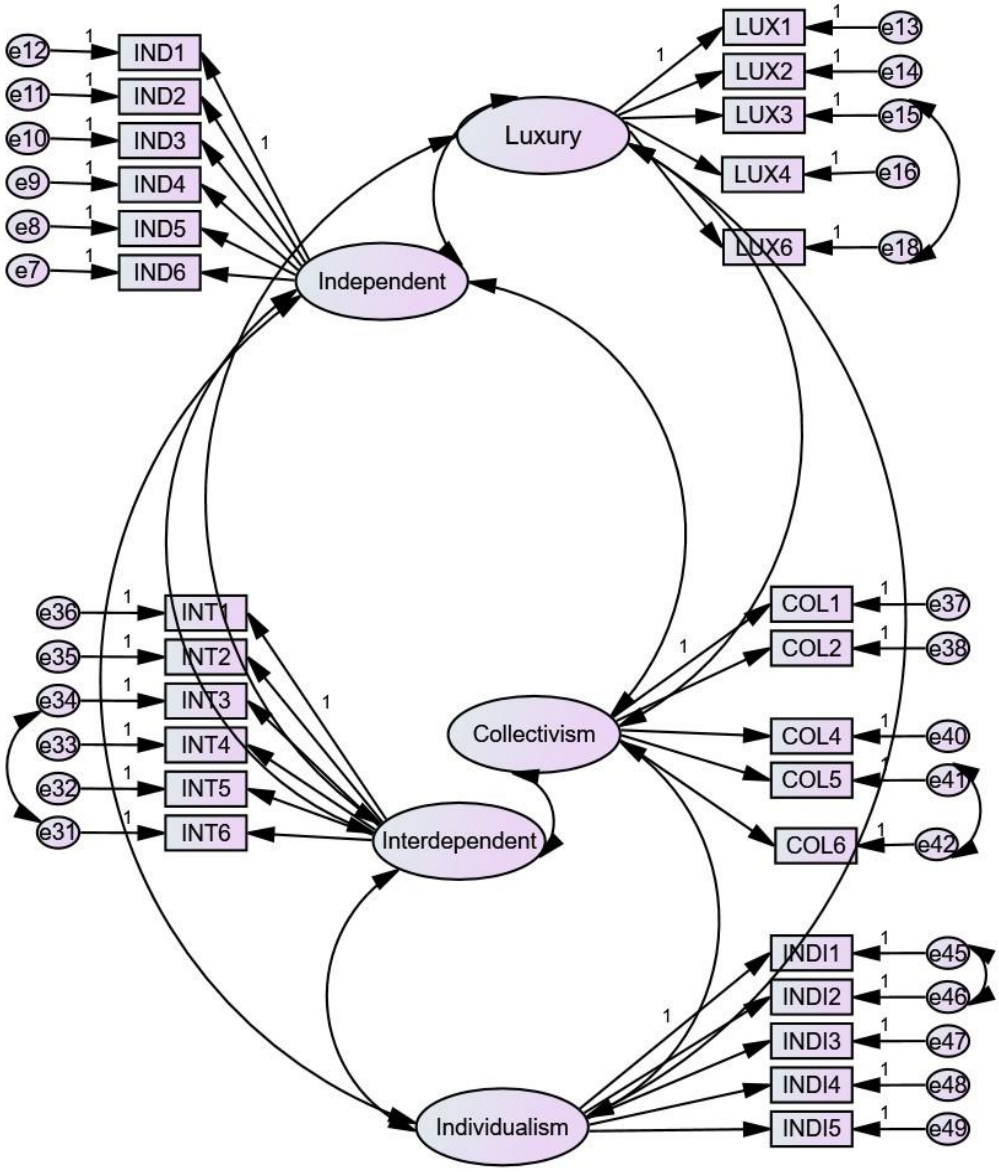


Figure 6.2 Modified measurement model

6.4.2. Measurement Invariance

According to Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998), cross-cultural studies need to consider measurement invariance to identify whether the same operationalised constructs remain unchanged across different groups. The procedure examines whether respondents across groups conceptually interpret the same measure in a similar way (Milfont and Fischer, 2010). However, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for each country was conducted before examining the cross-national measurement invariance to check whether the measurement scales were psychometrically sound within each country (Shukla and Purani, 2012). The results indicated the scales fit the data reasonably well across individual countries as shown in Table 6.6. The

comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) are all above the recommended level of 0.9 (Hu and Bentler, 1999; West et al., 2012;). The normed chi-square ($\chi 2$ /df) values are below the recommended cut-off point of 3, while the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA) is below the recommended level of 0.06 (Kline, 2015).

Since this study involves respondents from three country groups who identify as British, Indian, and Nigerians, measurement invariance was carried out to determine whether the respondents ascribed the same meaning to the same measurement scale. This study follows Steenkamp and Baumgartner's (1998) procedures to assess the cross-cultural invariance of the scales (configural and metric invariance) across the three countries using multigroup CFA (MGCFA) in Amos, which offers the more efficient and reliable means to measure the scales for invariance. First, the study tested for configural invariance and was carried out with the CFA model to check whether configurations of the non-salient and salient factor loadings are significantly different between the three countries (Pillai and Nair, 2021). This approach tests for measurement invariance by setting increasingly restrictive cross-group constraints and comparing more restricted models with less restricted models. Thus, assessing changes in model fits for significance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998), as shown in Table 6.7, an unconstrained measurement model across the three groups indicated a good model fit. Indicating the RMSEA value for the modified model is 0.03 less than the threshold of .07 as suggested by Hair et al (2019). The other model fit measures including the CFI (.95) and TLI (.95) are all above the recommended threshold value of 0.9. The normed chi-square is 1.9, below the recommended cut-off point of 3. Overall, the measurement scale achieved full configural invariance meaning the overall factor structure fits well across the three countries United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria.

Having achieved the configural invariance that is the unconstrained or baseline model against which other models are compared, the metric invariance is measured thereafter. The metric invariance examines whether the factor loadings are the same across groups. This was carried out by constraining the factor loadings of the model to be the same across the three countries and comparing the fit statistics with the unconstrained model. This process examines whether respondents across the countries answered the questions similarly (Milfont and Fischer, 2010; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998)

For the metric invariance, in an unconstrained model, the factor loadings, item intercepts, and error variances were allowed to be variant across the groups. The chi-square ($\chi^2 = 254.86$, df =

44, $p < .000$) was significant indicating only partial metric invariance (Pillar and Nair, 2021; Zeuger-Roth, Zakar and Diamantopoulos, 2015). Even though there was a significant difference between the configural and metric invariance models, other alternative fit indices did not decrease substantially as shown in Table 6.7. Since the chi-square tests for the model were significant this means that the factor loadings are not the same across the three groups (not invariant) thus full metric invariance is not achieved (Pillar and Nair, 2021). However, Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998) pointed out that full measurement invariance is not often achieved, and full metric invariance is extremely rare in cross-national studies. Moreover, Bryne, Shavelson and Muthen (1989) suggested that full measurement invariance is not mandatory for further analysis.

For partial metric invariance, in a constrained model all factor loadings is constrained to be equal across all three groups, the invariance is tested by examining the critical ratios for the difference between the measurement weights in both models (Pillar and Nair, 2021; Bakir et al., 2020; Westjohn et al., 2016). The measurement weights that were statistically different in other words contributed to not achieving full metric invariance constraints across the three groups was identified. Therefore, having looked through each construct separately, it was found that IND2, INT4, INT5, INDI3, INDI4, COL4, COL5, LUX2, LUX3 were untenable across the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria samples. The constraints on these non-invariant factor loadings, measurement weights, were then removed and the measurement invariance model run again, and this revealed partial metric invariance (Putnick and Bornstein, 2016). After testing the partial metric invariance by setting free the equality constraints for the above items, the revised measurement model demonstrated a better fit (χ^2 /df = 1.9, CFI = .95, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .03). Moreover, the partial metric invariance fit indices did not significantly differ from the configural model (χ^2 = 43.457, df = 18, p = .101), as shown in Table 6.7, the result, therefore, achieves partial metric invariance showing construct comparability across three country samples (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998).

Although this study achieves only partial metric invariance, it is suitable for comparing self-construal and cultural differences in the formation of attitudes toward luxury consumption across the three samples. This is because first, each country sample achieved partial metric invariance. In addition, although full measurement invariance is ideal and reasonable which indicates that participants in different countries responded to the items similarly, full metric invariance is not scientifically realistic (e.g., Horn, 1991; Byrne et al., 1989; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). In the present study having met only partial metric invariance, the scales are acceptable for making cross-cultural comparisons with similar meanings regarding the

influence of self-construal orientation and cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism on attitudes towards luxury across the three countries' samples.

Table 6.7 Model Comparison for Measurement Invariance

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Configural Invariance	1766.79	930	1.9	.95	.95	.03
Full metric invariance	2021.65	974	2.08	.94	.93	.03
Partial metric invariance	1810.25	948	1.91	.95	.94	.03

6.4.3. Common Method Variance

In order to test for the existence of common method bias, both procedural remedies and statistical methods was adopted following recent previous studies (e.g., Pillai and Nair, 2021; Bakir et al., 2020). The procedural measures were aimed at reducing common method biases following Podsakoff et al., 2003 recommendations such as checking all scale items for ambiguities and improving them where necessary and subsequently assuring respondents of anonymity to minimise common method bias. To ensure common method variance was not a problem statistical tests were additionally conducted firstly, Harman's single-factor test was employed with all measures in the model. All variables were loaded onto a single factor and constrained so that there is no rotation (Podsakoff et al., 2003). If the new factor explains more than 50% of the variance, then common method bias may be present. The results indicated that common method bias was not a problem in the British (16% explained by the single factor), Indian (20% explained by the single factor), and Nigerian (21% explained by the single factor) samples. Secondly, a common latent factor (CLF) test was adopted. A new common variable factor is introduced such that all observed items are related to it and all the paths are constrained to be equal (Williams et al., 2003).

The standardized regression weights from the unconstrained and constrained model after adding the CLF were compared for each item. If the difference between both standardised regression weights is larger than 0.2 common method variance is in existence. In all three countries, the differences before and after adding the CLF were less than 0.2 on all items indicating that no common method bias existed in the present study. Furthermore, common method variance is not a problem if the addition of the new CLF does not significantly improve

the fit of the model (Cheung and Rensvold, 2002). The unconstrained and constrained models were compared and there was no significant difference between both models, this indicates that common method variance does not pose any validity concerns of the study findings, CFI/RMSEA ≤ 0.01 (Cheung and Rensvold, 2002) as shown in the Table 6.8

Table 6.8 Model Comparison for Common Latent Factor (CLF)

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Without CLF	2115.18	942	2.25	.93	.92	.04
With CLF	2111.4	941	2.24	.93	.93	.04

6.4.4. Reliability and Validity Measurement

The study evaluates the construct validity based on convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to the extent to which the scale correlates positively with other measures of the same construct (Malhotra et al., 2013). Convergent validity is assessed by testing the average variance extracted (AVE), normally used to calculate the mean variance extracted. Hair et al. (2010) pointed out that the rule of thumb for AVE should be higher than 0.5, indicating that more than 50% of the variances were extracted. The results for the UK, India, and Nigeria samples as shown in table 6.8, reveals the average variance extracted (AVE) for all measures is 0.50 and above for all constructs, indicating good convergence moreover construct reliability is an indicator of good convergent validity. According to structural equation, modelling the composite reliability should be greater than 0.70 indicating good reliability. The composite reliability (CR) values for all scales across the countries are above the recommended threshold value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010) in all five constructs ranging from 0.73 to 0.98 giving further evidence of construct reliability.

A scale possesses discriminant validity (DV) if the average variance extracted by the construct is greater than the shared variance or the squared correlation of a construct with other constructs (Malhotra et al., 2013). This criterion was met by all the variables in the study as no correlation exceeds the square root of the average variance extracted. The square root of the AVE values was higher than the corresponding latent variable correlations. The composite reliability of all scales was above 0.70 across the constructs, exceeding the recommended threshold value, which also provides strong evidence of discriminant validity. The results for each country dataset are summarised in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9 Summary Results of Reliability and Convergent Validity 3-Group Model

Construct	Item	AVE			CR		
		UK	India	NIG	UK	India	NIG
Independent Self-construal	IND1 IND2 IND3 IND4 IND5 IND6	0.53	0.52	0.55	0.87	0.75	0.88
Interdependent Self-construal	INT1 INT2 INT3 INT4 INT5 INT6	0.58	0.59	0.77	0.89	0.73	0.95
Individualism	INDI1 INDI2 INDI3 INDI4 IND15	0.78	0.66	0.69	0.95	0.91	0.92
Collectivism	COL1 COL2 COL4 COL5 COL6	0.75	0.54	0.74	0.94	0.82	0.94
Attitude towards Luxury	LUX1 LUX2 LUX3 LUX4 LUX6	0.53	0.51	0.91	0.85	0.84	0.98

6.4.4.1. United Kingdom Sample

As shown in Table 6.4, the composite reliability scores for all constructs exceeded the cut off value of 7.0 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), this indicates that the scales are reliable. All of the factor loadings are significant at ($P< 0.001$). The average variance extracted (AVE) for the India sample as shown in table 6.8, reveals 0.50 and above cut off threshold for all constructs. Furthermore, the AVE for each construct was greater than the corresponding latent variable correlations (Table 6.9.1). The results overall suggest that each construct has strong evidence of convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 6.10 Reliability and Convergent Validity United Kingdom Sample

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Independent Self-Construal	IND1	0.73	0.87	0.53	0.88
	IND2	0.72			
	IND3	0.74			
	IND4	0.74			
	IND5	0.67			
	IND6	0.77			
Interdependent Self-Construal	INT1	0.75	0.89	0.53	0.89
	INT2	0.87			
	INT3	0.52			
	INT4	0.85			
	INT5	0.85			
	INT6	0.68			
Individualism	IND1	0.86	0.95	0.78	0.96
	IND2	0.78			
	IND3	0.97			
	IND4	0.98			
	IND5	0.80			
Collectivism	COL1	0.88	0.94	0.75	0.95
	COL2	0.94			
	COL4	0.92			
	COL5	0.76			
	COL6	0.83			
Attitude Towards Luxury	LUX1	0.74	0.85	0.58	0.86
	LUX2	0.65			
	LUX3	0.51			
	LUX4	0.83			
	LUX6	0.85			

Table 6.10.1 Discriminant Validity of United Kingdom Sample

Latent Variable	INDSC	INTERSC	INDI	COL	LUXURY
INDSC	**0.73**				
INTERSC	0.06	**0.76**			
INDI	0.19	0.08	**0.88**		
COL	0.24	0.12	-0.04	**0.88**	
LUXURY	0.04	-0.06	0.11	0.32	**0.73**

INDSC= Independent SC, **INTERSC**=Interdependent SC, **INDIVI**= Individualism **COLLECT**=Collectivism, **LUXURY**=Attitude towards luxury

6.4.4.2. India Sample

As shown in Table 6.4, the composite reliability scores for all constructs exceeded the cut off value of 7.0 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), this indicates that the scales are reliable. All of the factor loadings are significant at (P< 0.001). The average variance extracted (AVE) for the India sample as shown in table 6.8, reveals 0.50 and above cut off threshold for all constructs. Furthermore, the AVE for each construct was greater than the corresponding latent variable correlations (Table 6.10.1). The results overall suggest that each construct has strong evidence of convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 6.11 Reliability and Convergent Validity India Sample

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Independent Self-Construal	IND1	0.71	0.74	0.52	0.76
	IND2	0.72			
	IND3	0.67			
	IND4	0.71			
	IND5	0.51			
	IND6	0.77			
Interdependent Self-Construal	INT1	0.70	0.74	0.59	0.74
	INT2	0.70			
	INT3	0.84			
	INT4	0.57			
	INT5	0.54			
	INT6	0.71			
Individualism	IND1	0.68	0.91	0.66	0.92
	IND2	0.71			
	IND3	0.73			
	IND4	0.72			
	IND5	0.55			
Collectivism	COL1	0.65	0.82	0.54	0.84
	COL2	0.77			
	COL4	0.82			
	COL5	0.73			
	COL6	0.62			
Attitude Towards Luxury	LUX1	0.54	0.84	0.51	0.85
	LUX2	0.71			
	LUX3	0.88			
	LUX4	0.58			
	LUX6	0.54			

Tab 6.11.1 Discriminant Validity of India Sample

Latent Variable	INDSC	INTERSC	INDIVI	COLLECT	LUXURY
INDSC	**0.72**				
INTERSC	0.54	**0.77**			
INDIVI	0.36	0.28	**0.81**		
COL	0.66	0.68	0.37	**0.74**	
LUXURY	-0.07	-0.00	0.06	0.03	**0.72**

INDSC= Independent SC, **INTERSC**=Interdependent SC, **INDIVI**= Individualism **COLLECT**=Collectivism, **LUXURY**=Attitude towards luxury

6.4.4.3. Nigeria Sample

As shown in Table 6.4, the composite reliability scores for all constructs exceeded the cut off value of 7.0 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), this indicates that the scales are reliable. All of the factor loadings are significant at (P< 0.001). The average variance extracted (AVE) for the India sample as shown in table 6.8, reveals 0.50 and above cut off threshold for all constructs. Furthermore, the AVE for each construct was greater than the corresponding latent variable correlations (Table 6.11.1). The results overall suggest that each construct has strong evidence of convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 6.10 Reliability and Convergent Validity Nigeria Sample

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Independent Self-Construal	IND1	0.71	0.88	0.55	0.89
	IND2	0.72			
	IND3	0.79			
	IND4	0.73			
	IND5	0.71			
	IND6	0.78			
Interdependent Self-Construal	INT1	0.89	0.95	0.77	0.96
	INT2	0.92			
	INT3	0.76			
	INT4	0.88			
	INT5	0.92			
	INT6	0.88			
Individualism	IND1	0.82	0.91	0.69	0.93
	IND2	0.91			
	IND3	0.97			
	IND4	0.98			
	IND5	0.80			
Collectivism	COL1	0.76	0.94	0.74	0.94
	COL2	0.89			
	COL4	0.91			
	COL5	0.84			
	COL6	0.89			
Attitude Towards Luxury	LUX1	0.92	0.98	0.91	0.97
	LUX2	0.96			
	LUX3	0.98			
	LUX4	0.93			
	LUX6	0.98			

Tab 6.12.1 Discriminant Validity of Nigeria Sample

Latent Variable	INDSC	INTERSC	INDIVI	COLLECT	LUXURY
INDSC	**0.74**				
INTERSC	0.24	**0.88**			
INDIVI	0.33	0.26	**0.83**		
COL	-0.13	-0.14	-0.10	**0.86**	
LUXURY	-0.06	-0.10	-0.19	-0.03	**0.96**

INDSC= Independent SC, **INTERSC**=Interdependent SC, **INDIVI**= Individualism **COLLECT**=Collectivism, **LUXURY**=Attitude towards luxury

6.5. Assessment of the Structural Model

Having previously established a good fit measurement model (see Table 6.5 in Section 6.4.1), the next step is testing the fit of the structural model to examine how well the hypothesised model fits the data. The use of structural equation modelling is justified in this thesis (see section 4.6.1). To test this study's hypotheses, structural equation modelling was conducted using AMOS to estimate all direct and indirect effects simultaneously by applying the 2000 Bootstrapping methods at 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. As shown in Table 6.12, the structural model indicated a good fit. The RMSEA value is 0.04 which fell below the threshold of .07 as suggested by Hair et al (2010). The model fit measures such as the CFI (.92) are greater than the cut-off recommended threshold value of 0.9. The normed chi-square (χ^2/df) is 2.26, which is below the recommended cut-off point of 3. Overall, these fit indices showed that the hypothesised relationship between the constructs can be tested based on the research model (Tabachnick and Fidell 2013)

Table 6.13 Summary of Structural Model Fit 3-Group Model

	χ^2	**Df**	**χ^2/df**	**CFI**	**TLI**	**RMSEA**
Criterion			<3	>.90	>.90	<.07
	237.42	105	2.26	.92	.84	.04

Table 6.14 Summary of Research Hypotheses Results

Hypothesized Relationships	UK	95% CI	India	95% CI	NGA	95% CI	Hypothesis Test
H1: IndSC - LUX	.052*ns*	-.067, .157	.076*ns*	-.061, .206	.101*ns*	-.042, .251	Not Supported
H2: InterSC - LUX	.280***	.143, .407	.156*	.038, .275	.223***	.083, .352	**Supported**
H3: IndSC - INDI	- -.083*ns*	-.188, .030	.049*ns*	-.068, .164	-.078*ns*	-.193, .045	Not Supported
H4: InterSC - INDI	.043*ns*	-.086, .176	-.084*ns*	-.193, .034	-.033*ns*	-.144, .082	Not Supported
H5: IndSC - COL	.102*ns*	-.025, .237	.456***	.370, .529	-.139***	-.244, -.019	**Partially Supported**
H6: InterSC - COL	.245***	.130, .371	.415***	.328, .494	-.084*ns*	-.177, .011	**Partially Supported**
H7: INDI - LUX	.071*ns*	-.061, .198	.044*ns*	-.050, .144	-.171***	-.251, -.082	Not Supported
H8: COL - LUX	-.148*	-.285, -.003	.202***	.067, .335	-.037*ns*	-.131, .055	**Partially Supported**
H9: Social*IndSC - LUX	.061ns	-.075, .191	031ns	-.074 .137	.063*ns*	-.056, .197	Not Supported
H10: Social*InterSC - LUX	-.028ns	-.142 .078	.025ns	-.096	.225***	.121, .332	**Partially Supported**

Note: Standardised coefficients reported; *P < .05; ***P < .001, ns = not significant,

However, although, not hypothesized, the study explored whether the structural paths had the same effects across the three countries. Having constrained all paths coefficient across groups to be equal, the chi-square difference between the overall constrained model and the unconstrained model is significant ($\chi 2 = 18.14$, df =10, p <.002). Hence, this study compares a constrained model, in which only one individual structural path is set to be invariant, with the unconstrained model where other paths were set freely (Walsh and Bartikowski, 2013; Shukla and Purani, 2012). All ten structural paths were examined and results across the three groups are shown in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14.1 Hypothesised Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Hypothesized Relationships	Hypothesis Test	χ2(df)	Invariance Supported
H1: INDSC - LUX	Not Supported	.262 (2)	Supported
H2: INTERSC - LUX	Supported	.993 (2)	Supported
H3: INDSC - INDI	Not Supported	2.42 (2)	Supported
H4: INTERSC - INDI	Not Supported	2.19 (2)	Supported
H5: INDSC - COL	Partially Supported	94.68 (2)	Not supported***
H6: INTERSC - COL	Partially Supported	35.46 (2)	Not supported***
H7: INDI - LUX	Partially Supported	13.20 (2)	Not supported***
H8: COL - LUX	Partially Supported	12.55 (2)	Not supported***
H9: SOCIAL*INDSC-LUX	Not Supported	.081(2)	Supported
H10: SOCIAL*INTERSC-LUX	Partially Supported	6.81(2)	Not supported**

* $p \leq 0.05$; $p \leq 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.001$

Table 6.15 Mediation Path Independent Self-Construal - Attitude towards Luxury

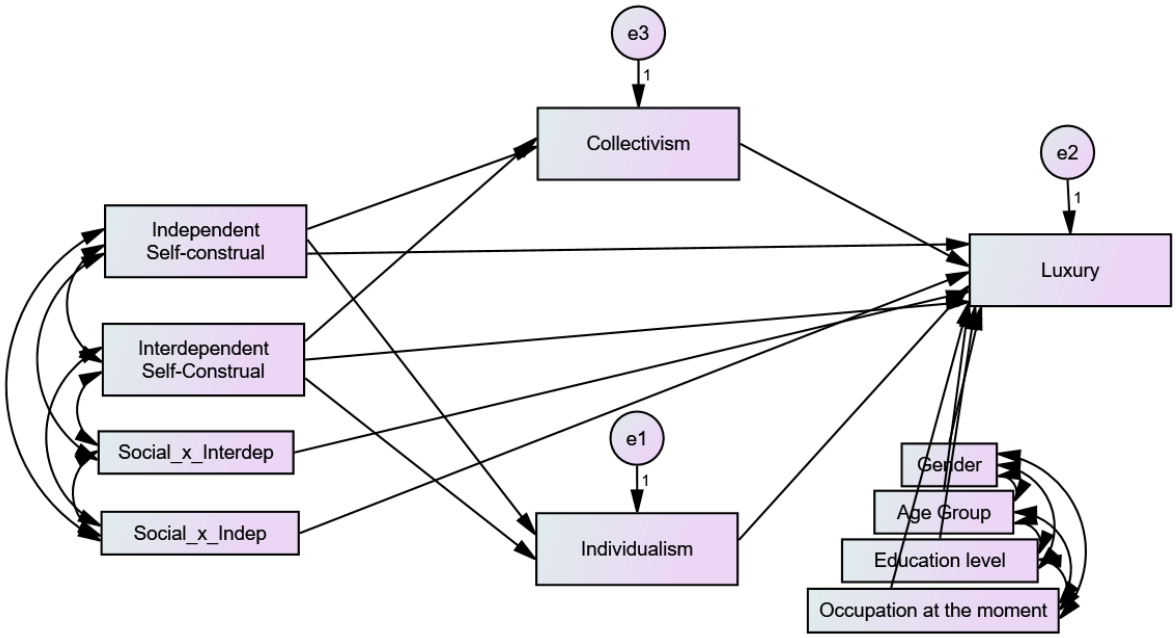
H11	Direct Effect (CI)	Indirect Effect (CI)	Mediation
UK	.052 (-.067, .157)	-.017 (-.059, .005)	No mediation
India	.076 (-.061, .101)	.128*** (.045, .231)	**Full mediation**
Nigeria	.101 (-.042, .251)	.011 (-.003, .030)	No mediation

* $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.001$; CI= 95% interval

Table 6.16 Mediation Path Interdependent Self-Construal - Attitude towards Luxury

H12	**Direct Effect (CI)**	**Indirect Effect (CI)**	**Mediation**
UK	.280*** (.143, .407)	-.021 (-.069, .017)	No mediation
India	.156* (.038, .275)	.091*** (.019, .140)	**Partial mediation**
Nigeria	.223*** (.083, .352)	.009 (-.015, .037)	No mediation

* $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.001$; CI= 95% interval



6.6. Results of Hypotheses Test

6.6.1. Influence of Self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury

Hypotheses 1 and 2 addressed the impact of self-construal on attitude towards luxury. An individual's self-construal has been shown to have a significant role in consumption of luxuries (Bakir et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Ko et al., 2019; Shukla and Purani, 2012). Hypotheses 1 and 2 expect that individuals with an independent and interdependent self-construal would have a positive influence on attitude towards luxury.

Hypothesis 1 (H1)- Not Supported

H1 proposed that an individual's Independent self-construal (INDSC) would have a positive influence on attitude towards luxury (LUX). However, the result showed no evidence of a positive influence between independent self-construal and luxury across the three countries United Kingdom respondents (β = .052, P = .403); India (β = .076, P = .297) and Nigeria (β = .101, P = .157). Hence hypothesis 1 was not supported.

In addition, while not hypothesised, when the relationship between INDSC and LUX was fixed to be equal across the three groups, the chi-square difference was not significant ($\chi 2$ = .262, df =2, p = .877), therefore the result showed that differences in path coefficients between INDSC and LUX were not statistically significant in the three countries.

Hypothesis 2 (H2)- Supported

H2 proposed that an individual's Interdependent self-construal (INTERSC) would have a positive influence on attitude towards luxury (LUX). The results indicated support for H2 across the three countries; United Kingdom respondents (β = .280, $P \leq .001$); Indian respondents (β = .156, $P < .05$) and Nigeria respondents (β = .223, $P \leq .001$). Thus, the data lent support to H2.

In addition, while not hypothesised, when the relationship between INTERSC and LUX was fixed to be equal across the three groups, the chi-square difference was not significant ($\chi 2$ = .993, df =2, p = .609), therefore the result showed that differences in path coefficients between INTERSC and LUX were not statistically significant in the three countries.

6.6.2. Effect of Self-Construal on Individualism/Collectivism

Hypotheses 3-6 tested the relationships between the effect of self-construal on culture.

Hypothesis 3 (H3)- Not Supported

H3 proposed that an individual's Independent self-construal (INDSC) would have a positive influence on cultural orientation of Individualism (INDI). However, the result showed no evidence of a positive influence between independent self-construal and cultural orientation of collectivism across the three countries United Kingdom respondents (β = -.083, P = .163); India (β = .049, P = .395) and Nigeria (β = -.078, P = .229). Hence hypothesis 3 was not supported.

In addition, while not hypothesised, when the relationship between INDSC and INDI was fixed to be equal across the three groups, the chi-square difference was not significant ($\chi 2 = 2.416$, df =2, p = .299), therefore the result showed that differences in path coefficients between INDSC and INDI were not statistically significant in the three countries.

Hypothesis 4 (H4)- Not Supported

H4 proposed that an individual's Interdependent self-construal (INTERSC) would have a positive influence on cultural orientation of Individualism (INDI). However, the result showed no evidence of a positive influence between interdependent self-construal and cultural orientation of individualism across the three countries United Kingdom respondents ($\beta = -.043$, $P = .491$); India ($\beta = -.084$, $P = .150$) and Nigeria ($\beta = -.033$, $P = .547$). Hence hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Additionally, while not hypothesised, when the relationship between INTERSC and INDI was fixed to be equal across the three groups, the chi-square difference was not significant ($\chi 2 = 2.192$, df =2, p = .334), therefore the result showed that differences in path coefficients between INTERSC and INDI were not statistically significant in the three countries

Hypothesis 5 (H5)- Partially Supported

H5 proposed that an individual's Interdependent self-construal (INDSC) would have a positive influence on cultural orientation of collectivism (COL). The results showed support for Indian respondents ($\beta = .456$, $P < .001$) but not among the United Kingdom respondents ($\beta = .102$, $P = .114$), and Nigeria respondents ($\beta = -.139$, $P \leq .001$) although the effect of an individual's INDSC on COL was negative for Nigerian respondents. Therefore, H5 was partially supported.

In addition, while not hypothesised, when the relationship between INDSC and COL was fixed to be equal across the three groups, the chi-square difference was significant ($\chi 2 = 35.46$, df =2, p = .000). The result revealed differences in path coefficients between INDSC and COL and hence was statistically significant in the three countries, however, the relationship between an individual's INDSC and COL was strongest among the Indian respondents.

Hypothesis 6 (H6)- Partially Supported

H6 expected that Interdependent self-construal effects (INTERSC) would have a positive influence on the cultural orientation of collectivism (COL). The results showed support for United Kingdom respondents ($\beta = .245$, $P \leq .001$) and Indian respondents ($\beta = 0.456$, $P \leq .001$). However, for the Nigeria respondents ($\beta = -.084$, $P = .091$), the effect of an individual's

INTERSC on COL was negative and not statistically significant. Therefore, H6 was partially supported.

In addition, while not hypothesised, when the relationship between INTERSC and COL was fixed to be equal across the three groups, the chi-square difference was significant ($\chi 2 = .94.68$, df =2, $p \leq .000$). The result revealed differences in path coefficients between INTERSC and COL and therefore was statistically significant in the three countries. The relationship between an individual's INTERSC and COL was stronger among Indian respondents compared to United Kingdom respondents.

6.6.3. Effect of Culture on Attitude towards Luxury

Hypotheses 7-8 test the effect of cultural orientation on attitude toward luxury

Hypothesis 7 (H7)- Not Supported

H7 expected that an individual's cultural orientation of Individualism (INDI) would have a positive influence on attitude towards luxury (LUX). However, the result showed no evidence of a positive influence between individualism and attitude towards luxury across the three countries United Kingdom respondents ($\beta = .071$, $P = .298$), India respondents ($\beta = -.044$, $P = .378$) and Nigerian respondents ($\beta = -.171$, $P \leq .001$) although the effect on the relationship was negative, but it was statistically significant. Therefore, H7 was not supported.

Although, while not hypothesised, when the relationship between independent self-construal and cultural orientation of collectivism was constrained to be equal across the three groups, the result indicated that the relationship between INDI and LUX did not have the same magnitude of effect across the three countries ($\chi 2 = 13.20$, df =2, $p \leq .001$), the result showed that differences in path coefficients between INDI and LUX were statistically significant in the three countries. The relationship between an individual's INDI and LUX was strongest among the Nigerian respondents.

Hypothesis 8 (H8)- Partially Supported

H8 expected that an individual's cultural orientation of Collectivism (COL) would have a positive influence on attitude towards luxury (LUX). The results showed support among Indian respondents ($\beta = .202$, $P \leq .005$) but not supported among Nigerian respondents ($\beta = -.037$, $P = .298$) and United Kingdom respondents ($\beta = -.148$, $P < .045$) although the effect on the

relationship was negative for the United Kingdom, the relationship was statistically significant Therefore, H7 was partially supported.

While not hypothesised, when the relationship between independent self-construal and cultural orientation of collectivism was constrained to be equal across the three groups, the result indicated that the relationship between COL and LUX did not have the same magnitude of effect across the three countries ($\chi 2 = 12.55$, df =2, $p \leq .002$), therefore the result showed that differences in path coefficients between COL and LUX were statistically significant in the three countries. The relationship between an individual's INDI and LUX was stronger among Indian respondents compared to United Kingdom respondents.

6.6.4. Moderating effect of Subjective Social Status

Hypotheses 9-10 tested the moderating effect of subjective social status on the relationship of self-construal on attitude toward luxury.

Hypothesis 9 (H9)- Not Supported

H9 expects that the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury is stronger for consumers with high subjective social status than for low subjective social status. However, the result showed no evidence of a positive influence between the interaction effect of social status and independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury for the United Kingdom respondents (β = .038, P = .576); India (β = -.004, P = .996) and the Nigeria respondents (β = .074, P = .211). Hence hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Hypothesis 10 (H10)- Partially Supported

H10 expects that the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury is stronger for consumers with high subjective social status than for low subjective social status. The results indicate that the positive relationship between the interaction effect of subjective social status and interdependent (SOCIAL*INTERSC) and attitude towards luxury (LUX) showed support among Nigerian respondents (β = -.225, $P \leq .001$). However, H10 was not supported in either the United Kingdom (β = -.028, P = .624) and India respondents (β = .025, P = .645). Furthermore, compared to United Kingdom and Indian respondents, subjective social status has a stronger effect on Nigerian respondents. Therefore, H10 was partially supported.

6.6.5. Mediation role of Individualism and Collectivism

Hypotheses 11-12 tested the mediation role of individualism and collectivism on the relationship of self-construal on attitude toward luxury.

In the study model, individualism and collectivism help explain how self-construal influences consumers' attitudes toward luxury. A mediator variable is a mechanism through which a predictor variable influences an outcome variable (Frazier, Tix and Barron, 2004). Mediation effects can be either full or partial mediation. Full mediation is met when only the indirect effects are significant (Cheung and Lau, 2008) while, partial mediation is met when direct and indirect effects are significant (Cheung and Lau, 2008), and on the other hand, no mediation is assumed when indirect effects are not significant. Schneider et al. (2005) suggest the conditions for mediation are met when there is a significant relationship between the predictor and mediator variable, and between the mediator and outcome variable. In order to perform mediation effects, the conditions required for mediation effects have to be present. To test the mediation analysis in this study, bias-corrected bootstrapping in AMOS version 24.0 was performed, with 2000 re-samples and a 95% confidence interval (Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010). The effects of independent and interdependent self-construal orientation on individualism and collectivism dimension, as well as the effects of individualism and collectivism on attitude towards luxury consumption, were examined. Following Byrne (2010) recommendations, the bootstrapping procedure was adopted to test the indirect effects and their statistical significance to determine the mediation effects. The bootstrap method was used to produce the confidence intervals for the statistical estimate in achieving significance level at lower and upper limit confidence intervals. According to Hair et al. (2021), the number of bootstrap subsamples to be generated must be at least equal to the number of valid observations in the dataset and following previous studies on luxury consumption (e.g., Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Pillai and Nair, 2021) a bias corrected bootstrapping in Amos was used with 2000 subsamples and a 95% confidence interval. Accordingly, the bootstrapping results showed that independent and interdependent self-construal have a significant indirect on attitude towards luxury among India but not among UK and Nigeria sample.

Hypothesis 11 (H11)- Partially Supported

For independent self-construal, the mediation effect of individualism and collectivism dimension on the relationship between Independent self-construal and attitude towards luxury as shown in Table 6.15, the results indicated the indirect (mediation) effect of the influence of

independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury across the countries was significant among Indian respondents (β = .128, $P \leq .005$), however, no mediation effect was achieved among the United Kingdom respondents (β = -.017, P = .115) and Nigeria respondents (β = .011, P = .147). Since there was no significant direct effect of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury across all three country samples, these results therefore indicate that for Indian respondents the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism fully mediated the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury among the Indian respondents but not among the British and Nigerian respondents.

Hypothesis 12 (H12)- Partially Supported

For interdependent self-construal, the mediation effect of individualism and collectivism on the relationship between Interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury as shown in Table 6.16, the results indicated the indirect (mediation) effect of the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury across the countries was significant among Indian respondents, (β = .091, $P \leq .009$) however, no mediation effect was achieved among the United Kingdom respondents (β = -.021, P= .246) and Nigeria respondents (β = .009, P = .396). Moreover, since there was a significant direct effect of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury across all three country samples, these results also reveal that individualism and collectivism dimension partially mediated the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury for the Indian respondents but not among the British and Nigerian respondents.

6.7. Test of Demographic Control Variables

To understand whether demographic variables influence the constructs in the research model, this study controlled for all demographic variables. To test this study's hypotheses, a multigroup structural equation modelling was conducted using the AMOS software to estimate all direct, and indirect effects and control variables simultaneously by applying the 2000 Bootstrapping methods at 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. Although not hypothesized, the results reveal that respondents' age, education, and occupation gender across the three countries were not statistically significant with attitude towards luxury. However, for the India sample, the relationship between age to attitude towards luxury was significant. A roughly equal number of males (52.7%) and females (47.1%) were included for the Indian respondents, presented in Appendix 6.5

6.8. Overview of Research Hypotheses Results

Table 6.17 presents an overview of all the hypotheses results to test whether the proposed research model holds in the UK, India, and Nigeria. Overall H2 was fully supported in all three countries. Six hypotheses were partially supported in H5, H6, H8, H10, H11 and H12. Specifically, H5, H6 and H8 were only supported in India, and H10 were supported in Nigeria only while H11 and H12 were supported in India only. Finally, five hypotheses were not supported in H1, H3, H4, H7 and H9 across United Kingdom, India and Nigeria. The implications of these results are discussed in the next chapter.

Table 6.17 Overview of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesized Relationship	Results			
	UK	India	Nigeria	Overall
Impact of Self-Construal				
H1: Independent self-construal has a positive influence on Attitude towards Luxury	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported
H2: Interdependent self-construal has a positive influence on Attitude towards Luxury.	**Supported**	**Supported**	**Supported**	**Supported**
Impact of Self-Construal on Culture				
H3: Independent self-construal has a positive influence on the cultural orientation of Individualism	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported
H4: Interdependent self-construal has a positive influence on the cultural orientation of Individualism	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported
H5: Independent self-construal has a positive influence on the cultural orientation of Collectivism	Not Supported	**Supported**	Not Supported	**Partially Supported**
H6: Interdependent self-construal has a positive influence on the cultural orientation of Collectivism	**Supported**	**Supported**	Not supported	**Partially Supported**
Effect of Culture on Attitude towards Luxury				
H7: Cultural orientation of Individualism has a positive influence on Attitude toward Luxury	Not supported	Not supported	Not Supported	Not Supported
H8: Cultural orientation of Collectivism has a positive influence on Attitude toward Luxury	Not Supported	**Supported**	Not supported	**Partially Supported**
Moderating effect of Subjective Social Status				
H9: The influence of Independent self-construal on Attitude toward Luxury is stronger for consumers with High Subjective Social Status than for Low Subjective Social Status	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not supported	Not Supported
H10: The influence of Interdependent self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury is stronger for consumers with High Subjective Social Status than for Low Subjective Social Status	Not supported	Not supported	**Supported**	**Partially Supported**
Mediating role of Individualism and Collectivism				
H11: Individualism and Collectivism mediates the effect of Independent self-construal on Attitude toward Luxury	Not supported	**Supported**	Not supported	**Partially Supported**
H12: Individualism and Collectivism mediates the effect of Interdependent self-construal on Attitude toward Luxury	Not supported	**Supported**	Not supported	**Partially Supported**

6.9. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the discussion of the data analysis conducted to explore the relationships among all variables studied in the present study. After data cleaning and initial analysis, 935 usable responses were considered, 221 from the United Kingdom, 319 from India, and 395 from Nigeria for further analysis. The ranges of the skewness and kurtosis values for the three countries' datasets fell within an acceptable range justifying normal distribution and no multicollinearity concern existed for the study sample. The composite reliability (CR) values for all scales across the countries are above recommended threshold value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010) in all five constructs ranging from 0.73 to 0.98 giving further evidence of construct reliability. The composite reliability of all scales was above 0.70 across the constructs, exceeding the recommended threshold value, which also provides strong evidence of discriminant validity.

The research model was assessed by testing the measurement and structural models. The measurement model assessed measurement invariance and common method variance both of which posed no concern. Initial results of the confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model demonstrated an unsatisfactory goodness-of-fit measure, however after modification of indices, the revised confirmatory factor analysis model achieved a good level of fit. The results were chi-square (χ^2) = 1766.79, degree of freedom (df) = 930. In terms of overall fit, the CFI =.95, TLI = .95, and RMSEA = .03. All the factor loadings for this measurement model are significant (p value < .000). The results indicated the model met the rule of thumb suggested by Hu and Bentler, (1999), showing a good fit (Tab 6.5). This study follows Steenkamp and Baumgartner's (1998) procedures to assess the cross-cultural invariance of the scales (configural and metric invariance) across the three countries' samples using multigroup confirmatory factor analysis in Amos.

The unconstrained measurement model across the three groups indicated a good model fit wherein all measures were above the recommended threshold value. Overall, the measurement scale achieved full configural invariance meaning the overall factor structure fits well across the three countries United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. Having achieved the configural invariance, the metric invariance is measured, although, only partial metric invariance was achieved in this study, the scales are acceptable for making cross-cultural comparisons with similar meanings regarding the influence of self-construal orientation and cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism on attitudes towards luxury across the three countries' samples. Having previously established a good fitting research model, the next stage is testing

the fit of the structural model. To test this study's hypotheses, a multigroup structural equation modelling was conducted using AMOS version 24 to estimate all direct and indirect effects simultaneously by applying the 2000 Bootstrapping methods at a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval which indicated a good model fit across the three groups. Overall, the fit indices showed that hypothesised relationship between the constructs can be tested based on the research model.

With reference to research question one (RQ1), "Does the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitudes towards luxury vary across cultures?" in order to answer this question hypothesis one and two was tested and the results revealed that interdependent self-construal is significantly influenced by attitude toward luxury across all three countries (Hypothesis 1). In contrast, independent self-construal did not positively influence consumers attitude towards luxury across all three countries (Hypothesis 2).

With reference to research questions two (RQ2), "Does the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism mediate the relationship between independent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury?" the results revealed that a partial support for independent self-construal effects on collectivism dimension (Hypothesis 5) but not significant effect was found for independent self-construal effect on individualism dimension (Hypothesis 3) and the effect of individualism and collectivism dimension on attitude towards luxury was partially supported (Hypothesis 7 and 8). Finally, a mediation analysis, using bias-corrected bootstrapping in AMOS version 24 with 2000 re-samples and a 95% confidence indicated the indirect (mediation) effect of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension on the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury among the Indian respondents however, no mediation effect was achieved among the United Kingdom, and Nigeria respondents. This means that individualism and collectivism enhance attitude towards luxury for independent self-construal among the Indian respondents but not among the British and Nigerian respondents

With reference to research question three (RQ3), "Does the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism mediate the relationship between interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury?" the results revealed that a partial support for interdependent self-construal effects on collectivism dimension (Hypothesis 6) but not significant effect was found for interdependent self-construal effect on individualism dimension (Hypothesis 4) and the effect of individualism and collectivism dimension on attitude towards luxury was partially supported (Hypothesis 7 and 8). Finally, a mediation analysis, using bias-corrected

bootstrapping in AMOS version 24 with 2000 re-samples and a 95% confidence indicated the indirect (mediation) effect of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension on the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury among the Indian respondents however, no mediation effect was achieved among the United Kingdom, and Nigeria respondents. Since the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude toward luxury was significant across all three countries, the mediation result indicates that individualism and collectivism also enhance attitude towards luxury for interdependent self-construal among the Indian respondents but not among the British and Nigerian respondents. Furthermore, does subjective social status moderate the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury stronger among high subjective status when compared to lower subjective status individuals? To answer this question, hypothesis 9 and 10 was tested for the moderation effect of subjective social status on the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitudes toward luxury. The findings revealed no significant moderation effect of subjective social status either at low or higher social status on the relationship between interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury (Hypothesis 9). On the other hand, the findings revealed that the relationship between interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury was stronger for consumers with higher social status compared to those of lower social status for the Nigerian respondents, but no significant influence was found for the British and Indian respondents (Hypothesis 10).

Following the analyses of the twelve hypothesised relationships in the present study, the results revealed partial support for six out of the twelve hypotheses, no support was found for five hypotheses out of the twelve hypotheses, and full support was found for one of the twelve hypotheses. The next chapter provides a detailed discussion of the implications of the obtained results as presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION

7.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the analyses conducted and the hypotheses tested. Cultural influences have been indicated to have a significant impact on consumer luxury purchases and attitudes by past studies (e.g., Wang et al., 2022; Ko et al., 2019; Bian and Forsythe, 2012). Several studies have investigated this relationship using macro-level cultural comparisons of individualism and collectivism framework as representing cultures based on where each country falls on the Hofstede (1980) cultural dimension score which implicitly assumes cultures are homogenous in terms of norms, beliefs, and behaviour. Recent research suggestions have thus argued that employing only cultural level analysis of culture without the individual level culture limits the knowledge and better understanding of psychological factors influencing behavioural outcomes when individual behaviour is addressed in response, the present study incorporates in a conceptual model the combination of both the individual-level (psychological) and macro-level (collective) measure of culture to examine the drivers of consumers' attitudes towards luxury leading consequently to an in-depth understanding of whether or not to focus on macro-level, individual level or both cultural dimensions in considering luxury market segments which have been growing over the past years despite Covid-19 crisis and economic down-turn globally (Wang et al., 2022; Ko et al., 2019).

Based on this, the present study investigates the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal and the explanatory role of individualism and collectivism framework on consumer attitude towards luxury which is theoretically and methodologically justified and provided in this chapter. The research aims and objectives which were clearly stated in the introduction (chapter 1) and methodology chapter (Chapter 4) were mostly achieved which are first to examine whether the effects of independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitudes towards luxury vary in a cross-cultural context. Secondly, to examine the explanatory role of individualism cultural dimension on the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury. Thirdly, to examine the explanatory role of collectivism cultural dimension on the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury. Finally, to examine to what extent the effects of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury varies depending on the level of an individual's subjective social status. This chapter comprises five sections, that is section 7.2 which provides discussions on the influences of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards Luxury (hypotheses one

and two). Section 7.3 provides a discussion of the self-construal effects on the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism. Specifically, hypotheses three to six are examined in this section. Following is Section 7.4 which presents the influence of individualism and collectivism on attitude towards luxury and Section 7.5, the moderating effect of subjective social status on the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury. Finally, a short summary of the discussion chapter is presented in Section 6.6.

7.2. Influence of Self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury

Markus and Kitayama (1991) introduced two different construal of the self and argued that these different definitions of the self, influence an individual's cognition, emotion, and motivation. Hence self-construal has been conceptualised as a "constellation of ideas, feelings, and behaviour concerning the self as related to others or the self as distinct from others" (Singelis et al., p. 316). The different self-images influence the belief about the relationship between the self and others and especially the extent to which individuals see themselves as separate (Independent self-construal) or as connected with others (Interdependent self-construal) (Park and Levine, 1999). Previous studies have examined the role of self-construal on consumer behaviour, especially via luxury consumption (e.g., Wang et al., 2022, Lee et al., 2021; Kastanakis and Balabanis., 2014; Gil et al., 2012). Moreover, some other studies (e.g., Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Tsai, 2005; Kastanakis and Balabanis., 2014) have pointed out that the reason for consuming luxury products are either for socially and personally oriented motives and these motivations have been traced back to an individual's interdependent and independent self-construal.

Independent self-construal focuses on the importance of self-expression, uniqueness, and the promotion of personal goals (Wang et al., 2022; Le Monkhouse et al., 2012). These consumers pay more attention to self-accomplishments and align symbolic benefits via luxury consumption to enhance their inner selves and demonstrate personal success (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). In contrast, an interdependent self-construal focuses on the act of fitting in and prioritizing others' goals. Despite the importance of self-construal on luxury consumption behaviour and how it may vary across and within cultures, this relationship has received limited attention. Hence in order to fill this gap and better understand the relationship between self-construal and attitude towards luxury across cultures, this section discusses the findings relating to the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury in a

cross-cultural context **(Hypothesis 1)** and the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury **(Hypothesis 2)**.

7.2.1. Influence of Independent Self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

Contrary to the expectations, the results did not lend support to the hypothesis that independent self-construal will have a positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards luxury (H1). The theoretical basis for the hypothesis was drawn from the concept that individuals with independent self-construal place a high value on self-differentiation, self-directed goals, and desire to be and maintain uniqueness from others (Milian and Reynold, 2014; Singelis, 1994; Cross et al., 2011; Wang and Waller, 2006). In turn, they are expected to express and improve their individuality and self-image through luxury consumption to enhance their independent selves (Bakir et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wiedmann et al., 2007; Tian et al., 2001). Since luxury possessions can be used as a medium to express their uniqueness and differences from others, it can be suggested that the independent self-construal can exhibit a positive motivation tendency towards luxury consumption as established by previous studies (Wang et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Millan and Reynolds, 2014; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). However, the results from all three countries the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria reveal that an individual's independent self-construal is not enhanced through purchasing and consuming luxury products. This finding indicates that individuals' tendencies for being separate from others, value for individuality, and consideration for personal goals do not directly influence their intention to engage in luxury consumption.

A potential explanation for the contrary result might be due to lack of support for the relationship between independent self-construal and consumer attitude toward luxury because culture is changing globally and may have been transiting in the direction of greater individualism (Brewer and Chen, 2007). This transition may propel independent self-construal individuals to avoid conspicuous displays of wealth and abandon luxury goods (Shukla 2012). Additionally, independent self-construal individuals are not concerned about group associations and adhering to social norms (Lee et al., 2021; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), as such they want to identify themselves as unique in societies and are not directly inclined towards luxury consumption which expresses social status and social differences (Lee et al., 2021; Aaker and Lee, 2001). Overall, the contradictory findings on

impact of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury (Bakir et al., 2020) highlight the need for more research on this relationship to better understand this effect.

7.2.2. Influence of Interdependent Self-construal on Attitude towards Luxury

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

The findings of the present research support the expectation that interdependent self-construal will have a positive influence on consumer attitude towards luxury (H2) across all three countries (United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to empirically confirm that individual's interdependent self-construal has a positive influence on attitude towards luxury. The result of this study implies that despite the existence of cultural differences, individuals with an interdependent self-construal use luxury consumption to enhance and reaffirm their self-identity. A review of literature (Bakir et. al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Lee et al., 2012; Markus and Kitayama, 1991) shows that since interdependent self-construal is guided by social connections and importance to belongingness, consumers are motivated to evaluate others based on social prominence and a tendency towards face maintenance. The motivation is derived from the external environment associated with their social oriented goals which reinforces the use of luxury consumption to enhance or reaffirm their social identity. As a result, these individuals may purchase luxury items that identify with their affiliation, belongingness and attachment with others in society (Wang et al., 2010; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Vickers and Renand, 2003).

Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) tested respondents from an individualistic culture focusing on within-country variations and other studies (Gil et al., 2012; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Shaikh et al., 2017) found similar results in collectivistic cultures. However, this thesis corroborates the findings in a cross-cultural context offering a more comprehensive results responding to the call for cross-cultural research on luxury consumption (Ko et al., 2019; Wiedmann et al., 2009). The evidence of within-country variations and between-country similarities, especially in luxury consumption where there are many similarities among luxury segments cross-culturally (Hennigs et al., 2012) makes a cross-cultural examination of these effects important. Owing to the large concentration of consumers within a given country, issues regarding whether national culture impacted the relationship between self-construal and attitude toward luxury might be unaddressed. This thesis introduces unique perspectives from varied national cultures to highlight the importance of the degrees to which various domains of

self-construal are prominent in three countries with divergent cultures. Furthermore, the similarity in findings across cultures can be attributed to the emergence of converging tastes and global lifestyles across cultures in terms of luxury consumption (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015). This gives luxury marketers the opportunity to target these interdependent self-construal consumers using a standardised marketing strategy approach across cultures.

7.3. Self-Construal and Individualism and Collectivism

The discussion in this section focuses on the hypotheses on independent self-construal effects on individualist culture (H3); interdependent self-construal effects on individualist culture (H4); independent self-construal effects on collectivist culture (H5); and interdependent self-construal effects on collectivist culture (H6). These hypotheses were largely drawn from prior literature suggesting that culture shapes and plays an important role in the way individuals view themselves in relation to the self and others and as well as the relationship between the two (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Consequently, it can be expected that individuals in collectivist cultures and societies are typically known to possess interdependent self-construal, specifically these individuals see themselves "not as separate from the social context but as more connected and less differentiated from others" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). On the other hand, individuals in individualist cultures are typically expected to possess independent self-construal which focuses or "involves a conception of the self as an autonomous, independent person" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p.226).

7.3.1. Self-Construal and Individualism

Hypothesis 3 (H3) and Hypothesis 4 (H4)

Contrary to expectations, the result from the three countries United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria did not lend support to the view that independent self-construal effects will have a positive influence on individualism (H3). The hypothesised relationship was drawn on the basis that culture plays a mediating role in explaining its members' view of self in relation to others. For that reason, individualist cultures tend to foster autonomy, and give priority to personal goals over collective goals and the members of these societies typically conceptualised the self and personality independently and as an autonomous entity. These cultures focus on self-related goals and their self-perception comprises unique personal traits and attributes with others de-emphasised (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). The configuration of these internal attributes in turn forms the behaviour which is expected to be invariant across contexts

(De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). The results in this study showed that independent self-construal effects were consistent across the three countries. This is an interesting finding as it was expected that consumers with independent self-construal are predominantly found in individualist cultures and therefore should be expected to have a positive effect for the British consumers who are considered as individualist cultures (Shukla and Purani, 2012; Cross et al., 2011; Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Contrary to expectations, the result from the three countries United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria did not lend support to the view that independent and interdependent self-construal effects will have a positive influence on individualism (H4). The basis for the prediction was derived from research suggesting that in all cultures individualism and collectivism can co-exist which implies that some individuals within a broad culture may define their self-construal differently (e.g., Masumoto, 1999; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Triandis, 1996). In the same vein, members of collectivist cultures can learn some individualist values and acquire self-views that are unique and separate from others, while on the other hand, members of individualist cultures can learn some collectivist values and define themselves as interconnected with others.

A potential explanation for explaining the lack of support or outcome for this study on independent and interdependent self-construal effects on individualism cultural dimension is based on culture is complex and dynamic, and it is ambiguous how structural features, such as values, beliefs, and attitudes, can be used to characterise and fully explain the cultural influence and related actions (Smith et al. 2013; Matsumoto and Juang 2004). For that reason, individualism and collectivism have been evidenced to exist and vary within cultures (Taras et al., 2009; Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1996). According to Triandis (1994 p.42), “All of us carry both individualist and collectivist tendencies; the difference is that in some cultures the probability that individualist selves, attitudes, norms, values, and behaviours will be sampled or used is higher than in others.” However contrary to expectation, the results do not lend support that interdependent self-construal will positively influence individualism. This is because most cultures or societies represent a combination of collectivist and individualism tendencies which in turn will form the basis of individuals construing their self-identities (Taras et al., 2009; Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1996). In addition, this might be why although many studies (e.g., Park and Levine, 1999; Morling and Fiske, 1999; Singelis, 1994; Singelis and Brown, 1995) have found that individualist cultures tend to manifest independent self-construal more strongly than interdependent self-construal, some studies (e.g., Matsumoto, 1999) have failed to find a strong relationship between self-construal and culture in the expected predictions. Moreover, some

studies (e.g., Cross et al., 2011; Ahluwalia, 2002; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Aaker and Lee, 2001) have reported that within individualist and collectivist cultures, individuals can display both independent and interdependent self-construal and shift between this self-construal depending on contexts based on the fact that culture is a complex and dynamic concept, with members within a culture becoming more culturally heterogenous. It is therefore unclear the underlying features such values, beliefs, norms and attitudes that can be used to characterise cultural influences (Smith et al., 2013; Matsumoto and Juang, 2004; Carpenter et al., 2012).

7.3.2. Self-Construal and Collectivism

7.3.2.1 Independent Self-Construal and Collectivism

Hypothesis 5 (H5)

The results of the study offer only partial support for the expectation that independent self-construal effects will have a positive influence on collectivism cultural dimension (H5). Support for this expectation was found only among Indian respondents, but not among the British and Nigeria respondents in this study. Collectivist cultures are guided by characteristics that place more emphasis on the values and needs of the group they belong to rather than themselves (Bergmuller, 2013). The members in these societies define themselves in terms of social memberships, social groups, and relationships and are likely to be more susceptible to social influences and norms rather than by personal motives (Wang and Waller, 2006; Sun et al., 2004; Schaefer, Hermans, and Parker, 2004).

From the findings in the present study, despite the fact that individuals define their self-identity as independent self-construal, they are more susceptible to collectivist tendencies rather than defining themselves independently of their collectivist culture. These results extend findings regarding the typical distinction between the interdependent and independent self-construal and collectivist and individualist cultures respectively. In the literature, independent self-construal individuals have been known to be predominantly found in individualist rather than collectivist cultures and vice versa for collectivist cultures. However, in this study independent self-construal effects positively influenced collectivism considered to be characterised by interdependent self-construal individuals (Cross et al., 2011; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). For instance, in terms of consumer behaviour, Shaikh et al (2017) found that independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal consumers from collectivist cultures seek uniqueness and social status in their consumption choices in order to conform to others. It is

reasonable to say that further research on independent self-construal and collectivist cultures needs to be explored with more cultural contexts before any generalization can be made. On the other hand, the results from the British and Nigeria respondents do not lend support for these views. For the British and Nigeria respondents, independent self-construal effects do not have a significant influence on collectivism because the independent self-construal encourages the individuals to differentiate themselves from others and be more concerned with personal needs, lifestyles, and personal goals rather than concerned with others (Wang and Waller, 2006; Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Since interdependent self-construal individuals are more prevalent in collectivist cultures compared to their individualist cultures counterparts (Markus and Kitayama, 1991), the constellation of factors constituting the interdependent self-construal which emphasizes conformity to social norms and contexts rather than with their internal attributes or to differentiate themselves from others is more referenced in collectivist cultures (Cheng and Lam, 2013; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). This means that because the normative tasks of individuals in an individualist culture seek to be unique and express their personal abilities and traits with resistance to social pressures (Cross, 1995), interdependent self-construal effects will most likely not have a positive influence on members of individualist culture. Following previous studies (e.g., Pillai and Nair, 2021; Shukla, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012) India have been considered to represent collectivist cultures. When thinking about themselves and others, individuals with a highly developed interdependent self-construal have a sense that the self and others are intertwined which implies that both the self and others are not separated from situations but rather are shaped by them (Singelis et al., 1995; Singelis and Brown, 1995). This follows in line with previously established findings revealing no significant relationship between interdependent self-construal and individualism. For example, Singelis and Brown (1995) found that members of collectivist cultures were more interdependent and less independent than individualist individuals. Park and Levine (1999) study indicated that interdependent self-construal corresponded to collectivism across cultures. This further corroborates the lack of support for interdependent and individualistic cultural relationships. Further research in testing this relationship is needed using different contexts before any generalization can be made.

7.3.2.2 Interdependent Self-Construal and Collectivism

Hypothesis 6 (H6)

The results of the study offer partial support for the expectation that interdependent self-construal effects will have a positive influence on collectivism (H6). Specifically, support for this expectation is found among the British and Indian respondents but not among the Nigerian respondents in this study. The results from the British and Indian respondents imply that consumers' interdependent self-construal is typically characterised by a focus on the interpersonal domain in which the opinions and reactions of others and how their public self appears to the rest of their social context or society plays a significant role in how they construe their self-identity (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014) in their attitudes towards luxury. These attributes in turn will have a greater tendency to influence the collectivist culture dimension because collectivist culture fosters and encourages adherence to norms, and values imposed by ingroups emphasizes connectedness within the in-group and give priority to group goals over personal goals (Kacen and Lee, 2002). However, contrary to expectations, the results do not offer support among Nigerian respondents, this suggests that for Nigerian consumers with an interdependent self-construal, the self-definition plays an important role for these consumers in terms of attitude and behaviour rather than conforming to social norms, values, and behaviour imposed by the collective culture which is in line with the make-up of collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 2012; De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). Based on the assumption that Nigeria is a collectivist culture on the ranking of Hofstede (1980) cultural dimension, the results are inconsistent with the predictions from Markus and Kitayama (1991) assumptions that members of a collectivist culture primarily tend to construe themselves as interdependent. This suggests that a Nigerian sample representing a collectivist culture with a low score of 30 on the Hofstede country comparison model should score higher on interdependence rather than on independence characteristics (Hofstede, 1991). However, a potential explanation is proposed for this divergent result (H6).

The result which is contrary to expectation with the assumption that interdependent self-construal is more common in collectivistic cultures and independent self-construal is more common in individualist cultures could be explained by the existence of collectivism and individualism present in all cultures (Taras et al., 2016; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Bond, 2002; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Triandis, 1996). In some cultures, some individuals in the same national culture may define their self-identity differently and vary in the extent to which they adhere to cultural norms and values as well (Triandis, 1996). For example, although, among the British respondents, interdependent self-construal had a positive influence on collectivism as

expected. However, based on previous results, for example, the United Kingdom is generally regarded as an individualist culture and most often suggested to predominantly have members who are more independent self-construal compared to interdependent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). While on the other hand the Nigerian sample which was contrary to expectation, did not find support for the general characterization of interdependent self-construal and collectivism. These results are consistent with Kolstad and Horpestad (2009) study, in which the findings revealed a contrary result to studies that showed more consistency along the self-construal and individualism and collectivism predictions (e.g., Park and Levine, 1999).

Kolstad and Horpestad (2009) study revealed that the Chilean sample representing a collectivist culture scored higher on independence than on interdependence which is contrary to expectations (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Cross-cultural research on self-perception has widely been confined to comparisons and differences between participants from the United States and East Asian countries such as China and Japan (Oyserman et al., 2002). Despite the fact that data from Japan or China and the United States cannot provide validity for the majority of country-level analyses. In order to fully understand the complexity and variations of selfconstrual perception and the relationship between particular cultures, more data from several cultures are typically needed before any generalizations can be made (Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009). As Oyserman et al (2002) pointed out, although individualism and collectivism have been widely used to differentiate several cultures, further refinements have often been needed. For example, the distinction between the United States, a highly individualist culture is clear compared to Korea a highly collectivist culture, however, the distinction between same Korea and Japan a moderate individualistic culture is vague (Oyserman et al., 2002). Consequently, this study's results are not consistent with the idea of classifying countries as either individualist or collectivist cultures. But rather in line with studies suggesting that most cultures represent a combination of individualism and collectivist tendencies reflecting the cultural diversity found in most modern countries and societies (Kolstad and Horpestad, 2009; Taras et al., 2009). The dichotomy conceptualization may be unsuitable to explain the specific relationship between individuals who view their self-identity differently in most cultures which could be based on different historical, political, economic, and cultural qualities. In this regard, further research from several cultures and countries will be required to empirically establish this fact. Knowledge of interdependent self-construal effects on collectivism needs to be further investigated before any generalizations are made for

individuals from understudied countries such as Nigeria (Cross et al., 2011; Oyserman et al., 2002)

7.4. Influence of Individualism and Collectivism on Attitude towards Luxury

Past studies have clearly linked luxury consumption attitudes to culture, even though when the same luxury products are often marketed cross-culturally this does not mean that consumers across cultures have the same motivation as a result that cultural influences are complex and subjective in nature (Ko et al., 2019). Even though some researchers (e.g., Hofstede, Steenkamp, and Wedel 1999) argue that homogeneous value perceptions stemming from the globalization of consumer culture will lead to the same influence on buying intentions Whereas, some other researchers (Ko et al., 2019; Shukla and Purani, 2012; Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Sharma 2010) argue that culture still has a significant influence on consumers' perceptions and attitude, leading to differences in purchasing behaviour in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Thus, the importance of culture on luxury product consumption needs to be considered when attempting to understand what motivates consumers' attitudes and behaviour toward luxury consumption (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Shukla, 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2009; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). Consumers from collectivistic cultures have a more positive attitude toward brands that demonstrate their connection to others while on the other hand, consumers from individualistic cultures have more positive attitudes toward brands that set them apart from others (Bharti et al., 2022; Gentina et al., 2016; Aaker and Schmitt, 2001). Accordingly, Wong and Ahuvia (1998) proposed that since collectivistic consumers are more inclined to the interdependent construal of self, their focus will be on the outer self and public perception in their decisions to purchase luxury products as expressions of social norms and appropriate behaviour. On the other hand, individualistic consumers are more inclined to the independent self and are expected to purchase luxury products for intrinsic pleasure to satisfy personal tastes and goals. Therefore, in order to clarify the relationship between the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism and consumers' attitude towards luxury, this section discusses the findings pertaining to the influence of the cultural dimension of individualism on consumer attitude towards luxury (Hypothesis 7) and the influence of cultural dimension of individualism on consumer attitude towards luxury (Hypothesis 8).

7.4.1. Influence of Individualism on Attitude towards Luxury

Hypothesis 7 (H7)

The results of this study did not offer support for the prediction that individualism will positively influence consumers' attitudes toward luxury (H7). Support for this expectation was not found among the British, Indian and Nigeria respondents. Individualism implies emotional detachment from groups and thus motivates consumers to choose their own preferences and needs and give priority to personal goals as opposed to group goals and pursue self-actualization, competition, and personal achievement become more significant (Brewer and Chen, 2007; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Kacen and Lee, 2002). Individualism and collectivism have been established to exist in all cultures (Kim et al., 2001; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Triandis, 1994). This means that the forms of individualism and collectivism may vary from subculture to subculture, country to country, or for each individual in any culture or society there is the possibility that they may possess varying degrees of individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1995). In support with previous studies (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012), the present study found that collectivist societies like Nigeria and India due to their collectivistic psyche of their society, luxury consumption is seen as a means to demonstrate their social recognition and belongingness among their significant others which is contrary to individualistic society who are motivated towards luxury by their own preferences and needs and tend to align symbolic benefits of luxury to their internal self (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). For example, consumers with a higher social status in such societies as India and Nigeria may seek to portray their position through their choice of luxury brands. This social status seeking may be understood as conforming to social or societal norms (Bian and Forsythe, 2012) hence may not influence

However, contrary to expectations, in the present study individualistic tendencies in attitude towards luxury did not have any effect among the British and Indian respondents. Possible explanation for this can be attributed to the fact that culture is changing globally and may have been transiting in the direction of greater individualism (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Brewer and Chen, 2007). This transition may propel independent self-construal individuals to avoid conspicuous displays of wealth and abandon luxury goods (Shukla 2012). Additionally, this may be because independent self-construal individuals are not concerned about group associations and adhering to social norms (Lee et al., 2021; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). As such they want to identify themselves as unique in societies and are not directly inclined towards luxury consumption which expresses social status and social differences (Lee et al., 2021; Aaker and Lee, 2001). Overall, the contradictory results resulting

impact of individualism on attitude towards luxury (Bakir et al., 2020) highlight the need for more research on this relationship to better understand this effect.

7.4.2. Influence of Collectivism on Attitude toward Luxury

Hypothesis 8 (H8)

The results of this study offer only partial support for the prediction that collectivism will positively influence consumers' attitudes toward luxury (H8). Support for this expectation is only found only among the Indian respondents and not among the British and Nigerian respondents. From the literature, the collectivist cultural dimension is guided by the obligation to the group and social context with a tendency to maintain harmonious relationships to enhance their sense of belonging (Bharti et al., 2022). Consumers from collectivist cultures like India, therefore, tend to conform to social norms, and contexts and place importance on other related goals to enhance themselves and exhibit their social prominence by acquiring and consuming luxury products (Bakir et al., 2020; Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Shaikh et al., 2017; Wong and Ahuvia, 1998).

According to Gregory et al (2002), consumers with collectivist attributes have a greater tendency to purchase products that enable them to achieve social goals such as conforming and fitting into important groups in order to show their belongingness. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that when British and Indian consumers invoke their collectivist psyche of the society wherein is a need to gain social recognition, this in turn influences them to engage in luxury consumption. However, unexpectedly, the results from the Nigerian respondents do not lend support for these views. For the British and Nigerian respondents, collectivistic attributes in the society do not prompt the consumers to engage in luxury consumption even though the Nigeria society based on Hofstede (1980) country comparison table scored low on individualism score thus can be termed collectivistic culture. These findings from the Nigerian sample suggest that the underlying motivations for luxury consumption attitudes need to be further investigated.

Possible reasons for the differences in outcomes among the three country samples on the influence of collectivism on attitude towards luxury could be attributable to given that collectivist cultures mainly focus on others in consuming to conform to social norms and reference others rather than focusing on oneself and consuming to express their identity to stand out or be unique (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). It can be suggested that because of most modern societies' appreciation of individuality, for impression management purposes, collectivist

culture consumers may also desire to show some degree of uniqueness through their luxury consumption choices (Bian and Forsythe, 2012). For such consumers, the expression of such socially attractive self-identity may be an expression of who they are and how they feel and instrumental for group acceptance and approval (Millan and Reynolds, 2014; Lee and Kacen, 2000). Consistent with the study findings, this might be the reason that Bian and Forsythe (2012) found that collectivist cultures who feel more obligated to the group against their predictions more strongly desired uniqueness compared to the individualist culture. Cultural changes as a result of globalization converging in greater individualism could explain why a substantial impact of uniqueness value on luxury purchase intention and consumption is not found across cultures (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Shukla, 2012; Bian and Forsythe, 2012). In another study, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012, p. 1405) revealed that consumer needs for uniqueness have a negative relationship to bandwagon consumption arguing that "in line with Leibenstein (1950) mathematical demonstration, the signaling value of a luxury good disappears (for the person with a higher need for uniqueness) when many people own this; that is, when this luxury eventually becomes a mass symbol." Consequently, it can be expected that based on the fact that consumers' uniqueness seeking which corresponds to individualistic tendencies to foster the need to be separate from or stand out from others could lead to the present study findings for Nigerian expectations in which collectivism is not able to meet their luxury consumption motive. Future research needs to consider the underlying motivations that may have impacted the hypothesised relationship between collectivism and attitude towards luxury before any generalization is made.

7.5. Moderating Effects of Subjective Social Status

Subjective social status perceptions are dynamically constructed by social experiences obtained through objective social status indicators of income, occupation, and educational level (Phillips et al., 2020). Subjective social status refers to the subjective assessments' individuals tend to make regarding their objective social status relative to others (Rarick et al., 2018; Quon and McGrath, 2014; Kraus et al., 2012; Snibbe and Markus, 2005). In the literature, subjective social status has been shown to independently influence social status beyond issues related to objective social status outcomes (Rarick et al., 2018). This implies that subjective social status typically explains more variance above and beyond more objective measures of social status and better represents factors that underlie objective social status measures (Baum et al., 1999; Operario et al., 2004; Goodman et al., 2001; Adler et al., 2000; Kraus et al., 2009). In other words, the measure of subjective social status is expected to provide a more accurate and

reliable relationship with variables explaining behaviours related to social motives. Thus, this study examined how high and low subjective social classes influence the relationship between self-construal on attitude toward luxury consumption. Few studies have investigated the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption (Shaikh et al., 2017; Millan and Reynolds, 2014; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Gil et al., 2012); however, the moderating effects of subjective social status on the relationship between the influence of self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury consumption have not yet been investigated. On this basis, in order to clarify this relationship this section discusses the findings pertaining to the moderating influence of subjective social status on the relationship between independent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury (Hypothesis 9) and the moderating influence of subjective social status on the relationship between interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury (Hypothesis 10) such that independent and interdependent self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury is stronger for consumers with high subjective social status than for low subjective social status

7.5.1. Moderating effects of Subjective Social Status on Independent Self-Construal effects on Attitude toward Luxury

Hypothesis 9 (H9)

This study considered subjective social status for the moderation effects on the positive influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury consumption (H9). The findings did not support that the moderation effects of subjective social status at either high or low levels on the relationship between independent self-construal and attitude towards luxury.

A potential explanation for the lack of support for the relationship between independent self-construal and attitude towards luxury is that independent self-construal individuals do not need to compare themselves with others to self-enhance because they already have high self-esteem not required to be improved by luxury consumption (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Wang et al (2022) findings revealed that independent self-construal consumers might consume luxury brands that are consistent with their personality and self-image rather than luxury brands that enhance their self-esteem. This might also be the reason Agrawal and Maheswaran's (2005) findings revealed that independent self-construal individuals typically pay more attention to self-expressive activities because they feel pride in themselves. These results are consistent with those of Jebarajakirthy and Das (2020) findings who found that social comparison did not have a positive influence on the relationship between independent self-construal and status

consumption. Since independent self-construal individuals are not obliged to conform to social norms, values, and traditions but rather are obliged by their freedom of choice, personal ideas, and expectations (Agrawal and Maheswaran, 2005; Markus and Kitayama, 1991), it, therefore, implies that they would not readily compare themselves with others before making luxury consumption choices.

7.5.2. Moderating effects of Subjective Social Status on Independent Self-Construal effects on Attitude toward Luxury (Hypothesis 10)

Hypothesis 10 (H10)

The results of this study offer only partial support for the prediction that interdependent self-construal effects on consumers' attitudes toward luxury will be moderated by subjective social status such that interdependent self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury is stronger for consumers with high subjective social status than for low subjective social status (H10). Support for this expectation is only found among the Nigerian respondents and not among the British and Indian respondents. Since subjective social status is guided by the subjective perception of an individual's environment compared with others, and the perceived level of social status in comparison with those around them (Chen et al., 2022).

As explained earlier, interdependent self-construal drives a positive attitude towards luxury, and this relationship is strengthened for individuals with a high subjective social status compared to those of low subjective social status. This is while the pursuit of status and material is a motivation for all humans, recent studies (e.g., Wang et al., 2020) show that the higher individuals perceive their social status, the more they want material success and status relevance (Wang et al., 2020). Given that luxury consumption signals status and wealth to others individuals display their social standing to distinguish themselves from low status individuals. These individuals tend to engage in the conspicuousness of luxury where the possessions are used to display social standings and distinguish themselves from individuals of low social status. Previous studies (Shukla, 2008; O'Cass and McEwan, 2004) have indicated a high correlation between conspicuousness and luxury consumption. Conspicuous consumption plays an important role in shaping consumers for products that are consumed in the public context. Since luxury products are typically a preferred medium for building social salience, this means a luxury product with a conspicuous signaling value will attract consumers even more (Shukla, 2012, Wiedmann et al., 2009; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Consequently, the results of this study suggest that future research on the moderating effects of subjective

social status on the relationship between interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury needs to be further investigated to understand the underlying motivations why subjective social status did not motivate attitude toward luxury for the United Kingdom and India respondents.

7.6. Mediating role of Individualism and Collectivism on Independent and Interdependent Self-construal on Attitude toward Luxury

Hypothesis 11 (H11) and Hypothesis 12 (H12)

The results of this study offer only partial support for the prediction that independent and interdependent self-construal effects on consumers' attitudes toward luxury will be mediated by individualism and collectivism. Support for this expectation is only found among the Indian respondents and not among the British and Nigerian respondents. Individualism-Collectivism has been shown as a fundamental factor that shapes social behaviours and, in this light, can reveal meaningful insights into consumer behaviours that may vary from culture to culture (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Shukla and Purani, 2012). This thesis considered individualism and collectivism the mediator for the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury.

The findings showed that individualism and collectivism fully mediated the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury among Indian respondent but not among British and Nigerian respondents (H11), which implies that independent self-construal enhances individualism and collectivism, which in turn enhances the attitude towards luxury consumption. As previously discussed, independent self-construal does not have direct effects on attitude towards luxury. This reveals that although independent self-construal does not directly enhance attitude towards luxury consumption, it improves the intention towards luxury consumption indirectly through individualism and collectivism. On the other hand, we can suggest that independent self-construal enhances attitude towards luxury consumption when individuals with independent self-construal are motivated by their own needs, personal self-esteem enhancement and are less concerned with in-group norms and consequences. Alternatively, when they focus more on obligations and relationships within the group and their identity based on the cohesive in-group they belong to (Eastman et al., 2018) in order to demonstrate their individuality, uniqueness and enhance their individual success and self-oriented goals (Wang et al., 2022).

The findings showed that individualism and collectivism partially mediated the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury among Indian respondent but not among British and Nigerian respondents (H12), which implies that interdependent self-construal enhances individualism and collectivism, which in turn enhances the attitude towards luxury consumption. Interdependent self-construal has direct effects on attitude towards luxury across cultures, however an indirect effect was only established among Indian respondent but not among British and Nigerian respondents. Given that individuals can be motivated highly to make meaning and attain resources from the socio-cultural environment, this can influence their motives and tendencies to use luxury consumption to enhance their interdependent self-identity. Consequently, the results of this study suggest that future research needs to investigate the mediating role of individualism and collectivism that drive British and Nigerian consumers on the influence of the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury.

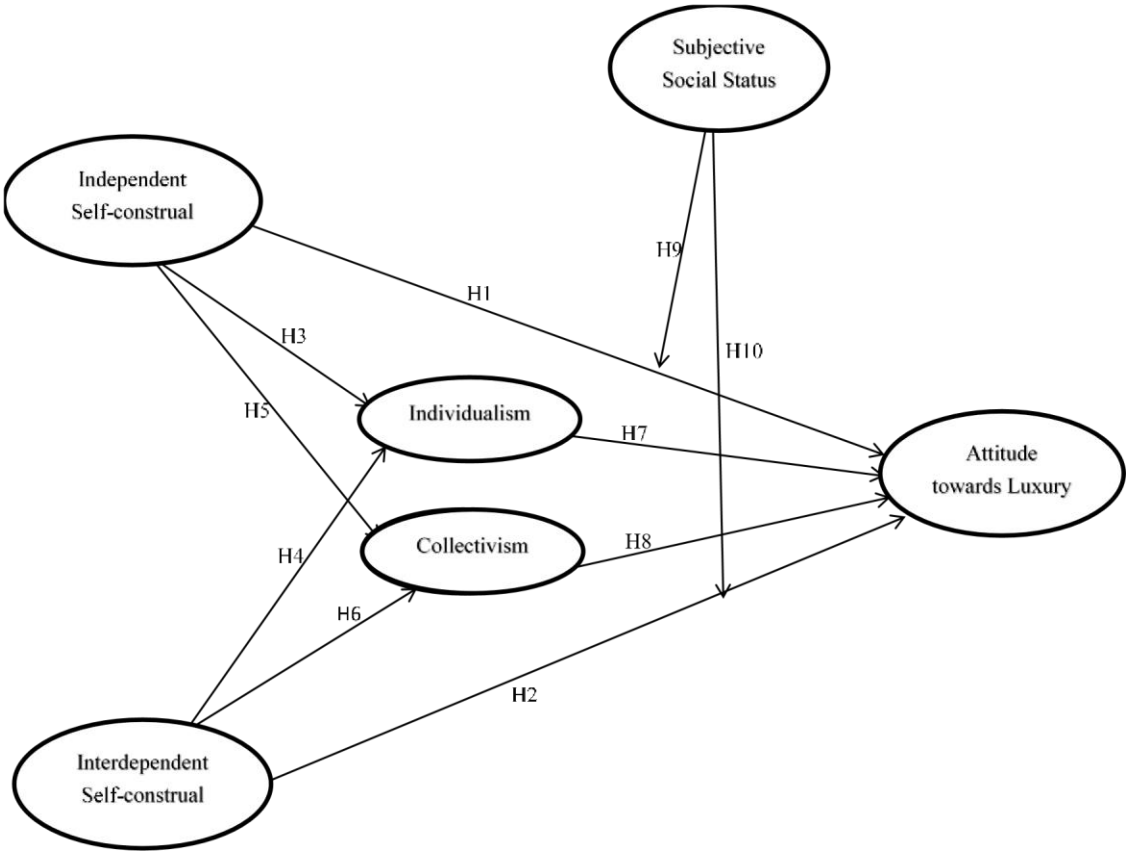


Figure 7.1 Summary Research Model

7.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter summarizes the theoretical explanations of the findings obtained in the previous chapter. It discusses the results of the hypotheses regarding (a) the influence of self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury (b) the influence of self-construal on individualism and collectivism cultural dimension (c) the influence of individualism and collectivism on attitude towards luxury and lastly (d) the moderating effects of subjective social status on self-construal influence on consumer attitude towards luxury consumption. The results provided evidence for the hypothesised relationships between self-construal and attitude towards luxury. For the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury, the results showed that an individual interdependent self-construal significantly influences attitude towards luxury and had a cross-cultural generalisability in this study. This result implies that regardless of the respondents' socio-cultural environment, the interdependent and collective psyche of the respondents wherein they mainly focus on external attributes such as acting as part of an ingroup or in-groups, collective achievement, reliance on others and a sense of belonging reflects their self-identity and image and in turn is associated positively with consumers' attitude towards luxury consumption (H1).

Contrary to expectations, the results show that cross-culturally, the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury does not have a significant relationship. These findings imply that consumers' attitudes towards luxury are not directly influenced by the consumers' independent self-construal regardless of their culture or society that is the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria. Indeed, other factors might have influenced the consumers' attitude towards the luxury formation process requiring further investigation into the underlying factors which may have impacted the hypothesised relationship (H2).

The results provided evidence for the hypothesised relationships between the influence of self-construal on the cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension. In regard to the effects of independent and interdependent self-construal on individualism, contrary to expectations, for the three countries the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria respondents, independent and interdependent self-construal does not positively influence individualism. This study finding suggests that further research investigating the cross-cultural generalisability on the direct effects of an individual's self-construal effect on individualism is required (H3 and H4). For independent and interdependent self-construal effects on collectivism the results revealed divergent results among the three country samples. The results from the Indian and Nigerian respondents empirically confirm that independent self-construal

effects positively influence collectivism cultural dimension, but not for the British respondents (H5). This might suggest that despite the respondents regarding their self-construal as independent, their collective culture plays a significant role in defining their identity and behaviour. The results from the British and Indian respondents empirically confirm that interdependent self-construal effects influences collectivism, but not for the Nigerian respondents. The contrary results for the Nigeria respondents who are relatively identified as collectivist culture (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2010; Markus and Kitayama, 1991) implies that an in-depth understanding and further investigation into the underlying motivations that may drive the individuals' interdependent self-construal which are not considered in this research is required (H6).

This study additionally provided evidence for the hypothesised relationships between the influence of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension on attitudes towards luxury. For the influence of individualism on attitude towards luxury, the findings indicated the existence of significant differences among the three country samples. The results from the Nigerian sample empirically confirm that individualism positively influences attitudes towards luxury, however, this is not the case for the British and Indian samples. These findings imply that some consumers even within relatively collectivist societies such as Nigeria might adopt some individualistic tendencies such as choosing their own preferences and neglecting social norms when engaging in a luxury consumption attitude (Bian and Forsythe, 2012) (H7). For the influence of collectivism on attitude towards luxury, the findings also indicated the existence of significant differences among the three country samples. The results from the British and Indian samples empirically confirm that collectivism dimension positively influences attitudes towards luxury, however, this is not the case for the Nigeria sample. This study's findings therefore suggest that further research investigating other cultural influences of attitude towards luxury is required (H8).

For the relationship between the moderated effects of subjective social status on the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury. Contrary to expectations, the results for the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury across the three countries United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria is not moderated by the subjective social status either at a low or high level. Moreover, the study findings previously found that independent self-construal does not significantly influence attitudes toward luxury, since this relationship was insignificant, the results of the moderating effect may carry less significance. These findings indicate that other factors might have influenced the independent self-construal consumers' luxury attitude formation process (H9). Additionally, the findings revealed that the relationship

between interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury was stronger for consumers with higher social status compared to those of lower social status for the Nigerian respondents, but no significant influence was found for the British and Indian respondents. This implies that subjective social status strengthens the influence of interdependent self-construal on consumers' attitudes towards luxury for the Nigerian sample when the individual possesses high social status (H10).

Lastly, the result of this study provided empirical evidence for the mediating role of individualism and collectivism on independent and interdependent self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury. The findings show an indirect effect for independent self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury for Indian but not among United Kingdom and Nigeria (H11). On the other hand, an indirect effect for interdependent self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury for Indian but not among United Kingdom and Nigeria (H12). Consequently, the theoretical underpinnings drawn from the findings and the research approach and methods of this study offer various theoretical contributions and managerial implications which are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

8.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical implications and conclusions drawn from the present study following an in-depth discussion of the findings in the previous chapter highlighting the contribution to the examination of the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal and the explanatory role of individualism and collectivism framework on the attitude towards luxury. Furthermore, the moderating effect of subjective social status was tested on the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal in an integrated framework. More specifically, this chapter introduces an overview of the study in Section 7.2, followed by details of the theoretical contribution this study makes to prior literature in Section 7.3, whilst the managerial implications focusing on practical actions recommended to international brand marketing managers in the context of luxury products is presented in Section 7.4. followed by the evaluation of this study's limitations are discussed in Section 7.5 and linked to future research directions in Section 7.6. Lastly, a summary of the chapter is provided in section 7.7.

8.2. Research Overview

This study undertakes a theoretical approach that examined a cross-cultural model for attitudes toward luxury. More specifically the objective of this research examines the effects of independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitudes toward luxury. Second, explored the impact of independent and interdependent self-construal on individualism and collectivism cultural dimensions. Additionally, the impact of individualism and collectivism dimension on consumers' attitude towards luxury was examined and lastly to what extent the effects of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury is moderated depending on the level of an individual's subjective social status was examined. This thesis adopts a positivist approach and uses an online questionnaire to collect primary data from a non-student sample of United Kingdom, Indian, and Nigerian respondents, these research contexts were carefully selected to ensure they are cross-culturally comparable and provide sufficient variability in terms of individual-level variables within each context.

This research consists of seven chapters.

Chapter One introduced the background of the study, the research aim, objectives, and questions. Following this, the significance of the study was presented, and the research gap indicated and expected contributions are discussed.

Chapter Two presented a comprehensive literature review of all the constructs used in this study: independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, individualism, collectivism, attitude towards luxury, and subjective social status.

Chapter Three follows the research objectives drawn from several gaps in the role of culture both on the individual and macro level on consumer attitude and behaviour towards luxury consumption literature as discussed in Chapter 2, a conceptual model is developed, and ten hypotheses are conceptualized.

Chapter Four this study adopts a positivist approach research design and employed an online questionnaire technique to collect data from a non-student sample of the United Kingdom, Indian and Nigerian respondents, these research contexts were carefully selected to ensure they are cross-culturally comparable. The questionnaire was administered by Amazon Turk an online research platform through which 935 usable samples from a non-student sample through a screening of only respondents who possess the study nationality and who have always lived in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria were obtained. The study was carried out in two stages: the pilot and the main study. A pilot study was conducted after which data for the main study were collected. In addition, the procedures used to analyse the research data were explained.

Chapter Five outlines the justification of the research stimulus to ensure this was cross nationally comparable. As a result, the stimulus of luxury watches and jewellery was selected for the main study. More specifically, respondents were asked whether they had purchased a luxury watch or jewellery in the past twelve months in order to take part in the survey. Thus, the pilot study's results were presented, which established satisfactory reliability and validity of the study constructs cultures. Overall, the findings were indicative, providing significant implications for the main study.

Chapter Six presents the research findings in relation to all ten hypotheses in this study. After data cleaning procedures were conducted, a total of 935 usable samples comprising 221 British, 319 Indian, and 396 Nigerian respondents were analysed in this study. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 24.0) was used to perform the initial descriptive statistical tests related to the demographic data statistics to ensure data accuracy before the proposed research model was assessed. Following this, Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS, version 24.0) was used to analyse data, more specifically for the cross-national measurement invariance assessment, validation of the measurement model analysis to test the overall model fit, common method variance analysis, and full structural equation modeling. Moreover, the

constructs' reliability, convergent and discriminant validity analyses, and all the measurement models revealed satisfactory reliability and validity. Out of the ten hypotheses, one was fully supported, five hypotheses were partially supported and four were not supported.

Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the findings obtained in the previous chapter of this study. And finally, this chapter (Chapter Eight) provides an overview of this study, the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and the limitations of this study for suggestions of directions for future study.

8.3 Theoretical Contributions

The findings of the present study make several contributions to the cross-cultural and consumer behaviour and luxury consumption literature. These contributions have been discussed throughout the prior chapter (chapter 7) based on the tested hypotheses however, the contributions are more explicitly highlighted in this chapter.

8.3.1. Influence of Self-Construal on Attitude towards Luxury

This study extends the understanding of the formation of attitudes toward luxury by examining the effects of independent and interdependent self-construal on luxury attitude in a cross-cultural context thereby contributing to literature on self-construal theory and cross-cultural luxury research. Prior studies have suggested that self-construal drives consumption decisions and consumption patterns (Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020), a comprehensive model does not exist in the literature that shows how independent and interdependent self-construal drives the formation of consumers attitude towards luxury consumption in a cross-cultural context. Though few studies have investigated the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption (Gil et al., 2012; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017), none of these studies investigated these effects in the light of individualism-collectivism and subjective social status. This study examined the effects of both types of self-construal on attitude towards luxury consumption, along with the mediation effects of individualism and the moderation effects of subjective social status on effect of self-construal on attitude towards luxury. Thus, this study developed and empirically tested a comprehensive model that shows how individuals self-construal drives the attitude towards luxury consumption. The findings of this thesis expand knowledge on the limited understanding of cross-cultural differences in the formation of attitude towards luxury by offering an integrated model to bridge this gap.

The effects of independent and interdependent self-construal are examined in cross-cultural contexts, one of which is more individualistic than the others. Researchers have called for cross cultural research in luxury consumption (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Hennigs et al., 2012; Ko et al., 2019). Self-construal differs between individualist and collectivist countries (Aliyev and Wagner, 2018; Gentina, Huarng, & Sakashita, 2018), and past studies show that consumers across cultures may have similar motivations in addition to differences when purchasing luxury products (Hennigs et al. 2012), but the salience of their effects may vary across different cultures. A few prior studies (Gil et al., 2012; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Shaikh et al., 2017) have highlighted the effects of self-construal on luxury consumption focusing only in individualistic culture (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014) or collectivistic culture (Shaikh et al., 2017; Jebarajakirthy and Das, 2020; Gil et al., 2012). However, a cross-cultural examination of the effects of self-construal has not been investigated to the best of the researcher's knowledge thus limiting the unique perspective from different national cultures to highlight the extent to which dominant independent and interdependent self-construal might influence attitude towards luxury in three countries with divergent cultures, UK, India and Nigeria. This study shows that the effect of interdependent self-construal on the consumer attitude towards luxury consumption does not differ across cultures. Therefore, it extends cross cultural research on luxury consumption by revealing the importance of studying luxury consumer attitudes from a self-construal perspective and its relatively greater importance for interdependent self-construal consumers across cultures. The examination of the effects of self-construal in these two contexts contributes to the extant literature on luxury consumption

8.3.2. Mediating Role of Individualism and Collectivism

This study makes an important theoretical contribution to knowledge by investigating the mediating role of individualism and collectivism on the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury. The study advances understanding of self-construal effects on attitude towards luxury consumption by highlighting the mechanism driven by cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism through which self-construal drives attitude towards luxury. Independent and interdependent self-construal individuals respond differently to luxury consumption and the response differences are mediated by cultural cues of individualism and collectivism. The study demonstrates the relevance of the mediating role of individualism and collectivism in prompting luxury consumers to rely more

on macro-cultural cues to improve their attitude formation towards luxury in India. Individuals with an independent self-construal likely focus on personally oriented motives towards luxury consumption and this motivation is reinforced by cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism leading to formation of attitude towards luxury. In contrast, Individuals with an interdependent self-construal likely focus on social oriented motives towards luxury consumption and this motivation is reinforced by cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism leading to formation of attitude towards luxury. By documenting the mediating effects of individualism and collectivism, this study extends the streams of research on luxury consumption by introducing the mediating effect of individualism and collectivism on the relationship between self-construal and luxury consumption.

8.3.3. Moderating Effects of Subjective Social Status

Another important contribution is this study expands the existing luxury consumption literature by introducing subjective social status as an important moderator to be considered on the effects on the relationships between independent and interdependent self-construal and consumer luxury consumer attitudes. Previous studies on subjective social status have largely focused on subjective social status effects in the domains of health and well-being with limited attention to its consequence on consumption. This research contributes to the literature by examining the effect of subjective social status on attitude towards luxury. This study reveals that high social status individuals when compared to low social status individuals moderates the relationship between self-construal and luxury consumption in Nigeria. Luxury consumption is assumed to be a status signal (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014), and relatively richer households signal their higher status to significant others through the consumption of status laden items (Wang et al., 2020). This study proposes and provide evidence that high social status individuals in comparison to low social status individuals are more prone to luxury consumption. The current findings corroborate with previous work (e.g., Wang et al., 2020) showing that the higher, the richer or high social status individuals perceive their social standing, the more they want status and material success and subsequently are more prone to luxury consumption to signal their status (Wang et al., 2020). By highlighting the moderating effect of subjective social status on the effects of independent and interdependent self-construal on luxury attitudes, this study demonstrates the relevance of social status in prompting luxury consumers to rely more on their subjective social standing to strengthen their attitude towards luxury. In doing so it introduces

the construct of subjective social status to the stream of research on attitude towards luxury consumption.

8.4. Managerial Implications

Beyond the theoretical contribution, this thesis has important implications for future practice. Luxury brand managers and marketers strive to achieve high brand loyalty levels among consumers, which is important in nurturing long-term relationships with them. Specifically, practitioners can use this thesis to effectively stimulate consumer attitudes and behaviour towards their luxury brands.

8.4.1. Market Segmentation

This study offers rich insights into the usefulness of the independent and interdependent self-construal for segmenting luxury consumer markets across cultures. Traditionally, marketers segment luxury consumers in terms of country level variables that are not strong descriptors of the differences among luxury consumers (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). In order to serve luxury consumers more richly, marketers need to understand the individual level factors that influences consumers within and across cultures. This allows marketers to design brand communication strategies that is likely to lead to most favourable brand attitude when targeting consumers with specific individual-level characteristics.

This thesis reveals that individuals with interdependent self-construal have the most positive attitude towards luxury. Therefore, marketers and advertisers are advised to use campaign approaches and adverts employing interdependence, warm relationships, affiliation or belongingness to social groups and maintaining group harmony. These themes are likely to be effective among interdependent self-construal consumers to create positive brand attitudes across cultures.

8.4.2. Targeted Branding Communication

The insights obtained from this thesis has implications for luxury marketers and advertisers to communicate with consumers through targeted messages or customized ads that offer opportunities to reach specific consumer segments with respect to their self-concept and motivations. Once customers have perceived that brands serve to satisfy their needs, it is likely that they would repeat purchase when they already have attitudinal preference towards the brands. These implications are elaborated below

First, this study demonstrated the importance of studying consumer attitude formation process from a self-construal perspective and its relatively greater importance to interdependent self-construal consumers across cultures. This suggests that consumers desire to show-off their interpersonal attributes, how their external persona appears in society and affiliation to social group membership drives their attitude to consume luxury. Therefore, to target interdependent self-construal individuals and to draw their attention to purchase luxury product and services, it is suggested marketers and advertisers design their brand communication strategies that demonstrate and highlight how their luxury products will enhance consumers' social standing, conformity, affiliation to certain social groups and the use of luxury to improve the consumers social identity. For example, the marketers and advertisers can use taglines such as "luxury deserves togetherness" in their promotional campaigns when they target interdependent self-construal individuals. Further, the findings provide luxury marketers and advertisers with an opportunity to standardize their communication strategies and advertising campaigns.

Second, this study showed that although independent self-construal does not drive consumer attitude towards luxury consumption directly, it drives attitude to consume luxury through individualism and collectivism dimension for India but not among UK and Nigeria consumers. The finding indicates that attempts to raise cultural consciousness among independent consumers may have some potential to stimulate a favourable attitude towards luxury. Luxury marketers and advertisers could use campaigns and ads that prompt consumers to rely more on cultural cues related to individualism and collectivism which has inbuilt messages that make the linkages more evident for independent self-construal consumers particularly in India. For example, marketing communications emphasizing the enhancement of one's in-group social standing, social differences, preferences and self-enhancement themes related to certain social groups in the society are likely to strike a chord to create positive brand attitudes with independent self- construal consumers particularly those in India.

Finally, the findings revealed that subjective social status moderates the relationship between interdependent self-construal and consumers' attitudes towards luxury in Nigeria but not in the UK and India. The results suggest that subjective social status reinforces the desire to purchase luxury items and form attitude towards for interdependent self-construal consumers. Hence, when designing effective communication messages targeting interdependent self-construal consumers particularly those in Nigeria, it is advisable to incorporate social status appeals. This will strengthen the chances of the luxury product being marketed to be accepted and consequently lead to more favourable attitude towards luxury. For example, marketers and advertisers should highlight more conspicuous themes that signal wealth, power and social

presentation in a bid to impress others in promo ads and campaign in their efforts to appeal to these consumers.

8.5. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the useful findings and theoretical and managerial implications of the role of culture on consumers' attitudes towards luxury, this thesis points out limitations that provide fruitful insights for future research to address.

Firstly, this study represents an initial effort to understand the role of culture on consumers' attitudes toward luxury brands, since no previous study known to the researcher has considered the simultaneous examination of self-construal and individualism versus collectivism framework on attitude towards luxury in a cross-cultural context, this may be bound by limitations. The findings from the present study are conducted in the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria, thus future research should replicate this model with other countries to further validate and provide a better generalisation of the study findings. The model proposed in this study could be used to investigate the influence of self-construal on other types of consumption, for example, status consumption, and impulsive consumption. In addition, the model can be expanded to include an investigation of other moderating and mediating factors that may affect the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury which can be identified from extant literature by future research and incorporated into the model to expand the study.

Second, another limitation is with the generalisability of the results, the study sample comprises only three countries (Bakir et al., 2020). Although the United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria differ in terms of individualism and collectivism, these countries might not represent all global regions. Future research will benefit from replicating the conceptual model on more extensive samples would enhance the generalisability of the results. Similarly, based on the fact that the United Kingdom is a developed country, and India and Nigeria are both considered developing countries, the observed country differences in this study may also have been impacted by the differences in their stages of economic development. Future comparative studies involving developing and developed countries and markets at different stages of development will provide additional insights.

The third limitation of the present study stems from the external validity of the conceptual framework. Although individualism and collectivism have been widely adopted to explain the general differences between diverse cultures' perspectives of culture and the self (Taras et al.,

2014; Brewer and Chen, 2007; Wang and Waller, 2006), the three countries differed in other Hofstede cultural dimensions which were not measured in this study to further provide a generalisation of the tested relationships based on macro-cultural differences. The study research contexts were chosen because they offer culturally distinct research grounds that are expected to test the external validity of the conceptual model. The United Kingdom, India, and Nigeria differ in terms of individualism versus collectivism on the Hofstede (1980) cultural dimension which has been widely adopted in research to differentiate culture (Shukla and Purani, 2012). The three countries are expected to offer adequate variability in terms of the individual-level characteristics of self-construal examined in this thesis. However, the three countries differ in many other ways apart from the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism that may have hindered the results in order to provide generalizations. For instance, power distance and long-term orientation are some of Hofstede's cultural frameworks that differentiate cultures based on inequality (power distance) and how cultures and societies value time holistically in terms of long-term versus now in terms of a short-term view which may have had an influence on the study findings. For example, in the Indian culture despite advancements in technology, globalization, social economic, and regional diversity, inequalities may not be very significant, however, the influence of power distance cannot be completely ruled out (Shukla and Purani, 2012). For long-term orientation, Nigeria with a low score of (13) is generally regarded as short-term oriented culture (Hofstede, 1991), compared to the United Kingdom (51) and India (51) both regarded as long-term oriented societies these divergent scores may have also influenced the study results. Thus, future cross-cultural research could replicate the study including other cultural dimensions of power distance, masculinity, and long-term orientation in the analysis to test whether other macro-cultural forces influenced the identified relationships before any generalisations can be attributed to the results.

Fourth, another limitation is the emphasis on a quantitative research approach which was justified as the most appropriate. Following the discussions from the methodology chapter, all the measurement construct scales used in the present study have been validated in previous studies, and it was deemed appropriate to include them directly in the research instrument. In addition, because the research objective is to determine the cross-cultural validity of the influence of culture on attitude towards luxury, the quantitative research approach was deemed appropriate. Moreover, qualitative research has been criticized for lacking generalisability and has the avenue for bias (Saunders et al., 2019; Bryman and Bell, 2015). However, employing follow-up qualitative research in future studies would allow for the exploration and more in depth understanding and could enrich the interpretation of the study findings (Saunders et al.,

2019). Further studies may benefit from carrying out a follow-up qualitative method to explore the inconsistent and unexpected quantitative results in the study can generate diverse insights (Maclnnis et al., 2020).

Fifth, another limitation is regarding the luxury stimuli employed in this study. The respondent's attitude towards luxury was measured by focusing on the use of a specific category of luxury which is luxury wristwatches and jewellery therefore results of this study should be seen based on this. However, adopting of a specific luxury product category was a deliberate choice to represent luxury consumption following previous research suggestions (e.g., Jhamb et al., 2020; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Yim et al., 2014;). This is because the luxury watches and jewellery product category are significantly more stereotypical when culture and gender are considered and are typically universal in size (Jhamb et al., 2020; Kastanaskis and Balabanis, 2014; Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2019). In addition, there is a significant difference in the quality of luxury wristwatches in terms of luxury and non-luxury products and brands in comparison to any other product categories (Liu et al., 2012; Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann, 2013). Furthermore, luxury wristwatches and jewellery category of luxury stimuli are widely adopted because of the highly symbolic properties that they provide to consumers in terms of both functional and psychological benefits (e.g., Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014; Phau and Prendergast, 2000; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004, Wiedmann et al., 2012; Yim et al., 2014;) and because luxury wristwatches are one of the most archetypical categories among luxury products, they can be typically seen as a representation of luxury consumption (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014). Having justified the choice of luxury watches and jewellery category, exploration with different luxury categories such as luxury cars and holidays can provide additional validity to the cross-cultural model. On another hand, because luxury is subjective and what characterizes a luxury from a non-luxury differs from individual to individual and the fact that individuals may have a different definition of luxury would be problematic (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Further research may benefit by not introducing the attitude towards luxury dependent variable in terms of any luxury category or products because consumers make their own subjective judgments about what they perceive and regard as luxury.

The sixth limitation of this thesis is the sampling approach method. Although the recruiting of respondents from an online research panel company is widely adopted in marketing research, which was deemed an appropriate method for data collection especially stemming from the fact that the data collection was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic and no feasible alternative was present for this process at the time of data collection. Approaching respondents

through an online panel is not free from disadvantages, mainly because the sample frame may not fully represent the British, Indian, and Nigerian respondents, the sampling method may have led to sample bias since all respondents selected themselves to participate in the study. A self-selected data sample may not adequately represent the population of interest required and may have introduced a bias into the study, especially as respondents were rewarded for their participation in the study. In order to enhance the generalisability of the study results, further research would benefit from data collected from a wider sample frame and a more robust sampling approach such as data collected from other sources such as Facebook, and LinkedIn to provide a more useful comparison with the findings of this study.

The findings showed that high subjective social status strengthens the influence of self-construal on attitude towards luxury for interdependent self-construal individuals in the Nigerian context and not among the British and Indian contexts, future research can explore the rationale behind the divergent results. In addition, the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury showed no significant relationship across all the countries, this needs to be further examined, and additional research could establish whether this relationship holds in other cultural contexts. Overall, the extension of this study with additional countries is required to replicate and confirm the suggested model before the results of this study can be regarded as widely applicable.

Finally, the data collection for this study was collected during the Covid-19 pandemic, thus the results of this study are limited to a traditional recession context which may help in explaining the low scores of attitudes towards luxury from the three countries, especially among the Nigerian contexts. Further research may benefit from the research opportunities of exploring consumers' luxury brand attitudes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

8.6. Chapter Summary

This study investigated the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal, the explanatory role of individualism and collectivism on attitude towards luxury. In addition, this thesis examined the moderating influence of subjective social status on the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury. This thesis presented four research questions.

With reference to research question one (RQ1), does the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitudes towards luxury vary across cultures?

Direct examination of the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal in a cross-cultural context has been few. This thesis makes a useful contribution in this regard by examining the aforementioned relationships. The results revealed that interdependent self-construal orientation is significantly influenced by attitude toward luxury across cultures. On the other hand, independent self-construal does not positively influence consumer attitudes toward luxury across cultures. This offers potentially valuable theoretical insights on the psychological literature on self-construal theory as well as the consumer behaviour literature on attitude towards luxury consumption.

With reference to research question two (RQ2) the aim was to determine whether individualism and collectivism mediates the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury. The results revealed an indirect effect of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension on the influence of independent self-construal on attitude towards luxury among the Indian respondents however, no mediation effect was achieved among the United Kingdom and Nigeria respondents. Additionally, the study examined whether individualism and collectivism mediate the relationship between interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury. The results revealed an indirect effect of individualism and collectivism cultural dimension on the influence of interdependent self-construal on attitude towards luxury among the Indian respondents however, no mediation effect was achieved among the United Kingdom, and Nigeria respondents.

Finally, in order to answer research question three (RQ3), does subjective social status moderate the influence of independent and interdependent self-construal on consumer attitude towards luxury stronger among high subjective status when compared to lower subjective status individuals? The findings revealed no significant moderation effect of subjective social status either at low or higher social status on the relationship between interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury. On the other hand, the findings revealed a divergent result for the relationship between interdependent self-construal and attitude towards luxury was stronger for consumers with higher social status compared to those of lower social status.

The findings of this thesis offer exciting avenues for academic research and luxury practitioners can use the findings of this study to create more effective marketing strategies and with reference to future study direction, more emphasis can be given to research involving more cultural factors that can impact the role of culture.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 2.1 Summary Current Research on Individualism and Collectivism and Luxury Consumption

Author/Date/Title	Context	Main Findings	Comments
Bharti et al (2022) International Market Review	Emerging and Developing markets	Socio-psychological antecedents had a more salient role than personality antecedents in driving luxury purchase intention (LPI), across both emerging and developed markets. Normative influence, status consumption and materialism exhibited a stronger influence on LPI in emerging markets than developed markets.	Individualism and Collectivism
Pillar and Nair (2021) Journal of Business Research	UK and India	Social comparisons differ between individualist and collectivist countries, social comparison orientation has a direct effect on willingness to purchase luxury only in the collectivist country and not in the individualist country. In both countries, the results demonstrate the indirect effect of social comparison on willingness to purchase luxury.	Individualism and collectivism assumed
Eastman et al (2018) Psychology and Marketing	Southeast United States	Findings show that cultural variables mediate the relationship between status consumption and purchase intention. That is collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity mediate the relationship between status consumption and purchase intention. Findings also show that young adults in the United States, it is the bandwagon effect that strengthens the relationship with the cultural variable of collectivism	Individualism and Collectivism measured
Aliyev and Wagner (2018) Journal of International Consumer Marketing	Germany and Azerbaijan	Collectivists have stronger perceptions of price-controlled values Conspicuousness negatively affects luxury purchase intentions among individualists but not among collectivists. High quality positively impacts luxury purchase intentions among collectivists but not among individualists. Hedonism (plays an important role in luxury purchase intentions among individualists. The extended self and subjective norm are a universal luxury-value perception on luxury purchase intentions for both Individualist and Collectivists	Individualism and collectivism assumed
Bian and Forsythe (2012) Journal of Business Research	China and USA	Contrary to the hypothesis, Chinese students demonstrate greater NFU than U.S. students with respect to similarity avoidance. Self-presentation attitude has a stronger impact on affective attitude and purchase intention among Chinese consumers than among U.S. consumers. Self-expression attitude has a stronger impact on affective attitude and purchase intention among U.S. consumers than Chinese consumers.	Individualism and collectivism assumed
Wang et al (2021) Journal of Brand Management	China and UK	The need for exclusivity in sustainable luxury items is negatively related to consumers' purchase intentions in China, while the need for conformity is positively related. In contrast, these effects are reversed in the UK. Our study implies the need to align the marketing of sustainable luxury with consumption values of consumers to reflect the cultural differences.	Individualism and collectivism assumed
Lee et al., 2018 Journal of Marketing Communications	USA and South Korea	Perceived social value influenced attitude change favourably among young Korean consumers. Young American consumers tended to increase their attitudes and purchase intentions toward luxury brands if they perceived superior product quality but more likely to lower their purchase intention if conspicuous value of consuming luxury brands is emphasised.	Individualism and Collectivism same as Independent and Interdependent Self-construal

Appendix 2.2 Summary Current Research on Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal and Luxury Consumption

Author/Date/Title	Context	Main Findings	Comments
Bahri-Ammari, et al (2020) Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Tunisia	Interdependent self positively associated with materialism, social comparison and bandwagon luxury consumption behaviour. Independent self negatively associated with bandwagon luxury consumption behaviour,	Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal
Jebarajakirthy and Das (2020) Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	India	Independent self-construal has a significant positive association with the intention for status consumption. Interdependent self-construal has no significant direct influence on status consumption but improves the intention for status consumption indirectly through social comparison	Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal
Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) Journal of Business Research	United Kingdom	The inter-dependent self-concept relates positively to consumer susceptibility to normative influence relates positively to the propensity to engage in bandwagon luxury consumption and relates negatively to the propensity to engage in snob luxury consumption. The independent self-concept relates positively to consumer need for uniqueness which relates positively to the propensity to engage in snob luxury consumption and relates negatively to the propensity to engage in bandwagon luxury consumption.	Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal
Gil et al (2012) Journal of Business Research	Brazil	Independent self-construal relates negatively to social consumption motivation. Interdependent self-construal relates positively to social consumption motivation. Social consumption motivation relates positively to attitude toward luxury brands. Social consumption motivation negatively relates to evaluative attitude toward luxury	Independent and Independent Self Construal
Lee et al (2021) Asian Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	Online respondents	Materialistic consumers with independent self-construal prefer inconspicuous luxury brands because of high need for uniqueness, whereas nonmaterialistic consumers with interdependent self-construal prefer conspicuous luxury products because of high self-monitoring	Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal
Shaikh et al (2017) Journal of International Marketing Review	Pakistan	The relationship between individuals' interdependent/ independent orientation and bandwagon luxury brand consumption is partially/fully mediated by their personality	Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal

Appendix 4.1 Pilot and Main Study Survey Questionnaire for British Respondents

Impact of Self-Construal on the Explanatory Power of Culture on Attitude towards Luxury

Research Questionnaire

Dear Madam/Sir,

I kindly ask you to take few minutes completing my questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is gathering information to help understand factors influencing attitudes towards luxury goods across cultures. The questionnaire is part of my PhD research project at Middlesex University, London.

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, your opinion is what really matters. The information is used only for this research and is strictly anonymous and confidential.

I would appreciate your full completion of the survey. However, you are free to stop the survey at any stage. Kindly note that completion of this questionnaire is assumed to be your consent to take part in this research.

Thank you for your assistance.

Nneka Alaita-Felix

PhD Student, Middlesex University, London.

Please indicate, by selecting, how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements, assessed on the scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) shown below:

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Slightly Disagree

4. Neither Agree nor Disagree

5. Slightly Agree

6. Agree

7. Strongly Agree

PART A:

1

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would rather depend on myself than others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often do "my own thing".	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that I do my job better than others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Winning is everything.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Competition is the law of nature.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a friend gets a prize, I would feel proud.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The well-being of my friends is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To me, pleasure is spending time with others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel good when I cooperate with others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

2

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PART B:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to maintain harmony within my group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would offer my seat in a bus to a pensioner.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respect people who are modest about themselves.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I should take into consideration my family advice when making education/career plans.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will stay in a group if they need me even when I'm not happy with the group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I hope I still have your attention. To show me that I still have your attention please select "slightly disagree" .	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Speaking up during a meeting is not a problem for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Having a lively imagination is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am the same person at home that I am at everywhere.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I act the same way no matter who I am with.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My personal identity independent of others, is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I value being in good health above everything.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

5

PART C:

In my opinion

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Luxury is old-fashioned	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury is pleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I buy luxury watches and jewelleries primarily for my pleasure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't know much about the luxury world	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I could talk about luxury products for hours	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not feel at ease in a luxury watch and jewelleries shop	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who buy luxury products try to differentiate themselves from others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who buy luxury products seek to imitate the rich	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury is flashy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury makes me dream	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Those who buy luxury are refined people.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The luxury products we buy reveal a little bit who we are	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6

Part 4

Think of a ladder with 10 steps representing where people stand in the society. **At step 10 are the people who are best off:** those who have the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs. **At step 1 are the people who are worst off:** those who have the least money, least education, and the least respected jobs or no job.

Please indicate, by selecting, on the step represented by numbers (1 to 10) that you feel most represented your relative standing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PART D: Personal details

1. Please indicate your gender

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

2. Please indicate your age group

- ○ 18-25
- ○ 26-34
- ○ 35-49
- ○ 50-59
- ○ 60 and over

3. What is your household (family) gross annual income? (£)

- ○ Under £15,000
- ○ £15,000 to £19,999
- ○ £20,000 to £29,999
- ○ £30,000 to £50,000
- ○ Over £50,000

7

4. Indicate your level of education

- ◯ No school-leaving certificate
- ◯ School leaving certificate (O level or A level)
- ◯ Vocational certificate
- ◯ Other (please specify)
- ◯ Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Masters' degree
- ◯ PhD

5. Indicate the category that best describes your occupation at the moment

- ◯ Unemployed
- ◯ Casual/part time worker/student/pensioner
- ◯ Semi-skilled, unskilled manual/retail worker
- ◯ Skilled manual worker/artisan
- ◯ Supervisory or clerical, and junior admin or professional
- ◯ Intermediate managerial, admin or professional
- ◯ Higher managerial, admin or professional

6. What is your Nationality?

Part F

Please create a Four (4) digit number(code) and write in the box below. Examples could be 2694, 1345, or 0011 etc. Any number with four digits that you create is valid. After finishing the survey use same Four (4) digit number (code) in the Mturk completion code box to be compensated for the survey.

Appendix 4.2. Pilot and Main Study Survey Questionnaire for Indian Respondents

Impact of Self-Construal on the Explanatory Power of Culture on Attitude towards Luxury

Research Questionnaire

Dear Madam/Sir,

I kindly ask you to take few minutes completing my questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is gathering information to help understand factors influencing attitudes towards luxury goods across cultures. The questionnaire is part of my PhD research project at Middlesex University, London.

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, your opinion is what really matters. The information is used only for this research and is strictly anonymous and confidential.

I would appreciate your full completion of the survey. However, you are free to stop the survey at any stage. Kindly note that completion of this questionnaire is assumed to be your consent to take part in this research.

Thank you for your assistance.

Nneka Alaita-Felix

PhD Student, Middlesex University, London.

Please indicate, by selecting, how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements, assessed on the scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) shown below:

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Slightly Disagree

4. Neither Agree nor Disagree

5. Slightly Agree

6. Agree

7. Strongly Agree

PART A:

1

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would rather depend on myself than others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often do "my own thing".	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that I do my job better than others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Winning is everything.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Competition is the law of nature.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a friend gets a prize, I would feel proud.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The well-being of my friends is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To me, pleasure is spending time with others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel good when I cooperate with others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

2

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PART B:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to maintain harmony within my group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would offer my seat in a bus to a pensioner.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respect people who are modest about themselves.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I should take into consideration my family advice when making education/career plans.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will stay in a group if they need me even when I'm not happy with the group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I hope I still have your attention. To show me that I still have your attention please select "slightly disagree" .	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Speaking up during a meeting is not a problem for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Having a lively imagination is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am the same person at home that I am at everywhere.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I act the same way no matter who I am with.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My personal identity independent of others, is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I value being in good health above everything.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

5

PART C:

In my opinion

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Luxury is old-fashioned	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury is pleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I buy luxury watches and jewelleries primarily for my pleasure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't know much about the luxury world	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I could talk about luxury products for hours	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not feel at ease in a luxury watch and jewelleries shop	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who buy luxury products try to differentiate themselves from others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who buy luxury products seek to imitate the rich	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury is flashy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury makes me dream	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Those who buy luxury are refined people.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The luxury products we buy reveal a little bit who we are	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6

Part D

Think of a ladder with 10 steps representing where people stand in the society. **At step 10 are the people who are best off:** those who have the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs. **At step 1 are the people who are worst off:** those who have the least money, least education, and the least respected jobs or no job.

Please indicate, by selecting, on the step represented by numbers (1 to 10) that you feel most represented your relative standing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PART E

1. Please indicate your gender

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

2. Please indicate your age group

- ○ 18-25
- ○ 26-34
- ○ 35-49
- ○ 50-59
- ○ 60 and over

3. What is your household (family) gross annual income? (INR)

- ○ Under 500,000 INR
- ○ 500,000 to 599,999 INR
- ○ 600,000 to 839,999 INR
- ○ 840,000 to 1,200,000 INR
- ○ Over 1,200,000 INR

7

4. Indicate your level of education

- ◯ No school-leaving certificate
- ◯ School leaving certificate (O level or A level)
- ◯ Vocational certificate
- ◯ Other (please specify)
- ◯ Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Masters' degree
- ◯ PhD

5. Indicate the category that best describes your occupation at the moment

- ◯ Unemployed
- ◯ Casual/part time worker/student/pensioner
- ◯ Semi-skilled, unskilled manual/retail worker
- ◯ Skilled manual worker/artisan
- ◯ Supervisory or clerical, and junior admin or professional
- ◯ Intermediate managerial, admin or professional
- ◯ Higher managerial, admin or professional

6. What is your Nationality?

Part F

Please create a Four (4) digit number(code) and write in the box below. Examples could be 2694, 1345, or 0011 etc. Any number with four digits that you create is valid. After finishing the survey use same Four (4) digit number (code) in the Mturk completion code box to be compensated for the survey.

8

Appendix 4.3. Pilot and Main Study Questionnaire Survey for Nigerian Respondents

Impact of Self-Construal on the Explanatory Power of Culture on Attitude towards Luxury

Research Questionnaire

Dear Madam/Sir,

I kindly ask you to take few minutes completing my questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is gathering information to help understand factors influencing attitudes towards luxury goods across cultures. The questionnaire is part of my PhD research project at Middlesex University, London.

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, your opinion is what really matters. The information is used only for this research and is strictly anonymous and confidential.

I would appreciate your full completion of the survey. However, you are free to stop the survey at any stage. Kindly note that completion of this questionnaire is assumed to be your consent to take part in this research.

Thank you for your assistance.

Nneka Alaita-Felix

PhD Student, Middlesex University, London.

Please indicate, by selecting, how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements, assessed on the scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) shown below:

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Slightly Disagree

4. Neither Agree nor Disagree

5. Slightly Agree

6. Agree

7. Strongly Agree

PART A:

1

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would rather depend on myself than others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often do "my own thing".	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that I do my job better than others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Winning is everything.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Competition is the law of nature.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a friend gets a prize, I would feel proud.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The well-being of my friends is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
To me, pleasure is spending time with others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel good when I cooperate with others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

2

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PART B:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to maintain harmony within my group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would offer my seat in a bus to a pensioner.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respect people who are modest about themselves.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I should take into consideration my family advice when making education/career plans.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will stay in a group if they need me even when I'm not happy with the group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I hope I still have your attention. To show me that I still have your attention please select "slightly disagree" .	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Speaking up during a meeting is not a problem for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Having a lively imagination is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am the same person at home that I am at everywhere.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I act the same way no matter who I am with.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel comfortable using someone's first name soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My personal identity independent of others, is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I value being in good health above everything.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PART C:

In my opinion

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Luxury is old-fashioned	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury is pleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I buy luxury watches and jewelleries primarily for my pleasure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't know much about the luxury world	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I could talk about luxury products for hours	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not feel at ease in a luxury watch and jewelleries shop	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who buy luxury products try to differentiate themselves from others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who buy luxury products seek to imitate the rich	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury is flashy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Luxury makes me dream	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Those who buy luxury are refined people.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The luxury products we buy reveal a little bit who we are	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6

Part 4

Think of a ladder with 10 steps representing where people stand in the society. **At step 10 are the people who are best off:** those who have the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs. **At step 1 are the people who are worst off:** those who have the least money, least education, and the least respected jobs or no job.

Please indicate, by selecting, on the step represented by numbers (1 to 10) that you feel most represented your relative standing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

PART D: Personal details

1. Please indicate your gender

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

2. Please indicate your age group

- ◯ 18-25
- ◯ 26-34
- ◯ 35-49
- ◯ 50-59
- ◯ 60 and over

3. What is your household (family) gross annual income? (₦)

- ◯ Under ₦1,000,000
- ◯ ₦1,000,000 to ₦1,999,999
- ◯ ₦2,000,000 to ₦3,999,999
- ◯ ₦4,000,000 to ₦6,000,000
- ◯ Over ₦6,000,000

7

4. Indicate your level of education

- ◯ No school-leaving certificate
- ◯ School leaving certificate (O level or A level)
- ◯ Vocational certificate
- ◯ Other (please specify)
- ◯ Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Masters' degree
- ◯ PhD

5. Indicate the category that best describes your occupation at the moment

- ◯ Unemployed
- ◯ Casual/part time worker/student/pensioner
- ◯ Semi-skilled, unskilled manual/retail worker
- ◯ Skilled manual worker/artisan
- ◯ Supervisory or clerical, and junior admin or professional
- ◯ Intermediate managerial, admin or professional
- ◯ Higher managerial, admin or professional

6. What is your Nationality?

Part F

Please create a Four (4) digit number(code) and write in the box below. Examples could be 2694, 1345, or 0011 etc. Any number with four digits that you create is valid. After finishing the survey use same Four (4) digit number (code) in the Mturk completion code box to be compensated for the survey.

8

Appendix 6.1 3-Group Model Metric Invariance Test

Model	DF	CMIN	P	NFI Delta-1	IFI Delta-2	RFI rho-1	TLI rho2
Measurement weights	44	254.859	.000	.014	.015	.010	.011

Appendix 6.2 3-Group Model Partial Metric Invariance Test

Model	DF	CMIN	P	NFI Delta-1	IFI Delta-2	RFI rho-1	TLI rho2
Measurement weights	18	43.457	.101	.002	.003	.001	.001

Appendix 6.3 Model Fit Indices Configural and Partial Metric Invariance

	Configural	**Partial Metric**
Measure	**Estimate**	**Estimate**
CMIN	1766.789	1810.246
DF	930	948
CMIN/DF	1.900	1.910
CFI	0.951	0.950
TLI	0.945	0.944
RMSEA	0.031	0.031
PClose	1.000	1.000

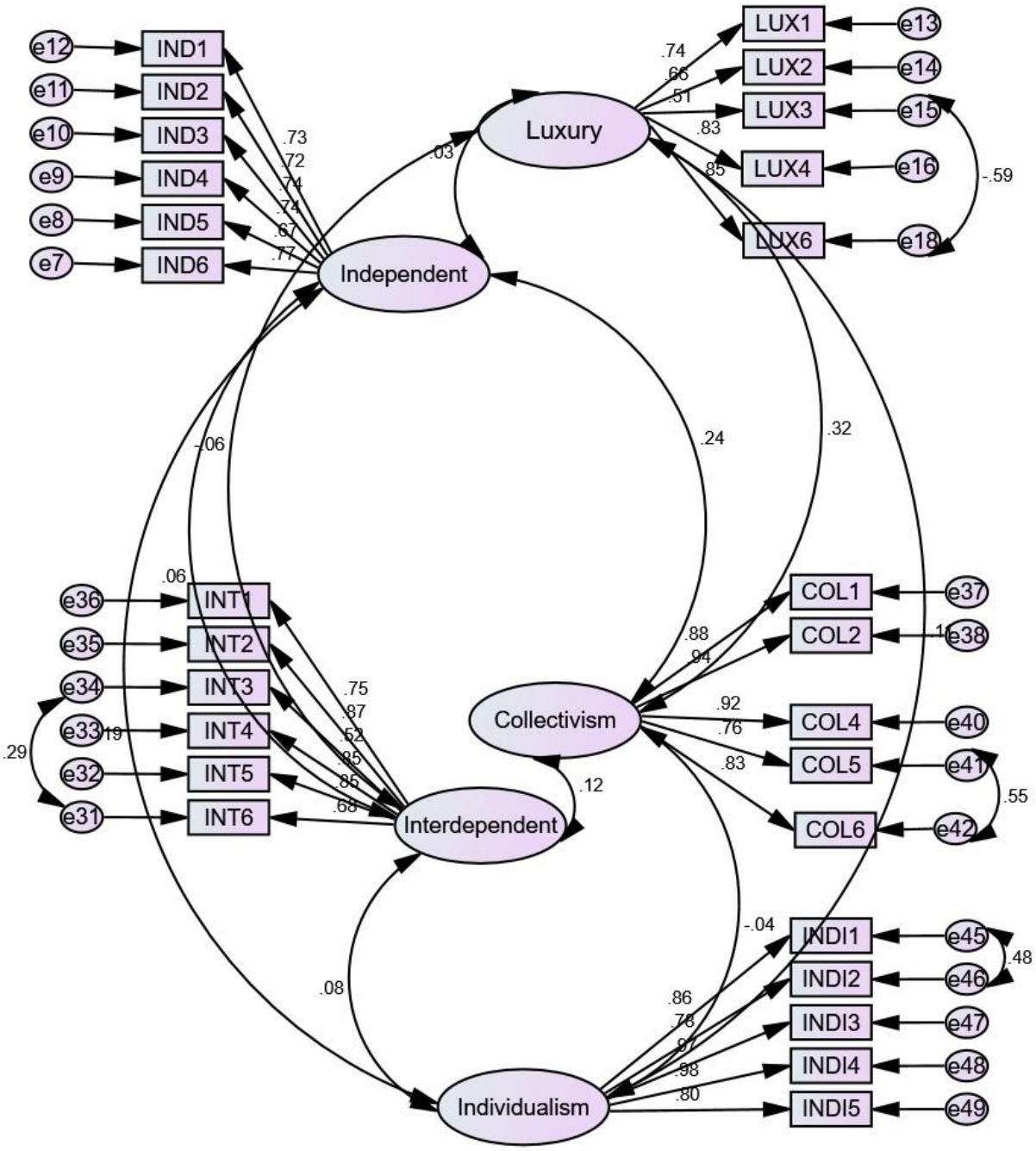
Appendix 6.4 Model Fit Indices Partial Metric Invariance

Measure	Estimate		
	UK	**India**	**Nigeria**
CMIN	674.640	487.360	604.272
DF	310.000	310.000	310.000
CMIN/DF	2.176	1.572	1.949
CFI	0.918	0.960	0.964
TLI	0.908	0.955	0.960
SRMR	0.067	0.047	0.043
RMSEA	0.073	0.038	0.055
PClose	0.000	0.999	0.118

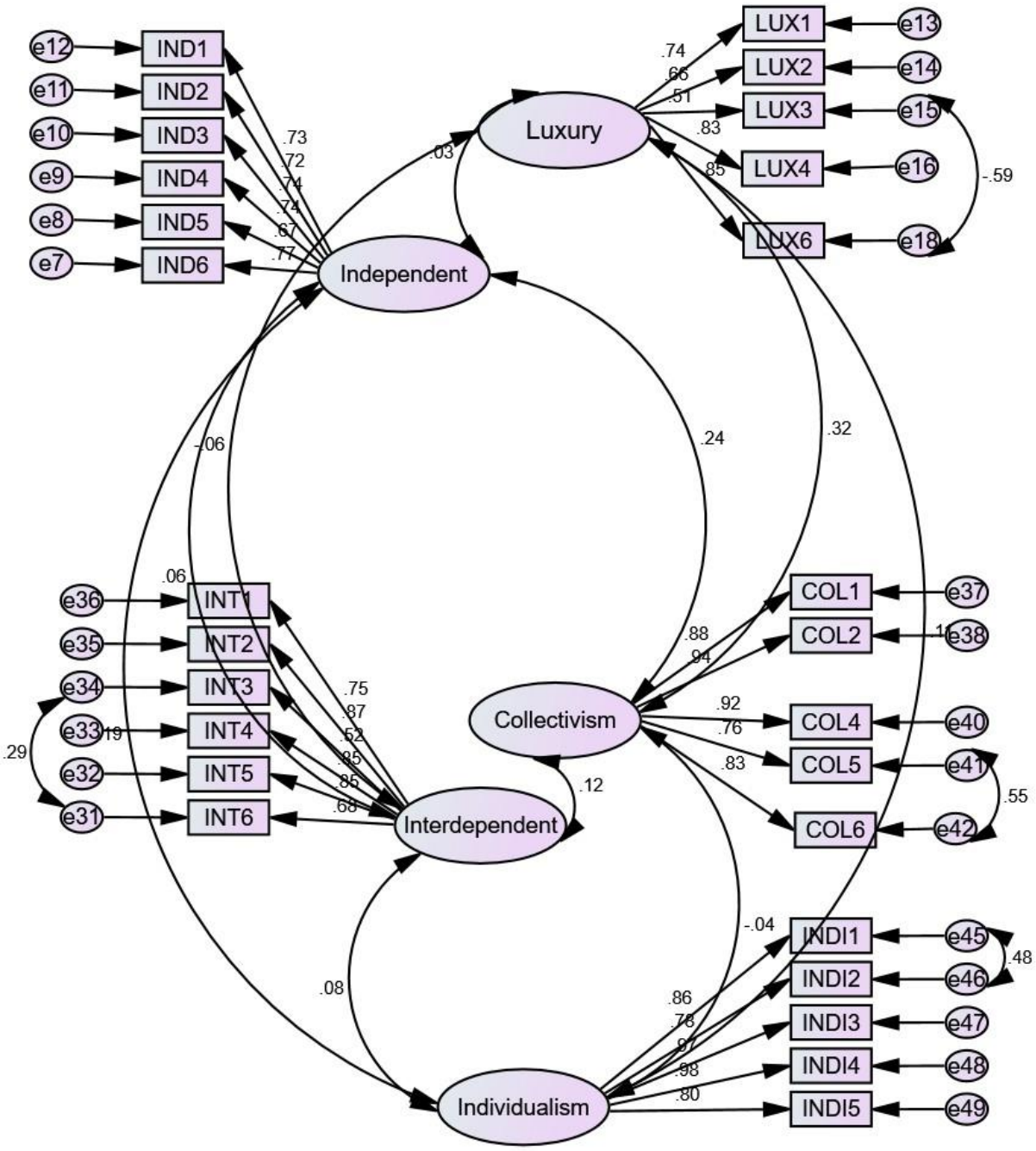
Appendix 6.5 Effects of Control Variable

Control Variables	**UK**	**95% CI**	**India**	**95% CI**	**NGA**	**95% CI**
Gender	.139*ns*	-.221, .029	.003***	.066, .253	.692*ns*	-.139, .093
Age	.093*ns*	-.017, .238	.397*ns*	-.061, .152	.428*ns*	-.062, .137
Education	-.092*ns*	-.021, .249	.320*ns*	-.123, .039	.453*ns*	-.065, .130
Occupation	.001***	-.476, -.223	.324*ns*	-.169, .061	.823*ns*	-.097, .130
Income	. 006***	.042, .260	.456***	-.050, .144	.378*ns*	-.108, .139

Appendix 6.6 Measurement Model United Kingdom



Appendix 6.7 Measurement Model India



Appendix 6.8 Measurement Model Nigeria