JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
Jönköping International Business School

Cold, Calm, and Cashmere

Exploring Motivations For Quiet Luxury Fashion Consumption In Scandinavia

MASTER THESIS WITHIN: *Business Administration*
NUMBER OF CREDITS: *15 ECTS*
PROGRAMME OF STUDY: *International Marketing*
AUTHOR: *Wesley Roland Theo Gerard Sijbers, Matvei Ershov*
JÖNKÖPING May 2025

Master Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Cold, Calm, and Cashmere
Subtitle: Exploring Motivations For Quiet Luxury Fashion Consumption In Scandinavia
Authors: Wesley Roland Theo Gerard Sijbers & Matvei Ershov
Tutor: Brian McCauley
Date: 2025-05-22

Key terms: Quiet luxury, Inconspicuous consumption, Conspicuous consumption, Self-Determination Theory, Luxury

---

Abstract

Background: Traditionally, the consumption of luxury fashion has been all about conspicuous consumption, where consumers demonstrate their wealth and status through visible logos and branding. Nowadays, a rising trend towards quiet luxury can be seen around the globe, which is characterized by its subtle and minimalistic branding, and with a focus on quality and timeless design. Various studies on quiet luxury consumers have been conducted, which are mainly focused on major economies like the United States and China, as well as some smaller Asian economies like Vietnam. The Scandinavian region, which is a big luxury market, and where values of modesty and social cohesion are common, represents an underexplored market for quiet luxury fashion.

Purpose: The aim of this research is to explore and uncover the motivations of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, thus focusing on consumers in Sweden, Denmark and Norway that purchase quiet luxury fashion. By covering the research gap in regional quiet luxury research and the call for research in big luxury markets that practice minimalism, the study contributes to the existing theory and provides new insights about inconspicuous luxury fashion consumption, particularly in Scandinavia.

Method: An interpretivist research paradigm with the use of an exploratory research design has been used. Primary data was collected through 18 semi-structured in-depth online interviews with Scandinavian quiet luxury fashion consumers, selected through both purposive and snowball sampling. Hereafter, a thematic analysis was conducted, which was guided by an adapted Self-Determination Theory framework that includes the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as specific quiet luxury motivations related to social sensitivity, which were added based on literature review findings.

Conclusion: The results have shown that quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia are primarily motivated to purchase quiet luxury fashion because of its quality, the ability to differentiate themselves from loud, conspicuous luxury consumers, and to not stand out from the crowd, thus maintaining social cohesion. In contrast to other quiet luxury studies, Scandinavian consumers demonstrated to not be motivated by aspirational motivations, thus not having the desire to chase a certain image or lifestyle. In addition, a new quiet luxury motivation was discovered. This was subsequently named ‘cultural influence’ by the authors, implying the presence of unspoken rules such as ‘Jantelagen’ and ‘Lagom’ in society, which also unconsciously motivates consumers in Scandinavia towards quiet luxury fashion.

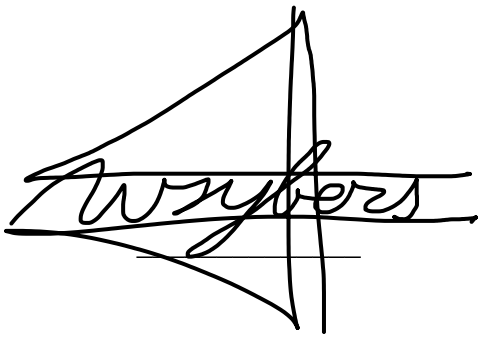
Acknowledgements

Writing this master thesis would not have been possible without the support from various people, who deserve the recognition for their help. Hence, we would like to make use of this opportunity to share our gratitude to these special people.

To our thesis supervisor Brian McCauley, for his support, guidance, and detailed, constructive feedback throughout the semester. This helped us stay on track and focussed. Thank you for your help and encouraging comments. To our thesis seminar group students, who showed interest in our thesis, and provided us with interesting comments and feedback which allowed us to reflect and improve our thesis. Thank you for your involvement. To our motivated interview participants, who made time for us, and who passionately shared their opinions on quiet luxury fashion. Your answers make our thesis worth reading. Thank you for participating and sharing your candid opinions.

Finally, a big thank you to all of our friends and family who had to endure our unsolicited brainstorms and feedback talks. By actively listening to our thoughts and opinions, and by supporting us throughout, we managed to stay on track, motivated, and in control. Thank you very much for being there for us.

May 22nd, 2025



Wesley Roland Theo Gerard Sijbers

Matvei Ershov

Table of Contents

1 Introduction 1
1.1 Background 1
1.2 Problem discussion 3
1.3 Research purpose and research question 4
1.4 Delimitations 5
1.5 Definitions 6

2 Literature review 7
2.1 Scandinavian culture 8
2.2 Luxury and luxury brands 8
2.3 Conspicuous consumption 10
2.4 Inconspicuous consumption 12
2.5 Quiet Luxury 15
2.6 Self-Determination Theory 17
2.6.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation 18
2.6.2 Self-Determination Theory and Quiet Luxury motivations 18

3 Methodology 21
3.1 Research paradigm 21
3.2 Research approach 22
3.3 Research design 22
3.4 Data collection 23
3.5 Interview structure 24
3.6 Sampling approach 25
3.7 Data analysis 26
3.8 Ethics 27
3.8.1 Confidentiality 28
3.8.2 Credibility 28
3.8.3 Transferability 28
3.8.4 Dependability 28
3.8.5 Confirmability 29

4 Findings 30
4.1 Participants background 30
4.2 Differentiation-driven motivations 31
4.3 Aesthetics-driven motivations 34
4.4 Quality-driven motivations 36
4.5 Social sensitivity driven motivations 38
4.6 Sustainability-driven motivations 42
4.7 Lifestyle-seeking-driven motivations 44
4.8 Cultural influence driven motivations 46

5 Discussion and Analysis 50
5.1 Need for autonomy among quiet luxury consumers 50
5.2 Need for competence among quiet luxury consumers 51
5.3 Need for relatedness among quiet luxury consumers 52
5.4 Social sensitivity among quiet luxury consumers 53
5.5 Cultural influence among quiet luxury consumers 54

6 Conclusion 56
6.1 Theoretical contributions 56
6.2 Managerial implications 57
6.3 Societal implications 57
6.4 Future research suggestions 58
6.5 Limitations 59

7 References 60

8 Appendices 70

Figures

Figure 1: Louis Vuitton Neverfull bag versus the Hermès Birkin bag 2
Figure 2: Motivations for Inconspicuous Consumption 15
Figure 3: Adapted model of the Self-Determination Theory based on Inconspicuous, Quiet Luxury consumption motivations 20
Figure 4: Coding for the differentiation theme 32
Figure 5: Coding for the aesthetics theme 34
Figure 6: Coding for the quality theme 36
Figure 7: Coding for the social sensitivity theme 39
Figure 8: Coding for the sustainability theme 42
Figure 9: Coding for the lifestyle-seeking theme 44
Figure 10: Coding for the cultural influence theme 47
Figure 11: Altered Self-Determination Theory model based on the motivations of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers 55

Tables

Table 1: Interview participants overview 31
Table 2: Interview participants motivated by differentiation 33
Table 3: Interview participants motivated by aesthetics 35
Table 4: Interview participants motivated by quality 38
Table 5: Interview participants motivated by social sensitivity 41
Table 6: Interview participants motivated by sustainability 43
Table 7: Interview participants motivated by lifestyle seeking 46
Table 8: Interview participants motivated by cultural influence 48
Table 9: Complete overview of participant motivations for all themes 49

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide 70
Appendix 2: GDPR Consent Form 72
Appendix 3: AI Declaration Form 74

1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the topics of luxury, conspicuous consumption and inconspicuous consumption, and quiet luxury. First, a background to the rise of the phenomenon is provided before the main topic of this research, as well as its identified research gap and research question are presented.

1.1 Background

Luxury is a term that has been used around the world to describe prestige, social hierarchy, and admiration (Loureiro et al., 2020). Historically, luxury can be linked to various interpretations: Danziger (2005) states that the term originates from the Latin word 'luxuria', which would refer to the 'extras of life'. Its roots can additionally be traced to the old French word 'luxurie', that translates to 'self-indulgence' and even 'sinful' (Berthon et al., 2009). Hence, the concept of luxury (as well as luxury brands) has steadily evolved over time (Balabanis & Karpova, 2025).

For a brand to be considered a luxury brand, it should have products or services of superior quality, offer emotional or functional benefits, demand elite pricing, and identify with the consumers' self (Ko et al., 2019). These luxury brands can then be categorized as either conspicuous brands, which are brands that utilise 'loud' logos and symbols, or inconspicuous brands, which are brands that are seen as more 'refined' or 'quiet' brands, and use very subtle aesthetics such as small logos, or no logos whatsoever (Eckhardt et al., 2015).

Traditionally, the consumption of goods from luxury brands has been linked to conspicuousness, which is about mainly providing symbolic value by means of signaling wealth, power, and gaining or maintaining status (Eckhardt et al., 2015). Here, it has been the belief that wealthy consumers wish to differentiate themselves from the masses by flaunting their wealth with this conspicuous luxury consumption (Han et al., 2010). In some countries, especially developing markets like China, the conspicuous consumption of luxury brands is also seen as a way to demonstrate authority, image, and upwards mobility (Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2021). Conspicuous consumption of luxury brands is not hard to spot, as brands help the signaling process with their recognizable patterns and logos (Berger & Ward, 2010). Examples are the famous Burberry plaid pattern or the Gucci and Armani logos. The extent to which these visible markings such as logos on products are found refers to 'brand prominence', which helps

the observer of the product to recognize the brand (Han et al., 2010). Depending on the consumer that the brand is targeting, they can opt for either 'loud' conspicuous branding, or 'quiet' inconspicuous branding (Han et al., 2010).

In recent times, a different type of luxury consumption has been on the rise. Due to luxury brands becoming more readily available to the mass market, the outspoken, conspicuous consumption of the nouveau riches, and the rise of well-made counterfeit products, the meaning of having traditionally (loud) luxury products has weakened (Wu et al., 2017). This has led to the popularity of 'inconspicuous consumption'. With inconspicuous consumption, only subtle signals are used that can be spotted by people with the needed knowledge to observe it (Berger & Ward, 2010). The term inconspicuous consumption can be interchanged with the more recent term 'quiet luxury'. Quiet luxury products are discreetly marked, which makes it harder to be recognized by the public, whereas loud luxury products feature high brand prominence that is easily spotted (Jiang et al., 2022). It offers an alternative to 'loud' branding, by displaying only a small logo or no signing at all that only true brand fanatics can recognize (Eckhardt et al., 2015). There are multiple reasons why luxury brand consumers choose the inconspicuous option over the loud, conspicuous one, such as the consequences of humility and empathy for their luxury brand choices (Nguyen et al., 2023), and avoid coming across as pretentious (Wu et al., 2017). But also, as a means towards self-fulfillment and personal self-enhancement (Makkar & Yap, 2018), and to demonstrate knowledge about the existence of these inconspicuous luxury brands (Wong & Ho, 2025). To illustrate the difference between loud, conspicuous luxury fashion, and quiet, inconspicuous luxury fashion, see the figure below.

Figure 1: *Louis Vuitton Neverfull bag versus the Hermès Birkin bag*

Source: Louis Vuitton (n.d.) and Hermès (n.d.-a).

To be able to quickly grasp the concept of a quiet luxury brand, it helps to present an example of such a fashion brand. Hermès is one of the oldest luxury fashion houses (or 'maisons'). Each product is made with attention to detail and the best possible materials, like leather. One of its most famous products came out in 1984, when Jane Birkin and Jean-Louis Dumas designed the 'ideal bag', the Birkin. It quickly became the iconic status symbol that was recognizable, while having almost zero branding to it (Hermès, n.d.-b). This bag is also presented in Figure 1.

1.2 Problem discussion

The field of inconspicuous consumption and quiet luxury have seen recent top academic journals uncover some of its different dimensions. Here, the focus has primarily been on regions or major luxury markets to develop a better understanding on why these consumers partake in quiet luxury. Take for instance the four major types of inconspicuous consumption in China based on differentiation, aesthetics & function seeking, envy avoidance, and fantasy lifestyle (Wu et al., 2017). Its findings showed that the Chinese market adapted its reasoning for their consumption in inconspicuous, quiet luxury. A different, recent examination of the markets in the United States and China, unveiled that the level of narcissistic tendencies, the degree to which people want to boost their own self-esteem and feel unique, of consumers in both countries made the difference (Jiang et al., 2022). It was unveiled that overt narcissists prefer quiet luxury products, whereas covert narcissists prefer loud, conspicuous luxury products (Jiang et al., 2022). Another research in Asia, which is an investigation into the Vietnamese inconspicuous luxury consumption consumers, uncovered four main motivations for inconspicuous consumption: status seeking, aesthetics and function seeking, differentiation seeking, and ethical motivations (Nguyen et al., 2023). The US market-based research uncovered a new, and specific type of inconspicuous consumption consumer, the inconspicuous minimalist, which desires high-quality brands with subtle brandings (Taylor et al., 2025). Finally, a study on consumers from Finland, Italy, and France (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2018) uncovered that nationality plays a role in quiet luxury consumption. Hence, quiet luxury and inconspicuous consumption have proven to be a prominent topic within academic research, and with interesting results based on the different countries and regions that have been studied.

The world of quiet luxury and inconspicuous consumption still has much room for exploration (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2025). Major (luxury) markets have been studied, but regional differences and their reasoning for consuming inconspicuous luxury fashion are still unknown. While the reasoning for quiet luxury from an

American and Chinese consumer perspective are clear, other countries should be studied too for stronger theoretical insights into their markets (Jiang et al., 2022). Understanding the motivations for luxury fashion consumption is complex (Petrescu et al., 2025), so quiet luxury consumers in other markets might have completely different motivations. This is in line with other studies who also call for more research in different markets (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2025). This holds especially true for the recent call for the study of quiet luxury in dominant luxury (and minimalism) markets (Taylor et al., 2025). For this reason, this study aims to research the motivations for quiet luxury consumption in Scandinavia. Answering to the research call by Taylor et al. (2025), Scandinavia is one of the largest luxury markets in Europe, with the markets of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark totalling close to 9 billion dollars (Statista, 2024a). Moreover, similarly to the motivation for the study of Nguyen et al. (2023), the region of Scandinavia is also home to consumers with collectivist traits, as illustrated by studies like that of Warner-Søderholm (2012), displaying egalitarianism in Norway and Tian & Guang (2017) for collectivism in Sweden. These findings strengthen the link between the consumers of the region and the description of quiet luxury. Both the Scandinavian luxury market size and consumer characteristics make Scandinavia a very interesting region for a closer investigation to uncover what motivates these particular consumers towards quiet luxury fashion consumption.

1.3 Research purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to address the identified gap in existing literature regarding the factors that motivate quiet luxury fashion consumption in Scandinavia, thus focusing on Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. This research aims to uncover the consumption drivers for quiet luxury fashion products in this specific region, which has not been extensively studied before. Previous research on regions such as the United States suggests further investigation in other regions (Jiang et al., 2022; Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2018). Scandinavia fits this description as it is considered to be a large luxury market (Statista, 2024a). Additionally, there is a recent demand for broader studies that include major European countries with large luxury markets and that practice minimalism (Taylor et al., 2025). By examining Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, this study fills in the gap in the previous research and future research suggestions and aims to contribute to the understanding of quiet luxury consumption motivations in a region, which has not been explored before (Taylor et al., 2025).

The exploratory nature of this research will help discover and understand the motivations of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers through in-depth individual interviews (Saunders et al., 2016). Utilizing the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the study will identify recurring themes and patterns in consumers' reasoning for purchasing inconspicuous luxury items. The SDT framework consists of three basic psychological needs: Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and will provide a structure for the major motivations found among the quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia. This approach allows an extensive exploration of the motivations that drive quiet luxury consumption behaviour in the region (Ryan & Deci, 1985). Taking into the account the nature of this study and the goal of the research, the following research question can be derived:

'What motivates Scandinavian consumers to choose quiet luxury fashion brands?'

1.4 Delimitations

Firstly, this study focuses on the consumers in the Scandinavian region, thus in the following countries: Norway, Denmark and Sweden. As a result, consumers from Iceland, Finland, Åland, and Faroe Islands have not been included, as they belong to the Nordics, but not Scandinavia, making these countries not fit the territory criteria.

Secondly, no participants have been rejected based on their age. The primary age ranges from 21 to 32 years old, as well as 56 to 60 years old. This has been decided by the research team, as the opinions of different age groups would help better understand the topic and give the ability to correctly answer the research question.

Thirdly, this study is delimited to only indicating consumer motivations for quiet luxury fashion. Other types of consumers that shop at fast fashion brands, such as H&M, have not been considered fit for the research. Therefore, the context of the paper has been narrowed to a particular type of fashion.

Lastly, the proportion of the interview participants have been skewed towards a more Swedish population. This is due to the fact the research has been conducted in Sweden, which made it is easier to contact quiet luxury fashion consumers from within the country.

1.5 Definitions

Conspicuous Consumption: '*The purchase of expensive goods to wastefully display wealth rather than to attempt to satisfy more utilitarian needs of the consumer, for the sole objective of gaining or maintaining higher social status*' (Eckhardt et al, 2015, p. 807)

Inconspicuous Consumption: '*The use of subtle signals too unidentifiable by the mainstream but instantly observable to those who possess the needed connoisseurship to decode its meanings.*' (Berger & Ward, 2010, p.556).

Luxury brand: '*A branded product or service that consumers perceive to: be high quality; offer authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional; have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality; be worthy of commanding a premium price; and be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer*' (Ko et al. 2019, p.406).

Quiet Luxury: '*Discreetly marked products that are less recognizable to the public* (Jiang & Shan, 2022, p. 312) *and where style signals quality in a qualitatively different way than a conspicuous brand which relies on ostentatious display*' (Taylor et al., 2025, p.143).

Brand Prominence: '*The extent to which a product has visible markings that help ensure observers recognize the brand*' (Han et al., 2010, p.15).

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background to the factors that influence consumer motivations to purchase quiet luxury products in the Scandinavian region. Firstly, a brief explanation of how and where the information has been sourced from is provided. Secondly, the main constructs related to quiet luxury are explained and reviewed, after which the existing theoretical perspective and framework is given before finally giving an adjusted framework to build a foundation for the following empirical research.

The literature review presents a detailed overview of the existing literature on the topic of factors that influence Scandinavian consumers to purchase inconspicuous luxury products. Literature has been collected using various databases, such as Primo, Google Scholar and Scopus. Despite the abundance of possible research databases, Scopus has been used as the primary source for information gathering of the articles related to the topic of this research. This database allowed for specific filtering options, which has the option to narrow down the research result to the very specific studies. Thus, allowing to generate a comprehensive literature review on the specific parts related to the topic. To narrow down the search results, several keywords related to the topic have been used: *luxury, luxury brands, luxury fashion, conspicuous consumption, inconspicuous consumption,* and *quiet luxury.* To create a deeper understanding of the subject studied in this research, a categorization of the necessary literature has been conducted using Microsoft Excel. Each source has been carefully studied and the key constructs that are related to the inconspicuous luxury consumption have been revealed. This step has been completed to allow for a thorough and clear analysis in this chapter. In order to ensure the highest quality of research, each source has been filtered through the ABS list, then the papers have been ranked accordingly. Currently, this study references articles that are almost exclusively ABS journals and published in the highest quality journals. This research primarily draws conclusions from the literature that has been published predominantly in the recent times. Limiting the age of sources has allowed for the collection of the most recent information that presents the most up-to-date analysis on the topic. Due to the broad nature of the study, several additional sources that enhance the understanding for the reader have been used, such as some articles from psychology related journals. Despite them not being on the ABS list or having lower ratings, they provide a better overview of the topic. The theoretical

framework of this study is based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) that has been created by Deci & Ryan (1985). It has a proven track record in its application to luxury consumption motivations research (Shadid & Paul, 2021; Shao et al., 2019; Petrescu et al., 2025), ensuring applicability. Also, it provides the opportunity to build a correct analysis of the findings that have been collected through interviews. The SDT is adjusted to fit the exact purpose of this research, and thus match with the recurring motivations for quiet luxury consumption that were uncovered in this literature review.

2.1 Scandinavian culture

Before examining all constructs related to conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption as well as quiet luxury, it is important to give more context about Scandinavia as a region. This provides a better understanding about the people in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark prior to conducting the primary research. Starting with Sweden, the country would typically be classified as an individualistic culture, but it also shows strong examples of social cohesion (Tian & Guang, 2017). For instance, Swedes tend to be very conformist, thus not wanting to stand out from the crowd, or having no need to express themselves in a way that is very different from others, for which the word 'Lagom' is often used too: not too little, but also not too much. (Tian & Guang, 2017). Similarly in Norway, its culture shows strong signs of egalitarianism, meaning that everyone should be treated equally, and everyone is as important as anyone else (Warner-Søderholm, 2012). Finally, there is the so-called 'Law of Jante' (or 'Jantelagen'), a very popular way of thinking in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway which basically states that you should be humble, and don't believe you are smarter, better, more knowledgeable, or more important than anyone else (Cappelen & Dahlberg, 2018). Thus, all three Scandinavian nations show similar cultural aspects in which social cohesion and humbleness is appreciated.

2.2 Luxury and luxury brands

The concept of luxury and luxury brands have been evolving consecutively. The different views and cultural differences have shaped the definitions in various ways (Balabanis & Karpova, 2025). The "idea of luxury" is considered to be as old as the Western world (Donze et al., 2020). One of the first studies that dives deep into the topic of luxury and its roots, explores the Stone and Bronze Age and includes the thoughts of philosophers and historians (Baudrillart, 1880). Despite the wide range of possible definitions, researchers have not yet agreed on a specific one that would describe luxury brands the best. Recently, there has been in increase in studies that dive deeper into the topic of luxury brands, their features and characteristics (Ko et al., 2019).

It is said that the concepts of luxury branding are relative, thus they change over time (Cristini et al., 2017). Generally, luxury brands are able to provide certain criteria that allow the consumer to distinguish the differences between the lower and higher end brands. They can be placed on a "continuum", where three different levels stand out: inaccessible, intermediate, and accessible (Petrescu et al., 2025). Bernard Arnault, the CEO of the LVMH luxury brands consortium, puts focus on the corporate identity, culture, heritage, and creativity as the primary drivers for their development (Fionda & Moore, 2009). According to the recent statistics, LVMH has been proven to be the most profitable luxury brand in the world, with approximate value of 130 billion dollars in 2024 (Statista, 2024b)

Brands that consumers perceive as luxury can have several key characteristics to them (Ko et al., 2019). First and foremost, these are the brands that sell a high-quality product, which is made out of the best materials and includes the craftsmanship of the person that made it (Berthon et al., 2009; Vinerean & Opreana, 2019). Importantly, they are noted to be one of the fastest growing "brand segments", while also being very profitable (Berthon et al., 2009). A luxury product always has a high price to match its numerous exquisite characteristics that make it stand out (Vinerean & Opreana, 2019; Wang, 2022). Such unique attributes make every luxury product exclusive and rare. This has the power to lure the consumers who are interested in not just purchasing a product but a history and heritage behind it (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Lastly, luxury brands have the power to provide a unique and authentic value to the consumer, either through functional features or the emotions that the product induces in its owner (Berthon et al., 2009; Ko et al., 2019; Walley et al. 2013).

Attributes could be further categorized into functional features, for example, brand characteristics and emotional features such as tradition, 'elitism', and 'eccentricity' (Heine et al., 2018). Luxury brands are thoroughly connected with status in society, it is possible to connect the consumption of luxury with the motivation to attain the said status (Kim et al., 2025). It is considered that more upper-class individuals are directly linked to the consumption of products sold by the luxury brands (Aaker, 1997). This statement could be further verified by using the fact that sales assistants at luxury stores treat consumers with the highest level of respect, giving them the outmost attention (Wang, 2022). Such a level of service turns the product into a whole luxury experience and each brand presents it differently (Berthon et al., 2009). Luxury brands are able to foster deep connections, find the common views on lifestyle and provide a distinct 'psychological value' for the consumers (Vinerean & Opreana, 2019).

2.3 Conspicuous consumption

The roots of conspicuous consumption can be traced back to Thorstein Veblen (1899), who wrote in 'The Theory of the Leisure Class' that conspicuous consumption is the willingness of consumers to buy luxury goods, so that they can display their wealth and financial capability. Although undoubtable an ancient source, it is still commonly used in literature today to describe conspicuous consumption (Cesareo et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2021; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Koo & Im, 2019; Patsiaouras & Fitchett, 2012; Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2021; Varma et al., 2024). Since then, slight alterations or additions to the definition have been made. Conspicuous consumption is also done to impress others by drawing attention to oneself, demonstrate distinctiveness, and show off one's ego (Zhang et al., 2024; Varma et al., 2024). To showcase status, conspicuous consumption is done by selecting brands with loud, visible logos (Koo & Im, 2019). Thus, at its core, conspicuous consumption can be described as a demonstration of one's wealth and ego by consuming luxury products with visible brand logos.

There are several factors driving consumers to conspicuous consumption. One factor is the power-distance belief, which is the endorsement of a social hierarchy (Jiang et al., 2021). Consumers with a high power-distance belief desire a social ranking, in which consuming products with a conspicuous design shows their status (Jiang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2024). An interesting perspective on this factor, is that some conspicuous consumption consumers want to show status, because they feel that they lack status (Koo & Im, 2019). By wearing loud, conspicuous logos and designs like the Louis Vuitton monogram or Burberry plaid pattern, conspicuous consumption consumers try to signal their desired status (Jiang et al., 2021). Due to their self-perceived lower status, they choose to display luxury brands with large logos to dissociate themselves from groups they do not want to belong to, and to show off (Koo & Im, 2019). They can also be socially excluded, and hope that the purchase of conspicuous luxury goods enhances others impression of them (Zhang et al., 2024). Hence, improving one's status is a key reason for partaking in conspicuous consumption (Jiang et al., 2021; Koo & Im, 2019; Zhang et al., 2024).

Conspicuous consumption is a global phenomenon and is noticeably popular in emerging economies such as China and India (Patsiaouras & Fitchett, 2012). Besides, the luxury market as a whole is experiencing rapid growth due to the fact that the market has expanded from solely the wealthy population to a broader population interested in luxury goods (Koo & Im, 2019). This expansion of luxury consumers, like the consumers mentioned earlier in emerging markets, is related to a status-seeking motivation (Koo & Im, 2019). Thus, the growth in the luxury

market can be attributed to conspicuous consumption consumers, as they have found to be status-driven (Jiang et al., 2021: Zhang et al; 2024). Interestingly, during economic downturn, such as during former recessions, conspicuous consumption does not stop (Nunes et al., 2011). Both from the consumer side, who continued to purchase conspicuous luxury items, and the brands themselves (such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton), who continued to launch loud, logo-driven products (Nunes et al., 2011). Consequently, the growing luxury market has turned conspicuous consumption into a global phenomenon.

However, the reasoning for conspicuous consumption is more than being merely status-driven (Cesareo et al., 2023; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2021), and a countertrend is on the rise (Jiang et al., 2021). Diving deeper than just a status-driven motivation, conspicuous consumption can also be driven by both the bandwagon effect and snob effect (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2021). When the demand for a luxury product increases due to the fact that other consumers are also having this product, it is called the bandwagon effect (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2021). The opposite can be referred to as the snob effect, which applies to a decreased demand for a luxury product due to its popularity (Kastanakis & Balanbis, 2014; Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2021). Accordingly, luxury conspicuous consumption cannot be treated as merely one-dimensional, status-driven (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). Shukla and Rosendo-Rios (2021) go as far as adding another motivation, referring an increased demand for a luxury product due an increase in price to the Veblen motivation, as it refers to Veblen's 1899 original definition of conspicuous consumption. Additionally, conspicuous consumption consumers were found to be willing to compromise on the beauty of the product, as long as it can signal its luxury status (Cesareo et al., 2023). These different viewpoints demonstrate that the motivation for conspicuous consumption is more refined than it looks like. As traditional luxury is diluting its effectiveness as a signal of wealth due to this conspicuous consumption, there is a rising demand for inconspicuous luxury consumption (Jiang et al., 2021). Inconspicuous consumption refers to a growing preference to not stand out, be more sophisticated and not flaunt your wealth to the public (Jiang et al., 2021). In contrast to the conspicuous consumers of luxury brands, consumers who prefer inconspicuous luxury consumption feel uncomfortable when they signal a social status difference with their luxury consumption (Jiang et al., 2021). The rise of inconspicuous consumption and its synonym quiet luxury will be investigated subsequently.

2.4 Inconspicuous consumption

In contrast to conspicuous consumption, inconspicuous consumption is not about showing your wealth by prancing with loud and large logo-driven clothing, but instead using subtly marked products that the general public does not immediately recognize (Atkinson & Kang, 2022). The origin of the term can be traced back to Berger and Ward (2010), who first described inconspicuous consumption as the use of subtle signals that are not identifiable to the general public, but observable to those who have the knowledge to figure out its meaning. This refers to a preference for smaller (or no) logos and less flashy items. Although slight variations of the definition have been made (Eckhardt et al., 2015), it is still the most commonly used way to describe inconspicuous consumption (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Wong & Ho, 2025; Wu, 2022). And while the term may originate from 2010, it has been consistently referred to as a rising phenomenon throughout the years, demonstrating its relevance (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Makkar & Yap, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024).

To better understand inconspicuous consumption, the construct can be explained by looking at its two main dimensions. The first dimension of inconspicuous consumption is the desire to use subtle signals that can only be understood by those who have the cultural capital to do so. Here, cultural capital refers to the collection of knowledge within both artistic and intellectual traditions (Wong & Ho, 2025). It determines how consumers interpret luxury products (Makkar & Yap, 2018), and their ability to recognize these subtle signals of luxury (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022). In other words, those who have cultural capital are able to recognize the subtle signals that identify a luxury brand, that the general public might not see. The second dimension is status signalling, but not in the same way as described for conspicuous consumption. With conspicuous consumption, brands use loud logos and big patterns so that their consumers can easily signal their status symbols to others (Wong & Ho, 2025). While with inconspicuous consumption, there is no desire to show off to the public, as this creates a sense of guilt and unease for demonstrating wealth (Makkar & Yap, 2018). Instead, status signalling via inconspicuous consumption allows consumers to quietly express themselves to the elite class, by sharing similar aesthetics and values, which are conveyed by the brands they consume (Wang et al., 2024). These consumers do not want to harm their relationships with others by being envied, which steers them away from flashy luxury items and towards inconspicuous luxury consumption instead (Wang et al., 2024). Hence at its core, inconspicuous consumption can be described as a phenomenon in which consumers demonstrate high cultural capital while simultaneously signalling status to other members of society with similar values and status.

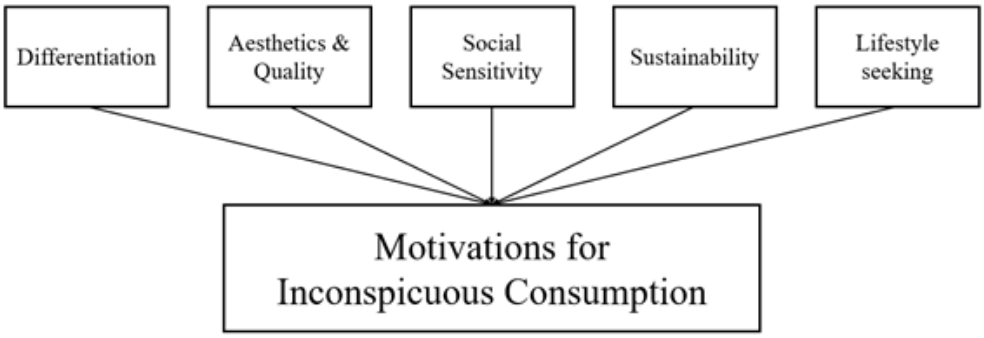
The type of consumers who partake in inconspicuous consumption have attracted research to allow further exploration (Makkar & Yap, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023). The two main dimensions of inconspicuous consumption that were just explained, cultural capital and status signalling, form the basis for creating various types of inconspicuous consumption consumers by Makkar and Yap (2018), which are now introduced. Consumers with a high cultural capital but a low need to signal their identity, were deemed 'fashion influencers', who are opinion leaders in the field of fashion and have knowledge and taste to back up their preferences. Similarly, the 'trendsetters' were identified as inconspicuous consumers with high cultural capital, but with a need to stand out, thus with a high need for signalling status. Consumers with a low cultural capital and a high need for status signalling, who follow the trendsetters blindly, are referred to as 'fashion followers'. Finally, inconspicuous consumption consumers who score low for both cultural capital and need for identity signalling, are referred to as 'luxe conservatives', who have no desire to parade their luxury taste and enjoy classical styles (Makkar & Yap, 2018). The description for the luxe conservatives is the closest to what is traditionally referred to as the inconspicuous consumption consumer, as they are driven by a desire to communicate value, and not a specific image in social settings (Shao et al., 2019). While these four types of inconspicuous consumption consumers are clearly described, the categories come across as rather broad and provide little room for interpretation.

A newer classification of inconspicuous consumption consumers provides a more comprehensive description. Here, one group of inconspicuous consumption consumers are referred to as 'inconspicuous luxury devotees', as their first luxury consumption was of an inconspicuous nature, and they continue to engage with subtle luxury products (Nguyen et al., 2023). Consumers who shifted from conspicuous luxury products to inconspicuous luxury products are named 'transitional consumers' (Nguyen et al., 2023). Finally, consumers who purchase both conspicuous and inconspicuous products, and are thus flexible in their luxury choices and preferences, are deemed 'situational consumers' (Nguyen et al., 2023). These more recent classifications of inconspicuous consumers find more support in research, as for example proven by the fact that inconspicuous luxury consumption can increase when a luxury consumers' knowledge increases (Wong & Ho, 2025), which matches with the description of the transitional consumers. The same can be said to the fact that an increasing number of consumers lean towards inconspicuous consumption (Wang et al., 2024). Hence, the latter form of classification of inconspicuous consumption consumers seems to paint a clearer picture.

Discovering what motivates consumers to choose inconspicuous consumption has been a hot topic for research as well (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022; Makkar & Yap, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023; Pangarkar & Shukla, 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2017). One major motivation to go for inconspicuous consumption, is to differentiate from the conspicuous consumers, and instead be recognized by the elite who share the same taste and cultural capital (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023). Interestingly, younger consumers were found to be more likely to be motivated by the need for differentiation (Wu et al., 2017). Another motivation for inconspicuous consumption is based on aesthetics and quality. These consumers appreciate the quality and the timeless design of inconspicuous luxury goods (Makkar & Yap, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023). In contrast to the motivation based on differentiation, consumers who are motivated by the design and quality of inconspicuous luxury goods are usually older, and more experienced luxury consumers (Nguyen et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2017). In addition, minimalists who appreciate simple items and subtle branding, tend to be motivated based on aesthetics as well (Pangarkar & Shukla, 2023). Consumers of inconspicuous luxury goods can also be motivated by wanting to avoid envy, and maintaining social harmony (Wang et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2017). Especially whenever there is an economic crisis or economic inequality, these consumers want to avoid feeling guilty and at unease with their luxury purchases (Wang et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2017). But even without an economic crisis, inconspicuous consumption provides the privacy to enjoy the luxury purchases without any external validation (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022), which contributes to the reasoning of being motivated by maintaining social harmony.

Another motivation for inconspicuous consumption commonly found among younger consumers, is from a sustainability standpoint (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Pangarkar & Shukla, 2023). Younger luxury consumers prioritize sustainability, and they demand that the brands that they consume align with their values (Atkinson & Kang, 2022). They would rather have fewer goods, but higher-quality luxury items (Pangar & Shukla, 2023). Finally, the last identified motivator for inconspicuous consumption, is for fantasy lifestyle seeking (Wu et al., 2017). Consumers who choose for inconspicuous consumption for this particular reason, do so because they want to symbolize an idealized self-image (Wu et al., 2017). As the literature shows, motivations for inconspicuous consumption are greatly diverse, especially in comparison to conspicuous consumption which demonstrates to be mostly variations of status-driven motivation (Jiang et al., 2021; Koo & Im, 2019; Zhang et al., 2024).

Figure 2: *Motivations for Inconspicuous Consumption*



Source: Own Illustration (2025)

2.5 Quiet Luxury

Quiet luxury can be defined by its aesthetic focused on minimalism, without a presence of conspicuous logos or branding. This preference originates from the philosophy of minimalism, where consumers put higher emphasis on quality and minimalism over quantity of products purchased (Pangarkar et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2025). These 'inconspicuous minimalists' are motivated by a desire for social connection with people with higher status, who also share similar cultural values instead of looking to impress the masses through traditional conspicuous consumption. This perspective contradicts the assumption that minimalists avoid luxury altogether, revealing that some actively look for high-end products as long as they align with their values (Taylor et al., 2025). A historical perspective on the evolution of quiet luxury can be seen through an analysis of media representations in a 'Home New Zealand' magazine from 1936 to 2015. It has been observed that during periods of economic recession or cultural 'restraint', there was a stronger preference for understated luxury, reflecting expanded attitudes in society towards wealth display. This historical example showcases how cultural and economic factors create preferences for quiet luxury instead of loud luxury over time (Walters & Carr, 2019). The psychological motivations behind quiet luxury consumption are complex and can be viewed differently (Pangarkar et al., 2021). The role of narcissism was examined in shaping preferences for quiet compared to loud luxury among young consumers in China and the United States. 'Narcissists', who adopt value-expressive attitudes, prefer loud luxury to signal their status (Kauppinen-Rausainen et al., 2018). In contrast, covert narcissists prefer quiet luxury due to its alignment with social-adjustive attitudes and their desire for targeted social acceptance. Social anxiety further influences the choice between quiet and loud luxury goods (Jiang et al., 2022). Different narcissistic orientations affect luxury consumption behaviours. It was found that 'overt narcissists' prioritize quality over quantity and prefer classic and

understated items associated with quiet luxury. ‘Covert narcissists’, on the other hand, prefer trendy and loud products, emphasizing quantity over quality. These findings highlight how personality traits influence divergent approaches to luxury consumption (Kang & Park, 2016). The role of brand prominence in status signalling has been extensively studied. Therefore, the concept of brand prominence was introduced, which reflects the conspicuousness of a brand's logo or mark on a product (Kauppinen-Rausainen et al., 2018). The research demonstrates that wealthy consumers that do not look for status-reflective products prefer inconspicuously branded goods as a way to associate with others of similar wealth while dissociating from the rest. Wealthy individuals that have a need for status use loud luxury goods to signal their affluence conspicuously to broader audiences (Young et al., 2010). The consumers' willingness to pay for quiet versus loud luxury products in online markets shows that consumers are willing to pay a premium of 17 to 18% for items with inconspicuous logos compared to those with prominent branding. This preference is connected to the ability of quiet luxury goods to signal exclusivity and cultural alignment within specific groups. The condition of these items significantly affects their perceived value; quiet luxury goods lose value more rapidly when in poor condition compared to the 'loud luxury' products (Yuan et al., 2022). At the same time consumers that are willing to pay high prices for quiet luxury items take their role as targeted status signals within specific social groups (Pangarkar et al., 2021). This unique form of signalling is sharply with traditional conspicuous consumption but remains rooted in the human desire for social differentiation (Yuan et al., 2022). The design elements of luxury goods play a crucial role in influencing consumer preferences for quiet luxury products. The findings suggest that extraverted individuals with a high need for status are more likely to purchase from logo-rich brands with excessive and eye-catching designs, while those open to new experiences prefer unique designs associated with quiet luxury aesthetics. This distinction showcases how personality traits steer consumer responses to different design elements in luxury products (Greenberg et al., 2020). The rise of quiet luxury reflects shifts in the society towards minimalism and sustainability in consumption. It is important to note that inconspicuous minimalists view their purchases as an extension of their values rather than as tools for ‘mass’ impression (Taylor et al., 2025). This aligns with the fact that preferences for understated luxury often appear during times of economic uncertainty or cultural changes (Walters & Carr, 2019).

2.6 Self-Determination Theory

To be motivated means that you are moved to do something, either thanks to personal commitment, or in contrast, due to being externally pressured (Ryan & Deci, 2000). While marketing and consumer behaviour have created countless theories related to consumer motivation, many of them have limited applicability (Gilal et al., 2019). For instance, the common motivation-related Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), is seen as too generalized and predictable (Gilal et al., 2019). Instead, a more promising and accurate way to uncover different motivational motives through both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, is the Self-Determination Theory, or SDT (Gilal et al., 2019). As a theory, SDT has been consistently used to uncover consumer motivations, also in the particular context of luxury consumption (Shadid & Paul, 2021; Shao et al., 2019; Petrescu et al., 2025). Hence the use of SDT for this exact research is meaningful. Since understanding consumer motivations behind owning luxury fashion products can be quite complex (Petrescu et al., 2025), it is wise to make use of a proven theory that can help uncover these motivations.

SDT states that humans are motivated by three major psychological needs: the experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2012). To start, the need for autonomy can best be described as a need to have ownership over one's own decisions and be free of any psychological burden (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It does not necessarily mean to be independent of others, but rather being free to make the decision yourself regardless of if it is in line with others or not (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It is also referred to as a motivational state or permanent motivational orientation (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Shadid & Paul, 2021). On top of having ownership, it also shows a sense of initiative (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Next is the need for competence, which is a sense of mastery over the environment, meaning to be capable to learn new skills in your surroundings (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) and be capable to participate in activities (Shadid & Paul, 2021). It demonstrates having the skills to succeed and grow in your environment (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Finally, the need for relatedness refers to a desire to belong and be connected to others, to care and be taken care of (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). But also, to form a strong emotional connection, and feel attached to others who belong to the same group (Shadid et al., 2021). Next to a sense of belonging and care, it also demonstrates respect to the group you belong to, or want to belong to (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

2.6.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Besides the three major psychological needs, SDT distinguishes two types of motivation: intrinsic (autonomous) motivation and extrinsic (controlled) motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Dwivedula, 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Shao et al., 2019, Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Various literature provides an easy-to-understand description of intrinsic motivation, such as the need of the person to engage in an activity because they find it interesting (Dwivedula, 2024), or for personal enjoyment (Shadid & Paul, 2021). In addition, people who are intrinsically motivated also engage in an activity for self-fulfilment and their own reward (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Thus, being intrinsically motivated means that you partake purely for your own satisfactions rather than for some linked consequence (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In contrast, extrinsic motivation cannot be described as easily, as it contains several variations (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). First of all, extrinsic motivation is being done because it leads to a separable outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and is often experienced as controlled, because people feel a pressure to do so to receive rewards of avoid a punishment (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). One type of extrinsic motivation is referred to as external motivation, which is behaviour that feels forced to avoid punishments for not engaging (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Similarly, introjected motivation is a type of extrinsic motivation which is done purely toavoid guilt or shame or similarly pride if they did or did not engage (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). With identified motivation or identification, people have realized the personal relevance of their behaviour and are because of that motivated to participate (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). The difference between the identified motivation, which is extrinsic, and internal motivation, is that internally motivated people do so because they personally enjoy it, whereas people with identified motivation only partake because they realise its importance, but do not necessarily enjoy it (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

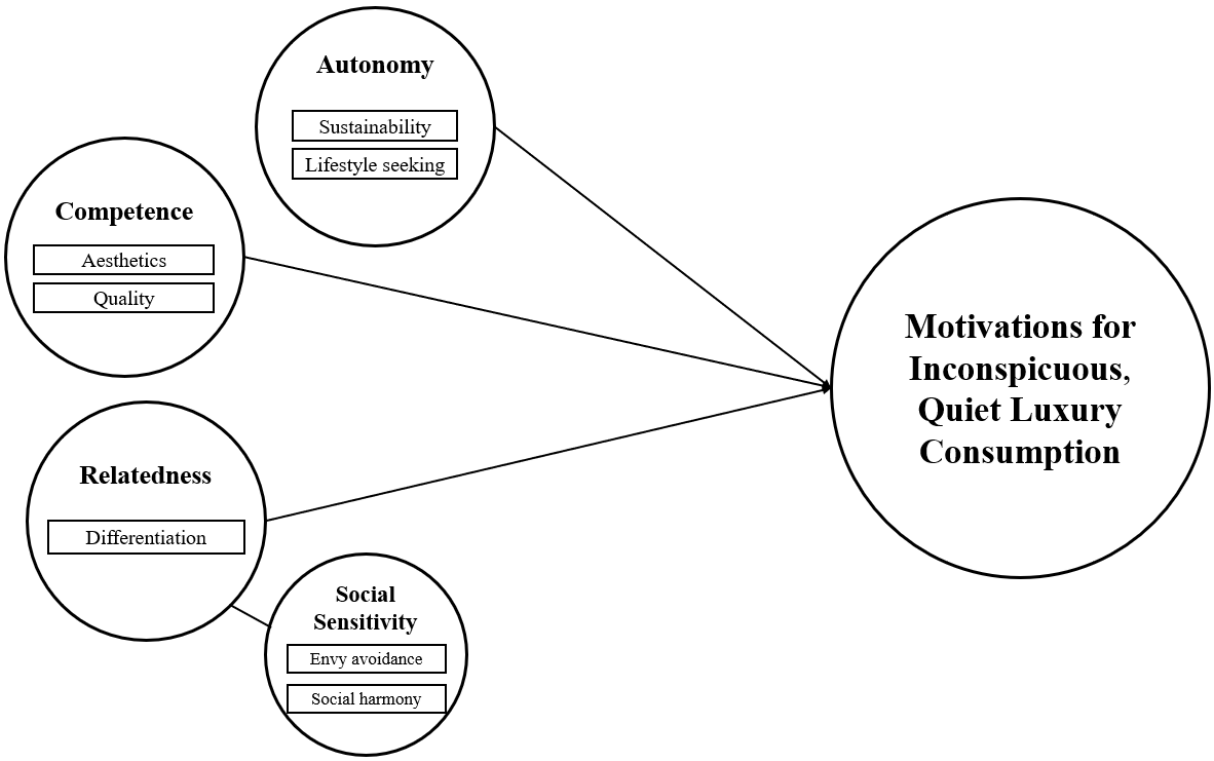
2.6.2 Self-Determination Theory and Quiet Luxury motivations

Next, it is time to link the previously stated motivations for consumers to partake in inconspicuous consumption or quiet luxury with the Self-Determination Theory to see to which extend the two align. The motivation for seeking differentiation from conspicuous consumers and instead be grouped together with individuals with similar taste and cultural capital (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023) fits well with the need for relatedness. While at first it may sound odd to group the motivation for differentiation with relatedness, a

closer look at the need for relatedness shows that these individuals also want to feel attached to a group (Shadid et al., 2021). What is more, the need for differentiation refers to differentiating from the public and conspicuous consumers, but not from likeminded individuals (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022). Hence the two do align well. The motivation to opt for inconspicuous consumption based on aesthetics and quality due to its timeless design (Makkar & Yap, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023) can be matched accordingly too. This motivation aligns best with the need for competence. As the need for competence demonstrates skills and knowledge (Van den Broeck et al., 2016), it can be matched with the aesthetic and quality-driven motivation, as these consumers have the competence to consume based on that reasoning. As previously described, particularly younger inconspicuous luxury consumers tend to be motivated from a sustainability point of view (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Pangarkar & Shukla, 2023). These consumers rather have fewer goods but have the luxury goods align with their own values (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Pangar & Shukla, 2023). This fits perfectly with the need for autonomy, as that is known having ownership over your decisions and showing initiative (Ryan & Deci, 2020), as well as it being a motivation-based orientation (Shadid & Paul, 2021). The motivation to partake in inconspicuous consumption or quiet luxury from an idealized self-image perspective can be grouped with the need for autonomy as well, as these consumers make an active, personal decision to consume inconspicuous luxury goods for this purpose (Wu et al., 2017).

This leaves one set of motivations untouched, which is being motivated to avoid envy, and maintain harmony in society (Wang et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2017). These consumers do not want to feel uncomfortable with their luxury purchases or risk showing any economic inequality to others (Wang et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2017). This motivation, based on envy avoidance and social harmony, fits best with the need for relatedness, as it shows that you want to belong to a certain group, and demonstrate respect to this group (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Shadid et al., 2021) by not displaying any differences in social class. Since these two motivations are related to each other, they were grouped together under the name ‘Social Sensitivity’, which embodies the motivation to avoid feelings of envy, guiltiness as well as maintaining social harmony in society (Wang et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2017). The motivation of Social Sensitivity is thus connected to the need for relatedness. With this adjustment made, all identified motivations for consumers to choose inconspicuous consumption or quiet luxury, have now been classified in the Self-Determination Theory, or SDT.

Figure 3: *Adapted model of the Self-Determination Theory based on Inconspicuous, Quiet Luxury consumption motivations*.



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

3. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and document the necessary steps of how the research was conducted, including the research paradigm, approach and design. Also, the chapter explains the chosen data collection method, interview structure, sampling method, analysis of the data and the ethics of this research.

3.1 Research paradigm

Research paradigms form the essential philosophical foundation of academic inquiry, with positivism and interpretivism/social constructivism representing the two primary approaches (Collis & Hussey, 2014; Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Positivism implies that reality is independent, and it looks for logical, objective explanations through quantitative methods, with the intention that social phenomena can be measured. In contrast, interpretivism perceives reality as highly subjective, emphasizing the analysis of complex social phenomena to gain interpretive understanding, primarily utilizing qualitative methods to extract meaning rather than quantify frequency (Krauss, 2005).

For this study, an interpretivist paradigm has been adopted to generate meaningful answers to the research questions. This choice enables the creation of a nuanced understanding of participants' responses regarding the factors that influence their purchase decisions of quiet luxury brands' products. The interpretivist approach guides the exploration of underlying mechanisms through which specific behavioural factors elements influence intrinsic motivation and how it could be enhanced. This aligns with the expectation that observations will be complex, heterogeneous, and subjective, consistent with interpretivist research philosophy (Krauss, 2005; Nunan et al., 2020).

By selecting an interpretivist approach, the research team explicitly distances itself from positivism, as the study's objective is not to conduct a numerical examination of the phenomenon but rather to seek a deeply rooted understanding and meaning. This methodological choice reflects the researchers' commitment to uncovering nuanced insights into the relationship consumer behaviour in Scandinavia in the specific context of inconspicuous consumption, focusing on the importance of interpretation of the participants past experiences related to the purchase of quiet luxury products (Krauss, 2005).

3.2 Research approach

This research utilizes an interpretivist perspective, while using a deductive qualitative approach in which existing theory, in this case the Self-Determination Theory, is used to examine a phenomenon (quiet luxury in Scandinavia), and further refine the theory to this particular case (Fife & Gossner, 2024). The study aims to explore the factors which influence the consumers to purchase inconspicuous products within the quiet luxury brands context, which is an area that has not been well researched in the context of the Scandinavian region. The goal is to investigate how these factors can be grouped and categorized together with the usage of the existing theory. This can be done with the use of the exploratory research, which allows to dive deeper into the existing theory and research to draw the new findings relevant to the topic (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The findings will be analysed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), with a plan to establish meaningful connections between empirical data and theory, thus contributing to the existing literature.

3.3 Research design

A qualitative research design was selected to address the research questions, aiming to understand the interviewed individuals regarding their motivations to purchase quiet luxury products. An exploratory approach aligns with qualitative methodology, which seeks to uncover underlying meanings that cannot be represented numerically (Krauss, 2005; Nunan et al., 2020). In contrast to quantitative research, which is not suitable for developing a deep understanding of phenomena and their underlying reasons, the qualitative approach allows to gain rich insights into the subject and draw the necessary conclusions (Collis & Hussey, 2014). By utilizing interviews, it is possible to create a comprehensive understanding of different factors and behavioural patterns influencing consumers in the context of inconspicuous consumption. This method allows participants to fully express their opinions, emotions, and thoughts on the topic under investigation (Nunan et al., 2020). Considering the previous key points, this approach aligns with the study's purpose of generating rich, subjective, and qualitative data that provide deep insights into the research topic allowing to answer the research question.

3.4 Data collection

For the purpose of finding out the motivations of Scandinavian consumers to partake in quiet luxury consumption, both primary and secondary research data was collected. In order to find out more about the field of conspicuous consumption, inconspicuous consumption, quiet luxury, and the broader luxury context, secondary research data was collected first. This helped create a proper understanding of the topic, which was required to find a subsequent research gap as well as for conducting the literature review on the research topic. As described in the literature review, this secondary data consisted almost exclusively of ABS-listed academic journals with journal articles related to this field of study. Secondary data in itself is referred to as data that has been collected by someone else (Adams et al., 2014) and for another purpose (Saunders et al., 2016), thus, not for this particular research. While secondary data will not answer all of the research needs, it is recommended to always start with secondary data collection, as this kind of data is usually readily accessible (i.e. via databases like Scopus or Web of Science), and saves a lot of time and effort compared to collecting all data via a primary data collection way (Clow & James, 2013).

Next, after all secondary data was collected, studied, and applied, the primary data collection was started. In itself, primary data is data that cannot be found via secondary data sources and therefore has to be collected to address the needs of this specific research (Silver & Wrenn, 2013). Primary data collection can further be split into three types, being either exploratory research, descriptive research, or causal research (Kumar, 2024). As this research aimed to uncover the motivations of Scandinavian consumers for quiet luxury consumption, it fits the description of exploratory research best. This is because exploratory research is used to uncover problems or motivations, and when little knowledge about the situation (in this case the motivation of Scandinavian consumers) is known (Kumar, 2024). There are many variations of primary data collection, such as surveys, observations, focus groups, and interviews (Silver & Wrenn, 2013). This research has collected its primary data via interviews, as it helps understand in-depth motivations for the behaviour and feelings of people (Adams et al., 2014). By conducting interviews, valid and reliable data can be collected that is relevant and tailored to the research question, allowing room for refining the ideas and information (Saunders et al., 2016). Hence, the use of interviews for this particular research makes sense. In addition, interviews are commonly used in research about inconspicuous consumption and quiet luxury, confirming its applicability (Makkar & Yap, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023; Wu, 2022).

3.5 Interview structure

To uncover the motivations of Scandinavian consumers of quiet luxury products, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Via this type of interviewing, a set of pre-made questions are asked to the participants, but with room for interpretation, change of order, and additional questions (Adams et al., 2014). Semi-structured interviews, sometimes referred to as semi-standardized interviews, are recommended when the participants have knowledge about the topic that makes them capable of answering spontaneously to open questions (De Sordi, 2024). As the participants of this research were selected based on the fact that they are consumers of quiet luxury fashion products (see the sampling approach), they were deemed capable of answering these types of questions. The questions slightly varied from interview to interview or required more context for some participants to extract the information needed to uncover the participants' motivation for quiet luxury consumption. This kind of flexibility and variety is common with semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2016).

The interview questions were mostly open questions, meaning that the participant was encouraged to provide an extensive answer, and reply as they wish (Saunders et al., 2016). These questions were directed in a way so that they could be linked to priorly discovered motivations for quiet luxury consumption, as well as uncover new motivations. One example of an interview question was: 'Why did you choose to buy products from Brand X?'. This kind of question is a probing question, which was also used in the interviews to further explore the responses of the participants (Saunders et al., 2016). While probing questions were used, indirect open questions were applied as well to make the Scandinavian participants of the interview more comfortable with answering. As such, projective and completion techniques were applied. With the projective technique, the participant can project their thoughts in an indirect way (Nunan et al., 2020). An example of this was the question 'How would you describe a typical consumer of Brand X?'. Similarly, with the completion technique, participants received an incomplete sentence that they should finish (Nunan et al., 2020). For example, this was used by asking 'People buy from Brand X because Y'. By applying both projective and completion techniques, the participants would give more elaborate answers than by just stating their own opinion directly.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted from March 15, 2025, to April 7, 2025. Due to the nature of this research, which aimed to uncover the motivations for quiet luxury consumption of Scandinavian consumers, all interviews were conducted online. This was done because of the great geographical dispersion of the participants, who lived in Sweden, Norway,

and Denmark. This made it hard from a financial, logistical, and executional perspective to do the interviews in-person, and subsequently, online interviews were conducted. In total, 18 interviews were conducted, which lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. This is in line with the common understanding on both the number and the length of semi-structured interviews, which should be between 5 and 25 interviews (Saunders et al., 2016) and are rarely shorter than 20 minutes or longer than 60 minutes (Adams et al., 2014). Also, as code saturation, which is the point where no new themes emerge from the interview transcripts, is reached at 9 interviews and meaning saturation between 16 to 24 interviews (Saunders et al., 2017), the 18 conducted interviews should be sufficient for this research.

3.6 Sampling approach

Next, a sampling approach was decided on. To start, probability sampling, which is the sampling approach in which each person from the population has a chance to be selected (Saunders et al., 2016), was dismissed. This is because the entire population of quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia is unknown, and thus no statistical estimate could be made to draw a sample from. It is also not matching the type of research, as probability sampling is common with quantitative research like surveys (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, a non-probability sampling technique was applied, which is based on the judgement of the researchers (Sharma, 2017). To get in contact with Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, both purposive and snowball sampling were applied. First, purposive sampling was applied, where based on the researcher's judgement, participants were selected that can contribute to the research (Saunders et al., 2016). While purposive sampling is sometimes seen as ill-considered, it can be a proper sampling method if it follows clear criteria (Sharma, 2017). This was the case, as participants had to be from either Norway, Sweden, or Denmark, and be consumers of quiet luxury brands. Potential participants were reached out to via online channels such as Instagram and WhatsApp, that allowed the researchers to judge their initial applicability based on the brands they wear on Instagram, or based on the fact that the participant was known to the researchers as consumers of such brands, which could indicate that they enjoy quiet luxury fashion. To confirm applicability, participants were asked if they did indeed purchase fashion products from these quiet luxury brands before the interviews were scheduled.

With snowball sampling, contact is sought with a person from the population (in this case a Scandinavian quiet luxury consumer), and this person is then asked to refer further people that could fit the research and be interviewed. This method is commonly used when it is hard to

identify members of the population (Saunders et al., 2016; Sharma, 2017), as was the case for this research. But it does limit the representability of the collected information (Clow & James, 2013). The participants were reached out to via the personal networks of the researchers and based on the fact that they consume quiet luxury fashion brands. Subsequently, by applying both sampling methods, 18 participants were interviewed by the researchers from March 15, 2025, to April 7, 2025

Now, while various inconspicuous consumption and quiet luxury studies mention brand names as inconspicuous, quiet luxury examples, this is not enough to make the distinction on what constitutes as a quiet luxury brand. This is why the three stages of luxury brands from conspicuous to inconspicuous, quiet luxury is used (Hong & Wo, 2023; Wo & Hong, 2025). Here, stage one luxury brands are described as the most recognizable luxury brands with often visible logos and patterns, such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton. Stage two brands are luxury brands which are more inconspicuous, and only visible to the people that recognize it. Examples are brands like Bottega Veneta and Thom Browne. Stage three brands are completely inconspicuous, and thus very niche and hard to recognize, such as The Row and Visvim (Wo & Hong, 2025). To adapt the brands mentioned to a Scandinavian perspective, quiet luxury consumers were sought from the Scandinavian equivalent of mostly stage two and stage three brands. Some of the Scandinavian quiet luxury fashion brands that match the description of the inconspicuous stage two, and three brands based on their aesthetics, are Toteme, Filippa K, Eton, Holzweiler, Oscar Jacobson, NN.07, Stenströms, Amundsen, and Tom Wood, among others.

3.7 Data analysis

The analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews followed a deductive approach, meaning that it used a theoretical framework to help organize the data analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). Based on the revised theoretical framework of the Self-Determination Theory, the major needs that drive quiet luxury consumption were identified before, and this helped group the data within these needs. The data that was used for the analysis are the transcripts from the interviews, which are a very common qualitative data source (Nunan et al., 2020). The transcripts were auto transcribed by the Microsoft Teams recording software and subsequently checked by the researchers for its accuracy. One of the most common qualitative data analysis approaches, and the one that this research used, is the thematic analysis. The purpose of this analysis type is to search for themes or patterns that occur across a data set, in

this case a set of interview transcripts (Saunders et al., 2016). The use of a thematic analysis for this research fits well, as it is often used to understand human attitudes and actions (Saunders et al., 2016), such as the motivations for quiet luxury consumption that this research uncovered. The major task of the thematic analysis after familiarising the data, is to create codes within the transcripts that demonstrate patterns or similarities in the answers (Willig et al., 2017). These codes summarize the meaning of that similarity and are visualized in a single word or short phrase (Saunders et al., 2016). The thematic analysis of this research makes use of a quote, visualising raw data that represents what comes next, which is the code fit for that context, which then leads to an encompassing theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2018). Once all transcripts have been coded, similar codes can emerge that are related, and can be grouped into themes (Saunders et al., 2016). As this research used a deductive approach built on the revised Self-Determination Theory, the similar codes were linked to themes that relate to the theory, such as themes that point to SDT's need for competence. The use of theory to help 'see' the data, create codes and develop themes is common in this deductive approach (Willig et al., 2017). Once all transcripts are subsequently coded, themed, and linked to the revised theory, the findings of the data can be discovered.

3.8 Ethics

Ethics deserve to be mentioned in the research methodology, as ethical concerns arise when conducting any research (Nunan et al., 2020; Silver & Wrenn, 2013). At its core, ethics refers to the standards and the behaviour that is being applied to anyone involved or affected by the research (Saunders et al., 2016). The research team strived to behave ethically in all aspects of this research, which will now be elaborated on further. One major ethical element in research, especially in qualitative research, is to make sure that participants are aware of their rights. At all times should it be clear that their participation is entirely voluntary, what the purpose of their participation is, and where the information is being used for (Kumar, 2024; Silver & Wrenn, 2013). This is why all participants of the interviews were made aware from the start that their participation would contribute to this research, and that they are entirely free to decide whether they would like to allocate time to an interview. This includes the full extent of consent given by the participants, such as the time for the interviews and scope of the questions (Saunders et al., 2016). Subsequently, the research team abided by the set agreement with each participant and did not exceed any time boundaries or the scope of the questions.

3.8.1 Confidentiality

Ensuring confidentiality of the data received is also a major ethical element, as participants expect to be asked for consent before their answers are shared publicly (Saunders et al., 2016). All participants have a right to privacy (Silver & Wrenn, 2013), and this has to be respected, for instance by ensuring anonymity if the participant sees their answers as confidential and does not want this to be publicly shared. Optionally, participant names can be changed, or pseudonyms can be used to strengthen their anonymity (Nunan et al., 2020). For this research, participants were asked if any of their answers were confidential, and thus required any additional steps such as anonymity, before their data was mentioned in the research. This way, data mentioned in the research has seen approval of the participants. In addition, by providing and signing the GDPR form provided by Jönköping University, privacy and careful use of the obtained data was promised.

3.8.2 Credibility

To ensure that the data received from the participants of the interviews is analysed and interpreted correctly, both researchers of the research team are involved in analysing the data. This helps contribute to the credibility of the information, as for information to be credible, it needs to either be obtained from multiple sources, or analysed by multiple researchers (Stahl & King, 2020).

3.8.3 Transferability

The transferability of the data is harder in qualitative research like this research, as it is not necessarily designed to be replicated like with quantitative research (Stahl & King, 2020). Yet, it can still be achieved by collecting ‘thick data’, meaning that the data collected from the interviews is described in detail, as well as the method of collecting the data such as the timeframe (Stahl & King, 2020). Transferability was therefore assured by making clear when the interviews with the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers took place, as well as by giving extensive descriptions of the data found in these interviews.

3.8.4 Dependability

Dependability implies that the research is conducted in a transparent, clear and comprehensive way that allows the reader to rely on the findings presented in the paper (Anney, 2014). The methodology provides an extensive overview of all the steps that have been taken to ensure the steps of the research, which describes the way the study has been conducted. This means that

the research can be replicated using similar steps described previously. This way, it is possible to ensure the dependability of the research (Anney 2014; Shenton, 2004). The data has been cross-checked and verified, to confirm that the findings correlate with each other and provide a logical answer to the research question.

3.8.5 Confirmability

Confirmability implies that the researchers have kept the neutrality and have been objective throughout the research (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In order to achieve confirmability, the possible bias and personal interests have not been taken into the account and are not reflected in this study (Shenton, 2004). This allows to create a meaningful and clear understanding of the topic. The interviews have been conducted until deemed that there is enough data to generate the necessary findings. Each has been checked to ensure that the transcripts and data are objective and reliable (Saunders et al., 2016). The direct quotes are provided ensuring the transparency and direct interpretation of the participants' input on the questions (Anney, 2014). All information and conclusions of this research has been derived from the primary and secondary research. Therefore, the confirmability is ensured in the study.

4. Findings

This chapter presents and describes the empirical data that has been collected by means of the semi-structured, in-depth interviews. A brief background on the participants is given first, after which a thematic analysis is applied, in which the interview data has been coded, ordered into themes, and is subsequently presented in this chapter.

4.1 Participants background

In order to find out what motivates Scandinavian consumers to choose for quiet luxury fashion, a total of 18 people were interviewed online between March 15, 2025, and April 7, 2025. As described previously in the methodology of this research, both purposive and snowball sampling have been used. This made the collection of suitable participants achievable, as many participants had friends or relatives with a similar fashion taste and preference for quiet luxury fashion. All participants fulfill the pre-set requirements for participation, which were their nationality (either Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian), and the fact that they shop for quiet luxury fashion, as proven by their mentioned favorite brands. The age range among participants varies, with the youngest participant aged 21 and the oldest 62, therefore covering not just one age bracket. The participants had various backgrounds, with older participants that have decades of experience in the textile industry, to the ex-CFO of a globally known conglomerate, store associates of fashion stores known for selling quiet luxury fashion, and young quiet luxury enthusiasts. While the interviews solely focused on the personal opinions of each participant, this background of participants shows that the collected data does not merely comprise of one group of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, but rather an arguably impressive mix of participants. Swedes represent the biggest group of participants with ten individual participants, followed by five Norwegians and three Danish participants. For privacy reasons, the gender instead of the name of each participant is given. Table 1 shows more details about the participants, such as their age, nationality, as well as their favorite brands. Further references to the participants will be made by stating either ‘Participant [NUMBER]’ or simply ‘P[NUMBER]’.

Table 1: *Interview participants overview*

Participant:	Gender:	Nationality:	Age:	Favorite brand(s):
1	Male	Swedish	27	Filippa K, Stenströms, Gant
2	Male	Swedish	56	Oscar Jacobson, Zegna, Slowear
3	Male	Danish	60	Hugo, Ralph Lauren, Nudie Jeans
4	Male	Swedish	21	Stenströms, Oscar Jacobson, Eton
5	Female	Swedish	32	Ralph Lauren, Gant
6	Female	Norwegian	26	Amundsen, Haglöfs, Peak Performance
7	Male	Swedish	21	A Day's March, Axel Arigato, NN.07
8	Female	Swedish	22	Acne Studios, Polène
9	Female	Swedish	22	Worn, Miu Miu
10	Female	Norwegian	24	Peak Performance
11	Female	Norwegian	24	Toteme, Filippa K, Nudie Jeans
12	Female	Danish	62	Prada, Louis Vuitton
13	Male	Swedish	22	Filippa K, Acne Studios
14	Male	Swedish	22	Acne Studios, NN.07, Filippa K
15	Female	Danish	60	Samsøe & Samsøe, Stine Goya
16	Female	Norwegian	29	Chanel, Prada, Yves Saint Laurent
17	Female	Norwegian	24	Holzweiler, Peak Performance
18	Female	Swedish	22	Acne Studios, Max Mara, Ralph Lauren

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

4.2 Differentiation-driven motivations

An examination of the interview transcripts revealed many different motivations to go for quiet luxury fashion, which will now be interpreted in detail. One common motivation among participants to go for quiet luxury fashion can be based on a literature review finding, which is the motivation based on differentiation. Among the answers of the 18 participants, this did not necessarily relate to wanting to stand out from the general crowd, but rather about wanting to differentiate from the overly loud, conspicuous luxury brands. For instance, participant 4 made this clear by candidly stating his dislike for loud luxury brand Philipp Plein:

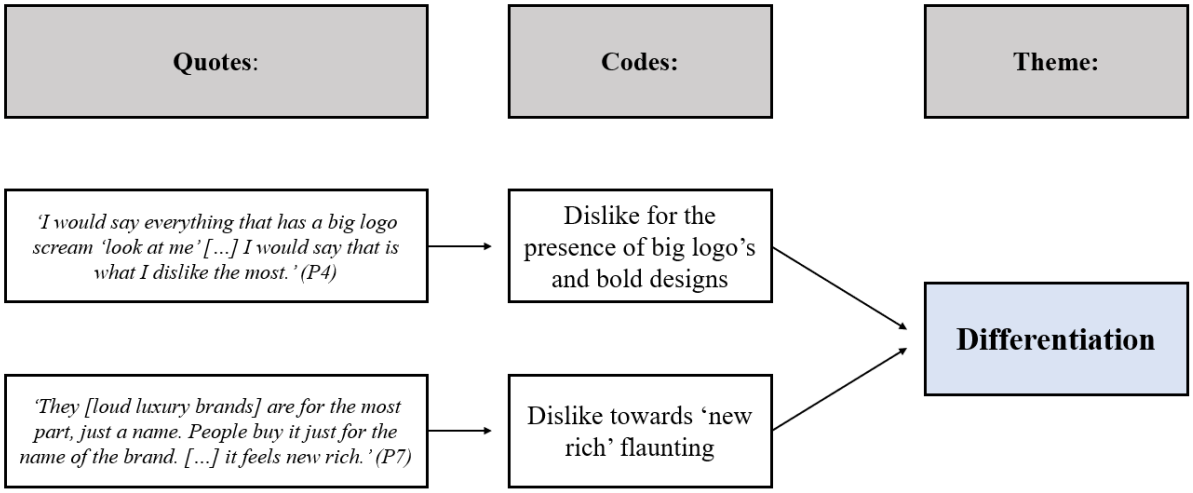
'It is a horrible brand, they [Philipp Plein] just put glitter all over, and I would never, ever, put something on from them.' (P4)

The dislike for loud luxury is not merely brand driven, but also in the way these loud luxury brands design their clothes, and thus chase away the quiet luxury consumers:

'I would also say the big brands with the big logos like Louis Vuitton, even though they are seen as very luxurious, […] I think it is ugly.' (P11)

The above quotes are examples of how the 18 participants reacted to loud luxury fashion. Below, more example quotes as well as the codes leading up to this motivation are shown.

Figure 4: *Coding for the differentiation theme*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

Aside from a general dislike towards the loud luxury brands and their logo-driven designs, the participants also saw the loud luxury consumers as 'new rich' consumers who want to flaunt, or 'wannabe rich' consumers that want to look rich. This is another differentiation-related reason why the quiet luxury consumer does not want to be in the same group as them:

'I do not want to sound rude, but I would describe it [loud luxury brand consumers] more as when you are newly rich or you are trying to look rich, but it is not really giving the old money style.' (P11)

In addition, participants stated that they move towards quiet luxury fashion as that would fit their character of being a 'confident' consumer that does not need the logos, and that they would feel uncomfortable being seen as someone that is a loud luxury fashion consumer:

'It [Gucci] is in your face too much, that would be too much for me. People just buy it for the name of the brand. It is a bit embarrassing, and I would feel embarrassed [wearing it].' (P7)

Finally, participant 2 gave an interesting perspective on the differentiation motivation, stating that loud luxury fashion is not fashionable anymore, and heavily copied. As a result, it is not attractive to wear loud luxury fashion, and alternatively, quiet luxury is more attractive:

'I think it [loud luxury fashion] is a bit in the past, and the brands that have it, like the big Gucci belt and Louis Vuitton label, are not in fashion anymore as it used to be. People are

getting tired of it, and the copy culture for that kind of product has been very aggressive. It is difficult to tell whether it is original or a copy. I don't think it [loud luxury fashion] will come back and I think fashion is going to be more sophisticated in the future.' (P2)

Hence, participants stated a variety of reasons why they want to distance themselves from their loud luxury fashion consumer counterparts, and as a result lean towards quiet luxury fashion. While some participants appreciated a single loud fashion piece as a part of their look to mix it up, nearly all participants would want to differentiate themselves from the overly loud luxury fashion consumers, for the reasons stated above. As a result, the overview table of participants who see differentiation as a motivation for quiet luxury consumption, marked X, looks as follows:

Table 2: *Interview participants motivated by differentiation*

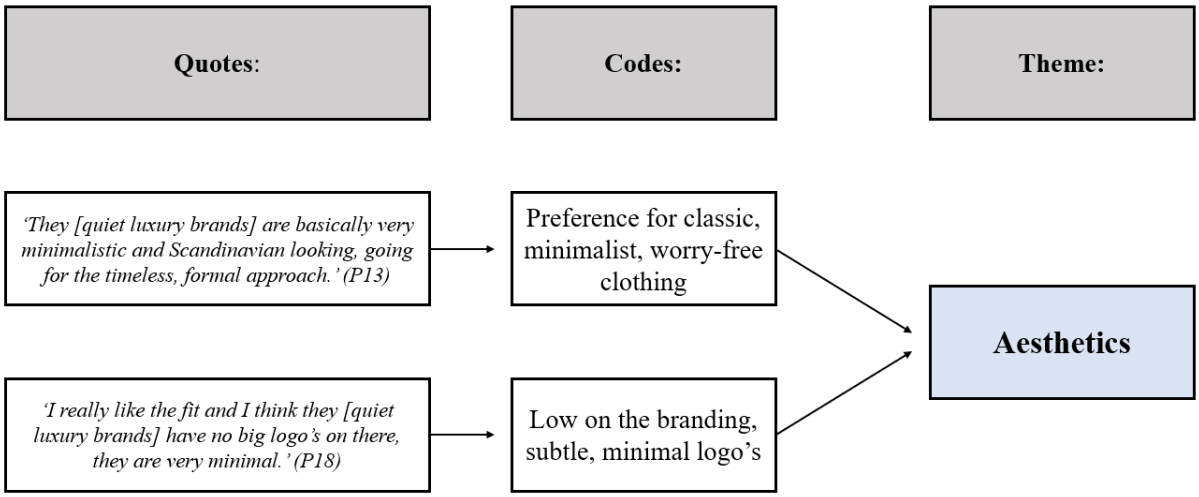
Participant:	**Theme: Differentiation**
1	X
2	X
3	
4	X
5	X
6	X
7	X
8	X
9	X
10	X
11	X
12	
13	X
14	X
15	X
16	
17	X
18	X

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

4.3 Aesthetics-driven motivations

Aside from differentiation-based motivations, the interview participants also demonstrated motivations for quiet luxury consumption that can be linked to an aesthetic perspective, therefore relating to the design, colors, and style. The coding of this theme is demonstrated below.

Figure 5: *Coding for the aesthetics theme*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

Referring to the aesthetics found in quiet luxury fashion, participants stated that quiet luxury fashion really fits with their own personal taste, and that they like the minimalist aspect of it. This also refers to the more toned-down use of colors:

'I think they [quiet luxury fashion brands] are more on the minimalistic side. I think you can obviously pull off [a look with] a lot of color, but otherwise I generally like the more marine blue, black, white and grey [fashion].' (P1)

When asked why participants liked the quiet luxury fashion brands that they mentioned, responses would, aside from personal style and colors, also mention the simplicity of the quiet luxury designs, as demonstrated by participant 8:

'Obviously, you have to like it before you want to buy it, but I think they [quiet luxury fashion brands] also market the products as very neat, clean, and simple. It [the fashion] does not feel very intimidating.' (P8)

On top of the use of toned-down colors, and neat, clean designs, participant 13 referred to the quiet luxury fashion aesthetic as something that is timeless, and according to him, therefore very Scandinavian:

'I like Acne Studios and Filippa K just because it is timeless. Also, Ralph Lauren for example, I would say is very Scandinavian [style wise] since they have clothes that are high in quality but not just for a trend, it is accessible for a longer time.' (P13)

The quiet luxury fashion brands can then be seen as a worry-free option for these fashion consumers, as they offer more classic pieces, and that are also easier to mix and match than loud luxury fashion pieces:

'I would buy more classical things, like trousers, and black skirts that you can combine with a lot of things, and do not go out of fashion in one season. […] I get so overwhelmed by all these really flashy brands […] and I just go sort of cold [on these brands].' (P15)

Finally, the more subtle use of branding and logos on the clothing, for which quiet luxury fashion is known, was given as an aesthetics-driven motivation to choose for the quiet luxury fashion brands:

'I like it when it is on a low [the branding]. Some brands have like a little small logo on the back of the jeans, but I think that is a good detail piece.' (P4)

To summarize, the aesthetics-driven motivations of the interview participants to go for quiet luxury fashion brands were based on the fact that they are clean, neatly designed brands with the use of subtle colors, a timeless, classic aesthetic, and subtle branding that matches with their personal styles. The table below indicates which participants mentioned aesthetic-driven motivations in their interviews.

Table 3: *Interview participants motivated by aesthetics*

Participant:	**Theme: Aesthetics**
1	X
2	
3	
4	X
5	X
6	X
7	X
8	X
9	
10	

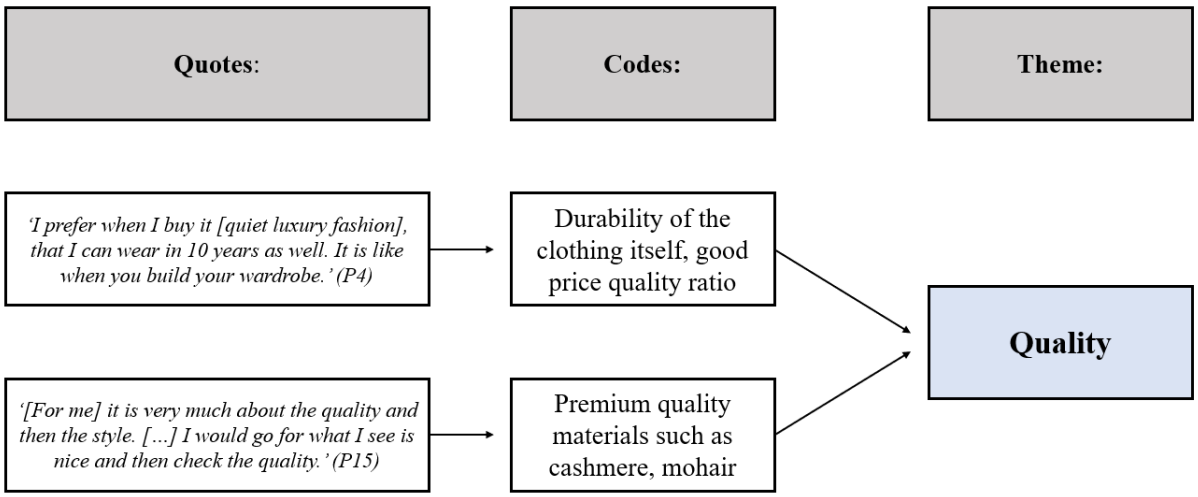
11	X
12	
13	X
14	X
15	X
16	
17	
18	X

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

4.4 Quality-driven motivations

If there is one motivation for quiet luxury fashion that was a common theme among interview participants, it could arguably be related to the quality aspect. Almost all interview participants stated aspects related to quality as a reason to go for quiet luxury fashion, as will now be examined. The coding of this theme is subsequently presented below.

Figure 6: *Coding for the quality theme*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

A common answer among interview participants for their decision to go for quiet luxury fashion, was based on the fact that quiet luxury fashion brands make clothing pieces that are durable, and therefore can be worn for many years:

'I got my first pieces of Ralph Lauren when I was living in the United States, and those pieces I still have 13 years later. So, at this point, it is the quality [that makes me like them]. Also, for bags […] I know it will hold up.' (P5)

'The fibers they use in the clothes are much longer, so it will stay nice much longer. Another example is shoes. They are very [expensive] shoes which are more than 20 years old and are still good shoes.' (P12)

Linked to durability, is the reasoning to go for quiet luxury fashion based on the materials that these brands use for their fashion pieces. Among the interview participants, there was a clear preference for brands that use premium fibers, and that stay away from cheaper, alternative materials like polyester:

'In recent years, I have started to look for good products. I do not want to have too much polyester in all of my clothes.' (P6)

Various participants had very clear opinions on the materials they search for in quiet luxury fashion, and it shows that they are actively searching for fashion brands that can meet these needs, and avoid (generally) cheap fashion brands:

'If I buy jeans, I want them to be denim, like 100% denim. I love cashmere, mohair, alpaca wool, and all of the natural fibers. So that is what mainly attracts me to brands.' (P11)

'I actually look at what material it is made out of. If it's lambswool, 15% cashmere, or something else. I really like lambswool, and I have some lambswool clothes from A Day's March, which I think is really comfortable. I do not want them to get destroyed in the first wash.' (P7)

While interview participants had a preference for premium materials in clothing such as cashmere, and mohair, they generally view the price quality ratio of such quiet luxury fashion as worth it:

'I kind of try to shop with the philosophy that if something is expensive versus costly, I think I will steer away from something that is expensive […], which I feel is like something poorly constructed and that does not live up to the price tag. If something is costly, I at least know it is good quality.' (P8)

'Every single brand I mentioned [Oscar Jacobson, Stenströms] satisfies me of course, because you really get the same thing as when you put it on in the store for like the next two or three years. Yeah, it is unmatched really [in quality], and […] it is a bit of like an investment [in the clothing].' (P4)

'About Oscar Jacobson and Slowear, [I have a lot of clothing] because that kind of brand has the most perfect quality price relation. I have other brands I used to buy in the past […] which I do not buy any longer, because the price level is more or less the same, but their quality has been decreasing a lot, and quality for me is very important.' (P2)

Hence, the quiet luxury consumers from Scandinavia that participated in the online interviews clearly demonstrated the importance of quality in their decision making. Here, we specifically refer quality to the durability of the clothing, the materials they use (or do not use) for their clothing, and how the fashion brands price themselves in comparison to the quality they offer. An overview of all participants that mentioned quality aspects in their motivations, is demonstrated below.

Table 4: *Interview participants motivated by quality*

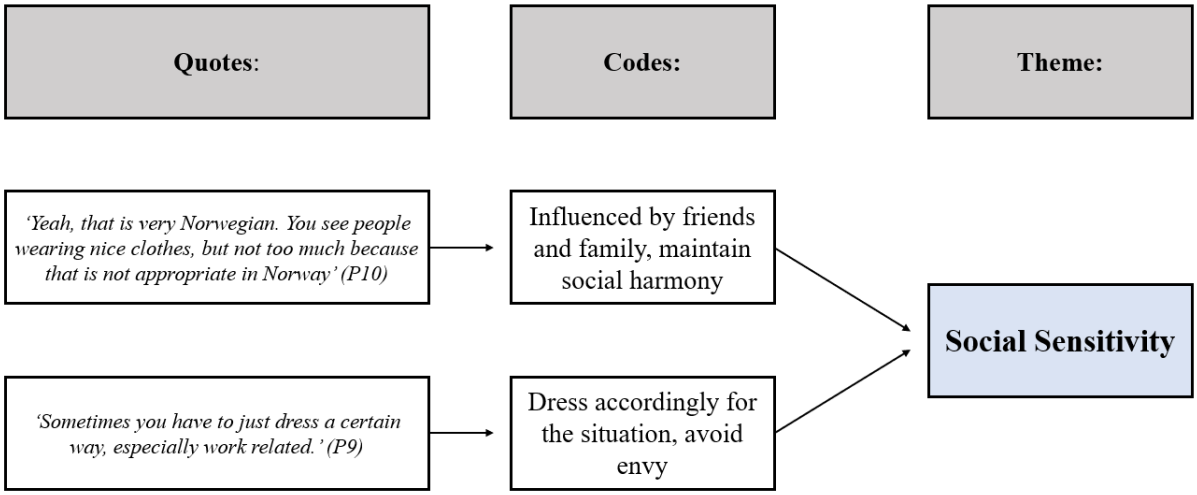
Participant:	Theme: Quality
1	X
2	X
3	X
4	X
5	X
6	X
7	X
8	X
9	X
10	
11	X
12	X
13	X
14	X
15	X
16	X
17	X
18	X

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

4.5 Social sensitivity driven motivations

Upon analyzing the transcripts of the interviews, motivations that can be related to maintaining social harmony and avoiding feelings of envy by others were identified. As such motivations were previously grouped by the researchers as 'social sensitivity' in the literature review, it has subsequently been referred to by this. Below, the coding process leading up to this theme is displayed.

Figure 7: *Coding for the social sensitivity theme*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

One common finding among the participants was the fact that they admitted that they were indirectly influenced by the people they surround themselves with. As such, this also influences their taste in fashion:

'I think you actually become who you are surrounded by. Obviously mentally, but also how you dress, right? I think that is just the Scandinavian way of doing it. I think the honest answer is that you try to fit in.' (P1)

'I think I do it [dressing this way] for myself, but I also do it to inspire my friends, or just to talk about it. Because that is something we are all [like], and a lot of times we are getting into talking about clothing brands and things.' (P4)

'I think they [others] are afraid of standing out too much. I think there is always an equation you do when you meet a Scandinavian at a clothing store. If they are interested [in the clothing item] they always think, oh does it look good, but is it well suited when I am outside of the store as well?' (P13)

'Back when I was studying in the US, we were with a lot of Scandinavians and […] you could definitely spot them, like with their linen pants. It was quite interesting to see how we got influenced by our clothing and […] we ended up getting other brands that they also bought.' (P6)

Hence either directly or indirectly, participants admitted to maintaining social harmony by means of fitting in with their own friends and surroundings. Among the participants, there were several ways of finding both validation and inspiration for their quiet luxury fashion preference:

'I tend to get influenced by people online a lot. I tend to see that as an inspiration. I do care about other opinions in the sense of if they share the same opinion about [the fashion piece].' (P8)

'I think it also happens in the friend group. […] I can't mention a specific example when it happens. You just kind of go with the flow and go with the group.' (P7)

'I would say it [other people's opinion] does influence me. Like, I would definitely ask my friends.' (P9).

'I do care about other people's opinion, I must admit. Especially my mom and my sister, they are my biggest critics. They are the ones that would actually tell me that.' (P16)

Participants also admitted that they adjust their style depending on the situation and the people they surround themselves with, something that can be linked to both envy avoidance and maintaining social harmony as well:

'In most situations, I dress based on the occasion. For example, this weekend I am going to be with my boyfriend's family, and they are very Swedish [participant is Norwegian]. So usually when I am with them, I try to downplay what I am wearing because I do not want to attract too much attention, so I usually have casual outfits and try to dress more Swedish.' (P11)

'For example, if I go to a nicer place, […] I will look for my more expensive clothes. Even though maybe they do not fit as nice. But it just fits the vibe.' (P7)

So far, participants admitted being motivated in their quiet luxury fashion behavior based on the people they surround themselves with, the opinions of others, and the situation they are in. However, a noticeable difference came to light while interviewing and transcribing older quiet luxury fashion consumers. They seemed to be less bothered about other people's opinions on their fashion, and some would even argue that others want to dress like them instead:

'I buy what I like, and what I identify with. I do not follow anything [that makes me belong to a group]. It is probably after a while, in the last few years, when you are the General Manager of the company, that it goes the other way around. The people that work with you tend to start dressing similar to how you dress, it is actually quite funny.' (P2)

'I am quite confident, self-confident person. […] when you grow up, you will get maybe more confident. […] I think you can [stand out] in my surroundings and my friends and my colleagues.' (P12)

While the older participants were clearly more confident about their fashion taste, arguably due to their age or their senior positions in their companies, they would still dress appropriately for the right occasion:

'I got a new one [mink coat] but I don't wear it often, because I think it's too flashy. For instance, If I would take the train to Copenhagen, I do not feel I can wear it, because everybody in the train would sort of think: oh my god.' (P15)

'Also, I went to a lot of international meetings, and I would always be one of the persons that would be the 'least dressed' because there was a lot of Chanel, and a lot of Louis Vuitton bags and shoes.' (P15)

'I am very careful with what I am wearing to work, because when I work in the textile industry, I am selling textile products. I have to be careful to send the right message to the customers, which are all professional buyers of textile products. So, I cannot wear something that is not up to the level that I am representing.' (P2)

Thus, social sensitivity driven motivations among quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia are driven by their surroundings, the groups they belong to, and the situations that they are in. This generally also holds true for older quiet luxury consumers, although they tend to be more confident in their own taste and need less to no validation of others. The following table summarizes which participants displayed social sensitivity driven motivations in their answers:

Table 5: *Interview participants motivated by social sensitivity*

Participant:	**Theme: Social sensitivity**
1	X
2	X
3	
4	X
5	X
6	X
7	X
8	X
9	X
10	X
11	X
12	

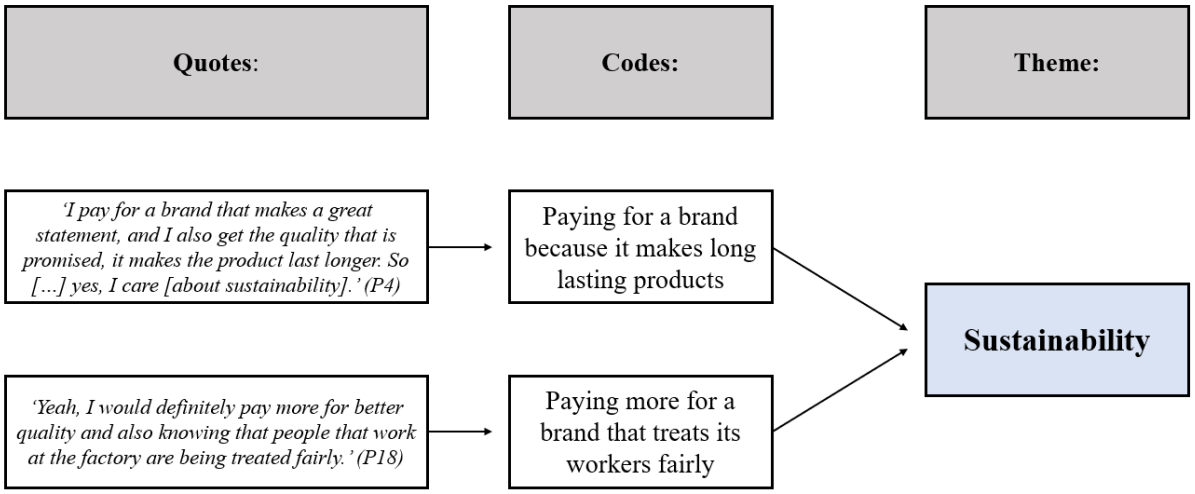
13	X
14	X
15	X
16	X
17	X
18	X

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

4.6 Sustainability-driven motivations

The interview participants have shown that sustainability can be one of the underrepresented motivations for quiet luxury fashion consumption. However, it could be noted that many participants did not give any significance to sustainability as a factor. The coding for this theme is represented below.

Figure 8: *Coding for the sustainability theme*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

When it comes to sustainability, the response from the participants has been particularly negative. With most of them stating that they are not willing to look into the subject, and do not trust fashion brands with regard to the claims that they make about it. Among the 18 participants, it could be observed that most of them do not give sustainability any priority at all when it comes to the purchasing decision that concerns quiet luxury fashion. For example, participant 2 who is employed in the textile industry, or participant 6 clearly stated that:

'[Fashion brands] are making themselves very sustainable and very hip but are not really resolving any problem. It's just a marketing gimmick.' (P2)

'Probably not that much [care about sustainability]. In reality, no. I'm not gonna lie.' (P6)

On the other hand, several participants have stated that they verify the materials that the product is made out of, as well as making sure that the luxury fashion brand is not using any unethical practices to produce the product:

'To actually try to figure out where the raw materials of a garment that you are purchasing are sourced from is very important [to me].' (P8)

'Figuring out whether a company is marketing their product or services in the right light and not, you know.' (P8)

It was also found that one participant wished that they paid more attention to the sustainability aspect in quiet luxury fashion, showing some aspiration to act more sustainable:

'I wouldn't say that [sustainability] really impacts my purchases. I really hope it did, but I'm going to be honest, it doesn't.' (P9)

Interestingly, participant 15 expected all brands from her country to follow sustainability regulations, therefore assuming that brands from Denmark act in a sustainable way:

'They have a higher standard so if I choose a brand that I know is Danish or […] then I assume also that they actually do it [act sustainable].' (P15)

Hence, sustainability is not as important to Scandinavian consumers of quiet luxury fashion as some of the other factors. Participants admitted to either not caring about sustainability or wanting to care more about it in the future. Very few participants claimed to consider the sustainability aspect when looking for quiet luxury fashion. The overview of participants motivated by sustainability is demonstrated in the following table:

Table 6: *Interview participants motivated by sustainability*

Participant:	**Theme: Sustainability**
1	
2	
3	
4	X
5	
6	
7	
8	X
9	X

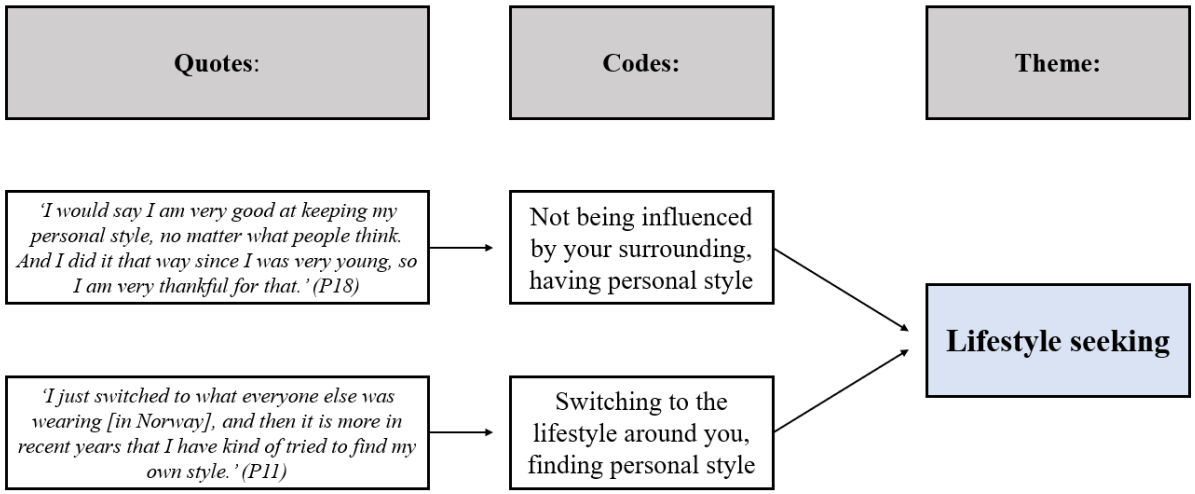
10	X
11	X
12	
13	X
14	X
15	
16	X
17	X
18	X

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

4.7 Lifestyle-seeking-driven motivations

During the literature review, one motivation found among quiet luxury consumers is the desire to belong to a social group, which can be either their friends or family, but it could also be aspirational. This motivation was found among participants too, who were either influenced by friends and family, or were looking to find their own style by being aspired by others. The coding leading up to this theme is represented below.

Figure 9: *Coding for the lifestyle-seeking theme*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

Nowadays, it is becoming increasingly easier for people to be influenced by their surroundings. That can include their family, friends and social media. When it comes to quiet luxury fashion, different situations can be observed. On the one hand, some participants take the opinion of their family about fashion choices quite seriously. For example, participant 18 consults with her friends about her purchases:

'Yeah, I would say maybe. Sometimes I want like opinions, but then I call my friends who like maybe doesn't follow the trends as well and know my personal style and I can be like does this feel like me?' (P18)

Some participants were influenced by their upbringing. For instance, participant 11 has been able to travel and live in various countries with their family. She has been able to observe how people from other cultures dress, and that has influenced her fashion choices as well:

'I think my friends and my colleagues influence my style a lot. For example, when I was younger, my family moved a lot, so I lived in the US for a bit and South Korea for a bit. And I remember doing that time I went to an international school, and we all had very unique styles.' (P11)

It is not just friends and family that inspired the participants. Participant 8 also highlights that her surroundings 'inspire' her quiet luxury fashion choices:

'It depends, I think first and foremost, when I look for things to buy. I go for like something that I am inspired by. So, either that is like luxury fashion that you see on like runways and photo shoots and stuff like that.' (P8)

In addition, participant 8 believes that wearing quiet luxury fashion gives her a particular feeling, which is different from normal fashion items. It seemingly raises her social status:

'It gives you that nice little feeling. I'm still, you know, part of a high society class, even though that might not be the case.' (P8)

This feeling of belonging to a certain group was also noticed in the answers of one participant, who is looking to fit into a very niche style that is associated with certain activities:

'Yeah. I think sometimes, I feel like I want to be that, you know, coffee shop, coffee [guy]. Be a cozy guy: have a large shirt and some nice pants and white shoes. (P7)'

As stated before, not everyone is influenced by others. One participant noted that she is not influenced by anyone, and has an individualistic style, which is special just to her:

'No, I'm very individualistic when it comes to my clothing choices usually.' (P13)

Regarding the motivations related to the theme of lifestyle seeking, it becomes clear that some participants were motivated in their quiet luxury fashion style choices by their direct surroundings such as family, friends, and colleagues. Others were motivated by a more

aspirational style, found in magazines, or by looking at a certain lifestyle like the upper class. The rest of the participants were not motivated by either of the two and were therefore not looking for anyone or anything to influence their personal style. This is reflected in the following table, which shows the participants that were motivated by the lifestyle seeking factor:

Table 7: *Interview participants motivated by lifestyle seeking*

Participant:	**Theme: Lifestyle-seeking**
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	X
8	X
9	
10	
11	X
12	
13	X
14	X
15	
16	X
17	X
18	X

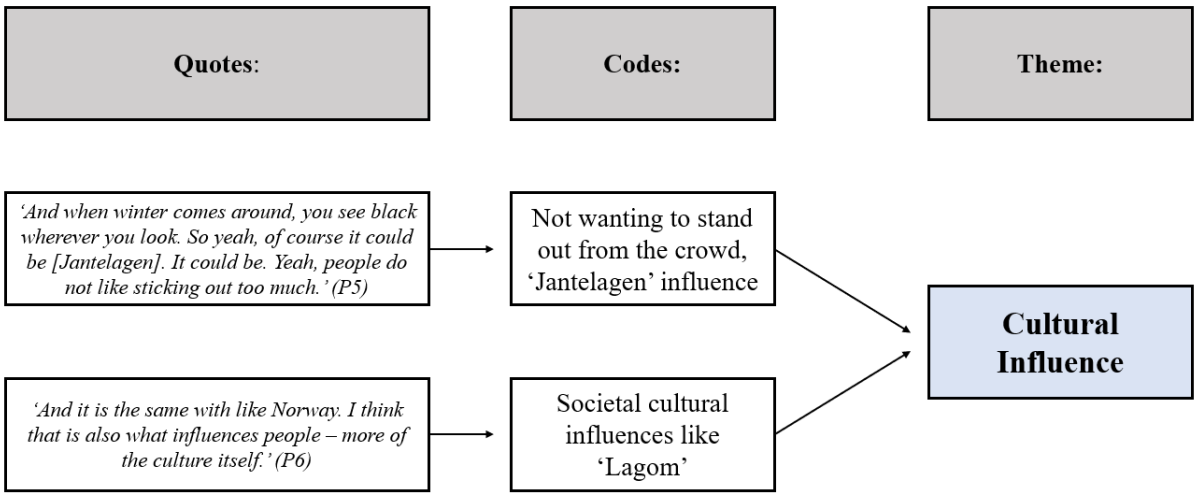
Source: Own Illustration (2025).

4.8 Cultural influence driven motivations

The previously mentioned themes with motivations driving quiet luxury consumption, were themes that could be linked to motivations previously discovered during the literature review. However, the interviews with the 18 Scandinavian participants resulted in one new motivation, and thus an eight theme, which could not be grouped into any of the other motivations. And that motivation is linked to their cultural upbringing, referring to the typical Scandinavian concepts of ‘Jantelagen’ and ‘Lagom’ which were previously explained. These cultural phenomena influencing the motivation to buy quiet luxury fashion, was therefore deemed ‘cultural influence’. Many participants have pointed out that one of the main reasons that people

in Scandinavia consume quiet luxury fashion, is the presence of this cultural influence that is not outspoken but is still considered. The coding for this theme is represented below.

Figure 10: *Coding for the cultural influence theme*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

Some participants have not directly acknowledged the presence of these cultural phenomena, while others have admitted to indirectly following the 'unspoken' social rules. The cultural phenomenon include: 'Lagom', which can be indirectly translated to 'balance' in English and 'Jantelagen', which is a list of social rules that every Scandinavian 'has to follow'. Participant 1 has described it the following way:

'Let's say humble or, you know, like down to earth and like, yeah, you shouldn't, you know, show off too much and you should just live your life and you know, but I kind of like the same things goes, you know, towards your neighbors, even if you know your neighbors or, you know, sitting at the bus, you don't really get close.' (P1)

Participant 16 goes further, admitting that such socially acceptable behavior is 'rewarded':

'And in Scandinavia, you do really get socially rewarded for belonging in a group.' (P16)

Another participant assumes that the fashion items that people wear can also be influenced by the country and that climate:

'I do think that's part of it [Talking about 'Lagom' and 'Jantelagen']. But I've also noticed that places with more sun, wear more colors. So, both like if you look at fashion in Italy or fashion in like the Caribbean, like whatever, like if you look at places with more sun, you will see more colors so.' (P5)

This socially acceptable behavior translates into fashion, with participant 2 explaining that in Sweden, people should try to look good without standing out too much:

'Which is a little bit that that is the logic of the quiet fashion today. You should always look sharper, but without overdress you know also about Sweden. Everything should be 'Lagom'. It should not be too much.' (P2)

Interestingly, this social behavior is then also linked to the more minimalist fashion which is popular in Sweden:

'I think since Sweden has always been minimalistic, like there's, we're not too much, we have a word called 'Lagom'. It just doesn't exist in anybody else's languages or dictionary. It's just here and I think that really makes it makes an example for fashion as well.' (P4)

To summarize, the culture in Scandinavia linked to 'Jantelagen' and 'Lagom' clearly motivates the participants towards quiet luxury fashion, as this is in line with their own cultural upbringing of not standing out too much from the rest, something which is common in quiet luxury fashion. The following table demonstrates which of the 18 participants mentioned in their interviews that such cultural influences motivate their quiet luxury fashion behavior:

Table 8: *Interview participants motivated by cultural influence*

Participant:	**Theme: Cultural Influence**
1	X
2	X
3	X
4	X
5	X
6	X
7	X
8	X
9	X
10	
11	X
12	X
13	
14	
15	
16	X
17	
18	X

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

After examining all participants' answers and the subsequent themes into which their answers were grouped, the summarizing table shown below indicates which of these motivations occur the most among the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers that were interviewed. It visually highlights that motivations to consume quiet luxury fashion are commonly based on the quality, social sensitivity aspect, its differentiation capabilities, as well as cultural influences. Other motivations were also important, but less strong compared to the previously mentioned motivations, with an especially low score for the desire to portray a certain lifestyle through quiet luxury fashion, as demonstrated by its relevance for 8 out of 18 participants. How these findings hold up compared to what was previously known about quiet luxury motivations, will now be analyzed in the following chapter.

Table 9: *Complete overview of participant motivations for all themes*

Participant:	**Differentiation:**	**Aesthetics:**	**Quality:**	**Social Sensitivity:**	**Sustainability:**	**Lifestyle seeking:**	**Cultural Influence:**
1	X	X	X	X			X
2	X		X	X			X
3			X				X
4	X	X	X	X	X		X
5	X	X	X	X			X
6	X	X	X	X			X
7	X	X	X	X		X	X
8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9	X		X	X	X		X
10	X			X	X		
11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12			X				X
13	X	X	X	X	X	X	
14	X	X	X	X	X	X	
15	X	X	X	X			
16			X	X	X	X	X
17	X		X	X	X	X	
18	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TOTAL:	15/18	11/18	17/18	16/18	10/18	8/18	13/18

Source: Own Illustration (2025).

5. Discussion and Analysis

In this chapter, the previously described findings will now be reflected upon in more detail, linking the research findings to prior studies on quiet luxury consumers and their motivations. The similarities and differences will be discussed, after which an adjusted model is presented that shows the motivations influencing Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers.

5.1 Need for autonomy among quiet luxury consumers

To start, sustainability and 'lifestyle seeking' motivations can be directly linked to the need for autonomy motivation, as outlined in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). As could be seen in the chart of all participants and their motivations, sustainability has a mediocre number of respondents that admit to it being their motivation, with 10 respondents out of 18. Meanwhile, the 'lifestyle seeking' motivation is not prevalent at all among the participants, amounting to just 8 people out of 18 mentioning it.

It could be noticed that many participants have responded negatively to the question whether they pay attention to the subject of sustainability when purchasing quiet luxury fashion products. Several of them have admitted to not caring about it as much as they would like to. One participant has mentioned that fashion brands are using greenwashing to lead consumer to believe that their clothing is sustainable. Other young participants have mentioned that they pay attention to the fabrics and the country of origin, stating that workers must be treated fairly, and the materials need to be ethically sourced. When it comes to the 'lifestyle seeking' motivation, some participants noted that they shop for their luxury clothing items through special second-hand stores. It allows them to adapt to a certain sustainable consumption lifestyle. Others are purely looking to adapt to a specific trend or 'aesthetic' that matches their preferences.

The findings align with the previously discussed literature. Sustainability has been a common motivation among young people, who prefer to have less items, but ones with higher quality (Atkinson & Kang, 2022; Pangarkar & Shukla, 2023). This could also be seen among the participants, many of which have shown their preference for better quality clothing that lasts longer than an unsustainable option from the mass-market segment.

The literature has mentioned people that purchase quiet luxury fashion are looking to project a better self-image (Wu et al., 2017). Despite that, most participants have not shown that they are trying to fit into a niche lifestyle, contradicting the previous findings about quiet luxury motivations. Instead, several participants strongly believe in their own personal and unique

fashion style. It is worth noting that only one interviewee has classified their motivations as 'status-driven', as they were trying to achieve a different social status, which is different from other people (Jiang et al., 2021; Koo & Im, 2019; Zhang et al., 2024).

Sustainability and 'lifestyle seeking' motivations both connect with intrinsic motivations described by the previous literature. As found in the interviews, people are looking to engage in some activity for their own personal satisfaction and fulfilment (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Shadid & Paul, 2021). Some participants purchase quiet luxury fashion because they believe that they contribute to the better part of the fashion industry that prioritizes ethical material sourcing and fair working conditions. While people that look for a specific lifestyle, purchase clothes that satisfy their inner needs and preferences.

5.2 Need for competence among quiet luxury consumers

Previously, the motivations for quiet luxury consumption based on aesthetics and quality, which were both used as individual themes in the interview findings, were linked to the need for competence from the Self-Determination Theory, as the need for competence requires skills and knowledge (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Among interview participants, both motivations related to aesthetics and quality were identified in a majority of their answers. 11 out of 18 participants demonstrated to be motivated by the aesthetics for which quiet luxury is known, and a staggering 17 out of 18 participants showed motivation to shop for quiet luxury fashion based on the quality of the products.

One common finding related to aesthetics is the preference for minimalist fashion, which does not draw too much attention, and which can be styled easily thanks to its use of neutral colors. Thanks to its timeless designs and use of few to no logos, aesthetics was revealed as a common motivation for quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia. Similarly, the quality of the clothing is a major motivation among the Scandinavian participants to shop for quiet luxury fashion. Participants expressed their preference for the premium materials commonly found in quiet luxury fashion, such as cashmere, mohair, premium cotton, and others. As a result, the durability of the clothing thanks to the use of the premium materials was another quality-driven motivation commonly found among the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers.

These findings are mostly in line with what is known about consumer motivations in quiet luxury literature, but not all findings match existing literature. An appreciation for the timeless aesthetic and high quality of quiet luxury goods are motivations previously found among quiet luxury consumers (Makkar & Yap, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023). Similarly, the aesthetics-driven

motivation based on simple designs and subtle branding (Pangarkar & Shukla, 2023) was also found among Scandinavian consumers as described above, therefore confirming motivations previously found in other quiet luxury studies. However, previous research stated that quiet luxury consumers who are motivated based on aesthetics and quality are usually older (Nguyen et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2017). This does not match the findings of the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, as not merely the older participants, but also younger participants showed to be motivated by aesthetics and quality-driven reasons. Therefore, this Scandinavian- focused study shows an interesting difference compared to the studies of quiet luxury consumers in Vietnam and China, in which also younger consumers are motivated by both quality and aesthetics.

5.3 Need for relatedness among quiet luxury consumers

The need for relatedness element of the Self-Determination Theory was previously matched with the motivation based on differentiation, as the need for relatedness is linked to wanting to belong to a certain group (Shadid et al., 2021). Here, differentiation refers to wanting to distance from one group, and instead belong to another group, such as fellow individuals with a similar taste and cultural capital (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023), which demonstrates that differentiation can indeed be linked to the need for relatedness. Differentiation-based motivations were common among Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers too, as 15 out of 18 participants demonstrated such motivations in their interviews.

Among the differentiation-driven motivations, two major motivations for differentiation were identified: the desire to differentiate from those wearing loud, big logos, and the desire to differentiate from those identified as ‘new rich’ who want to flaunt their wealth by wearing conspicuous luxury brands. The Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers shared that they would feel uncomfortable wearing such loud logos, and that they would feel more confident in wearing quiet luxury fashion known for its minimalist, subtle designs. Also, the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers stated that some of those wearing loud, conspicuous luxury fashion are trying to look rich and important as opposed to being wealthy and having status. As a result, the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumer does not want to be associated with these individuals.

The differentiation-driven motivations of quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia present an interesting take on what is currently known in quiet luxury literature. One reason to go for inconspicuous, quiet luxury is based on the desire to differentiate from conspicuous consumers and instead be recognized by the elite who share the same taste and knowledge (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023). This holds partially true for the Scandinavian quiet

luxury consumers. As stated above, the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumer also wants to differentiate from the loud, conspicuous consumer. However, there is no desire to be recognized by the so-called elite or by others with the same style. Hence, the quiet luxury consumer in Scandinavia has a slightly different motivation than what is currently known in literature. Younger quiet luxury consumers were previously found to be more motivated by differentiation-driven motivations (Wu et al., 2017), and this is also the case for Scandinavian consumers, as nearly all older participants aged 60 or older are not driven by differentiation, whereas the younger participants are. Thus, young Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers are motivated to differentiate from conspicuous consumers, but not to belong to any social elite.

5.4 Social sensitivity among quiet luxury consumers

The motivations based on wanting to avoid envy and maintain social harmony, which are both motivations found in quiet luxury consumers (Wang et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2017), were previously grouped together as 'social sensitivity', and additionally linked to the need for relatedness as such motivations also demonstrate wanting to belong to a certain group (Shadi et al., 2021) without offending them or creating envy. These motivations were also found among the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, with nearly all (16 out of 18) participants showing signs of social sensitivity in their answers.

The Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers expressed social harmony in their answers by commonly stating how they are influenced by their own social circle such as their friends and family and actively ask for their opinions. Additionally, they stated that this behavior is especially common among Scandinavians, as they avoid standing out from the crowd. In order to avoid envy by others, the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers also admitted to dressing for the occasion, whether that is at work, school, or visiting friends and family with a different cultural background. This apparently even occurs among Scandinavians, as one Norwegian participant admitted to dressing differently when visiting Swedish family members who tend to dress more neutral than her. All of the above generally holds true for all Scandinavian quiet luxury participants, although the older participants were more confident in their own style and thus cared less about the social harmony aspect. They do, however, take note in their professional circle, as the older participants do not want to create envy in the workplace.

These particular motivations of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers seem to match the motivations of other quiet luxury consumers that have been previously studied. To elaborate, quiet luxury consumers can be motivated to purchase quiet luxury products because the

anonymity of the brands help avoid feeling guilty or at unease with their purchases (Wang et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2017). This was also discovered among Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, who really care about blending in with their social environment, and do not want to stand out. The Scandinavian consumer has no desire to show off its economic status and does not need any validation for the brands they are wearing, especially if they are older. The preference to enjoy such luxury products in private without any validation also generally holds true for quiet luxury consumers in general (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022). As a result, it can be said that Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers are also motivated by the desire to avoid envy and maintain social harmony, which was grouped together as 'social sensitivity'.

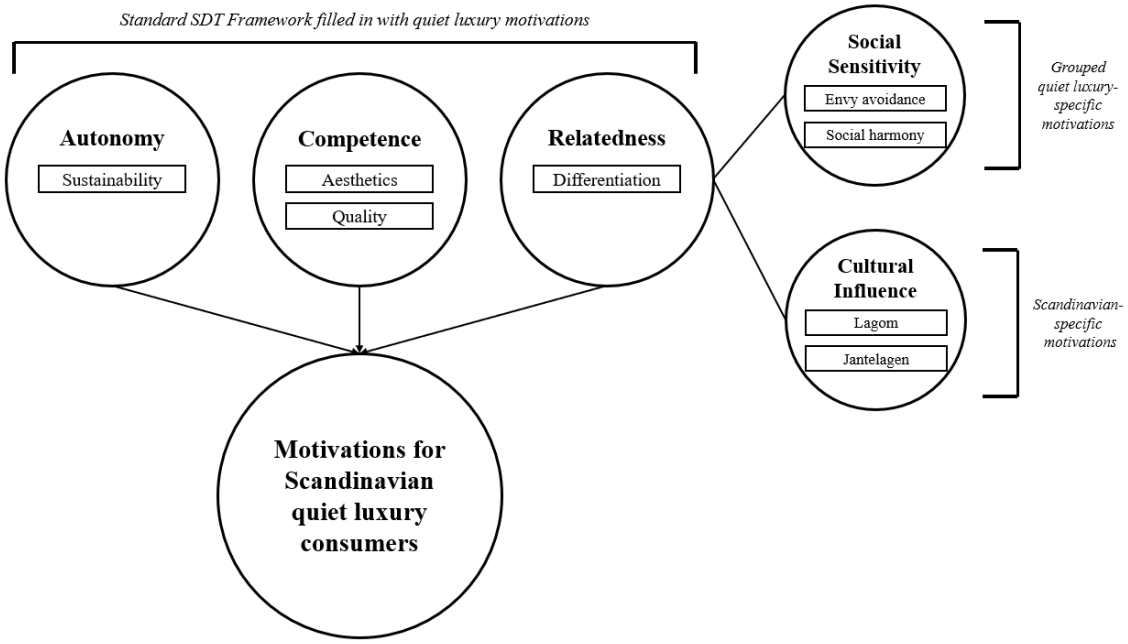
5.5 Cultural influence among quiet luxury consumers

After conducting the interviews, it became apparent that another motivation among Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers could be identified and added to the already modified SDT model. More and more participants started mentioning unspoken Scandinavian rules, such as 'Jantelagen' and 'Lagom'. These cultural phenomena have been actually found to be a motivation for Scandinavian consumers to purchase quiet luxury fashion. Some participants were unsure of their words about this phenomenon being present, stating that they simply 'conform to the social norms'. Other participants have strongly suggested that both 'Jantelagen' and 'Lagom' directly influence their lifestyle, and the items that they purchase, particularly quiet luxury fashion. It is clear that this type of fashion allows the participants to not stand out from society and fit in, while at the same time wear prestigious and elevated fashion items. In total, 13 out of 18 participants have mentioned what was named 'cultural influence' as one of their motivations.

The findings relating to cultural influence do align somewhat with quiet luxury consumers, but it has not been identified specifically for Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers until now. According to the participants, Scandinavians share cultural values, and do not seek to impress others through conspicuous consumption. Taylor et al. (2025) have claimed that consumers purchase high-end product that align with their own and societal values, thus showing some connection to what was discovered in this study. However, it was previously discovered that people that share the same cultural capital have the same taste and are looking to relate to a specific group (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023). But in this case, cultural capital refers to people that share the same knowledge about quiet luxury fashion brands, and not their actual cultural upbringing. Both 'Jantelagen' and 'Lagom' embody the minimalistic

lifestyle that is balanced and not harmful to others in the society (Cappelen & Dahlberg, 2018; Tian & Guang, 2017). As a result, the fact that Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers are motivated by how they were culturally raised, such as by the concepts of 'Lagom' and 'Jantelagen', is an arguably new motivation for quiet luxury consumption which differs from the 'social sensitivity' motivation discovered earlier, as that refers to wanting to belong to your friends and family, and dressing for the occasion. The cultural influence on Scandinavians by such concepts fits well with quiet luxury, as these consumers are not looking to steer envy in their surroundings but rather respect the people around them by wearing quiet luxury items (Wang et al., 2024). Reflecting on the analysis of the findings, it is clear that previously altered Self-Determination Theory model for quiet luxury motivations, which was presented at the end of the literature review, needs another alteration. In order for the model to fit the motivations of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, it needs to remove the motivation based on 'lifestyle seeking', as this was not found to be a major motivation among the participants. The motivation of cultural influence needs to be added, as this is a new motivation specifically discovered among the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers. As this new motivation also fits within the description of the need for relatedness, it is subsequently linked to that need from the Self-Determination Theory. As a result, the following model represents all motivations commonly found among Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers:

Figure 11: *Altered Self-Determination Theory model based on the motivations of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers.*



Source: Own Illustration (2025).

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter, a conclusion to the research will be given by means of stating its theoretical contributions, as well as its managerial and societal implications. In addition, future research suggestions and the limitations of the research are described.

6.1 Theoretical contributions

The findings and analysis of this research demonstrate various contributions to what is currently known about quiet luxury and its consumers, as will now be explained. To start, the use of the Self-Determination Theory from Deci & Ryan (1985; 2000) has been extended to the domain of quiet luxury motivations, especially in Scandinavia, which is a new contribution. Previously, the Self-Determination Theory has been used in luxury related research (Shadid & Paul, 2021; Shao et al., 2019; Petrescu et al., 2025), but not to this extent. Thus, this research now demonstrates how the Self-Determination Theory is also fit for the field of quiet luxury.

With the motivation dubbed 'cultural influence', an additional motivation for quiet luxury motivation was found, and a motivation from previous quiet luxury research, lifestyle seeking, was discovered to not apply to the Scandinavian context. Previous research on the topic of quiet luxury discovered the motivation based on lifestyle seeking, meaning that consumers want to symbolize some kind of idealized image of themselves (Wu et al., 2017). In contrast, this motivation was not identified among quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia, demonstrating that quiet luxury consumers do not share the same motivations across the globe. The motivation based on cultural influence, which was newly discovered in this research on Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, is a contribution to theory too. It shows that culture plays a role in the motivations of quiet luxury consumers, which is something that previous studies on motivations have not discovered to this extent. Also, extra nuance has been discovered with this research. In contrast to previous research that states that quiet luxury consumers who like quality and aesthetics are usually older (Nguyen et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2017), this research has shown that also younger quiet luxury consumers appreciate the aesthetic and quality of this type of fashion.

6.2 Managerial implications

This research provides particularly marketing and branding managers with various implications that they should apply to their marketing and communications approach, which will now be elaborated. To start, it is now clear that Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers value modesty and quality, partially due to their cultural upbringing, but also based on their own personal motivations. Status is not something that is being desired. As a result, quiet luxury brands should be careful with their marketing and communications, particularly their advertising, which should downplay the fact that quiet luxury fashion can be a status symbol. Instead, these brands are advised to focus on the craftmanship and quality of their products.

Quiet luxury brands should also be very careful with their product design. The research demonstrated that Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers really do not like any flashy or obnoxious, loud branding. What is more, they prefer simple, minimalist designs and not too many colors. Therefore, quiet luxury brands are advised to be wary of the designs for their products and should consider the style and use of color in general when deciding on which products to sell in the Scandinavian region.

Finally, marketing and branding managers now have the opportunity to make use of the newly discovered motivation for cultural influence. By demonstrating in their marketing and communications that the quiet luxury brand knows about the Scandinavian cultural upbringing, such as ‘Jantelagen’ and ‘Lagom’, they can demonstrate to the consumers in this region that they are aware of their culture and understand what they are looking for. It creates room for quiet luxury brands to make a creative interpretation of these cultural phenomena in their own marketing and communications, such as their advertising.

6.3 Societal implications

This study reveals several societal implications that can be linked to the motivations for quiet luxury fashion consumption in Scandinavia. Firstly, the presence of quiet luxury consumers and their motivations based on belonging to the group, and wanting to avoid standing out, demonstrates values of social cohesion. The influence of Scandinavian cultural rules such as ‘Jantelagen’ and ‘Lagom’ demonstrate how Scandinavian societies value humility, and less presence of visible status symbols, as seen in this quiet luxury fashion study.

While not valid for all participants of this research, the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers expressed a preference for durable clothing, the use of premium materials, and, when possible,

conscious shopping behavior from brands that act sustainable. This might indicate a growing interest from the consumer side in conscious fashion shopping, demonstrated by a preference for premium, sustainable clothing over fast fashion consumption. The study also shows the role of social sensitivity and group belonging in consumer behavior. Many participants mentioned adjusting their fashion choices to fit particular social contexts and to avoid standing out, prioritizing 'fitting in' over individuality. This tendency may create inclusivity and reduce social pressures associated with status, but it could also limit personal expression for those who actually wish to avoid following the social norms.

Finally, the findings suggest that the motivations for quiet luxury consumption in Scandinavia are deeply connected with regional cultural identity. The interest in quiet luxury fashion may strengthen these local cultural values like 'Jantelagen' and 'Lagom' and may help with preserving such social norms that value modesty and community over displaying conspicuous wealth, status and individualism.

6.4 Future research suggestions

This study has now uncovered that quiet luxury consumers are motivated by different, and additional motivations than those previously known in literature. For instance, the Scandinavian quiet luxury consumer is not motivated by the desire to assimilate a certain lifestyle, which was a motivation dubbed 'lifestyle-seeking'. Instead, the cultural upbringing of the Scandinavian consumer was discovered as a factor influencing their motivation to go for quiet luxury fashion. This raises the question whether other quiet luxury consumers from different geographical regions or nationalities are also motivated by their cultural influence. Thus, studying additional geographical regions or nationalities would uncover if these findings were purely a Scandinavian phenomenon, or a more common motivation among quiet luxury consumers elsewhere. Such future research would help quiet luxury brand marketers with formulating their marketing communications messaging and advertising, depending on whether culture plays a role for quiet luxury consumers in local markets.

Now that the most prominent motivations for quiet luxury consumers in Scandinavia are discovered, future research could also include a quantitative study which makes use of a larger sample size, and which could uncover interconnections between the different motivations as well as the nationalities. Also, this qualitative study consisted of a compact sample size. A quantitative follow-up study on quiet luxury motivations of Scandinavian consumers could help

confirm the findings of this research and subsequently uncover new connections among the motivations and nationalities.

Future research could also consider taking a closer look at the company side by means of studying how quiet luxury brands target and communicate with quiet luxury consumers. Such research could uncover potential gaps between how quiet luxury brands try to target the consumer versus what actually motivates them, as discovered in this research. Such research could audit the brands on their customer knowledge and uncover room for improvement.

6.5 Limitations

The study includes a number of limitations that need to be considered and mentioned. First of all, a larger sample size of participants that are interested in quiet luxury fashion in Scandinavia could have been analysed in the study, because it would give a clearer picture of the consumer motivations, as it can be noted that some motivations do not have a top-of-mind priority within the participants. Additionally, a better distributed age range of the participants could allow for a blend of various views and opinions on the topic of this study. The consideration of these limitations could potentially change the overall findings in the study.

It could also be noted that most participants are born or located in the smaller cities within the Scandinavian countries, and are not from the 'fashion capitals', such as Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo. The inclusion of more people from these cities could have showcased more diverse opinions on the topic. This fact stems from the statements by the participants that the Scandinavian capitals have people that are more 'open-minded' towards fashion and are willing to express themselves more compared to the people from the regions.

The level of the fashion expertise varies greatly among the participants. While most of them come from different backgrounds, several are connected to the fashion and beauty industry, and therefore have unique insights into consumer motivations. Moreover, some participants attain to a more 'casual' consumption of quiet luxury fashion, not everyone values specific details about such type of clothing. Meanwhile, other participants have been more eager to explain their specific lifestyle, taste and other attributes that directly impact their motivations to purchase quiet luxury fashion items. Thus, a group of participants that solely consists of highly motivated and aware consumers could have made this research extra interesting.

7. References

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *34*(3), 347-356. https://doi.org/10.2307/3151897

Adams, J., Khan, H. T. A., & Raeside, R. (2014). *Research methods for business and social science students* (Second edition.). Sage Publications.

Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*, *5*(2), 272-281.

Atkinson, S. D., & Kang, J. (2022). New luxury: defining and evaluating emerging luxury trends through the lenses of consumption and personal values. *The Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *31*(3), 377-393. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-09-2020-3121

Balabanis, G., & Karpova, A. (2025). The personality of luxury. A new measure and the effects of brand personality distinctiveness and congruence on consumer responses. *Journal of Business Research*, 189, 115107-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.115107

Baudrillart, H. (1880). Histoire du luxe privé et public, depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours. Hachette.

Berger, J., & Ward, M. (2010). Subtle Signals of Inconspicuous Consumption. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, *37*(4), 555-569. https://doi.org/10.1086/655445

Berthon, P., Pitt, L., Parent, M., & Berthon, J.-P. (2009). Aesthetics and Ephemerality: Observing and Preserving the Luxury Brand. *California Management Review*, *52*(1), 45-66. https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2009.52.1.45

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cappelen, C., & Dahlberg, S. (2018). The Law of Jante and generalized trust. *Acta Sociologica, 61*(4), 419-440. https://doi.org/10.1177/000169931771731

Cesareo, L., Townsend, C., & Pavlov, E. (2023). Hideous but worth it: Distinctive ugliness as a signal of luxury. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 51*(3), 636-657. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-022-00913-3

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2018). Using thematic analysis in counselling and psychotherapy research: A critical reflection. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, *18*(2), 107-110. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12165

Clow, K. E., & James, K. E. (2013). *Essentials of marketing research : putting research into practice*. SAGE.

Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2014). *Business research: a practical guide for undergraduate & postgraduate students* (4th edition). Palgrave Macmillan.

Cristini, H., Kauppinen-Räisänen, H., Barthod-Prothade, M., & Woodside, A. (2017). Toward a general theory of luxury: Advancing from workbench definitions and theoretical transformations. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 101-107. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.07.001

Danziger, P. (2005) *Let Them Eat the Cake: Marketing Luxury to the Masses as well as the Classes*. Chicago, IL: Dearborn Trade Publishing.

De Sordi, J. O. (2024). *Qualitative Research Methods In Business : Techniques for Data Collection and Analysis* (1st ed. 2024.). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50323-8

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York: Plenum.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Motivation, Personality, and Development Within Embedded Social Contexts: An Overview of Self-Determination Theory. In *The Oxford Handbook of Human Motivation*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195399820.013.0006

Donzé, P.-Y., Pouillard, V., & Roberts, J. (Eds.). (2020). The Oxford handbook of luxury business. Oxford University Press.

Dwivedula, R. (2025). Why Is Generation Z Motivated at Work? A Qualitative Exploration. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, *44*(3), 38-49. https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22273

Easterby-Smith, M., Jaspersen, L. J., Thorpe, R., & Valizade, D. (2021). *Management and business research* (Seventh edition). SAGE.

Eckhardt, G. M., Belk, R. W., & Wilson, J. A. J. (2015). The rise of inconspicuous consumption. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *31*(7-8), 807-826. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2014.989890

Fife, S. T., & Gossner, J. D. (2024). Deductive Qualitative Analysis: Evaluating, Expanding, and Refining Theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *23*. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241244856

Fionda, A. M., & Moore, C. M. (2009). The anatomy of the luxury fashion brand. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5), 347-363. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2008.45

Gilal, F. G., Zhang, J., Paul, J., & Gilal, N. G. (2019). The role of self-determination theory in marketing science: An integrative review and agenda for research. *European Management Journal*, *37*(1), 29-44. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2018.10.004

Greenberg, D., Ehrensperger, E., Schulte-Mecklenbeck, M., Hoyer, W. D., Zhang, Z. J., & Krohmer, H. (2020). The role of brand prominence and extravagance of product design in luxury brand building: What drives consumers' preferences for loud versus quiet luxury? *The Journal of Brand Management*, 27(2), 195-210. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-019-00175-5

Han, Y. J., Nunes, J. C., & Drèze, X. (2010). Signaling Status with Luxury Goods: The Role of Brand Prominence. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(4), 15-30. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.4.15

Heine, K., Atwal, G., Crener-Ricard, S., & Phan, M. (2018). Personality-driven luxury brand management. *The Journal of Brand Management*, 25(5), 474-487. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-018-0090-8

Hermès. (n.d.-a). *All about the Hermès Birkin bag collection*. Retrieved May 19, 2025, from: https://www.hermes.com/se/en/content/106191-birkin/

Hermès. (n.d.-b). *Six generations of artisans*. Retrieved April 27, 2025, from: https://www.hermes.com/se/en/content/271366-six-generations-of-artisans/

Ho, F.-N., & Wong, J. (2023). Disassociation from the common herd: conceptualizing (in)conspicuous consumption as luxury consumer maturity. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, *26*(2), 139-154. https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2022.2066655

Jiang, L., Cui, A. P., & Shan, J. (2022). Quiet versus loud luxury: the influence of overt and covert narcissism on young Chinese and US luxury consumers' preferences? *International Marketing Review*, 39(2), 309-334. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-02-2021-0093

Jiang, L., Gao, H., & Shi, L. H. (2021). The effect of power distance beliefs on the inconspicuous versus conspicuous consumption of luxury accessories in China and the USA. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *37*(15-16), 1459-1489. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2021.1913214

Kang, Y.-J., & Park, S.-Y. (2016). The perfection of the narcissistic self: A qualitative study on luxury consumption and customer equity. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(9), 3813-3819. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.12.073

Kastanakis, M. N., & Balabanis, G. (2014). Explaining variation in conspicuous luxury consumption: An individual differences' perspective. *Journal of Business Research, 67*(10), 2147-2154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.04.024

Kauppinen-Räisänen, H., Björk, P., Lönnström, A., & Jauffret, M.-N. (2018). How consumers' need for uniqueness, self-monitoring, and social identity affect their choices when luxury brands visually shout versus whisper. *Journal of Business Research*, 84, 72-81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.012

Kilsheimer Eastman, J., Iyer, R., & Babin, B. (2022). Luxury not for the masses: Measuring inconspicuous luxury motivations. *Journal of Business Research, 145*, 509-523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.03.022

Kim, S., Cuevas, L., & Chang, H. J. (Julie). (2025). Revisiting consumer loyalty: luxury brand extension into restaurants and cafés. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 53(2), 199-215. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-04-2024-0193

Ko, E., Costello, J. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2019). What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of the literature. *Journal of Business Research, 99*, 405-413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.023

Koo, J., & Im, H. (2019). Going up or down? Effects of power deprivation on luxury consumption. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 51*, 443-449. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.10.017

Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer. Qualitative Report, 10(4), 758-770.

Kumar, V. (2024). *International Marketing Research : A Transformative Approach* (1st ed. 2024.). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54650-1

Louis Vuitton. (n.d.). *Neverfull Monogram MM Canvas*. Retrieved May 19, 2025, from: https://en.louisvuitton.com/eng-nl/products/neverfull-mm-monogram-nvprod5350101v/M46987

Loureiro, S. M. C., Jiménez-Barreto, J., & Romero, J. (2020). Enhancing brand coolness through perceived luxury values: Insight from luxury fashion brands. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *57*, 102211-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102211

Makkar, M., & Yap, S.-F. (2018). The anatomy of the inconspicuous luxury fashion experience. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, *22*(1), 129-156. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-08-2017-0083

Michaelidou, N., Christodoulides, G., & Presi, C. (2022). Ultra-high-net-worth individuals: self-presentation and luxury consumption on Instagram. *European Journal of Marketing*, *56*(4), 949-967. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2020-0853

Nguyen, N. B., Nguyen, M. T. T., & Nguyen, M. B. (2023). Understanding of consumers' inconspicuous luxury consumption practices in Vietnam: an exploratory study from an ethical perspective. *Journal of Global Responsibility*, *14*(3), 295-309. https://doi.org/10.1108/JGR-07-2022-0072

Nunan, D., Birks, D. F., & Malhotra, N. K. (2020). *Marketing Research: Applied Insight* (Sixth ed.). Pearson.

Nunes, J. C., Drèze, X., & Han, Y. J. (2011). Conspicuous consumption in a recession: Toning it down or turning it up? *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *21*(2), 199-205. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2010.11.002

Pangarkar, A., & Shukla, P. (2023). Conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption of luxury goods in a digital world: insights, implications, and future research directions. *International Journal of Advertising*, *42*(7), 1226-1238. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2023.2246260

Pangarkar, A., Shukla, P., & Taylor, C. R. “Ray.” (2021). Minimalism in consumption: A typology and brand engagement strategies. *Journal of Business Research*, 127, 167-178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.01.033

Patsiaouras, G., & Fitchett, J. A. (2012). The evolution of conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, *4*(1), 154-176. https://doi.org/10.1108/17557501211195109

Petrescu, M., Siqueira, J. R., Dobre, C., Mrad, S. B., Ciuta, A., & Kara, A. (2025). Social comparison and self-determination in luxury consumption motivations. *Psychology & Marketing*, *42*(2), 292-310. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.22126

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *25*(1), 54-67. https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1020

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness. New York: Guilford Publishing.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *61*, 101860-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). Research methods for business students (7. ed.). Pearson Education.

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, *52*(4), 1893-1907. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

Shahid, S., & Paul, J. (2021). Intrinsic motivation of luxury consumers in an emerging market. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *61*, 102531-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102531

Shao, W., Grace, D., & Ross, M. (2019). Consumer motivation and luxury consumption: Testing moderating effects. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *46*, 33-44. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.10.003

Sharma, G. (2017). Pros and cons of different sampling techniques. *International Journal of Applied Research,* 3, 749-752.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information,* 22(2), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Shukla, P., & Rosendo-Rios, V. (2021). Intra and inter-country comparative effects of symbolic motivations on luxury purchase intentions in emerging markets. *International Business Review*, *30*(1), 101768-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101768

Silver, L. S., & Wrenn, B. (2013). *The essentials of marketing research* (3rd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203182598

Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding Approaches for Research: Understanding and Using Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Developmental Education, 44*(1), 26-28. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45381095

Statista. (2024a). *Luxury goods – Custom region (Sweden, Norway, Denmark) | Statista market forecast*. https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/luxury-goods/custom?token=WJkEWm_NYJ02NXXV0Q6qS0orohYOZbPbQKa-YPOlLL6GMxiCh_egdl-RSxzhN1bv3EpAzQc4kdGxSYscpYjIaM0=&currency=USD

Statista. (2024b). *Brand value of the leading 10 most valuable luxury brands worldwide in 2024*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/267948/brand-value-of-the-leading-10-most-valuable-luxury-brands-worldwide/

Sun, H., Guo, Z., & Qian, H. (2024). The self on display: The impact of self-objectification on luxury consumption. *Psychology & Marketing, 41*(10), 2412-2430. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.22061

Taylor, C. R., Borenstein, B., & Pangarkar, A. (2025). What, no logos? Why some minimalists prefer quiet luxury. *Psychology & Marketing*, 42(1), 142-158. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.22121

Tian, K., & Guang, T. (2017). Exploration of Collectivism in Contemporary Sweden. *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 19(11/12), 11-27.

Van den Broeck, A., Ferris, D. L., Chang, C.-H., & Rosen, C. C. (2016). A Review of Self-Determination Theory's Basic Psychological Needs at Work. *Journal of Management*, *42*(5), 1195-1229. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316632058

Varma, I. G., Chanana, B., Lavuri, R., & Kaur, J. (2024). Impact of spirituality on the conspicuous consumption of fashion consumers of generation Z: moderating role of dispositional positive emotions. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, *19*(5), 1178-1195. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOEM-01-2022-0159

Veblen, Thorstein (1899). The Theory of the Leisure Class. The Collected Works of Thorstein Veblen, vol. 1

Vinerian, S., & Opreana, A. (2019). Social Media Marketing Efforts of Luxury Brands on Instagram. Expert Journal of Marketing, 7(2), 144-152.

Walters, T., & Carr, N. (2019). Changing patterns of conspicuous consumption: Media representations of luxury in second homes. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 19(3), 295-315. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540517717778

Wang, S., Li, F., & Wang, H. (2024). The more attention you get, the better you feel? A study on the influence of being envied on inconspicuous consumption. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *36*(9), 2177-2196. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-02-2023-0149

Wang, Y. (2022). A conceptual framework of contemporary luxury consumption. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 39(3), 788-803. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2021.10.010

Warner-Søderholm, G. (2012). Culture Matters: Norwegian Cultural Identity Within a Scandinavian Context. *SAGE Open*, *2*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012471350

Willig, C., Rogers, W. S., & Stainton Rogers, W. (2017). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (Second edition.). SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555

Wong, J., & Ho, F. N. (2025). The luxury consumer knowledge effect: when mature consumers prefer inconspicuous consumption. *European Journal of Marketing*, *59*(1), 109-130. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-01-2023-0073

Wu, Z. (2022). Crafting Inconspicuous Luxury Brands Through Brand Authenticity in China. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 826890-826890. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.826890

Wu, Z., Luo, J., Schroeder, J. E., & Borgerson, J. L. (2017). Forms of inconspicuous consumption: What drives inconspicuous luxury consumption in China? *Marketing Theory*, *17*(4), 491-516. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593117710983

Yuan, Y., Deily, M. E., & Yao, Y. (2022). Willingness to Pay for Status Signals in Online Luxury Markets. *Production and Operations Management*, 31(2), 668-680. https://doi.org/10.1111/poms.13572

Zhang, X., Aw, E. C.-X., Wei-Han Tan, G., & Ooi, K.-B. (2024). The pursuit of splendour: a recipe of psychological motivations driving conspicuous luxury consumption. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *52*(5), 565-579. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-06-2023-0375

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1. Introductory questions:

1) Could you briefly introduce yourself?

2) When we talk about fashion, what are some of your favourite premium/luxury brands that you usually buy?

3) Talking about your favourite brand(s), what makes that you like those brands?

2. General questions:

4) When you shop for fashion, what are the most important aspects for you? (Aside from availability, the price and the size) i.e. quality, style

5) Are there premium/luxury fashion brands you avoid, or maybe even hate, and for what reason do you avoid them?

6) Looking at some 'loud' luxury fashion brands and products, what is your opinion of it?

3. Motivation and beliefs:

7) When you buy premium/luxury fashion, is it important for you that the brand values match with your own beliefs, mindset and character?

8) Talking about quality of the luxury fashion products, how important is it for you? And are you willing to pay more?

9) How important is sustainability in luxury fashion for you? Do you consider it when shopping?

4. Motivation and social connection:

10) Would you buy products from certain brands so that you belong to a social group like your friends, colleagues, etc? Or to show that you have a certain style, knowledge?

11) Similarly, do you think about other people's opinion before you decide to buy fashion? In other words, is your fashion choice influenced by what people (friends, at work, in general) could think of you?

12) Scandinavia turns out to be a big luxury fashion market and known for its minimalist fashion. Why do you think that is the case?

13) Would you say Scandinavians are careful with their luxury fashion choices, for example to not stand out from the crowd, offend others?

14) Do you believe that the Scandinavian 'fashion capitals', for example Stockholm, Oslo and Copenhagen have distinct fashion styles?

15) Are there situations in which you would prefer to wear certain brands over others? For example, occasions where you rather wear something more subtle? If so, why?

16) If you were to describe a customer from a loud luxury brand like Gucci or Dsquared2, then you would say they are X.

17) In contrast, if you were to describe a typical Scandinavian consumer who buys quiet luxury brands such as: 'Ralph Lauren', 'Axel Arigato', 'Hermès', 'Toteme', then they would be X.

5. Closing questions and remarks

18) Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not mentioned during the interview process?

19) Thank the interviewee for participating.

Appendix 2: GDPR Consent Form

JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

GDPR Consent form

Information letter about Master Thesis data collection

Title of the thesis: Quiet Luxury Going North: Exploring motivations for quiet luxury fashion consumption in Scandinavia

Research team:
Student 1: Wesley Roland Theo Gerard Sijbers (siwe24eh@student.ju.se)
Student 2: Matvei Ershov (erma21nd@student.ju.se)
Thesis supervisor: Brian McCauley (brian.mccauley@ju.se)

You are hereby asked to participate in this interview, which is a part of the research for this particular Master thesis at Jönköping International Business School. Before considering your consent for participation, please read the following explanation.

Research purpose:
The purpose of this research is to find out what motivates consumers of quiet luxury brands in Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Denmark) to purchase from these type of brands. By uncovering the motivations of Scandinavian quiet luxury consumers, this research aims to help better understand the quiet luxury consumers of this region, and subsequently contribute to research on the topic. As a result, only quiet luxury consumers from these countries are reached out to and asked to participate. The audio of the interview will be recorded purely for transcription and analysis purposes.

Confidentiality:
All information collected during the interview process will be strictly held confidential, and no personal details that can trace the participant will be used in the Master thesis document. The data collected during the interview will be safely stored and secured, and subsequently deleted after final completion and grading of the Master thesis. There will be no access to the interview data other than to the above mentioned researchers and the grader of the thesis. If desired, the finished Master thesis is available for inspection to see how the data has been implemented.

Because of GDPR, you as a participant are:
Allowed to see the Master thesis document, decline to comment on questions, ask for clarifications or deletion of the used data, restrict the processing, and object the analysis. Above all, participation in the interview is completely voluntary at all times, and with the option to decline or withdraw without any needed justification.

For any questions about the processing of the data, you can reach out to the research team mentioned at the top of the document. If you think that your personal data is processed incorrectly, you have to option to submit a complaint to JU's data protection officer via dso@ju.se, or the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection (IMY)

Participation consent form

Consent to participate in the Master thesis project: 'Quiet Luxury Going North: Exploring motivations for quiet luxury fashion consumption in Scandinavia'

I have hereby carefully read the provided information about the study, and agree to voluntary participate in the interview to help the research students by providing insights into the research topic. I agree that the interview will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes, and understand that all personal information is handled with utmost care, and deleted after final completion of the Master thesis. If requested, I am able to receive a copy of the research to see how the data has been used.

☑ I hereby agree with the above and will participate in the interview.

Name of participant: (in full)	**Place and date:** (XX/XX/XXXX)	**Signature:**

Appendix 3: AI Declaration Form

JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
Jönköping International Business School

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that this represents our own work.

We declare that we have obtained the necessary ethical approval (e.g. GDPR), and acknowledged my/our obligations and the rights of the participants in this research. We have read and applied Jönköping University's current research ethics guidelines regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and the purpose for their use. During the preparation of this work, the authors have made use of AI tools for the following purposes:

- ChatGPT has been utilized to find grammatical and logical errors in the sentences, and the authors have adapted these errors manually and independently.

- Perplexity has been utilized to summarize some large research papers to help identify the key points.

As authors, we have reviewed and edited the content as needed, and take full responsibility for the content of this thesis.

Signature: _____

Date: 20-05-2025

Signature: _____

Date: 20-05-2025