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Uncovering the relationships between aspirations and luxury brand preference

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Abstract
Purpose – This paper seeks to test the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations on luxury brand preference. The objective is to help luxury marketers better understand and anticipate the psychological needs of their customers.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on a thorough review of the literature, a series of hypotheses are derived and tested using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The final sample consists of a total of 615 participants.

Findings – The main findings show that aspirations can affect luxury brand preference depending on the type of aspirations: positive for extrinsic aspirations and negative for intrinsic ones. The findings also suggest that intrinsic aspirations play a more substantial role in luxury consumer behaviour than had been previously thought.

Practical implications – The findings suggest that luxury marketers should take into consideration the duality of intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations when designing marketing campaigns. Particularly, focusing advertising campaigns on extrinsic values seems restrictive and discards consumers who are intrinsically motivated.

Originality/value – Aspirations are important in social psychology research because they have a strong influence on individuals’ behavior. However, little research has been done in marketing to assess the potential effects of aspirations on consumer behavior, especially within the context of luxury goods.

Keywords Brands, Marketing strategy, Premium products

Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.

1. Introduction
Everyone is considered to have aspirations, long-term goals that one expects to accomplish over a lifetime (Kasser and Ryan, 1993). Whether people strive for money, popularity or for more internally oriented rewards such as self-satisfaction, humans relentlessly and naturally pursue personal growth by physiological needs (Maslow, 1954). In social psychology, these psychological needs are called aspirations or life goals (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996). Since aspirations are related to fundamental psychological needs acting as motives for action, they have direct effects on an individual’s behavior which over time tends to be consistent with the goals that s/he pursues (Sheldon et al., 2004; Pyszczynski et al., 2004; Sheldon, 2004; Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996; Kim et al., 2003). Although previous research has highlighted the important effects of aspirations on human behavior, there is a paucity of research in marketing concerning the effects of aspirations on consumer behaviour (Solomon and Englis, 2004).

Aspirations are particularly relevant to luxury consumption, hence its selection as the industry focus for this study. The role of aspirations in driving consumer behavior may well be substantial given that consumers tend to purchase luxury goods for their symbolic content such as status and prestige.
rather than functionality (Amaldoss and Jain, 2005). The public display of luxury brands is not a new phenomenon. As cited by Koehn (2001, p. 33) – as early as 1767, the English political economist Nathaniel Foster noted: “The perpetual restless ambition in each of the inferior ranks to raise themselves to the level of those immediately above them,” causing fashionable luxury to spread “like contagion.”

The 2008 luxury market report from the Luxury Institute estimated that the global market for luxury products has grown at a compounded two-digit rate for the last decade. This growth could be attributed to three possible causes.

1. The wealthy are purchasing more luxuries.
2. There are greater numbers of wealthy people.
3. That middle and lower classes are purchasing luxury brands.

There may be more people aspiring to own luxuries than people who have the economic means to be able to regularly do so (Koehn, 2001).

One important motivation for the consumption of luxury brands lies in the status and aspirational values they provide consumers, whatever their economic situation (Vickers and Renand, 2003). Research attention has to date been directed more towards related topics such as self-concept theory (SCT) and conspicuous consumption theory (CCT). SCT studies the congruency between consumers’ self-concepts (how one perceives him/herself) and product preference and choice (Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004). CCT investigates consumers’ conspicuous behavior towards luxury goods and brands.

Researchers in this area address the ways in which consumers use luxuries to signal their status and wealth, but rarely included aspirations, and more specifically the intrinsic ones, in their antecedents. Given the importance accorded to the role of aspirations in social psychology, a strong case can be made for their inclusion in luxury consumption research. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to assess empirically the two types of aspirations – intrinsic and extrinsic – on consumer preference for luxury brands. Brand preference was selected over brand choice because it includes actual as well as potential luxury brand consumers thereby limiting the potentially moderating affect of purchasing power.

As noted by previous researchers (Shapiro and Spence, 2002; Yang et al., 2002), one effective method in order to investigate the effects of antecedents on consumer behavior is through multiple regression analysis using structural equation modeling. This approach has been adopted for this paper. In the proposed model of the relationship between aspirations and brand preference, the antecedents (i.e. independent variables) are represented by seven aspirations and luxury brand preference as the dependent variable. The hypothesized relationships between the variables within the model derive from the theoretical framework located in the next section of this paper. This will be followed by an outline of the empirical research studies, the findings and a discussion of these results within the context of previous research. The final section concludes by outlining some limitations and suggestions for further research directions.

2. Theoretical framework
   2.1. Aspirations

Aspirations constructs stem from self-determination theory (SDT) which may be defined as a macro-theory of human motivation concerned with the development and functioning of personality within social contexts (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The theory acknowledges that humans are active organisms with a tendency towards psychological growth and development (Sheldon et al., 2004). The nutrients for healthy development and functioning are specified using the concept of basic psychological needs, which are innate, universal and essential for healthy well-being. Well-being is therefore dependent on the ability to satisfy these basic psychological needs.
There is a close relationship between psychological needs and goal pursuits. Individuals tend to pursue goals that are consistent with their most important psychological needs. Researchers argue that all individuals pursue life goals and have identified seven universal aspirations (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996). They distinguish two broad classes of goals on the basis of their content: extrinsic and intrinsic goals. Each goal or aspiration satisfies a psychological need. Extrinsic goals include financial success (money and luxury), social recognition (fame), and appealing appearance (image). Intrinsic goals may consist of self-acceptance (growth), affiliation (relatedness), community feeling (helpfulness), and physical fitness (health). In general, individuals tend to pursue more purposely one of the two broad aspirations (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996).

There is a difference as to why individuals pursue intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Intrinsic goals are internally oriented and are therefore driven by “autonomous reasons”, meaning that individuals pursue these goals because of the satisfaction, enjoyment, or personal meaning derived from their attainment. People who pursue extrinsic goals tend to be concerned about how they are perceived by others and by a desire to receive their praise and rewards. Aspirations are therefore thought to influence motivation and in turn behavior (Kasser and Ryan, 1996; Kim et al., 2003; Sheldon et al., 2004).

2.2. Conspicuous consumption theory

Most contemporary luxury consumption research emanates from Veblen’s (1899) conspicuous consumption theory (CCT). This theory argues that wealthy people tend to consume highly conspicuous goods in order to display their wealth and gain social status. The Veblen Effect became known as a willingness to pay a higher price for a functionally equivalent product but one perceived to be more prestigious (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996). This willingness to pay a price premium may serve to generate considerably more status for the users than direct utility (Mason, 2001). In such circumstances, a product’s price premium may have positive effects on the consumer’s decision making process.

People who engage in conspicuous consumption often do so to emulate the consumption patterns of the group of people who are socially situated either directly or considerably above them (Mason, 1998). As stated by Veblen (1899, p. 84), “the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal.” Social emulation is normally publicly demonstrated since status is granted by others. So luxury goods purchased for status reasons tend to be more conspicuous than private (Bearden and Etzel, 1982). More than 100 years after Veblen proposed his theory, social emulation as reflected in the desire to gain higher status through conspicuous consumption is still thought to shape preferences for products and services that are consumed publicly (Corneo and Jeanne, 1997; Trigg, 2001; Dholakia and Talukdar, 2004; O’Cass and Frost, 2002). As reflected in aspirational reference groups, consumers have a tendency to imitate the buying behavior of the members of the group to which they desire to belong (Dholakia and Talukdar, 2004). It has also been posited that aspirations are not static but evolve to a higher level when one achieves a desired status and moves towards a new reference group (Chang and Arkin, 2002).

A related construct to luxury consumption which has been studied in a consumer behavior setting is self-esteem. This topic is discussed next.

2.3. Self-esteem and aspirations

Several authors have suggested that self-esteem is an essential part of the human ego and broadly posited that individuals naturally strive to enhance their self-esteem (e.g. Sheldon et al., 2001; Crocker and Nuer, 2004; Pyszczynski et al., 2004; Sheldon, 2004). Self-esteem has also been presented as a fundamental element within theories of motivation and selfconcept (Hogg et al., 2000; Ferraro et al., 2005). Moreover, Sheldon et al. (2001) proposed that self-esteem is a fundamental need which may be assimilated to goal pursuit and therefore included as an aspiration. Previous investigations into the role of aspirations in consumer behavior have not evaluated this
construct. However, taking into consideration the social psychology literature, it is the researchers’ contention that self-esteem may play some role in explaining more fully the relationship between aspirations and luxury brand preference.

In summary, given the fundamental role of aspirations in social psychology and their relative exclusion from luxury consumption behavior studies, they warrant being tested empirically. Besides, most studies have also omitted internal motives as antecedents of luxury consumption. Therefore, this study takes a more holistic approach in exploring the role of internal as well as external aspirations on consumer preference for luxury brands.

2.4. Model development

From a review of the extant literature, various researchers have proposed a theoretical model depicting the relationship between aspirations and luxury brand preference which is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Proposed structural model

![Proposed structural model](image)

The model includes seven aspirations as dependent variables (Personal growth, Relationships, Community feeling, Self-esteem, Wealth, Popularity-Influence, and Image) adapted from the extant
literature. INT (Intrinsic) and EXT (Extrinsic) are independent second-order factors, meaning that the seven aspirations are best described by two, single second-order factors. The double-headed arrow between these two factors shows a correlation hypothesized to be negative. The paths linking the second-order factors to BPref (the dependent latent variable for Luxury Brand Preference) show the hypothesized relationships between aspirations and brand preference. The relationship between EXT and BPref is predicted to be stronger than the one between INT and BPref.

2.5. Hypotheses

The hypotheses linked to the model above also evolved from the review of the relevant literature. The first hypothesis concerns the place of self-esteem in the model. Because of its importance in explaining human behavior and motivation in social psychology, self-esteem was included in the study as an aspiration. Based on the researchers’ understanding of social psychology it was expected that self-esteem would tend more towards intrinsic rather than extrinsic aspirations. Therefore, we propose that:

H1. In the structural model, self-esteem will load as an intrinsic aspiration.

The second hypothesis addresses the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference which has not previously been tested in a luxury marketing context. Consumers tend to prefer brands that are consistent with how they perceive themselves or how they would like others to see them (Hogg et al., 2000). As luxury brands are high in conspicuous and status traits (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004), it is hypothesized that there will be a positive and direct relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference. Thus:

H2. There is a positive and direct relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference.

The third hypothesis assesses the relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference. As discussed, intrinsic aspirations are generally pursued for autonomous reasons. Intrinsically oriented individuals tend to grant less importance to the opinions of others and seek aspirations that are internally rewarding (Youngmee et al., 2003). SCT suggests that internally motivated consumers tend to prefer brands that are consistent with their own self-concept (Hogg et al., 2000) and be less dependent on brands that convey external values. It can therefore be hypothesized that:

H3. There is a negative and direct relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference.

The final hypothesis concerns the effects of the two types of aspirations on luxury brand preference. It is posited that extrinsic aspirations, driven by peer pressure and social standing requirements are more powerful motivators of luxury consumption than intrinsic aspirations. Although this has been suggested in the extant literature, it does not appear to have been tested previously in any marketing setting (Youngmee et al., 2003; Chaplin and John, 2005). People driven by intrinsic aspirations, are considered to be psychologically less dependent on luxury brands (Amaldoss and Jain, 2005). In terms of luxury brand preference, it is therefore hypothesized that the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference will be stronger than the relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference, irrespective of whether these relationships are positive or negative. Therefore, we propose that:
H4. The strength of the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference is stronger than the relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference.

3. Research methodology
This study adopted a survey approach in testing the hypotheses contained in the proposed model depicted in Figure 1. The items used to measure aspirations and brand preference were adapted from the extant literature. The extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations constructs were identified and adapted from the Aspirations Index of Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996), the only previous scale measuring aspirations. The descriptions of the aspirations items are shown in Table I. Luxury brand preference was measured using the Luxury Brand Index (LBI) scale previously developed by Truong et al. (2008). This particular scale for luxury brand preference was adopted because its authors claimed it to be more parsimonious and able to produce a better fit than previous instruments used by (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004; O’Cass and Frost, 2004). Respondents were asked to choose their favorite brand in three product categories. The LBI would then provide a score for the chosen brand to indicate the level of perceived prestige and therefore the brand preference of the respondent.

The questionnaire was developed in two stages. During the first stage, the questionnaire was worded in English and later translated into French by two bilingual professors of language. The translated version was then submitted for a back translation to a researcher of the French medical research institute INSERM in order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. The second stage concerned pre-testing the questionnaire, first with a sample of 75 respondents, then after modifications, with an additional sample of 20 respondents. The two pre-tests were deemed necessary as suggested by Malhotra (2004) in order to eliminate any ambiguities.

3.1. Data collection
Data collection was conducted during the month of June 2006. A total of 615 adults aged between 21-40 years were surveyed. The age range of 21-40 was selected in order to be consistent with the sample frame used in previous studies using the LBI. A stratified random sample was employed as random sampling is often preferred in rigorous studies to reduce sampling bias (Fox, 2003). The sampling frame was applied within Lyon, France. The city was divided into 12 squared sectors with a further six sectors randomly drawn from the initial 12 as a basis for selecting individual households. A team of seven trained research students administered the questionnaires at three different times of the day using face-to-face interview techniques. The length of the average interview was considered to be moderate with a completion time of 13 minutes.

A binomial test for gender and a chi-squared test for age were applied to the sample frequencies to ensure that the sample represented the general population defined from census data. A p-value of 0.01 was chosen as the significance level. Based on the results of these tests, it was concluded that the sample matched the distribution of the general population in France for people aged between 21 and 40 years.

3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis
Confirmatory factor analysis and varimax rotation in SPSS were used to assess the measurement model. The measurement model performed well on both the KMO (0.902) and Bartlett’s tests (P<0.01). The items loaded distinctly on eight factors (seven aspirations and BPref) with loadings ranging from 0.40 to 0.82. Cronbach’s Alphas for all variables were all above 0.7, showing an acceptable level of reliability. Table II shows the CFA loadings.

3.3. Model estimation and fit
Structural equation modeling allows for the use of second-order factors which are latent variables that “regroup” several first-order factors as indicators (Byrne, 2001). In this case, it means that each
of the two types of aspirations (intrinsic and extrinsic) would be modeled as second-order factors and would have the first-order factors (aspirations) as indicators. Second-order factors can greatly simplify the relationships between independent and dependent variables in a structural model when the first-order factors are correlated (Kline, 2004). In practice, it means that the use of second order factors reduces the number of paths between independent and dependent variables, making relationships less complex and more interpretable. Second, when a model is appropriate for second-order factors, the use of second-order factors their application can produce a better model fit than a model which considers only first-order factors.

Model estimation and fit were performed using AMOS 6.0. The chosen method was Maximum Likelihood (ML), a widely used method in SEM (Byrne, 2001). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were chosen to assess this study’s model fit (Garson, 2006).

4. Results
4.1. Fit tests
Tests on the initial model provided a CFI (0.86) and a TLI (0.85) which were below the general recommended threshold of 0.9 (Garson, 2006). However, it is rare that a model is accepted after the first test (Garson, 2006) and re-examining the measurement model gave a more viable solution. The aspirations constructs were all unidimensional and had five items each. In SEM, it is accepted that items from unidimensional constructs be deleted in order to separate measurement from model structure thus lowering interpretational confounding (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988).

Two items with the lowest loadings were deleted for each variable in order to increase the model parsimony, avoid repetitive items and increase the model fit. Fit statistics for the modified model were considered acceptable with TLI=0.908, CFI=0.920, and a very good RMSEA=0.05. Figure 2 shows the regression coefficients of the model.

R2 indicates the amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the variation in the latent variable. The R2 scores were relatively high except for self-esteem (0.23), community (0.49) and wealth (0.44) scored slightly lower. Possible explanations for these lower scores are discussed in the following section. Overall, the measurement instrument performed better for extrinsic aspirations and brand preference than for intrinsic aspirations. All relationships were significant at P=0.00.

4.2. Results for each hypothesis

H1. In the structural model, self-esteem will load as an intrinsic aspiration.

Self-esteem as an independent latent variable loaded better on the second order factor INT (intrinsic aspirations) than EXT (extrinsic aspirations). The regression coefficient between self-esteem and INT was also moderate (0.48) but enough to accept H1, that self-esteem in a luxury marketing context should be considered as an intrinsic aspiration. Nevertheless, the R2 for self-esteem was much lower than those of other intrinsic aspirations (R2=0.23). It can therefore be concluded that although self-esteem should be considered as intrinsic in nature, it is statistically distinctive from other intrinsic aspirations.

H2. There is a positive and direct relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference.
<table>
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<th>Latent variables</th>
<th>Items</th>
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<td><strong>Intrinsic aspirations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal growth</strong></td>
<td>To grow and learn new things. How important is this to you? At the end of my life, to be able to look back on my life as meaningful and complete. How important is this to you? To choose what I do, instead of being pushed along by life. How important is this to you? To know and accept who I really am. How important is this to you? To gain increasing insight into why I do the things I do. How important is this to you?</td>
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<td><strong>Relatedness</strong></td>
<td>To have good friends that I can count on. How important is this to you? To share my life with someone I love. How important is this to you? To have committed, intimate relationships. How important is this to you? To feel that there are people who really love me, and whom I love. How important is this to you? To have deep enduring relationships. How important is this to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community feeling</strong></td>
<td>To work for the betterment of society. How important is this to you? To assist people who need it, asking nothing in return. How important is this to you? To work to make the world a better place. How important is this to you? To help others improve their lives. How important is this to you? To help people in need. How important is this to you?</td>
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<td><strong>Self-esteem</strong></td>
<td>To have many good qualities. How important is this to you? To be satisfied with myself. How important is this to you? To have a strong sense of respect for myself. How important is this to you? To be proud of myself. How important is this to you? To feel competent in what I do. How important is this to you?</td>
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<td><strong>Extrinsic aspirations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Wealth</strong></td>
<td>To be a wealthy person. How important is this to you? To have many expensive possessions. How important is this to you? To be financially successful. How important is this to you? To be rich. How important is this to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Image</strong></td>
<td>To have enough money to buy everything I want. How important is this to you? To successfully hide the signs of aging. How important is this to you? To have people comment often about how attractive I look. How important is this to you? To keep up with fashions in hair and clothing. How important is this to you? To achieve the “look” I’ve been after. How important is this to you? To have an image that others find appealing. How important is this to you?</td>
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<td><strong>Popularity influence</strong></td>
<td>To have strong impact on what other people do. How important is this to you? To be a person whose advice others seek out and follow. How important is this to you? To have a strong influence on others’ beliefs and behavior. How important is this to you? To be appreciated and liked by many people. How important is this to you? To be popular. How important is this to you?</td>
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Table II Factor loadings for the measurement model

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Figure 2 Regression coefficients and variance explained
The regression coefficient between these two variables was strong, positive and significant (0.60), suggesting a close relationship between them. Furthermore, the regression coefficients from EXT to the three extrinsic aspirations were very strong (0.66, 0.83, and 0.96). This result strongly supports H2, although the contribution of wealth was lower than expected (regression coefficient=0.66; R2=0.44). One possible explanation may be the relative extrinsic nature of wealth as a life-goal. Becoming a wealthy person may be extrinsic or intrinsic depending on whether a person wants anyone to know. The pursuit of wealth may well be an intrinsic aspiration for some individuals if there is no associated conspicuous behavior.

H3. There is a negative and direct relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference.

The regression coefficient between INT and luxury brand preference was found to be negative (20.30). As a consequence, the hypothesis that individuals with high intrinsic aspirations tend to disaffect luxury brands was accepted. Luxury brands essentially appeal to consumers who hold values which are extrinsically oriented. The regression coefficients between INT and the four
intrinsic aspirations (0.78, 0.80, 0.70 and 0.48) were slightly lower than those between EXT and extrinsic aspirations (0.66, 0.83, and 0.96). This difference may be explained by a greater difficulty in measuring intrinsic values which by their nature are more subjective than extrinsic values. This measurement challenge has also been noted in past studies (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996; Sheldon et al., 2001).

H4. The strength of the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference is stronger than the relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference.

Based on the extant literature, it was hypothesized that the effects of extrinsic aspirations on luxury brand preference would be significantly stronger than for intrinsic aspirations. In other words, while the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference is almost a systematic one, the relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference is less straightforward. Although the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference was expected to be very strong, there were no conceptual grounds to expect an equally strong relationship between intrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference. This view was supported by the findings. The regression coefficient between EXT and BPref (0.60) was much stronger than between INT and BPref (-0.30) resulting in this intrinsic aspirations impact on luxury brand preferences, positively for extrinsic and negatively for intrinsic, the relative impact of extrinsic aspirations is much stronger.

5. Discussion
Previous studies involving CCT have found that consumers purchase luxury goods in order to signal their wealth and status (Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996; Mason, 1998, 2001; O’Cass and Frost, 2004). However, that desire to signal wealth and status presupposes that there is some wealth and some status to be signaled. Veblen’s fundamental theory primarily concerned members of the wealthiest class who desired to differentiate themselves from others by acquiring, displaying and consuming conspicuous goods (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996). Veblen’s approach – which has been widely adopted in subsequent studies – neglects individuals who desire luxury brands but lack the adequate financial resources. To overcome this omission, this study has taken a different approach by investigating people’s desire to achieve wealth and status. With the global growth in disposable and discretionary incomes, middle and lower-class consumers aspiring to the lifestyle of the wealthy have become valuable target segments for luxury goods firms many of which have extended their product range to appeal to broader socio-economic segments.

As shown by the findings, the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and luxury brand preference is very strong. People who grant importance to extrinsic aspirations tend to prefer luxury brands. The status and conspicuous power associated with luxury brands allows certain consumers to signal to others a level of wealth and status, which assists them in satisfying their pursuit of extrinsic-oriented aspirations. Among the contributing factors for extrinsic aspirations, image was the most important (coefficient of 0.96), more so than wealth (coefficient of 0.66). In our study consumers granted more importance to how others perceived them than how much wealth they actually had. Since extrinsic aspirations are related to status, this reinforces the view that status may be more a matter of perceptions than one’s actual financial position.

In terms of their relative impact, the findings show that intrinsic aspirations have a negative effect on brand preference for luxury goods. That is, people who grant importance to personal growth and internal values have a tendency to avoid choosing luxury brands because the status and conspicuousness linked to these brands do not act as a motivator to purchase. More precisely, although the symbolic content of luxury brands can help extrinsically oriented individuals in their goal pursuits, such content is likely to have minimal impact on intrinsically driven people. In some circumstances they may even avoid purchasing luxuries even if they have the economic means. The
scores for the construct personal growth, which is one of the highest contributors to intrinsic aspirations (coefficient of 0.78), confirms the view that intrinsically oriented consumers are motivated by reasons that are personal and internal. It follows therefore that intrinsically oriented consumers may be interested in luxury brands but for reasons that are not conspicuous in nature. This conclusion challenges the widespread industry practice of typically promoting luxury brands which appeal to conspicuous consumers.

Findings in relation to H2 and H3 show that extrinsic aspirations have positive effects on luxury brand preference whereas intrinsic aspirations have negative effects. The results for H4 demonstrated that extrinsic aspirations have a stronger effect on luxury brand preference than intrinsic aspirations. Several reasons may explain the difference in strength between the two effects. Since extrinsic aspirations are pursued for controlled reasons, that is, reasons concerning the perceptions of others (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996), extrinsically oriented people tend to have a systematic preference for brands that convey external values because of the high congruency between those brand values and their extrinsic aspirations. Intrinsic aspirations are pursued for autonomous reasons, that is, reasons that are personal and independent of others (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996). The systematic preference for luxury brands by extrinsically oriented people may be a result of the historical dominance of conspicuous marketing strategies used by luxury firms, which at the same time may have created avoidance behavior among intrinsically oriented people.

6. Limitations and future research
The first limitation concerns our sample of 21 to 40 year olds. The findings are primarily applicable to consumers within this age range but we recognize that many luxury consumers are over the age of 40 years where higher disposable income makes luxuries more affordable. However, many recent luxury brand extensions target this younger range.

The second limitation relates to the choice of sampling in one country, namely France. Although global brands tend to have a similar image (Chu and Keh, 2006), the relative importance of the seven aspirations may vary from country to country. However, the researchers would expect that aspirations might vary slightly across western countries because members share many common cultural values, norms and customs (Hofstede, 2001). Western countries tend to be rather individualistic whereas Asian countries for example, tend to be more collective (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, although the findings from this research may be generalized cautiously beyond France to other Western countries, it may be inappropriate to apply them to consumers with very different cultural values. Further research concerning the impact of cultural differences on aspirations would be a worthwhile extension to more fully understand the nature of consumer aspirations.

7. Conclusion
The relationship between the important area of aspirations and luxury brand preference has been explored in this paper. It is one of the first studies to include internal motives and self-esteem in a predictive model for luxury brand preference. There seems little doubt of the need for subsequent research in terms of aspirations which has been neglected to date. Noted differentiation between extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations has been confirmed and expanded in the luxury brand context. Managerially, the focus of attention in luxury goods marketing has to be inexorably focused on extrinsic aspirations. Nonetheless, such focus is always dependent on understanding the dynamics of the served market, hence the need to evaluate aspirational constructs more fully. Further, future research could use the structural model developed here and apply it to other stages in the consumer decision-making process such as purchase intent, actual purchase, and brand choice. The new tests would not only improve the current model but also widen its predictive power to other stages of the decision-making process in consumer behavior.

8. Managerial implications
The findings of this study suggest that intrinsic aspirations can be serious inhibitors to consumer preference for luxury brands. Consumers who are intrinsically oriented tend to avoid luxury brands. Given that most advertising campaigns promote luxury brands based on purely extrinsic values, luxury marketers may be neglecting consumers who are primarily driven by intrinsic values. Some intrinsically oriented consumers can still appreciate luxury brands but do not identify themselves with the extrinsic values promoted in the advertisements. Luxury firms should find ways to reach this intrinsically oriented audience while keeping their current relationships with those who engage in conspicuous behavior. One can imagine an advertising campaign that promotes both types of values in different advertisements. For example, a luxury firm may advertise different facets of its brand such as quality, hedonism, exclusivity and prestige. Although quality and hedonism are normally associated with intrinsic values whereas exclusivity and prestige are rather identified with extrinsic values, they are not contradictory or incompatible (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). As a consequence, combining these values in advertising campaigns would help luxury firms reconcile the two audiences, and increase both market shares and the overall market size for luxury goods.

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Executive summary and implications for managers and executives
This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefits of the material present.

Aspirations play a key role in human development. They are associated with basic psychological needs that are “innate, universal and essential for healthy well-being”. Furthermore, aspirations drive intention and behavior to the degree that people are inclined to act in accordance with these desires.

Issues to consider
Goals are broadly defined as either extrinsic or intrinsic and scholars distinguish between the two types. Financial success, social recognition and image are typical extrinsic aspirations, while intrinsic goals might relate to such as health, connection to others and self-acceptance. Evidence reveals a tendency for goal pursuit to be linked more strongly to one rather than both categories. Those who are concerned about how others perceive them will be motivated by goals of an extrinsic nature. On the other hand, the internal orientation of intrinsic goals appeals to individuals seeking “satisfaction, enjoyment or personal meaning”.

Researchers have established a connection between aspiration pursuit and the purchase of luxury goods. Such products tend to be consumed less for their functionality and more because of the status and prestige they proffer. It is therefore supposed that certain aspirations may serve as a strong motivational factor in this respect.

Global growth for luxury products has been strong over the last decade. A rise in the number of rich people or the fact that wealthy consumers are buying more luxuries are possible reasons for this increased demand. Desire to express their wealth and social standing prompts wealthy people to consume goods that are highly conspicuous. Theorists who advocate this view additionally believe that such consumers are also willing to pay higher prices for products considered more prestigious than for alternatives that are cheaper yet equally functional.

Another explanation for this sales growth is that people from lower classes aspiring to achieve higher status may be responsible. Many researchers believe that such consumers purchase conspicuous goods in order to mimic the consumption behavior of a group or groups that are socially above them. The point is made that status is recognized by others. It follows, therefore, that individuals with a strong desire to climb the social ladder believe the purchase of goods that are publically consumed provides the best means of fulfilling their goals. Furthermore, the notion has been forwarded that aspirations are ‘not static’ so achieving a status goal stimulates ambitions to climb even higher.

Different theorists consider self-esteem to be fundamental to the human ego. It is argued that self-esteem can be regarded as an aspiration because many people aim to improve it. However, this construct has received minimal attention during research into how aspirations impact on human behavior. This reflects a general pattern whereby aims to identify determinants of luxury consumption have largely ignored internal motives.

Research and findings
Several extrinsic and intrinsic variables were used in the present study conducted among selected households in Lyon, France. Truong et al. surveyed 615 adults aged between 21 and 40 in order to
mirror previous research into luxury brands. Age and gender representation within the sample reflected the general population. The authors created and tested several hypotheses and the results indicated that:

- Self-esteem should be considered an intrinsic aspiration in the context of marketing luxury products. But the impact of the variable was lower than other intrinsic aspirations and therefore “statistically distinctive” from them.
- Extrinsic aspirations strongly influence preference for luxury products. Among these aspirations, the lower than expected effect of wealth was noted. One possible explanation purposed is the possibility that wealth might serve as an intrinsic aspiration among people less disposed to flaunt their affluence. Image had the strongest impact, inviting the conclusion that status could be more about the perception of others rather than actual position.
- People whose aspirations are highly intrinsic in nature are less attracted to luxury goods than consumers whose values are extrinsically oriented.
- Extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations respectively wield positive and negative influence on luxury brand preferences. However, the relationship between extrinsic aspirations and preference for luxury products was markedly stronger than the relationship between intrinsic aspirations and this preference. This was predicted on grounds that the first connection is “almost a systematic one” whereas “no conceptual; grounds” exist to justify the same expectations in respect of the second one.

This study differs from others through its focus on those aspiring to achieve wealth and status rather than those already in higher social groups. Truong et al. adopt this approach because people around the world are enjoying an increased level of disposable income. Consequently, lower and middle class consumers with visions of grandeur have become an important market segment. This is recognized by the many luxury goods firms now extending their product range to capture a broader socio-economic class of clientele.

**Marketing recommendations and additional study**

Personal growth was one of the strongest factors for people holding intrinsic values. The authors suggest that such consumers might still be interested in luxury goods but not for their symbolic content or visible distinctiveness. They question the merits of concentrating entirely on “conspicuous marketing strategies” as it risks creating “avoidance behavior among intrinsically oriented people”. With this in mind, marketers are urged to develop methods that enable them to reach these consumers without jeopardizing relations with extrinsically oriented individuals. One idea is to create advertisements that highlight intrinsic values such as quality and hedonism alongside prestige and exclusivity that are normally associated with extrinsic values. These attributes may not be ‘contradictory or incompatible’ and can help extend the share and size of the market for luxury products.

Since many older people consume luxury goods confining the study to those aged between 21 and 40 is acknowledged as potentially inhibiting the findings. The authors also accept that limiting the sample to a single country may likewise be significant. It is pointed out that the impact of each aspiration considered in the survey may vary between countries, particularly where cultural differences are evident. They note the possibility of research findings being applicable to similarly individualistic Western countries. However, further study is recommended in order to explore the impact of aspirations in contexts where different cultural values prevail. Another suggestion is to adopt the model used here to investigate purchase intent, actual purchase, brand choice and other stages of the consumer decision making process.