

LYCar Company Project

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A research on customer experience in the luxury retail industry

Executive Summary

As part of the LYCAR (Launching your career) course, students are required to complete a thesis for a company in order to graduate. I have had the chance to write mine for a commissioner working in fine watchmaking, about the future of luxury retail.

The problem mess was deconstructed by looking into concepts such as hedonism, hedonistic escapism, and the broadest of all: luxury. Hedonism comes from an ancient Greek term which signifies pleasure (Moore, 2019). The basic definition of hedonism is "living and behaving in ways that mean you get as much pleasure out of life as possible according to the belief that the most important thing in life is to enjoy yourself" (Cambridge, 2022). After identifying the main threads between these 3 topics, the problem was narrowed down. It came to the gap between what the luxury customers of today want and how luxury retail stores conduct their business. The main research question was formulated thanks to the problem statement: How can luxury retail stores align the quality and rarity of their products with their retail experience to fit current customer's wants and needs?

The primary data collected for the project is qualitative and consists of interviews with luxury consumers, retail managers, experts, and observations about the customer experience in luxury stores. These showed the need for customers to feel cherished, taken care of and to live an out of the ordinary experience. A quote which summarizes it well is the following: "All I would really like is that somewhere where it feels like I'm home."

The secondary data collected was done through a literature review. Indeed, various academic literature, scientific journals were analyzed and summarized. The topics which were looked into were customer experience in luxury retail, more specifically the new practices such as Audemars Piguet whom are transforming their retail stores into home like stores. The second topic explored through the literature review is social desirability according to social class. Indeed, there are many social classes within the upper class who desire and need different things regarding social desirability and status. Social status has had its roots in Ancient society, indeed, every person had a place in the hierarchy. This has evolved and merit and worldly success became inseparable (Young Jee et al., 2010). The rich were considered to be better and merited success. Affluence then became the marker for social status, which made wealth and social status "inextricably linked" (ibid)

After analyzing evidence from literature, customers, experts, the proposed solution was designed. It lies in offering ultra-luxury customers an exclusive experience in the form of a social club. This club will be on invitation only by the sales associates and will give customers an entry into the club. These will be designed as luxurious homes, will have a bar and a dining area. Events such as fashion shows, auctions, will be organized with other members to create a sense of belonging to the brand and a sense that they are socially desirable, different, cherished and recognized.

The solution could not be implemented physically but it was tested in the most realistic way possible. Customers were sent a mood board to show the design of the club, with

warm tones and a homey atmosphere, along with a voice over describing the experience they would have when a part of this club. The results generally showed a positive outlook from customers, although some were indifferent, due to the difficulty of imagining an experience with a mood board and a voice over.

This led to the evaluation of the solution and the risks and limitations. If seriously considered, the solution should be tested physically, by using a small part of a store to show customers how the private club would be like. This would allow for more accurate results in testing. Moreover, the biggest limitation fell under the fact that the luxury market is difficult to penetrate and thus, it leads to a lack of generalizability of the study. More customers should be interviewed to mitigate this. The biggest risk is the financial investment, as it is consequential.

Preface

Dear Reader,

The LYCAR course includes 3 blocks and is the last stretch before graduating from Hotel school The Hague. The following company project includes the 5 steps of the Design Based Research cycle: Problem Definition, Analysis and Diagnosis, Methodology, Solution Implementation, Solution Evaluation.

My commissioner, Denis Asch, asked for me to research how luxury products are best sold in stores nowadays according to the wants and needs of the current customers. HE wanted to increase sales in his store which is why we came to agreement regarding the topic. The focus was originally on fine watchmaking but was shifted to luxury goods in general, to ensure a generalizable and doable study.

I would like to thank Denis Asch for his support in this project, my coach Ms. Son, for the valuable feedback and my peer group for the support and feedback in and out of our coaching sessions.

Kind regards,

Mathilde Laporte

List of abbreviations

LYCAR	Launching your career
AQ	Adversity quotient
EQ	Emotional quotient
IQ	Intelligence quotient

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1. Problem definition

1.1 Context from different sources of evidence

1.1.1 What is hedonism?

Hedonism comes from an ancient Greek term which signifies pleasure (Moore, 2019). The basic definition of hedonism is "living and behaving in ways that mean you get as much pleasure out of life as possible according to the belief that the most important thing in life is to enjoy yourself" (Cambridge, 2022), while it is a very complex term.

There are two types of hedonism: psychological and ethical hedonism (ibid).

Psychological hedonism considers that only pleasure motivates humans whilst ethical hedonism claims that pleasure only has worth or value and only pain has disvalue (ibid).

This is very interesting as the dilemma between pain and pleasure is what have governed humans since the dawn of time (ibid). This concept has of course developed over the years as our society changes. Most motivational theories have found that human behavior is guided by the hedonic principle which affects our choices of activities (Taquet et al., 2016). For instance, it was found that people would choose positive activities such as sports when they felt down and mood decreasing ones such as housecleaning and such when they felt good (ibid). When asking Jean Noel Kapferer, a famous expert and book writer on luxury marketing, he says that hedonism is vastly broad and that luxury equals hedonism (Kapferer, 2022). This is interesting as it entails that hedonism is found in every aspect of luxury and that all luxury experiences should then allow customers to have as much enjoyment as possible.

1.1.2 Hedonic escapism in the luxury context

Hedonic escapism is defined as an escapist experience from stress and boredom, when an individual is fully immersed and absorbed in an activity, it is the luxury that takes customers out of their ordinary routine (Holmqvist et al., 2019). This concept is the basis for this research project as it has become a vastly important factor for customers, particularly in the luxury industry. High prices are often used to identify luxury, however, there is another key to luxury: exclusivity (ibid). Research argues that customers escape their daily lives with activities such as shopping (ibid). There is a fine distinction between escaping from and escaping into, which is what luxury consumption is about. It is about escaping into an unforgettable experience, even if one is content with their daily life (ibid). Hedonic escapism is an immersion into an out of the ordinary experience, by breaking the routine and altering the perception of time which particularly relates to escapism (ibid). In terms of hedonism in the luxury shopping context, it is argued that hedonism, is crucial but is not sufficient to create a "moment of luxury" (Holmqvist et al., 2019). A moment of luxury is also created by the experience and the connection made with the sales associate, as a customer cannot escape from their daily routine without the help of someone else, who will make this happen for them. The goal is for the customer not to have to do anything but simply to let go and be transported out of their routine.

1.1.3 Luxury retail industry

Luxury is very hard to define, there are hundreds of definitions but not a globally accepted one (Ko et al., 2019). However, when looking at many different viewpoints, there are a few criteria which make up a widely accepted definition. Those are: "high quality, an authentic value via desired benefits (functional or emotional), a prestigious image within the market (artisanship, craftsmanship or service quality), being worthy or commanding a premium price and being capable of inspiring a deep connection with the consumer" (ibid). These criteria allow for brands to be judged objectively rather than based on subjectiveness or name and ranked based on certain indexes such as the Brand Luxury Index (ibid). Now that boundaries have been established to define luxury, how does it translate into retail? The luxury retail industry has dynamically evolved over the years and takes cultures and psyche into account (Cheah et al., 2020). Indeed, retail must adapt to their different customers through selling techniques, marketing, and social media to ensure the best service and most sales (ibid). Moreover, in-store retail experiences are continuously growing in demand and instilling customer loyalty (Drettmann, 2020). When speaking to my commissioner and his view on the luxury retail industry, the first concept he mentioned was service and hospitality (Asch, 2022). In his eyes, the most important aspect when making a luxury purchase, was the connection with the sales associate, the experience and how one was treated in the store (ibid). As a world renowned watch dealer and watchmaker, he confidently said that what he remembers most about the purchase of a watch is not the product at first, it is not the design of the store, but it was the first instants when the sale associate greeted him and made him feel comfortable. He also mentioned how vividly he can remember a bad customer experience in a luxury store and that this affects the image of the brand considerably. This relates to hedonic escapism as it is about living a special and unforgettable moment through acts of service and not only because of the product (ibid). This concept is very interesting to take on for the remaining of the research project as it is crucial to understand consumer behavior and to understand how brands can grow and remain desirably.

1.2 Problem Definition

1.2.1 Identified Problem:

The world of retail is constantly evolving, particularly since Covid-19 (Achille and Zipser, 2020). The current situation is that stores remain very traditional in their retail execution (ibid). The problem is that this does not align with customer's current needs to have a unique, personalized and exclusive experience. In turn, this can make customers feel left aside, or disinterested in the brand, as they do not feel understood (Holmqvist et al., 2022). The issue that will be researched is how to solve this gap to make sure the future retail experience is adapted to customer wants and needs.

1.2.2 Goal of research:

The goal of this research is to find ways in which luxury retail stores, can align the quality and rarity of their products to their retail experience. The outcome of this report should provide concrete examples and ways to develop the future of luxury retail.

1.2.3 Why research is needed:

Research is needed to bridge the gap between how luxury retail is currently in place and how consumers want luxury retail to be according to their psyche and emotions.

1.2.4 Main Research question

How can luxury retail stores align the quality and rarity of their products with their retail experience to fit current customer's wants and needs?

2. Analysis and Diagnosis

2.1 Topics for research

Based on the problem definition and the reason for research, the topics chosen for the literature review are luxury retail, customer experience, social desirability, and social class.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Customer experience in luxury retail

Customer experience is one of the added values when buying a luxury product, amongst many other things. Retail stores have the power to bridge the gap between desire created from marketing to the physical purchase, thus, they need to understand their customers very well (Ko et al., 2016). Consumers no longer want to simply buy a product but want to be part of an experience, something they will remember (ibid). There is a need for a different retail experience from customers (ibid). For instance, pop up stores for luxury brands have been very successful as they differ from traditional retail and are effective within existing and new target groups. It was found that they are an effective marketing tool for luxury brands as they do not alienate existing target groups (ibid). On the other hand, pop up stores rarely offer the utmost comfort and personalization demanded by consumers while experiencing something different, meaningful, and innovative (ibid). There is indeed a gap between what luxury brands are trying to do (being innovative, satisfying the new generations such as Millennials and Generation Z) and what luxury stands for (Rosenbaum et al., 2020). When looking for a combination between the innovativeness, creativity of pop up stores with a luxurious experience, a few examples arise. For example, Audemars Piguet, a fine watchmaking Maison, has decided to transform their stores into "AP Houses". These are retail stores, displaying and selling watches, designed as luxurious homes, located on an upper floor to create the feeling of a home with a dining room, living room (Corder, 2021). This concept is very innovative and has proven to be effective as customers spend up to 4 times more time in AP Houses than in regular stores (ibid). The basis of this concept is creating "homeyness" within a store, which has been studied and found in many luxury stores (Debenedetti, 2021). This could be by greeting customers with "Welcome to our home" upon entry in the store, by offering coffee, displaying couches, setting a warm and cozy atmosphere (ibid). These are rather small adjustments to instill a hedonistic feeling for consumers, however, the experience is still not designed around their needs and wants and the missing criterion remains exclusivity (Holmqvist et al., 2022). Here comes an interesting aspect of luxury retail: loyalty programs. Studies have shown the effectiveness of loyalty programs across luxury and non-luxury brands (Stathopoulou and Balabanis, 2016). What is interesting here is that luxury consumers liked the programs for the hedonic benefits whereas non luxury consumers liked it for the utilitarian benefits (ibid). This shows that luxury consumers are prepared to pay more or to be part of a certain program just to access hedonism (ibid). In conclusion, there may be an opportunity for brands to take this on in order to form an even more exclusive community within their luxury consumers. Social desirability and exclusivity are topics

which are at the heart of luxury and which will be explored in the next part of this literature review.

2.2.2 Social desirability in luxury according to social class

Luxury started as a niche market, where only very few people could afford it whilst modern luxury is very different from this (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2016). The targeted clientele is much larger, and includes the middle class, while the industry grows exponentially (Cabigiosu, 2020). Nowadays, many brands have abandoned the rarity and quality of their products to adopt an "abundant rarity" strategy (Kapferer, 2012a). These strategies prioritize the illusion of exclusivity such as limited editions, pop up stores, capsule collections, rather than the actual rarity of their products (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2016). This is partly because nowadays, consumption is seen as a source of happiness (ibid). The challenge for brands to remain exclusive and desirable becomes more difficult as they open the doors to a wider variety of customers (ibid). Social desirability is how luxury brands create value. Indeed, customers buy luxury products to feel part of an exclusive, unattainable club which others cannot be part of. There are many aspects of social desirability depending on the clientele. A study about young luxury customers (between 19 and 37) showed that there were now two types of luxury: loud luxury and quiet luxury (Jiang et al., 2021). As expected, loud luxury refers to wearing a luxury item with a brand which is clearly visible (ibid). This touches upon a certain type of clientele: covert narcissists. They are shy, depreciating, and prefer loud luxury as it introduces them to society in a loud, self-important way (ibid). They feel a need to compensate for their insecurity by showing their wealth off and appear socially desirable (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). This kind of customer is highly influenced by social media and will grab at any opportunity to display their wealth in order to make themselves more social desirable (ibid). On the other hand, overt narcissists, are not afraid to show a confident image publicly and would rather purchase brands that are more discrete and have a private social status (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). They do not feel the need to compensate for anything and would rather show differentiation (ibid).

A study was done with a few luxuries customer about what was important to them. Concerning exclusivity, respondents evaluated what kind of clientele the brand selected (elite, middle class, or all classes, celebrities). The reflected image of the brand is an important factor in terms of decision making for consumers. Social desirability and status, as it has been established, is important. But how does it change according to types of wealth and classes? Old money, meaning families who inherited instead of generated their wealth represent 10 billion euros in luxury spending per year (Bellaiche et al., 2010). These families often despise the new money and competes with them to show how tasteful and refined they are (Kapferer, 2012b). They do not appreciate this new elite, promoting a "dematerialized and sustainable luxury" (ibid). Their spending pattern is focused mainly on fashion and clothing (30%), cosmetics and fragrances, (20%) furniture and decorations (20%) and watches and jewelry (20%) leather good and accessories (10%) (ibid). Their focus is relatively even across all areas. New money, meaning those who earned their wealth themselves represent 55 billion euros to

60billion of luxury sales, yearly (ibid). They are the biggest luxury spenders. Their patterns are fairly like those of old money: fashion and clothing (30%), cosmetics and fragrances (25%), leather goods and accessories (20%), watches and jewelry (15%) and furniture and decorations (10%) (ibid). The one notable difference is the spending on furniture and decorations. Indeed, old money spends more on interior design, which is less status related than fashion and clothing for instance. It is interesting to note as new money is considered to place greater emphasis on social status and desirability than old money does (Godfrey and Sendler, 2016) It is, nevertheless, important for brands to take these differences into consideration as a new money consumer may want to have an experience which can be posted on social media (pop up store, public event), in order to reach a hedonistic lifestyle, whereas an old money consumer may prefer a discrete and out of the public eye experience. We can conclude that new money consumers care more about social desirability and a hedonistic lifestyle than an old money customer (ibid).

2.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework right below was chosen as it regroups many of the topics explored through this research. Those are quality of the product and service, uniqueness of the products aligning with the uniqueness of the service, conspicuousness meaning the social exclusivity and social desirability and finally hedonism, the art of pleasure (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). This framework helps to break down the concept of luxury, which is very complex as seen in the literature review (ibid). The areas which will be focused on throughout the research is hedonism, under personal perceptions and uniqueness under non-personal perceptions. It is important to have both a personal and a non-personal perception as luxury retail is meant to create an emotional experience around a tangible product (ibid).

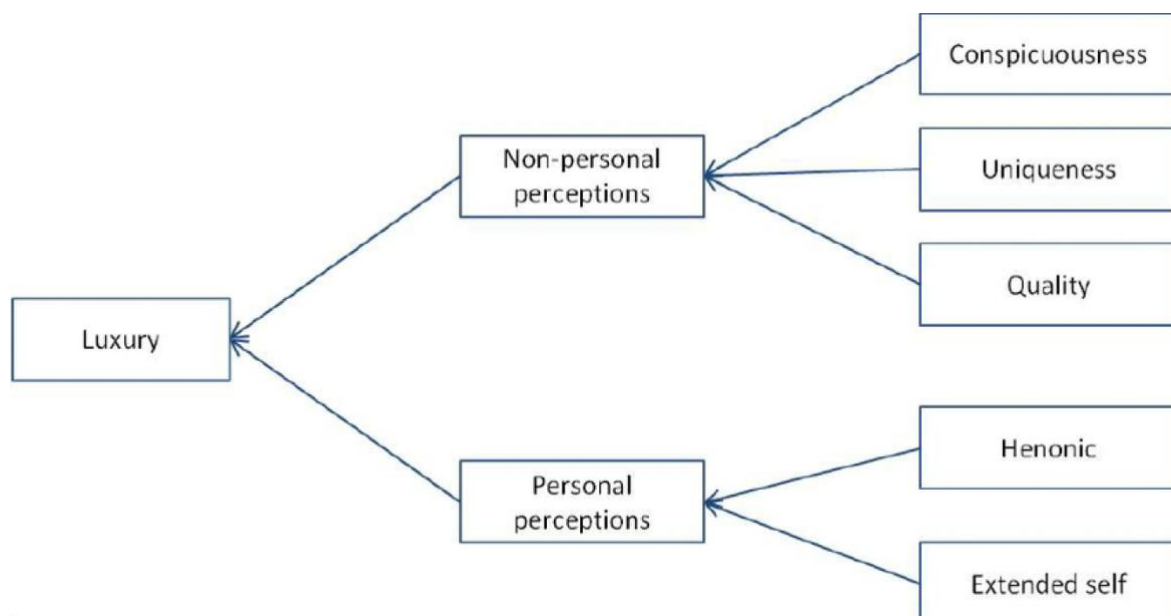


Figure 1 (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004)

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 Research population and sampling

To approach the subject from multiple angles, two populations will be researched. This will allow for an in-depth analysis of luxury retail. The populations are the following: luxury consumers from Europe and Asia and luxury retail managers from Europe as the solution concerns the future of retail.

The sample population was calculated based on the researcher's expectation and regulations which sets the number of interviews between 8 and 12 (Guest et al., 2020). The number of interviews for this research was set at 8: for both luxury retail employees and luxury retail customers.

2.4.2 Methods of data collection

The topic of luxury is subjective, experiential, and discrete. It requires qualitative research to understand experiences, emotions and wishes. Qualitative data was chosen as it allows the research to find rich insights which explain certain underlying processes, and psychological mechanisms (Bouncken et al., 2021). This is particularly important as the researcher is focusing on the luxury industry which is all about deeply understanding customer behaviors and customers' needs and wants. Moreover, since it is a very exclusive industry, it is easier to make a connection with someone over the phone or in person than with a survey.

The primary data was gathered through semi structured conversational interviews with a maximum of 40 minutes length. Some interviews with the retail managers lasted longer as they had a lot to say regarding customer experience and behaviors. These lasted on average for 40 minutes while customer interviews lasted around 20 minutes. The guidelines for the interviews can be found in appendix 6.1 and the interview questions in appendix 6.2. These touched upon the personal background of the interviewee, in order to set a comfortable atmosphere and create a connection. The rest of the topics explored were about the retail experience, and the role of sales associates. The underlying insights which the researched aimed to gather were about the sense of exclusivity, social desirability and social status.

Qualitative data from semi structured interviews allowed a clearer view on customers' needs and wants regarding luxury retail as well as their positive/negative experiences. This helped shape an idea of what consumers want from luxury stores, brands and sales associates. Ultimately, this led to an idea of what kind of solution should be implemented.

More primary data has been gathered through qualitative observations in luxury stores (fashion, watches, jewelry) to understand the world of luxury retail from a consumer

perspective. The observations have been made based on criteria used in service observations, such as opening the door within 5 seconds, making eye contact, smiling, greeting, giving undivided attention, engaging, anticipating needs, giving out contact details (Saunders et al., 2012). Service was the object of the observations as it is the one variable which differs considerably from store to store. The researcher went to 13 stores, in 4 different countries, to ensure enough cultural differences, brand diversity and identity. The recorded observations can be found in appendix 6.3.

2.4.3 Data ethics and storage

To respect every interviewee's privacy, which is particularly important in the luxury industry. Consent forms will be distributed before the interviews to agree that interviewees will remain anonymous, that the data will be used solely for the purpose of this research and that all the data will be destructed after handing in the project. Moreover, for transcribing purposes, all interviews will be recorded, if agreed by the interviewee. The declaration of confidentiality can be found in appendix 6.4.

2.4.4 Data analysis

Table 1 : Categories and sub categories for interview coding

Social desirability	Recognition Social class distinguishment Exclusiveness
Retail experience	Hedonism Homeyness Need to feel understood Personalization
Customer advisors	Ability to adapt Creating a connection Communication skills

All the interviews have been transcribed and translated (if in French). The transcripts can be found in appendix 6.5. After this, they have been read multiple times to get familiar with the content. Next, categories and subcategories of topics have been created using academic literature. These can be found in Table 1 right below. This allowed the researcher to start color coding. This method allows to sort and organize the data, and to gather meaningful insights from it (Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019).

2.4.5 Limitations

Some limitations have come up when doing qualitative research and semi structured interviews. When conducting an interview in English with a French speaker, a language barrier arose and limited some participants when expressing their thoughts. To limit this, when the interviewee struggled with speaking English correctly, the interviewer switched to French to guarantee the most accurate data. Time constraint was also an issue as 40minutes in one's workday is a lot to ask for and some interviews were cut short. This was particularly the case with retail managers, as they were interviewed in their store. Although we had made an appointment, they were often called, or asked to help with something. This led to some interviews being shorter than expected, even if all the data necessary was collected. Cancellations were another expected limitation when doing interviews. This happened twice. As mentioned previously, 40minutes in ones workday is consequential. Therefore, 1 retail manager and 1 customer cancelled and were not able to reschedule.

Qualitative research comes with validity threats such as researcher bias and observational bias (Benge et al., 2012). Researcher bias occurs when the researcher has preconceived ideas about the study which could affect the outcome of it (ibid). Moreover, observational bias occurs when there is a possibility for the researcher to fail to collect sufficient observational data or sees things in a particular way (ibid). The first threat was limited by analyzing the data in the correct way, by coding, even though bias will always remain as qualitative data is being collected. The second threat was limited to a certain extent by going to a wide range of luxury stores (watches, jewelry, fashion, cars), to ensure to have a wide range of observations, however there will always be a certain bias which the researcher was mindful of when analyzing the results.

2.5 Data results

2.5.1 Interview results

Interviews were conducted both with luxury retail customers and luxury retail employees. The interviews have been coded using color coding, the results of the interview coding with respect to categories and subcategories can be found in appendix 6.6. The summary of this can be found right below.

2.5.2 Social desirability

When conducting the interviews, it appeared that **recognition** was one of the most important aspects. It was not asked in a direct manner; however, it transpired through the answers. Luxury customers crave recognition, whether it be because they have been loyal for many years, or because they are big spenders. One of the retail managers said "That's why it's difficult because the old-fashioned clients, say: "Why do they take care of these clients so much with their backwards hats, et cetera. Millennials" because these are their customers of tomorrow, obviously. It's now that we have to develop their loyalty.' This shows that the older generation of customers, who have been loyal for many years have a deep need to feel recognized for their loyalty especially when seeing Millennials and younger customers getting as much attention from their first purchase on. When speaking to Millennial luxury customers, they feel "frustrated", "disengaged", "discouraged", and "disappointed" when not feeling recognized and engaged by sales associates. They tend to react in a stronger way and do not recommend the experience to friends or family. The way that older customers react to the lack of recognition is different than how Millennials react. Indeed, they feel somewhat threatened and do not want to mix with them, as they feel superior and different from them.

Social class distinguishment was the next subtopic studied, as it relates closely to recognition. Again, there are some generational differences, a boutique director says "before, we had a client who was bourgeois or wealthy. Today, we evaluate our clients more in terms of their means. Somehow, it's completely crazy, today we have people who don't have the majority, but who spend 800 or 1,000 € on a pair of sneakers", and "We have a clientele today, which obviously has nothing to do with the clientele we had in the 90s-2000s and even 2010. Why is that? Because we have consumers who are extremely young and who consume a lot with money they have not earned. That is, it's their parents' money." Whether the young generation comes to spend money they did not earn or not yet have, or the older generations who want to distinguish themselves by their social status, all customers want the same thing "the status", and "to be rich". Both generations have their own way of expressing their need for social class distinguishment, but it stems from the same need: to feel different, to feel part of a certain social class.

Exclusiveness is another factor closely related to social desirability. Luxury customers want a personalized experience, they do not "want to wait in front of a store for hours". Retail managers highlight the importance of distinguishing the difference between what some customers find exclusive and what others don't. For instance, "customers who have a lot of money, paradoxically, need a lot of simplicity. Finally, receiving them

outside of a public place, that is to say in a private place, makes sense." Whereas for the new generation, it is "I have a party in one hour and I need an outfit now." These observations made by retail managers show the differences between customers. In more detail "You must never forget that you can have two clients who will both have a private jet and a helicopter. One will use his private jet and his helicopter to go to Nikki Beach to splash champagne all afternoon and the second one will go for a picnic on top of Mont Blanc. It's the same budget, it's not the same experience, it's not the same philosophy, it's not the same person.". This raises an interesting point as the luxury store faces two completely different customers with completely different expectations but with the same budget. This means that they need different experiences, as every customer needs a different and as exclusive experience.

2.5.3 Retail experience

When looking into **hedonism**, which has been touched upon in the very beginning of the thesis, it is a difficult factor to grasp within interviews as it is as abstract as it gets. For a reminder, Hedonism comes from an ancient Greek term which signifies pleasure (Moore, 2019). The basic definition of hedonism is "living and behaving in ways that mean you get as much pleasure out of life as possible according to the belief that the most important thing in life is to enjoy yourself" (Cambridge, 2022). In interviews, it translated in a way which shows that customers truly want an experience, instead of simply purchasing a luxury product. A retail managers says that customers "prefer something faster. Something interesting, something fun. They come and try something. They like a glass of champagne. Having a nice experience.", this shows that clients are not just here to purchase, but are here to escape from their daily life, which is what hedonism is about. Customers on the other hand touch upon the sensory aspects of an experience and say "I would like to have an experience that engages all my senses I wanna see, feel, and even smell the luxury around me when I am shopping" and "I love an immersive experience". This related closely to an escape experience as it shows that customers wish to be fully engaged, to be fully transported into another universe, not just physically but also mentally. As mentioned, hedonism is difficult to dissociate from all the other categories as it is always closely related to luxury, nevertheless, the findings were interesting and conclusive enough.

Homeyness was one of the topics which was most discussed in all interviews, and once again relates to hedonism and the need for recognition. On the side of retail managers they treat their respective stores, like a home and train their employees to act accordingly "We also have the idea of being very relaxed and as natural as possible. When we train the saleswomen, in any case, in my store, it's the idea of inviting someone into your home.", and "That's why the fact that I feel like I'm at home and I consider the person in front of me as my mother, my sister or my friend, that's really specific to this place.". This shows how much the need to make customers feel at home is important. For customers, the same feeling is perceived "she offered me a drink and really gave me all the time to decide which bag and color I chose at the end. It felt super homey and comforting.", "I want to feel relaxed, welcome", "a guest should be able to have a seat and relax. Kind of like a living room", "when we walked in, they were very welcoming and they wouldn't judge you or anything.", all of these testimonies from luxury customers show their need to feel comfortable, welcome, appreciated and as if they were at home. This is crucial as often enough luxury stores can be unwelcoming

"versus ones I've had in Europe where they were just trying to kind of get rid of you as fast as possible". This feeling cannot be forgotten by a customer and hurts the image of the brand. This is a very important point.

Moving on to the **need for customers to feel understood**. This was mainly discussed by retail managers as they shared what they put in place to ensure that all their customers feel heard, understood, recognized. For example, "To our oldest clients here, we spend and we dedicate all the time so they don't feel that they are apart from our side.", "The idea is to have enough empathy and enough connection with the clients and understand their needs.", "You have to give them the time. To listen to all the stories of their holidays, you know, or the other one that is, "I don't want to say anything. I just want to pay and go." It's to understand what they need and what we have to give to them.". This requires a lot of emotional intelligence and empathy to achieve, it is as important to listen to someone who needs to talk, then to deal with someone who want to be quiet, who does not want to be engaged with. Perhaps it is even more difficult in the second scenario as it is against nature when working in retail, but both are extremely important. As mentioned previously, every customer will need a different experience. The retail world has changed in that sense, as the emotional side has taken over "We have stopped focusing on why you come to buy a pair of pants or why this color. It's more the idea of: "Who am I looking at, who is this person, what is their daily life like?" To really make the person feel privileged in that sense.", retail manager says. From a customer perspective, the need to feel understood comes forward when the purchase feels seamless, "It felt so comfortable and friendly, didn't really feel like I was buying something.". When the sales associate manages to make someone feel as if they are not purchasing something, to make them feel comfortable and understood to the point where the experience equals or is superior to the product, that is a success.

Personalization comes hand in hand with the need to feel understood. Indeed, when a client is understood by a sales associate, the experience can only be personalized, and tailor made. Retail managers have various way of making the experience more personal "The only way that we can ensure this is if each client advisor has one client.", We send flowers, we send personalized postcards with the client advisor's signature or lettering by hand.", With the VIP we bring them to this area, but with another client it's the glass of champagne or with another client is a glass of water. If we see a client with children, we have a children's kit for coloring.". Every experience depends on the person that is buying the product, "a unique experience is one that is as close as possible to the person in front of us.". An interesting point regarding personalization was the increasing number of customers who wish to try their clothes at home, who feel more comfortable in a homey environment. At Max Mara "Everything is done remotely; you can try it out at home. If it doesn't fit, a delivery person comes back to pick it up and brings it back to the store and we'll take whatever you decide to keep or not." This was greatly increased since the pandemic and will most likely become one of the new ways to do retail.

2.5.4 Sales associate

Moving on to the **importance of sales associates and their ability to adapt**, which is one of the most important qualities. The challenges faced by sales associates are to “manage several strata of several age groups at the same time in these stores, so several desires, several views, several types of adhesion.” The sellers are not only there to sell a product but need to have a certain attitude, a story telling, and need to offer an experience above all, retail managers says, “because they not only sell, they work a lot in clientele action”. Retail managers are looking for “more than experience, we need more attitude, more energy”, in their recruitments. The role of sales associate is changing along the way with how customers are changing, depending on their needs. On the customer side, they want “a sales associate that has the perfect balance of engagement but also giving me space to think about my purchase and maybe even pick up design that she/ he believes would fit me” and they find important that “the service is genuine and coming from an associate that is not pushing me to purchase something but rather supports me in whichever decision I take.”. This shows that customer rely on sales associates’ ability to adapt to their needs, in which case they will be satisfied with the experience whether they end up purchasing something or not.

Creating a connection is also a very important role from the sales associates, in order to build a loyal clientele over time. Retail managers spoke greatly of this, for them “customer experience is about truthfulness and authenticity, sincerity, personal commitment, meeting customers, empathy and sharing, so that the customer ends up coming to you”, “the goal is that when the customer leaves the store, she remembers the person. When she comes back, she doesn't necessarily have to ask because the saleswoman remembers her.”. Customer loyalty and customer experience is built on creating a connection, as that is the reason why clients will come back to the store, to see a particular sales associate. Without this, the customer experience is shallow and meaningless. It is important for salespeople to keep in contact with their clients outside of the store, by texting them, calling them. At Max Mara, for instance, they have put in place an acquisition and retention program: “there is a planning and follow-up program which means that we try to keep a fairly regular contact. It's not necessarily a material contact, but it's just a free contact. For example: “How are you doing? Did we talk about your husband? Are you doing any better?””. The retail manager says the only way for it to work is “It has to be done in a sincere way and you have to want to do it, otherwise it's not worth it. It's also only done if you really understand who you're dealing with.”. This highlights once again the importance of sales associate and their willingness to create such a connection and timeless experience for their clients.

Finally, **communication skills** are a very important tool, as just mentioned when speaking about keeping in touch with customers. Retail managers say that sales associates “have to have very good communication skills”. This implies verbal and non-verbal communication, as they are both equally important. Nonverbal communication is actually more impactful regarding customers perception of service (Islam and Kirillova, 2020). These skills are also crucial to conclude a sale, retail managers says “It's like you're bringing the product to life. But when you are a salesperson, you have the product in your hands and you have to persuade the customer that it is made for him. You have to seduce the customer.”. Without persuasive communications skills, a salesperson would

not be successful enough. They need both excellent communications skills to keep a relationship with their customers, nonverbal communications skills to show empathy and to create a comfortable environment, and finally persuasive word choice to sell.

2.6 Observation results

After conducting structured observations in 13 luxury stores in 4 different countries, a framework based on service was used to record them (Saunders et al., 2012). In most stores, sales associates were professional, helpful and did not push the researcher to purchase an article. However, there were very few stores where contact details were exchanged, and a real connection was made. This, in addition to the interviews conducted which showed a real importance in making a connection, more than the product, confirms the gap mentioned in the problem statement as customers nowadays want a real experience instead of a simple purchase (Seeböhm, 2021). The recorded observations can be found in appendix 6.3.

3. Solution Design

3.1 Solution

After having looked through academic literature, gotten evidence from experts, retail employees, retail customers, and observations a solution has been created. The three components which this solution is based on are social desirability, retail experience and sales associates. The solution is a combination of a few practices such as Audemars Piguet, Chanel, Soho House and aims to reshape the luxury retail industry. Customer interviews have shown that what is important is the level of attention, care, and sense of exclusivity in a luxury store. Retail managers have also stated the importance to have separate and special experiences for certain customer who desire a more exclusive experience. When doing observations, the one criterion that truly made a difference was the level of attention and connection felt with the sale associate. Literature showed that social status and distinction plays a large part in the buying for luxury customers (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018) and that luxury retail stores play an important role in this (Debenedetti, 2021). Indeed, stores, can influence social distinction by managing customer's access to certain areas (ibid).

The solution entails managing customers access to certain areas within the stores or outside of the stores (ibid). This private retail space will be accessible on invitation only, on the model of a social club. Social clubs are the epitome of luxury, social desirability and high-end exclusivity (Holmqvist et al., 2022). This enhances the social desirability of the brand and establishes them as somewhat unattainable. These private stores should be designed as luxurious apartments, in order to give an intimate and homey feeling (Holmqvist et al., 2019). Not located on the ground floor to enhance the sense of intimacy, exclusivity and unattainability, these stores will take the form of social clubs, they can either be located on a separate floor of the regular retail store, or elsewhere in the chosen city. On invite only, as a social club would do, customers who highly value social desirability would feel more included and cherished. This invitation for both loyal and high spending customers who need a more discrete, exclusive experience would give access to the retail lounges, where not only sales are generated but meals served, events organised, and experiences shared. This space would give life to a new way to do luxury, adding intimacy, proximity, and exclusivity.

3.2 Dissemination plan

The thesis was not only written for Hotelschool The Hague or for the commissioner, but also for luxury brands and retail managers. The aim for the dissemination is to share the knowledge gathered through interviews, literature observations, in the hope to spark interest and a conversation, to further develop the project and contribute to the development of the industry. Right below can be found the dissemination plan for the project, which was executed in chapter 5.

Stakeholders	Involvement in study	Problem in the beginning	Information of interest	Product	Modes of dissemination
Commissioner and Lycar COach	Supported the research process and gave insights on the industry	Commissioner needed to know how to improve luxury retail to make it fit current customers needs and wants	Results of the study	Final report	Written report
Commissioner	Supported the research process and gave insights on the industry	Commissioner needed to know how to improve luxury retail to make it a hedonistic experience	Results of the study	Final report	Call to explain findings and share the solution
Retail managers	Participated in interviews	Need to know to know what customers want and how to respond to their wishes and needs	How to improve the in-store retail experience	Infographic	Email and meeting if interested
Luxury stores worldwide	None	Need to know to know what customers want and how to respond to their wishes and needs	How to improve the in-store retail experience	Infographic	Linkedin

Table 2: Dissemination plan

4. Implementation outline

Since the implementation and solution requires physical changes to stores, meaning an important financial and time investment, the solution cannot be physically tested. However, it was tested by putting customers in a virtual immersion situation. A mood board was created to show the concept, with a voice over guiding the customer through the customer experience. By doing this, customers were able to imagine themselves in such a place.

The solution design aims to fulfill loyal and ultra-VIP customer's needs to reach a sense of exclusivity and unattainable social status. By implementing an invite only membership to a private store, in the form of a social club, luxury brands ensure that their top customers are understood. Indeed, it will ensure their loyalty as they are being recognized for the clients they are. With the rise in the global luxury market, loyal customers may feel disregarded when having to wait in line, or when told to wait because there is no sale associate available (Bellaiche et al., 2010). Investing in a private area, with dedicated staff, ensures a constant above and beyond service, with the highest standards.

The insights gathered through the literature review show the need for certain customers in the luxury industry to feel different, to feel socially desirable. The literature also showed how stores are slowly shifting into home like places, to enhance the feeling of intimacy (Debenedetti, 2021). The customer interviews and retail manager interviews showed a need for exclusiveness and meaningful experiences.

Since the investment is consequential, the first step and key to the project is securing the space and real estate. Depending on the brand and the sector of activity, it would be beneficial for the brand to first and foremost decide for a flagship store where there is the most demand for such a concept. For instance, Dior and Chanel would start this project in Paris, and Patek Philippe in Geneva. These are of course assumptions based on the sector of activity but market research absolutely needs to be done depending on the brand.

The first option is to invest into another floor or nearby space in the current store. This would make logistics simpler in terms of stock and employee management. If the first option is not possible, then the private store would need to be off site which represents a higher investment but possibly a higher return as it would feel completely separate and even more exclusive for customers. An important renovation would need to be done in order for each private space to have a bar/dining area, a living room/reception room and many private dressing rooms. To reinforce the idea of hedonistic living and social desirability, it would be preferable to use a well-known designer for such a project such as Philippe Starck, who has designed many of the most beautiful hotels, restaurants, boutiques in the world (Starck, 2022). There should be a great importance on how the place is designed, to honor the customers who spend time there. No detail should be left aside as it is an important investment and represents the said brand. Once this major topic has been dealt with, the customer experience side can begin.

Second, store managers, with the help of their sales associates should target which customers are worth inviting and under which criteria. The criteria would be the following:

- How many years of loyalty to the brand
- Annual spending over the years
- Number of visits per year
- Needs in terms of discreteness or visibility

Depending on the size of the space and its capacity, the number of invitees may differ. However, it should not exceed one staff per customer and 20 per club to keep a sense of intimacy and exclusivity, as it is the goal of these stores. If they become too big, there will still be a problem of recognition for the VIP clients. For each of these clients, it should be established which sales associate is affiliated with them in order to ensure they stay with them even if they are invited to the private store. Customers should not have to build a new relationship especially since this is a new place for them.

Third, the staff should be trained in order to adapt to this new service. Indeed, they need to be even more customer centric, learn how to communicate differently in this type of environment. They will now be dedicated to only a few extremely regular clients instead of hundreds of different ones. This means having to get to know each of them well, knowing all of their preferences, communicating with them even when they are outside of the private space. All of this information will be registered in a customer management system. For example, if it is a client's birthday, no matter where they are, something should be arranged for them. If a new collection arrives, they should be alerted by text or call with pieces set aside for them. All of these customer-oriented details should be the focus of the training in order to ensure the success of the project and for the goal to be accomplished: making ultra-VIP customers feel recognized, appreciated and cherished which ultimately should increase sales.

Next, once the location is secured, the list of customers ready and the employees trained, clients should be invited to be part of this new experience. Depending on the client, a formal invitation should be sent by mail or addressed in person. Then, an inauguration of the place with all the members should be organized in order to launch the project.

The last step which is ongoing will be to discretely collect feedback from the members on their thoughts, how they are enjoying the club, and of course follow up on any complaints or suggestions by using a customer management system.

4.1 Test

While it was not possible to physically test the solution, the closest way to test it was to use voice and visuals to spark the imagination of luxury customers. A voice over of the text in appendix 6.7.1 was sent out the luxury customers interviewed along with a moodboard right below (Figure 2). The text written aimed to touch upon different feelings: recognition, exclusivity, intimacy, and the mood board aimed to convey discrete luxury, exclusivity, elegance. Even though the customers could not physically be there, these are the feelings which are aimed to be conveyed with the creation of the private store.

The voice over and the moodboard was sent to all the people interviewed. They were asked to listen to the voice memo while looking at the pictures on the moodboard. This would allow them to imagine themselves better.

A short follow up call was set up in order to gather insight and feedback. The choice of not sending out a questionnaire was thought out as the whole aim of the project is to create an exclusive and personal experience, thus, sending a questionnaire is opposite of this. The testing of the solution needed to feel as seamless as possible.

The questions asked during the call were the following:

- How did you feel during the experience?
- Do you feel that this kind of store arrangement would fit your needs, if not, why?
- What changes would you make to the visuals or the concept?
- How would feel if you were invited to such a club?
- How would your perception of a brand change if you were invited to such a club?

A summary of the calls was made in appendix 6.7.2. The results show that respondents felt "important" "different" and overall valued and special. One customer felt nothing particular during the experience but said would feel special if invited to such a club. This could be because the testing of the solution is not realistic enough. Indeed, some people may have trouble envisioning a physical space with the use of a narrative. For instance, some customers pointed out that the spaces shown are not "bright enough" and would like more "light colors". The design of the store would need to be brightened and have less of a private club feel and keep regular luxury retail store designs and colors. This could also be because this concept is new to customers, and as they are used to regular retail stores, it could take a while to get used to this new way of doing. Nevertheless, the general feedback gotten regarding the experience shows that the solution responds to customers' needs and fulfills their desire for exclusivity.



Figure 2: Moodboard sent to luxury customers representing the solution proposed

4.2 Risk

The main risk of the implementation of the project falls under the financial investment and real estate part. The financial investment represents a big risk for the company, as it entails buying a new piece of real estate or redoing a part of their store. In both scenarios, a considerable amount would go into the architecture, interior design, and facilities. If the financial investment is approved, the real estate part could be a challenge. Indeed, this private store only works if the store can add another floor or can completely privatize a current space or can buy a piece of real estate elsewhere in the city. If it is not possible to find a suitable space to accommodate the store, then the whole project falls apart. It is extremely important to evaluate the feasibility in terms of space before even considering implementing this.

5. Evaluation outline

5.1 Discussion

The purpose of this research was to find out how luxury stores could align the quality of their products with the retail experience they offer. By collecting primary and secondary data, the researcher hoped to close this gap and propose a solution which would fit the needs both of retail brands and of retail customers.

It is first important to note that within the luxury industry, two sub populations were studied: retail customers and retail managers. Although it was clearly defined in the data analysis process, it could have led to mix ups as they both provide very different perspectives.

The results of this study show that luxury retail customers need a retail experience which goes beyond the standard. They need to feel a part of the brand they are buying from, through connecting to their sales associates, by feeling different, cared for. Retail managers have also noticed this change with the newer generation who has a high spending power, who can afford many items but nevertheless, want an experience to remember, they want to live something that is out of the ordinary, which will remove them from their daily routine. The common factor to all the different generations, types of customers and spending habits is the need for exclusiveness and for social desirability. It was interesting to notice that even though customers want completely different experiences, their need for exclusivity and out of the ordinary experience is the same. This quote by one of the retail managers "You must never forget that you can have two clients who will both have a private jet and a helicopter. One will use his private jet and his helicopter to go to Nikki Beach to splash champagne all afternoon and the second one will go for a picnic on top of Mont Blanc. It's the same budget, it's not the same experience, it's not the same philosophy, it's not the same person.", truly sums it all up. It shows that brands must adapt to the needs of their clients and create new experiences for them depending on who they are. This could be divided within the types of wealth. As seen in the literature review, new money and old money customers are very different (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2016). Old money generally looks down on new money. While old money and over narcissists customers prefer a more private brand, with high quality, new money and covert narcissists prefer to be seen and care about social status in a more demonstrative way (for example, posting on social media) (Jiang et al., 2021).

The interviewees showed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of sales associates. They mentioned repeatedly how much their experience was influenced on the advisor's behavior and how much they appreciated them being patient, empathetic and understanding. This quote by one of the luxury customers represents this: "I find it important that the service is genuine and coming from an associate that is not pushing me to purchase something but rather supports me in whichever decision I take". Retail managers also showed how meaningful and important the roles of their employees are, the customer experience is about truthfulness and authenticity, sincerity, personal

commitment, meeting customers, empathy and sharing, so that the customer ends up coming to you". The seek for absolute exclusivity, the need to feel socially desirable and the creation of a meaningful connection to the sales associates make up the perfect retail experience as it touches upon all of the customer's needs.

5.2 Limitations

The main limitation for this research project falls under the exclusivity of the luxury industry. Indeed, it is a very difficult industry to penetrate both from the outside and from the inside. It was challenging to find enough customers who were willing to take part in the interviews and open up about their experiences. Even though the confidentiality agreements were distributed, and a comfortable atmosphere was set, it appeared difficult to break through some of the customers. Many refused to be interviewed because they believed it would take too much time or said they were not interested. When speaking, with a retail manager, this topic was brought up and the conclusion drawn from this is that customers do not want to feel burst out of their luxury bubble. Having a third party (the researcher), come in and disturb that osmosis is most likely the reason why it was so difficult. The retail managers interviewed were luckily open about their jobs. Nevertheless, the two other retail managers whom were asked to be interviewed also refused and said that they did not want to disclose any information and be recorded, even if the confidentiality of the interview was confirmed. The risk that this extreme exclusivity brings forward is inaccuracy in results. Indeed, it could be that even the customers and retail managers who accepted to be interviewed could have been held back or not comfortable enough to share, by fear of luxury being deconstructed right before their eyes. The initial number of interviewees was set at 8 , based on regulations and the researchers expectations. The actual number of interviewees ended up being 6, due to the difficulties to get luxury customers and retail managers to be interviewed. This could alter the quality of the data as it does not accurately represent the whole population. This would of course be mitigated by interviewing more people as it would increase accuracy of the study.

5.3 Direction for future research

Since it was not possible to physically test the solution for the purpose of this research, a virtual testing was done. A voice over was sent to the interviewees along with a moodboard. This aimed to portray the solution in the closest way possible by making customers feel part of an exclusive experience, with a smooth tone of voice and a careful choice of words "Here you are: the doors open, you are at the epitome of exclusivity, an access to a certain social which money can't buy", "You feel right at home", "You instantly feel part of a group". These words intended to make customers feel as if they were in the private retail store. Even though the researcher aimed to make the implementation as accurate as possible given the limited resources, the testing done for this research is not close enough to the real solution. For further research, a physical testing of the solution should be done. For example, the brand could use a small space in

their store and design it as shown in the moodboard. Customers could come in and have the experience in person. This would help the researcher with determining whether the solution is suitable and what changes would be made to it. Even if this is somewhat of an investment in resources and time, given the magnitude of the proposed solution, it is worth putting it in place before making a large and global financial investment.

Additionally, for further research, it would be interesting to find more luxury customers to interview as the generalizability of the current study can be questioned. The researcher's position as a student could have also influenced the trust luxury customers gave. With a different position and purpose of research, the outcome could be better and more customers and retail managers could be interviewed. This would then result in more accurate findings

5.4 Dissemination

5.4.1 Dissemination act 1

The first dissemination act consisted in a call with the research commissioner. The researcher explained the process of the research, the outcome and the proposed solution. As the commissioner had originally asked the researcher to focus on the High Horology industry and that this had to be broadened to the luxury industry in general, the researcher made clear links between how every step of the research and the solution can be applied to the fine watch industry. Firstly, the problem definition previously established, was discussed. Then, a quick review of the literature was done to emphasize the findings. The summary of the interviews made with customers and retail managers was discussed, as the commissioner highlighted the importance and the value of these findings. Finally, the solution was presented, again, making apparent links with the watchmaking industry. Once all the findings were presented, the researcher asked the commissioner feedback on the solution. The commissioner was very enthusiastic with the idea of a private retail store designed as a social club, on invite only as he deemed for it to answer the needs of the customers of today. He did point out that the financial investment was a risk but that if revenue increased by 10% thanks to it, it would be a success. It was concluded that this target, on top of testing the solution physically, would help make the implementation more reliable.

5.4.2 Dissemination act 2

The second act of dissemination consisted in the creation of an infographic showing the problem definition, the desired situation, the gap and solution. This informative infographic, showing in a concise and clear way the findings of a complex study, aims to help luxury retail managers to understand the needs and wants of their current customers. As the researcher's LinkedIn connections include many luxury retail managers and employees, this infographic targeted the right audience and could spark a discussion. The researcher, in the LinkedIn post, offered to discuss and to answer questions, in order to make the post interactive. The infographic can be found in appendix.

5.4.3 Dissemination act 3

The third act of dissemination consisted in sharing the infographic with the retail managers who were interested to see the end solution. This was a way to thank them for their input and to show that the time they put in to the making of the research was beneficial and resulted in a concrete solution. The researcher also offered to send the written report if the manager was interested in getting more academic information. One of the managers responded very positively to the infographic and was pleased with the results, she said: "It is great! It looks very clear and is explained well. I have been thinking of your research as I see more and more hotels and stores who are shifting to such private spaces, I think you are right at the turn of the luxury market and your research was very valuable".

6. Appendix

6.1 Interview guidelines

Semi structured interview guidelines for consumer interviews:

Introduction	Summary of the research topic Interview expectations	Questions
Personal background	Questions on age, job, citizenship	How are you today? Could you tell me a little bit about your background? In what industry are you working in? Where are you from? Where do you usually shop?
Retail experience	Best and worst experience with luxury retail and why	Could you tell me about your best retail experience and what it made it special? How did you feel before making the purchase? How did you feel after? Could you tell me about your worst retail experience? How did you feel before and after? Did you make the purchase? If yes, do you regret making it because of the poor retail experience? What is crucial for you in a luxury retail experience?

<p>The ultimate retail experience</p>	<p>How they picture or want luxury retail to be like</p>	<p>How do you envision your perfect luxury retail experience? Would it look like this? Show picture of AP Houses Or like this Show picture of regular but new retail store</p> <p>Would you be interested in an even more exclusive retail experience in the form of a social club?</p>
<p>Role of sales associates</p>	<p>How they interact and find sales associates in luxury retail</p>	<p>How do you find interactions with sales associates to be? How do you like to keep in touch with sales associates after your purchase? For them to give you exclusive updates on new arrivals and such? Have you ever been influenced to buy something or not buy something because of the sales associate? Why?</p>

Semi structured interview guidelines for interviewing retail managers

Introduction	Summary of the research topic Interview expectations	Questions
Personal background	Questions on age, job, citizenship	How are you today? Could you tell me a little bit about your background? How long have you been working in the luxury retail industry?
Retail experience	How to make the retail experience special	How do you make the retail experience special for every consumer? How do you make it special for returning consumers? How do you want your customers to feel when being in the store? How do you want your customers to feel after a purchase? How do you ensure customer loyalty?
The ultimate retail experience	What the future of luxury retail looks like to them, what changes they would make to luxury retail	What does the future of retail look like to you? What do you think customers want nowadays? What changes would you make to the current luxury retail world to adapt?
Role of sales associates	How they view sales associates, what kind of trainings they received	How do you view your sales associates in terms of importance in the buying process? How do you train them to ensure they meet and exceed standards? How do you think their role is changing and

		will change in the future?
Potential interest in solution		Do you think a more exclusive retail experience, in the form of a social club would match the needs and wants of customers today?

6.2 Interview questions

The questions asked are the following:

How are you today?

Could you tell me a little bit about your background?

In what industry are you working in? Where are you from? Where do you usually shop?

Could you tell me about your best retail experience and what it made it special?

How did you feel before making the purchase?

How did you feel after?

Could you tell me about your worst retail experience?

How did you feel before and after? Did you make the purchase? If yes, do you regret making it because of the poor retail experience?

What is crucial for you in a luxury retail experience?

How do you envision your perfect luxury retail experience?

Would it look like this? This is a picture of an Audemars Piguet, a fine watchmaking Maison, who recently redesigned their stores as luxurious apartments.





Or like this? These are classic and timeless Chanel and Louis Vuitton stores,





Would you be interested in an even more exclusive retail experience? This would take the form of a social club with a yearly membership giving you access to private stores, designed as a social club, allowing you to shop, before having a drink or a meal at the in-house restaurant. An out of the ordinary experience.

How do you find interactions with sales associates to be?
How do you like to keep in touch with sales associates after your purchase? For them to give you exclusive updates on new arrivals and such?
Have you ever been influenced to buy something or not buy something because of the sales associate? Why?

Interview questions luxury retail employees

How are you today?
Could you tell me a little bit about your background? Where are you from? What studies did you do?
How long have you been working in the luxury retail industry?
What made you want to work in this industry?

How do you make the retail experience special for every consumer?
How do you make it special for returning consumers?
How do you want your customers to feel when being in the store?
How do you want your customers to feel after a purchase?
How do you ensure customer loyalty?

What does the future of retail look like to you?
What do you think customers want nowadays?
What changes would you make to the current luxury retail world to adapt?

How do you view your sales associates in terms of importance in the buying process?
 How do you train them to ensure they meet and exceed standards?
 How do you think their role is changing and will change in the future?

Do you think a more exclusive retail experience, in the form of a social club would match the needs and wants of customers today? This would take the form of a social club with a yearly membership giving access to private stores, designed as a social club, allowing customers to shop, before having a drink or a meal at the in house restaurant. An out of the ordinary experience.

6.3 Recorded observations

Max Mara Lyon

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	Sales associate
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	A sales assistant immediately came forward to offer help
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	The private area upstairs was offered to shop
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	Yes	The reason for purchase was asked about, leading to a nice conversation
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	Yes	The conversation about reason for purchase led to personal conversation
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	The Sales associate did not push when seeing that I didn't want to buy something
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	Yes	The manager gave contact details

Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	Yes	The manager kept in touch asking for news, showing new collections
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Max Mara Rome

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	Doorman
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	Was guided throughout the whole store
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	No	Did not engage in a conversation that much
Anticipates customers' needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	No	Did not engage much, did not make the effort to understand
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	The sales associate did not show other items
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Fendi Rome

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	Doorman
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	A sales associate immediately came, introduced herself with her name
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	The sale associate guided me throughout the whole store
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	Yes	She asked many questions and was trying to get to know me better
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	Yes	The conversation she started showed that she understood what kind of customer I was and what I wanted
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Fendi Geneva

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
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Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	Doorman
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	Someone introduced themselves without saying their name
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	The visit was short, but the sales associate was there for all of it
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	No	No conversation was made
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	No	
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Fendi Barcelona

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	Doorman
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	No	Apart from the doorman, there was no formal greeting
Gives the customer undivided attention	No	No one came to assist me

throughout the whole purchase		
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	No	No conversation was made
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	No	
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	No	
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Audemars Piguet Geneva

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	Doorman was present
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	A host was there to greet me
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	The host guided me through the store and then brought me to the senior sales associate
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	Yes	The sales associate asked many questions about
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	Yes	Sales associate asked many questions about my being here, my background etc

Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	She was very elegant and discrete with the request
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	Yes	The sales associate gave me her card to keep in touch
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	Yes	She reached out right after the visit to summarize our discussion and a few weeks later to ask me if I had made a choice

Tiffany's Barcelona

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	A doorman was present
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	One of the sales associates say hi
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	No	No sales associate made interaction or offered help even though the boutique was free of customers
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	No	
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	No	
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	No	
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Maier Jewellery Lyon

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	The sales associate have to open the door as there is a security system
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	The sales associate immediately greeted me
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	I was the only customer he was helping
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	Yes	The conversation and questions asked were very natural
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	Yes	
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	The request for purchase was very well handled and I did not felt pressured
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	He gave me his name when I left the store but not his contact details
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Prada Barcelona

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	A doorman was present
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	The sales associate immediately greeted me
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	I was the only customer being attended to
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	Yes	The sales associate was very kind and made an instant connection by finding points of common
Anticipates customers' needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	Yes	The connection formed allowed for an understanding of my being at the store
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	The purchase was not completed but nevertheless the sales associate was not pushy
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	Yes	He left me his contact details
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	Yes	He reached out to show me the new collection and ask how I was

Christian Louboutin Barcelona

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	A doorman was present

Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	The sales associate greeted me immediately
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	He was very attentive
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	Yes	He was joyful and enthusiastic about his job and the brand
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	Yes	The conversation he made was very natural and upbeat but remained professional
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	He was helpful and have good advice but did not push for the purchase
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Louis Vuitton Lyon

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	A doorman was present
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	A sales associate is appointed to the customers
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	No	I do not feel that the experience was special
Anticipates customers' needs by understanding why they are here, who	No	There was no connection or anticipation of needs

they are and what they expect		
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	Since there was no connection, it was not natural for the sales associate to give her contact
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Hermes Lyon

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	A doorman was present
Makes eye contact, smile, and greets the customer	Yes	A sales associate was appointed to me
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	No	No questions were asked, the store was very busy so the sales assistant may have been stressed
Anticipates customers' needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	No	The sales process was very quick
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	Since the process was quick and decisive, there was no need to push for more
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

Hogan Geneva

Behavior	Was the behavior Observed	Comments
Opens the door within 5 seconds	Yes	The sales associate came to open the door
Makes eye contact, smile and greets the customer	Yes	She greeted me and helped me immediately
Gives the customer undivided attention throughout the whole purchase	Yes	She was helpful and guided me well in the purchase
Engages and tries to make a connection with the customer by asking questions	No	She did not ask questions or aim to make a connection, even if she was professional
Anticipates customers needs by understanding why they are here, who they are and what they expect	No	
Helps with completing a purchase without pushing the customer too much	Yes	She was discrete and professional and did not insist on me making a purchase
Gives contact details to stay in touch if appropriate	No	Although the sales associate was professional, no connection was made
Keeps in touch with the customer if contact details were given	No	

6.4 Declaration of confidentiality



**Declaration relating to confidentiality concerning research data
in Launching Your **CAREER** (LYCAR) programme**

The undersigned, Mathilde

Laporte.....

(hereinafter referred to as: the Student), residing in

Paris.....

Conducting a (research)project for the company Denis

Asch.....

(hereinafter referred to as: the Client), residing in:

Geneva.....

Whereas:

- the Student shall, in the context of his or her LYCAR research, gain access to confidential information;
- the Client shall, where appropriate, demand a signed declaration relating to secrecy and confidentiality concerning the information provided in this context;
- this non-disclosure agreement shall, in the event of any discrepancies, take precedence over other contracts or agreements which have been or will be concluded or made between the Student and the Client.

Declares as follows:

1. The Student shall keep confidential any information which the Client or any other party involved in the LYCAR research provides under this contract, and shall not further disclose such information in any way, except insofar as the Student is obliged to disclose it by virtue of any legal requirement or irrevocable decision of a judge.
2. Information, as referred to under 1, refers to all information, including written, verbal, graphic and digital information, or information in any other form, which comes to the knowledge of the Student during the research period and which the Student knows, or can reasonably be expected to know, is of a confidential nature.
3. The Student shall not, without the prior written consent of the Client, disclose any confidential information to third parties or contribute to the publication of confidential information. The Student shall submit the thesis to the supervisor for approval from the Client in respect of confidential information, before making such information available to his examiner(s) at Hotelschool The Hague.
4. This non-disclosure agreement shall be in force for an indefinite period / The Student shall be bound to this obligation of secrecy for five (5) years after signing this declaration.
CHOOSE IN CONSULTATION WITH CLIENT)

Thus declared and signed by:

Name: Laporte Mathilde

Date: 17/08/2022

Place: Paris

Student number: 781094

Signature:


CHOOSE IN CONSULTATION WITH CLIENT)



6.5 Interview transcripts

Interview 1: Retail manager Louis Vuitton

Interviewer: It's a very nice company anyway.

Interviewee: Yes, I agree. It's a really beautiful company and through Mr. Reybier I find what we had with Yves Carcelle, for example. A very customer-oriented, family-oriented dimension, with a lot of common sense. Demanding, of course, but on a human scale, even though the group is very large.

Interviewer: Yes, and then it grew, but it's true that it's a company that is really family and customer oriented at all costs.

Interviewee: Yes, completely and those true values.

Interviewer: Yes, exactly. You can feel it when you walk in the door.

Interviewee: It's something quite rare that I find today. I think that luxury is at a particular point in its history and probably at a new turning point. I think that the luxury sector is still socially sectorized and therefore it is interesting to be able to work with groups like these, which, even if they are already huge, it is not the LVMH group, it has more proximity with its clientele, it works a lot on the feeling and on the emotion. I think that there is still a lot of piloting to do.

Interviewer: Yes, of course. Speaking of the LVMH group versus a group like Michel Reybier, how did you manage to make the customer experience really special, personalized? Because in large structures, I imagine that it is not always easy. How did you manage to build loyalty?

Interviewee: Well, I'll tell you, I feel like it's something that's getting lost, for several reasons. First of all, because the customer has changed and today, the customer changes every few months. Maybe not as fast, but since 2000, with all this generation of millennials, we have a clientele today, which obviously has nothing to do with the clientele we had in the 90s-2000s and even 2010. Why is that? Because we have consumers who are extremely young and who consume a lot with money they have not earned. That is, it's their parents' money.

Interviewee: When it's not hush money, because obviously, we've urbanized, in quotes, this clientele a lot. These are people who have a different relationship to luxury, to property and to status. It is not necessarily a very nice clientele in the ethical sense of the term. However, the luxury houses have no choice but to take it into consideration, because it is a clientele that has every interest in building loyalty for the future. That's why it's difficult because the old-fashioned clients, in quotes, say: "Why do they take care of these clients so much with their backwards hats, et cetera. Millennials" because these are their customers of tomorrow, obviously. It's now that we have to develop their loyalty. The challenge of luxury today is to be able to manage several strata of several

age groups at the same time in these stores, so several desires, several views, several types of adhesion. Do you see what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: It's very complicated. Before, we had a client who was bourgeois or wealthy. Today, we evaluate our clients more in terms of their means. Somehow, it's completely crazy, today we have people who don't have the majority, but who spend 800 or 1,000 € on a pair of sneakers. Then, a clientele that is not only culturally international, but even within the same country, we have a cultural internationalization. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes, I do.

Interviewee: In the way they feel, in their approach, in their experience, in their expectations. Afterwards, we also have a customer who knows more about the brand and the products it puts out than his own consultants. Because he is so hyper-connected, hyper-informed, hyper-influenced by influencers, who moreover go faster than the brands to interpret their own products, that in reality when the customer walks through the door, if he has had other information, he sometimes has a completely different idea of what the advisor has been trained to offer him the product. It's extremely unique.

Interviewer: I guess, yes.

Interviewee: That's why the customer experience, going back to your question and how do you bring it to life? Obviously, you have to adapt to your customer. I was of that generation, I used to like to say that I was basically just a bag lady. Which was the reality, that is to say that I don't think you should take yourself seriously in luxury houses. Because when I start my classes with my students, I tell them that for me, luxury is four essential words. The first is humility. Because luxury does not exist without humility. You can ask the question of humility in every sense, upside, down and 360 in luxury, nothing is more humble than an artisan in luxury. Even the craftsman who cuts the most precious stones is still a craftsman. It's a gentleman in a smock who's got bad hands. There is no better manager than the humble manager. There is no greater boss than the one who does not take himself seriously and who has the humility to respect his craftsmen, his collaborators. For me, humility is the obvious identity of luxury. Do you agree?

Interviewer: Yes, very interesting.

Interviewee: Then, the second word for me is endurance, because these are jobs that require a lot of endurance. These are jobs where you have to be brave. These are jobs where you have to be extremely patient, therefore patient as a craftsman, because it takes a long time for the gesture to come, and so on. Patience to build customer loyalty, patience to create a brand. The biggest brands, the oldest brands, they have not been successful as they are today all their life. People today have the impression that Louis Vuitton was already glittering, et cetera in 1854. Not at all, but then light years from that. Louis Vuitton, he was just wondering how he was going to make it to the end of the year. Endurance is that ability to say, "Okay. This is something that's not going to

happen in six months." It's a value that is a value that is extremely lacking in today's society. Because endurance, if you link it to patience, it's complicated in today's world.

Interviewer: Yes, that's true.

Interviewee: Another word that is close to endurance, but yet extremely different. For me, it's pugnacity. Because pugnacity is the ability to accept failure. That is, "I didn't make it today, but I'll try again tomorrow. If I don't make it tomorrow, I'll do it again the day after tomorrow. I didn't get in through the door, but there's still the window and the chimney. If it didn't work today, it's not a big deal. Besides, when a failure occurs, I go around it and this failure, it brought me a lot." We're in a society where failure is death.

Interviewer: That's true.

Interviewee: Failure is shame. It's very Judeo-Christian. Anglo-Saxons, they are not like that. On the contrary, they say that a good entrepreneur is an entrepreneur who has failed at least twice. So that's suspicious. In our country, if you don't get a good grade, you're bad. If you don't get good grades in school, you're bad. But there are a lot of self-taught people who have done extremely well. It's true that you can't get good grades at school because you're not adapted to that environment at the time, but it's not because you were a dunce at school that you won't be a brilliant person later on.

Interviewer: Yes, that's true.

Interviewee: Unfortunately, in our society, everyone has to go through the highest education level and we don't promote a lot of professions that have to do with luxury and arts and crafts, where we don't have enough people today.

Interviewer: Yes, that's true. That's right.

Interviewee: Everyone wants their children to have a great education, a long education, but they don't think about whether their children will be happy or not. I teach in all these schools where there are a lot of students who think that they are going to make a good living. I'm worried about them.

Interviewer: Yes, it's a passion job too, luxury.

Interviewee: It's a job of passion, it's a job where you have to have courage, stamina, pugnacity, et cetera. Obviously, I conclude with the last word which is the word of excellence, because no luxury without the requirement of excellence, for humility, for pugnacity, for endurance. Once again, to come back to your question, for me, the customer experience is about truthfulness and authenticity, sincerity, personal commitment, meeting customers, empathy and sharing, so that the customer ends up coming to you. Because the customer, he comes in for the status. They come in because it's shiny, they come in because it's bright and everyone's talking about it. Once they come in, you have to explain to them that they're home.

Interviewee: All of this takes time. You have to tame the client. It takes a lot of strategy to do that. When I say strategy, manipulation, taming, it can be Manichean. If it's done with a lot of truth, sincerity, and authenticity, if it's done with heart and with passion, it's wonderful. Because it's sharing with many people what they don't know, what they

expect from what man is capable of doing. Because when man is able to make beautiful or rare things, to use the rarities of our planet to make beautiful and exceptional things, we don't have to know everything. The ability to buy it does not prevent you from discovering it, seeing it, appreciating it. Today, everyone wants a Louis Vuitton or Christian Dior bag. Everyone can have the opportunity to buy them at some point. Not everyone can afford a diamond Choker from Van Cleef & Arpels. But we are not unhappy about it. It's so wonderful to know that we're in a country where there are houses like Van Cleef & Arpels that can create pieces like this for people who can afford it.

Interviewer: Yes, that's true.

Interviewee: Because it's the hand of these artisans that create this, et cetera. People will say, "Yes, but we're plundering the planet's resources." Today, luxury houses have an ethical obligation in all this. Even on the contrary, fortunately there is luxury because otherwise there would be no ethics. I, for example, defend fur, because I say that there is nothing more ethical than fur in luxury. Why do you say that? Because first of all, fur is fur that is raised in breeding farms today in luxury. Not only, because we need traceability, but with what is called the blockchain today, you can imagine that we do not risk poaching mink to make fur coats at Fendi. It's the same, for example, for exotic crops. The more breeding farms we have, the fewer poachers we will have. Why? Because breeding farms hire poachers who used to poach because they had no other way to survive. This allows the wild species to continue to develop. It's already protecting the species.

Interviewee: Then, it calls for the craftsman furrier which is a trade. Then, it's passed on, a fur piece. It's repurposed, which means that I, for example, I have my mother's fur coat which is 1.62 meters and I'm 1.80 meters. I might as well tell you that I had all the skins taken apart and I had another coat made, but they are my mother's skins. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Then it gets recycled, because it's also self-destructing. It's a virtuous circle because it's sustainable, whereas if you buy fake fur from Zara, you're totally missing the point.

Interviewer: Yes, of course.

Interviewee: Obviously, we have to say to ourselves what we are capable of doing rather than working absolutely everything, under the pretext that luxury is a universe that stirs up a lot of money. This is true and therefore creates a kind of look that is always either concupiscent or judgmental, because these are people who are rich, because they are people who exploit. In any case, once again, and I am not the first to say this, it was Voltaire who said: "In any case, those who serve the rich are only waiting for one thing, to become rich in their turn in order to be served." Today in France, the France insoumise and block and I am very happy for them, but everyone else is spinning around.

Interviewer: Yes, right.

Interviewee: I mean, rich people are abominations, **but then everyone wants to be rich.**

Interviewer: Yes. That's so true.

Interviewee: **It's a good thing that there are rich people so that the craft industry still exists. It's a good thing there are rich people so that everyone has a job, because the rich need to be served, drive nice cars, etc.** Unfortunately, I would like to see the egalitarian system work, but everyone who has tried it, it doesn't work very well.

Interviewer: No, it doesn't.

Interviewee: It's true that it's full of equality, but then again, we have a problem with that too. That is, we don't accept that we don't have the same thing as others. In the past, we didn't know what was going on with other people. We knew that they lived in big castles and we imagined what it was like, but we didn't know how they lived and at the time, they weren't much happier than us, even if they were more comfortable, no doubt. Today, with social networks, with television, we know exactly what number Kim Kardashian's panties are. We said to ourselves why Kim Kardashian, she has a life like that and not me? Because that's how it is, because we can't all have the same lives and in any case we have to make the hole of hers when we can. There's no point in putting your spleen in the oven because you don't have the neighbor's. We're in a society where we want our neighbor's life, but we don't realize that we're someone else's rich person.

Interviewer: Yes, that's so true.

Interviewee: **That's the whole problem with luxury. It's that luxury today, people feel that it's aggressive, because it's extremely present. If it's so aggressive, it's because we all want it.** Once again, the whole challenge of luxury today, of retail, of hospitality in luxury houses, is to know all these parameters, which are obviously extremely difficult to manage once you have the ability to interpret them. How do you make this happen? When you're a store manager, you have to have the qualities I mentioned in terms of humility, stamina, pugnacity and excellence, but above all you have to be able to make a team exist on that scale.

Interviewee: You're not behind everyone all the time and you can't multiply yourself. We have people who are passionate and others who are less so. We have people who are patient and others who are less so. Opposite all this, we have customers who are anything but the customers of these presses, who are people who are also going through difficult times in their lives, who are more or less well brought up or more or less cultured, more or less patient, more or less wealthy and who, depending on the means they have, have buying habits that are not necessarily written on their foreheads. It's an adventure that multiplies by as many people as you meet in a day.

Interviewer: It's true. The clients are so different from each other.

Interviewee: Then you don't know what they went through the hour before. We don't know where they came from, we don't know anything about them. **In the hotel business, which touches on an extremely intimate moment of feeling, it's something else again.**

Interviewer: Yes, it's very particular.

Interviewee: There you go. What I'm finding very interesting right now with my Rebyer venture is that I'm being asked to develop business and I'm coming into a place where people used to provide service. They're not results-oriented like in the stores. That is to say, there are no concrete results and when the customer comes in, he will pay at the end of his stay. We make sure that everything goes well and that we provide the best service. Except for the restaurant bill, we don't know the value of the gesture we made, whereas when you sell a product, you know right away. Today, I have to tell them: "Guys, it is not enough to distribute, you have to argue to sell. You see for example in Ramatuelle, in Geneva, the spa girls, they don't sell.

Interviewer :No, that's for sure. And the stores, at least in Geneva, are not really designed to sell. I don't know if you've been there.

Interviewee: Up until now, they had a sales deposit. They thought it was fine, because what they were selling, their suppliers were billing them for. Then what they didn't sell, I didn't sell, so I give it back to the suppliers. I'm buying it back. Already, they have the hair on their head in the stores saying, "No, but it costs that." Yes, it costs that, but when we sold it to them, we would have earned two and a half times as much. The boss is interested in the fact that we made two and a half times more, but first we have to sell it. "Yes, but if there is any stock left." "I don't want any inventory left." You're going to have sell-through targets. "Yeah, but we're going to need an extra full-time equivalent." Maybe.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure.

Interviewee: It's funny, but it just goes to show that it's not the same philosophy, it's not the same habits, it's not the same code, it's not the same outcome orientation.

Interviewer: Yes, absolutely, it's really different. It's true that in the luxury hotel industry, we are really experience-oriented and sales-oriented.

Interviewee: Selling, you're just selling, quote-unquote. *It's your attitude that sells, but you're selling an asset. You're bringing the product to life. It's like you're bringing the product to life. But when you are a salesperson, you have the product in your hands and you have to persuade the customer that it is made for him. You have to seduce the customer.* You have to get the customer to discover something about the product that he didn't know he had. And above all, you have to sell what you have in stock. That is to say, when the customer comes looking for something you don't have in stock, you have to persuade him that what you have is just as interesting. It's much more demanding in terms of the ability to succeed. It binds much more. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes. Of course you do. It's really quite different.

Interviewee: Right, and there's a different eligibility. It's interesting to mirror it against the hotel effect experience. It's good that you have that too.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's true that I'm passionate about this environment, but it's really exciting to hear you talk about this.

Interviewee: You know what, I'm such a talker. You have to cut me off and ask me your questions, because you're not going to get away with it.

Interviewer: No, but we've covered a lot of topics, so I wanted to ask you about the customer experience to build loyalty. The last thing I wanted to talk to you about, I, for my dissertation, you have to find a solution to a problem. For me, it's really to bridge the gap between the very traditional retail and precisely this new generation which has totally different expectations than the previous generations. The solution I thought of would be to replicate what Audemars Piguet and soon Chanel are doing, to create more private, more intimate boutiques, which are often on the first or second floor of a building. To really create an atmosphere like a very luxurious apartment to sell products and to do this in the form of a social club, therefore with an annual subscription that gives access to customers who want more exclusivity. We were talking about it earlier, there are customers who have a lot of money, but for them, exclusivity is of little interest.

Interviewee: *Because everything is already exclusive in terms of the way they are received, the way they live. They already don't live well like us, so I agree with you.* I just want to pick up on one thing. Your subject is how do we make luxury exist today, knowing that we have these clients who are much more voluble or how do we upgrade the access to luxury to this existing clientele which finally today does not have a great culture of luxury? I can't understand if it's what I just told you or the previous one. Do you want to handle the very high-end customers or do you want to--?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Yes, that's right. It's how do you allow the very high-end customers to feel more and more different?

Interviewer: Right, exactly. *It's really for that clientele that doesn't necessarily want to wait in front of a store for hours.*

Interviewee: I totally agree with you. What you need to explain, I'm trying to help you a little bit, is that you need to start from the fact that today luxury stores are more frequented than they ever were by a clientele that is more popular, in quotes. Why is this? *Because access to luxury has practically become a social prerequisite. For example, the less money people have, the less luxury people can afford, the more they need to display luxury to feel socially integrated.* The ultimate paradox is that when we can't afford luxury, we are the last ones to buy counterfeit. That is to say that buying counterfeit is really because you can't afford it. Those who buy counterfeit today are often people who can afford to buy the real thing. They'll buy a very well-made counterfeit rather than a wink, et cetera. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Because otherwise, counterfeiting, today, it still exists as much, but we don't have the same view on counterfeiting as we used to, because in reality, we are

quite capable today of identifying this counterfeiting. We know very well if we buy counterfeit what we are doing. Either you buy counterfeit because you don't have the culture of luxury and therefore you don't know what you are buying. People who have that culture, they don't respect your taste. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: That's the whole suburban squalor, quote-unquote. I'm really saying that with no malice.

Interviewer: No. Of course it is.

Interviewee: She doesn't have that culture and is in a caricatured status. That, the question doesn't even arise, okay?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Then you have those who don't know what they're buying. As soon as people have a little bit of that culture and want that status, they're willing to spend a whole month's salary to get the real thing, rather than buying a counterfeit. In quotes, the more counterfeits there are, the healthier the luxury brands are. The day they are no longer counterfeit, nobody will be interested in them.

Interviewer: Yes, that's true.

Interviewee: I don't know if you've noticed, counterfeiting, it's getting more and more high-end. It used to be that counterfeiting was just a matter of imitation. Nowadays, it has to replace. It's completely different. That's why the blockchain system was set up and why it's difficult today. It's difficult to identify beautiful counterfeits. In the near future, the blockchain will be the only way to identify them as surely as possible. All this means that customers who have a lot of money, paradoxically, need a lot of simplicity. Finally, receiving them outside of a public place, that is to say in a private place, makes sense. Once again, among clients who have a lot of money, we have to be careful with those who still want bling bling. Because today, among the clients who have a lot of money, we have the Kardashians who are anything but elegant.

Interviewee: That's life. Afterwards, who are we to judge? Then you have people who are really extremely good luxury clients, with a real luxury culture that nobody knows about. You must never forget that you can have two clients who will both have a private jet and a helicopter. One will use his private jet and his helicopter to go to Nikki Beach to splash champagne all afternoon and the second one will go for a picnic on top of Mont Blanc. It's the same budget, it's not the same experience, it's not the same philosophy, it's not the same person. Since it's the same budget, luxury must manage these two clients. Bring the glitter to the person who is crazy about bling bling. Bringing hyper discretion and customization to the one who is going to have a picnic on the Mont Blanc.

Interviewer: It's so complicated.

Interviewee: It's so complicated. We can't imagine today how complicated it is. For me, the answer to your question is to say that the capacity of luxury today to differentiate by

saying to itself this client, is how it goes to meet him? How it organizes the meeting that today we call hyper luxury, which was a word that didn't exist because we didn't need it. Today, we have to call it hyper luxury. Hyper luxury can be extremely simple. Hyper luxury can be picnicking with another brand on your wrist and going there with your helicopter, but it's a form of hyper luxury.

Interviewer: Yes, of course.

Interviewee: How it can indeed be a caricature of luxury. That's what shows how challenging it is. I totally agree with your idea. The club idea, it's fine, but to me, the club idea, it's perfect for the Kardashians who need to feel that everyone knows they're part of a club that others don't have access to. There's one example that's blatantly obvious. I don't know if you've read in the press, Kim Kardashian wanted to be invited to the Queen's Jubilee. She was refused at the garden party. Because she wasn't on the list. She did everything to go. She even physically went, thinking, "Once I get there, they'll take me." Because she wasn't on the list, they told her, "Look, we're sorry, but no." What was really luxurious was maybe people who have much less means and are much less beautiful than the Kardashians, but they were invited. Why? Because it's a family thing, because it's a story, you know, I don't know.

Interviewer: Yes. Of course.

Interviewee: There will be no more beautiful Kelly bag than the one that belonged to your grandmother.

Interviewer: Yes, that's right.

Interviewee: The one that belonged to your grandmother, because in your family you've had Kelly bags forever. It's going to be more luxurious than the one from, what's her name? Hello what?

Interviewer: Nabilla?

Interviewee: Nabilla who got one for I don't know how much, 210 000 €, diamonds and I don't know what. Nabilla, she makes Hermès live as well as the customer who obviously has her grandmother's, but who also has some from time to time. The idea of the club is very good, but for the client who has the means of luxury in his DNA for a very long time, who has this culture of luxury. He practically has to be a friend of the house and you have to do his shopping, you have to offer him to do his shopping at home, on his boat. I think that the more you offer him simple things, the more he will recognize you. He, for example, will want to go and participate in an operation to save an endangered species at the North Pole. You will associate him with that. In relation to that, you will have values that will make him continue to buy from you. It's interesting to tell you that. Because this one, he won't want to be in the club. Why not? Because in that club, he knows that Kim Kardashian is there.

Interviewer: Yes, absolutely. It's complicated, can we have two different experiences?

Interviewee: You have to have more experiences.

Interviewer: Yes, that's right. Right.

Interviewee: That's exactly it. Finally, the challenge of luxury is going to be customization. We were talking about customization for products, made to order in product, but it's going to be, made to order in experience. *People complain that I'm talking nonsense, the 10 richest people on the planet, the 100 richest people on the planet. I'll tell you, it's going to take 100 experiences. I'm exaggerating, but maybe it's going to take 10, because you're going to do multiples of 10. You have 10 like the Kardashians, 10 like the Elon Musk. Elon musk is going to the stars. Kardashian is going to the queen's garden party. Mr. something-or-other is I don't know, having a private dinner, because he's a horseback riding enthusiast in the winter circus, where you deliver his custom saddle, whatever.*

Interviewer: Yes. I know what you mean. I'm going to tweak this a little bit. I mean, it's such a broad topic.

Interviewee: That's why I'm thinking, "At the same time it's good, there's plenty to do, but it's dizzying."

Interviewer: Yes, it is.

Interviewee: Because you think you have to really scratch your head in terms of creativity. That's also why you have to be very attentive, very curious and very aware of everything that's going on. Because that's where you're going to discern the clues that are going to bring you your answers. Frankly, I see today to stick to what my clients will want, I am in little mouse mode all the time, listening to what is happening, what is done. In any case, I am delighted Mathilde, even if I did not let you talk much, I still feel you are on the right track.

Interviewer: That's very kind. Really, it was exciting to have this conversation with you and to get your perspective on this environment. Really, I'm very grateful to have an opinion, a point of view different from mine. Different from mine, which is to have someone who has such a long history in luxury.

Interviewee: Yes, longer. It's a matter of time, you'll see. Anyway, don't hesitate. Start working on your project there. If you have a problem, you can always call me. If you like, we can have a little coffee. You have my contact information, you can send me a text message, and then we'll have a little coffee in town. It'll be nice, at least this way, I can see you in real life.

Interviewer: Absolutely. That's very nice, at least for your time. And then I wish you a very nice evening and I hope to see you soon.

Interviewee: I hope to see you soon and I'll hear from you. Okay?

Interviewer: Yes, absolutely, with pleasure. Thank you very much. Have a nice evening. Bye.

Interviewee: Goodbye. Have a nice evening.

FRENCH

Mme. Margot: C'est une très belle maison en tout cas.

Mme. 2: Oui, je suis d'accord. C'est vraiment une très belle maison et je retrouve à travers monsieur Reybier ce qu'il y avait par exemple avec Yves Carcelle. Une dimension très orientée clients, familiaux, avec beaucoup de bon sens. Exigeante certes, mais à taille humaine, alors même que le groupe est vraiment conséquent.

Mme. Margot: Oui, puis ça a grandi, mais c'est vrai que c'est une maison qui est vraiment axée famille et clients à tout prix.

Mme. 2: Oui, complètement et qui des valeurs véritables.

00:00:36

Mme. Margot: Oui, exactement. Ça se ressent d'ailleurs quand on met un pied dans l'établissement.

00:00:45

Mme. 2: C'est quelque chose d'assez rare que je trouve aujourd'hui. Je trouve que le luxe, justement, est à un moment un peu particulier de son inscription dans la société et probablement à un nouveau virage. Je pense qu'on a encore sectorisé socialement la dimension du luxe et donc c'est intéressant de pouvoir travailler avec des groupes comme ceux-là qui, même s'ils sont déjà énormes, ce n'est pas le groupe LVMH, ça a plus de proximité avec sa clientèle, ça travaille beaucoup sur le ressenti et sur l'émotion. Je pense qu'il y a encore du pilotage.

00:01:26

Mme. Margot: Oui, bien sûr. En parlant justement du groupe LVMH par rapport à un groupe comme Michel Reybier, comment est-ce que vous faisiez pour rendre l'expérience client vraiment particulière, personnalisée ? Parce que dans de grandes structures, j'imagine que ce n'est pas toujours facile. Comment est-ce que vous faisiez pour même fidéliser ?

00:01:49

Mme. 2: Moi, je vais vous dire, j'ai le sentiment qu'en plus c'est quelque chose qui se perd, pour plusieurs raisons. D'abord parce que le client a changé et qu'aujourd'hui, le client, il change à quelques mois près. Peut-être pas aussi vite, mais depuis 2000, avec toute cette génération de millénials, on a une clientèle aujourd'hui, qui évidemment n'a rien à voir avec la clientèle qu'on avait dans les années 90-2000 et même 2010. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'on a des consommateurs qui sont extrêmement jeunes et qui consomment beaucoup avec un argent qu'ils n'ont pas gagné. C'est-à-dire que c'est l'argent de leurs parents.

00:02:24

Mme. 2: Quand ce n'est pas l'argent occulte, parce qu'évidemment, on a beaucoup urbanisé, entre guillemets, cette clientèle. Ce sont des gens qui ont un rapport au luxe, à la propriété et au statutaire qui est encore différent. Ce n'est pas forcément une très belle clientèle au sens éthique du terme. Pour autant, les maisons de luxe n'ont pas le choix que de la prendre parfaitement en considération, parce que c'est une clientèle qui ont tout intérêt à fidéliser pour l'avenir. C'est pour ça que c'est difficile parce que les clients à l'ancienne, entre guillemets, ils disent : « Pourquoi ils s'occupent autant de ces clients-là avec leurs casquettes à l'envers, et cetera. Les milléniaux » parce que ce sont leurs clients de demain, évidemment. C'est maintenant qu'il faut les fidéliser. Justement, le challenge du luxe aujourd'hui, c'est d'avoir la capacité de gérer en même temps dans ces magasins plusieurs strates de plusieurs tranches d'âges, donc plusieurs envies, plusieurs regards, plusieurs types d'adhésion. Vous voyez ce que je veux dire ?

00:03:28

Mme. Margot: Oui.

00:03:28

Mme. 2: C'est très compliqué. Avant, on avait un client, c'était le client bourgeois ou fortuné. Aujourd'hui, on évalue plus son client par rapport à ses moyens. Quelque part, que c'est complètement fou, on a aujourd'hui des gens qui n'ont pas la majorité, mais qui dépensent 800 ou 1 000 € dans une paire de baskets. Puis, une clientèle qui n'est pas seulement internationale culturellement, mais même au sein d'un même pays, on a une internationalisation culturelle. Vous voyez ce que je veux dire ?

00:04:04

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est sûr.

00:04:05

Mme. 2: Dans le ressenti, dans l'approche, dans le vécu, dans les attentes. Après, on a aussi un client qui sait plus de choses sur la marque et sur les produits qu'elle sort que ses propres conseillers. Parce qu'il est tellement hyper connecté, hyper informé, hyper influencé par les influenceurs, qui d'ailleurs vont plus vite que les marques pour interpréter leurs propres produits qu'en réalité quand le client passe la porte, s'il a eu d'autres informations, il se fait une idée parfois complètement différente de ce que le conseiller a été formé à lui proposer le produit. C'est extrêmement particulier.

00:04:50

Mme. Margot: J'imagine, oui.

00:04:51

Mme. 2: C'est pour ça que l'expérience client, pour en revenir à votre question et comment la faire vivre ? Évidemment, il faut s'adapter à son client. Moi, j'étais de cette génération, j'aimais à dire que je n'étais au fond qu'une marchande de sacs. Ce qui était la réalité, c'est-à-dire que je pense qu'il ne faut pas se prendre au sérieux dans les maisons de luxe. Parce que moi, quand je commence maintenant dans mes cours avec mes étudiants, je leur dis que pour moi, le luxe, c'est quatre mots essentiels. Le premier, c'est l'humilité. Parce que le luxe n'existe pas sans humilité. Ça, vous pouvez poser la question de l'humilité dans tous les sens, upside, down et à 360 dans le luxe, rien n'est plus humble qu'un artisan dans le luxe. Même l'artisan qui taille les pierres les plus précieuses, ça reste un artisan. C'est un monsieur qui est dans une blouse qui a des

maines abîmées. Il n'y a pas de meilleur manager que le manager humble. Il n'y a pas de plus grand patron que celui qui ne se prend pas au sérieux et qui a l'humilité de respecter ses artisans, ses collaborateurs. L'humilité, pour moi, c'est l'identité évidente du luxe. D'accord ?

00:06:00

Mme. Margot: Oui. Très intéressant.

00:06:01

Mme. 2: Ensuite, le deuxième mot pour moi, c'est l'endurance, parce que ce sont des métiers qui demandent beaucoup d'endurance. Ce sont des métiers où il faut être courageux. Ce sont des métiers où il faut être extrêmement patient, donc patient en tant qu'artisan, parce que c'est très long pour que le geste vienne, et cetera. Patience pour fidéliser la clientèle, patience pour créer une marque. Les plus grandes marques, les marques les plus anciennes, elles n'ont pas été successful comme elles le sont aujourd'hui tout leur chemin de vie. Les gens aujourd'hui ont l'impression que Louis Vuitton était déjà paillettes, et cetera en 1854. Pas du tout, mais alors à des années-lumière de ça. Louis Vuitton, il se demandait simplement comment il allait tenir jusqu'à la fin de l'année. L'endurance, c'est cette capacité à se dire : « Okay. C'est quelque chose qui ne se fera pas en six mois. » C'est une valeur qui est une valeur qui fait extrêmement défaut dans la société d'aujourd'hui. Parce que l'endurance, si on la lie à la patience, c'est compliqué dans le monde d'aujourd'hui.

00:07:01

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est vrai.

00:07:04

Mme. 2: Un autre mot qui se rapproche de l'endurance, mais qui est pourtant extrêmement différent. Pour moi, c'est la pugnacité. Parce que la pugnacité, c'est la capacité à accepter l'échec. C'est-à-dire : « Je n'y suis pas arrivé aujourd'hui, mais je recommencerai demain. Si je n'y arrive pas demain, je recommencerai après-demain. Je ne suis pas rentré par la porte, mais il y a encore la fenêtre et la cheminée. Si ça n'a pas marché aujourd'hui, ce n'est pas très grave. D'ailleurs, quand un échec se présente, je le contourne et cet échec, il m'a beaucoup apporté. » Nous, on est dans une société où l'échec, c'est la mort.

00:07:42

Mme. Margot: C'est vrai.

00:07:43

Mme. 2: L'échec, c'est la honte. C'est très judéo-chrétien. Les Anglo-saxons, ils ne sont pas comme ça. Au contraire d'ailleurs, on dit qu'un bon entrepreneur est un entrepreneur qui a échoué au moins deux fois. Donc c'est louche. Chez nous, tu n'as pas une bonne note, c'est que tu es mauvais. Tu n'as pas de bonnes notes à l'école, c'est que tu es mauvais. Or, il y a un tas d'autodidactes qui ont extrêmement bien réussi. Certes, on peut ne pas avoir de bonnes notes à l'école parce qu'on n'est pas adapté à cet environnement-là à l'instant T, mais ce n'est pas parce qu'on a un cancre à l'école qu'on ne sera pas quelqu'un de brillant par la suite.

00:08:20

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est vrai.

00:08:22

Mme. 2: Malheureusement, dans notre société, il faut que tout le monde transite par les plus hautes études et on ne met pas en valeur un tas de métiers qui ont trait au luxe et à l'artisanat d'art où on manque de bras aujourd'hui.

00:08:37

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est vrai. Exactement.

00:08:42

Mme. 2: Tous les gens veulent que leurs enfants fassent de grandes études, de longues études, mais on ne se demande pas si leurs enfants seront heureux ou pas. Moi, j'enseigne dans toutes ces écoles où en plus il y a un nombre d'élèves qui pensent qu'ils vont bien gagner leur vie. Moi, je me fais du souci pour eux.

00:08:59

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est un métier de passion aussi le luxe.

00:09:03

Mme. 2: C'est un métier de passion, c'est un métier où il faut avoir du courage, de l'endurance, de la pugnacité, et cetera. Évidemment, je le conclus avec le dernier mot qui est le mot de l'excellence, puisque point de luxe sans l'exigence de l'excellence, pour l'humilité, pour la pugnacité, pour l'endurance. Encore une fois, pour revenir à nouveau à votre question, pour moi, l'expérience client, elle passait par énormément de vérité et d'authenticité, de sincérité, d'engagement personnel, aller à la rencontre des clients, l'empathie et créer du partage et que le client finisse par venir vers vous. Parce que le client, il rentre pour le statut. Il rentre parce que ça brille, il rentre parce qu'il y a de la lumière et que tout le monde en parle. Une fois qu'il est rentré, il faut lui expliquer qu'il est chez lui.

00:09:54

Mme. 2: Tout ça, ça prend du temps. Il faut apprivoiser le client. Il faut beaucoup de stratégies pour ça. Quand je parle de stratégie, de manipulation, d'apprivoiser, ça peut être manichéen. Si c'est fait avec beaucoup de vérité, de sincérité, et d'authenticité, si c'est fait avec le cœur et avec la passion, c'est merveilleux. Parce que c'est faire partager à beaucoup de gens ce qu'ils ne savent pas, de ce qui les attendent de ce que l'homme est capable de faire. Parce que quand l'homme est capable de faire du beau ou du rare, d'utiliser les raretés de notre planète pour faire du beau et de l'exceptionnel, on n'est pas obligé de tout savoir. La capacité de l'acheter, ça ne vous empêche pas de le découvrir, de le voir, de l'apprécier. Aujourd'hui, tout le monde veut un sac Louis Vuitton ou Christian Dior. Tout le monde peut avoir à un moment la possibilité de les acheter. Tout le monde n'a pas la possibilité de s'offrir un Choker en diamants de chez Van Cleef & Arpels. On n'est pas malheureux pour autant. C'est tellement merveilleux de savoir qu'on est dans un pays où il y a des maisons comme Van Cleef & Arpels qui peuvent créer des pièces comme ça pour des gens qui ont les moyens de l'acheter.

00:11:08

Mme. Margot: Oui. C'est vrai.

00:11:09

Mme. 2: Parce que c'est la main de ces artisans qui créent ça, et cetera. Les gens vont vous dire : « Oui, mais on pille les ressources de la planète. » Aujourd'hui, les maisons de luxe ont une obligation d'éthique dans tout ça. Même au contraire, heureusement qu'il y a du luxe parce que sinon il n'y aurait pas d'éthique. Moi, par exemple, je défends la fourrure, parce que je dis qu'il n'y a rien de plus éthique que la fourrure dans le luxe. Pourquoi ? Parce que d'abord, la fourrure, c'est de la fourrure qui s'élève en fermes d'élevage aujourd'hui dans le luxe. Non seulement, parce qu'il faut de la traçabilité, mais avec ce qu'on appelle la blockchain aujourd'hui, vous vous doutez bien qu'on ne risque pas d'aller braconner des visons pour en faire des manteaux de fourrure chez Fendi. C'est pareil, par exemple pour les cultures exotiques. Plus on va avoir de fermes d'élevage, moins on aura de braconniers. Pourquoi ? Parce que les fermes d'élevage, elles embauchent les braconniers qui avant braconnaient, parce qu'ils n'avaient pas d'autres moyens de survie. Ça permet aux espèces sauvages de continuer de se développer. Déjà, ça protège l'espèce.

00:12:17

Mme. 2: Ensuite, ça fait appel à l'artisan fourreur qui est un métier. Ensuite, ça se transmet, une pièce en fourrure. Ça se reconditionne, c'est-à-dire que moi, par exemple, j'ai le manteau de fourrure de ma mère qui mesure 1,62 mètre et moi, je fais 1,80 mètre. Autant vous dire que j'ai fait démonter toutes les peaux et que je me suis fait faire un autre manteau, mais ce sont des peaux de ma mère. Vous voyez ce que je veux dire ?

00:12:43

Mme. Margot: Oui.

00:12:46

Mme. 2: Ça se recycle ensuite, parce qu'en plus ça s'autodétruit. Tout ça, c'est un cercle vertueux, parce qu'en plus c'est pérenne, alors que si vous achetez de la fausse fourrure chez Zara, on est totalement à côté de la plaque.

00:13:01

Mme. Margot: Oui, bien sûr.

00:13:05

Mme. 2: Évidemment, il faut se dire qu'est-ce qu'on est capable de faire plutôt que de wokiser absolument tout, sous prétexte que le luxe est un univers qui brasse beaucoup d'argent. C'est vrai et qui donc crée une forme de regard qui est toujours soit concupiscent, soit dans le jugement, parce que ce sont des gens qui sont riches, parce que ce sont des gens qui exploitent. De toute façon, encore une fois, et je ne suis pas la première à le dire, c'est Voltaire qui disait : « De toute façon, ceux qui servent les riches n'attendent qu'une chose, c'est de devenir riches à leur tour pour être servis. » Aujourd'hui en France, la France insoumise et à bloc et je suis bien contente pour eux, mais tout le monde tourne autour.

00:13:51

Mme. Margot: Oui, exact.

00:13:52

Mme. 2: Je veux dire, les riches sont d'abominables, mais enfin tout le monde veut le devenir.

00:13:56

Mme. Margot: Oui. C'est tellement vrai.

00:14:03

Mme. 2: Heureusement qu'il y a des riches pour que l'artisanat existe encore. Heureusement qu'il y a des riches pour que tout le monde ait du travail, puisque les riches ont besoin qu'on les serve, qu'ils roulent dans de belles voitures, et cetera. Malheureusement, moi, j'aimerais bien que le système égalitaire fonctionne, mais enfin tous ceux qui ont essayé, ça ne marche pas très bien.

00:14:19

Mme. Margot: Non, c'est sûr.

00:14:22

Mme. 2: C'est vrai que c'est rempli d'égalité, mais encore une fois, on a aussi un problème avec ça. C'est-à-dire qu'on n'accepte pas de ne pas avoir la même chose que les autres. Autrefois, on ne savait pas ce qu'il y avait chez les autres. On savait qu'ils vivaient dans de grands châteaux et on imaginait ce que c'était, mais on ne savait pas comment ils vivaient et du moment, ils n'étaient pas beaucoup plus heureux que nous, même s'ils étaient plus confort, sans nul doute. Aujourd'hui, avec les réseaux sociaux, avec la télévision, on sait exactement quel est le numéro de la culotte de Kim Kardashian. On s'est dit pourquoi Kim Kardashian, elle a une vie comme ça et pas moi ? Parce que c'est comme ça, parce qu'on ne peut pas tous avoir les mêmes vies et qu'il faut en tout cas se faire le trou de la sienne quand on peut. Ça ne sert à rien de se mettre la rate au court-bouillon, parce qu'on n'a pas celle du voisin. On est dans une société où on veut la vie du voisin, alors qu'on ne réalise pas qu'on est le riche de quelqu'un d'autre.

00:15:19

Mme. Margot: Oui. C'est tellement vrai.

00:15:19

Mme. 2: C'est tout le problème du luxe. C'est que le luxe aujourd'hui, les gens ont le sentiment que c'est agressif, parce que c'est extrêmement présent. Si c'est aussi agressif, c'est qu'on le veut tous. Encore une fois, tout le challenge du luxe aujourd'hui, du retail, de l'accueil dans les maisons de luxe y transite par la connaissance de tous ces paramètres, qui sont évidemment extrêmement difficiles à gérer dès l'instant où on a eu la capacité de les interpréter. Comment est-ce qu'on fait vivre ça ? Quand on est store manager, avoir les qualités dont je vous ai parlé en termes d'humilité, d'endurance, de pugnacité et d'excellence, mais il faut surtout être capable de faire exister à cette dimension-là une équipe.

00:16:10

Mme. 2: On n'est pas derrière tout le monde à tous les instants et on ne peut pas se démultiplier. On a des gens qui sont passionnés et d'autres qui le sont moins. On a des gens qui sont patients, d'autres qui le sont moins. En face de tout ça, on a les clients qui sont tout sauf le client de ces presses, qui sont des gens qui vivent des moments

difficiles aussi dans leur vie, qui sont des gens plus ou moins bien élevés ou plus ou moins cultivés, plus ou moins patients, plus ou moins riches et qui, en fonction des moyens qu'ils ont, ont des habitudes d'achat qui ne sont pas forcément écrites sur leur front. C'est une aventure qui se multiplie par autant de personnes que vous allez rencontrer dans une journée.

00:16:55

Mme. Margot: C'est vrai. Les clients sont tellement différents les uns que les autres.

00:17:02

Mme. 2: Puis, on ne sait pas ce qu'ils ont vécu l'heure qui a précédé. On ne sait pas d'où ils viennent, on ne sait rien d'eux. Dans l'hôtellerie qui touche à un moment extrêmement intime de ressenti, c'est encore autre chose.

00:17:17

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est très particulier.

00:17:19

Mme. 2: Voilà. Ce que je trouve très intéressant là en ce moment avec mon aventure Rebyer, c'est qu'on me demande de développer du business et j'arrive dans un endroit où les gens avaient l'habitude d'apporter du service. Ils ne sont pas orientés résultats comme dans les boutiques. C'est-à-dire qu'il n'y a pas de concret et quand le client, il rentre, il va payer à la fin de son séjour. On fait en sorte que tout se passe bien et qu'on apporte le meilleur service. Sauf à l'addition du restaurant, on ne sait pas quelle est la valeur du geste qu'on a eu, alors que quand vous vendez un produit, vous savez tout de suite. Moi, aujourd'hui, il faut que je leur dise : « Les gars, il ne suffit plus de distribuer, il faut argumenter pour vendre. » Vous voyez par exemple à Ramatuelle, à Genève, les filles du spa, elles ne vendent pas.

00:18:14

Mme. Margot: Non, ça, c'est sûr. Puis les boutiques, en tout cas à Genève, ne sont vraiment pas conçues pour vendre. Je ne sais pas si vous y êtes allée.

00:18:25

Mme. 2: Jusqu'à présent, ils avaient du dépôt de vente. Ils trouvaient ça bien, parce que ce qu'ils vendaient, leurs fournisseurs leur facturaient. Puis ce qu'ils ne vendaient pas, je n'ai pas vendu, donc je le rends aux fournisseurs. Moi là, je suis en train de le racheter. Déjà, ils ont les cheveux droits sur la tête dans les boutiques en disant : « Non, mais ça coûte ça. » Oui, ça coûte ça, mais quand on leur a vendu, on aurait gagné deux fois et demie plus. Le patron, ce qui l'intéresse, c'est qu'on ait gagné deux fois et demie plus, mais d'abord, il faut le vendre. « Oui, mais s'il reste du stock. » « Je ne veux pas qu'il reste du stock. » Vous allez avoir des objectifs d'écoulement. « Oui, mais il va falloir qu'on ait un équivalent temps plein supplémentaire. » Peut-être.

00:19:14

Mme. Margot: Oui. C'est sûr.

00:19:14

Mme. 2: C'est amusant, mais ça prouve bien que ce n'est pas la même philosophie, ce ne sont pas les mêmes habitudes, ce n'est pas le même code, ce n'est pas la même orientation résultat.

00:19:27

Mme. Margot: Oui, tout à fait, c'est vraiment différent. C'est vrai que dans l'hôtellerie de luxe, on est vraiment orienté expérience et vendre.

00:19:39

Mme. 2: Vendre, vous ne faites que vendre, entre guillemets. C'est votre attitude qui vend, mais vous vendez un acquis. Vous faites vivre le produit. C'est comme si vous animiez le produit. Or, quand on est vendeur, le produit, vous l'avez entre les mains et il faut persuader le client qu'il est fait pour lui. Il faut séduire le client. Il faut amener le client à découvrir quelque chose du produit qu'il n'avait pas soupçonné. Puis surtout, il faut vendre ce que vous avez en stock. C'est-à-dire que quand le client vient pour chercher quelque chose que vous n'avez pas en stock, il faut le persuader que ce que vous avez, c'est tout aussi intéressant. C'est beaucoup plus exigeant en termes de capacité à la réussite. Elle se lie beaucoup plus. Vous voyez ce que je veux dire ?

00:20:29

Mme. Margot: Oui. Bien sûr. C'est vraiment très différent.

00:20:32

Mme. 2: Voilà, et il y a une éligibilité différente. C'est intéressant de le mettre en miroir par rapport à l'expérience en effet hôtelière. C'est bien que vous ayez ça aussi.

00:20:42

Mme. Margot: Oui. C'est vrai que c'est un milieu qui me passionne, mais c'est vraiment passionnant de vous entendre parler de ça.

00:20:52

Mme. 2: Vous savez quoi, je suis tellement pipelette. Il faut que vous me coupiez et que vous me posiez vos questions, parce que vous n'allez pas vous en sortir avec moi.

00:20:58

Mme. Margot: Non, mais on a abordé plein de sujets, donc je voulais vous poser des questions sur l'expérience client pour fidéliser. La dernière chose dont je voulais vous parler, moi, pour mon mémoire, il faut trouver une solution à un problème. Moi, c'est vraiment pour, comme on dit en anglais bridge the gap entre le retail très traditionnel et justement cette nouvelle génération qui a des attentes totalement différentes des générations précédentes. La solution à laquelle j'ai pensé, ça serait un peu de répliquer ce que fait Audemars Piguet et bientôt Chanel, c'est créer des boutiques plus privées, plus intimes, qui sont souvent aux premier et deuxième étages d'un immeuble. Vraiment créer une atmosphère comme un appartement très luxueux pour vendre des produits et faire ça sous la forme d'un club social, donc avec un abonnement annuel qui donne accès aux clients qui ont envie de plus d'exclusivité. On en parlait tout à l'heure, il y a des clients qui ont beaucoup d'argent, mais pour eux, l'exclusivité, ça a peu d'intérêt.

00:22:15

Mme. 2: Parce que tout est déjà exclusif pour la manière dont on les reçoit, la manière dont ils vivent. Ils ne vivent déjà bien comme nous, donc je suis d'accord avec vous. Je veux juste reprendre une chose. Votre sujet, c'est comment on fait exister le luxe aujourd'hui, sachant qu'on a ces clientèles-là qui sont beaucoup plus volubiles ou comment on upgrade l'accès au luxe à cette clientèle existante qui finalement aujourd'hui n'a pas une grande culture du luxe ? Je n'arrive pas à comprendre si c'est ce que je viens de vous dire ou le précédent. Vous voulez gérer les clients très haut de gamme ou vous voulez-- ?

00:22:59

Mme. Margot: Oui.

00:23:00

Mme. 2: Oui, c'est ça. C'est comment on permet aux clients très haut de gamme de se sentir toujours plus différents ?

00:23:05

Mme. Margot: Voilà, exactement. C'est vraiment pour cette clientèle-là qui n'a pas forcément envie d'attendre devant une boutique pendant des heures.

00:23:15

Mme. 2: Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec vous. Ce qu'il faut que vous expliquiez, j'essaye de vous aider un peu, c'est qu'il faut que vous partiez du constat qu'aujourd'hui les boutiques de luxe sont plus fréquentées qu'elles ne l'ont jamais été par une clientèle qui est plus populaire, entre guillemets. Pourquoi ? Parce que l'accès au luxe est pratiquement devenu un prérequis social. Par exemple, moins les gens ont d'argent, moins les gens ont les moyens du luxe, plus ils ont besoin d'afficher du luxe pour avoir le sentiment d'être intégrés socialement. Le paradoxe ultime, c'est que quand on n'a pas les moyens d'avoir du luxe, on est les derniers à acheter de la contrefaçon. C'est-à-dire qu'acheter de la contrefaçon, c'est vraiment parce qu'on n'en a pas les moyens. Ceux qui achètent de la contrefaçon aujourd'hui sont souvent des gens qui ont les moyens de s'acheter du vrai. Ils achètent de la contrefaçon très bien réalisée plutôt qu'un clin d'oeil, et cetera. Vous voyez ce que je veux dire ?

00:24:13

Mme. Margot: Oui.

00:24:13

Mme. 2: Parce que sinon la contrefaçon, aujourd'hui, elle existe toujours autant, mais on n'a plus le même regard sur la contrefaçon qu'avant, parce qu'en réalité, on est tout à fait capable aujourd'hui d'identifier cette contrefaçon. On sait très bien si on achète de la contrefaçon ce qu'on fait. Soit on achète de la contrefaçon, parce qu'on n'a pas la culture du luxe et donc on ne sait pas ce qu'on achète. Les gens qui ont cette culture-là, ils ne vous respectent pas dans vos goûts. Vous voyez ce que je veux dire ?

00:24:45

Mme. Margot: Oui.

00:24:47

Mme. 2: Ça, c'est toute la banlieue misérable, entre guillemets. Je dis ça vraiment sans méchanceté.

00:24:52

Mme. Margot: Non. Bien sûr.

00:24:53

Mme. 2: Elle n'a pas cette culture-là et qui est dans un statut caricatural. Ça, la question ne se pose même pas, d'accord ?

00:25:01

Mme. Margot: Oui.

00:25:01

Mme. 2: Après, on a ceux qui ne savent pas ce qu'ils achètent. Dès que les gens ont un peu cette culture et veulent ce statut, ils sont prêts à dépenser le salaire d'un mois entier pour avoir du vrai, plutôt que d'acheter une contrefaçon. Entre guillemets, plus il y a de contrefaçons, plus les marques de luxe sont en bonne santé. Le jour où elles seront plus contrefaites, c'est qu'elles n'intéressent personne.

00:25:21

Mme. Margot: Oui. C'est vrai.

00:25:23

Mme. 2: Je ne sais pas si vous avez remarqué, la contrefaçon, elle est de plus en plus haut de gamme. Autrefois la contrefaçon, il suffisait qu'elle imite. Aujourd'hui, il faut qu'elle remplace. C'est complètement différent. C'est d'ailleurs pour ça que le système de blockchain s'est mis en place et qu'aujourd'hui, c'est difficile. Les belles contrefaçons, c'est difficile de les identifier. Prochainement, il n'y aura plus que la blockchain pour identifier le plus sûrement possible. Tout ça, ça veut dire que les clients qui ont vraiment beaucoup de moyens, ils ont besoin finalement paradoxalement d'énormément de simplicité. Finalement, les recevoir en dehors d'un lieu public, c'est-à-dire en toute simplicité dans un lieu privé a du sens. Encore une fois, dans les clients qui ont beaucoup de moyens, il faut faire attention à ceux qui ont quand même encore envie du bling bling. Parce qu'aujourd'hui, parmi les clients qui ont beaucoup de moyens, on a les Kardashian qui sont tout sauf l'élégance.

00:26:26

Mme. 2: C'est la vie. Après, qui sommes-nous pour juger ? Puis, vous avez des gens qui sont vraiment d'extrêmement bons clients du luxe, avec une vraie culture du luxe que personne ne connaît. Il ne faut jamais oublier qu'on peut avoir deux clients qui vont avoir tous les deux un jet privé et un hélicoptère. Il y en a un qui va se servir de son jet privé et de son hélicoptère pour aller à Nikki Beach s'asperger de champagne tout l'après-midi et le deuxième qui va aller pique-niquer en haut du Mont-Blanc. C'est le même budget, ce n'est pas la même expérience, ce n'est pas la même philosophie, ce n'est pas la même personne. Comme c'est le même budget, le luxe doit gérer ces deux clients-là. Apporter à celui qui est fou de bling bling les paillettes. Apporter l'hyper discrétion et le sur mesure à celui qui va pique-niquer sur le Mont-Blanc.

00:27:22

Mme. Margot: C'est tellement compliqué.

00:27:26

Mme. 2: C'est tellement compliqué. On n'imagine pas aujourd'hui à quel point c'est compliqué. Pour moi, la réponse à votre question, c'est se dire la capacité aujourd'hui du luxe à différencier en se disant ce client-là, c'est comment elle va à sa rencontre ? Comment elle organise la rencontre qu'aujourd'hui on qualifie d'hyper luxe, qui était un mot qui n'existait pas parce qu'on n'en avait pas besoin. Aujourd'hui, on est obligé d'appeler ça l'hyper luxe. L'hyper luxe, ça peut être extrêmement simple. C'est-à-dire l'hyper luxe, ça peut être de pique-niquer avec une autre marque qui est au poignet et d'y aller avec son hélicoptère, mais c'est une forme d'hyper luxe.

00:28:05

Mme. Margot: Oui, bien sûr.

00:28:07

Mme. 2: Comme ça peut être en effet être une caricature du luxe. C'est ça qui montre à quel point c'est challengent. Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec votre idée. L'idée de club, elle est bien, mais pour moi, l'idée de club, elle est parfaite pour les Kardashian qui ont besoin de sentir que tout le monde sait qu'ils font partie d'un club que les autres n'ont pas accès. Il y a un exemple qui est flagrant. Je ne sais pas si vous avez lu dans la presse, Kim Kardashian, justement, voulait être invitée au Jubilee de la reine. Elle a été refusée à la garden-party. Parce qu'elle ne faisait pas partie du listing. Elle a tout fait pour y aller. Elle y est même venue physiquement en se disant : « Une fois que je serai là, ils me prendront. » Comme elle n'était pas sur la liste, ils lui ont dit : « Écoutez, on est désolé, mais non. » Ce qui était vraiment luxueux, c'est peut-être des gens qui ont beaucoup moins de moyens et qui sont beaucoup moins beaux que les Kardashian, mais qui, eux, étaient invités. Pourquoi ? Parce que c'est une histoire de famille, parce que c'est une histoire, vous voyez, je n'en sais rien.

00:29:14

Mme. Margot: Oui. Bien sûr.

00:29:14

Mme. 2: Il n'y aura pas de plus beau sac Kelly que celui qui aura appartenu à votre grand-mère.

00:29:18

Mme. Margot: Oui. C'est vrai.

00:29:20

Mme. 2: Celui qui a appartenu à votre grand-mère, parce que dans votre famille, vous avez des sacs Kelly depuis toujours. Il sera plus luxueux que celui de, comment elle s'appelle ? Allô quoi ?

00:29:31

Mme. Margot: Nabilla ?

00:29:32

Mme. 2: Nabilla qui en a eu un à je ne sais pas combien, 210 000 €, des diamants et je ne sais pas quoi. Nabilla, elle, fait vivre Hermès aussi bien que la cliente qui a évidemment celui de sa grand-mère, mais qui en a aussi de temps en temps. L'idée du club est très bien, mais pour le client qui, lui, a les moyens du luxe dans son ADN depuis très longtemps, qui a cette culture du luxe. Lui, il faut pratiquement qu'il soit un ami de la maison et que vous fassiez ses achats, vous lui proposez de faire ses achats chez lui, sur son bateau. Je pense que plus vous lui proposerez des choses simples à celui-ci, plus il vous reconnaîtra. Lui, par exemple, il va avoir envie d'aller participer à une opération de sauvetage d'une espèce menacée au pôle Nord. Vous allez l'associer à ça. Par rapport à ça, vous aurez des valeurs qui vont faire qu'il continuera de consommer chez vous. C'est intéressant de vous dire ça. Parce que celui-ci, il ne voudra pas être dans le club. Pourquoi ? Parce que dans ce club, il sait qu'il y a Kim Kardashian.

00:31:10

Mme. Margot: Oui, tout à fait. C'est compliqué, est-ce qu'on peut avoir deux expériences différentes ?

00:31:21

Mme. 2: Il faut multiplier les expériences.

00:31:22

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est ça. D'accord.

00:31:23

Mme. 2: C'est exactement ça. Finalement, le challenge du luxe, ça va être le sur mesure. On parlait du sur mesure pour les produits, made to order en produit, mais ça va être, made to order en expérience. On se plaint que je dis n'importe quoi, les 10 plus riches de la planète, les 100 plus riches de la planète. Je vais vous dire, il va falloir 100 expériences. J'exagère, mais peut-être qu'il en faudra 10, parce que vous allez faire des multiples de 10. Vous en avez 10 comme les Kardashian, 10 comme les Elon Musk. Elon Musk, c'est d'aller dans les étoiles. Kardashian, c'est d'aller à la garden-party de la reine. Monsieur trucmuche, c'est j'en sais rien, faire un dîner privé, parce que c'est un passionné d'équitation dans le cirque d'hiver, où vous lui livrez sa selle sur mesure, n'importe quoi.

00:32:19

Mme. Margot: Oui. Je vois ce que vous voulez dire. Je vais peaufiner un peu tout ça. C'est vrai que c'est tellement vaste comme sujet.

00:32:29

Mme. 2: C'est pour ça que je me dis : « À la fois c'est bien, il y a de quoi faire, mais c'est étourdissant. »

00:32:35

Mme. Margot: Oui, c'est vrai.

00:32:37

Mme. 2: Parce qu'on se dit qu'il faut vraiment se gratter la tête en termes de créativité. C'est aussi la raison pour laquelle il faut être très attentif, très curieux et très aware à tout ce qui se passe. Parce que c'est là que vous allez discerner les indices qui vont vous

amener vos réponses. Franchement, moi, je vois aujourd'hui pour coller à ce dont mes clients auront envie, je suis en mode petite souris tout le temps, écouter ce qui se passe, ce qui se fait. En tout cas, je suis ravie Margot, même si je ne vous ai pas laissé beaucoup parler, je vous sens quand même sur la bonne voie.

00:33:19

Mme. Margot: C'est très gentil. Vraiment, c'était passionnant d'avoir eu cette conversation avec vous et d'avoir votre perspective sur ce milieu. Vraiment, je suis très reconnaissante d'avoir une opinion, un point de vue différent du mien. Différent du mien, c'est-à-dire d'avoir quelqu'un qui a une expérience tellement longue dans le luxe.

00:33:45

Mme. 2: Oui, plus longue. C'est une question de temps, vous verrez. En tout cas, n'hésitez pas. Commencez à travailler là votre projet. Si vous avez un problème, vous pouvez toujours m'appeler. Si ça vous fait plaisir, on se prend un petit café. Vous avez mes coordonnées, vous me mettrez un petit SMS, puis on se prend un petit café en ville. Ça sera sympa, au moins comme ça, je vous vois en vrai véridique.

00:34:04

Mme. Margot: Absolument. C'est très gentil, en tout cas pour votre temps. Puis, je vous souhaite une très belle soirée et j'espère à bientôt.

00:34:13

Mme. 2: J'espère à bientôt et vous me donnerez des nouvelles. Okay ?

00:34:16

Mme. Margot: Oui, absolument, avec plaisir. Merci beaucoup. Bonne soirée. Au revoir.

00:34:20

Mme. 2: Au revoir. Passez une bonne soirée.

Interview 2: Retail manager Prada

Interviewer: I'm doing my thesis about customer experience in luxury retail and how it's changing.

Interviewee: What are you--

Interviewer: I'm studying hospitality management, but I'm going to go into luxury management and guest experience.

Interviewee: Where are you studying?

Interviewer: I was studying in the Netherlands, and then I'm going to Switzerland for my master's.

Interviewee: Which university?

Interviewer: In Switzerland, Glion. It's very exciting. I'm just trying to get a lot of perspectives on customer experience and I guess just how it's evolving. For instance, this VIP room, how do you determine how VIP your clients are?

Interviewee: Look, we have different scenarios. The classic one is the one of the clients that we already know. That they are our super loyal clients, or if they spent a lot of money in our store. We already know them. That's the easiest one and actually they already know this place and they come directly here.

Interviewer: Okay. They come here.

Interviewee: Then when we start to have, I don't know, a tourist, for example. He comes to the entrance and he starts seeing a lot of things, and we notice that it's someone who needs more personalized attention. We prefer to move to this place for a more personalized client experience.

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: Actually, it could be here or if you want, after this I can take you to have a tour of the store. We have another private area because sometimes we have more than one VIP client.

Interviewer: It's not easy.

Interviewee: Exactly. We have more spots in the store that we normally use for these kinds of clients. Actually, another important thing that I can share with you is, I'm telling you VIP for you to understand, but here in Prada, we say VIC. That is the same, but it's not very important people or person. It's Very Important Customer. The initials are V-I-C. It is just another good thing that you can know in retail vocabulary.

Interviewer: How do you make it special every time? Because when you have returning customers, I know in hospitality, it's quite easy to make the experience kind of different every time. How does it work in retail when you have a VIC that comes all the time?

Interviewee: Actually, it's something in luxury retail, it's not only Prada. We always try to ensure the highest client experience, not only with the VIC clients. Any client who comes to the store we always try to transmit this luxury, this nice energy. I mean, to discover the collection. We always try to break the ice with the client. Where do they

come from or **to connect with the client**. Actually, each brand has customer experience process or sales process. **In our case the name is unique client experience**. We have different steps that we have to take, and it includes exactly to discover a client, get to know them better, connect with them. It's like finding a way to start a nice conversation with them. Then of course, to maximize opportunities. However, it's not only with the VIC.

Speaker 1: It's with everyone.

Interviewee: **If we find someone who we already know that they are not going to buy anything, we try to do the tour of the store. It's always to transmit the best experience.**

Interviewer: Right. It doesn't matter.

Interviewee: It doesn't matter. I don't know if you see that all the stores in Barcelona for now they have a queue.

Interviewer: Yes. All the time.

Interviewee: You will see it in the best brands, I think Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and now us, Fendi sometimes. It's because of that. **We want to make the most personalized client experience and it is the only way that we can ensure that**. It's because if all the people come inside, we'll lose control and, of course, they can steal things and it's not the objective. **The only way that we can ensure this is if each client advisor has one client.**

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: The idea is to transmit the best energy and the best experience for the clients.

Interviewer: I know my mother sometimes and she's in touch with Giovanni and she finds it very nice that there's always keeping in touch even when she's in France. Do all sales associates do this with their own clients? How do they engage? You know, getting the phone number and then talking over text. How does that work?

Interviewee: The luxury client advisor's profile, it has to be like Giovanni. I mean, some people really love their jobs and they go further. Because we have another profile that sometimes we have to push a lot to keep in contact with the clients. Actually Giovanni is the best picture of the client advisors in the luxury world. Because he's being nice, but at the same time commercial, but at the same time he knows about the products and he knows how to contact a client. He's not contacting the client every day.

Interviewer: No.

Interviewee: He's very specific and very punctual. That's the idea for all the client advisors. We always have different profiles, but that's the idea. Actually, now after COVID, we started selling a lot of long distance transactions. All the communication was only by phone or WhatsApp.

Interviewer: You kept it.

Interviewee: Exactly. Sending links to pay and sending the products because we were- just to let you know, we were closed. We were selling with the store closed for three months. We didn't have clients in the store, but we were here selling. Selling, contacting clients, sending the new collection, sending the products. Even sending the products to try at home and then returning the products. This beyond client experience and that's retail and luxury brand. Always go beyond.

Interviewer: A step further.

Interviewee: A step further. We always have experiences with clients. Sometimes, we take a client to Milan, Prada or different experiences.

Interviewer: Okay, so you also do beyond the store.

Interviewee: Exactly. We find what could be a good action for a client that we already know that could be a good idea, and we try to do it. Always we have options and it happens the same with the birthdays or special dates for the clients. We send flowers, we send personalized postcards with the client advisor's signature or lettering by hand. Those are the small details that I'm sure you already know and you already see what makes a difference.

Interviewer: Yes, but I think it's different because in hospitality you're expected to. If it's a birthday, guests in luxury will always expect something, but for retail, I think it's really nice even when the client is not in the store. How do you see the differences between- I'm also studying the new generation, the millennial and the Generation Z, with the older generations? How they react differently to this customer experience? It's changing a lot.

Interviewee: Yes. That's a good question. In Prada it's interesting because it's the perfect balance. I'm talking about the collection. It's the perfect balance between something classic and something trendy. You can actually see the collection. Sometimes, you see this classic shoe in green or a nice sweater. [silence 00:09:27-00:10:47] I'm sorry.

Interviewer: No worries at all. Take your time.

Interviewee: That's another retail life. There is always something.

Interviewer: Yes, but that's nice.

Interviewee: Sorry. I was telling you that in Prada it's interesting because it's the perfect balance between the classic and the most trendy and strange pieces. That's true. It's challenging to move from the local and the classic styles to the millennial and the super trendy profile. That's true. All the brands are moving to millennial. Regarding the service, I mean, they are less- I don't know how to say it in English.

Interviewer: You can say it in Spanish as well.

Interviewee: Demanding. That's the word. You mean the older generation or the new?

Interviewee: No, the new are less demanding. They prefer something faster. Something interesting, something fun. They come and try something. They like a glass of champagne. Having a nice experience. However it's not the long client experience like with the older generation that I have to spend one hour and prepare everything. With this new generation, it's "Okay, I like this one. I have a party in one hour and I need an outfit now." It's like this movement. It is interesting and for now, these types of clients are increasing every year.

Interviewer : Like crazy.

Interviewee: Every year. It's very interesting.

Interviewer: Well, obviously it's outgrowing the older generation, but I feel like the younger generation is so much more attracted by luxury now.

Interviewee: Another thing of the new generation is we have the classic profile that they have the money to buy a lot. There is another market, the girls who are saving the money to buy their first Prada bag. Of course, they expect this amazing client experience and they are buying the super iconic traditional bag. Now it's girls from 15 years old.

Interviewer: Yes. That's true.

Interviewee: They are buying their first Prada bag. That's another very young profile that we have now.

Interviewer: How do the older generations- because I've heard from other retail managers that sometimes they think, "Oh, but why are you paying so much attention to such a young person? I'm such an old customer and a VIP" Do you have that? Maybe it's just France.

Interviewee: I think it could be different between countries, could be different between brands and actually it could be different between stores even in the same brand.

Interviewer: Yes. That's true.

Interviewee: The profile of the local clients in Barcelona are totally different than the clients from Madrid, for example. I think we don't have that problem. To our oldest clients here, we spend and we dedicate all the time so they don't feel that they are apart from our side. They can see that they feel apart because of the collection, for example. Because they come and they- can you imagine there is a client that was a Prada fan since 40 years ago, so, of course, they see the evolution of the brand.

Interviewer: It changes a lot.

Interviewee: They think, "Okay, now there is nothing for me. The clothes, there is nothing for me. There are no sizes, there is no style." You see these dresses?

Interviewer: Yes. I can imagine.

Interviewee: It's super difficult to show these kind of pieces to our classic and oldest clients. That's the part where they see the evolution of the brands. I'm sure it's in all the brands, not only in Prada. We still have iconic pieces that we can always present, and we are taking care of them and showing these collections. However, they see the evolution and they see it even in the client buy stores. It's always younger. The attitude is different. We are changing in a lot of points of retail and they notice this, but we still have our icon so we can handle.

Interviewer: Yes, I can imagine. That's very good. About this room, because I'm studying also various VIP experiences and how stores are shifting into home places like this could be. In a home it feels very cozy, like in Chanel. How do people like this? How do they feel when they're shopping in here versus shopping in the main part of the store? Do they feel more inclined to buy or?

Interviewee: Of course they feel a lot more special. That's why if we are here, maybe our client could see what is happening there, the VIP room. Of course. If I can make a more special experience for one person, they feel it immediately. They value these kind of actions from our side. We always try to have these kind of little actions with all the clients. With the VIP we bring them to this area, but with another client it's the glass of champagne or with another client is a glass of water. If we see a client with children, we have a children's kit for coloring.

Interviewer: Okay. That's nice.

Interviewee: The idea is to have enough empathy and enough connection with the clients and understand their needs. We can act super-fast and give them the thing that they want, not only in products, in experience. It's different if I have a client who wants something super-fast or a client who wants to talk and speak about their life. You have to give them the time. To listen to all the stories of their holidays, you know, or the other one that is, "I don't want to say anything. I just want to pay and go." It's to understand what they need and what we have to give to them. It's the same with the kids' kit or whatever.

Interviewer: Just very personal.

Interviewee Exactly. We have to be very proactive. The people sometimes confuse the luxury service with slow service, you know. You imagine luxury and you can imagine someone in a store or in a hotel super slow.

Interviewer: Taking so much time.

Interviewee: No, luxury is being super smart to understand, to react super-fast with client needs and, of course, keeping the brand's standard. We have a special glass for champagne that is different from the competitors. You will always see the details in each brand. It's the way that we want to mark our difference but the service is the same. We always try to give the highest one. You will see the difference in different stores, but we celebrate the same. The clients' birthdays or we take them to have lunch with them, but it is the same in all the stores.

Interviewer: Yes, it's just a bit different according to-

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Okay. Very nice. You call them client advisors, or luxury advisors? Your sales associates, the people who sell. You call them client advisors?

Interviewee Client advisors.

Interviewer: Client advisors. How do you see that their role is changing? Because I feel nowadays maybe they're much closer to their customers, as I was saying, with the texts and just keeping in touch in that way. How do you see that it has changed over time and how do you think it's going to evolve?

Interviewee: Now the client advisors have to be the same. *Super digital, super-fast, very familiarized with the phone, with the apps.* Because in the past we used to have more of this kind of service with client advisors. I don't know, 50 years for example. *It's more experienced, and now more than experience, we need more attitude, more energy, super agile.* The profiles of the client advisors are moving to that. People are super resistant, mentally resistant because they have to keep and maintain the calm when they see the queue full of 50 people waiting. Then at the same time they have to contact another client and at the same time they have a private appointment to prepare. If you are working in a luxury store it's not because you are waiting for a client like this all the time.

Interviewee: *There's a lot of movement inside of a store because they not only sell, they work a lot in client-telling action. They have to have very good communication skills, not only verbally. They write mails or messages.* They have to be very punctual or they work a lot in the stock and maintenance.

Interviewer: There's so much to do.

Interviewee: There's too much to do. That's why instead of this profile that they have on their mind, that a person waiting in a store is super elegant like this in France, is not working anymore. Now you will see, like Giovanni, is moving all the time. *"What do you want to drink? Do you want some water? Your birthday? Of course I can help you. This is the number of my manager."* You know, he's going beyond. His objective is to help you in everything you need. It's like a concierge.

Interviewer: Yes, that's true. He's very similar to concierge. How do you train your employees? Because it's not skills that you will have immediately, I guess, when you get into luxury retail. How do you make sure that all your client advisors are so energetic?

Interviewee This part comes before, because in the recruitment process, we try to analyze these skills in advance. When they come to the store, we align them to the Prada process, but they already know these soft skills, of course. We have, the name is one-to-one, every month we have a conversation with each one. What can they improve? Besides the quantitative objectives, we always have time to speak about the qualitative part. In this part it comes to energy, empathy, connection with the clients, client-telling actions. We try to work in this part every month. That's part of the training and always, of course, as managers, we try to transmit the DNA of the brand. They have

to feel proud to work here. We always try to make them feel super proud of being in Prada.

Interviewer: That's really amazing how you do it. I mean, it was so interesting to see how Giovanni was with my mother, because she knows I'm so interested in luxury, and to see it from a client perspective, it was very good.

Interviewee: Yes, and you saw it before this conversation.

Interviewer: Yes, exactly.

Interviewee: The thing that I'm now explaining to you, you already saw it with him and that's the idea with all the client advisors.

Interviewer: No, that's great. I mean, it's a new way to do luxury, but I think it's great. You're in your own home, but then someone is reminding you of a skirt. It's really good. Very good. Would you maybe mind taking me around the store so I can see a little bit.

Interviewee: Of course.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Interviewee: You can see that I told you that we use when we want to find another private place. Because we have the other meeting room. Those are a little bit more private. It's very comfortable.

Interviewer: This is where the private fitting rooms are or?

Interviewee: No, this is the general one but there is another private place.

Interviewer: Okay. Nice.

Interviewee: We are one of the biggest stores in Europe. That's another story. The women's shoes. You're in a special place for men. [We are one of the few stores in the world that have the Made to Measure service. We do Made to Measure for suits.](#) The wool of Prada is a very specific of the brand. It's wool, different colors. They designed the material.

Interviewer: I guess it's very popular.

Interviewee : Yes, it's one of the best sellers. The client can choose the model, then the size, but they can try it in advance.

Interviewer: It's by appointment?

Interviewee: Yes. Appointment or you can order it. [It takes around six weeks to have it. It's a long process.](#)

Interviewer: Do you knit it here or do you knit it in Italy?

Interviewee: Italy. *Just very few pieces that we do in other parts of Italy. It's because of the quality of the materials. I forget which product we do in a different place, but it's because of the quality.* We have opened this door, but now with the flow of the store, we keep it closed because we cannot control both entrances. The other personalized service for Prada is that you can choose the buckle. The buckle on the belt.

Interviewer: In general, do you have more women clients?

Interviewee: We have more women clients but we still have men. Yes.

Interviewer: It's a very different field here.

Interviewee: We like to change the gates like that.

Interviewer: The atmosphere.

Interviewee: Next month we will change some of the designs of the store. In August, I will send some pictures.

Interviewer: Yes. That's very nice.

Interviewee: Our main business, this is our line. This is our store.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Interviewee: Matilda. If you have another question that you forgot today you can text me any time. I'm sorry I cannot answer at the moment, but I promise I can help you if you need more details. If you need pictures.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: At least you can have a catalogue or something.

Interviewer: That's very nice.

Interview 3: Retail manager Max Mara

Mme. 1: On peut commencer, j'écris mon mémoire sur l'expérience client en boutique et le futur de l'expérience client avec tous les changements en ce moment, avec les attentes des clients etc. Peux-tu parler de ton parcours ? Depuis combien de temps travailles-tu dans le luxe et depuis quand es-tu à ce poste-là ?

00:00:30

Mme. 2: J'ai commencé dans la vente à proprement dit chez mes parents qui sont commerçants, mais qui ne sont pas dans la vente au détail de vêtements. Depuis que je suis toute jeune, j'ai ce contact client. Ensuite, j'ai fait mes études, mais j'ai toujours voulu arriver dans le luxe parce que les tâches qui nous sont imposées sont plus agréables à gérer au quotidien. C'est aussi un milieu, un espace, des odeurs, des matières avec lesquelles tout le monde ne peut que s'y plaire. C'est surtout que, plus tu montes en gamme, que ce soit dans le vêtement, dans l'hôtellerie, plus il y a des moyens mis en place qui sont très intéressants pour favoriser le lien avec le client et le

fidéliser. Ce que tu vends aussi, il y a une qualité qui suit, donc c'est plus facile pour toi d'être convaincant. C'est pour ça que le luxe m'a toujours attirée. Hormis que ce soit beau et agréable, c'est surtout qu'il y a des moyens qui sont présents. Il y a de l'investissement qui est fait, financier et en tant que personne pour avancer et évoluer dans le bon sens.

00:01:44

Mme. 1: D'accord. Comment vois-tu l'expérience client en boutique ? Innovante soit pour les clients qui viennent dans la boutique pour la première fois et également pour les clients qui viennent ici souvent.

00:02:08

Mme. 2: On travaille énormément sur la psychologie du client. Une expérience unique, c'est une expérience qui se rapproche au plus de la personne qu'on a en face de nous. C'est unique dans le sens personnalisé au maximum. On a arrêté de se focaliser sur ce pourquoi tu viens acheter un pantalon ou pourquoi telle couleur. C'est plutôt l'idée de : "Qui est-ce que j'ai en face de moi, qui est cette personne, quel est son quotidien ?" Pour vraiment que la personne se sente privilégiée dans ce sens. On a aussi l'idée d'être très décontracté et le plus naturel possible. Quand on fait les formations des vendeuses, en tous cas, dans ma boutique, c'est l'idée d'inviter quelqu'un chez soi. On a les mêmes réflexes de se demander si la personne se sent assez à l'aise. Quand quelqu'un frappe à ta porte et que tu fais une soirée avec tes amis, tu ne dis pas : "Entre et débrouille-toi." Il y a réellement le réflexe d'accompagner de A à Z, j'ai besoin de savoir si tu te sens bien, j'ai besoin de savoir comment s'est passée ta journée. On essaie de copier sur le même modèle. On a plusieurs choses pour que le client se sente écouté dans son besoin, c'est-à-dire qu'on essaie en plus d'avoir réponse à toutes les éventualités. On a des systèmes de commande de produits, on a des systèmes où on peut te faire livrer à la maison, ou on prend simplement ton empreinte bancaire. Ça ne se limite pas à venir en boutique, la vendeuse est gentille avec toi, on garde contact et c'est tout. Le côté unique, c'est le côté personnalisé au maximum. Pour nos clients habituels, on essaie déjà d'être moins insistants parce que ce sont des personnes qui sont énormément sollicitées. Avant, on travaillait énormément sur le WhatsApp, on envoyait toujours la nouvelle collection. On se rend compte qu'à force d'envoyer des messages ou d'appeler, même quand on a des événements un peu particuliers, un cocktail par exemple, c'est des gens qui sont moins attentifs parce que c'est ce que tout le monde fait. On se rend compte que ce qui fait vraiment la différence, ce n'est pas le cadeau client, le cocktail ou le fait qu'elle ait reçu dix jours avant la photo de la collection. C'est surtout le côté écoute, gentillesse, juste prendre des nouvelles de temps en temps, de façon normale, non forcée et gratuite. Ensuite, on a le côté rendez-vous privé, des pièces uniques où on peut recevoir ces personnes. On donne accès à des pièces en avant-première où on établit aussi des listes d'envie. On se rend compte que pour ces clients, c'est tellement habituel que ce n'est même plus un plus. Le plus se fait dans le rapport de gentillesse, d'être quelqu'un de normal et qui est là pour vous, qui va prendre de vos nouvelles de temps en temps. Ce n'est pas si simple que ça d'être juste tranquille et sympa. On est dans un milieu dans lequel, surtout l'équipe de vente, il faut vendre et avoir des résultats. Pour ces gens, on essaie d'être un peu en retrait sans pour autant laisser tomber les gens et de leur dire dès qu'il y a une nouvelle collection. Garder un lien, mais être discret.

00:05:23

Mme. 1: J'ai aussi étudié la clientèle très luxe. C'est un terme un peu spécial pour cette clientèle qui se démarque des gens qui viennent acheter un jeans et qui ont besoin de plus de discrétion. Est-ce qu'ils préfèrent les rendez-vous privés ?

00:05:47

Mme. 2: Pas forcément, on se rend compte que cette clientèle est de plus en plus spontanée. C'est ce qui nous a fait dire qu'il faut qu'on soit plus spontanés. Il ne faut pas forcément prendre rendez-vous ou fermer la boutique pour elle. Ça fonctionne moins et ce sont les gens qui se disent qu'ils vont passer. Il y a presque l'envie de passer un peu inaperçu, sans complication. On a commencé à le voir quand on organisait des cocktails auxquels les gens qui viennent dans nos cocktails, ce sont soit les nouveaux clients, soit des gens qui passaient par là. Ce sont des gens qui veulent moins d'attention et qui veulent un peu plus être tranquilles et spontanés. C'est pour cette raison qu'on essaie de l'être aussi.

00:06:28

Mme. 1: D'accord, c'est très intéressant. Pour toi, il faut que les clients se sentent comme chez eux dans la boutique. Mais est-ce propre à Max Mara ? C'est-à-dire l'idée de rendre les clients à l'aise et confortables ou ça l'est plutôt à Lyon ?

00:06:57

Mme. 2: Cette idée est commune à notre maison. La solution numéro un pour arriver à ce qu'on veut, c'est de faire en sorte que la personne nous fasse confiance, en étant agréable. Chaque boutique Max Mara est située dans un quartier différent, par exemple en France, et en fonction des pays. En Italie, ils ont une approche qui est très chaleureuse, très animée. On parle fort, on applaudit comme dans les fêtes. Si tu vas à rue Saint-Honoré à Paris, c'est le contraire. Ce sont des personnes qui sont en recherche de standing, c'est le côté un peu froid des Français. Ils se disent qu'on n'est pas à la maison, mais on est en boutique et on va essayer de garder notre distance. Nous, ici à Lyon, disons que c'est un entre deux, mais évidemment, on s'adapte. On a des gens qui ont besoin d'un espace vital et qui ne veulent surtout pas qu'on leur fasse leur fête. On respecte cela. Je dis aux filles : "Ici, c'est chez vous, vous organisez un petit apéritif, puis il y a votre une copine qui vient avec sa nouvelle amie ou votre chéri." Tout ça, c'est vraiment propre à cette boutique.

00:08:03

Mme. 1: D'accord.

00:08:04

Mme. 2: Lyon, c'est une clientèle aussi très particulière qui a désespérément besoin de ça parce que quand on discute avec de bons clients qui sont aussi clients dans les deux autres boutiques qui sont Louis Vuitton et Hermès. Systématiquement, ce qui revient, c'est un accueil froid. On ne se sent pas à notre place, alors que ce sont des gens qui ont des moyens illimités. C'est pour ça que le fait de se dire qu'on est à la maison et je considère la personne que j'ai en face de moi comme ma mère, ma sœur ou mon amie, c'est vraiment propre à ici.

00:08:35

Mme. 1: D'accord. C'est une belle maison ! On parle beaucoup de clients qui ont besoin de se sentir chez eux. En plus, il y a des boutiques qui se transforment en appartements

de luxe sans avoir une vitrine qui est au rez-de-chaussée. Comment penses-tu que ça se profile ? Est-ce que c'est le futur de l'expérience client ou ce sont juste des exceptions ?

00:09:05

Mme. 2: Personnellement, je pense que l'idée un peu du showroom et d'appartement, c'est réservé à une certaine catégorie de produits et à une certaine catégorie de clients. Je le vois mal se démocratiser dans quelques années. Ce qu'on remarque, c'est que tout change tellement vite, mais on essaie de ne pas être dépassé par la technologie. C'est notre premier but parce qu'on se rend compte maintenant que même les personnes âgées sont sur Instagram. Ce sont des personnes qu'on a habitué à être sur des services, ne serait-ce que Amazon ou Zara, que tout le monde utilise au quotidien. Tout le monde a déjà commandé au moins une fois sur Amazon pour une brouille. C'est livré très rapidement, tu peux te faire livrer sans en avoir à payer de frais. Et si ça ne va pas, quelqu'un vient le chercher chez toi. On essaie, même si on est dans le luxe, de coller à ceci parce que malgré tout c'est ce que les gens demandent. Je pense que le futur de notre travail, c'est peut-être moins quelque chose de fixe sur place, mais plutôt quelque chose qui est amené à être transporté matériellement et être envoyé à domicile.

00:10:35

Mme. 1: Est-ce que ça vous arrive d'aller chez les clients par exemple ?

00:10:42

Mme. 2: Livrer à la cliente une fois que la vente est terminée, oui, on l'a toujours fait. Que ce soit par un service de livraison, avec UPS ou que ce soit un coursier ou même si l'hôtel est à côté, on va le déposer, surtout pour les clients étrangers.

00:10:55

Mme. 1: D'accord.

00:10:57

Mme. 2: Depuis qu'on a notre nouveau système qui fait que tu peux commander des pièces sans même avoir à les régler, on prend juste ton empreinte de carte comme dans un hôtel. Tout se fait à distance, tu peux l'essayer chez toi tranquillement. Si ça ne va pas, un livreur revient le chercher et nous les ramène à la boutique et on prélèvera tout ce que tu as décidé de garder ou pas. On se rend compte que c'est quelque chose qui fonctionne de mieux en mieux. Ça reste un plaisir de pouvoir se balader en ville, et faire son shopping. On se rend compte que ce système fonctionne même pour ces personnes-là vraiment. C'est devenu un vrai outil de vente à part entière. C'est-à-dire que dans 100 % du temps des filles, il y a au moins un tiers du temps qu'elles passent à faire ça.

00:11:44

Mme. 1: Quel est le genre de clientèle qui est intéressée ?

00:11:47

Mme. 2: Tout le monde, mais il y a les personnes qu'on connaît bien qui ont toujours ce petit côté un peu affectif. On se rend compte que le côté affectif, on l'a à distance, même avec des gens qu'on n'a jamais vus, qui nous ont juste appelés au téléphone ou même qui sont venus en boutique et que finalement, on a décidé alors de procéder ainsi, mais globalement, c'est un petit peu de tout. Au début, ça a commencé avec des personnes avec lesquelles il y avait une nécessité et qui disent : "Je préfère être à la maison parce

que j'ai besoin de l'avis de mon mari." Elles se rendent compte que c'est un petit confort en plus et qu'il y a encore des gens qui sont énormément en télétravail. Ça concerne aussi les personnes qui ne travaillent pas et qui sont à la maison avec leurs enfants ou leur mari. C'est là où on essaie d'avoir un service luxe pour tout le monde. L'idée est que tout le monde puisse bénéficier de quelque chose de pratique aussi, même s'il y a des moyens mis en place et un coût financier assez important, mais on s'y retrouve.

00:12:47

Mme. 1: D'accord. Je ne sais pas si vous avez une jeune clientèle qui a à peu près mon âge. C'est vrai que la nouvelle génération est assez particulière dans la façon de faire des achats. Quand on parle des besoins et des exigences des clients de nos jours, est-ce que vous retrouvez ces changements en boutique ou est-ce que vous avez toujours une clientèle qui n'a pas encore ces besoins-là ?

00:13:25

Mme. 2: On se rend compte que même les personnes un peu plus âgées, pas forcément des personnes de 70 ans, mais ceux qui ont 30, 40, même 50 ans qui sont un peu plus sur le côté technologie et réseaux. Ce n'est pas seulement que les jeunes personnes. Ce qu'il faut dire aussi, c'est que les jeunes filles qui viennent nous voir, même des jeunes garçons, sont souvent accompagnés des parents parce qu'effectivement, c'est un petit budget. Tout le monde n'a pas forcément les mêmes moyens ou se sent à l'aise de rentrer dans une boutique. On parle de vêtements et non pas d'accessoire, donc il y en a qui ont besoin de l'approbation des parents.

00:14:12

Mme. 1: D'accord.

00:14:13

Mme. 2: En ce qui concerne les exigences des clients, on se rend compte que les personnes, en globalité des gens habitués ou des nouvelles personnes qui rentrent et qui ne sont pas habitués à être dans un espace comme celui-ci, ont des exigences de plus en plus élevées. C'est extraordinaire ! On fait tout pour que tout le monde soit content, mais on a aussi nos limites. On n'a pas non plus des budgets illimités, ou un nombre de personnes limité et des amplitudes horaires limitées. Dès fois, on se retrouve un petit peu bloqué là-dessus. Ce qu'on a observé aussi, c'est qu'il y a ces exigences parce que c'est ce qu'on donne aux gens ailleurs. Tu vas chez Nespresso acheter une rame de capsule qui coûte 4 €. Il y a un portier à la porte, tu peux avoir un café gratuit, tu peux même goûter quelque chose, on t'offre un cadeau en plus.

00:15:18

Mme. 1: C'est mieux que chez Vuitton.

00:15:20

Mme. 2: Tu vas dépenser en tout 10 € maximum. Les gens vont s'attendre à avoir ça partout. Tu commandes chez Zara, tu peux te faire livrer où tu veux et quand tu veux, il y a toujours du stock. On a des gens qui ont les exigences qui sont élevées parce qu'ils sont habitués à avoir un service qu'on appelle luxe, mais pour "rien". On remarque aussi que les gens ont des exigences et des besoins qui sont très ponctuels ou très disparates. C'est-à-dire que c'est quelque chose qu'ils n'auraient jamais mis ou qui n'a pas forcément de lien avec leur personnalité ou ce dont ils ont l'habitude ou pas. On est alors

dans un système d'exigences et de besoins, ou certaines fois, c'est compliqué pour nous. Surtout s'il y a eu la guerre de la Covid est passée par là. On est aussi dans une société où on rentre dans le crâne des gens que tout le monde est beau, tout le monde a sa place, tout le monde a un talent, tout le monde est extraordinaire et on le ressent ici, avec des gens qui se pensent je ne sais où. J'avoue que même en y mettant la meilleure volonté du monde, on se retrouve un petit peu dépassé et on ne sait pas comment réagir. D'ailleurs, on a fait une réunion il y a deux jours où on se demande comment on gère ce genre de personnes parce que ça arrive de plus en plus.

00:17:00

Mme. 1: Oui, c'est déstabilisant.

00:17:02

Mme. 2: C'est déstabilisant, et on essaie de ne pas avoir réponse à tout dans le sens où on a toujours raison et je ne peux qu'acheter, mais dans le sens où on est paré à toute éventualité. On ne se retrouve pas devant la personne à lui dire qu'on a réfléchi ton cas de figure et on a la solution qui va t'avantager. Il y a de plus en plus de demandes auxquelles je n'y peux rien. Comment gérer ça ? Ce n'est pas forcément en trouvant une solution parce qu'à notre échelle c'est limite. Comment faire comprendre que malheureusement, on ne peut pas tout faire démesurément ?

00:17:48

Mme. 1: Une autre question pour clore sur l'expérience client, si tu pouvais faire un ou deux changements à la boutique maintenant, que ferais-tu pour s'approcher le plus des besoins et des exigences des clients ?

00:18:07

Mme. 2: Je pense qu'il faut déjà persévérer dans notre patience parce que des fois, on a l'impression que prendre le temps et parler aux gens. Et sur l'heure par exemple où la dame est là, on parle pendant 50 minutes de son chien et dix minutes du pantalon. C'est important et je pense qu'il faut continuer dans ce sens. C'est un changement qui est en marche et tout le monde devrait se calquer sur ce modèle. C'est très difficile, mais à mon avis, on va y arriver. C'est peut-être réussir à éduquer les gens à prendre plus leur temps. Quand tu fais la démarche de venir jusqu'au centre-ville, ça veut dire qu'il y a forcément une voiture dans l'histoire et donc la garer plus ou moins loin ou ayant pris un transport, c'est que tu as le temps. On est tellement dans quelque chose de très rapide que c'est à nous d'essayer de se former. Même si des fois, tu as quelqu'un de très rapide en face de toi et qu'au contraire, tu essaies de le calmer. Il faut peut-être faire plus de formation là-dessus pour essayer de véhiculer au mieux cette idée de : "On est dans une boutique, on se détend, on est là pour prendre plaisir." Dans l'entreprise dans laquelle je travaille, c'est toujours pareil. On se plaint de ne pas avoir assez de soucis. On ne dépend pas de la France, on n'est pas une maison française. L'entreprise est comme ça et malheureusement, on ne peut pas changer. J'ai réfléchi, mais en termes d'amélioration, on est tellement axés sur beaucoup de choses que je ne me vois pas en rajouter. On essaie tellement de penser à tout et tout le temps.

00:20:10

Mme. 1: Plutôt du côté du service ?

00:20:12

Mme. 2: Oui et persévérez sur ce qu'on est en train de travailler actuellement.

00:20:20

Mme. 1: D'accord. Maintenant, on va parler des vendeurs et des vendeuses. Quelle importance ont-elles lors d'un achat ? Dans le sens relationnel, vois-tu qu'il y a des clients qui viennent et qui demandent spécifiquement une vendeuse parce qu'ils ont créé une connexion avec ?

00:20:49

Mme. 2: En ce qui concerne les gens qui sont déjà venus et qui ont déjà été servis, le but, c'est que quand la cliente part de la boutique, elle se souvienne de la personne. Quand elle revient, elle n'a pas forcément à demander parce que la vendeuse se souvienne d'elle. On a tout un système qu'on appelle acquisition et rétention. C'est-à-dire qu'une nouvelle cliente qui est inscrite dans notre système, il y a un programme de planning et de relance de tel ou tel type qui fait qu'on essaye de garder un contact assez régulier. Ce n'est pas forcément un contact matériel, mais c'est juste un contact gratuit. Par exemple : "Comment ça va ? On a parlé de votre mari ? Est-ce que ça va mieux ?" Il faut le faire de façon sincère et il faut avoir envie de le faire, sinon ce n'est pas la peine. Ça se fait aussi que si on a vraiment compris qui est-ce qu'on avait en face de nous. C'est ce qu'on appelle l'acquisition. Tout est lié. On a aussi un autre projet qui est la rétention, ce qui veut dire que chaque semestre, on a une liste de clients qui englobe un peu tout. Chez Max Mara, tout est très répertorié en âge, la classe sociale et les habitudes d'achats. On a un peu de tout. On prend des clients qui ne sont pas revenus depuis au moins six mois à un an. Le but est de pouvoir les faire revenir. Si on n'a pas créé de lien avec eux, c'est très difficile : "Coucou, c'est moi il y a un an." ou "Je suis nouvelle vendeuse." Ils ne vont pas revenir et acheter quelque chose. C'est aussi un autre travail qu'on a. Rien que pour ça, la vendeuse est indispensable. Ce n'est pas quelque chose qu'on peut trouver sur internet. Autre chose qui fait qu'on reste vraiment indispensable dans le processus, c'est qu'on voit l'histoire de pouvoir envoyer les pièces à la maison, que les gens préfèrent faire ça plutôt que de commander sur internet. Tu peux le faire à n'importe quelle heure depuis chez toi, dans ton lit et ça va arriver par la poste le lendemain. Il y a quand même une demande de besoin de contact. C'est pour ça qu'il faut persévérer dans une discussion où on prend le temps de demander comment ça va, parce que c'est ce qui fait que les gens vont avoir envie de nous. On compare toujours à des choses du quotidien. C'est comme des relations entre amis. Si tu ne prends jamais une nouvelle ou si je vais te demander un service ou t'inviter à une soirée dans un an.

00:23:31

Mme. 1: Oui, c'est vrai.

00:23:40

Mme. 2: C'est la même chose. En ce qui concerne tout le back-office, organisation et stock. La vendeuse n'est pas quelqu'un qui est absolument indispensable, même si, si tu veux être à l'aise avec quelqu'un, il faut connaître ton stock et savoir ce qu'il y a d'intéressant. Tout à l'heure, on disait qu'à terme, je voyais ce métier comme quelque chose plus à distance, mais je ne me vois pas le faire juste avec des stockistes ou quelqu'un qui n'y connaît rien qui te dit : "Tu as commandé telle pièce, je te l'envoie, tu réfléchis, tu me la rends." La vendeuse est en train de se transformer en conseiller. Ce terme de conseiller de vente commence à prendre son sens plutôt que vendeuse.

00:24:25

Mme. 1: Oui, c'est vrai qu'on l'appelle ainsi maintenant.

00:24:29

Mme. 2: Ou on leur dit que c'est l'assistante qui a le côté d'assister quelqu'un. Pour moi, la vendeuse reste importante dans le processus de vente. On voit aussi des clients qui sont plus à l'aise avec telle ou telle personne. Il y a des clients qui viennent avec telle personne. Les achats qu'elle va faire avec Stéphanie, ça va être complètement différent des achats qu'elle va faire avec moi par exemple. C'est que quelque part, on influence aussi la personne.

00:25:07

Mme. 1: La vendeuse se présente-t-elle quand les clients rentrent de la boutique ?

00:25:16

Mme. 2: Ça dépend, on est en train d'expérimenter quelque chose. Ce qu'il faut dire aussi, c'est qu'avant la Covid, on avait le luxe et la chance de ne pas être en sous-effectif, qui fait qu'on avait un greeter, à l'accueil qui était fait pour t'accueillir. Il fallait que ça se fasse entre dix et quinze secondes pour dire bonjour, il faut être souriante. Il faut savoir ce pour quoi tu es là, t'introduire à une vendeuse et justement dire qu'on est là pour vous. Maintenant, on ne l'a plus, donc on essaie effectivement d'introduire si on veut qu'on se souvienne de nous ou quand elle parle sur le trottoir en disant : "Ah ! X s'est occupée de mon fils, elle est géniale !" Il y a forcément des moments dans les ventes où on va le glisser. Ensuite, c'est tellement des cas particuliers à chaque fois que dire : "Bonjour, je m'appelle Sarah et je suis là pour vous." il y a un côté un peu protocolaire. On essaie de le gommer un petit peu. Par contre, donner ma carte et essayer de trouver quelque chose qui fait que je pourrais le caser. Hier par exemple, il y avait des femmes du Koweït. On a discuté et j'essaie de prendre leurs Whatsapp et je leur ai donné mon prénom parce que c'est un prénom arabe. Hier, Claudia a demandé le signe astrologique d'une personne et elles s'en sont venues à parler des prénoms. Il y a toujours quelque chose qui fait qu'on essaie de le caser sans attendre la fin pour donner la carte et dire comment on s'appelle. Il y a des personnes qui n'y sont pas sensibles. Il y a beaucoup de gens qui ne connaissent pas mon prénom. Par contre, quand on arrive dans la boutique, on se reconnaît et c'est déjà ça.

00:27:08

Mme. 1: D'accord, merci beaucoup. Pour la dernière question, on a une problématique pour notre thèse. On doit trouver une solution à la problématique. Pour moi, c'est l'écart entre ce que les clients de nos jours veulent, exigent et ont besoin et la façon traditionnelle de faire de la vente au détail. Il faut trouver une solution à ce problème.

00:27:39

Mme. 2: C'est relatif mais s'en est un.

00:27:39

Mme. 1: Il y a les marques comme Audemars Piguet par exemple, qui ont commencé à transformer leurs boutiques en espace de vie. Il y a un bar dans eut boutique. Ça fait comme un genre de club social où ils vendent leurs montres, mais qui n'a rien à voir avec leur boutique, par exemple à Genève. Chanel qui créer aussi des espaces pour leurs

clients très VIP. J'avais pensé, en regroupant toutes ces idées, de faire un espace, comme on en parlait tout à l'heure, sous forme de club social pour une clientèle ultra luxe. Comme on l'appelle sur le marché du luxe en dit beaucoup. Ils se sentent délaissés ou dépassés par toute cette nouvelle clientèle qui arrive. Est-ce que tu penses que ce genre d'initiative pourrait marcher ? Par exemple, prendre un appartement à deux rues d'ici et créer un espace pour les clients très VIP avec quelques pièces ou faire venir des pièces de la boutique pour créer un espace de vie, en même temps, avoir un moment privilégié. Tu peux, par exemple, réserver l'appartement pour faire un shopping privé. Est-ce que tu penses que c'est une bonne idée et est-ce que ça pourrait marcher ?

00:29:09

Mme. 2: Je pense que c'est une très bonne idée puisqu'il y a des gens qui y ont pensé. Cette idée est aussi reprise pour une plus grande échelle. Tu parles des choses privilégiées, par exemple un salon privé où chez Chanel, on ne verra jamais ces gens-là. Il sont derrière un mur et il y a un autre monde qui s'y passe. Chez Cartier, il y a ça aussi et tout le monde peut y aller. La nouvelle boutique Dior, avenue Montaigne ou Flagship Europe, il y a aussi tout un espace de restauration à ciel ouvert qui fait que n'importe qui peut y aller. Je trouve cette idée bien, que ce soit privatisé pour offrir un service ultra luxe, soit comme Dior. J'étais chez Harvey Nichols la semaine dernière, il y a un bar en haut où après ton shopping, tu peux venir et c'est ouvert à tout le monde. Dans les deux cas, je trouve que c'est une bonne idée. Pour Max Mara, ce serait une bonne idée, mais à Lyon, on n'a pas assez cette clientèle ultra luxe. On a effectivement des gens très connus mais notre clientèle ultra luxe, ce sont beaucoup de gens qui travaillent, qui ne sont pas à Lyon tout le temps. D'ailleurs, même quand on a proposé de privatiser la boutique, ils ne sont pas venus.

00:30:38

Mme. 1: D'accord.

00:30:38

Mme. 2: Par contre, dans une autre ville où il y a un peu plus de tourisme et plus de personnes ultra luxe. Je ne pense pas forcément à Paris, mais une boutique comme Rome, ça peut être une bonne idée. On reproduirait bien cette idée. On a organisé quelque chose pour des gens très luxe et qui sont invités à venir découvrir les usines dans notre siège en Italie, près de Milan, avec un repas et un dîner. On est beaucoup plus sur cette expérience, de se déplacer et de faire venir dans notre monde en Italie que sur place, ouvrir sur deux choses à part. Parce que pour le peu de cocktails qu'on fait qui sont à la base les clients VIP, ça ne fonctionne pas. Je dis que c'est OK, mais qui met-on dedans ? Qu'appelles-tu ultra luxe ? Parce qu'il y a de moins en moins de catégories tranchées. Il y a énormément de gens qui font des folies alors que ce sont des gens qui n'ont pas des moyens illimités. On s'adresse à des gens riches mais est-ce que le "nouveau riche" qui a fait fortune en montant sa société l'année dernière, on le met dans la même catégorie que celui qui a une fortune illimitée depuis des années. Je ne suis pas sûr que le deuxième apprécie la présence du premier. Qui est concerné par ça ? Le problème, c'est qu'il faut des moyens pour ça.

00:32:18

Mme. 1: Oui.

00:32:18

Mme. 2: Il faut du stock, du personnel et une amplitude horaire. Il y a des moyens énormes mis en place. Les maisons comme Chanel ou Audemars Piguet s'y retrouvent parce qu'il y a un rapport de productivité qui fait que ça ne me demande pas beaucoup de temps et pas beaucoup d'efforts pour se retrouver avec des millions.

00:32:42

Mme. 1: Oui, ce sont des achats conséquents.

00:32:46

Mme. 2: Il y a des pièces uniques de défilé où on peut aller jusqu'à 6 000 € ou 7 000 € du manteau. À la fin, le panier ne sera jamais aussi élevé. On ne serait pas aussi productifs en termes d'argent. Le côté ultra-privé s'adresse à une catégorie de personnes qui ont généralement le temps pour ça. Ce sont des gens qui ont besoin de se retrouver dans un club social entre eux pour partager ça. À Max Mara, tout le monde est ami, on est là pour tout le monde et dans le partage. Bien sûr, comme je viens de le dire, il y a une catégorie de gens qui peuvent avoir cet avantage. Mais sur toute l'Europe, il y a peut-être 40 personnes qui ont pu avoir ce droit.

00:33:39

Mme. 1: À Lyon, on se rapproche du shopping privé, c'est-à-dire amener chez les clients.

00:33:46

Mme. 2: Shopping privé, faire des achats à distance ou même te proposer un rendez-vous en boutique. On laisse respirer notre clientèle ultra luxe de Lyon parce que ce sont des gens qui n'ont pas le temps. Quand on regarde la classe un peu en dessous, ce sont des gens qui découvrent ça et qui aiment ça. Ça passerait plus par une sélection, mais on teste un petit truc qui est en attente d'être lancé, c'est-à-dire qu'on attend qu'il y ait une première demande. L'idée est de faire comprendre aux gens qu'on est là, mais sans être trop insistant. C'est comme dans une relation de couple, si on est ensemble depuis quelques mois, je ne vais pas te dire que je t'aime tous les jours et te dire à quel point tu es la femme de ma vie. On reste calme. Ça passe par des petites choses un peu subtiles et c'est comme ça que la relation se construit.

00:34:57

Mme. 1: Une dernière petite question sur ces espaces privés à l'étage. Par exemple, chez Prada à Barcelone, ils ont un espace VIP qui est complètement caché. Est-ce qu'on peut trouver ce genre d'espace dans d'autres boutiques Max Mara ?

00:35:14

Mme. 2: Non, pas à ma connaissance, en tout cas pas en France. Saint-honoré et Hermès ont des espaces VIP. On n'a pas ceci parce que c'est la mentalité italienne, c'est-à-dire que tout le monde se mélange. Il faut aussi dédramatiser la situation. Ça m'est déjà arrivé de voir dans d'autres boutiques, si je reprends l'idée de la nouvelle boutique Dior Avenue Montaigne, est tellement grande qu'il y a des espaces privilégiés. J'ai vu des gens avec des paquets remplis de chiens qui les accompagnent à faire leurs shoppings et être au milieu de tout le monde, au milieu des badauds qui venaient tester la boutique. À qui est-ce que tu proposes cela ? Il y a parmi nos clients ceux qui achètent des sacs à 45 000 ou 50 000 € et qui sont au milieu de tout le monde et ça ne les dérange pas. À aucun moment, j'ai entendu ces clientes-là me dire : "J'ai acheté mon sac en alligator à 50 000 €, il y avait tout le monde autour de moi !" Finalement, ça nous choque peut-être

plus en tant que vendeurs parce qu'on aimerait avoir plus un espace pour nous sans qu'il y ait tout le monde qui butine autour. D'un autre côté, de la petite expérience que j'ai vu avec ces clients, je n'ai jamais entendu dire : "J'aurais bien aimé mettre un bar, je n'ai envie de me mélanger." Tu le vois, on a tellement de vitre et tellement de collections, l'idée est de plaire à tout le monde et que tout le monde se sente à l'aise.

00:37:03

Mme. 1: Oui, donc c'est plutôt la mentalité italienne.

00:37:07

Mme. 2: Je le pense, mais surtout, c'est la preuve que ce n'est pas parce qu'on a des moyens illimités qu'on est quelqu'un de compliqué. Tu as dû le voir dans l'hôtellerie, ce sont les gens qui ont plus de moyens qui sont les plus tranquilles. Même si la chambre n'est pas faite, ils ne voient pas le problème. Cette demande peut venir des gens qui ont eu une fortune très rapidement ou récemment, qui ont besoin de montrer qu'ils sont à part. Par contre, on n'a pas ce genre de clientèle à Lyon.

00:37:37

Mme. 1: Ce n'est pas l'esprit de la marque.

00:37:48

Mme. 2: Tout à fait. On a parfois des clients qui nous disent : "Je préfère rester à l'étage ? Est-ce qu'on peut toujours se mettre ici ?" On leur répond "Oui, avec plaisir." Par contre, il n'y a pas le côté caché.

Interviewee: Oui, il faut des expériences pour tout le monde et c'est pour ça que c'est compliqué de trouver un compromis. Puisqu'il y a des gens vraiment riches qui sont nouveaux riches, et la clientèle qui a beaucoup d'argent, mais de famille, c'est plutôt celle qui m'intéresse. Comme ils veulent être discrets, c'est compliqué de-- Ce sont toutes mes questions, merci beaucoup.

Interviewer: Let's get started, I'm writing my dissertation on the in-store customer experience and the future of the customer experience with all the changes right now, with customer expectations etc. Can you talk about your background? How long have you been working in the luxury industry and how long have you been in this position?

Interviewee: I started out in sales with my parents who are merchants, but not in the retail clothing business. Since I was very young, I have had that customer contact. Then I went to school, but I always wanted to get into the luxury business because the tasks that are imposed on us are more pleasant to manage on a daily basis. It's also an environment, a space, smells, materials that everyone can only enjoy. The more you move upmarket, whether in clothing or in the hotel business, the more interesting the means put in place to encourage the link with the customer and build loyalty. What you sell also has a quality that follows, so it's easier for you to be convincing. That's why luxury has always attracted me. Apart from the fact that it is beautiful and pleasant, it is above all that there are means that are present. There is an investment that is made, financially and as a person to move forward and evolve in the right direction.

Interviewer: Okay. How do you see the customer experience in the store? Innovative either for customers who come into the store for the first time and also for customers who come here often.

Interviewee: We work a lot on the psychology of the customer. A unique experience is one that is as close as possible to the person in front of us. It's unique in the sense that it's as personalized as possible. We have stopped focusing on why you come to buy a pair of pants or why this color. It's more the idea of: "Who am I looking at, who is this person, what is their daily life like?" To really make the person feel privileged in that sense. We also have the idea of being very relaxed and as natural as possible. When we train the saleswomen, in any case, in my store, it's the idea of inviting someone into your home. We have the same reflexes to ask ourselves if the person feels comfortable enough. When someone knocks on your door and you're having a party with your friends, you don't say, "Come in and figure it out." There's really a reflex to accompany from A to Z, I need to know if you're feeling good, I need to know how your day went. We try to copy on the same model. We have several things so that the customer feels listened to in his need, that is to say that we try in addition to have answer to all the eventualities. We have product ordering systems, we have systems where we can deliver to your home, or we simply take your bank imprint. It's not just about coming into the store, the salesperson is nice to you, we keep in touch and that's it. The unique side is the personalized side to the maximum. For our regular customers, we already try to be less insistent because they are people who are very much in demand. Before, we worked a lot on WhatsApp, we always sent the new collection. We realize that by sending messages or calling, even when we have special events, a cocktail party for example, people are less attentive because it's what everyone does. You realize that what really makes the difference is not the client gift, the cocktail party or the fact that she received the photo of the collection ten days before. It's mostly the listening side, the kindness, just checking in from time to time, in a normal, unforced and free way. Then, we have the private meeting side, unique pieces where we can receive these people. We give access to previews of pieces where we also establish wish lists. We realize that for these customers, it is so usual that it is not even a plus. The plus is in the relationship of kindness, of being someone normal who is there for you, who will check on you from time to time. It's not that easy to just be quiet and nice. We're in an environment where, especially the sales team, you have to sell and get results. For these people, we try to be a little behind the scenes without letting people down and telling them as soon as there is a new collection. Keep a connection, but be discreet.

Interviewer: I also studied the very luxury clientele. It's a bit of a special term for this clientele that is different from people who come in and buy jeans and need more discretion. Do they prefer private appointments?

Interviewee: Not necessarily, we realize that this clientele is more and more spontaneous. That's what made us say that we need to be more spontaneous. We don't necessarily have to make an appointment or close the store for them. That works less and it's the people who say they're going to stop by. There's almost a desire to be a little unnoticed, uncomplicated. We started to see it when we were having cocktail parties where the people who come to our cocktail parties are either new customers or people who were passing by. These are people who want less attention and want to be a little more quiet and spontaneous. That's why we try to be that way too.

Interviewer: Okay, that's very interesting. You want to make the customers feel at home in the store. But is that unique to Max Mara? Is it the idea of making customers feel comfortable or is it more like Lyon?

Interviewee: This idea is common to our house. *The number one solution to achieve what we want is to make the person trust us, by being pleasant.* Each Max Mara store is located in a different area, for example in France, and depending on the country. In Italy, they have an approach that is very warm, very animated. People talk loudly, they clap like at parties. If you go to rue Saint-Honoré in Paris, it is the opposite. *These are people who are looking for standing, it's the cold side of the French. They think we're not at home, but we're in a store and we try to keep our distance.* Here in Lyon, let's say that it's an in-between place, but obviously, we adapt. We have people who need their own space and who don't want us to make their party. We respect that. *I tell the girls, "This is your place, you're having a little cocktail party, and then there's your girlfriend coming with her new friend or your honey." All of that is really unique to this store.*

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Lyon, it's also a very particular clientele that desperately needs that because when you talk to good customers who are also customers in the other two boutiques which are Louis Vuitton and Hermès. Systematically, what comes back is a cold welcome. We feel out of place, even though these are people with unlimited means. *That's why the fact that I feel like I'm at home and I consider the person in front of me as my mother, my sister or my friend, that's really specific to this place.*

Interviewer: Okay. It's a beautiful home! We talk a lot about clients needing to feel at home. Plus, there are stores that are turning into luxury apartments without having a storefront that's on the first floor. How do you think this is shaping up? Is this the future of customer experience or are these just exceptions?

Interviewee: *Personally, I think the idea of a bit of a showroom and apartment, it's reserved for a certain category of products and a certain category of customers.* I don't see it becoming more democratic in a few years. What we notice is that everything changes so fast, but we try not to be overtaken by technology. That's our first goal because we realize now that even older people are on Instagram. These are people that we've gotten used to being on services, if only Amazon or Zara, that everyone uses on a daily basis. Everyone has ordered at least once on Amazon for a trifle. It's delivered very quickly, you can have it delivered without having to pay for it. And if it doesn't fit, someone comes to pick it up from you. We try, even though we're in the luxury business, to stick to that because that's what people are asking for anyway. I think that the future of our work is maybe less something fixed on site, but rather something that is brought to be transported physically and sent to the home.

Interviewer: Do you ever go to clients' homes for example?

Interviewee: Delivering to the customer after the sale is complete, yes, we've always done that. Whether it's through a delivery service, with UPS or whether it's a courier or even if the hotel is next door, we'll drop it off, especially for foreign customers.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Since we have our new system where you can order parts without even having to pay for them, we just take your card imprint like in a hotel. **Everything is done remotely, you can try it out at home. If it doesn't fit, a delivery person comes back to pick it up and brings it back to the store and we'll take whatever you decide to keep or not.** We realize that this is something that is working better and better. It's still a pleasure to be able to walk around town and do your shopping. We realize that this system works even for these people. It has become a real sales tool in its own right. That is to say that in 100% of the girls' time, there is at least a third of the time that they spend doing this.

Interviewer: What kind of clientele is interested?

Interviewee: Everyone, but there are the people that you know well that still have that little bit of an emotional side. We realize that the emotional side, we have it from a distance, even with people we've never seen, who just called us on the phone or even came into the store and finally, we decided then to proceed like this, but overall, it's a little bit of everything. In the beginning, it started with people that there was a need with and they say, "I'd rather be at home because I need my husband's input." **They realize that it's a little extra comfort and that there are still people who telecommute a lot. It's also about people who don't work and are at home with their kids or husband. This is where we try to have a luxury service for everyone. The idea is that everyone can benefit from something practical as well, even if there are means put in place and a fairly significant financial cost, but we are getting there.**

Interviewer: Okay. I don't know if you have a younger clientele that's about my age. It's true that the new generation is quite particular in the way they shop. When we talk about the needs and requirements of customers these days, do you find these changes in the store or do you still have a clientele that doesn't have these needs yet?

Interviewee: We realize that even people who are a little bit older, not necessarily 70 years old, but those who are 30, 40, even 50 years old who are a little bit more on the technology and networking side. It's not just young people. It's not just young people. Young girls who come to us, even young boys, are often accompanied by their parents because it's a small budget. Not everyone has the same means or feels comfortable going into a boutique. We're talking about clothes, not accessories, so there are some who need parental approval.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: In terms of customer requirements, you realize that people, overall regular people or new people coming in who are not used to being in a space like this, have higher and higher requirements. It is extraordinary! We do everything we can to keep everyone happy, but we also have our limits. We don't have unlimited budgets, or a limited number of people and limited time slots. Sometimes, we find ourselves a little bit stuck on this. What we've also observed is that there are these requirements because that's what we give to people elsewhere. You go to Nespresso to buy a ream of capsules that costs 4 €. There's a doorman at the door, you can get a free coffee, you can even taste something, they give you a gift as well.

Interviewer: It's better than at Vuitton.

Interviewee: You will spend a total of 10 € maximum. People will expect to have this everywhere. You order from Zara, you can have it delivered where you want and when you want, there is always stock. We have people who have high expectations because they are used to having a service that we call luxury, but for "nothing". We also notice that people have requirements and needs that are very punctual or very disparate. That is to say, it is something that they would never have put on or that does not necessarily have a link with their personality or what they are used to or not. We are then in a system of requirements and needs, or sometimes it is complicated for us. Especially if there was the Covid war that went on. We are also in a society where people think that everyone is beautiful, everyone has a place, everyone has a talent, everyone is extraordinary and we feel it here, with people who think they are somewhere else. I admit that even with the best will in the world, we find ourselves a little overwhelmed and we don't know how to react. [Moreover, we had a meeting two days ago where we wondered how to manage this kind of people because it happens more and more.](#)

Interviewer: Yes, it's destabilizing.

Interviewee: It's destabilizing, and you try not to have all the answers in the sense that you're always right and I can only buy, but in the sense that you're prepared for anything. We don't find ourselves in front of the person saying that we have thought about your situation and we have the solution that will benefit you. There are more and more requests that I can't help. [How do I deal with that? It's not necessarily by finding a solution because at our level it's limited. How do we make people understand that unfortunately, we can't do everything in excess?](#)

Interviewer: Another question to close on the customer experience, if you could make one or two changes to the store now, what would you do to get as close as possible to the needs and requirements of the customers?

Interviewee: I think we have to persevere in our patience because sometimes it feels like taking the time and talking to people. And on the hour for example when the lady is here, we talk for 50 minutes about her dog and ten minutes about the pants. That's important and I think we need to continue that. It's a change that's happening and everyone should follow that model. It's very difficult, but I think we'll get there. Maybe it's educating people to take more time. When you take the step of coming downtown, it means that there is necessarily a car in the story and therefore parking it more or less far away or having taken a transport, it means that you have the time. We are so much in something very fast that it is up to us to try to form. Even if sometimes you have a very fast person in front of you and you try to calm him down. Maybe we need to do more training on this to try to convey this idea of: "We're in a store, we're relaxing, we're here to enjoy ourselves." In the company where I work, it's always the same. We complain that we don't have enough to worry about. We don't depend on France, we are not a French company. The company is like that and unfortunately, we can't change. I thought about it, but in terms of improvement, we are so focused on many things that I don't see myself adding to it. We try so hard to think about everything all the time.

Interviewer: More on the service side?

Interviewee: Yes and persevere on what we're working on now.

Interviewer: Okay. Now we're going to talk about the salesmen and saleswomen. How important are they in a purchase? In the relational sense, do you see that there are customers that come in and specifically ask for a salesperson because they've made a connection with?

Interviewee: As far as people who have been there and been served before, the goal is that when the customer leaves the store, she remembers the person. When she comes back, she doesn't necessarily have to ask because the saleswoman remembers her. We have a whole system that we call acquisition and retention. That is to say that a new customer who is registered in our system, there is a planning and follow-up program of this or that type which means that we try to keep a fairly regular contact. It's not necessarily a material contact, but it's just a free contact. For example: "How are you doing? Did we talk about your husband? Are you doing any better?" It has to be done in a sincere way and you have to want to do it, otherwise it's not worth it. It's also only done if you really understand who you're dealing with. This is what we call acquisition. Everything is linked. We also have another project, which is retention, which means that each semester we have a list of clients that includes everything. *At Max Mara, everything is very much catalogued by age, social class and shopping habits.* We have a little bit of everything. We take customers who haven't been back for at least six months to a year. The goal is to get them to come back. If you haven't made a connection with them, it's very difficult: "Hello, this is me a year ago." or "I'm a new salesperson." They're not going to come back and buy something. It's also another job we have. For that alone, the saleswoman is indispensable. It's not something you can find on the internet. Another thing that makes us really indispensable in the process is that we see the history of being able to send the pieces home, that people would rather do that than order on the internet. You can do it at any time from your house, in your bed and it's going to arrive in the mail the next day. There's still a demand for contact. That's why you have to persevere in a discussion where you take the time to ask how things are going, because that's what makes people want us. We always compare it to everyday things. It's like relationships between friends. If you never pick up a new one or if I'm going to ask you a favor or invite you to a party in a year.

Interviewer: Yes, that's true.

Interviewee It's the same thing. As far as all the back office, organization and inventory. The saleswoman is not someone who is absolutely essential, although if you want to be comfortable with someone, you have to know your stock and know what's interesting. Earlier, we were saying that eventually I see this business as something more remote, but I don't see myself doing it just with stockists or someone who doesn't know anything about it who tells you, "You ordered this part, I'll send it to you, you think about it, you give it back." The salesperson is turning into a consultant. This term sales consultant is starting to make sense rather than saleswoman.

Interviewer: Yes, that's right, that's what they call it now.

Interviewee: Or we tell them it's the assistant who has the side of assisting someone. To me, the salesperson is still important in the sales process. We also see customers who are more comfortable with this or that person. There are customers who come with this person or that person. The purchases she will make with Stephanie will be completely different from the purchases she will make with me, for example. Somewhere along the line, we also influence the person.

Interviewer: Does the saleswoman introduce herself when the customers come back from the store?

Interviewee: It depends, we are experimenting with something. What I have to say is that before the Covid, we had the luxury and the luck of not being understaffed, so we had a greeter at the reception desk who was there to greet you. It had to be done between ten and fifteen seconds to say hello, you have to be smiling. You have to know what you are there for, introduce yourself to a saleswoman and say that we are here for you. Now we don't have that anymore, so we actually try to introduce if we want to be remembered or when she's talking on the sidewalk saying, "Ah X took care of my son, she's great!" There are bound to be moments in sales where we'll slip it in. Then, it's such a special case each time that saying: "Hello, my name is Sarah and I'm here for you" has a somewhat protocol side. We try to erase it a little bit. On the other hand, giving my card and trying to find something that I could fit in. Yesterday, for example, there were women from Kuwait. We talked and I try to take their Whatsapp and I gave them my first name because it is an Arabic name. Yesterday, Claudia asked the astrological sign of a person and they came to talk about the first names. [There is always something that makes you try to fit it in without waiting until the end to give the card and say what your name is.](#) There are people who are not sensitive to that. There are many people who don't know my first name. However, when we arrive in the store, we recognize each other and that's something.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much. For the last question, we have a problem for our thesis. We have to find a solution to the problem. For me, it's the gap between what customers today want, demand and need and the traditional way of doing retail. We have to find a solution to that.

Interviewee: It's relative, but it's a problem.

Interviewer: There are brands like Audemars Piguet for example, which have started to transform their boutiques into living spaces. There is a bar in the boutique. It's like a kind of social club where they sell their watches, but it has nothing to do with their boutique, for example in Geneva. Chanel also creates spaces for their very VIP clients. I had thought, by gathering all these ideas, to make a space, as we were talking about earlier, in the form of a social club for an ultra luxury clientele. As we call it in the luxury market, it says a lot. They feel neglected or overwhelmed by all this new clientele that is coming in. Do you think this kind of initiative could work? For example, taking an apartment two blocks away and creating a space for very VIP clients with a few rooms or bringing in pieces from the boutique to create a living space, at the same time, having a special moment. You can, for example, reserve the apartment for private shopping. Do you think that's a good idea and could it work?

Interviewee: I think it's a very good idea because there are people who have thought of it. This idea is also being taken up for a larger scale. *You're talking about the privileged things, for example a private salon where at Chanel, you'll never see those people. They are behind a mut and there is another world going on there.* At Cartier, there is also that and everyone can go there. The new Dior boutique, on avenue Montaigne or Flagship Europe, there is also a whole open-air restaurant space where anyone can go. *I think that's a great idea, that it's privatized to offer an ultra-luxury service,* either like Dior. I was at Harvey Nichols last week, there's a bar upstairs where after your shopping, you can come and it's open to anyone. In both cases, I think it's a good idea. For Max Mara, it would be a good idea, but in Lyon, we don't have enough of this ultra-luxury clientele. We do have some very famous people, but our ultra-luxury clientele is made up of many people who work, who are not in Lyon all the time. Moreover, even when we proposed to privatize the store, they did not come.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: On the other hand, in another city where there is a little more tourism and more ultra luxury people. I'm not necessarily thinking of Paris, but a boutique like Rome, that might be a good idea. We would replicate that idea. We have organized something for very luxury people who are invited to come and discover the factories in our headquarters in Italy, near Milan, with a meal and a dinner. We are much more about this experience, to move and bring in our world in Italy than on the spot, open on two separate things. Because for the few cocktails we do that are basically VIP customers, it does not work. I say it's OK, but who do we put in it? What do you call ultra luxury? Because there are less and less clear-cut categories. There are a lot of people who do crazy things even though they don't have unlimited means. We're talking about rich people, but is the "new rich" who made his fortune by setting up his company last year put in the same category as the person who has had unlimited wealth for years? I'm not sure the latter appreciates the presence of the former. Who cares about that? The problem is, you need resources for that.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: You need inventory, you need staff, and you need a range of hours. There are huge resources put in place. Houses like Chanel or Audemars Piguet are able to do this because there is a productivity ratio which means that it doesn't take a lot of time and effort to end up with millions.

Interviewer: Yes, those are consistent purchases.

Interviewee: There are unique pieces of fashion show where you can go up to 6,000 € or 7,000 € per coat. In the end, the basket will never be that high. We wouldn't be as productive in terms of money. *The ultra-private side is for a category of people who usually have time for it. These are people who need to be in a social club with each other to share that.* At Max Mara, everyone is a friend, we are there for everyone and we share. Of course, as I just said, there is a category of people who can have this advantage. But in the whole of Europe, there are maybe 40 people who could have this right.

Interviewer: In Lyon, we are getting closer to private shopping, that is, taking to the customers' homes.

Interviewee: Private shopping, shopping at a distance or even offering you an appointment in a boutique. We let our ultra-luxury clientele in Lyon breathe because they are people who don't have the time. When we look at the class a little below, they are people who discover this and who like it. It would be more of a selection process, but we are testing a little thing that is waiting to be launched, that is to say that we are waiting for the first demand. The idea is to make people understand that we are there, but without being too insistent. It's like in a relationship, if we've been together for a few months, I'm not going to tell you that I love you every day and tell you how you're the woman of my life. We stay calm. It's a little bit subtle and that's how the relationship is built.

Interviewer: One last little question about these private spaces upstairs. For example, at Prada in Barcelona, they have a VIP area that is completely hidden. Can we find this kind of space in other Max Mara stores?

Interviewee: No, not to my knowledge, at least not in France. Saint-honoré and Hermès have VIP spaces. We don't have this because it's the Italian mentality, which is that everyone mixes. It is also necessary to play down the situation. It has already happened to me to see in other stores, if I take the idea of the new Dior store Avenue Montaigne, is so large that there are privileged spaces. I've seen people with packages full of dogs accompanying them to do their shopping and be in the middle of everyone, in the middle of the onlookers who came to test the store. Who do you offer this to? Among our customers, there are those who buy bags for 45,000 or 50,000 € and who are in the middle of everyone and it doesn't bother them. At no time have I ever heard these customers say to me: "I bought my alligator bag for €50,000, there was everyone around me!" In the end, maybe it shocks us more as sellers because we'd like to have more of a space to ourselves without everyone milling around. On the other hand, from the little experience I've seen with these customers, I've never heard them say, "I wish I had put a bar in, I don't feel like mixing." You see it, we have so much glass and so many collections, the idea is to please everyone and have everyone feel comfortable.

Interviewer: Yes, so it's more the Italian mentality.

Interviewee: I think so, but above all, it's the proof that it's not because you have unlimited means that you are a complicated person. You must have seen it in the hotel business, it's the people who have more means who are the quiet ones. Even if the room is not done, they don't see the problem. This demand can come from people who have made a fortune very quickly or recently, who need to show that they are special. On the other hand, we don't have that kind of clientele in Lyon.

Interviewer: That's not the spirit of the brand.

Interviewee Absolutely. We sometimes have clients who say, "I'd rather stay upstairs? Can we still fit in here?" We tell them, "Yes, we'd love to." On the other hand, there's not the hidden side.

Interviewer: Yes, you need experiences for everyone and that's why it's complicated to find a compromise. Because there are really rich people who are newly rich, and the clientele who have a lot of money, but family, that's the one I'm more interested in. Since they want to be discreet, it's complicated to-- These are all my questions, thank you very much.

Luxury customer 1

Interviewer: Hi! Thank you very much for accepting to do this interview, it will be recorded but as the form you signed, it is absolutely confidential. As we spoke about previously, I am doing research on the retail experience in luxury stores. First of all, could you tell me a little bit about your background?

Interviewee: It is all clear thank you, I am happy to help. Well, Hi! My name is Marie and I was born in Belgium. After 2 weeks I moved to London for four years, 6 years in NYC, 7 years in Bratislava. During my studies I also had the opportunity to move to Switzerland for 6 months. I am studying Hospitality and Management, as you are. I love luxury as well so I think this topic is very interesting. During my free time I like to go for runs, do some yoga or some online shopping.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for this introduction, you are quite the cosmopolitan! Indeed it is a very interesting topic and it is so vast. Speaking of, could you tell me about your best retail experience? Where was it? And in what context?

Interviewee: Ah that is a good question. Let me think (pause). Oh so my best retail experience was at Goyard in Paris. It was super special because they sat me down, explained all the benefits the bag had. **In addition to that I could really feel from the employee that she really let me take as much time as possible.** You know, sometimes you feel that the sales associates are busy, you see the line outside and it just doesn't feel very comfortable. **But she offered me a drink and really gave me all the time to decide which bag and colour I chose at the end. It felt super homey and comforting.**

Interviewer: I completely understand that feeling, it's what a luxury retail experience should look like. How did you feel before the purchase?

Interviewee: So before the purchase I thought I had made my decision. I usually go to stores knowing what I will buy. But since the lady was so patient with me **I chose for a totally different item that I had planned to buy.**

Interviewer: That is really interesting, so the way sales associates take care of you, your purchasing will change. Now that we went over the best retail experience, how was your worst retail experience, if you had one?

Interviewee: **Well this one I remember very vividly, it was in YSL in Vienna. So I had made an appointment with an employee I was in contact with, so far so good. And when arriving to the store for my appointment the employee was in a rush and he wasn't ready for the appointment. That was super frustrating, and it was also very busy in the store, I could feel tension all around me. You know I was really excited before walking in**

and it's not like I regret the purchase but I was still so disappointed and unhappy with the customer service. Now I'm more reluctant going to YSL stores.

Interviewer: That makes perfect sense, even if the product is still good quality, it is the retail experience which sticks with you on the long run and it can really affect the brand image. So in conclusion for these questions, what is crucial for you in a retail experience?

Interviewee: Definitely I want to feel relaxed, welcome, I want the employees to be helpful and knowledgeable and to make me feel special.

Interviewer: How do you envision your perfect luxury retail experience?
Would it look like this? This is a picture of an Audemars Piguet, a fine watchmaking Maison, who recently redesigned their stores as luxurious apartments.

Or like this? These are classic and timeless Chanel and Louis Vuitton stores,

Interviewee: Hum, I prefer a store where I can see most of the products but also have privacy so that not everyone in the store is visible to each other. It is also important for there to be seating. From time-to-time employees are busy, so a guest should be able to have a seat and relax. Kind of like a living room.

Interviewer: Thank you very much Marie for answering all these questions, that is all for me. Thanks for your time.

Interviewee: My pleasure and let me know how the research turns out.

Interviewer: Will do. Bye.

Luxury customer 2:

Interviewer: Good morning, thank you for accepting to do this interview, it will be recorded but as you know and signed off, it is all confidential and for research purposes only. Just for context, I am doing research for my thesis on the retail experience in luxury stores. To begin with, could you tell me a little bit about your background?

Interviewee: Of course, so I am Elfie I am 21 years old and I am half Dutch half Chinese.

Interviewer: Thank you Elfie, in what industry are you working in?

Interviewee: I am currently working at Cartier, so in luxury jewelry and watches

Interviewer: You are perfectly in the theme, could you tell me about your best retail experience and what it made it special?

Interviewee: So my best retail experience was when I went to a jeweler to pick something up for my birthday together with my parents. They really sat down with us first to really get to know us and the occasion of the gift and then afterwards the associate picked up some pieces and showed me a lot of things which I could try on. It was so nice cause he really you know took the time.

Interviewer: That is of course a very good feeling. And how did you feel before making the purchase?

Interviewee: Well I went inside the store with an open mind, but I didn't really know if there would be something that would suit me you know. I didn't have many expectations to be honest.

Interviewer: And how did you feel after the purchase?

Interviewee: I felt super happy with my new purchases but I was especially pleased with the nice and personalized experience I had as well. It felt so comfortable and friendly, didn't really feel like I was buying something.

Interviewer: That is very nice, every retail experience should be like this right? And could you now tell me about your worst retail experience?

Interviewee: That one I can remember well. When I was at the Bijenkorf, it's a department store with high end items by the way, my mom and I were looking through the collection of Ted Baker and the sales associate didn't even try to engage with us. She was distant, didn't care to make a connection. It was very discouraging for us while we did want to purchase something. And once at the register she also did not make eye contact and was not very engaging.

Interviewer: That must have felt very disengaging indeed. But how did you feel before and after? Did you make the purchase? If yes, do you regret making it because of the poor retail experience? Or?

Interviewee: I mean we did make the purchase in the end because I really wanted to have the particular jumpsuit, but I definitely would not recommend the brand to my friends or family.

Interviewer: I can imagine you wouldn't. So, what is crucial for you in a luxury retail experience?

Interviewee: For me it is quite simple, it needs to be genuine, caring and personalized. Nothing very crazy.

Interviewer: I would also agree. How do you envision your perfect luxury retail experience?

Interviewee: That is a very good question, hum. So would like to have an experience that engages all my senses. I wanna see, feel, and even smell the luxury around me when I am shopping you know?. I would want to have a sales associate that has the perfect balance of engagement but also giving me space to think about my purchase and maybe even pick up design that she/ he believes would fit me.

Interviewer: Thank you, this is a very interesting point, so an immersive experience. Would it look like this? Your perfect retail experience? This is a picture of an Audemars

Piguet, a fine watchmaking Maison, who recently redesigned their stores as luxurious apartments.

Interviewee: Yes, it looks beautiful I really love it, it looks very homey. I would shop there definitely.

Interviewer: And based on this, would you be interested in an even more exclusive retail experience? This would take the form of a social club with a yearly membership giving you access to private stores, designed as a social club, allowing you to shop, before having a drink or a meal at the in-house restaurant. An out of the ordinary experience.

Interviewee: Yes I would definitely be interested in that, I love an immersive experience so I would love this.

Interviewer: Good to know. And how do you find interactions with sales associates to be?

Interviewee: Well as I mentioned in one of my previous answers, I really find it important that the service is genuine and coming from an associate that is not pushing me to purchase something but rather supports me in whichever decision I take.

Interviewer: How do you like to keep in touch with sales associates after your purchase? For them to give you exclusive updates on new arrivals and such?

Interviewee: Yes, we stay in contact via email. I think it's nice and helpful.

Interviewer: Okay that is helpful to know thank you! That is all for my questions, thank you again for your help.

Interviewee: Of course, no problem. Good luck.

Interviewer: Thank you. Bye.

Luxury customer 3:

Interviewer: How are you today?

Interviewee: I'm good. How are you?

Interviewer: I'm good. Thank you so much for accepting to do this interview. I'm writing my thesis about guest experience in luxury retail, so I'm conducting research on how luxury products are best sold in the retail selling and how ultra luxury customers are behaving and what are their needs nowadays. This interview is recorded and will be transcribed, but of course it's 100 percent confidential as I've sent you the confidentiality agreement which you signed, so everything that you say stays between us and your name will not be displayed anywhere. Could you tell me a little bit about your background? Where are you from and where do you usually shop?

Interviewee: Okay, so my name is Jessica, I'm from the US, I'm also half-Japanese. I value quality over quantity, and so going to stores like Zara and other fast fashion brands. I've decided to stop doing that, so now my mother always said to me while I was

growing up that it was very important to kind of value quality. She would always buy thing like coats and bags and shoes and things like that, she preferred if I would buy more luxury or more quality brands instead of the cheap shoes, that will kind of like be thrown in the trash in a few months.

Interviewee: That makes sense.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: If I understand correctly you've been used to having luxury items based on an ethical perspective, but also on a quality perspective.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your best retail experience and what made it special?

Interviewee: Specific ones, I can't think of a specific one, but I'm going to go with culturally. I've had better experiences in a luxury store, let's say in Asian countries, because they're a lot more focused around customer service if you like, whereas in European stores, it was more of they would look at you and kind of determine whether they wanted to serve you well or not and see you based off of what you were wearing and things. I would say that I've had a lot, I think of a specific time is when I was at Mikimoto and I was buying a necklace and earrings with my mother. They were very kind, offering us water and offering us take a seat whenever they were doing the transaction, because it takes quite a long time, due to the tax free things. Even when we walked in, they were very welcoming and they wouldn't judge you or anything. They would take you immediately to where you needed to go, and it was just a much more enjoyable experience, versus ones I've had in Europe where they were just trying to kind of get rid of you as fast as possible.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Yes. I feel like, yes.

Interviewer: You preferred a more customer centric private experience, instead of a quick one and waiting in line, and that's not really what you were looking for.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, it's kind of the same question, but what is crucial for you in a luxury retail experience?

Interviewee: Well, I think the most crucial thing, because I like to feel comfortable, obviously, and I want to feel like me, like I am this person that I'm the sales representative or I don't want it to feel like there's judgment between us or there's any sort of tension. I just want it to feel like a very, swift, chill like just a normal transaction between you and the sales representative. You know, I don't know how to explain it very well.

Interviewer: No that makes sense.

Interviewee: Just a lot more nice and chill.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you so much. When envisioning your perfect luxury retail experience in terms of design, could you have a look at the pictures that I'm showing you? Would it look more like the first two? It's a picture from a Magpie storage, which is a fine watchmaking Maison. Who recently redesigned some of their stores as a luxury apartment. The two first pictures or do you think it looks more like the last two? These are classic Chanel and Louis Vuitton stores. What is your brand?

Interviewee: Okay for me, I do like where they are designing the stores, like living rooms and classic like areas like your home. I do like the brightness of the other two better, so I don't know if that really matters or is relevant, but I do like the idea where you are in a room where it kind of feels like you're home and it doesn't feel like you're kind of in a store.

Interviewer: Right, so you prefer the idea of a private store, but maybe the particular design wouldn't be for you.

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewer: That makes sense. You would be interested in a more exclusive retail experience, for instance, it would take the form of a social club. You would be invited by the luxury brand that you shop out frequently to be part of this extremely private retail experience, which money can't buy because it's not only about how much you're spending, it's also about the type of customer that you are, and depending on your needs, you would be invited or not. It would be a space where you have a dining area where it really feels like a home that you could spend time out. You would have private rooms for fittings and such and have a personal sales associate, which would really follow through with you from A to Z and always be in contact with you. As you were mentioning previously, that you like a comfortable setting and comfortable relationships, so would you be interested in this, do you think this would fit your needs?

Interviewee: Yes, I feel like it definitely would, but I would prefer because all I would really like is that somewhere where it feels like I'm home? I don't feel like stressed to buy something. I don't feel like where I just can look at the things that I want to look at, and if I end up liking something, then I will buy it. This would be nice because if I just feel it's more important that the sales representative is not very pushy or judgmental. I think that's really all the qualities that I look for in a luxury retail experience.

Interviewer: Right. Do you think that being part of such a private experience would help with that? Because then you're not pressured, I mean, there's not a time pressure from this associate in respect to a regular store.

Interviewee: Yes, for sure.

Interviewer: Okay. That makes sense. Well, that's it for my questions. We also touched upon the relationship with this sales associate, which were my last questions. Thank you so much for taking part of this. I'll reach back out to you when I have a more complete

research and testing for this solution, and yes, thank you so much for your time and we'll be in touch.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you.

6.6 Interview coding

6.6.1 Social desirability

Recognition

That's why it's difficult because the old-fashioned clients, in quotes, say: "Why do they take care of these clients so much with their backwards hats, et cetera. Millennials" because these are their customers of tomorrow, obviously. It's now that we have to develop their loyalty.

Then when we start to have, I don't know, a tourist, for example. He comes to the entrance and he starts seeing a lot of things, and we notice that it's someone who needs more personalized attention. We prefer to move to this place for a more personalized client experience.

Actually, another important thing that I can share with you is, I'm telling you VIP for you to understand, but here in Prada, we say VIC. That is the same, but it's not very important people or person. It's Very Important Customer.

Well this one I remember very vividly, it was in YSL in Vienna. So I had made an appointment with an employee I was in contact with, so far so good. And when arriving to the store for my appointment the employee was in a rush and he wasn't ready for the appointment. That was super frustrating, and it was also very busy in the store, I could feel tension all around me. You know I was really excited before walking in and it's not like I regret the purchase but I was still so disappointed and unhappy with the customer service.

When I was at the Bijenkorf, it's a department store with high end items by the way, my mom and I were looking through the collection of Ted Baker and the sales

associate didn't even try to engage with us. She was distant, didn't care to make a connection. It was very discouraging for us while we did want to purchase something. And once at the register she also did not make eye contact and was not very engaging.

I've had better experiences in a luxury store, let's say in Asian countries, because they're a lot more focused around customer service if you like, whereas in European stores, it was more of they would look at you and kind of determine whether they wanted to serve you well or not and see you based off of what you were wearing and things.

Social class distinguishment

First of all, because the customer has changed and today, the customer changes every few months. Maybe not as fast, but since 2000, with all this generation of millennials, we have a clientele today, which obviously has nothing to do with the clientele we had in the 90s-2000s and even 2010. Why is that? Because we have consumers who are extremely young and who consume a lot with money they have not earned. That is, it's their parents' money.

These are people who have a different relationship to luxury, to property and to status. It is not necessarily a very nice clientele in the ethical sense of the term. However, the luxury houses have no choice but to take it into consideration, because it is a clientele that has every interest in building loyalty for the future.

Before, we had a client who was bourgeois or wealthy. Today, we evaluate our clients more in terms of their means. Somehow, it's completely crazy, today we have people who don't have the majority, but who spend 800 or 1,000 € on a pair of sneakers.

Because the customer, he comes in for the status. They come in because it's shiny, they come in because it's bright and everyone's talking about it. Once they come in, you have to explain to them that they're home.

"In any case, those who serve the rich are only waiting for one thing, to become rich in their turn in order to be served."

But then everyone wants to be rich

It's a good thing that there are rich people so that the craft industry still exists. It's a good thing there are rich people so that everyone has a job, because the rich need to be served, drive nice cars, etc.

That's the whole problem with luxury. It's that luxury today, people feel that it's aggressive, because it's extremely present. If it's so aggressive, it's because we all want it.

Because access to luxury has practically become a social prerequisite. For example, the less money people have, the less luxury people can afford, the more they need to display luxury to feel socially integrated.

Then you have those who don't know what they're buying. As soon as people have a little bit of that culture and want that status, they're willing to spend a whole month's salary to get the real thing, rather than buying a counterfeit.

The classic one is the one of the clients that we already know. That they are our super loyal clients, or if they spent a lot of money in our store. We already know them. That's the easiest one and actually they already know this place and they come directly here.

Of course they feel a lot more special. That's why if we are here, maybe our client could see what is happening there, the VIP room. Of course. If I can make a more special experience for one person, they feel it immediately.

At Max Mara, everything is very much catalogued by age, social class and shopping habits.

Among our customers, there are those who buy bags for 45,000 or 50,000 € and who are in the middle of everyone and it doesn't bother them.

I think so, but above all, it's the proof that it's not because you have unlimited means that you are a complicated person. You must have seen it in the hotel business, it's the people who have more means who are the quiet ones.

This demand can come from people who have made a fortune very quickly or recently, who need to show that they are special

Exclusiveness

It's really for that clientele that doesn't necessarily want to wait in front of a store for hours.

All this means that customers who have a lot of money, paradoxically, need a lot of simplicity. Finally, receiving them outside of a public place, that is to say in a private place, makes sense.

Then you have people who are really extremely good luxury clients, with a real luxury culture that nobody knows about. You must never forget that you can have two clients who will both have a private jet and a helicopter. One will use his private jet and his helicopter to go to Nikki Beach to splash champagne all afternoon and the second one will go for a picnic on top of Mont Blanc. It's the same budget, it's not the same experience, it's not the same philosophy, it's not the same person. Since it's the same budget, luxury must manage these two clients. Bring the glitter to the person who is crazy about bling bling. Bringing hyper discretion and customization to the one who is going to have a picnic on the Mont Blanc.

People complain that I'm talking nonsense, the 10 richest people on the planet, the 100 richest people on the planet. I'll tell you, it's going to take 100 experiences. I'm exaggerating, but maybe it's going to take 10, because you're going to do multiples of 10. You have 10 like the Kardashians, 10 like the Elon Musk. Elon Musk is going to the stars. Kardashian is going to the queen's garden party. Mr. something-or-other is I don't know, having a private dinner, because he's a horseback riding enthusiast in the winter circus, where you deliver his custom saddle, whatever.

Any client who comes to the store we always try to transmit this luxury, this nice energy. In our case the name is unique client experience.

It's always to transmit the best experience.

Sending links to pay and sending the products because we were- just to let you know, we were closed. We were selling with the store closed for three months. We didn't have clients in the store, but we were here selling. Selling, contacting clients, sending the new collection, sending the products. Even sending the products to try at home and then returning the products. This beyond client experience and that's retail and luxury brand. Always go beyond.

With this new generation, it's "Okay, I like this one. I have a party in one hour and I need an outfit now."

We are one of the few stores in the world that have the Made to Measure service. We do Made to Measure for suits. It takes around six weeks to have it. It's a long process. Just very few pieces that we do in other parts of Italy. It's because of the quality of the materials. I forget which product we do in a different place, but it's because of the quality.

Personally, I think the idea of a bit of a showroom and apartment, it's reserved for a certain category of products and a certain category of customers

You're talking about the privileged things, for example a private salon where at Chanel, you'll never see those people. They are behind a mut and there is another world going on there. I think that's a great idea, that it's privatized to offer an ultra-luxury service.

The ultra-private side is for a category of people who usually have time for it. These are people who need to be in a social club with each other to share that.

6.6.2 Retail experience

Hedonism

Because everything is already exclusive in terms of the way they are received, the way they live. They already don't live well like us, so I agree with you.

They prefer something faster. Something interesting, something fun They come and try something. They like a glass of champagne. Having a nice experience.

So would like to have an experience that engages all my senses I wanna see, feel, and even smell the luxury around me when I am shopping you know?

I love an immersive experience so I would love this.

Homeyness

A very customer-oriented, family-oriented dimension, with a lot of common sense. Demanding, of course, but on a human scale, even though the group is very large.

We also have the idea of being very relaxed and as natural as possible. When we train the saleswomen, in any case, in my store, it's the idea of inviting someone into your home. We have the same reflexes to ask ourselves if the person feels comfortable enough.

I tell the girls, "This is your place, you're having a little cocktail party, and then there's your girlfriend coming with her new friend or your honey." All of that is really unique to this store.

That's why the fact that I feel like I'm at home and I consider the person in front of me as my mother, my sister or my friend, that's really specific to this place.

They realize that it's a little extra comfort and that there are still people who telecommute a lot. It's also about people who don't work and are at home with their kids or husband. This is where we try to have a luxury service for everyone. The idea is that everyone can benefit from something practical as well, even if there are means put in place and a fairly significant financial cost, but we are getting there.

But she offered me a drink and really gave me all the time to decide which bag and colour I chose at the end. It felt super homey and comforting.

Definitively I want to feel relaxed, welcome, I want the employees to be helpful and knowledgeable and to make me feel special.

From time-to-time employees are busy, so a guest should be able to have a seat and relax. Kind of like a living room.

Yes, it looks beautiful I really love it, it looks very homey. I would shop there definitely.

They were very kind, offering us water and offering us take a seat whenever they were doing the transaction, because it takes quite a long time, due to the tax free things. Even when we walked in, they were very welcoming and they wouldn't judge you or anything. They would take you immediately to where you needed to go, and it was just a much more enjoyable experience, versus ones I've had in Europe where they were just trying to kind of get rid of you as fast as possible.

I do like where they are designing the stores, like living rooms and classic like areas like your home. I do like the brightness of the other two better, so I don't know if that really matters or is relevant, but I do like the idea where you are in a room where it kind of feels like you're home and it doesn't feel like you're kind of in a store.

All I would really like is that somewhere where it feels like I'm home

Need to feel understood

To our oldest clients here, we spend and we dedicate all the time so they don't feel that they are apart from our side. They can see that they feel apart because of the collection, for example. Because they come and they- can you imagine there is a client that was a Prada fan since 40 years ago, so, of course, they see the evolution of the brand.

The idea is to have enough empathy and enough connection with the clients and understand their needs.

You have to give them the time. To listen to all the stories of their holidays, you know, or the other one that is, "I don't want to say anything. I just want to pay and go." It's to understand what they need and what we have to give to them. It's the same with the kids' kit or whatever.

We have stopped focusing on why you come to buy a pair of pants or why this color. It's more the idea of: "Who am I looking at, who is this person, what is their daily life like?" To really make the person feel privileged in that sense.

It's mostly the listening side, the kindness, just checking in from time to time, in a normal, unforced and free way.

It felt so comfortable and friendly, didn't really feel like I was buying something.

I mean we did make the purchase in the end because I really wanted to have the particular jumpsuit, but I definitely would not recommend the brand to my friends or family.

Personalization

If we find someone who we already know that they are not going to buy anything, we try to do the tour of the store

We want to make the most personalized client experience and it is the only way that we can ensure that.

The only way that we can ensure this is if each client advisor has one client.

We send flowers, we send personalized postcards with the client advisor's signature or lettering by hand.

We always try to have these kind of little actions with all the clients. With the VIP we bring them to this area, but with another client it's the glass of champagne or with another client is a glass of water. If we see a client with children, we have a children's kit for coloring.

It's different if I have a client who wants something super-fast or a client who wants to talk and speak about their life

We work a lot on the psychology of the customer. A unique experience is one that is as close as possible to the person in front of us. It's unique in the sense that it's as personalized as possible

Everything is done remotely, you can try it out at home. If it doesn't fit, a delivery person comes back to pick it up and brings it back to the store and we'll take whatever you decide to keep or not.

6.6.3 Customer advisors

Ability to adapt

The challenge of luxury today is to be able to manage several strata of several age groups at the same time in these stores, so several desires, several views, several types of adhesion. Do you see what I mean?
It's a job of passion, it's a job where you have to have courage, stamina, pugnacity, et cetera.
Super digital, super-fast, very familiarized with the phone, with the apps
It's more experienced, and now more than experience, we need more attitude, more energy, super agile.
There's a lot of movement inside of a store because they not only sell, they work a lot in client-telling action
"What do you want to drink? Do you want some water? Your birthday? Of course I can help you. This is the number of my manager."
These are people who are looking for standing, it's the cold side of the French. They think we're not at home, but we're in a store and we try to keep our distance.
Moreover, we had a meeting two days ago where we wondered how to manage this kind of people because it happens more and more.
How do I deal with that? It's not necessarily by finding a solution because at our level it's limited. How do we make people understand that unfortunately, we can't do everything in excess?
They really sat down with us first to really get to know us and the occasion of the gift and then afterwards the associate picked up some pieces and showed me a lot of things which I could try on
I would want to have a sales associate that has the perfect balance of engagement but also giving me space to think about my purchase and maybe even pick up design that she/ he believes would fit me.
I really find it important that the service is genuine and coming from an associate that is not pushing me to purchase something but rather supports me in whichever decision I take.

Creating a connection

It has more proximity with its clientele, it works a lot on the feeling and on the emotion
--

These are jobs where you have to be extremely patient, therefore patient as a craftsman, because it takes a long time for the gesture to come, and so on. Patience to build customer loyalty, patience to create a brand.

Once again, to come back to your question, for me, the customer experience is about truthfulness and authenticity, sincerity, personal commitment, meeting customers, empathy and sharing, so that the customer ends up coming to you.

In the hotel business, which touches on an extremely intimate moment of feeling, it's something else again.

You know, he's going beyond. His objective is to help you in everything you need. It's like a concierge.

As far as people who have been there and been served before, the goal is that when the customer leaves the store, she remembers the person. When she comes back, she doesn't necessarily have to ask because the saleswoman remembers her. We have a whole system that we call acquisition and retention. That is to say that a new customer who is registered in our system, there is a planning and follow-up program of this or that type which means that we try to keep a fairly regular contact. It's not necessarily a material contact, but it's just a free contact. For example: "How are you doing? Did we talk about your husband? Are you doing any better?" It has to be done in a sincere way and you have to want to do it, otherwise it's not worth it. It's also only done if you really understand who you're dealing with.

There is always something that makes you try to fit it in without waiting until the end to give the card and say what your name is.

In addition to that I could really feel from the employee that she really let me take as much time as possible.

Communication skills

The number one solution to achieve what we want is to make the person trust us, by being pleasant.

They have to have very good communication skills, not only verbally. They write mails or messages.

It's your attitude that sells, but you're selling an asset. You're bringing the product to life. It's like you're bringing the product to life. But when you are a salesperson, you have the product in your hands and you have to persuade the customer that it is made for him. You have to seduce the customer.

6.7 Solution testing

6.7.1 Voice narrative

Imagine yourself as a loyal customer of your favorite luxury brand. Could be car, watches, clothes, shoes. Anything you like. Your sales associate, after being a loyal

customer for years, invites you to a private club. You had heard about it but never quite knew what the prerequisites were to get in. Here you are: the doors open, you are at the epitome of exclusivity, an access to a certain social which money can't buy. Your sales associate greets you with your favorite drink, as he/she has noted down your preferences. You feel right at home. While a selection is being prepared for you, the dining area is the perfect place to wait while having a bite and making contact with other members. You instantly feel part of a group, you make business connections, share similar interests. Once the selection of pieces is made, you are taken to a private area which looks like a comfortable dressing room, just like the one you have at home. The selection was made according to your taste, sizes and demands. After the fitting, your selection is sent directly to your home. A few days later, the sales associate texts you to tell you a new piece has arrived. Unfortunately, you don't have time to go to the private club. An hour later, the said piece is delivered to your door. The experience is brought right to you. There is no limit or barrier to delivering you the most personalized experience. A few weeks later, you receive an invitation to visit the manufacture of the brand, with the creative director, the ultimate insider invitation. This invite only private store, built as a social club gives you the most exclusive access to the intimate and secret world of luxury.

How do you feel after imagining this? Would you add or remove any of the components?

6.7.2 Testing results summary

How did you feel during the experience?	Important x2 different x3 nothing particular x1
- What changes would you make to the visuals or the concept?	I would make it brighter, with more light colors x2 I would make the fitting rooms smaller, more cozy x1 It looks to my taste x 2
- How would feel if you were invited to such a club?	Special x 2 Different x 2 Ultra VIP x 1
- How would your perception of a brand change if you were invited to such a club?	I would think it's very customer centric x2 I would think they value me x 2 Indifferent x1

6.8 Dissemination

6.8.1 Dissemination Act 2




Mathilde Laporte • You

Luxury goods, hospitality management

1m • 

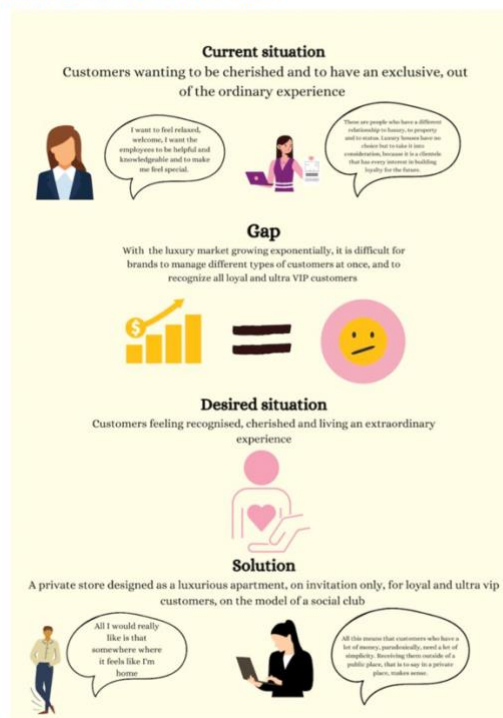
...

Hi everyone, as part of my final thesis at Hotelschool The Hague, I have conducted research about customer experience in luxury retail stores. This topic is very near and dear to my heart as a luxury passionate. I have developed a solution based on literature research trend analysis and customers needs and wants. The solution can be found in the infographic right below. If you have questions or thoughts, I would love to discuss 😊 [#luxury](#) [#retail](#) [#customerexperience](#) [#research](#)



Mathilde Laporte
Luxury goods, hospitality management
[View full profile](#)

below. If you have questions or thoughts, I would love to discuss 😊 [#luxury](#) [#retail](#) [#customerexperience](#) [#research](#)



6.8.2 Dissemination Act 3

Max Mara
en yesterday at 9:32 pm

Merci pour ce gentil message tu es adorable!

11:24 am

TODAY

Current situation
Customers wanting to be cherished and to have an exclusive, out of the ordinary experience

Gap
With the luxury market growing exponentially, it is difficult for brands to manage different types of customers at once, and to recognize all loyal and ultra VIP customers

Desired situation
Customers feeling recognized, cherished and living an extraordinary experience

Solution
A private store designed as a luxurious apartment, on invitation only, for loyal and ultra vip customers, on the model of a social club

Hello [redacted]! La fin de mon memoire approche et je voulais te partager l'infographie representant la recherche effectuee et la solution qui se essaye de repondre aux besoins des clients d'aujourd'hui. Je voulais de nouveau te remercier pour ton aide precieuse et tes conseils. Si toutefois tu souhaitais le memoire complet, je peux egalement te l'envoyer mais l'infographie permet d'avoir un visuel qui parle davantage! Je te souhaite un tres bon weekend :)

10:18 am ✓✓

6.9 Research agreement

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AGREEMENT ON THE EXECUTION OF A RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

- I. Mathilde Laporte

hereafter referred to as THE STUDENT, and

- II. Commissioning company: Denis Asch
Address:

represented by:
Denis Asch
Owner

hereafter referred to as THE CLIENT, and

- III. Hotelschool The Hague, Brusselselaan 2, 2587 AH Den Haag
Launching Your Career/LYCar course
represented by:

Ms Son

hereafter referred to as the LYCar Coach

hereby enter into a project contract under the following conditions:

1. Context

Under the supervision of the LYCar coach appointed by Hotelschool The Hague, students are to carry out a research assignment for a commissioner. The commissioner is the LYCar student's client. The research assignment for the student is defined in line with the students' focus and development goals in LYCar. The signing of this agreement by all parties indicated in I, II and III confers their alignment and consent on this assignment as detailed in the Student's Proposal for LYCar¹. Should the client, coach and/or student need support in evaluating the assignment, then the parties can consult the Research Projects Team on researchprojects@hotelschool.nl.

¹ Note: the student starts the research assignment before an internship. The student writes a research plan first and incorporate this in the Proposal for LYCar later. The research plan needs to be aligned and approved by all parties involved (i.e. Client, Student, LYCar coach).

2. Project specifications

The Student's assignment is formulated as follows:

The project title will be:

The retail experience in fine watchmaking enabling hedonic escapism

The type of end deliverables (i.e. 'professional product' for LYCar) as requested by the client, that will create value for the client:

Professional product

3. Timeline/deadline

The project will start 04/05/2020 and will be completed before December 28th 2022.

Structure, reporting and support throughout the research project and the student's assignment more in specific have been explained and agreed upon between the client and the student.

In particular the following milestones apply:

- Week 1: signing of this contract, agreement on reason for research and aim of the study
- Week 4: presentation and approval of plan (includes context analysis, aim and research questions, theory and methods)
- Week 10: presentation of research project (includes results, conclusions and recommendations)

4. Professional standards

The project is part of the research program of Hotelschool The Hague. The external responsibilities of Hotelschool The Hague require professionalism in the delivery of research projects. The student agrees to professional standards in project communication, timeliness, technical preparation of in-between or end deliverables as agreed upon and contact with external partners. The student commits himself/herself to a performance effort in research quality, under the guidance of the LYCar coach and support from the client.

5. Responsibilities

Once agreed by all parties, the student may not modify the project description or planning without prior written consent by the client and the LYCar coach. The student may not abandon the project and/or accept a different LYCar assignment without prior written consent by the client and the LYCar coach. The student takes full responsibility of delivering the work and deliverables for the client and for his LYCar as agreed upon in his approved research plan. Any possible major deviation must be officially approved by all parties before execution.

6. Reporting and consequences delay(s)

If a delay in the execution of the project occurs because of complications derived from the research activity, such as data availability, planning constraints, software availability etc., or because of force majeure, the Student shall immediately report the causes and expected length of the delay to the client. If a delay remains unreported or occurs because of other causes, this will be considered as an abandonment of the project by the client. This also means that the project assigned to the Student may be declared invalid and will not be assessed as part of the LYCar (to be evaluated and decided by the LYCar coach).

7. Deliverables and client evaluation

As completion of the project the student can deliver the following to the client (specified with the client):

- (1) An electronic (Word) version of the professional product(s) in the context of the research assignment as agreed upon.
- (2) A research report to underpin the deliverable(s)
- (3) Any data collected for the project (open files only, not in Pdf)
- (4) PDF files of important (academic) articles used in the report.

The student will only be allowed to defend his final deliverables as long as the research assignment has been completed and the materials under 1,2,3 and 4 have been delivered and accepted by the client.

A final client evaluation will always be provided by the client, indicating the value of the deliverables for the client. This evaluation is important input for the student's final LYCar assessment. The student will initiate this client evaluation, in line with the requirements in LYCar, e.g. send to LYCar coach and cc the client (for details, see LYCar syllabus).

8. Publications and data

Unless otherwise agreed, all research findings will be made publicly accessible through the usual channels of the client and of Hotelschool The Hague. If an opportunity arises to publish a version of the LYCar paper, this will be discussed with the student, for which reason he/she is requested to make contact data after graduation available to the client. The student fills in a data management form and adheres to the principles of ethics and research integrity.

9. Project**expenses**

Project expenses incurred by the student can only be reimbursed by Hotelschool the Hague and/or student if agreed with and approved by the client beforehand and after completion of the project.

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Agreement on the execution of a Research Assignment

SIGNED:

THE STUDENT

Mathilde Laporte

Lyon on 04/05/2022

DocuSigned by:

2D6437D2742D4A9
THE CLIENT

Denis Asch

Geneva on 04/05/2022

Signature:

THE LYON COACH


LYON COACH

Lyon Coach:

Amsterdam/The Hague _____ (city), _____ (date)


31/10/2022

6.10 Deliverable client evaluation

Evaluation Form Company Project/Research

(EVALUATION FORM OF ALL CLIENTS AND ON ALL DELIVERABLES IS COMPULSORY, FORMAT IS NOT)

Name of student:	Laporte Mathilde	Student number:	781094	
Name of company/organisation:	L'Heure Asch	Department:	Management	
Name of company tutor/research commissioner:	Denis Asch	Position of company tutor/commissioner (if applicable):	Owner	
Project and/or Deliverable: (please specify)	Thesis on customer experience in luxury retail stores			
During the first (unofficial) evaluation the set-up for the project and end deliverable(s) is discussed. For this final evaluation the project has been delivered by the student and is thus evaluated. This is taken into consideration for the final assessment of the student.				
CATEGORY 1: EXPERTISE/KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIELD				
Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
	In-depth use of relevant literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable shows excellent thinking capacity of the student (considering all significant factors and looking from all different perspectives).	Use of relevant literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable shows mostly intellectual depth (considering significant factors and looking from different perspectives).	No or incorrect use of literature and knowledge of the field. The deliverable lacks intellectual depth.	Mathilde has shown a great interest in the topic and has shown intellectual depth with the literature she picked.



CATEGORY 2: KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION/SOLVING PROBLEMS				
Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
	The theories and models are skillfully applied and the student can translate this in a unique solution and implementation. The student can relate situations to concepts that results into a solution that adds great value to the company's overall strategy. The creative solution is/can be implemented and evaluated and is solving the problem.	The student uses theory, models, and shows understanding of the issues at hand. The solution is realistic and implementable for the company. The solution is/can be implemented and evaluated.	Mentioning theory and models, but not using them in the correct way. The student cannot convince of the possibilities to implement and evaluate. It is not solving the problem.	Mathilde has made use of framework and understand perfectly the issues faced. The solution makes sense considering the research she did and is very relevant to me even though it applies to a lot of luxury stores. The investment is very big so that is my only point but it is worth implementing.

CATEGORY 3: INFORMED JUDGEMENTS				
Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
	The research process is done and explained in an excellent way. All statements, conclusions and recommendations are underpinned with the data collected by the students and/or referencing. The analysis is very substantial.	The research process is done and explained well. Most statements, conclusions and recommendations are underpinned with the data collected by the student and/or referencing. The analysis is substantial.	Weak problem analysis, research question not clear enough. Data collection and/or methodology is insufficient. Weak analysis, use of data from one dimension and not backed up.	I think that the research is done well and is thorough. The conclusions are based on the research and findings gathered. It would have been nice to have more interviewees, but I know it is a struggle to interview luxury customers and Mathilde was very transparent about that.

CATEGORY 4: COMMUNICATION AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE				
Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
	Excellent ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to all stakeholders involved. The deliverable adds great value to the main stakeholders. Initial and creative channels have been actively used to share outputs and knowledge.	Good ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to stakeholders. The deliverable adds value to the company. Existing channels have been used to share knowledge	The deliverable could have been better delivered to the stakeholders. The deliverable could have added more value, if better delivered. No active communication of outputs and knowledge.	We called and she presented her findings to me from the problem until the solution. It was very clear and I was impressed with the work delivered. The infographic was well done and explained a complex topic into a nice visual.

CATEGORY 5: INTERCULTURAL HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP				
Rating	Excellent	Good	Room for improvement	Comments
	Student can lead the project by themselves. Student is self-critical towards improvement and takes feedback to heart. Student deals with a diversity of stakeholders in an intercultural competent way. Hospitality mindset is seen in project or work in a very distinct way.	Student can lead the project with little help. Student is critical towards improvement and listens to feedback. Student deals with different stakeholders. Hospitality mindset can be seen.	Tasks performed are described and not critically analyzed. Student is not too critical towards own learning and can listen better to feedback. Student does not know how to deal with differences in stakeholders. Hospitality can be improved.	Mathilde was very independent with this project. Whenever I gave her feedback she was receptive, and implemented it when she felt relevant for the project.

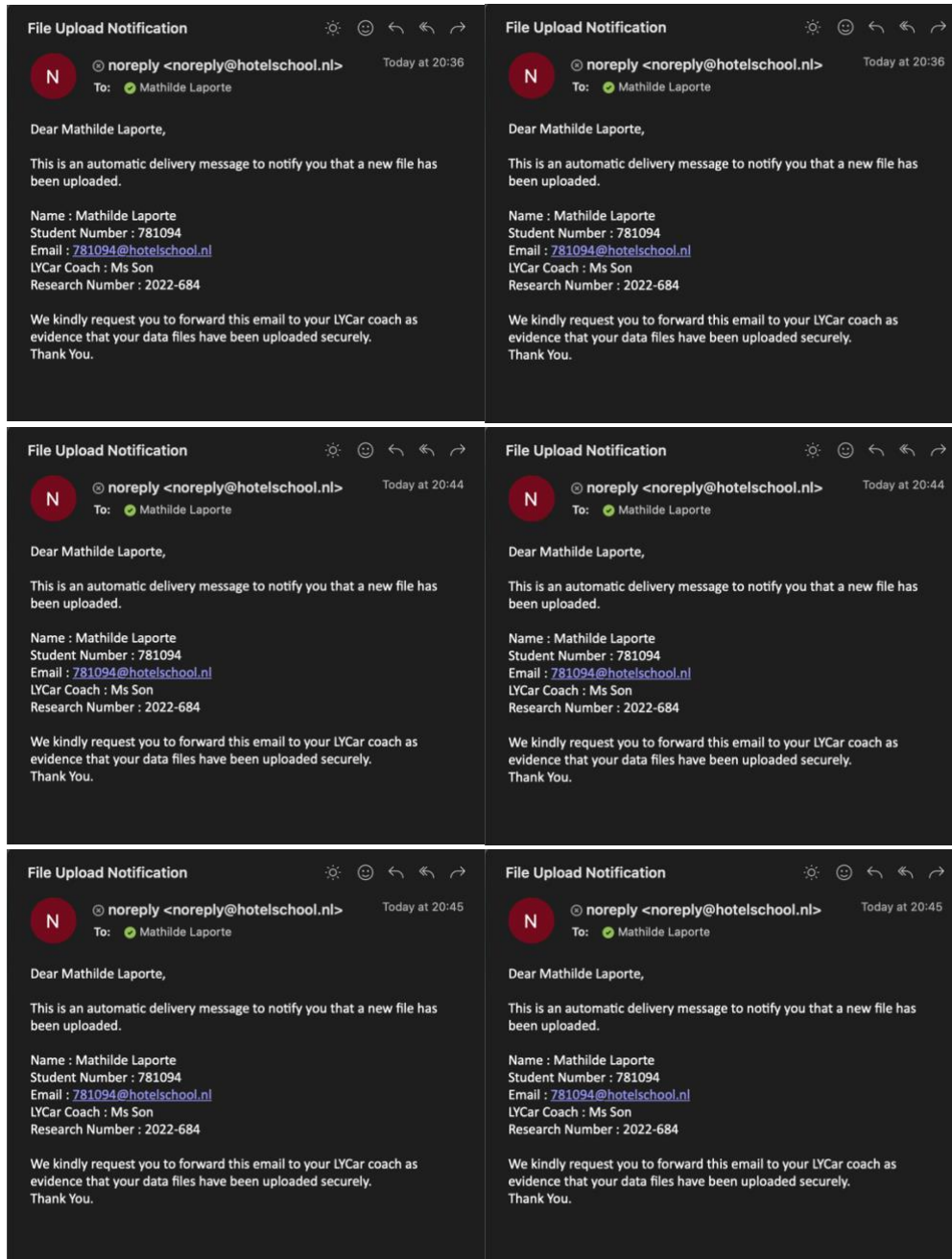
Page 2 of 3

OVERALL COMMENTS	
Overall, I was pleased with the quality of work and the enthusiasm Mathilde has shown despite the difficulty of the sector which I know well about.	
STUDENTS' COMMENTS:	
Comments on evaluation:	I am happy with the feedback Mr. Asch has given me as this project was meaningful to me. I know that some of the limitations could have affected the accuracy of the study so I agree with the feedback.
DATE & STUDENT'S SIGNATURE:	
 Mathilde Laporte, Paris, 10.11.2022	 Denis Asch, Geneva 09.11.2022

THE COMPLETED FORMS (ON ALL DELIVERABLES AND PERFORMANCE) NEED TO BE EMAILED TO THE LYCAR COACH AND PUT IN THE APPENDICES OF THE CAREER PORTFOLIO

Page 3 of 3

6.11 Proof of upload to research center



6.12 Lycar Proposal approval

LYCar Proposal Grading Rubric
 U.1.1 (Version LYCar 2020; 16 February, 2021)

Student Name: <input type="text" value="Mehide"/>	LYCar Coach: <input type="text" value="Ms. Son"/>
Student Number: <input type="text" value="781094"/>	Primary PLO: <input type="text" value=""/>
Date Submitted: <input type="text" value="August 2nd"/>	Secondary PLO(s): <input type="text" value=""/>

Note: All boxes with red border to be filled by student

Preconditions (required for assessment)	Yes	No	Comments
Checks content and completeness			
Executive Summary is present, concise, can be read independently, contains information about process and content, focuses on results and outcomes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
LYCar Proposal meets formal reporting criteria (according to e.g., LYCar Reading & Writing Guide)			
LYCar Proposal is written in English and is professional, including common basic components such as (Intro, TOC, Conclusion etc. - see Reading & Writing Guide)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
LYCar Proposal is max. 5,000 words (counting after Table of Contents, incl. text in tables) - visual proof of wordcount is included in Appendices	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Harvard Referencing Style is used consistently, referencing to primary sources only, List of References is well presented	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Check (technical) formalities and submissions			
Ephorus upload	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
LYCar Proposal incl. Appendices are uploaded in Osiris	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ethics and data management			
Ethical, integrity and data management requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Entitled to assessment? (All yes above required):			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

DD1: The student has demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that is supported by advanced textbooks

	Excellent	Pass	No Go
1.1 Use of literature and knowledge of the field	Student uses in-depth literature and knowledge of the field throughout the report. The report contains no mistakes and factual incoherence.	Student uses in most cases literature and knowledge of the field in the report. The report contains some mistakes and factual incoherence in a limited part of the report.	No sufficient or correct use of literature and knowledge of the field in the report. The report contains mistakes and factual incoherence.
1.2 Intellectual depth and abstract thinking	Student takes all significant factors into account and looks from different perspectives, sees patterns, relates situations to concepts in order to solve larger problems. The reports show excellent thinking capacity of the student. New unique insights presented in the topic and depth of understanding displayed. Excellent linking between the elements and the underlying issues within the case situation.	Student takes different perspectives into account. The report shows intellectual depth (taking into account all significant factors and looking from different perspectives) in most parts of the report. Some patterns are clear. Some links have been made.	The report lacks intellectual depth (superficial and merely descriptive) in some parts of the report. Patterns are not sufficiently made clear.

Student Feedback:

Pass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Not Yet	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Assessor Feedback:

Pass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The literature review is thorough and stems from the problem definition. Scientific literature, practitioner, organisational data is used in order to get the most points of view.</p> <p>The literature review seems to be limited to the different writings of Mr. Kaplaner. However different views would enhance the understanding of the topic. In addition, the review is more addressing what luxury is, as opposed to what the core execution of this needs to be in real. Being the topic of research.</p> <p>The literature review will benefit from including a more diverse selection of sources as well as being more focussed on the topic of retail execution of a luxury offering.</p>
Not Yet	<input type="checkbox"/>	

DD3: the student has the ability to devise data gathering events, gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues

	Excellent	Pass	No Go
3.1 The Design Based Research Process	Student sets the research process up in a systematic and well organised way. Student makes use of a problem mess, analyses a (complex) problem and formulates hypotheses by using a design-based research approach. Logical flow from Problem definition to Analysis to Solutions Design/methods are well chosen and motivated.	Student analyses the problem, and formulates possible solutions underpinned by literature using a design-based research approach. Methods motivated and mostly logically chosen	Insufficient problem analysis and methodology, research cycle not used.
3.2 Analysis and evaluation of data	Student plans analysis and evaluation of data/information well using appropriate (digital) tools and makes data-driven decisions. All statements are underpinned with facts and figures and/or referencing. The appropriate tools are used in all steps. Analysis is sufficiently complex with use of information from more than 2 different dimensions (practitioner, scientific literature, the organization and stakeholders).	Student plans analysis and evaluation of solutions clearly, with some flaws or uncertainties. Some statements are underpinned with facts and figures and/or referencing, some lacking underpinning. Analysis is sufficiently complex using data from at least one dimension and sufficiently backed up with literature.	Plan of analysis and evaluation of solutions is not clear. Statements are mostly not underpinned with facts and figures and/or referencing, some are contradicting. No tools are used. Lacking or no analysis and not backed up with literature.
Student Feedback:	Pass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Yet <input type="checkbox"/>	The DBR cycle is respected, with more than 2 sources of evidence, the problem mess is structured in a clear way and leads to a research question which guides the literature review and the rest of the report as well as interview questions.	
Assessor Feedback:	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Not Yet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The understanding of the utilization of qualitative research within the context of this research is not well presented. Flaws exist also in the extraction of conclusions from the research. What is 'data saturation'? In addition, no underpinning is given in how the research findings lead to the presented solution: what were the findings in the research? what was the interpretation of that? So, what should be the suggested solution to the client?	

DD2: The student can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and has competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining feedback and solving problems within their field of study

	Excellent	Pass	No Go
2.1 Application of theories/models to situations at hand	Student uses a range of theories/models appropriate to the problems in the case study and able to add their own unique perspective and insight. They own the model(s).	Student mentions a range of theories/models appropriate to the problems in the case and applying some of them in the correct way.	Mentioning models and theories but not using them in a correct way.
2.2 Possible impact and meaning of own work - dissemination of research	Student plans evaluation of impact and meaning of own work in relation to business and industry with sound underpinning. Identification of all stakeholders and acts of dissemination. Plan on how to effectively disseminate knowledge through different channels fitted for a variety of audiences is also presented.	Student formulates criteria for evaluation. Student describes possible impact and meaning of own work. Identification of stakeholders and planning of dissemination through at least one valuable channel with an audience is presented.	Student fails to describe criteria how to evaluate impact. No identification of stakeholders or realistic plan on dissemination of knowledge through at least one valuable channel with an audience.
Student Feedback:	Pass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Yet <input type="checkbox"/>	A theoretical model was used and a large variety of theories and academic literature was used to underpin. A dissemination plan was constructed with the original problem, what kind of information each stakeholder is interested in and how this would help them, as well as the dissemination tool.	
Assessor Feedback:	Pass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Yet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The purpose of application of the model presented is not clear. In what way did it inform you or helped you to develop your understanding or the set-up of your research approach? One main model was presented, however it was not made clear how this was implemented in the research approach.	

DD4: the student can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences

	Excellent	Pass	No Go
4.1 Communication to audience making use of professional (business) English	Student divides information effectively in paragraphs/chapters. No noticeable errors in English usage and mechanics. Use of language enhances the argument and avoids abbreviations. Sentence structures are well varied, and voice and tone are highly suitable for the specific audiences. Style and content complement each other into an appealing, high quality story. Highly skilful organisational strategy. The logical sequence of ideas increases the effectiveness of the argument and transitions between paragraphs strengthen the relationship between ideas. Sub-headings are employed effectively and the links between different sections are reinforced through linking expressions. Shows attention to detail in all parts of the report.	Student divides information in paragraphs/chapters. Errors in English usage and mechanics are present, but they rarely impede understanding. Use of language supports the argument. Sentence structures are varied, and voice and tone are generally appropriate for the intended audience/s. Generally, a clear organisational strategy. The sequence of ideas in most cases supports the argument and transitions between paragraphs clarify the relationship between ideas. The report is mainly comprehensively written and lacks some attention to detail in some parts of the report.	Distracting errors in English usage are present and they impede understanding. Use of language is basic, only somewhat clear and does not support the argument. Word choice is general and imprecise. Voice and tone are not always appropriate for the intended audience/s. Basic organisational strategy, with most ideas logically grouped. Transitions between paragraphs sometimes clarify the relationship among ideas. The report is not comprehensively written and lacks attention to detail in most parts of the report.
Student Feedback:	Pass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Yet <input type="checkbox"/>	The report was well written and the writing guide followed.	
Assessor Feedback:	Pass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Yet <input type="checkbox"/>	Some grammatical / linguistic issues appear in the report, however none of these being too severe. Overall a well written report.	

DD5: the student has developed those learning skills necessary to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy

	Excellent	Pass	No Go
5.1 Plan on IQ development in PLO: Reflection on product(s)	Student has clear plans on what will be delivered and uses different relevant theory to underpin own work and reflect on it.	Student has a plan on what will be delivered and uses theory to underpin planned own work and reflect on it.	No clear deliverables mentioned and almost no theory to underpin own work and reflection.
5.2 Plan on AQ & EQ Self development	Student devises excellent ability to critically reflect on own developmental goals and demonstrates real growth mindset for life-long learning. Student proposes a demonstration of being able to self-direct, taking initiative in unpredictable situations. Student shows different metrics that can demonstrate development in terms of their EQ/AQ.	Student shows developmental goals and demonstrates growth mindset. There is a plan on how to reflect on values, attitudes and behaviour. Starting levels and desired end levels are described and measurements are provided.	Developmental goals are not concrete, there is no demonstration of growth mindset. Plan on how to reflect is vague and does not give enough substantiation to show growth.
5.3 Plan on EQ Social development	Student provides a plan on how to construct a multitude of proof that shows development as an Intercultural Hospitality Leader. Excellent ability to contribute to the global society/local community as a responsible citizen. Excellent analysis of diversity of people the student will deal with. Possible effective collaboration with all stakeholders in different cultural settings. Hospitality is key to the project or work the student does.	Student provides a plan on how to prove development as an Intercultural Hospitality Leader. Plan on how to contribute to the global society/local community as a responsible citizen. Proposing ideas on how to collaborate with different stakeholders in different cultural settings. Hospitality is a differentiator in the student's project or work.	No clear plan on development as an Intercultural Hospitality Leader. Plan on how to contribute to global society/local community is missing. Ideas proposed on collaboration or hospitality are not sufficient.
Student Feedback:	Pass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Yet <input type="checkbox"/>	The last part of the proposal includes clear set goals according to PLO's and test results for AQ and EQ. These are all thought out and realistic. The international aspect is also included as it is very important. The Gibbs reflective cycle is included as a tool for the development plan.	

Assessor Feedback:	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Even though this is a pass, more attention should be given to this part in the final report. The assessment of the different topics now does suggest a sufficient effort.
	Pass <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Not Yet <input type="checkbox"/>	

Overall Assessor Feedback

The general direction of this research project is clear. However the research approach and execution presented is thin and needs more work. What genuinely was the outcome of the various interviews. What did you see from these in the sense of consumer whereabouts or the experiences of retail employees? What can you thus extract as prerequisites for the future of luxury retail. This needs to create an underpinned understanding of the needs/wants of luxury consumers - well beyond what you have observed in current stores.

For now, your suggested solution seems to lack in underpinning from your qualitative research. It might be that other brands are doing so, however what is it that consumers are looking for is not made clear.

LYCar Proposal Outcome

- Pass ☒ All qualitative criteria awarded a "Pass". "P" registered in Osiris. Student can continue with LYCar execution.
- No Go ☐ One or more qualitative criteria graded as "Not Yet". "F" registered in Osiris. Student re-writes LYCar Proposal with incorporated feedback.
- Pre-Condition NY ☐ Pre-conditions not met. Student resubmits LYCar Proposal. No grade or feedback provided to the student.

6.13 Preconditions

Preconditions (required for assessment)	Yes	No	Comments
Checks content and completeness			
Executive Summary is present, concise, can be read independently, contains information about process and content, focuses on results and outcomes	yes		
LYCar Report is complete and incorporates the following 2 elements: a. LYCar Company Project Report including Design Based Research component and end deliverable(s) for client(s) b. Career portfolio on student's development, reflection and analysis of Intercultural Hospitality Leadership	yes		
LYCar Report meets formal reporting criteria (according to e.g. LYCar Reading & Writing Guide)			
All documents that are part of final assessment are written in English and are professional, including common basic components such as Intro, ToC, Conclusion etc. - see HTH Reading & Writing Guide	yes		
LYCar Company Project Report is max. 11.000 words (counting after Table of Content, incl. text in tables) - visual proof of workload is included in Appendices.	yes		
LYCar Portfolio is max. 4.000 words (counting after Table of Content, incl. text in tables) - visual proof of workload is included in Appendices Career Portfolio.	yes		
Harvard Referencing Style is used consistently, referencing to primary sources only. List of References is well presented	yes		
Alignment between all LYCar deliverables can be assessed; all relevant info is included in Appendices			
Assessment & feedback form approved Proposal is included - in Appendix Company Project Report	yes		
Proof of dissemination of the company project is shown: the disseminated piece itself or other relevant material	yes		
Client(s) evaluations are included for all end deliverables incl. a confirmation and evaluation of all deliverables	yes		
Check (technical) formalities and submissions			
LYCar Execution is the last exam at Hotelschool, student has 210 ECs and 150 ECTS IFT students (students should have a pass on the LYCar Proposal).	yes		
Tu.nl accepted	yes		
LYCar Company Project Report has been sent to larchive@hotelschool.nl	yes		
Ethics and data management			
Ethical, integrity and data management requirements are met (add proof of delivery of data sets to research@hotelschool.nl including research number).	yes		
Entitled to assessment? (All yes above required):	yes		

7. List of references

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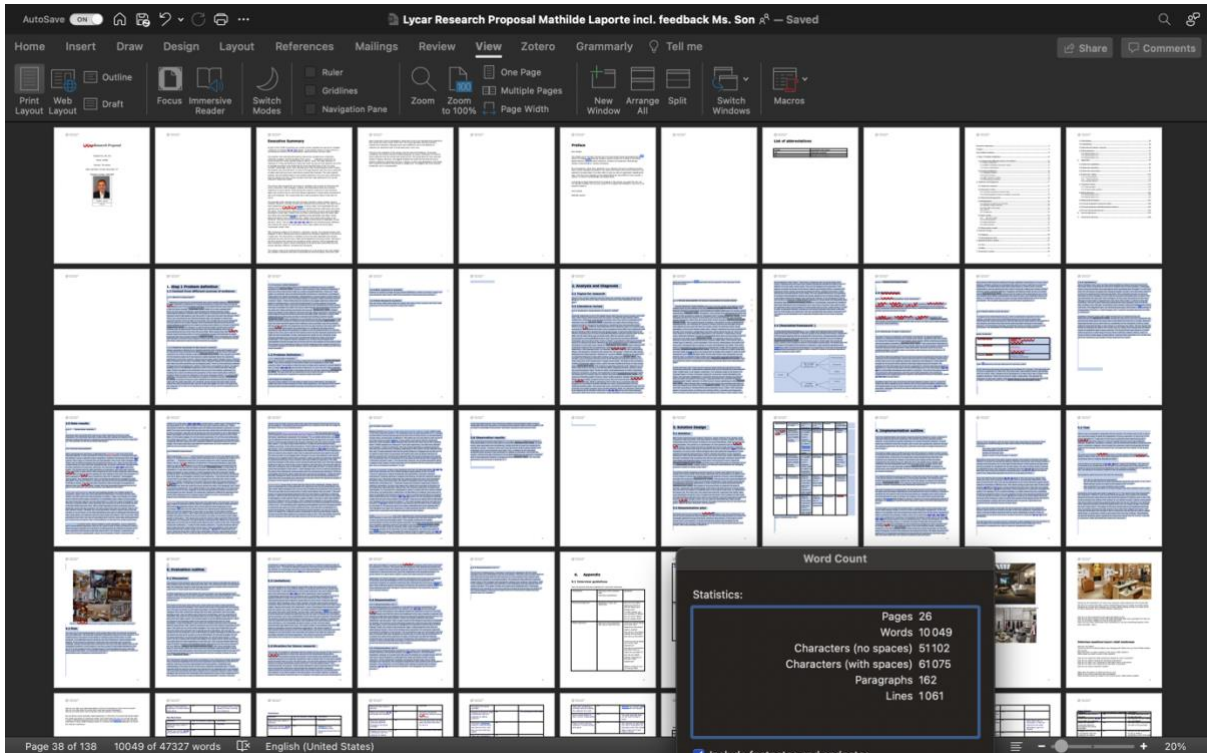
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8. Proof of wordcount

Words from pictures:12

Total Wordcount: $10049 + 12 = 10\,061$



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word interface with a document titled "Lycar Research Proposal Mathilde Laporte incl. feedback Ms. Son". The document is displayed in a grid view, showing multiple pages. A "Word Count" pop-up window is visible in the bottom right corner, displaying the following statistics:

Statistics:	
Pages	26
Words	10 049
Characters (no spaces)	51 102
Characters (with spaces)	61 075
Paragraphs	162
Lines	1 061

The status bar at the bottom of the window indicates "Page 38 of 138", "10049 of 47327 words", and "English (United States)".