

## **Practicable Value-Cascade Positioning of Luxury Fashion Brands**

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## Practicable Value-Cascade Positioning of Luxury Fashion Brands

An increase in competition turned consumer-centred management into a key success factor. The transfer of an ultimate consumer orientation to brand positioning could change its logic: While positioning maps generally portray the position of a brand in the minds of consumers relative to its competitors, rigorously consumer-oriented positioning maps depict what consumers with preferences for a certain brand actually want – as compared to consumers with preferences for competitor brands. The construct of human values refers to people's wants and goals in life, influencing their behaviour including their brand preferences. There is a cascade from preferences for certain values that flow into preferences for certain brands. Value-Cascade Positioning (VCP) builds on that relationship and maps a brand depending on the values of its consumers and possibly other constructs of consumer behaviour intervening in this relationship, such as attitudes and motives, for example. However, daily business customs require that the complexity of the methodology and especially that of the results is reduced to simple figures and models that are easy to understand and to communicate. The objective of this article is therefore to outline a concept of VCP, which combines a scientific base with practicable business requirements. This concept will be demonstrated and tested for the case of luxury fashion brands with the data from two recent luxury consumer surveys. In doing so, the paper also presents some new insights regarding characteristics of luxury consumers. Results include VCP maps of selected luxury fashion brands and instructions for the application of VCP. The paper continues to discuss its benefits and concludes that VCP can complement common positioning with valuable consumer insights that may inspire brand management and help to create competitive advantages.

According to the **consumer-orientation** of modern marketing, **brands** are defined as images in the minds of consumers and other target groups (Aaker 1996, p. 68). **Positioning** is one of the most important strategic tools in marketing, helping to analyse these images and **perceptions of consumers** about a brand. The positioning map generally portrays the position of a brand in the minds of consumers relative to that of its competitors. The goal of positioning is to identify a position that differentiates a brand from its competitors and best matches the desires of its target group (c.f. Trommsdorff 2007; 2008, p. 169 et seqq.). In times of **recession**, companies are trying even harder to differentiate themselves from competitors and lure consumers back into the shops. In order to do so, they first need to delve deep into the minds of their consumers and understand what (perceptions) they really want. If **consumer orientation** is a key to survive the economic storm, it makes sense to rethink the logic of positioning: Companies rely mainly on positioning maps to show them consumers' perceptions of brands. But wouldn't it make sense if the positioning map would portray **what consumers of a brand actually want** as compared to consumers of its competitors?

The **construct of human values** refers to people's wants and goals in life and influences their behaviour, including their brand preferences. So there is a cascade from preferences for certain values that flow into preferences for certain brands (c.f. Da Silva Añaña and Nique 2007, p. 293). Value-Cascade Positioning (VCP) builds on that relationship and maps a brand depending on the values of the consumers with preferences for that brand relative to competitor brands and the values of their consumers. There are certainly several other constructs – attitudes and motives, for example – factoring into the relationship between values and brand preferences. VCP may consider further constructs, but it cannot represent completely their complex relationships. It should therefore not be used to substitute, but only to complement regular positioning with valuable **consumer insights** to inspire brand management. The quality of its results depends on the scientific foundation of the integrated constructs, their measurement and interpretation.

Still, **day-to-day business practice** proves that the complexity of the methodology and the study results need to be reduced to simple models and figures that are easy to understand and to communicate: Managers often prefer a three-slides-summary from an intern, not the 500-pages-report. The **objective of this article** is therefore to outline a concept of VCP that combines a scientific base with practicable business requirements.

The application of VCP will be demonstrated and tested for **the case of luxury fashions brands** with the data from two recent TU Berlin luxury consumer surveys. Using these means, the article presents also some new insights about the characteristics of luxury consumers. **Luxury brands** are especially well-suited to VCP because their **symbolic benefits** often exceed their functional benefits (c.f. Lebas et al. 1990, p. 48), in other words consumers buy luxury brands for what they stand for (Dubois and Duquesne 1993, p. 37), i.e. for their symbolic positioning. Moreover, the symbolic meaning of luxury brands conveys to a large extent personality traits and **personal values** in particular (c.f. Vigneron and Johnson 2004, p. 490), which matches with a value-based positioning.

The **article is organised as follows**: Section 1 introduces the idea of VCP and its theoretical base including the construct of values and its categorisation. Section 2 gives an overview of the empirical studies on luxury consumers, followed by an explanation about the concept of luxury and the identification of luxury consumers in section 3. The ensuing sections 4 - 6 present the values of luxury consumers and their relationships to the motives of luxury consumption. Building on this, section 7 illustrates the development of VCP maps and explains its benefits. Finally, section 8 represents an outlook and a conclusion.

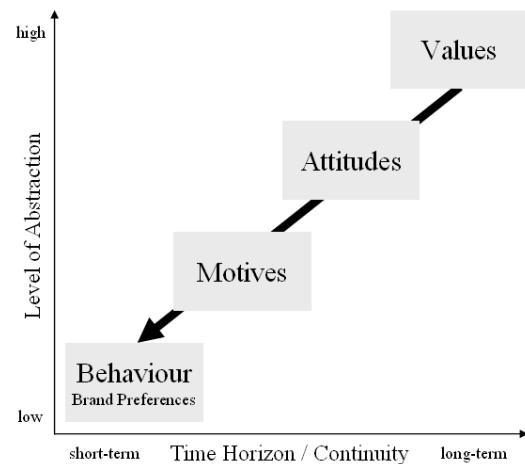
## I Conceptual Groundwork

### I.1 Introduction of the Values-Attitudes-Motives-Behaviour Cascade

Values can be defined as “desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, which serve as guiding principles in people’s lives’ (Schwartz 2006, p. 2; c.f. Rokeach 1973, p. 3).

As they represent peoples aims in life, values are highly relevant and help to predict peoples’ behaviour, including their brand preferences (Da Silva Añaña and Nique 2007, p. 293). However, figure 1 demonstrates that there are several other constructs of consumer behaviour, such as attitudes and motives for example, intervening in the relationships between values and brand preferences (c.f. Trommsdorff 2008, p. 34).

**Figure 1: The Values-Behaviour-Cascade**



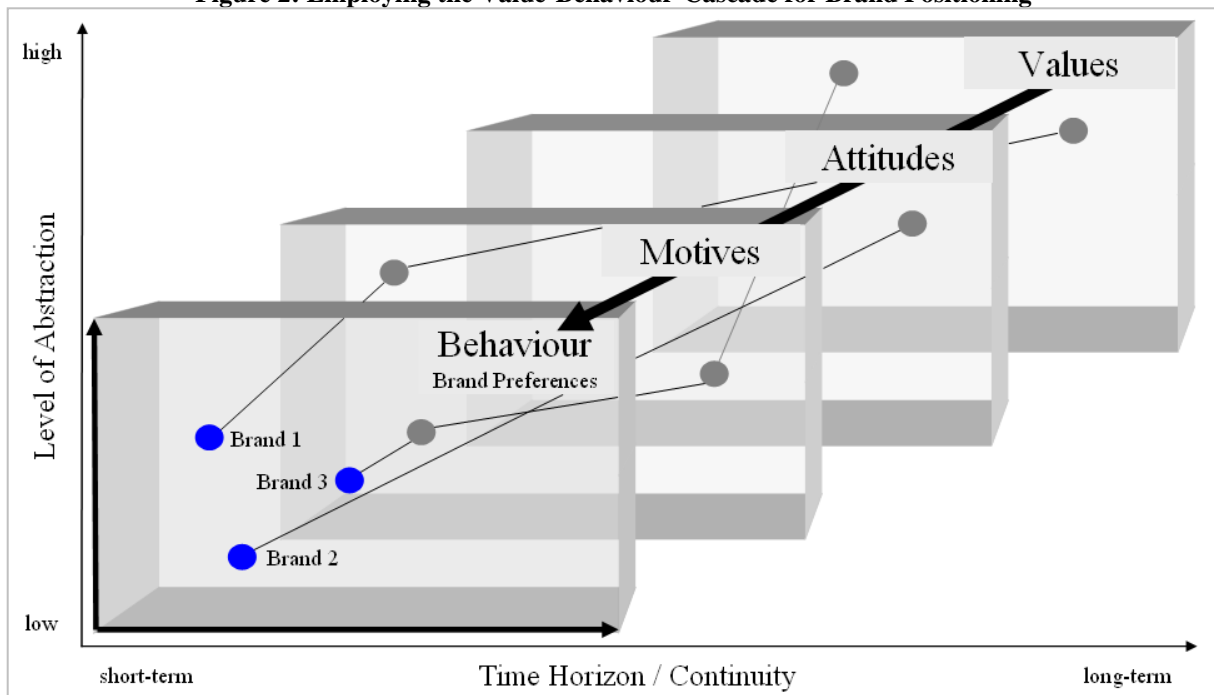
Source: According to Trommsdorff 2008, p. 34.

The constructs vary in their time horizon and level of abstraction. Values exhibit the highest level of abstraction, meaning they are “trans-situational“ and apply to all aspects of life. They are also the most long-term-orientated construct, i.e. they change relatively little over a certain period of time. In comparison to that, attitudes are not “trans-situational“, but refer to specific actions, objects or situations. Moreover, people adapt their attitudes more frequently (c.f. Trommsdorff 2007, S. 189 et seqq.). The values-behaviour cascade serves as the basis for the VCP, which is explained below.

### I.2 The Idea of Value-Cascade Positioning

The purpose of VCP is to **turn the focus from the brand rigorously to the consumer:** While positioning maps generally portray the perceptions of consumers about a brand, VCP maps depict what consumers with preferences for a certain brand actually want – as compared to consumers with preferences for competitor brands. Because of the match between the means (their brand preferences) and ends (their values), the values-behaviour cascade provides the theoretical framework for VCP. As figure 2 demonstrates, the position of a brand offers a glimpse through the layers of the values-behaviour cascade back to the values as the highest-order construct in this model of “motivational sphere” (Shcheglova 2009).

**Figure 2: Employing the Value-Behaviour-Cascade for Brand Positioning**



Source: According to Trommsdorff 2008, p. 34.

The simplest version of VCP considers only values and brand preferences. It is based on the fact that (luxury) brands represent certain values and attract consumers with similar values – and may disgust consumers with opposing values. In contrast to “perceptual maps”, Mazanec (2001, p. 894) describes positioning maps that are inferred by brand choice as “choice maps”; while the current version of VCP leads to “preference maps” (c.f. Elrod 1988). However, there are several other constructs intervening in the relationships between values and brand preferences such as attitudes and motives. This explains why a certain value preference does not always lead to similar brand preferences – or why preferences for a certain brand do not necessarily rely on the same values. Therefore, it is recommendable to integrate further constructs – which could lead to multi-layer positioning maps. But for the sake of practicability, other constructs may also be integrated with separate analysis (as explained below). This deepens the understanding of the values-behaviour relationships of the target group.

### **I.3 Literature about Value-based Positioning**

As the construct of values is individual-related, the interest in the literature focuses mainly on value-based consumer segmentation. What is more, relevant literature often also refers to brand positioning, with examples including Boote (1981), Kennedy et al. (1988), Novak and MacEvoy (1990), Kamakura and Novak (1992) and Ajay (2005). As common demographic

variables today often lack predictive accuracy for the purpose of consumer segmentation, value-based segmentation has become increasingly popular in many businesses.

The idea of **value-based positioning** was first introduced by Herrmann and Huber (2000) and received relatively little attention in the literature. They explained the employment of means-end-analysis as a basis for value-based positioning. There are a number of marketing literature articles about means-end-analysis that also refer to brand positioning, though that is not their primary focus (e.g. Reynolds and Gutman 1984; Prakash 1986; Kliebisch 2002) as well as articles about positioning that also consider consumer values (e.g. Padgett and Mulvey 2007). While Herrmann and Huber's approach delivers rich insights, there are no easy-to-use positioning maps. However, qualitative means-end-analyses are relatively complex and time-consuming – and therefore often difficult for most businesses to implement.

Some **consulting companies** also employ the concept of Value-Based Positioning (e.g. Roland Berger, Howaldt 2005), though these concepts often **lack valid theoretical and methodological foundations**. They are often build on home-made value categorizations that are easy-to-use, but often contain inconsistencies and confuse values, attitudes, motives, lifestyles, and other constructs. They simply cannot match scientific value categorizations based on many years of research. In contrast to VCP, these tools do not position a brand depending on the values of its consumers, but portray value-related perceptions of consumers about a brand.

The first step towards the development of a VCP is determining the underlying value categorization system, which is the objective of the following paragraph.

#### **I.4 The Categorization of Values**

There is a **wide variety of literature** on the categorization and measurement of values. The most important approaches include Wickert (1940, p. 163), Scott (1965, p. 37), Senger (1971, p. 417), Rokeach (1973, p. 28), Stoeckeler and Hasegawa (1974, p. 271), Stiksrud (1976, p. 123), Kahle (1983, p. 61; List of Values), Hildebrandt (1983, p. 225), Windhorst (1985, p. 256), Silberer (1991, p. 45),

For the purpose of this study, we employ the **value categorization system by Schwartz** (1992; 1999; 2006; Schwartz et al. 2001), which is one of the most widely recognised and widespread categorization systems of human values (c.f. Dietz-Fitzgerald-Schwom, p. 352). It

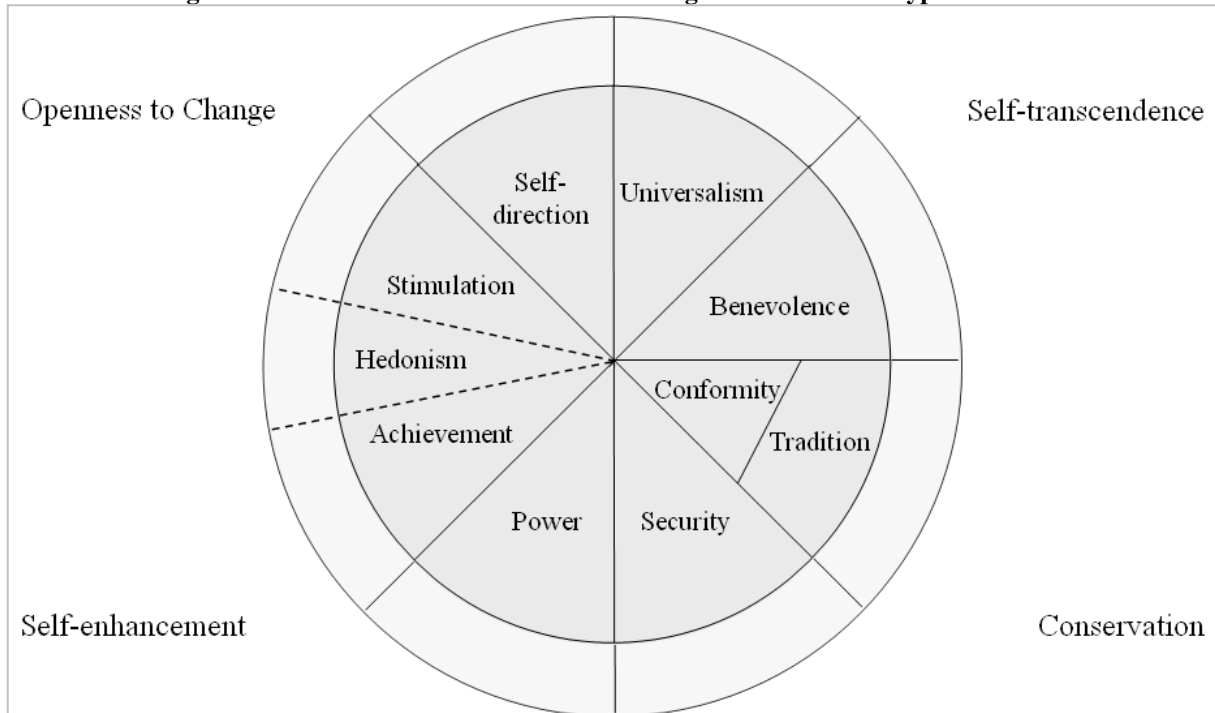
is based on a multitude of surveys in over 60 countries. Schwartz (2006, p. 2) argues that “it is possible to classify virtually all the items found in lists of specific values from different cultures, into one of [his] motivationally distinct basic values.“ His value system consists of ten basic values, which he also terms as “value types“. Table 1 gives an overview about these basic values including a short description for each of them. Each basic value consists of a set of sub-values. Benevolence, for example, is explained with the sub-values forgiving, politeness, helpful and loyal.

<b>1. Universalism</b>	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature
<b>2. Benevolence</b>	Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the “in-group“)
<b>3. Conformity</b>	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms
<b>4. Tradition</b>	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self
<b>5. Security</b>	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self
<b>6. Power</b>	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources
<b>7. Achievement</b>	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards
<b>8. Hedonism</b>	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself
<b>9. Stimulation</b>	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life
<b>10. Self-Direction</b>	Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring

Source: Schwartz 2006, p. 2

Schwartz (2006, p. 2) argues that “actions in pursuit of any value have psychological, practical, and social consequences that may conflict or may be congruent with the pursuit of other values. The pursuit of achievement values, for example, may conflict with the pursuit of benevolence values – seeking success for oneself is likely to obstruct actions aimed at enhancing the welfare of others who need one's help.” The circular structure of his value categorization portrays the relations of conflict and congruity among values (see figure 3). The closer any two values in either direction around the circle, the more similar and congruent they are. The more distant any two values, the more antagonistic they are. Schwartz identified two major dimensions: openness to change vs. conservation and self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence. Openness to change values (such as self-direction and stimulation) encourage independence of thought and receptiveness to change – and conflict with conservation values (such as conformity, tradition and security), which refer to self-restriction and preservation of traditional practices and stability. Self-enhancement values (such as power and achievement) encourage pursuing one’s own success and influence, while self-transcendence values (such as universalism and benevolence) encourage pursuing tolerance, social justice and welfare of others (Schwartz et al. 2006, p. 7).

**Figure 3: Theoretical model of relations among ten motivational types of values**



Source: Schwartz 2006, p. 3.

The ten value types and the two major values offer the underlying dimensions for Value-Cascade Positioning. Moreover, the value cycle (figure 3) will be employed for the illustration of the positioning map. Schwartz (1999, p. 36) already analysed the culture of different countries and illustrated each countries' position in his value cycle. For the purpose of VCP, the countries will be exchanged with brands. The next part of the article therefore outlines the empirical data base for the development of a VCP for luxury brands.

## **II Overview of the Empirical Base**

The idea of VCP will be demonstrated with practicable data, which include a quantitative luxury consumer survey and qualitative in-depth interviews with dedicated luxury consumers.

The **quantitative survey** is based on an online questionnaire referring to luxury consumption, personal values, motives of luxury consumption, luxury brand preferences and demographics. Target groups were luxury consumers and non-luxury consumers. The link to the questionnaire and a description of the survey was posted on a wide variety of Internet forums and newsgroups. This led to a convenient sample of  $n \cong 4,000$ . The data cleaning considered the completeness and the consistency of responses and led to a net sample of  $n = 2,021$ . Compared to the general public, respondents included a larger proportion of men (45%



women, 55% men) and people with high incomes (20% earn more than 5,000€ per month) and high education (about 75% passed at least their A-levels).

The target group for the **qualitative survey** consisted of dedicated luxury consumers with a sound understanding of luxury brands and products. Therefore, selection criteria required that respondents are high net worth individuals (HNWI are defined as individuals with a net worth of at least one million euros) and that they like to consume luxury products enthusiastically. This was verified in a preliminary talk before the interview. The interviews were conducted in Berlin and Cologne by two interviewers at a time and were each approximately one to two hours long. They covered preferences for product characteristics, motives of luxury consumption and personal values of the respondents. The interviews employed repertory grid, laddering, creative interviewing and projective techniques. The sample contained 31 participants including 14 women and 17 men, mainly entrepreneurs, managers, experts from different industries and heirs. The age distribution was balanced between 20 and 70 years.

### **III Luxury Products, Brands and Consumers**

#### **III.1 The Concept of Luxury**

In management field it is accepted to distinguish **luxury products** from necessary and ordinary products within their category by price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, specialty and symbolism. As with the notion of luxury, all of these characteristics are relative terms. A luxury product is characterised by a high rating on each of these dimensions compared to other products of its category.

The definition of luxury products is closely related to the definition of **luxury brands**, because they are distinguished from non-luxury brands by product-related associations. The essential characteristics of luxury products therefore correspond largely with these of luxury brands and lead to the following definition: Luxury brands are regarded as images in the minds of consumers that comprise associations about a high level of price, quality, aesthetics, rarity and specialty (Trommsdorff and Heine 2008, p. 1670, Heine 2009, p. 161 et seq.; c.f. Meffert and Lasslop 2003, p. 6).

The symbolism of luxury brands mainly refers to human values (c.f. Vigneron and Johnson 2004, p. 490). According to the specific characteristics of luxury brands, it is reasonable to assume that their symbolic meaning covers only a **certain spectrum of values**. While some

of these values are generally characteristic for luxury brands, there is also a part of the value spectrum that is characteristic only for certain brands and differentiates them from their peers. For the interpretation of a brands' VCP, it is crucial to understand the characteristic positioning of luxury brands, i.e. the characteristic **values of luxury brands**. As VCP refers to the values of consumers, we have to analyse the characteristic values of luxury consumers. A prerequisite for that purpose is to discriminate luxury from non-luxury consumers, which is the objective of the following paragraph.

**III.2 Identification of Luxury Consumers**

Dubois and Duquesne (1993, p. 38 et seq.) proposed identifying luxury consumers based on their effective luxury consumption. Therefore, they compiled a list of luxury products that covers the major luxury categories and asked respondents to indicate which products they bought or received in recent years. As it is far more revealing if someone buys an expensive car than a bottle of champagne, they differentiated between accessible and exceptional luxury products according to their selling price, diffusion level and repurchase rate. For the purpose of this study, their list of products was extended and adapted in order to meet present market conditions (see figure 4).

**Figure 4: Scale of Luxury Product Consumption**

Accessible Luxury Products	Exceptional Luxury Products
(1) Please indicate which of the following products from a luxury brand you bought or received over the course of the last <b>two</b> years.	(2) Please indicate which of the following products from a luxury brand you bought or received over the course of the last <b>three</b> years.
<input type="checkbox"/> A scarf or tie worth more than 50€	<input type="checkbox"/> A piece of clothing worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> Another piece of clothing of a luxury brand for 100€-500€	<input type="checkbox"/> At least one more piece of clothing of a luxury brand worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> At least one more piece of clothing of a luxury brand for 100€-500€	<input type="checkbox"/> An article of jewellery worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> A leather good worth more than 200€	<input type="checkbox"/> A watch worth more than 5,000€
<input type="checkbox"/> Cosmetics or perfume worth more than 40€	<input type="checkbox"/> A mobile phone worth more than 2,000€
<input type="checkbox"/> An article of jewellery for 150€-500€	<input type="checkbox"/> Hi-fi stereo or video equipment worth more than 2,500€
<input type="checkbox"/> A watch for 400€-5000€	<input type="checkbox"/> A piece of furniture worth more than 5,000€
<input type="checkbox"/> A pen or lighter worth more than 100€	<input type="checkbox"/> Silverware worth more than 500€
<input type="checkbox"/> A bottle of champagne or wine worth more than 30€	<input type="checkbox"/> Porcelain worth more than 1,500€
<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above products	<input type="checkbox"/> An Automobile worth more than 60,000€
	<input type="checkbox"/> A sailing or motor yacht worth more than 300,000€
	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above products

Source: According to Dubois and Duquesne 1993, p. 39.

According to Dubois and Duquesne, a luxury consumer was defined as any person who had bought or received at least three accessible and two exceptional luxury products. A non-luxury consumer was defined as any person who had neither bought an accessible nor an

exceptional luxury product. According to this definition, the present sample includes 347 luxury consumers and 494 non-luxury consumers. However, Dubois and Duquesne also analysed the differences in the values of luxury consumers and non-luxury consumers, but they did neither consider that luxury consumption does not necessarily rely on personal values nor that values may also explain future luxury consumption (as values refer to future goals in life). Consequently, their sample of luxury consumers is contaminated by consumers who actually do not want luxury items or even dislike them but received them as gifts or bought them for other reasons than for what they stand for. Their sample of non-luxury consumers is also contaminated with future luxury consumers such as students aspiring to consume luxuries when they can afford them later in life. Therefore, respondents were asked to rate the following statements about their preferences for luxury consumption on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “not true at all“ to “very true“:

1. *I am interested in luxury products.*
2. *I (would) enjoy consuming luxury products.*
3. *Luxury products are actually not very important to me.*
4. *I would like to consume more luxury products if I would have a larger financial scope.*

The **group of luxury consumers was cleared** of 79 people who are not interested in luxury products, do not enjoy luxury consumption and value luxuries as not important to them (ratings of “rather not true“ and “rather true“ were not considered). The group of non-luxury consumers was cleared of 204 people, who are interested in luxury products, value luxuries as important to them, like luxuries and would enjoy consuming more of them.

This led to a group of 268 luxury consumers and a comparison group of 290 non-luxury consumers. Thus, the overall **sample is split into three subgroups** including luxury consumers, non-luxury consumers and the remaining “excursionists“ (c.f. Dubois and Laurent 1996, p. 470). The analyses of the differences between luxury and non-luxury consumers in the following paragraphs rely on comparisons between the two respective subgroups.

## **IV The Values of Luxury Brands and Consumers**

### **IV.1 Previous Studies**

There is very little written about the value preferences of luxury consumers. Only Dubois and Duquesne (1993) focused with their well-cited article ”Income vs. Culture“ on the influence of values on luxury consumption. However, with “openness to change“ they actually

considered only a single value category, which is similar to the dimension “openness to change vs. conservation“ by Schwartz. Besides that, there are only a few articles that contain some information about the value preferences of luxury consumers (e.g. Ajay and Goutam 1995). There was no article found in the literature, which delivers a comprehensive analysis about the value preferences of luxury consumers.

#### **IV.2 Measurement of Values**

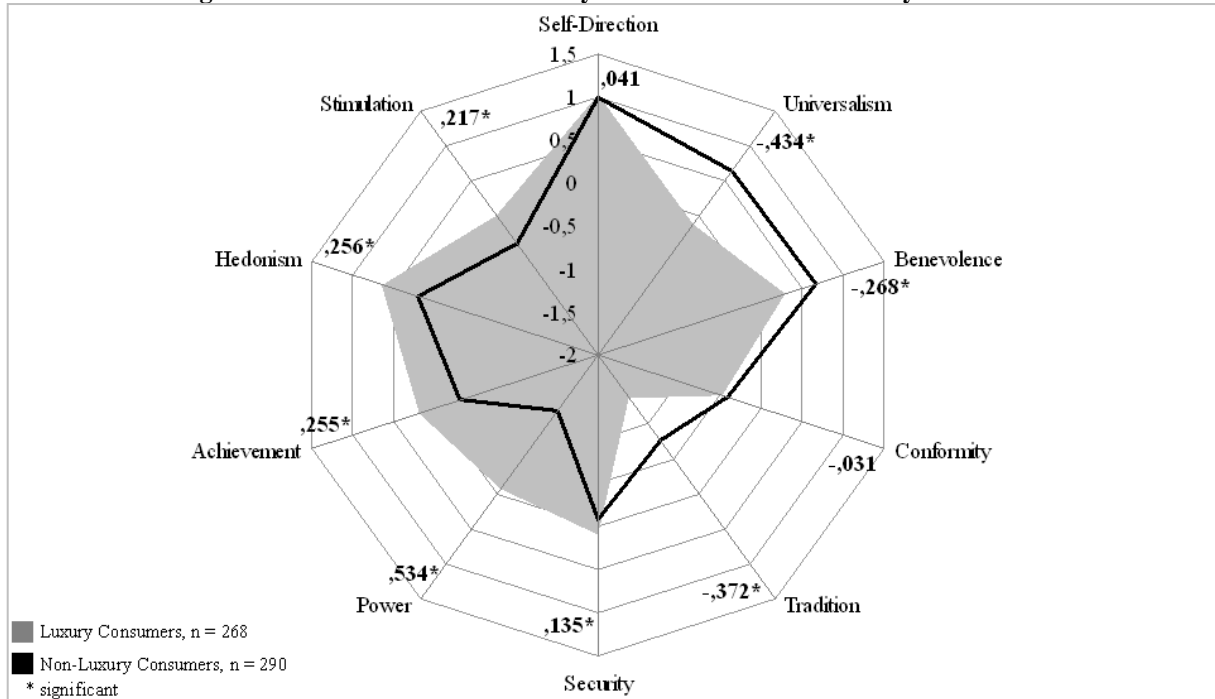
The **Portrait Values Questionnaire** (PVQ) by Schwartz et al. (2001) was used for the measurement of values. It measures the ten value types with an indirect approach: respondents were faced with 40 descriptions of persons, for example: “Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way.” They were asked to rate how much the person described is or is not like them on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (0) “very much like me“ to (5) “not like me at all“. The **Value Scores** (VS) were calculated by taking the mean of the raw ratings (ranging from 0 to 5) of the respective items of each value type. Subsequently, the **Centred Value Scores** (CVS) were computed in order to take individual scale usage differences into account. The CVS equal the VS minus the mean of each individual’s scores across all 40 items.

The measurement approach can be simplified for **business application purposes** as follows: Respondents could be faced with the list of value types and their short descriptions (see above) and asked to rate the relevance of these values as a guiding principle in their live on a scale from “not important“ to “very important“.

#### **IV.3 Results of the Quantitative Study**

The **CVS were calculated** for the subgroup of luxury consumers and the comparison group of non-luxury consumers (see section III.2). According to the Schwartz value cycle, a **radar chart** was compiled, which offers a clear overview about the value preferences. Figure 5 demonstrates the value priorities of luxury and non-luxury consumers and the Spearman correlations between value priorities and group membership.

**Figure 5: Value Preferences: Luxury Consumers vs. Non-Luxury Consumers**



Consistent with Dubois and Duquesne’s results (1993, p. 40), luxury consumers tend to prefer “openness to change“, especially stimulation over tradition. As the previous study was limited to a single value type, it could not discover an important constraint: There are nearly no differences for conformity and self-direction. These values do not differentiate luxury from non-luxury consumers. In addition, the previous study did not focus on the most important differences that exist between the preferences for power and its opposite value, universalism. Not surprisingly, luxury consumers tend to strive harder for social status and prestige as well as for control and dominance over people and resources. According to this relevance of power, it is understandable that some authors refer to luxury brands rather as “status brands“ (O’Cass and Frost 2002, p. 67) or “prestige brands“ (Dubois and Czellar 2002; Vigneron and Johnson 1999, p.1), even though the results demonstrate that these terms cover only a specific segment of luxury brands. Moreover, there are also significant differences (in descending order) between the preferences for tradition, hedonism, benevolence, achievement and security.

#### **IV.4 Value-based Luxury Consumer Segments**

Of course, there are also big differences in value preferences between luxury consumers. The qualitative in-depth interviews helped to develop a deep understanding of the luxury values (and subsequent consumption motives and preferences) and to identify value-based consumer segments. First of all there are **Power-Status-Money-Lovers**, whose absolutely prominent

value is power. The bigger part of luxury consumers splits into two main segments: Prestige-oriented Conformists and Individualistic Performers. Members of both segments favour power and achievement over their opposite values. But while **Prestige-oriented Conformists** prefer security, conformity and possibly tradition, **Individualistic Performers** strive for hedonism, stimulation and self-direction. Surprisingly, there is also a growing segment of **alternative luxury consumers** who prefer benevolence and universalism (and who we removed from the luxury consumer subgroup). These people often look back to a very successful career or inherited substantial resources. They split into **Altruists**, who take care of their family, friends and social issues, and **Intellectual Idealists**, who are more interested in arts, environmentalism and alternative lifestyles.

## V The Motives of Luxury Consumption

### V.1 Overview about the Motives of Luxury Consumption

Motives of luxury consumption are generally distinguished into social motives, which can only be satisfied in interaction with other people and private motives, which are satisfied independently from others (Tsai 2005, p. 431). Beside that, some authors argue that there are also **functional motives** of luxury consumption (Wiedmann et al. 2009, p. 626). **Quality Assurance** is one of its most important representatives and refers to consumers, who purchase luxury products mainly due to their superior functional benefits (Gentry et al. 2001, p. 259; Tsai 2005, p. 435). **Social motives** refer to prestige-seeking and demonstrative consumption (e.g. demonstration of wealth and therewith also of success), which aims to satisfy the need of social recognition (c.f. Veblen 1899 and also: Adlwarth 1983; Feemers 1992; Bagwell and Bernheim 1996; Braun and Wicklund 1989; Mason 1981). They can be distinguished mainly into Bandwagon, Snob and Non-Conformity motives (c.f. Trommsdorff and Heine 2008, p. 1671; Vigneron and Johnson 1999, p. 4 et seqq.). Rather than to break the rules or to stick out of the mass, **Bandwagon** consumption aims to conform with attractive peer-groups in order to gain their acceptance or to demonstrate affiliation to these groups. In contrast to that, **Snob** consumption strives to set oneself apart (that is to say superior) to others. Suitable for that purpose are products, which are rare and therefore expensive and affordable only for few people (c.f. Leibenstein 1950, p. 183 et sqq.). **Non-Conform** consumption also strives to set oneself apart, but unlike Snob consumption, it does not focus on vertical status-differentiation, but refers also to horizontal differentiation with non-conform or even eccentric lifestyles. Luxury products are used here to demonstrate the consumers' personality and values (Belk 1988, p. 139 et seqq, Richins 1994, p. 509; Solomon 1983, p. 322 et sqq.) in order to satisfy

the need for uniqueness and to communicate their own identity (c.f. Holt 1995, p. 2, McCracken 1986, p. 71 et seqq.). **Private motives** mainly split into Self-Directed Pleasure and Congruity with Internal Self (c.f. Tsai 2005, p. 433 et seqq). The motive of **Self-Directed Pleasure** can be satisfied with products that allow to pamper oneself and that make life more convenient and enjoyable. This includes self-gift-giving (c.f. Mick and Demoss 1990) and affective consumption, which means that people buy luxury products to remedy a negative mood or to create or to increase a positive mood (Roth 2001, p. 217 et seqq.; c.f. Luomala 2002). The motive of **Congruity with Internal Self** can be satisfied with luxury products, whose image is congruent with the consumers' notions about their internal self. Therefore, these products can satisfy the consumers' need for self-respect. Non-Conformity consumption also refers to the congruity between product image and self, but in contrast to the Congruity motive, it applies to the creation of the external self, i.e. to socially-oriented impression management (c.f. Tsai 2005, p. 434; and also Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Puntoni 2001).

## V.2 Measurement of Motives

The **objective** was to measure the preferences for the six main motives of luxury consumption and to analyse their relationships to value preferences. There is neither an article in the literature about the relationship between value preferences and motives of luxury consumption, nor a comprehensive article about social and private motives (and their relevant measurement scales). Therefore, the study follows an exemplary and explorative approach. The development of relevant measurement scales for the motives was based on **literature research** (e.g. Dubois et al. 2005; Bearden and Etzel 1982; Lynn and Harris 1997; Tsai 2005) and **group discussions** and pre-tests with business students. For the purpose of this study, the goal was to create scales that are as short and simple as possible. The resulting items were **integrated in the questionnaire** of the quantitative survey. Respondents were asked to rate them on a 6-point-Likert scale ranging from "not true at all" to "very true".

A **factor analysis** over all statements using principal components analysis and varimax rotation led to a **five-factor model** with an explained variance of 67%, without cross-loadings of more than 0.4 and with all factor loadings nearly 0.7 or above. Table 2 gives an overview about the statements for each motive and their factor loadings (the original statements were in German). Results support that Non-Conformity, Self-Directed Pleasure, Congruity with Internal Self and Quality Assurance are distinctive motives. Interestingly, the statements of Bandwagon and Snob motives did not differentiate and led to a **common Veblen factor**. This

reflects also the theoretical dependencies between these two motives, which both rely on the need for social recognition. According to theory, statements of Bandwagon and Snob motives were still differentiated for subsequent analysis. The scales exhibit a **decent reliability**, which is demonstrated in table 2 with the item-scale-correlations for each statement and the Cronbachs Alpha for each scale (all above 0.7 except for quality).

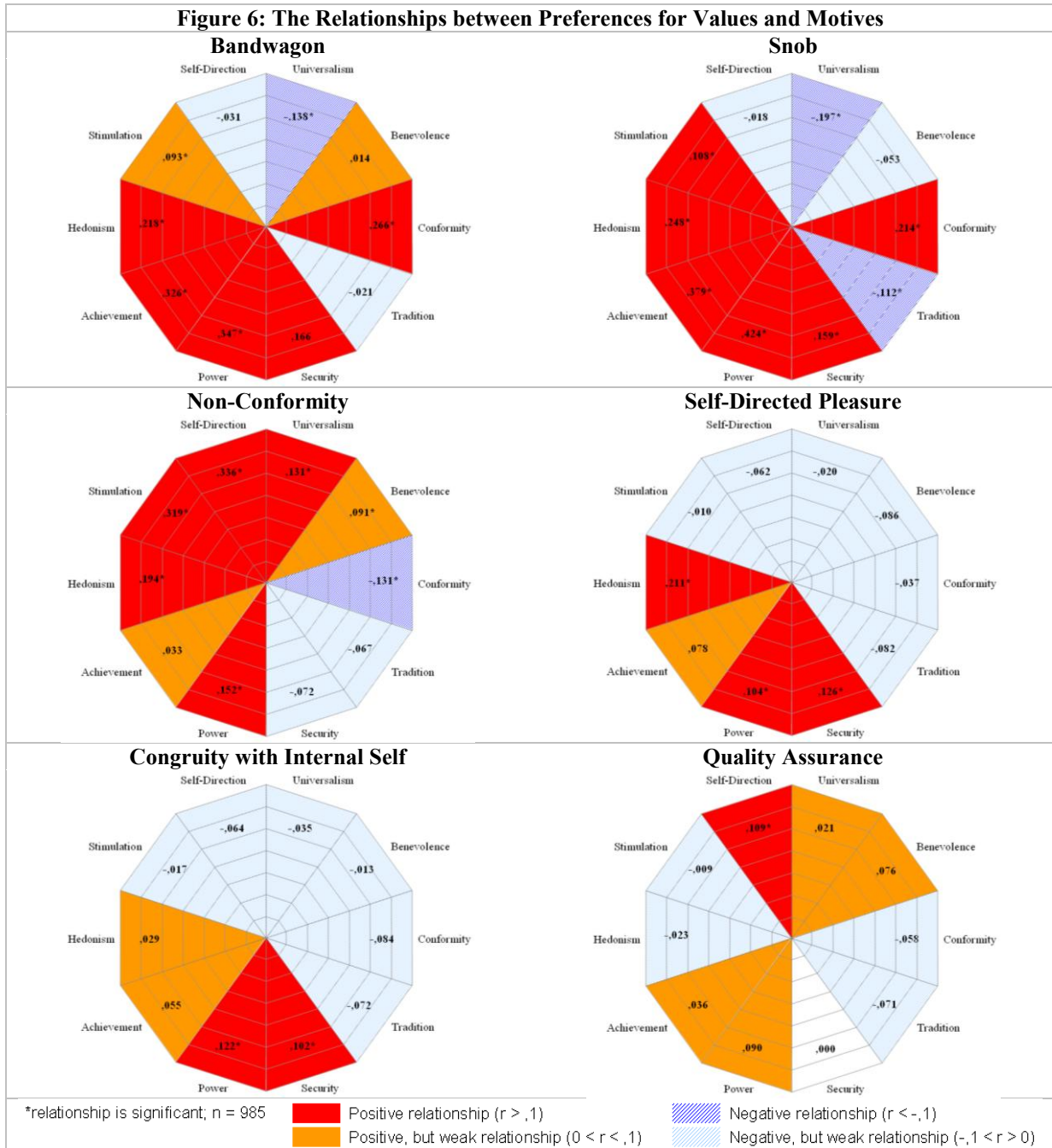
<b>Table 2: Measurement Scales for the Motives of Luxury Consumption</b>			
<b>Motive Scales</b> (Cronbachs Alpha)	<b>Items</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Item-Scale-Correlations</b>
<b>Bandwagon</b> (,779)	• I purchase luxury products that make me look good in front of my friends.	,821	,658
	• When I buy something expensive, it is important what others think about me.	,761	,604
	• I am buying luxury products mainly to attract those people who interest me.	,699	,587
<b>Snob</b> (,821)	• I am enjoying the looks of others when I appear with expensive luxury products.	,783	,679
	• I purchase luxury products mainly to demonstrate my achievements to myself and others.	,778	,659
	• I like to show with luxury products that I am well off.	,773	,687
<b>Non-Conformity</b> (,713)	• I am very attracted to rare luxury products.	,827	,608
	• I like to shop in stores that offer unusual luxury products.	,802	,495
	• I prefer extraordinary luxury products, which few other people have or like.	,681	,495
<b>Self-Directed Pleasure</b> (,852)	• I consider luxury products as a source of personal pleasure for myself.	,844	,715
	• I purchase luxury products mainly to reward myself for something I accomplished.	,842	,751
	• I see luxury products as presents that I purchase to pamper myself.	,835	,701
<b>Congruity with Internal Self</b> (,761)	• I never buy a luxury brand, whose image is not absolutely consistent with the characteristics that I use to describe myself.	,830	,585
	• It's important to me to buy only luxury products whose image fits to who I really are.	,782	,630
	• Luxury brands are like personalities; I purchase only those I get along with.	,685	,561
<b>Quality Assurance</b> (,639)	• The most important selection criterion for a luxury product is quality including functionality, performance and state of the technology.	,808	,510
	• I would never buy a luxury product that doesn't meet my quality expectations, also if it is very reputable.	,742	,415
	• I would prefer a more reasonably priced product of an unknown brand to a luxury brand, if I could be sure that the quality is absolutely the same.	,715	,423
*n = 1.704			

### **V.3 Results: Relationships between Values and Motives of Luxury Consumption**

According to Schwartz (2006, p. 4), we analysed the **Pearson correlations** between the preferences for values (using the VS) and the motives for luxury consumption (using the motive factors). Figure 6 presents the results.



**Figure 6: The Relationships between Preferences for Values and Motives**



Results demonstrate strong relationships between values and motives especially for Bandwagon and Snob consumption. There are close relationships especially for power, achievement and hedonism. Compared to Snobbism, **Bandwagon consumption** exhibits a higher relationship to conformity and a slightly higher relationship to security. By contrast, **Snob** consumption exhibits an even stronger relationship to power and achievement and a negative relationship to tradition. Results for **Non-Conformity** consumption are also consistent with theory. There is also a significant relationship to power, but it is much weaker compared to Snob or Bandwagon consumption. This demonstrates that Non-Conformity consumers are less concerned about prestige and “what others think“, but strive for a (horizontal)

differentiation to others. Hence, there is a negative correlation to conformity and a positive correlation to hedonism, stimulation and especially to self-direction. Results also reflect the relationships between values and the resulting value-based consumer segments: Power-Status-Money-Lovers heavily indulge in Snob consumption, Prestige-oriented Conformists prefer Bandwagon consumption and Individualistic Performers strive for Non-Conformity consumption. Not surprisingly, **Self-Directed-Pleasure** is related especially to hedonism. As this motive can be satisfied independently from others, there are much smaller relationships to power and achievement in comparison to Veblen motives. However, there is still a significant relationship between Self-Directed Pleasure and power. This may be explained with the fact that personal pleasure is still more of a self-enhancing rather than a self-transcendent and altruistic objective (c.f. Schwartz 2006, p. 3). There are not very strong relationships between value preferences and **Congruity with Internal Self**. This motive is satisfied by consuming products, whose image is congruent with the consumers' associations about their internal self. However, these associations could refer to a big range of values. Consequently, there might be other personality traits explaining that motive. For example, Tsai (2005, p. 446) found a significant correlation between an independent self-construal and preferences for the Congruity motive. For **Quality Assurance**, there is only a single significant relationship to Self-Direction. In addition, there is a slightly negative relationship to tradition and conformity and a slightly positive relationship to benevolence. The qualitative survey unveiled that luxury consumers value product quality for many different reasons: Some respondents favour high-quality products to demonstrate their connoisseurship and status and others prefer high-quality products, which are long-lasting and work economically, because of environmental concerns. This demonstrates a fact, which is regularly overlooked: Quality Assurance (and functional motives of luxury consumption in general) is often just a means to an end, i.e. a prerequisite for other motives.

## **VI Value-Cascade Positioning of Luxury Fashion Brands**

### **VI.1 How to Develop a Value-Cascade Positioning Map**

For the development of a VCP map we propose a practicable approach, which can be easily replicated for daily business use. It consists of four main steps including preparations, data collection, data analysis and interpretation. In the preparation phase, the target group and a relevant set of brands need to be defined. Positioning generally requires a **set of brands** that covers either the consideration set of target consumers or an expertise-based selection of the major competitors. For the purpose of this study, an expertise-based set of brands that

represents the German luxury fashion market was developed based on the following selection criteria: a brand should either belong to the most important brands in the market regarding awareness and turnover (e.g. Hugo Boss or Louis Vuitton) or should help to complete the variety of brand images with some unique symbolic characteristics (e.g. rather connoisseur brands like Alexander McQueen, Issey Miyake or Vera Wang). The analysis was based on the qualitative survey and literature research and led to a set of 42 brands. It contains all brands that Esteve and Hieu-Dess (2005) covered in their analysis of luxury brand positioning, which is one of the few and most profound works about the subject.

In the **data collection** phase, respondents were asked to rank their **awareness** of the selected brands on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “never heard about it“ to “very well known“. For those brands that they know relatively well (ratings between 4 and 6 on the awareness scale), they were asked to rank their brand **preference** on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “dislike very much“ to “like very much“.

In the **data analysis** phase **value profiles were calculated** for each brand. They consist of ten scores representing the Schwartz value types. The scores for a given brand equal the average of the CVS of those respondents, who like that brand “very much“ (rating 6 on the preference scale). In order to obtain distinctive results, it is recommended to include only those respondents who assigned the highest score to not more than ten brands. The brand profiles can be illustrated with a value radar chart. The objective of the final phase is to interpret the **positioning map** and to derive some meaningful marketing implications.

## **VI.2 Value-Cascade Positioning of Luxury Fashion Brands**

In reference to the theory of Schwartz, value-based positioning must rely on the two main dimensions “openness to change vs. conservation“ and “self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence“. Following the notion of Vigneron and Johnson (2004, p. 490) that personal values are the main source for the symbolic meaning of luxury brands, these dimensions would be the **most important dimensions in luxury positioning**. This is consistent with the previous work by Esteve and Hieu-Dess (2005) that led to very similar dimensions: “modern/eccentric vs. classic“ and “low vs. high luxury/prestige.“

For the sake of clarity, figure 7 **illustrates the value profiles** only of those four brands that proved to represent best one of the quadrants in the value-based positioning map. These brands include Paul Smith and Aigner for the dimension “openness to change vs. conservation“ and Louis Vuitton and Nina Ricci for the dimension “self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence“. Paul Smith represents individualistic brands with high scores for stimulation

and self-direction and relatively low scores for the opposite values tradition and security. In contrast to that, Aigner represents a conform brand with relatively high scores for security and conformity and low scores for stimulation and self-direction. Louis Vuitton typifies status-oriented brands with high scores for power, achievement and hedonism and low scores for benevolence and universalism. In contrast to that, Nina Ricci represents eco-ethical luxury brands with high scores for benevolence and universalism and relatively low scores for power and achievement.

Figure 7: Value-based Positioning of Luxury Brands

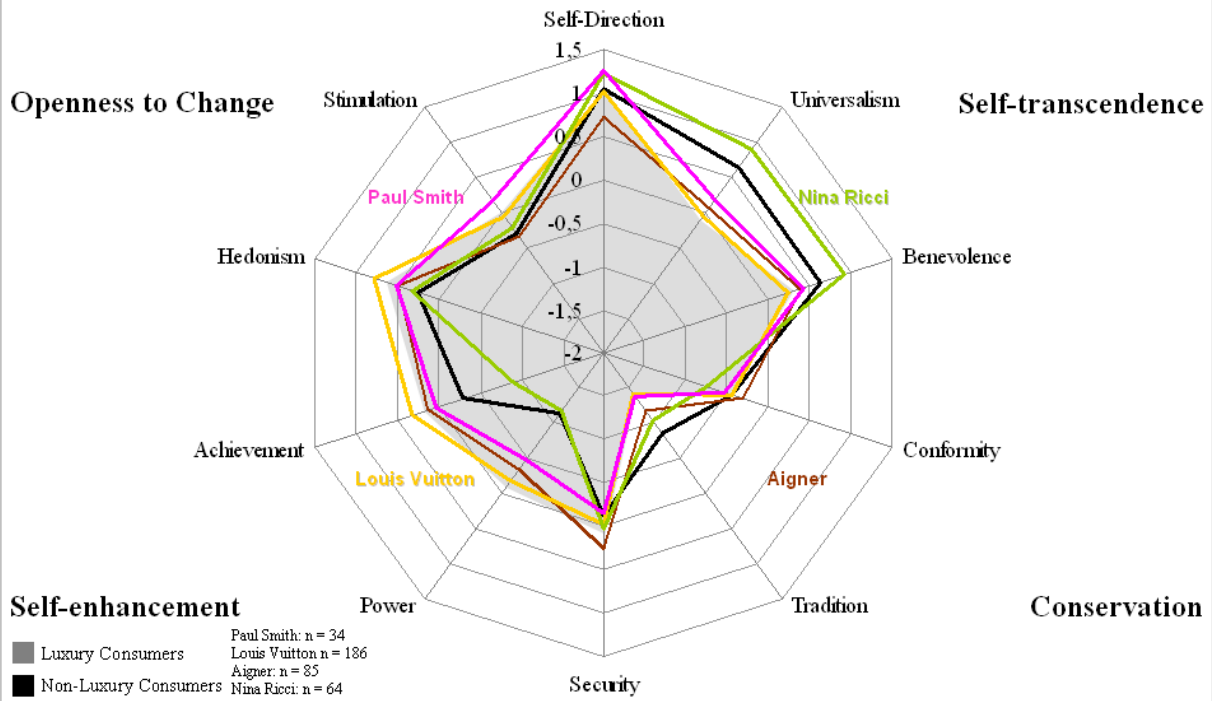


Figure 8 shows some recent adverts of the four brands that support their positioning and illustrate how these brands **create their specific “aura“**. Paul Smith combines an elegant setting in an old English-style salon with people wearing some eccentric animal masks. Aigner also keeps its ad elegant, clean and perfect, but avoids any exiting elements – consumers definitely can’t do anything wrong with that. Louis Vuitton strives for a maximum of perfection and glamour with a lascivious-looking lady in transparent gloves, red lips and extra-shiny hair. Nina Ricci, by contrast, does not portray any symbols of luxury but a fairy-like, androgynous creature in a magic forest instead.

Figure 8: Recent Advertisings Expressing the Brands' Values



### VI.3 Benefits and Practical Implications of Value-Cascade Positioning

In **contrast to common positioning maps**, the position of a specific brand in the value radar chart does not depict consumers' perceptions of its image, but the value preferences of its consumers (actually of those people, who like that brand very much). According to the assumptions that luxury symbolism is mainly fuelled by personal values and that consumers strive for luxury brands that represent their value preferences, value-based positioning maps display also the bigger part of the brands' image and symbolic meaning (as discussed earlier). However, this approach goes beyond image analysis and is much more consumer-focused by revealing consumers' values and motivations that influence their brand preferences.

First of all, the value radar chart delivers a clear and easy-to-read **overview about the value preferences** of a brands' target group. Insights about what the customers' rank important in their lives are already valuable on their own. Moreover, the value preferences can be related to other constructs such as motives, which are not "trans-situational", but rather product-specific and therefore offer deeper insights about the adherers of a brand and more specific marketing implications. For example, the desire for Louis Vuitton can be explained with strong consumer preferences for power, achievement and hedonism. It was shown that there is a close relationship between preferences for these values and Snob consumption. The information about this motive is very specific; marketers can learn that they "[enjoy] the looks of others when [they] appear with expensive luxury products" and that they "purchase luxury products mainly to demonstrate [their] achievements to [themselves] and others" (see table 2 in section V.2). It would be possible to integrate any other consumer variable such as hobbies, holiday preferences, political opinions, attitudes about environmentalism and so forth.

Moreover, further insights can be derived with a comparison of a brand's position with its **competitors**. The understanding about what the own consumers want and what they don't want becomes even clearer by comparing it with other brands and what their consumers want and don't want.

These insights about consumers' values and motives allow marketers to create symbolic benefits that **perfectly suit the desires** of their target group. The understanding about the values-behaviour cascade enables them also to improve the **consistency** of their marketing activities. Moreover, results can be used to analyse the **fit between the brand values** (and the brand identification) and consumer values. In addition, this approach offers a new perspective on brand positioning, which may help to find **positioning niches** or to develop **unique value-cascade combinations**. This would allow a company to improve **brand differentiation** and to create **competitive advantages**.

Nevertheless, marketers must consider also the **limitations** of VCP. First of all, there are several other **constructs intervening** in the relationship between values and brand preferences such as attitudes and motives. This means that there are many cases when certain brand preferences do not ascribe to the same values. In addition, consumers may perceive brands and their value-related symbolism differently (c.f. Da Silva Añaña and Nique 2007, p. 292). This means that people with differing values might be attracted to the same brand because of their **differing perceptions of the brands' image**. The integration of further constructs helps to constrain these limitations. However, as mentioned above, VCP cannot substitute, but rather complement common positioning with valuable consumer insights that inspire brand management.

## **VII Summary, Outlook & Conclusion**

The **objective of the article** was to outline a concept of VCP that combines a scientific base with practicable business requirements. Therefore, we proposed to employ the Schwartz value cycle as the fundamental framework for VCP. **Preparations** for the development of VCP include the definition of the target group and a relevant set of brands. Then the **data is collected** with a quantitative survey that covers the measurement of values, brand awareness, brand preferences, demographics and potentially items for further constructs such as motives. Subsequently, **data analysis** includes data cleaning, the calculation of the value scores for each brand, the creation of VCP maps using value radar charts and potentially also the

analysis of relationships between values and other constructs and their illustration in the radar charts. The final step concentrates on the **interpretation of results** and the derivation of meaningful marketing strategies. The article demonstrated that it is useful to complement the quantitative survey also with qualitative interviews in order to deepen the understanding about the consumers and to constrain the limitations of VCP. This may include focus groups, expert interviews or more sophisticated techniques such as repertory grid and laddering.

The present approach of VCP offers various opportunities for **further enhancements**. For example, the **enlargement of brand profiles** with the 57 sub-values by Schwartz would lead to even more precise results. Moreover, the value profiles could be **differentiated by consumer segments or characteristics** including demographic, socio-economic and psychological attributes. The values-behaviour cascade could be complemented also with **other constructs** such as attitudes, (brand) personality traits or lifestyle preferences. In addition, the same approach could also be implemented **for other industries** or for **other stimuli** than brands such as products or persons.

The article demonstrated that VCP can offer marketers new insights about their consumers and new perspectives about the positioning of their brand. Despite the theoretic base and rich insights of VCP, it is still easy-to-implement and its results easy-to-understand. Therefore, it may help a company to sharpen its competitive edge and to create competitive advantages.

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