

# How Seniors Find Youth and Joy in Luxury: From Paris to Tunis

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## ABSTRACT

Motivated by the understudied intersection of luxury consumption and aging, this cross-cultural study explores how motivations for luxury purchases evolve with age, varying from one culture to another. Semi-structured interviews with 55 senior luxury consumers in France and Tunisia reveal distinct behavioral patterns. Contrary to the values associated with collectivism and individualism, this study demonstrates that Tunisian seniors prioritize motivations focused on quality, while French seniors tend to favor social motivations and those associated to the pursuit of pleasure. Despite cultural differences, both groups share certain motivations behind luxury consumption: long-term investment, habitual practice and aspiration to feel younger. The latter motivation is particularly relevant for this age group, exclusive to their life stage. It provides a distinct contrast to the motivations of younger consumers, who are typically not centered around the goal of feeling or looking younger.

These findings offer valuable insights for academics and practitioners seeking to effectively target and engage this growing and influential consumer segment.

**Keywords:** luxury; senior; aging; motivation; culture.

## INTRODUCTION

The global luxury market continues to set new records, demonstrating remarkable stability in the face of geopolitical and economic turbulence, exceeding the €1.5 trillion mark in 2023 (Bain & Company, 2024)<sup>1</sup>. These exceptional performances are driven by significant changes and challenges, giving rise to new lifestyles and consumption patterns. Notably, the increasing participation of lower and middle-class consumers now constitutes nearly half of the global luxury goods market (Rosendo-Rio and Shukla, 2023).

Simultaneously, in a context of globalization, where information and fashion seamlessly traverse cities and cultures, and technological progress enables universal access and fosters a tendency towards conformity, there has been a notable surge in research interest regarding the behavior of luxury consumers from various cultures (Cheah et al., 2020; Faschan et al., 2020; Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2022). Yet, while cross-cultural studies provide valuable insights into luxury consumer behavior across various age groups, including adolescents (Bakir et al., 2020), youth (Aliyev and Wagner, 2017; Cheah et al., 2020), millennials (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2022), as well as emerging adults (Faschan et al., 2020), the current literature highlights a significant gap in understanding these dynamics among seniors. Interestingly, this often neglected segment is constantly growing and deserves special interest (Touchaei and Hashim, 2023; Kim et al., 2024). Its particularities, such as differences in physical and psychological changes (Guiot, 2001; Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024), strong purchasing power, free time, and brand loyalty (Amatulli et al., 2015; Guido et al., 2018; Bae and Jo, 2022), are particularly relevant. In recent times, the senior market has become a real business and is undergoing a period of rapid expansion (Kim et al., 2024; Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024). The current aging of the population presents an interesting growth opportunity for many industries including the luxury one. According to the United Nations, population ageing is becoming one of the most important

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<sup>1</sup> Bain & Company, (2024). Following a record year, the stalled luxury goods market faces a dilemma between catering to top clientele and reaching new audiences amid ongoing complexities. Retrieved from <https://www.bain.com/about/media-center/press-releases/2024/following-a-record-year-the-stalled-luxury-goods-market-faces-a-dilemma-between-catering-to-top-clientele-and-reaching-new-audiences-amid-ongoing-complexities/>

social transformations of the 21st century, with repercussions in different areas. Almost every country in the world is facing this phenomenon<sup>2</sup>.

As such, given the heterogeneity of this target group, the changing cultural movements and the rapid growth of the global luxury market, the purpose of this study is to explore the motivations of seniors in luxury products consumption, across two cultures. Gaining insights into these motivations is valuable for assisting managers in formulating better marketing strategies among seniors (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2020). This is particularly interesting given the demonstrated variation in their motivations across different cultures (Le Serre et al., 2013) and different age groups (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024).

Our main research questions are as follows: How does aging impact the motivations associated with consuming luxury products? Do these motivations differ among seniors from various cultures and different age groups? What are the key motivations of French and Tunisian seniors in relation to the consumption of luxury products? What distinct characteristics define the motivations of seniors compared to younger segments in the consumption of luxury products?

To answer these questions: The opening section of this paper presents a thorough literature review. It begins by outlining the theoretical framework of the research, followed by a discussion on the increasing importance of studying seniors within the dynamic luxury sector. Additionally, it underscores the importance of examining cultural differences in luxury consumption, providing clarity on the chosen contexts for this research. The subsequent section unveils the outcomes of a qualitative investigation, conducted through 55 individual interviews, in both France and Tunisia. Lastly, the paper concludes by discussing key findings, presenting conclusions, and offering insights into the theoretical and managerial implications derived from this research.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Individuals have long turned to luxury consumption driven by various motivations, including boosting self-esteem, enhancing social status, conforming to or being different from others. These examples highlight the evolving aspect of this type of consumption, depending on time, period, context, culture, psychological and demographic differences (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2022; Cunningham and Petzer, 2022).

### **Psychosocial Development Theory**

According to Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development, a person's age influences their personal motivation. Social and personal identities tend to modify an individual's values and needs throughout their life (Erikson, 1963). This theory has been used as a general framework to explore how age impacts behavior and attitudes. It demonstrates that motivations evolve with aging and explains that each life stage is characterized by psychosocial conflicts that shape individuals' behaviors and motivations.

Erikson (1963) emphasizes that the challenges encountered at each stage are not merely obstacles; rather, they can also provide opportunities for personal growth and learning. As individuals age, their motivations may shift in response to the specific challenges of each life stage. Older adults often reflect on their lives in search of meaning and integrity, which influences their motivations. This drives them to pursue meaningful experiences and share their knowledge during social interactions. Additionally, as they grow older, social motivations, such as the need for belonging and connection, may become more pronounced, prompting individuals to maintain significant relationships and engage in community activities (Erikson, 1963).

In the context of consumer behavior, this theoretical framework is particularly valuable as it emphasizes the importance of exploring all age groups in studies of consumption behavior, including seniors, who have often been overlooked in previous research, especially in the field of luxury. Each demographic group represents a unique and valuable segment, characterized by its own distinct traits, opportunities, and challenges.

### **Unlocking Untapped Potential: Seniors in the Luxury Sector**

In marketing, the term senior refers to people aged 50 and older (Le Serre et al., 2013; Touchaei and Hashim, 2023), but due to rapidly aging societies, some authors only consider those over 60 or 65. Fifty is considered as

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<sup>2</sup>United Nations, (2023). Ageing. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ageing>

a pivotal age in an individuals' life, since this period could be manifested by significant events such as early retirement, repayment of loans, departure of children from the family home, care and/or death of parents, inheritance. Such events are likely to bring about a transformation in purchasing and consumption behavior associated with higher personal expenditures in areas such as travel, financial services and luxury products (Guido et al., 2018).

Today, aging is increasingly seen as a new beginning, where older adults adopt a new social and cultural identity, shaped by their life experience and personal aspirations (Fregolente et al., 2019). Old stereotypes portraying seniors as low-activity and reluctant to spend their money, are largely outdated. In fact, older adults are now more actively striving to remain engaged both physically and socially. They continue to work and build meaningful relationships to enhance their aging experience (Guido et al., 2022). Additionally, they are becoming more health-conscious, seeking to improve their quality of life and embrace a modern, active lifestyle (Guido et al., 2022). Over the past few decades, seniors have changed significantly, so have their consumer experiences (Guido et al., 2018; Bae and Jo, 2022). Moreover, they now have significant purchasing power that exceeds not only that of their predecessors but also that of other market segments (Guido et al., 2018; Fregolente et al., 2019). They represent the richest age cohort in the world; and until 2030, their influence and significance will continue to grow as their population increases by 3.2% every year, in contrast to the 0.8% growth rate of the overall population (Fengler, 2021).<sup>3</sup>

Despite research highlighting the economic potential of an increasingly aging population for companies in various fields (Guido et al., 2018; Touchaei and Hashim, 2023; Kim et al., 2024), very little research has focused on the consumption of luxury products among seniors. However, seniors are more likely to prefer long-established and well-known brands (Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent, 2010), a characteristic often associated with luxury brands (Amatulli et al., 2015). Moreover, they remain more attached to their favorite brand compared to younger consumers, maintaining this loyalty for an extended duration (Lambert-Pandraud and Laurent, 2010; Amatulli et al., 2015). As a result, seniors represent a relatively more loyal and captivating target audience for luxury companies. To address this gap, this study underscores the significance of recognizing the opportunities presented by population aging for the global luxury market.

### **Cultural Variances in Luxury Consumption**

This study specifically focuses on the consumption of luxury products among seniors in two distinct contexts: Tunisia and France. Exploring these cultural regions provides nuanced insights into how cultural differences impact the motivations and behaviors shaping seniors' luxury experiences.

Tunisia has been a crossroads of several successive civilizations. This mosaic of cultures has given rise to an educated, open-minded, Europeanized, fashionable and relatively affluent society, ready to spend large amounts of money to acquire luxury products (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2016; Diallo et al., 2021). It represents one of the countries that is beginning to stand out in the luxury sector. The uprisings that began in 2010 and constituted the Arab Spring have had a role to play in opening up markets and expanding access to information and media (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2020). It is evident to expect that an open economy and increasing interaction with the media will also fuel the desire for luxury goods (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2020). Its luxury fashion market revenue amounts to US\$32.57 million in 2024. The market is expected to grow annually by 3.33%<sup>4</sup>. However, very little research has focused on the luxury consumption behavior of the Tunisian population from a cultural and psychological point of view (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2016). France, on the other hand, is known worldwide for its luxury and especially for its luxury industries, exemplified by LVMH, a French multinational conglomerate and the world's largest luxury goods company. It confirms its position as world leader in this sector. Therefore, interest in this luxury market is undeniable.

<sup>3</sup>Fengler, W. (2021). The Silver Economy Is Coming of Age: A Look at the Growing Spending Power of Seniors. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/01/14/the-silver-economy-is-coming-of-age-a-look-at-the-growing-spending-power-of-seniors/>

<sup>4</sup>Statista (2024). Luxury Fashion – Tunisia. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/luxury-goods/luxury-fashion/tunisia#:~:text=Revenue%20in%20the%20Luxury%20Fashion,US%2434%2C960m%20in%202024>

Tunisia and France are distinct yet interconnected cultures. Historically, Tunisia was a French protectorate, and the enduring impact of their colonial roles is evident in the contrast between France as a developed country and Tunisia as a developing country, marked by significantly different economic environments (Diallo et al., 2021). Consequently, they differ in their market characteristics and in the degree of development of their luxury markets. While France has a long tradition of luxury, Tunisia is a booming market for luxury products (Diallo et al., 2020). Moreover, these two countries are culturally different according to Hofstede's (1991) dimensions. Tunisia is considered as a country with a collectivist culture (Gupta and Zaghoudi, 2016) where people are more concerned about their families and their relationship with others (Hofstede, 1991). However, France has an individualistic society where people place more emphasis on personal satisfaction (Hofstede, 1991).

In general, in luxury products consumption, consumers of collectivist culture base their purchases on social aspect (Hofstede, 1991) for reasons of status and social recognition (Cunningham and Petzer, 2022), while consumers of individualist culture base their purchases on personal aspect (Hofstede, 1991). On the other hand, some studies have shown that individualist consumers are more likely to have symbolic motivations than collectivist ones, whereas the latter ones are more likely to have perfectionist motivations (Aliyev and Wagner, 2017; Yu and Sapp, 2019). Additionally, there seems to be a predisposition to similar luxury purchasing behavior for consumers from different cultures, due to the phenomenon of globalization and open markets (Nwankwo et al., 2014).

The lack of information on whether individualism or collectivism and other cultural factors are important for luxury consumers needs further studies (Aliyev and Wagner, 2017). Thus, for both theoretical and practical reasons, France and Tunisia have been chosen for this study.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

When a phenomenon is a little explored, as is the case in this study, a qualitative approach is appropriate for a first phase of exploration (Bryman et Bell, 2015).

### Data Collection

A semi-structured protocol was developed to conduct interviews, face to face. The interview guide begins with a general introductory theme aimed at understanding respondents' perceptions, attitudes, preferences, and opinions regarding luxury consumption. In order to avoid potential biases associated with self-reported data, particularly given the study's focus on sensitive motivations in luxury consumption, such as social status, respondents were not directly questioned about their motivations for luxury good consumption. An indirect approach, inspired by the work of Walker and Olson (1991), was employed. Respondents were asked to identify the most significant attributes associated with luxury products. Subsequently, for each chosen attribute, respondents were prompted to articulate the reasoning behind their choice without interruption, using the question "why is this important to you?" to guide the exploration of motivations.

Before beginning data collection, three pilot interviews were conducted. Some adjustments were suggested to improve the quality of the interview guide. Subsequently, 55 one-on-one interviews were conducted with French (30) and Tunisian (25) luxury consumers, all aged 50 and over. Each interview lasted about 40 minutes and was conducted in France and Tunisia, mainly in the two capitals: Paris and Tunis. The dimension of the sample follows the concept of saturation where the collection of new data no longer provides additional insights in each context (Bryman et Bell, 2015). The surveyed population is composed of regular and occasional senior luxury consumers. This choice is justified by the phenomenon of democratization of luxury (Rosendo-Rio and Shukla, 2023), and by the category of luxury products chosen for this study (Ready-to-wear and fashion accessories). This choice of product seems to be interesting because clothing is an area affected by the perception of age (Guiot, 2001). The beginning of each interview included filter questions to ensure that only the study target proceeded with the interview. The snowball sampling technique was also used as some initial participants referred others with expertise relevant to the research topic (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

The distribution of respondents according to their typologies is presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Respondents' Typologies

Typology		French participant	Tunisian participant
Gender	Male	9	10
	Female	21	15
Age range	[50 ; 55)	3	6
	[55 ; 60)	1	3
	[60 ; 65)	10	4
	[65 ; 70)	4	3
	[70 ; 75)	7	4
	[75 ; 80)	2	3
	80 and over	3	2
Socio-professional category	Business leader	3	11
	Executive professional	9	4
	Employees	1	3
	Retired	14	4
	Unemployed	3	3
Average monthly income (Dinar/ Euro)	< 2 000	2	0
	[2 000 ; 4 000)	9	9
	[4 000 ; 7 000)	9	5
	[7 000 ; 12 000)	7	3
	>12 000	3	8

### Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, translated into English, and coded digitally before being manually analyzed. The total data represent 148 single-spaced pages of 12-point text, corresponding to 54,160 words. In order to ensure the quality and accuracy of the answers, the back-translation method of Brislin (1970) was used. This method, which is one of the most common approaches to translating a scientific text, consists in comparing the original version and the back-translated version in order to determine the differences and check the reliability of the translation (Brislin, 1970).

A thematic analysis was used during the content analysis. The goal of content analysis is to apply to the corpus of data, treatments that allow access to a meaning that meets the research problem. The analysis was conducted line by line, classifying the data into analysis units corresponding to themes, each associated with a motivation in luxury consumption.

After a detailed study of the corpus, the main themes were identified in both contexts (France and Tunisia). These themes were categorized by calculating the frequencies of appearance of the analysis units associated with each theme in the respondents' speeches.

### RESULTS

Eight motivations in luxury products consumption among seniors emerged from the analysis. While these motivations have been identified in previous studies on luxury goods consumption, some of them have

received very little attention. One of these motivations is only specific to senior consumers. Note also that a cross-analysis of the two contexts is conducted. Following the results of the thematic analysis, it turned out that the same motivations appeared in both contexts, Tunisian and French, with differences in the frequency of appearance. **Table 2** presents the different themes of respondents' motivations classified by culture.

Table 2. A Cross-Analysis of Seniors' Motivations by Culture

Motivations	French (Individualist culture)		Tunisians (Collectivist culture)		Total of respondents citing the motivation
	Counting (30)	Frequency	Counting (25)	Frequency	
Perfectionism (quality)	26/30	0,87	25/25	1	51/55 (0,93)
Hedonism (pleasure)	24/30	0,8	10/25	0,4	34/55 (0,62)
Status	19/30	0,63	10/25	0,4	29/55 (0,53)
Uniqueness	18/30	0,6	10/25	0,4	28/55 (0,51)
Long-term investment	10/30	0,33	9/25	0,36	19/55 (0,35)
Habit	9/30	0,3	9/25	0,36	18/55 (0,33)
Conformity	11/30	0,37	4/25	0,16	15/55 (0,27)
Aspiration to feel younger	7/30	0,23	4/25	0,16	11/55 (0,20)

The elderly population is expanding, making the aging market potentially huge (Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024). This segment is increasingly heterogeneous and seniors of different age groups have different needs from a marketing perspective (Guido et al., 2018; Bubphapant and Brandão, 2024). One way to better understand this 50+ market is to divide it into different chronological groups. **Table 3** presents the different types of motivations from the two cultures, classified according to age groups.

Table 3. Cross-Analysis of Seniors' Motivations by Age Group

Motivations	50s (13)	60s (21)	70s (16)	80s and over (5)	Total of respondents citing the motivation
Perfectionism (quality)	11/13 (0,85)	20/21 (0,95)	15/16 (0,94)	5/5 (1)	51/55 (0,93)
Hedonism (pleasure)	6/13 (0,46)	18/21 (0,86)	8/16 (0,5)	2/5 (0,4)	34/55 (0,62)
Status	8/13 (0,61)	14/21 (0,66)	7/16 (0,44)	0/5 (0)	29/55 (0,53)
Uniqueness	6/13 (0,46)	11/21 (0,52)	8/16 (0,5)	3/5 (0,6)	28/55 (0,51)
Long-term investment	5/13 (0,38)	7/21 (0,33)	7/16 (0,44)	0/5 (0)	19/55 (0,35)
Habit	5/13 (0,38)	9/21 (0,43)	4/16 (0,25)	0/5 (0)	18/55 (0,33)
Conformity	4/13 (0,31)	8/21 (0,38)	3/16 (0,19)	0/5 (0)	15/55 (0,27)
Aspiration to feel younger	3/13 (0,23)	5/21 (0,24)	3/16 (0,19)	0/5 (0)	11/55 (0,20)

### Perfectionism

Perfectionism, which concerns consumers who seek the best quality of products (Yu and Sapp, 2019), is the most important motivation that emerges from the analysis. Almost all respondents (93%) in both contexts, France (87%) and Tunisia (100%), and from different age groups, associate luxury products with quality, and

state that the quality of the product, service or raw material is the first criterion they rely on when purchasing a luxury product.

*"Luxury is the very technical knowledge in certain fields, quality products that are worked with people who have a real know-how, I am really very demanding in my purchases", (Man, 60-65, France); "The benefit expected in the purchase of luxury products is the quality! Even when it is a very well imitated product, with time and after use you feel the difference", (Woman, 50-55, Tunisia).*

Some respondents even associated the importance of quality with advancing age. These results confirm previous work showing that older consumers associate luxury products with quality and durability (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2016). Some respondents (33%) think that their consumption of luxury has changed and they tend more and more to buy luxury in a more rational way, focusing on better quality that provides comfort and durability.

*"Young people are willing to spend a lot of money to be noticed. At a certain age we would like to have things that are of good quality and that satisfy us more", (Woman, 65-70, France).*

### **Hedonism**

Hedonism was identified in the responses of Tunisian and French seniors as a very important motivation (62%). Several previous studies have referred to the fact that luxury brands convey a hedonic value, such as sensory pleasure, excitement or even euphoria (Holmqvist et al., 2020; Rosendo-Rio and Shukla, 2023). Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2019) talk about "a temporal escape from ordinary life" to describe consumption practices associated with the hedonic meanings of luxury. This motivation is present among French seniors (80%) more than Tunisian ones (40%), and this finding accords with Aliyev and Wagner (2017). Besides, this motivation is quite significant for seniors in the 60s. The respondents consider their consumption of luxury products as a part of life, essential to their well-being and happiness.

*"It's a pleasure that only those who consume luxury can understand, it's a special feeling, even your behavior, your looks ... everything changes", (Woman, 50-55, Tunisia); "Sometimes we're really under the spell, it's something we don't feel when we see an ordinary product that we find in mass, even an ordinary product can please us, but in luxury, it's another dimension", (Woman, 65-70, France).*

### **Status**

Status seeking manifests in the desire to deal with social perception, external evaluation and reputation, thus individuals seek to reflect their status through the consumption of products that only a privileged few can obtain (Latter et al., 2010; Amatulli et al., 2015). It is a form of influence marked by the respect, admiration, and envy of others (Cheah et al., 2020). It is considered as an important motivation in the consumption of luxury products among seniors (53%), nevertheless, cross-analysis of seniors' motivations by age group shows that this motivation becomes less and less important with age. Status seeking is present among French seniors (63%) more than among Tunisian ones (40%). These results support previous work showing that individualistic consumers have become more likely to have symbolic motivations than collectivistic ones (Yu and Sapp, 2019).

*"It's not very good what I'm going to say, but luxury is a social code", (Woman, 60-65, France); "I think that seniors consume luxury to keep a certain identity and a certain status ... Luxury allows us to be captured by others, it is a symbol of success", (Man, 70-75, Tunisia); "Luxury is appearance, ... it's true that now everything is appearance", (Woman, 50-55, France).*

### **Uniqueness**

The desire for uniqueness reinforces individuals' need to feel unique, and their desire for differentiation and exclusivity. This can be satisfied when the consumption and use of certain products and brands are offered only to an exclusive clientele (Latter et al., 2010). Thus only certain luxury products can provide this uniqueness to its consumers and are likely to distinguish them from others. Approximately 51% of seniors in

all age groups report that they buy and consume luxury products to feel unique and distinguish themselves from others.

This motivation is more present among French seniors (60%) than Tunisian ones (40%), and these findings accord with the work of Aliyev and Wagner, (2017).

*"Luxury allows me to be different, more elegant... It's a bit tricky to say that, but luxury allows me to distinguish myself socially from others. I think that all luxury consumers have the same motivation, which is the distinction from the rest of the society", (Woman, 65-70, France); "Luxury is the out of the ordinary, perfection, beauty. It's something that you don't find in everyone, and it's also for a limited category of people", (Woman, 60-65, Tunisia).*

### **Long-term investment**

Long-term investment explains how some consumers view luxury purchases as a way to acquire products that are built to last and retain their value over time (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Around 35% of participants from both cultures revealed that they buy luxury brands expecting them to maintain value and quality in the future, thus prioritizing classic and timeless products.

*"In luxury, I look for durability ..., a style that remains classic and durable that we never tire of and we always keep the pride of wearing or owning", (Woman, 60-65, France); "I especially love Rolex watches because they never go out of fashion, a watch lasts a lifetime", (Woman, 55-60, Tunisia).*

It is also interesting to note that seniors try to justify their expensive purchases by the desire to acquire products that could be passed on from one generation to another or that could be resold one day.

*"The point of luxury is to have a piece that you can keep over time and sometimes even pass on, a product that will not lose its value, you will pay a lot for it, but you can still pass it on to someone in your family, an inheritance ", (Man, 60-65, France); "Some luxury products are like gold, their value increases with time and you can always resell them", (Woman, 55-60, France).*

This motivation, as well as the motivations presented below, become less important among the older seniors, according to the cross-analysis of seniors' motivations by age group.

### **Habit**

Habitual orientation is one of the main characteristics of decision making for consumers. If circumstances remain stable, the behavior of a consumer may become a habit, so that it will be based on past behavior rather than on cognitive considerations (Bamberg et al., 2003). Very few studies have mentioned the role of habit in the consumption of luxury products, yet this variable is important for understanding the behavior of luxury consumers, particularly the older ones. Some of the respondents (33%) in the two contexts, , France (30%) and Tunisia (36%), mentioned the fact that luxury can be or become a habit over time.

*"For seniors, luxury becomes a common consumption, a habit of consuming without always being aware of it, very naturally we go for luxury products and we will reject other products because we know how to distinguish them" (Woman, 60-65, France); "Luxury can become a habit, when we get used to wearing only branded shoes, our feet don't fit in other shoes", (Woman, 60-65, Tunisia).*

### **Conformity**

Conformity is manifested in people's tendency to buy products to fit in with their social group's expectations. This need to conform stems from a desire to belong and feel accepted by those they identify with (Cunningham and Petzer, 2022). Respondents in this study often show patterns of conformity. They mention the effect that their consumption of luxury brands has on others, and describe how luxury allows them to maintain their place in society. This motivation is more present among French respondents (37%) than Tunisian ones (16%), and this finding coincides with the work of Yu and Sapp (2019).



*"There is a feeling of being among the privileged, it's a way of being recognized by people of the same class, of having a social recognition, a gain of confidence in relation to others" (Woman, 70-75, France).*

Some respondents even admit being constrained to consume and wear luxury products, because of their age or social group, in order to keep their position and recognition in their entourage.

*"When you live in an environment where all women have a Chanel bag, you feel a bit obliged to buy one, this bag is a kind of visa in the world of luxury", (Woman, 60-65, Tunisia).*

The low number of occurrences of this motivation, as well as the subsequent one, can be explained by the fact that they represent unconscious or sensitive topics, which respondents find difficult to admit openly.

### **Aspiration to Feel Younger**

The aspiration to feel younger is among the least explored motivations in literature, as it concerns a very specific age group: older adults. People aged 50 and over value social roles traditionally associated with younger age groups and strive to maintain them for as long as possible (Guiot, 2001). Furthermore, this same segment, when perceiving old-age stereotypes as a threat, demonstrates a pronounced inclination to purchase prestige brands. This inclination is driven by their desire to distance themselves from their age group and is fueled by the symbolic appeal of prestige brands, which represent a youthful and desirable identity (Bae and Jo, 2022). This phenomenon is observed among Tunisians (16%) and French (23%) respondents, shedding light on why some seniors opt for luxury products to feel younger, more confident, and attractive. This could even be a means to maintain self-assurance and confidence in their appearance

*"Luxury gives us value... it's reassuring for our age. When we are young we have the beauty of youth, we have a lot of things, whereas at a certain age we lose a lot of our natural beauty and we need more and more tricks... things that reassure us. I'm not attracted to material things, but even I am touched by this idea. I think that the older we get, the less confident we are about our looks and luxury compensates for what we miss" (Woman, 65-70, France).*

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Previous studies have demonstrated, that in terms of age, luxury consumers have shown different perceptions and motivations (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2016; Faschan et al., 2020), and that older people from different cultures show significant differences in terms of motivations (Le Serre et al., 2013). It should be noted that, to the author's best knowledge, this is the first study to explore cross-cultural differences with regard to luxury consumption among seniors.

The results of this study reveal interesting similarities and differences among senior luxury consumers from two cultures. Respondents from both cultures mentioned the same motivations with almost the same frequency, particularly those associated with the senior segment, such as long-term investment, aspiration to feel younger and habit. It is worth noting that, regardless of culture, seniors adopt similar behaviors in their consumption of luxury products by seeking to look and feel younger, and to own durable products that they can pass on to the future generation. Moreover, for seniors from different cultures, luxury can become a common consumption, a habit of consuming without always being aware of it, because with time and experience, they learn to distinguish the best products and the highest quality.

Perfectionism, i.e. the search for quality, represents the most important motivation of luxury products consumption among seniors from both cultures. The results showed that collectivist respondents (Tunisian) are more likely to have perfectionist motivations than individualist ones (French). These findings corroborate with recent studies that have shown that collectivists no longer base their purchases solely on the social aspect but have become more likely than individualists to base their purchases on perfectionist motivations (Aliyev and Wagner, 2017; Yu and Sapp, 2019). According to the cross-analysis of seniors' motivations by age group, perfectionism remains the most significant motivation for seniors regardless of their age. These results confirm previous work that shows that among older consumers, quality, self-satisfaction, and durability of the luxury

product represent the most important motivations (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2016). Seniors need to make rational purchases where they look for the best products in terms of quality, because with age they are less and less interested in buying (shopping), and they prefer to have durable and comfortable products.

Hedonism, i.e. the search for pleasure, represents the second most important motivation among seniors. This motivation is more present and important among individualists than among collectivists, which sustains the work of Aliyev and Wagner (2017). Hedonism is especially important for seniors in their 60s, and this tendency may be linked to their quest for pleasure and positive emotions at the end of their professional careers. In individual interviews, some respondents highlighted that luxury consumption at this stage of life serves as a form of personal reward, symbolizing the success and recognition of their hard work. As they conclude their careers, these seniors seek to indulge themselves, enjoying the rewards of their professional dedication. These luxury purchases can play a crucial role in their well-being, particularly during the challenging moments of aging, when factors such as stress, lack of self-confidence, or inactivity may negatively affect their quality of life. It should be remembered that, more than in any other sector, luxury consumption is a response to the pursuit of positive emotions and joy (Holmqvist et al., 2020).

The present study reveals that motivations illustrating the social aspect, such as status, conformity or uniqueness, are present in the responses of seniors with a higher frequency among individualists than among collectivists. These results align with the findings of Yu and Sapp (2019), which indicate that individualist luxury consumers are more likely to have social and symbolic motivations than collectivists. However, some respondents reveal that these motivations become less important for older people compared to younger one, who are much more likely to purchase luxury products for social reasons (Gupta and Zaghdoudi, 2016). It is worth noting, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1963) suggests that motivations evolve with age in response to the specific challenges of each life stage. For older adults, facing feelings associated with aging, such as loneliness and inactivity, finding meaning in life and personal integrity often becomes crucial, which can influence their motivations by prompting them to seek experiences of social interaction and group belonging. As they age, social motivations, particularly the need for belonging and connection, may thus become more pronounced, encouraging them to consume certain luxury products to conform to a specific group, appeal to others, appear younger, or even attract attention by standing out and displaying social status.

However, the study results reveal that, regardless of the respondents' cultural contexts, some emphasize that, at a certain age, it becomes essential to prioritize subtlety and discretion, avoiding ostentatious purchases. For today's seniors, luxury is more about refinement: it represents an understated style, recognizable only by connoisseurs and not very showy. Thus, they tend to embrace a more discreet form of luxury consumption to signal their status only to the groups with whom they wish to identify. These groups, composed of connoisseurs, can interpret the subtle signals associated with true luxury, unlike younger consumers, who often seek more ostentatious signs, such as large, visible logos, easily recognizable by everyone. It is worth noting that the social aspect of luxury consumption is important across all age groups, but the reasons behind it differ. Younger consumers use luxury to gain visible status and recognition, while older ones prefer subtle, refined luxury as a means of connecting with select groups, valuing exclusivity and sophistication over public display.

Previous research has shown that attitudes and motivations for purchasing luxury goods differ across cultures (Aliyev et Wagner, 2017; Bakir et al., 2020; Kapferer et Valette-Florence, 2022). However, this study reveals that the motivations of seniors in the two cultural contexts are fundamentally the same, though there are differences in the frequency of certain motivations. These findings highlight the convergence between senior luxury consumers from different cultures. This convergence can be attributed to different factors. First, as people age, their motivations for luxury consumption tend to become more similar. Second, the globalization of technology and media has influenced consumer values and behaviors towards luxury brands, making predispositions to luxury consumption increasingly similar, regardless of economic or social environment (Nwankwo et al., 2014; Faschan et al., 2020).

Alternatively, historical facts contribute to the close relationship between Tunisia and France, with ties forged through current socio-cultural dynamics and economic interactions, based on geographical proximity and shared influences.

## Theoretical Implications

This study provides important theoretical implications to previous research. It contributes to an exploration of a research topic largely overlooked in the marketing literature: the consumption of luxury products among seniors. More specifically, it addresses this issue within two distinct cultural contexts. Its implication is therefore to take into account the role of aging and culture in the consumption of luxury products.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of studying the older demographic, given their significant behavioral and demographic changes, the literature on luxury consumption has primarily focused on younger consumers. This study allows developing a deeper understanding of the motivations of seniors in the consumption of luxury products through a cross-cultural analysis. To the author's best knowledge, no study to date has specifically addressed this topic.

The findings reveal a distinctive behavior among seniors compared to younger consumers, highlighting a specific motivation: the aspiration to feel younger. Some senior consumers seek through their consumption of luxury products to feel younger by projecting a youthful, confident, and attractive image within their social environment. This research also highlights some dissimilarities between the motivations of seniors in different age groups, and sheds additional light on the issue of the impact of culture in the consumption of luxury products among this segment.

All of these contributions provide managers with key elements and guidance to adapt their marketing strategies.

## Managerial Implications

Due to the aging of the population, it seems very important to understand how senior consumers evaluate the offers of luxury companies (Amatulli et al., 2015; Bae and Jo, 2022). This growing segment is reshaping the industrial landscape, particularly that of luxury goods, bringing both opportunities and challenges within and across cultures. To adapt to this population characterized by significant purchasing power, luxury brands may reconsider design changes or functionality adjustments to their products and services. Brands that embrace this strategic evolution can thrive by responding to the changing preferences of this rapidly expanding segment.

To attract seniors, luxury companies should learn how to establish appropriate offers adapted to intrinsic motivations such as perfectionism (quality) and hedonism (pleasure), as these motivations are the main drivers of luxury consumption among seniors from different cultures. By realizing that buying luxury products offers unmatched quality and durability compared to other products, seniors will feel more assured that they have made a good choice and will be more confident that their money has been well spent. Moreover, this demographic is more experienced and skilled in discerning high-quality products due to their previous purchasing experiences. As mentioned earlier, seniors represent a particularly loyal consumer segment. When they find products that meet their expectations, they are more likely to remain loyal to the same brand. At an advanced age, their interest in the latest fashion trends is typically less pronounced. What matters more to them is trust in the brand, the acquisition of reliable, high-quality products, and a classic, timeless style that ensures durability. Luxury companies should also move towards a discreet and refined luxury. Products aimed at an older demographic should feature subtle brand markers, as status-driven and conformist seniors tend to seek appeal among a luxury-savvy audience rather than the general public.

Additionally, seniors feel the need to indulge themselves and enjoy experiences that brings not only comfort but also positive emotions. For some, purchasing luxury products at an older age becomes a form of personal reward and self-recognition after years of hard work and sometimes saving. Therefore, it is crucial for luxury brands to offer personalized shopping experiences that create a sense of well-being and evoke feelings of gratification for senior consumers. On the other hand, it is necessary to distinguish senior consumers who feel particularly young and act accordingly, knowing that the younger the consumer feels, the more likely they are to purchase luxury goods (Amatulli et al., 2015). Hence, advertisers should opt for advertisements that aim to show the seductive and appealing aspects of luxury products. They should develop communicative messages revealing youthfulness to reach the seniors who need to feel and look younger. Regarding the motivation of the

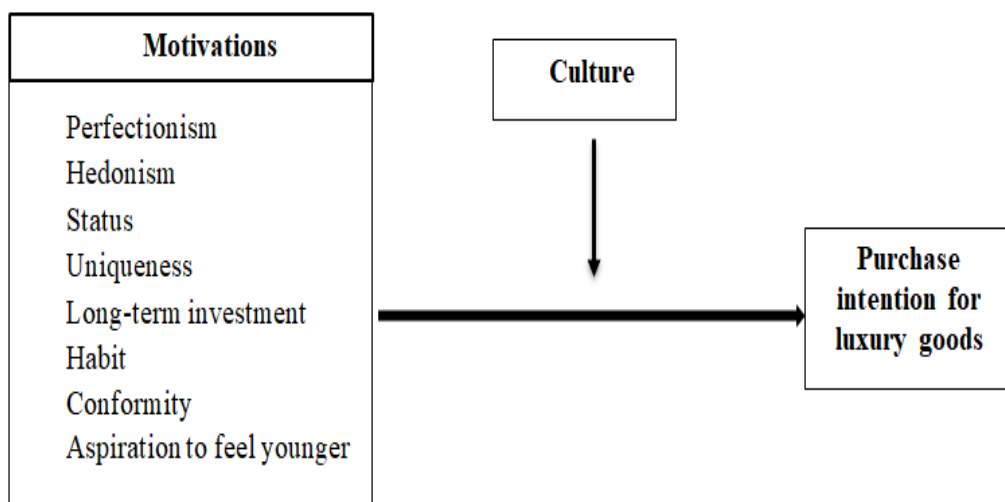
long term investment, marketers could focus on the heritage and timeless aspects of luxury products. It is therefore advisable to position oneself on the axis of generativity for certain products. Indeed, the consumption of luxury gives a new meaning by transmitting valuable objects to future generations by ensuring a symbolic immortality.

Since older adults from different cultures exhibit fairly similar behaviors, luxury marketers targeting this demographic should adopt generally uniform strategies. However, they must consider that individualistic consumers are highly sensitive to the image that a luxury product projects, while collectivist consumers prioritize the quality of the luxury products they purchase.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study is geographically limited to France and Tunisia. Despite cultural differences, factors such as the geographical proximity of these two countries and their significant interaction may contribute to the observed similarities in consumption behavior. Therefore, it would be interesting to expand the scope of future research to include a broader range of countries or regions.

While this research offers an in-depth qualitative analysis, the sample size limits the ability to generalize the results on a larger scale. Quantitative research would be valuable to complement these findings and provide statistically significant data. To date, no quantitative studies have been conducted to understand senior consumers’ behavior regarding luxury goods across different cultural contexts. The findings of this study reveal key insights that could serve as the foundation for a proposed research model, which could be tested through a confirmatory quantitative study.



**Figure 1.** Proposed Research Model

However, this article suggests other research perspectives. The results of this study were based on chronological age, without considering the subjective age, which presents a limitation, as the gap between chronological age and subjective age increases with aging (Guiot, 2001). Moreover, Amatulli et al. (2015) mentioned the importance of subjective age on the luxury products' consumption among seniors. Finally, offering a more detailed segmentation by gender, income, socio-professional category, and other demographic factors could lead to a richer understanding of luxury consumption patterns among seniors.

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