

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
NATIONAL ECONOMICS UNIVERSITY**



NGUYEN BAO NGOC

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO INCONSPICUOUS
LUXURY CONSUMPTION IN VIETNAM**

**PHD DISSERTATION
IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

HANOI - 2025

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Supervisor: Prof. Dr. NGUYEN THI TUYET MAI

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DECLARATION

The author hereby declares that this dissertation is my work, which the author has never submitted for a degree at this or any other educational institution. The author also certifies that all of the dissertation's references have been properly credited.

The author has read and comprehended the University's policy on plagiarism and academic integrity violations. With my honor, the author certifies that I carried out this research and that it does not violate regulations of good scholarly practice.

PhD candidate

Nguyen Bao Ngoc

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LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Full Name
ATT	Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases
AVE	Average variance extracted
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CR	Composite reliability
CS	Collectivistic self
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
INT	Purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products
IS	Individualistic self
EJ	Ethical judgments
NS	Need for status
PBC	Perceive behavioral control toward inconspicuous luxury purchases
PDB	Power distance belief
RQ	Research question
SEM	Structural equation modeling
SN	Subjective norms
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Vietnam, one of the fastest-growing and most promising consumer markets in Southeast Asia, showcases the dynamic potential of emerging nations (Nguyen & Mai, 2019). According to recent research by the World Bank (2023), Vietnam's economy is projected to grow by 6.3% in 2023, mainly driven by increased consumption from the rising middle class. The number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWI) in Vietnam has nearly doubled from 2017 to 2022 (Frank, 2023), while the population of wealthy individuals with assets over \$1 million has surged by 70% in the past five years, with projections suggesting a 173% increase from 2017 to 2027. In 2022, there were 1,059 individuals with net assets exceeding \$30 million (over 700 billion VND), and this number is anticipated to approach 1,300 by 2027, reflecting a 122% increase over ten years.

This growing affluent demographic positions Vietnam as a promising market in the Asia-Pacific region, especially for the luxury fashion industry. In 2023, Vietnam is seen as a vital growth market within the Asia-Pacific for brands and retailers. Reports indicate that Vietnam's luxury fashion sector is set for significant expansion, with projected revenues of \$957.2 million in 2023 and an annual growth rate of 3.23% leading up to 2028. High-end fashion labels are establishing a stronger presence in Vietnam, with brands such as Dior, Louis Vuitton, Tiffany & Co., and Berluti launching direct distribution stores in key locations like Union Square, Rex Hotel, and Saigon Center. Additionally, exclusive distribution groups are broadening their reach; for instance, DAFC introduced Montblanc and Christian Louboutin in 2021, and ACFC secured a distribution deal for Polo Ralph Lauren, adding around ten stores throughout Vietnam. To succeed, luxury brands must deeply understand consumer behavior, which necessitates academic research to inform decision-making within the luxury sector.

Alongside this rapid growth, there is a noticeable shift in consumer preferences toward more understated forms of luxury. In Vietnam, the "quiet luxury" trend is gaining momentum, particularly among celebrities who favor understated yet high-quality items (Advertisingvietnam, 2023). For instance, beauty queens Ky Duyen and Huong Giang have been seen carrying Goyard bags, known for their minimalist design and absence of conspicuous logos, embodying the "stealth wealth" aesthetic (Vnexpress, 2024). This shift in preferences underscores the increasing importance of inconspicuous luxury in Vietnam's expanding luxury market.

Studies on luxury purchasing behavior in Vietnam and other nations that are similar contexts have primarily viewed it as conspicuous consumption. Defined by Veblen and Banta (2009), conspicuous consumption refers to acquiring and displaying goods and services to publicly demonstrate wealth and social status rather than meeting practical needs. However, recent global research has uncovered a shift in luxury consumption: ‘Luxury, once reserved for the extraordinary, has also become accessible to ordinary individuals’ (Jiang & Shan, 2018; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018). This evolution gives rise to inconspicuous luxury consumption, garnering increasing interest among marketing scholars. Inconspicuous consumption, as described by Berger and Ward (2010), refers to ‘the use of subtle signals that are only observable to individuals with the requisite knowledge to interpret their meaning.’ This concept of subtlety in luxury consumption has emerged as a key topic within the literature. Scholars have begun to investigate various facets of inconspicuous luxury consumption, including its conceptualization (Berger & Ward, 2010; Eckhardt et al., 2015), the profiles of inconspicuous luxury consumers (Han et al., 2010; Makkar & Yap, 2018b), and the underlying motivations driving inconspicuous consumption (Jiang, Gao, et al., 2021). Despite significant efforts by scholars to explore these new emerging behaviors, the body of research on inconspicuous luxury consumption remains relatively limited, which may hinder a deeper understanding of this consumption pattern. Therefore, additional studies on inconspicuous luxury consumption are needed (Jiang et al., 2021), particularly in the context of developing countries (Shao et al., 2019b), to explain this phenomenon further.

Meanwhile, prior research indicates that consumers in developing Asian countries, including Vietnam, exhibit a stronger preference for luxury and status-oriented products compared to their counterparts in developed nations (Juan Li & Su, 2007; P. Shukla, 2011) for self-presentation and achieving a high social standing. Such tendencies are attributed to Confucian values and collectivist cultural norms, which emphasize the importance of ‘face’ and social harmony in consumption behaviors. Empirical studies reveal that consumers in various emerging economies, such as China and South Korea, are particularly attuned to the opinions of others (Jenkins, 2016), adhere to shared standards, pursue collectivistic ideals, and value conformity (Heaney et al., 2005) in their selection of luxury products. In contrast, inconspicuous luxury consumption is characterized by less overt status signaling (Berger & Ward, 2010; Wu et al., 2017). Given that the subtle signals of inconspicuous luxury products are less

perceptible to the general public, they do not convey the same level of communicative value as conspicuous luxury products. This raises concerns about whether inconspicuous luxury consumption can thrive in the context of developing countries influenced by Confucianism and collectivism, such as Vietnam.

Recent studies suggest that the trend of inconspicuous luxury consumption is also emerging in several Asian countries. For example, Postrel (2008) contends that the conspicuous consumption prevalent among newly affluent individuals in developing countries, such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China, is likely to transition to inconspicuous consumption as their economies become more prosperous. In the Chinese context, recent research has explored how consumers utilize inconspicuous luxury brands (Jiang et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2017). These observations indicate that inconspicuous luxury consumption may indeed persist in developing countries. This observation highlights a research gap in the understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumption that warrants further investigation.

Traditionally, the relationship between consumer ethics, sustainability, and luxury consumption is contradictory (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015). However, recent research suggests that luxury consumers are increasingly aware of ethical issues concerning luxury consumption, especially regarding luxury fashion purchase decision-making (De Klerk et al., 2019). In the luxury consumption domain, ethical aspects play significant roles in various consumption practices, such as counterfeit consumption (Quoquab et al., 2017) and conspicuous consumption (Goenka and Thomas, 2018). Although the link between ethical considerations and luxury consumption has received much research attention, the relationship between ethical considerations and inconspicuous luxury consumption remains to be determined.

For the above reasons, researching inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam is critical. Therefore, the author decided to work on the research topic ‘**An investigation into inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam.**’ By integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior and the General Theory of Marketing Ethics (Hunt-Vitell model), this study enriches the understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumption behavior from an ethical perspective. The result points out the practice of inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam and the factors affecting it. These findings are the basis for suggesting marketing strategies for brand managers and businesses to expand the luxury product market more effectively.

2. Research objectives and Research scope

2.1. Research objectives

The objective of the dissertation is to investigate inconspicuous luxury consumption behavior and antecedents influencing this behavior in an Asian country.

(1) To explore the phenomenon of inconspicuous luxury consumption and the motivational factors driving this consumption, focusing on the ethical motivations;

(2) To determine the impact of some factors towards inconspicuous luxury products. Specifically:

- To determine the role of ethical judgments on purchase intentions for inconspicuous luxury products.
- To examine the role of need for status on purchase intentions for inconspicuous luxury products.
- To determine the role influence of self-concepts (Collectivistic self and individualistic self) on ethical judgments and attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases.
- To integrate the TPB model and the Hunt-Vitell model to explain the factors influencing purchase intentions for inconspicuous luxury products.

2.2. Research scope

Research space: The research data was collected from consumers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. These are two major cities in Vietnam with a concentration of consumers with high levels of education and income, making them suitable for investigating luxury consumption behavior.

Research period: The research was conducted for five years, from 2019 to 2024. In the first two years (2019-2021), the author overviewed the research and conducted a qualitative study to identify research gaps. Two years later, the author conducted a quantitative survey by building a research model, collecting quantitative data, and writing a research report.

Research content: Antecedents of purchase intentions towards inconspicuous luxury products

3. Research subjects

The research subject of this dissertation is the antecedents of purchase intentions towards inconspicuous luxury products.

4. Research questions

This dissertation aims to address the following research questions to achieve the research objectives:

RQ1: How do Vietnamese luxury consumers practice inconspicuous consumption?

RQ2: What motivates them to engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption?

RQ3: Do and how do ethical considerations (e.g., ethical judgments) play roles in shaping inconspicuous luxury purchase intention?

RQ4: Do and how does the need for status play roles in shaping inconspicuous luxury purchase intention?

RQ5: Do and how do self-concepts (i.e., collectivistic self and individualistic self) play roles in shaping ethical considerations (e.g., ethical judgments) and consumers' attitudes in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption?

RQ6: How does the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Hunt-Vitell model explain purchase intentions towards inconspicuous luxury products?

5. Research methodology

To achieve the research objectives, the author conducted a sequential exploratory mix method study with two phases. Specifically:

In the first phase, the author used a qualitative research method (with in-depth interviews) to describe the phenomenon of inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam and identify the motivational factors driving this consumption. The author conducted 42 in-depth interviews with Vietnamese luxury consumers, selecting them using the snowball technique. The author then employed a thematic procedure to analyze the qualitative research data.

In the second phase, the author conducted a survey to investigate the antecedents (identified in the first study) and their impacts on purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products. The author utilized a questionnaire to collect the research data. During this phase, the author performed two tests: a pilot test and an official test. The pilot test was conducted to assess the reliability of the measurement scale. The sample size of the pilot test was 146 respondents. The official test was performed to test the hypotheses in the research model. The respondents for the formal test were collected through a convenience sampling method, with a sample size of 328 participants. The author used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze the quantitative data.

6. Contributions of the research

This dissertation provides original contributions in several ways. First, it contributes to the extant literature with limited research on the ethical considerations for inconspicuous luxury consumption. In fact, it is one of the few studies advancing the understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumption by integrating both the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the Hunt-Vitell theory of marketing ethics into a unified research framework.

Second, this dissertation highlights the role of several key concepts in the context of emerging economies. Specifically, it emphasizes the self-concept dimensions (collectivistic and individualistic) in shaping the ethical judgments of Vietnamese consumers within the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption. Similarly, it also clarifies the crucial role of status-seeking motivations in shaping the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods in developing countries, a topic that has been underexplored in the literature.

Finally, the dissertation affirms the presence of inconspicuous luxury consumption in developing countries like Vietnam. In fact, it is one of the few studies to examine this phenomenon in such a context.

From a practical perspective, this dissertation offers valuable insights for luxury fashion brands and policymakers. First, it recommends that luxury fashion companies utilize subtle designs as a key marketing strategy, especially with the rising trend of inconspicuous luxury consumption. Second, the findings highlight how Vietnamese luxury consumers navigate ethical dilemmas in their purchasing decisions. Communication campaigns should then underscore the appeal of quiet luxury products, which embody wealth, sophistication, elegance, and humility. Findings from this dissertation also offer recommendations for policymakers to encourage informed luxury consumption.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes four chapters, as below

Chapter 1: Literature review and Theoretical framework. In this chapter, the author reviews key concepts such as luxury products, inconspicuous luxury consumption, and existing research on inconspicuous luxury consumption. The theoretical background and initial research model are also presented.

Chapter 2: Research methodology. In this chapter, the author presents the research methodology, including sampling methods, data collection procedures, and research analysis techniques.

Chapter 3: Research findings. In this chapter, the author presents the results of both qualitative and quantitative research. This includes reliability testing of measurement scales, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and hypothesis testing results.

Chapter 4: Discussions and Implications. In this chapter, the author discusses the research results and presents both theoretical and policy implications. The author also discusses the dissertation's contributions and limitations and suggests future research.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Luxury products

1.1.1. *Definition*

Luxury is a concept marked by exclusivity (Dion, Debenedetti, & Philippe, 2024), which presents significant challenges in formulating a precise definition. Within marketing literature, there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes luxury. The difficulty in clearly defining luxury arises from two key reasons: first, perceptions of what defines ‘luxury’ have evolved over time (Cristini et al., 2017), and second, these perceptions are influenced by individual values and personal interpretations of what is deemed valuable (Hanna, 2004).

The evolution of the concept of luxury over time underscores its complex and multifaceted nature, which complicates efforts to establish a clear and universally accepted definition. The notion of luxury has been embedded in various consumption patterns since ancient civilizations, playing a pivotal role in societies such as Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. It continues to hold significance in modern societies (Berry, 1994). Furthermore, luxury is inherently a relative and subjective concept, further complicating its definition. Different experts within the luxury industry offer varied perspectives on the term; for instance, Pam Danziger, a consultant, defines luxury as ‘what makes life more comfortable, more enjoyable, more fulfilling.’ From an academic standpoint, many studies use terms like prestige, status, and luxury interchangeably, which contributes to the challenge of clearly delineating the essence of luxury.

In this study, luxury is defined as the ‘extras of life,’ offering indulgence or convenience that exceeds the basic, nonessential minimums (Wiedmann et al., 2007). However, given the wide range of perspectives on the concept of luxury and the lack of a clear, universally accepted definition, scholars argue that it is more productive to focus on the key characteristics of luxury products and brands in the current market rather than attempting to define luxury or determine whether it pertains to products or brands (Ko et al., 2019). Therefore, the following section will examine the concept of luxury products to provide a deeper understanding of what constitutes luxury.

Research on luxury products and services has attracted significant scholarly attention. As discussed above, the concept of a luxury product is a subject of ongoing debate, with its definition presenting notable challenges. The term ‘luxury’ is inherently

subjective and context-dependent (Mortelmans, 2005), emphasizing the importance of individual perspectives in the discussion of luxury. Perceptions of what constitutes 'luxury' are dynamic and evolving (Cristini et al., 2017), further validating the audience's unique viewpoints. The subjective nature of luxury ensures that scholarly discussions on the definition of luxury products remain diverse and inclusive, with consensus proving difficult to achieve. As Heine (2012-p.9) noted, 'From about 20 years ago until today, there is above all a consensus in business literature that there is actually no consensus about the definition of luxury products and brands'.

Similar to the multifaceted nature of luxury itself, the definitions of luxury products are diverse and abundant. This section encapsulates several prominent perspectives on the concept of luxury products. According to Berthon et al. (2009), luxury extends beyond a mere collection of attributes, rather than being defined solely by its inherent features, a luxury product is characterized by its accomplishments across three dimensions: the objective (material), the subjective (individual), and the collective (social). The objective dimension is marked by exceptional materials, meticulous craftsmanship, outstanding utility, and superior performance. The subjective aspect reflects the hedonic and emotional value a brand holds in the consumer's perception. Meanwhile, the collective dimension encompasses the symbolic value a brand conveys to others and the significance of this signal to the individual projecting it.

Keller (2009) outlines ten key characteristics that define luxury products: (1) maintaining a premium brand image, (2) fostering intangible brand associations, (3) adherence to superior quality, (4) leveraging logos, symbols, and packaging to drive brand equity, (5) deriving secondary associations from linked personalities, events, countries, and entities, (6) controlled distribution systems, (7) premium pricing strategies, (8) meticulously managed brand architecture, (9) broadly defined competition, and (10) strong legal protection of trademarks.

Dubois et al. (2001) conceptualize luxury through six defining facets: (1) exceptional quality, (2) high price, (3) scarcity and uniqueness, (4) aesthetic appeal and polysensuality, (5) ancestral heritage and personal history, and (6) an element of superfluousness. In alignment, Tynan et al. (2010) emphasize that luxury products and services are characterized by their high quality, exclusivity, and prestige. These attributes, coupled with their non-essential nature, authenticity, and ability to deliver symbolic and emotional value through customer experiences, are pivotal indicators of luxury.

Vickers and Renand (2003) distinguish luxury products from non-luxury goods through a unique interplay of three instrumental performance dimensions:

functionalism, experientialism, and symbolic interactionism. Similarly, Heine (2012) asserts that luxury products are associated with elevated levels of price, quality, beauty, uniqueness, and extraordinariness, often accompanied by a high degree of non-functional connotations. Nueno and Quelch (1998) add that luxury products exhibit low functional utility relative to their price while offering high intangible and situational value. Finally, luxury products consistently occupy the apex of the product hierarchy, as corroborated by the works of Dubois and Duquesne (1993), Goor et al. (2019), and Keinan et al. (2016).

The literature review reveals a plethora of concepts related to luxury brands. However, many of these frameworks are tailored to specific industry segments (e.g., Okonkwo, 2007) or lack the robustness of a comprehensive theoretical foundation (Ko et al., 2019). Consequently, they are excluded from the scope of this dissertation. A key insight from the review of luxury literature is that consumer perception plays a pivotal role in determining whether a product is categorized as luxurious. While strategic factors such as premium pricing and exceptional quality can enhance the likelihood of a product being perceived as luxurious, they are supplementary and not the primary determinants of luxury status.

In this study, the author aligns with Ko et al. (2019) in defining luxury products as *‘products or services that consumers perceive to be of superior quality, offering authentic value through desired benefits—whether functional or emotional—while maintaining a prestigious market image rooted in attributes such as artisanship, craftsmanship, or exceptional service quality; warranting a premium price and capable of fostering a profound connection or resonance with the consumer’* (Ko et al., 2019). The decision to adopt the definition of Ko et al. (2019) as the theoretical foundation for this study is well-justified for several reasons. *First*, this definition has broad applicability to luxury brands and covers several key aspects commonly discussed in the luxury consumption literature. It goes beyond traditional characteristics such as superior quality, high price, and scarcity by emphasizing symbolic value and experiential value—two elements that play an increasingly important role in modern consumer behavior. *Second*, the definition provides a systematic, clear, and up-to-date approach that fits well with the current luxury market context, where consumer perception and individual evaluation are central. Importantly, it highlights that the classification of a brand as a luxury brand is deeply connected to consumer perceptions, as it is ultimately consumers who determine whether a brand is considered luxury through their own judgments and experiences.

1.1.2. Typologies of luxury products

In the practical and academic literature, there are many ways to classify luxury products. According to Heine (2012), as some different luxury strategies, some types of luxury products are divided and listed below:

(1) Based on *the dimension of socio-economic class*, Allérès (1990) builds a hierarchy consisting of three levels of the degree of accessibility of luxury products (Figure 1.1): the inaccessible luxury level, the intermediate luxury level, and the accessible luxury level.

- The inaccessible luxury level is associated with an upper sociometric class and is distinguished by absolute product uniqueness. It is connected with costly things that give the possessor tremendous social status.

- The intermediate luxury level refers to a subset of luxury goods available to the 'professional' sociological class.

- The accessible luxury level refers to luxury items affordable to the middle sociometric class, who are implicitly seen as attempting to reach high social standing through their purchasing behavior.

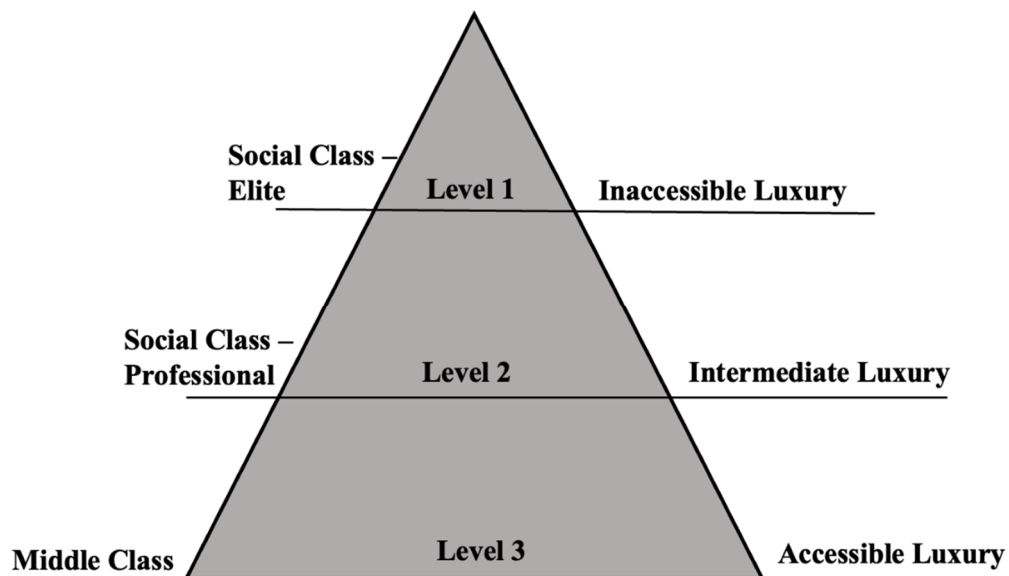


Figure 1.1: A hierarchy of luxury products

Source: Danielle Allérès (1990)

(2) According to their accessibility in terms of *their price and production volume*, You (2014, p.16) suggests three groups of luxury products:

- Available luxury products refer to situations in which a luxury product is affordable to the majority of people.

- Mid-level luxury products: The products in this category cannot be purchased or accessed by consumers with a limited budget and are only available to certain consumers.

- Unavailable luxury products: This category includes commodities that, due to their unique manufacturing circumstances and high pricing, can only be purchased by the most affluent people.

(3) Based on *product functions*, Heine (2012) developed a category of luxury products. However, over time, this classification has become unstable due to the emergence of many new luxury goods industries (Heine, 2012).

Fashion products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apparel ▪ Shoes ▪ Underwear ▪ Fashion accessories (Belts, Gloves, Scarfs, Hats, Ties, Eyewear)
Bags & Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Luggage ▪ Handbags ▪ Wallets & Cases
Cosmetics & Fragrances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cosmetics ▪ Fragrances
Body decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobile electronics ▪ Wristwatches ▪ Jewelry ▪ Pens ▪ Diaries ▪ Writing papers
Means of transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bikes ▪ Motorcycles ▪ Automobiles ▪ Boats/ Yachts ▪ Aircrafts/Jets
Delicacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beverages (Wines, Sparkling wines, Spirits) ▪ Foods
Interior decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Furniture ▪ Kitchens ▪ Table decoration

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linens (Table linens, Bed linens, Bath linens) ▪ Bathroom equipment ▪ Carpets ▪ Lamps ▪ Interiors electronic ▪ Interior accessories ▪ Sports equipment ▪ Garden furnishing
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Figure 1.2: The categories of luxury products based on the functions

Source: Revised from Heine (2012)

(4) Based on the *social setting of consumption*, luxury products are divided into publicly and privately consumed luxury products. Public products, such as cars, clothing, and handbags, are consumed publicly and seen by others. Private products, such as underwear and kitchen appliances, are consumed privately and are difficult to be seen by others.

(5) *Accessible vs. Exceptional luxury products*: According to Dubois and Duquesne (1993 - p.38), luxury products can be divided into accessible and exceptional luxury products based on an inter-categorical comparison of their selling price, which influences their diffusion level and repurchase rate. Accessible luxury products refer to products that are affordable for most people, at least from time to time—for example, perfumes. Exceptional luxury products such as private jets are only affordable for very few people (inaccessible for most people).

(6) *Unique Pieces, Limited Editions, Expanded-diffusion Products*: According to the exclusivity and production volume, luxury products are divided into some groups:

- Unique pieces refer to the clutch of an inspired creator who is unsurpassable in perfection. This group of luxury products typifies the highest level of the luxury segment. The presentative is the haute couture clothing of the exclusive circle of couture houses such as Chanel, Christian Dior, and Jean Paul Gaultier (Kapferer, 2001-p.323).

- Limited editions: These products are nearly similar to the griffe with limited editions. For example, the Guerlain ‘Kiss Kiss Or & Diamonds’ lipstick is produced in a limited edition of only 100 pieces (Trommsdorff & Heine, 2008-p.1669).

- Limited-diffusion products: Due to their manufacturing complexity, these luxury products are highly rare and require high handwork and craftsmanship (Sicard,

2003)—for instance, Gucci Bamboo bags, Maybach automobiles, and Meissen porcelain figures. In the fashion industry, this category can be referred to as prêt-à-porter.

- Expanded-diffusion products: Despite the production volumes of these products still being limited compared to mass-market products, their production process resembles mass-market serial production (Sicard, 2003). Examples include Dolce & Gabbana jeans, Poggenpohl kitchens, and Porsche automobiles.

(7) *Quiet vs. Loud Luxury Products:*

In the luxury industry, product design is a critical characteristic and a powerful tool in building competitive advantage for businesses (Noble & Kumar, 2010). Indeed, the aesthetic appeal of luxury products often surpasses their functional values (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Dubois & Szellar, 2002). Due to their distinctive design, luxury products are frequently regarded as ‘art objects and become iconic items over time (Roncha & Alexander, 2018). Examples include the Hermes Birkin bag, the Chanel tweed suit, or the Burberry trench coat.

Recent literature on luxury consumption categorizes luxury into two groups: loud and quiet (Amatulli et al., 2018; Jiang & Shan, 2018; Pino et al., 2019). This classification is based on certain characteristics of luxury products, specifically the *visibility* and *brand prominence*.

Firstly, *visibility* is crucial in consumption to demonstrate status, which is defined as ‘the social and public visibility surrounding the consumption of a product’ (Piron, 2000-p.309). Consumers strive to achieve status through the consumption of luxury products that bear clear identifying marks. This stems from ‘the tendency for individuals to enhance their image through the overt consumption of possessions, which communicates their status to others’ (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004, p.34). Previous research has indicated that the visibility of luxury products significantly influences conspicuous consumption. Wealthier consumers seek to distinguish themselves by conspicuously displaying their wealth through luxury consumption that the general public cannot readily afford (Han et al., 2010).

However, not all luxury products are easily recognizable. The selection of products with varying degrees of visibility can reflect intentions to signal low or high status and indicate preferences for differentiating luxury brand strategies. Wealthier consumers do not use prominent brands to distinguish themselves from the masses (so-called ‘patricians’). Instead, they choose sophisticated brands that only connoisseurs of luxury goods can recognize (Han et al., 2010). In contrast, those wishing to signal their success by distancing themselves from the crowd (so-called ‘parvenus’) tend to use prominently branded products that everyone can recognize.

Brand prominence is considered one of the key criteria for distinguishing different types of luxury brand designs. Brand prominence refers to ‘the extent to which a product has visible markings that help ensure observers recognize the brand’ (Han et al., 2010). Based on the brand prominence of luxury product designs, scholars differentiate between two types of luxury brands: those with a large, highly noticeable logo categorized as ‘loud’ or conspicuous, and those with a more subtle, discreet logo categorized as ‘quiet’ or inconspicuous (Kang & Park, 2016; Wilcox et al., 2009). A product with high brand prominence is characterized as conspicuous, pretentious, flashy, and logo-oriented. In contrast, a product with low brand prominence is described as modest, unobtrusive, discreet, purist, and minimalistic (Heine, 2012). However, low brand prominence does not necessarily imply a desire for lower status, as this preference may be related to private status rather than public (Han et al., 2010).

Studies indicate that brand prominence is not solely about the logo (i.e., logo size, signaling function) but also about the color and shape of the design or general overt design aesthetics (Butcher et al., 2016; Eckhardt et al., 2015; Janssen et al., 2017). For example, products with subdued and serene colors are often used for quiet luxury brands (Janssen et al., 2017). In contrast, products that are striking are typically utilized for loud luxury brands. Eckhardt et al. (2015) categorize inconspicuous brands as those associated with more subtle and refined products and conspicuous brands as those that offer a flashier array of products.

The luxury literature indicates that brand prominence is a crucial factor in consumer behavior toward luxury product purchases. A study by Pino et al. (2019) suggests that different brand strategies (subtle versus conspicuous designs) influence the willingness to purchase luxury products among consumers in India and the United States. Han's research (2010) indicates that consumers' choices between conspicuous or quiet products are influenced by their need to express their social status. Patricians (‘old money’), who have a lower need for status signaling, prefer quiet brands, whereas parvenus (‘new money’), who are more motivated to signal their status, prefer loud luxury brands (Han et al., 2010).

In conclusion, loud luxury features products with high brand prominence that enable the general public to recognize the brand quickly. In contrast, quiet luxury displays discreetly marked products that are less recognizable to the masses. In other words, the difference between quiet and loud luxury is whether the product has visible and recognizable brand signals (Han et al., 2010). Figure 1.3 presents examples of conspicuous (loud) and inconspicuous (quiet) luxury products.



Figure 1.3: Examples of conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury products

Source: Author

In this study, the term ‘quiet luxury products’ are used interchangeably with low-brand prominence luxury products or inconspicuous luxury products.

1.2. Conspicuous consumption versus inconspicuous consumption

1.2.1. Conspicuous consumption

1.2.1.1. Defining conspicuous consumption

The evolution of the concept of conspicuous consumption

The concept of conspicuous consumption has evolved alongside societal changes. While the term ‘conspicuous consumption’ was first coined by Veblen (1899) in his seminal work *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, discussions about the display of wealth and social status can be traced back much earlier.

The pre-Veblen era (1899). In ancient Rome, for example, the extravagant lifestyles of the elite were frequently critiqued, with figures such as Cicero highlighting how Mark Antony used exotic animals, actresses, and custom chariots to showcase his power and social status publicly. Early critiques of ostentation within capitalism also reflect societal attitudes toward tangible wealth and status symbols.

Anthropological studies of primitive societies reveal that flaunting wealth was often viewed as wasteful, and individuals who sought to assert material superiority were typically condemned and sometimes ostracized from their communities. In 16th and 17th century Western Europe, the economic principles of the Mercantilists, alongside Calvinist religious beliefs, promoted saving and investing as key to personal economic success (Weber, 1930). In this context, displaying conspicuous goods and status symbols was seen as wasteful and counterproductive to personal development and happiness (Mason, 1998). These early cultural attitudes laid the foundation for Veblen's later in-depth exploration of conspicuous consumption as a social phenomenon, shaped by economic conditions and cultural norms, particularly during the rise of industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The development stage of Veblen's theory. Alfred Marshall's 'Principles of Economics', published in 1895, laid the groundwork for neoclassical economics by focusing on the 'economic man,' whose consumption decisions were primarily motivated by utility and efficiency, rather than by social status. In contrast, Thorstein Veblen, drawing on his observations of socio-economic changes and cultural norms, introduced the concept of 'conspicuous consumption' in 'The Theory of the Leisure Class'. Veblen's theory emphasized that in industrial societies, individuals sought to display their wealth and status through the visible consumption of goods. He argued that, in such societies, the display of affluence not only fulfilled basic needs but also served as a symbol of social rank and personal prestige. Veblen's assertion that conspicuous consumption was a social behavior revealing the tensions between production and consumption challenged traditional economic views, and his work laid the foundation for later studies on consumer behavior and cultural capital. However, between 1899 and 1945, 'The Theory of the Leisure Class' faced criticism for focusing primarily on the behavior of elites rather than offering a comprehensive sociological analysis of broader social dynamics.

The post-war period from 1945 to 1975 marked a significant shift in global economies, moving from wartime restrictions to an era of mass consumption and economic prosperity. The rise of post-industrial capitalism in Western societies played a key role in fueling this growth, with television advertising emerging as a powerful tool that promoted products as symbols of social status. This period saw the rise of a new middle class, which began to engage in conspicuous consumption, signaling a shift toward more complex displays of wealth compared to earlier times.

Influenced by thinkers like Ernest Dichter and Thorstein Veblen, scholars and economists began to explore the psychological and social motivations behind consumer

behavior. This period laid the foundation for deeper investigations into status-seeking behavior and the cultural significance of consumption, leading to the development of concepts such as the 'Veblen effect.' As Leibenstein (1950, p. 189) explained, the Veblen effect refers to the phenomenon where the demand for a consumer good increases because it carries a higher price, signaling a higher status rather than a lower one.

The period from 1975 to 2000. From 1975 to 2000, conspicuous consumption continued to evolve globally, reflecting shifts in societal, economic, and psychological perspectives on consumer behavior. During this period, marketers adapted their strategies to cater to consumers' desires for both intellectual fulfillment and social status, placing greater emphasis on the symbolic meanings of products (Page, 1992). The rise of neoliberal theories, championed by Milton Friedman, advocated for consumer sovereignty in open markets, framing consumption as a competitive means for individuals to achieve higher social status and status differentiation (Slater, 1997). This shift led to the spread of conspicuous consumption beyond the United States, reaching Europe, particularly the UK. Over time, it extended to emerging economies such as China and India, where displays of wealth became increasingly common (Bocock, 1993).

Academically, scholars began to focus more on consumer behavior, integrating social psychology with economic theories to better understand the motivations behind status consumption and product symbolism (Mason, 1998). Sidney Levy's groundbreaking work in 1959 emphasized the symbolic significance of brands as indicators of social status, challenging traditional functionalist views of consumer behavior (Levy, 1959). Levy's insights affirmed the role of products in signaling social participation, reinforcing social class distinctions. This work built upon Pierre Martineau's earlier contributions, which explored the connections between social stratification and consumption (Martineau, 1958).

From the late 1970s to the 1990s, conspicuous consumption continued to evolve against the backdrop of shifting societal dynamics and economic changes, reflecting new motivations in consumer behavior and the use of status symbols. The 1980s, in particular, saw a resurgence of ostentatious displays of wealth and heightened materialism as individuals increasingly sought self-expression and social differentiation through conspicuous consumption (Belk, 1986). Research during this period highlighted the significance of product symbolism and consumer experiences in shaping both individual identities and social interactions (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Solomon, 1983). Consumer behavior became a key means for individuals to

communicate their social status and cultural identity through their choices of goods and services (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

Definition of conspicuous consumption

Based on the developmental history recounted above, conspicuous consumption is an intriguing concept that has garnered significant attention from scholars across various fields. *From an economic perspective*, Thorstein Veblen, in 'The Theory of the Leisure Class' (1899), conceptualized conspicuous consumption as the spending of money on goods and services primarily to display one's wealth and social status publicly. This implies that conspicuous consumption serves as a mechanism for social emulation and prestige within the leisure class. Extending the concept of Veblen, (Baudrillard, 1998) argues that 'Conspicuous consumption is not so much leisure and wasting time as an assertion of the freedom and discretion of the upper class'. In the same vein, conspicuous consumption is defined as 'the tendency for individuals to enhance their image, through overt consumption of possessions, which communicates status to others' (O'cass & McEwen, 2004, p. 34). From this view, conspicuous consumption is viewed not only as a display of wealth but also as a symbolic act that reinforces social status and power dynamics within consumer societies.

From a consumer society and identity construction perspective, Schor (1998, p.7) defines that 'Conspicuous consumption refers to the acquisition of goods and services for the primary purpose of 'showing off'. This definition examines how conspicuous consumption is intertwined with identity construction in consumer societies. Individuals often engage in conspicuous consumption not just to display wealth but also to construct and express their identities through the goods and services they consume. *From a cultural and symbolic capital perspective*, Bourdieu (1984) argues that consumption patterns are influenced by social class and function to uphold and perpetuate social hierarchies. What consumers consume and how they consume contributes to reinforcing and sustaining the social stratification system. Hence, these perspectives illustrate the dual function of conspicuous consumption: as a vehicle for personal identity expression and as a mechanism that reinforces broader social structures and inequalities within consumer societies.

The literature review indicates that the concept of conspicuous consumption is well-documented from various perspectives. Nonetheless, Thorstein Veblen's idea of conspicuous consumption remains a key concept and is still prevalent today. For this dissertation, *conspicuous consumption* refers to the tendency for individuals to spend money on goods and services not mainly for their practical benefits but to showcase their wealth and differentiate themselves from others in society.

1.2.1.2. Conspicuous consumption in the luxury context

The research overview suggests that conspicuous consumption is closely linked to the consumption of luxury products (Wu et al., 2017; Pangarkar & Shukla, 2023). A key motivation behind conspicuous consumption is the desire to signal one's social status and wealth to others. Luxury products, with their high price tags and exclusive branding, act as powerful symbols of affluence and success. By purchasing and consuming these luxury items, consumers communicate their elevated social position or lifestyle to their peers. Additionally, luxury consumption facilitates social comparison, where individuals assess their status in relation to others (Han et al., 2010). Conspicuous consumers often exhibit higher levels of materialism (Chacko et al., 2018), as they view possessions as sources of happiness, with the acquisition of high-end branded products serving as a symbol of wealth, success, and social standing (Richins & Dawson, 1992; N. Sharda & A. K. Bhat, 2018). As a result, highly materialistic consumers are more likely to engage in conspicuous spending on expensive fashion products compared to those with lower materialistic values (Lewis & Moital, 2016; Wu et al., 2017; Anada et al., 2024).

Additionally, conspicuous consumption is fueled by the desire to gain recognition and admiration from others. Luxury goods act as markers that help consumers either bond within a group or distinguish themselves from others (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Sharda & Bhat, 2019). Affluent consumers seek to differentiate themselves by visibly showcasing their wealth through conspicuous consumption behaviors (Han et al., 2010). Parvenus—individuals who are striving for higher status—often use loud signals of affluence to distance themselves from groups with lower wealth levels.

Purchasing luxury goods is not solely about displaying wealth externally; it also fulfills internal psychological needs. Consuming luxury products often satisfies desires for self-esteem, identity expression, and hedonic pleasure (Han et al., 2010; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). For example, individuals may seek to boost their self-esteem and self-worth by acquiring prestigious, high-status items (Eastman et al., 1999). Luxury products also serve as a means of self-expression and personal gratification (Laurent & Dubois, 1994). Consumers who engage in conspicuous consumption typically seek out products that symbolize wealth, even if those items do not necessarily offer superior quality or functionality compared to more affordable alternatives.

The discussions above indicate that conspicuous consumption is closely aligned with the context of luxury products. In this study, conspicuous consumption is

understood as the consumption of luxury products for the purpose of signaling wealth and social status, or what is commonly referred to as conspicuous luxury consumption.

1.2.2. Inconspicuous consumption

1.2.2.1. Defining inconspicuous consumption

The phenomenon of inconspicuous consumption within the luxury industry has garnered significant academic interest (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2022; Makkar & Yap, 2018a). Scholars have sought to conceptualize the essence of inconspicuous consumption, identify the factors that drive it, and examine its implications for individuals and society. The marketing literature offers a range of definitions, each providing unique perspectives on the nature and dynamics of inconspicuous consumption.

The term *inconspicuous consumption* originally referred to the normative consumption of commonplace goods and services (Shove & Warde, 2001). This concept highlights the preference for mass-produced, widely accessible products over luxury or high-end offerings. In Shove and Warde's (2001) framework, inconspicuous consumption underscores the 'ordinariness' inherent in the goods or services consumed, emphasizing their everyday and unremarkable nature.

Sullivan and Gershuny (2004) conceptualized *inconspicuous consumption* as a form of consumption in which individuals perceive luxury goods and services through the lens of their anticipated future use. High-income consumers, in particular, often purchase expensive goods or services that symbolize their aspirational identity or luxurious lifestyle, despite lacking the free time to use or showcase them. This concept emphasizes both the motivation to publicly display such products and the tendency to delay their actual consumption.

In recent scholarship, *inconspicuous consumption* has been defined as 'the use of subtle signals that are only observable to people with the requisite knowledge to decode their meaning' (Berger & Ward, 2010, p. 556). Expanding on this perspective, Eckhardt et al. (2015) described inconspicuous consumption as 'the use of subtly marked products that most observers misrecognize but facilitate interaction with those who have the requisite cultural capital to decode the subtle signals' (p. 808). Within this framework, Berger and Ward (2010) highlight the functional role of subtle signals. While subtly marked products may appear ineffective to the broader audience due to widespread misrecognition, individuals possessing domain-specific cultural capital (i.e., insiders) value these signals for their ability to differentiate them from the mainstream and foster interactions with others 'in the know.'

Numerous studies have indicated that consumption is understood as the purchase and use of products. For example, status consumption refers to consumers' behavior of seeking to acquire goods and services for the status they confer (Eastman et al., 1999; Bourdieu, 1989; Shukla, 2010). Therefore, in this study, *inconspicuous consumption* refers to *the purchase and use of luxury products that feature subtle signals, observable only to individuals with the requisite knowledge to decode their meaning*.

A review of the literature suggests that research on consumption behavior often focuses on identifying the factors influencing the purchase and use of various products. For instance, research on deliberate counterfeit consumption has predominantly centered on identifying the factors that affect consumers' use and purchase of counterfeit goods (Tom et al., 1998; Wu et al., 2019). Consequently, this dissertation focuses on examining the factors influencing the purchase of inconspicuous luxury products (e.g., purchase intention)

1.2.2.2. Inconspicuous consumption in the luxury context

Previous research on inconspicuous consumption highlights its intersection with luxury consumption (Berger & Ward, 2010; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2004). Studies on luxury consumption have similarly suggested that inconspicuous consumption, like its conspicuous counterpart, is closely tied to materialism. Materialistic individuals tend to engage with both loud and subtle luxury products, albeit through distinct self-conceptual mechanisms. Specifically, materialists with a high degree of independent self-construal exhibit a preference for quiet luxury products driven by their strong need for uniqueness. Conversely, materialistic consumers with a high degree of interdependent self-construal favor loud luxury products, reflecting their heightened tendency for self-monitoring (Lee et al., 2021).

Recent research has revealed that consumers in affluent societies are increasingly gravitating toward more subtle and understated forms of luxury (Wu et al., 2017). Those who indulge in quiet luxury prioritize refined, understated items that do not overtly display wealth but still exude exclusivity and quality (Butcher et al., 2016; Eckhardt et al., 2015). Eckhardt et al. (2015) suggest that quiet luxury products are often more sophisticated and intricate compared to their conspicuous counterparts. In contrast, the overt visibility of loud luxury items allows consumers to flaunt their wealth and status. The value of subtle signals, however, is contingent upon the audience; insiders can often decipher these more discreet cues (Berger and Ward, 2010). This shift from conspicuous to inconspicuous consumption reflects changing societal norms and values, with

individuals increasingly seeking to express their status and identity through more refined, less obvious means (Kang & Park, 2016). For example, consumers may favor luxury products with minimal branding and subtle design elements that convey exclusivity and sophistication without directly signaling affluence (Cannon & Rucker, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2009). Building on the contrasting signaling value of loud versus quiet luxury, previous studies have explored the varying motivations behind luxury product choices (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2022; Pino et al., 2019).

The communication value of subtle signals in quiet luxury products lies in their ability to be recognized primarily by insiders who possess the connoisseurship required to decode their meaning (Berger & Ward, 2010). According to Eckhardt et al. (2015), luxury consumers with cultural capital are drawn to quiet luxury products that embody sophistication and complexity. Unlike social class dynamics driven by the bandwagon effect, cultural capital is more closely associated with the snob effect. Consumers with high snobbery are more likely to be attracted to inconspicuous luxury brands that reflect their cultural capital (Yoon & Lee, 2019). This preference stems from a desire to distinguish themselves from the overtly conspicuous consumption of the nouveau riche and the aspirational consumption of lower-status consumers (Eckhardt et al., 2015).

In conclusion, the definition put forth by Berger and Ward (2010) is widely accepted and utilized in numerous studies on inconspicuous consumption (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018; Makkar & Yap, 2018b). According to Wu et al. (2017), inconspicuous consumption refers to the use of luxury goods without overt displays of wealth or social status, thus enabling luxury products to be consumed discreetly. The conceptualization proposed by Berger and Ward (2010) is grounded in empirical research on luxury fashion items, which is directly relevant to the focus of this dissertation. The terms 'inconspicuous consumption with luxury products' and 'inconspicuous luxury consumption' are used interchangeably throughout this study.

1.2.2.3. Inconspicuous luxury consumers

Inconspicuous luxury consumers possess distinct traits that differentiate them within the high-end consumption landscape. These individuals, who may not necessarily have significant wealth, still seek inconspicuous luxury—characterized by subtle, understated branding. Often referred to as 'insiders,' these consumers, with the financial means to afford high-priced luxury goods, demonstrate unique tastes and preferences that set them apart from the mainstream (Berger & Ward, 2010). Han et al. (2010)

classify individuals who use subtle signals aimed at affluent elites as members of the 'Patrician' group. Makkar and Yap (2018a) further developed a typology for inconspicuous consumers, categorizing them based on their identity signaling needs and level of expertise in fashion. This typology includes fashion influencers, trendsetters, fashion followers, and luxe conservatives.

Kauppinen-Räsänen et al. (2018) propose that the younger demographic may represent a segment more inclined toward inconspicuous luxury consumption. The influence of brand visibility on the intention to purchase luxury items varies depending on the maturity of the market. In more mature markets, a preference for subtle, understated brands tends to be more pronounced (Pino et al., 2019).

Inconspicuous consumers prioritize claiming status without relying on prominent brand visibility, recognizing that the proliferation of luxury goods in the market has diluted their exclusivity (Bruce & Kratz, 2007). These consumers are often motivated by a concern for socially responsible consumption (Klein, 2010), with some even rejecting both authentic and counterfeit luxury items as a way to assert their status without overtly indulging in luxury (Geiger-Oneto et al., 2013). Additionally, Ledbury Research highlights that connoisseurship and the early adoption of luxury products are key drivers for the pursuit of inconspicuousness (The Economist, 2005). Makkar and Yap (2018a) propose a typology for inconspicuous luxury fashion consumers, which considers their need for identity signaling and cultural capital. Eckhardt and Bardhi (2020, p.88) further emphasize that while traditional elites and hierarchies persist, a new class of elites is emerging—those who have risen to prominence not due to their wealth but due to their knowledge and adaptability.

1.2.3. Distinguishing inconspicuous consumption and conspicuous consumption

Luxury consumption can manifest in various consumption practices (Dubois et al., 2005), including conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption, both of which have garnered significant attention in academic research (Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017). While both conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption occur within the luxury context, they represent two distinct consumer behavior concepts.

First, conspicuous consumption refers to the tendency of individuals to enhance their image by overtly displaying possessions, thereby communicating their status to others (O'cass & McEwen, 2004). In contrast, inconspicuous consumption involves the use of subtle signals to communicate with others. While conspicuous consumers send loud signals to broader audiences through the visible consumption of luxury products,

inconspicuous consumers encode their messages using more subtle signals that can be decoded by receivers with high cultural capital (Gurзки & Woisetschläger, 2017).

Second, conspicuous consumption involves the deliberate purchase of highly visible and often expensive items to signal social standing and distinguish oneself from others (Han et al., 2010). In contrast, inconspicuous consumption prioritizes qualities such as craftsmanship, quality, and exclusivity over overt displays of wealth, appealing to a more discerning and sophisticated consumer base. This type of consumption focuses on the intrinsic value of the products rather than their ability to display status.

Third, while the consumption of conspicuous products is more easily recognizable, the consumption of inconspicuous products can be more valuable in conveying the intended message to the right audience. Subtle signals allow individuals with high cultural capital in a particular domain to communicate with fellow insiders. These subtle signals may include discreet brand identification, design, shape, patterns, detailing, and other nuanced aspects that are understood primarily by those familiar with the codes of luxury (Berger and Ward, 2010).

In addition, it is important to distinguish inconspicuous consumption from other types of consumption. Some consumers may avoid products with clear brand identities—often associated with conspicuous products—because they reject ostentatious symbols or feel guilty about being conspicuous. However, this avoidance does not constitute inconspicuous consumption. Inconspicuous consumers, on the other hand, are not averse to logos or brand identities. They are comfortable using them as long as these signs remain subtle or invisible to the broader mainstream, signaling exclusivity to those with the cultural capital to recognize them.

1.3. Research on inconspicuous luxury consumption

1.3.1. Inconspicuous consumption in global

Marketing practitioners have discussed the tendency toward inconspicuous consumption for years, but it is only recently that marketing scholars have started to explore it in depth (Kilsheimer Eastman et al., 2022). With a limited number of studies on inconspicuous luxury consumption, the theoretical conceptualization and empirical testing of inconspicuousness remain underdeveloped (Jiang et al., 2022). Research on inconspicuous luxury consumption can be categorized into several main themes:

The first theme is considered foundational research. It establishes a theoretical basis for the study of inconspicuous luxury consumption and outlines the various dimensions of its conceptual framework. These publications commonly conceptualize

inconspicuous consumption behavior, including definitions of inconspicuous luxury consumption, inconspicuous luxury consumers, and their typologies.

Berger and Ward's (2010) study is a key contribution, introducing the concept of inconspicuous consumption and the significance of subtle signals. While less prominent branding may increase the risk of misidentification (i.e., observers mistaking an expensive item for a less costly one), individuals with higher cultural capital in a particular domain appreciate subtle signals because they enable them to distinguish themselves from the mainstream. This work highlights the communicative value of less explicit signals, in addition to exploring the implications for branding, signal persistence, and identity communication.

The conceptual paper by Eckhardt et al. (2015) explains the rise of inconspicuous consumption, suggesting that the dilution of traditional luxury goods and the increasing demand for subtle design and individuality have driven the emergence of this trend. As a result, the connection between luxury and conspicuousness has weakened.

Although not exclusively focused on inconspicuous consumption, Han et al. (2010) offered a taxonomy that categorizes consumers into four groups based on their affluence and need for status. They demonstrate how brand prominence influences consumer preferences, with individuals seeking either to associate with or dissociate from others. According to Han et al. (2010), 'Patricians'—wealthy individuals with a low need for status who prefer to associate with other patricians—are drawn to inconspicuous luxury brands. Building on the work of Han et al. (2010), Makkar & Yap (2018a) propose a typology of inconspicuous consumers based on their awareness of fashion and their need for identity signaling.

The second research theme focuses on the motivations behind inconspicuous consumption. Much of the research in this area uses qualitative methods to explore consumers' reasons for engaging in inconspicuous consumption. For instance, a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews and unstructured naturalistic observations of 10 expatriate inconspicuous luxury consumers in Dubai suggests that emotion plays a key role in self-regulation. Consumers use subtle luxury purchases as a means of self-protection (Makkar & Yap, 2018b).

An ethnographic study involving 30 Chinese luxury consumers reveals that inconspicuous consumption serves various purposes: displaying desired identities or fantasy lifestyles, appreciating aesthetics and functionality, avoiding envy and anger during times of economic austerity, and seeking to differentiate themselves. Additionally, these consumers engage in inconspicuous consumption by using subtle

signals that are only recognizable to those with the cultural capital to decode their meaning (Wu et al., 2017).

The final theme explores the mechanisms that influence luxury consumers' choices between conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption. Research indicates that when the level of brand prominence in luxury products is higher, consumers' perceptions of quality, emotional value, and luxury purchase intentions also increase (Butcher et al., 2016).

A two-part study involving 138 students from a European business school and 124 luxury consumers online found that inconspicuous luxury brands, compared to their conspicuous counterparts, activate more favorable beliefs about corporate social responsibility (CSR). This results in higher self-congruity with the brand (Janssen et al., 2017). Consumers with a strong desire for originality, who seek social dissimilarity and have a high need for uniqueness, tend to prefer subtle brand markings. In contrast, individuals who engage in extensive self-monitoring typically favor high brand prominence, as it enhances their public image (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018).

A cross-national study conducted with Indian and US consumers examines how prominent versus subtle branding and status consumption influence consumers' intentions to purchase luxury products in both emerging and mature markets (Pino et al., 2019). The results reveal that Indian consumers with a higher tendency toward status-seeking are more inclined to purchase luxury products with conspicuous branding compared to those with subtle branding. In contrast, US consumers with a lower status-seeking tendency are more likely to buy subtle luxury products rather than those with obvious branding.

An experimental study with Australian consumers by Shao et al. (2019a) investigates why consumers choose conspicuous versus inconspicuous luxury products. Drawing from functional theories of attitudes and consumer motivations, the study finds that consumers are more likely to favor subtle branding over overt exposure when advertisements emphasize expressive value rather than socially adaptive attitude functions. This preference is influenced by their internal versus external motivations.

Another study by Shao et al. (2019b), based on the goal attainment perspective, demonstrated that subtly marked luxury goods were more likely to be purchased by consumers compared to those with clearly visible branding. Extrinsically motivated

respondents showed a stronger preference for premium products than intrinsically motivated ones, regardless of the type of signals. Among intrinsically motivated respondents, the higher their need for uniqueness, the greater their intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products. Additionally, individuals with low self-monitoring tendencies were more likely to engage in inconspicuous consumption, a pattern not observed among extrinsically motivated consumers.

In an experimental study by Lee et al. (2021) with 215 participants from an online survey platform, the researchers explored why consumers choose luxury products. The results indicated that consumers' self-conceptual mechanisms influence materialistic buyers' choices between subtle and conspicuous luxury goods. Specifically, materialistic consumers with independent self-construals were more inclined to prefer subtle luxury brands, driven by their strong need for uniqueness. On the other hand, non-materialistic consumers with interdependent self-construals favored conspicuous luxury goods due to their high self-monitoring tendencies.

Jiang et al. (2022) explore how narcissism influences the luxury consumption choices of young buyers in China and the US, specifically regarding the preference for quiet versus loud luxury items. The study, grounded in the social attitude function theory and narcissism literature, reveals that overt narcissistic consumers have a value-expressive attitude toward luxury goods, which leads them to favor inconspicuous (rather than conspicuous) luxury products. Additionally, social anxiety is found to amplify the mediating role of narcissism in shaping social attitude functions, further influencing preferences for subtle luxury items.

To investigate the role of culture in luxury consumption choices, Jiang et al. (2021) integrate the power distance belief (PDB) literature with social attitude functions theory. This research shows that consumers with low PDB (as opposed to high PDB) tend to have a value-expressive attitude toward luxury, favoring inconspicuous over conspicuous luxury brands. The study provides convergent evidence from an experiment in the US and a survey in China, supporting the cultural influence on luxury preferences.

Despite the growing interest in inconspicuous luxury consumption, the existing literature still lacks empirical studies that thoroughly explore the nature of inconspicuousness in luxury consumption (Jiang et al., 2021). The current study aims to address this gap and further investigate the phenomenon of inconspicuous luxury consumption in various cultural and psychological contexts.

1.3.2. Inconspicuous luxury consumption in emerging economies

In a conceptual paper, Eckhardt et al. (2015) argue that inconspicuous consumption is on the rise, driven by the dilution of the signaling power of traditional luxury goods. As a result, the ability to distinguish social classes through conspicuous luxury products has weakened, prompting a shift from conspicuous to inconspicuous consumption among luxury consumers. This trend is not confined to developed countries but is also evident in emerging economies. Empirical studies have shown that consumers in countries like China (Wu et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2021), Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2023), and Malaysia (Ting et al., 2018) are increasingly adopting inconspicuous luxury consumption practices.

In the new luxury landscape, Chinese consumers continue to engage with luxury brands, but in a more subtle and understated way (Wu et al., 2017). A qualitative study by Nguyen et al. (2023) highlights that Vietnamese consumers are also shifting towards inconspicuous luxury consumption, where subtle signs of prestige—rather than overtly visible brand logos—serve as a form of status signaling. This form of consumption is seen as a novel way for high cultural capital consumers to differentiate themselves from the mass or the nouveau riche (Wu et al., 2017). For many Vietnamese consumers, inconspicuous luxury consumption represents a new form of ostentatious consumption, where luxury items are refined and sophisticated yet not overtly visible.

While scholars have increasingly focused on inconspicuous luxury consumption, there is still a call for more empirical studies from developing countries, particularly in regions like Vietnam (Shao et al., 2019). Most current studies on luxury consumption in Vietnam overlook the distinction between inconspicuous and conspicuous consumption, making the investigation of this gap a key focus of the present study.

1.4. Antecedents of purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products

Previous studies have demonstrated that inconspicuous consumption is a complex social phenomenon influenced by various factors (Jiang et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2017). The following section provides an overview of the key factors that influence the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

1.4.1. External factors

There are many external factors influencing consumers' inconspicuous purchasing behavior, such as cultural factors, social factors, and marketing activities of luxury companies. However, in this section, the author only discusses cultural and social factors, which are identified as research gaps in the literature review.

1.4.1.1. Cultural factors

The concept of power distance originates from Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework, where it is defined as the degree to which less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect an unequal distribution of power. While typically assessed at the national level, power distance can also manifest at the individual level, referred to as power distance belief. PDB reflects an individual's acceptance and expectation of power inequality within a given social structure (Oyserman, 2006). In essence, power distance belief represents an individual's perception of power disparities and hierarchical relationships in society (Han et al., 2017).

The literature suggests a significant relationship between power distance belief and luxury consumption, with PDB influencing individuals' attitudes toward status differentiation. Several studies highlight PDB as an important antecedent of luxury consumption, given its role in shaping individuals' perspectives on status and hierarchy (Aaker, 2006). Specifically, consumers with high PDB are more inclined toward conspicuous luxury consumption, as they tend to have a stronger desire for status and are more focused on social differentiation (Lee et al., 2020; Zhang & Kim, 2013). These individuals view luxury goods as powerful symbols of social standing (Gao et al., 2016) and are more motivated to enhance their social status through the consumption of such goods (Eastman et al., 2018).

The study by Jiang, Gao, et al. (2021) provides specific evidence regarding the influence of power distance belief (PDB) on inconspicuous luxury consumption. Consistent with previous research, the study finds that consumers with high PDB tend to prioritize social status, whereas those with low PDB place greater value on social equality and self-expression. The results reveal that PDB has a direct impact on luxury consumption choices. Specifically, individuals with low PDB exhibit a stronger preference for inconspicuous luxury brands compared to those with high PDB. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that high PDB can reduce inconspicuous luxury consumption, with this effect mediated through a value-expressive attitude function.

1.4.1.2. Social factors

Status is defined as 'an expression of evaluative judgment that conveys high or low prestige, regard, or esteem,' based on factors such as wealth, power, and prestige (Donnenwerth & Foa, 1974, p.786). In essence, status refers to the position, rank, social honor, respect, or prestige attributed to an individual by others (Eastman et al., 1999). Individuals with high social status are often granted 'the approval, respect, admiration, or

positive qualities imputed to a person or group' (Balkin, 1997, p.2318). As such, status is viewed as a valuable attribute, conferring respect, consideration, and even envy from others.

Previous studies suggest various strategies for gaining social status. In any given society, the status of individuals is often evaluated based on their performance in social roles. However, in the absence of direct personal information, one's success and achievements can be communicated and amplified through visible possessions (Eastman et al., 1999). Specifically, products and brands play a significant role in signaling status and enhancing social standing (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004).

In consumer behavior research, the need for status is recognized as a fundamental motivational driver, particularly within the domain of luxury consumption (Anderson et al., 2015). This consumption-related need for status is defined as the motivational process by which individuals opt to conspicuously consume products that they believe will 'confer and symbolize status for both the individual and surrounding significant others' (Eastman et al., 1999, p.42). Within the context of conspicuous consumption, the need for status has been well-documented as a key factor in driving consumption behaviors, serving as a powerful motivation to appear prestigious in the eyes of others. Additionally, Han et al. (2010) suggested that social status is one of the primary consumer-related drivers of inconspicuous consumption.

A cross-national study by Pino et al. (2019) highlighted cultural differences in status-driven consumption patterns, revealing that Indian consumers with a higher need for status were more inclined to purchase luxury products with prominent branding, whereas U.S. consumers with a lower need for status preferred subtly branded luxury products. This finding emphasizes the varying role of status in influencing consumer preferences across different cultural contexts.

1.4.2. Internal factors

1.4.2.1 Narcissism

Narcissism has become an increasingly prevalent phenomenon worldwide, marked by a growing presence of narcissistic traits among individuals (Newman, 2018). As a result, scholars have focused significant attention on exploring the connection between narcissism and consumer behavior, especially within the context of luxury consumption (Neave et al., 2020).

In the field of marketing, narcissism is defined as an individual's tendency toward excessive self-admiration (Kang & Park, 2016; Lee et al., 2013). It is understood both as a psychological disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and as a

personality trait (Chokshi, 2019; Fastoso et al., 2018). Recent research in consumer behavior has shed light on how different manifestations of narcissism influence luxury consumption preferences (Fastoso et al., 2018; Lambert & Desmond, 2013). Specifically, narcissism is categorized into two types: overt (or grandiose) narcissism and covert (or vulnerable) narcissism (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982).

In examining the influence of narcissism on inconspicuous luxury consumption, Jiang, Shan, et al. (2021) explore how narcissism acts as both a psychological and social driver in the luxury purchase decisions of contemporary young consumers worldwide. Specifically, their study reveals that within the dichotomy of narcissistic subtypes, overt and covert narcissists display distinct preferences for subtle versus conspicuous luxury products. The findings indicate that overt narcissism directly influences the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury items, with overt narcissists showing a clear preference for such products. Additionally, the relationship between overt narcissism and purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products is mediated by the value-expressive attitude. This suggests that overt narcissism impacts purchase intentions both directly and indirectly. While the study clarifies the role of narcissism in the luxury choices of young consumers, future research should explore this relationship across different customer segments to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

1.4.2.2. Materialism

In consumer behavior research, materialism has been conceptualized both as a personality trait (e.g., Belk, 1985) and as a consumer value (e.g., Richins & Dawson, 1992). Richins and Dawson (1992, p.308) define materialism as a ‘set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life’. Individuals who are highly materialistic place significant value on material goods and view possessions as a crucial factor in determining their life satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Ogden & Cheng, 2011). Many scholars argue that materialistic consumers believe that acquiring material possessions is linked to happiness or success and that using these possessions serves to enhance their social status and success (Lim et al., 2020; Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Richins and Dawson (1992) identify three key belief domains of materialism: possession-defined success, which refers to the extent to which individuals use possessions as indicators of success and achievement in life; the centrality of acquisition, which describes the degree to which individuals prioritize the acquisition of possessions in their lives; and acquisitions in pursuit of happiness, which reflects the belief that material possessions are essential to one's happiness and overall well-being.

In the domain of luxury consumption, materialism plays a significant role in shaping consumers' purchasing behaviors. Existing literature explores how materialistic values and perceptions influence luxury consumption (N. Sharda & A. K. Bhat, 2018). For instance, Sharda and Bhat (2018) found that young Indian consumers are motivated to purchase expensive luxury brands in pursuit of materialistic goals. Similarly, Ali et al. (2019) identified a positive relationship between materialism and the intention to purchase luxury cars. Talukdar and Yu (2020) further examined how materialism, alongside product conspicuousness, impacts consumers' intentions to buy luxury goods. Many scholars argue that materialism is closely tied to conspicuous consumption, with individuals exhibiting high materialism spending more ostentatiously on expensive products compared to those with lower materialistic tendencies (Lewis & Moital, 2016; Wu et al., 2017). Chacko et al. (2018) also observed a positive correlation between materialism and conspicuous consumption.

An empirical study by Lee et al. (2021) explored how individuals with strong materialistic tendencies favor different types of luxury brands (both inconspicuous and conspicuous) based on their self-conceptual orientations, employing distinct psychological mechanisms. The study reveals that materialism is linked to the purchase of both conspicuous and inconspicuous luxury items, including snob luxury consumption. Specifically, materialistic consumers with an independent self-construal tend to gravitate toward inconspicuous luxury brands due to their heightened need for uniqueness, while those with an interdependent self-construal prefer conspicuous luxury products, driven by a desire for social visibility and self-monitoring.

1.4.2.3. Attitude

Attitude plays a crucial role in consumer behavior. It refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of a specific object, concept, or behavior (Dietz et al., 2005). This definition highlights how attitudes shape consumer decisions and influence their actions.

In the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude toward behavior is one of the three key determinants of purchase intention. Attitude is defined as 'an individual's positive or negative feeling regarding performing the target behavior' (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.216). This suggests that attitude reflects the degree to which a person evaluates a particular behavior favorably or unfavorably (Ajzen, 1991). An individual's salient beliefs contribute to the formation of attitudes, which are based on their expectations of certain outcomes and their evaluations of those outcomes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Several studies in the luxury consumption context have emphasized that attitude significantly influences both luxury purchase intentions and actual purchasing behavior

(Schwenk & Möser, 2009; N. Sharda & A. Bhat, 2018). These findings underline the importance of positive attitudes toward luxury products in driving consumer decisions in the luxury goods market.

Functional theories of attitudes focus on understanding the motivations behind individuals' attitudes by explaining why they hold certain attitudes and how these attitudes relate to their behaviors (Debono, 1987). In this framework, attitudes are seen as underlying constructs that influence consumer behavior in luxury goods consumption. Specifically, there are four key facets of attitude that affect behavior toward luxury products: the social-adjustive function, the value-expressive function, the hedonic function, and the utilitarian function (Ioana-Daniela et al., 2018). Bian and Forsythe (2012) highlight that luxury consumers are significantly influenced by social-functional attitudes, which drive them to express individuality and exhibit their social status through their luxury brand choices. In the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption, Ting (2018) found that the social-adjustive and hedonic functions of attitude positively influence Malaysian consumers' purchase intention toward subtle luxury fashion goods. These attitudes guide consumers in selecting luxury items that allow them to display their social standing without overtly signaling it. Furthermore, functional attitudes have been found to moderate the relationship between consumer motivations and luxury purchases. For instance, when consumers encounter advertisements promoting a value-expressive or a social-adjustive attitude, they tend to show a preference for subtle over conspicuous visibility, depending on whether their motivations are intrinsic or extrinsic in nature (Shao et al., 2019b). This demonstrates the dynamic role that attitude functions play in shaping consumer behavior toward inconspicuous luxury consumption.

1.4.2.4. Subjective norms

Subjective norm is defined as an individual's perception of the approval or disapproval of their behavior by significant others (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Essentially, it reflects how much social pressure an individual feels regarding a particular behavior (Paul et al., 2016). According to Ajzen (1991), subjective norms are a key predictor of consumer behavior.

Existing research has explored the role of subjective norms in shaping luxury purchase intentions and actual luxury purchases. The findings across these studies consistently suggest that subjective norms positively influence luxury purchases (e.g., Jain et al., 2017). For instance, Kim and Karpova (2010) identified a direct relationship between subjective norms and purchase intention, specifically in the context of purchasing counterfeit fashion goods among U.S. college students. Similarly, a study

conducted in India found that subjective norms are a significant predictor of luxury fashion goods purchases (Salem & Salem, 2018).

In the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption, the positive influence of subjective norms on purchase intention aligns with these previous findings, suggesting that social approval and the perceived expectations of significant others continue to play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior toward more subtle luxury items.

1.4.2.5. Perceived behavioral control

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to ‘the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, and it is assumed to reflect experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles’ (Ajzen, 1991, p.188). PBC helps predict behaviors that individuals intend to perform but may be unable to execute due to a lack of resources or opportunities, such as time, money, or skills. According to Ajzen (1991), PBC is the third key determinant of the decision-making process, influencing both intentions and the behaviors in question.

In the context of luxury consumption, existing literature suggests a positive relationship between PBC and luxury purchase intention or actual purchases (e.g., Salem & Salem, 2018; Ajzen, 1991; Loureiro & Araújo, 2013). For instance, Zhang et al. (2020) identified PBC as a significant predictor of luxury fashion goods purchase intentions in China. Similarly, a study with Chinese Gen Y consumers found a strong relationship between PBC and luxury purchase intentions (Jain, 2020). Furthermore, Ting (2018) confirmed that in the inconspicuous luxury consumption context, PBC also positively influences purchase intention.

While much of the existing research on inconspicuous consumption has focused on psychological and social factors (Jiang et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2017), there remains a significant gap in addressing the ethical perspective of inconspicuous consumption. This aspect is becoming increasingly important among luxury consumers, as concerns about ethical considerations, such as sustainability and the social impact of luxury consumption, grow in significance (Vanhamme, Lindgreen, & Sarial-Abi, 2023). The following section will explore this research gap in greater detail.

1.5. Research gaps

Despite considerable scholarly efforts to investigate the nature of inconspicuous consumption and the factors shaping inconspicuous consumer behavior, a critical review of the literature reveals several research gaps. These gaps underscore the need for further exploration to enhance our understanding of this complex and evolving phenomenon.

First, the research highlights the significant influence of ethical considerations on consumer behavior (Holbrook, 1999), particularly in the context of luxury products. Ethical concerns play a pivotal role in shaping how individuals perceive and interact with luxury items as extensions of their identity (Belk, 1988). Several studies have explored the impact of ethical issues on consumer decision-making. For instance, Auger et al. (2008) found that consumers' willingness to pay for socially responsible attributes in luxury goods underscores the importance of sustainability and social responsibility in shaping purchasing choices. Similarly, an empirical study by Stathopoulou and Balabanis (2019) reveals that moral values and ethical concerns positively influence consumer attitudes toward luxury brands and products.

Research on conspicuous consumption has highlighted that luxury goods offer exceptional value across multiple dimensions, including social, unique, and pleasure value (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Vigneron, 1999). These goods also embody both collective (social) and subjective (personal) value. Conspicuous consumption—the acquisition and display of luxury products—provides various benefits to consumers. For instance, such products enable individuals to signal their wealth and social status (Talukdar & Yu, 2020). Berger and Ward (2010) posit that luxury consumers are driven by associative or dissociative motivations when making purchases.

Recent literature has expanded on these motivations, examining luxury consumption in terms of achieving intrinsic and extrinsic personal goals (Shao et al., 2019a), self-congruity (Makkar & Yap, 2018a), and socio-psychological objectives (Stathopoulou & Balabanis, 2019). From the perspective of signaling theory, luxury goods serve as tools for signaling high social status and wealth. They function as visible indicators of an individual's economic standing and are often employed in social comparisons (Veblen, 1899). Luxury brands leverage exclusivity and high pricing to convey prestige and superior quality, with rarity further amplifying their signaling effectiveness (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Beyond signaling, luxury consumption also significantly influences self-expression and identity construction. These goods act as symbolic representations of personal and social aspirations, reflecting individual identity and societal positioning (Belk, 1988; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

Although conspicuous consumption provides several advantages to consumers, it has drawn criticism due to its moral implications. The overt markers of luxury products in conspicuous consumption, such as prominent brand names and logos, are generally more effective as public signals since they are easily recognizable by observers (Berger & Ward, 2010). However, this visibility can lead to inner conflict

among consumers who are aware of the negative societal and environmental consequences associated with highly visible luxury consumption (Goenka & Thomas, 2020). To address this conflict, consumers must cognitively balance their self-interest with considerations of moral desirability (Sharma & Lal, 2020).

In contrast, inconspicuous luxury consumption is characterized by the use of luxury goods with subtle signals. While explicitly marked products enable clear identification, as their prices and brands are easily recognized by the general public, subtly marked items are more likely to be misinterpreted or overlooked (Berger & Ward, 2010). The communicative value of these subtle signals often depends on the audience. Insiders—those familiar with the nuanced markers of luxury—are typically better equipped to decode and appreciate such understated expressions of wealth and status.

Additionally, while conspicuous consumption is often criticized for its role in exacerbating social inequality and environmental degradation, inconspicuous consumption is frequently perceived as a more ethical alternative. This perception arises because inconspicuous consumption emphasizes quality, personal satisfaction, and understated elegance over overt displays of social status (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). The consumption of ‘quiet luxury’ products, characterized by subtle branding and low visibility, has the potential to address moral concerns associated with luxury consumption. These products' discreet nature aligns with the desire to mitigate ethical dilemmas while continuing to engage in luxury consumption (Phau & Prendergast, 2000).

The arguments presented underscore the significance of ethics as a factor influencing luxury consumption behavior. However, prior research on inconspicuous luxury consumption has predominantly focused on psychological and social dimensions, leaving the relationship between ethical considerations and inconspicuous luxury consumption underexplored. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into the ethical dimensions of inconspicuous luxury consumption, offering a promising avenue for future research.

Second, to the best of the author's knowledge, research on inconspicuous luxury consumption in emerging markets remains underexplored. While prior studies predominantly emphasize conspicuous consumption as a dominant trend in developing economies, scholars have begun to call for empirical investigations into the nuances of inconspicuous luxury consumption in such contexts (Jiang et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2019).

Emerging economies, such as China and India, have historically associated luxury consumption with conspicuous displays of wealth and social status. Luxury goods have

served as symbols of achievement, with consumers leveraging these products to signal their newfound affluence and differentiate themselves socially (Juan Li & Su, 2007; P. Shukla, 2011). This trend is particularly pronounced in Confucian-influenced societies, where cultural norms like ‘face-saving’ and societal harmony drive preferences for visible, status-enhancing luxury goods (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Le & Quy, 2020). For instance, Vietnamese consumers often use conspicuous luxury products to enhance social standing and conform to societal expectations (Nguyen & Tambyah, 2011).

However, there is growing evidence of a shift toward inconspicuous luxury consumption in these markets. As economic growth accelerates and social values evolve, consumers in emerging economies are beginning to favor subtler forms of luxury that balance status signaling with discretion (Bharti et al., 2022). In China, for example, maturing market dynamics have fostered a preference for understated luxury brands (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2017). Similarly, in Vietnam—a rapidly growing consumer market within the CIVETS group—rising affluence and shifting cultural values create fertile ground for inconspicuous luxury consumption to emerge as a significant trend (Nguyen & Mai, 2019).

Vietnam's unique cultural and economic context makes it particularly compelling to study inconspicuous luxury consumption. Confucian values, which emphasize societal harmony and collective well-being, continue to shape Vietnamese consumers’ attitudes and behaviors. At the same time, the country’s robust economic development—reflected in the luxury market's projected growth to USD 271.80 million by 2027 (Alda, 2023)—is fostering consumer sophistication and diversifying motivations for luxury consumption.

Despite these developments, little is known about how inconspicuous consumption unfolds in Vietnam and similar markets. Postrel (2008) suggests that as emerging economies transition from ‘Second or Third World’ identities, a shift from conspicuous to inconspicuous luxury consumption is inevitable. This phenomenon highlights a critical research gap: understanding how cultural, economic, and social factors intersect to drive inconspicuous consumption in developing contexts. Addressing this gap will not only enrich the theoretical discourse but also provide actionable insights for luxury brands seeking to navigate these evolving markets.

1.6. Theoretical background

The objective of this dissertation is to investigate inconspicuous luxury consumption behavior and its antecedents in an emerging Asian market. Ribeiro, Harmsen, Carreón, and Worrell (2019) highlight the complexity of consumption

behavior and emphasize the need to study it from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Therefore, to achieve this goal, the study integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with the Hunt-Vitell model. Specifically, in Phase 1, the Hunt-Vitell model is employed to introduce a new ethical perspective within the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption, which serves as one of the key contributions. In the quantitative phase, both the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Hunt-Vitell model are combined to develop the research framework. The Theory of Planned Behavior, as a well-established theoretical foundation for explaining consumer behavior, including luxury consumption, serves as the primary theoretical base. A core construct from the Hunt-Vitell model, ethical judgment (EJ), is integrated into the Theory of Planned Behavior framework to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological, social, and ethical factors influencing consumers' intentions to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

The following section presents the reasons for selecting these two theoretical frameworks and outlines their main conceptual foundations.

1.6.1. The Hunt-Vitell model

1.6.1.1. Reasons to apply the Hunt-Vitell model

There are several compelling reasons to apply the Hunt-Vitell model as a foundational theory in this study, particularly in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption. *Firstly*, Vitell and Paolillo (2003) identify three major theoretical models that explain ethical decision-making: those proposed by Ferrell and Gresham (1985), Hunt and Vitell (1986), and Trevino (1986). While these models share a similar structure, starting with a triggering event and leading to observable behaviors, the Hunt-Vitell model stands out for its focus on incorporating both individual and external factors into the ethical decision-making process. Specifically, the Hunt-Vitell framework is especially suited to explain consumer ethical behavior (Kavak et al., 2009). Unlike Trevino's (1986) and Ferrell and Gresham's (1985) models, which treat individual decision-making as a solitary factor, the Hunt-Vitell model distinguishes itself by exploring individual decision-making through two ethical philosophies that influence the ethical judgments of decision-makers (Vitell et al., 2001). This distinction makes the Hunt-Vitell model particularly relevant for examining consumer behavior in a more holistic way.

Secondly, the concept of "quiet luxury," which emphasizes subtlety and minimalism, contrasts sharply with the overt branding of traditional luxury goods. This

shift reflects a broader trend towards inconspicuous consumption, allowing consumers to engage in luxury consumption without the overt displays of wealth typically associated with conspicuous consumption. Inconspicuous consumption offers a socially acceptable way to indulge in luxury while mitigating the ethical and social concerns tied to conspicuous displays of wealth (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Many consumers of inconspicuous luxury products are motivated by ethical concerns, seeking to avoid the negative social judgments tied to conspicuous luxury and prioritizing environmental responsibility and social consciousness (Belk, 1988; Joy et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2021; Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). As such, the Hunt-Vitell model is ideally suited to examining the ethical dimensions of inconspicuous luxury consumption, as it allows for a deeper understanding of how ethical judgments influence consumers' decisions in this context.

Therefore, the Hunt-Vitell model provides a robust framework for understanding the ethical decision-making process in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption.

1.6.1.2. Key ideas of the Hunt-Vitell model

The Hunt-Vitell model provides a valuable framework for understanding ethical decision-making processes, including those related to the choice of inconspicuous luxury products. According to the model, an individual's moral philosophy is crucial in shaping their ethical judgments, which, in turn, influences their ethical behavior. Moreover, the model highlights the impact of various factors—such as personal beliefs, values, and characteristics—on moral decisions (Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Singhapakdi & Vitell, 1993).

The decision-making process begins when an individual encounters a situation involving ethical considerations. For instance, luxury consumers may face an ethical dilemma when selecting a luxury product. Previous studies suggest that conspicuous consumption can evoke moral objections because it may conflict with social norms emphasizing modesty and empathy (Godfrey et al., 1986). This recognition of ethical issues triggers the next stages in the decision-making process. If, however, the individual does not perceive any ethical concerns in the situation, the subsequent components of the model remain dormant.

After identifying this evoked set, the individual proceeds to evaluate the alternatives through two distinct types of evaluations: deontological and teleological. The key distinction between these evaluations lies in whether the individual focuses on the morality of the behavior itself (deontological evaluation) or on the consequences of the behavior (teleological evaluation) (Cole et al., 2000).

Deontological evaluation involves assessing the inherent morality of a behavior based on personal values, beliefs, and situation-specific considerations. This evaluation emphasizes the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of the behavior itself. In contrast, teleological evaluation concerns the potential outcomes or consequences of the behavior, assessing whether the results are beneficial or harmful (Hunt & Vitell, 2006; Vitell et al., 2001).

According to the Hunt-Vitell model, the individual ultimately arrives at an ethical judgment by integrating both types of evaluations. This combined approach allows for a more comprehensive ethical decision-making process, taking into account both the morality of the behavior and the potential outcomes (Cole et al., 2000).

In the deontological evaluation, individuals assess the inherent morality or immorality of the available alternatives based on their personal values, including both general beliefs and those specific to the situation (Vitell et al., 2001). For example, some individuals may avoid conspicuous consumption because they believe it is morally wrong due to the social perception of ‘snobbery’ (Goenka & Thomas, 2020). In contrast, consuming inconspicuous products aligns with values that transcend social class distinctions, potentially reducing the negative perceptions associated with overt displays of wealth (Wu et al., 2017).

On the other hand, in the teleological evaluation, individuals evaluate the expected consequences of each alternative behavior. The teleological evaluation involves four key constructs: (1) the perceived consequences of each alternative for different stakeholder groups, (2) the likelihood of each consequence occurring for each stakeholder group, (3) the desirability or undesirability of each consequence, and (4) the significance of each stakeholder group (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). The more impactful, desirable, and likely the consequences are for the decision-maker, the more favorable the teleological evaluation becomes for a particular behavior.

For instance, some individuals believe that engaging in inconspicuous consumption will help avoid the social consequences of inequality and the perceived lack of empathy for others. Subtle signals from luxury goods are less likely to be noticed by others, reducing the potential for negative judgment (Berger & Ward, 2010). As a result, these individuals may view inconspicuous consumption as a more ethical and socially responsible choice.

The core of this process is that an individual makes an *ethical judgment*, which is the culmination of their evaluations of behavior. According to Hunt and Vitell (1986), ethical judgment is a function of both the deontological and teleological evaluations,

which assess the morality of the behavior itself and its potential consequences. In essence, ethical judgment involves an overall assessment of whether a behavior is deemed good or bad based on both the action itself and its intent (Hunt & Vitell, 1986, p. 9). In alignment with this perspective, Trevino (1986) defines ethical judgments as an individual's 'prescriptive assessment of what is right or wrong.' Both authors converge on the idea that ethical judgment is fundamentally about evaluating whether a behavior is morally acceptable or not.

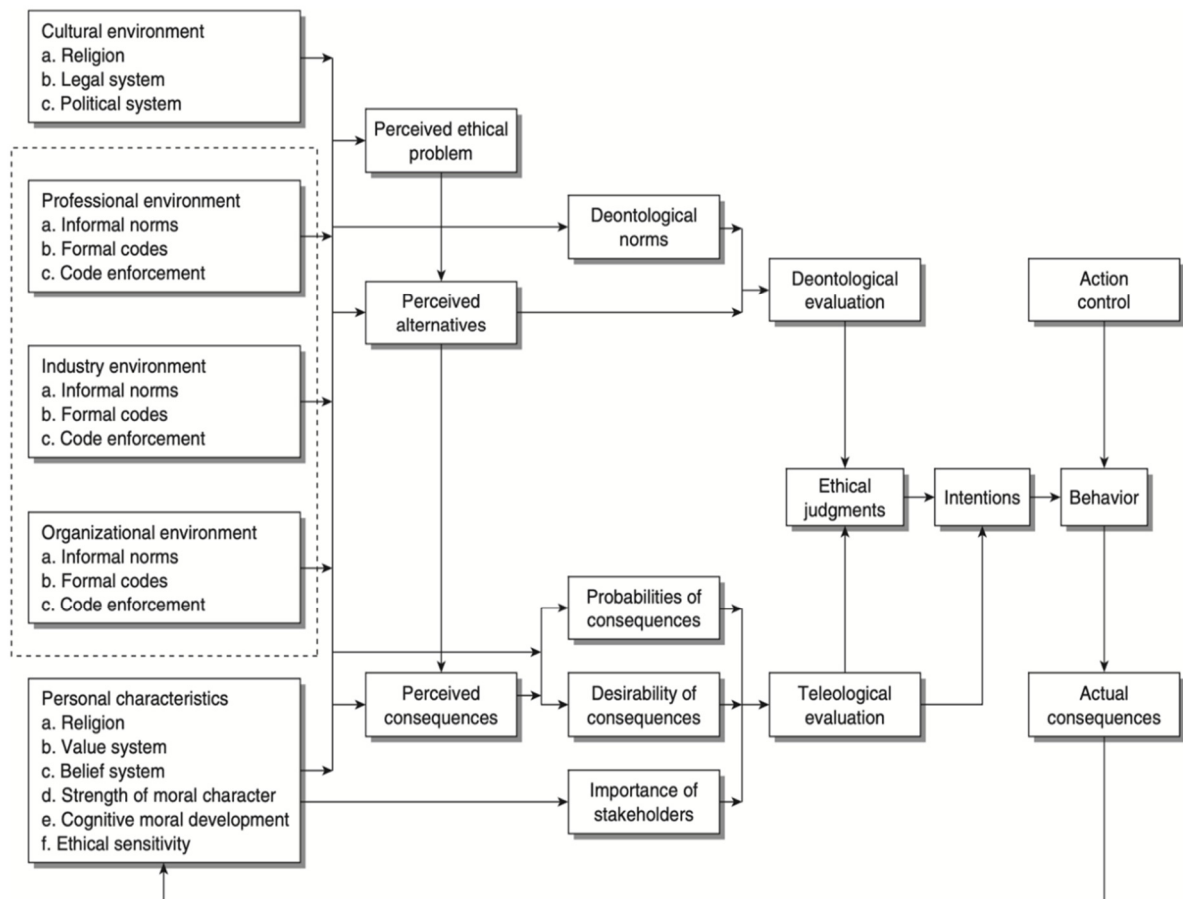


Figure 1.4: The Hunt-Vitell model (the General theory of Marketing ethics)

Source: Hunt & Vitell (1986)

1.6.2. Theory of Planned Behavior

1.6.2.1. Reasons to apply Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), provides a solid theoretical foundation for exploring purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products for several key reasons.

Firstly, predicting consumer behavior, especially in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption, is complex due to the variety of factors influencing these decisions. Makkar highlights that inconspicuous luxury consumers are driven by both rational and emotional factors in their purchasing decisions. The TPB offers an effective framework to examine this complexity, allowing researchers to explore both internal factors, such as attitudes and perceived behavioral control, and external factors, such as subjective norms. This makes the TPB highly relevant for understanding the multifaceted nature of consumer behavior in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption.

Secondly, TPB is an expectancy-value model, which explains how consumers form and adjust their attitudes based on their beliefs about the outcomes of specific behaviors and the evaluation of those beliefs (Hoyer et al., 2017). In the case of inconspicuous luxury consumption, individuals' intentions are shaped by their attitudes toward luxury products and their beliefs about the potential outcomes of such purchases. This makes the TPB particularly suitable for investigating the complex and nuanced intentions behind inconspicuous luxury purchases.

Additionally, Hoyer et al. (2017) emphasize that TPB is widely accepted in consumer behavior research due to its structured approach to understanding how consumer attitudes, intentions, and behaviors are influenced by both internal factors (e.g., attitudes) and external factors (e.g., societal pressure, cultural norms). One of TPB's strengths lies in its flexibility, which allows researchers to incorporate a wide range of variables into the model. This adaptability enhances the predictive power of the TPB, making it a versatile tool for studying consumer behavior across diverse research contexts (Ahmadi et al., 2021). As such, TPB provides an ideal framework for studying inconspicuous luxury consumption, as it accommodates both individual and social determinants of consumer behavior.

In conclusion, the TPB model offers a comprehensive and flexible approach to understanding the factors that influence consumer intentions in inconspicuous luxury consumption, making it an essential theoretical tool for this study. The following section outlines the key components of the TPB framework.

1.6.2.2. Key ideas of TPB

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) outlines an individual's decision-making process regardless of the context (Ajzen, 1991). Initially, the model emphasized the importance of examining both an individual's attitude and subjective norms—social norms that may influence behavioral intention, forming the basis of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Later, Ajzen (1991) extended the

TRA by adding the construct of Perceived behavioral control (PBC), which addresses the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior. This expansion led to the development of the more comprehensive Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

According to Ajzen (1991), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) asserts that behavioral intentions are influenced by three key factors: the individual's attitude toward the behavior, the subjective norm related to the behavior, and perceived behavioral control (PBC). Behavioral intention, in turn, serves as the direct precursor to the behavior itself. In the updated version of the theory, both a positive attitude and supportive subjective norms foster motivation to engage in a particular behavior. However, the actual intention to perform the behavior is solidified when individuals perceive a strong sense of control over it. As the intention to engage in a behavior intensifies, the likelihood of actually performing that behavior increases accordingly.

Attitude is defined as 'a summary evaluation of a psychological object captured in such attribute dimensions as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likable-dislikable' (Ajzen, 2001, p.28). It is derived from three functions: cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive function relates to thought processes, the affective function encompasses emotions, and the conative function influences behavior (Hoyer et al., 2017). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the attitude toward a behavior results from accessible beliefs about the likely consequences of that behavior, referred to as behavioral beliefs. A behavioral belief reflects an individual's subjective probability that engaging in a particular behavior will lead to a specific outcome or experience. These beliefs shape the individual's attitude, with the overall attitude being influenced by the positive or negative valence associated with each anticipated outcome, weighted by the subjective probability of that outcome occurring as a result of the behavior.

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure that encourages one to engage in a behavior (Ajzen, 2005). Ajzen suggests that subjective norms are shaped by the influence of normative beliefs and an individual's motivation to comply. In essence, individuals who possess a strong inclination to adhere to the expectations of their immediate social circles, including family and friends, are inclined to perceive these expectations as representative of broader societal norms. Two distinct types of normative beliefs contribute to the overall perceived social pressure influencing behavior, which are termed subjective norms: injunctive and descriptive norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Injunctive normative beliefs revolve around the anticipation or subjective probability that a particular reference individual or group (e.g., friends,

family, spouse, coworkers, one's physician, or supervisor) approves or disapproves of the behavior under consideration. Conversely, descriptive normative beliefs pertain to beliefs about whether significant others engage in the behavior themselves.

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure that encourages one to engage in a behavior (Ajzen, 2005). According to Ajzen, subjective norms are shaped by normative beliefs and an individual's motivation to comply. Essentially, individuals who feel a strong inclination to meet the expectations of their immediate social circles—such as family, friends, or colleagues—tend to view these expectations as representative of broader societal norms.

There are two types of normative beliefs that contribute to the overall perception of social pressure, which is termed subjective norms: injunctive norms and descriptive norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Injunctive normative beliefs involve the anticipation or subjective probability that a specific individual or group (e.g., friends, family, spouse, coworkers, or supervisors) approves or disapproves of the behavior under consideration. On the other hand, descriptive normative beliefs are concerned with perceptions of whether important others engage in the behavior themselves, highlighting whether the behavior is commonly practiced within the reference group.

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to the degree of ease or difficulty an individual perceives in performing a behavior. In his expansion of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Ajzen (2002) introduced perceived self-efficacy as an additional construct, drawing on Bandura and Adams (1977) concept within social cognitive theory. According to Bandura (1999), self-efficacy is defined as a 'belief system in the foundation of human agency' (p. 28), which represents an individual's belief in their ability to influence events that affect their lives. In consumer behavior research, perceived behavioral control (PBC) represents an individual's subjective sense of control over a specific behavior. In contrast, perceived self-efficacy specifically relates to 'people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control' (Ajzen, 2002, p.667).

Similar to how attitudes are derived from accessible behavioral beliefs and subjective norms arise from accessible normative beliefs, PBC is based on accessible control beliefs. These control beliefs focus on factors that either facilitate or inhibit the execution of a particular behavior. Factors influencing control beliefs may include necessary skills, abilities, available resources (such as time and money), and the cooperation of others. A control belief is defined as an individual's subjective probability that a specific factor will either facilitate or hinder their ability to perform

the behavior. The extent to which each control belief contributes to perceived behavioral control depends on the perceived effectiveness of the factor in enabling or preventing the behavior.

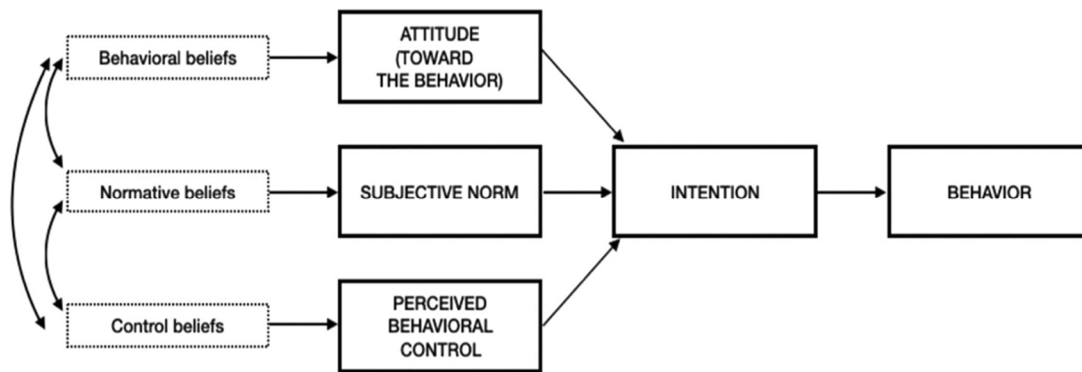


Figure 1.5: The Theory of Planned Behavior model

Source: Ajzen (1991)

1.6.3. Reasons to integrate Theory of Planned Behavior and the Hunt-Vitell model

While the TPB model has been foundational in understanding consumer behavior, particularly in predicting intentions and actions, it has certain limitations. The TPB model primarily explains consumer behavior through social and psychological factors such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. However, it does not fully account for the moral dimensions involved in decision-making. Recent research indicates that ethical considerations can significantly influence consumer behavior (Vanhamme et al., 2021). In contrast, the Hunt-Vitell model emphasizes ethical evaluation in decision-making, offering insight into how moral norms and considerations of personal or societal benefits shape consumer behavior. By integrating TPB with the Hunt-Vitell model, this study constructs a more comprehensive theoretical framework that allows for the exploration of psychological, social, and ethical factors influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the domain of inconspicuous luxury consumption.

1.7. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

This study aims to explain the factors influencing the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products. The following section presents the proposed research model, which is developed based on the theoretical frameworks of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Hunt-Vitell Model.

1.7.1. Antecedents of purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products

1.7.1.1. TPB constructs: Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases,

Subjective norms, Perceived behavioral control

Attitude is defined as ‘a summary evaluation of a psychological object captured in such attribute dimensions as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likable-dislikable’ (Ajzen, 2001, p.28). In this study, *Attitude* (ATT) is defined as the consumer's overall evaluation, whether positive or negative, of purchasing inconspicuous luxury products.

Prior research provides empirical evidence supporting the favorable influence of attitudes on purchase intentions within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework, both in general consumer behavior (Carfora et al., 2021) and specifically in the context of luxury consumption (Schade et al., 2016). In general, studies have consistently shown a direct and positive impact of attitudes on purchase intention. However, the extent of this effect varies depending on the specific context of the research. In the domain of luxury consumption, several studies have established a connection between consumer attitudes and their intention to purchase luxury goods. For example, Jain et al. (2017) highlight the importance of attitude as a key determinant of Indian consumers' intentions to purchase luxury fashion products. Similarly, research by Zhang and Kim (2013) in China also demonstrates a positive relationship between attitude and the intention to purchase luxury fashion products. A cross-national study by Bian and Forsythe (2012) further reinforces this connection, showing that a positive attitude toward luxury consumption influences purchase intention among consumers in both the US and China. In the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption, Ting (2018) suggests that Malaysian consumers associate positive social-adjustive and hedonic functions with their attitudes toward purchasing subtle luxury fashion items. Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases positively influences the purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure that influences an individual's decision to engage in a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), subjective norms capture the impact of societal expectations and pressures from significant others, which can substantially shape consumer decisions, including those related to luxury consumption. In this study, Subjective norms (SN) specifically refer to the social pressure perceived by individuals to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

The influence of subjective norms on consumer behavior has been examined across various contexts, such as green consumption (Nguyen, 2019), sustainable consumption (Minton et al., 2018), and the consumption of environmentally friendly apparel (Bong Ko & Bin, 2017). In the context of luxury consumption, social influences are known to play a pivotal role in the decision-making process. Consumers often purchase luxury products to signal wealth and social status due to the perceived social pressures surrounding them (Wiedmann et al., 2009). The desire to conform to social expectations and elevate one's social standing significantly impacts luxury consumption choices (Kastanakis, 2012). Accordingly, luxury consumers opt for high-end products to meet the perceived demands for social approval and conformity. In the case of inconspicuous luxury consumption, consumers may prefer discreet luxury items as a means to associate with others without overtly displaying their wealth (Han et al., 2010).

Research by Nguyen et al. (2023) suggests that social pressure to conform to social norms can drive the selection of understated luxury products. In this context, individuals may gravitate toward subtle luxury goods when they feel the need to align with societal expectations, as these products communicate status or wealth without excessive visibility. It has also been observed that subjective norms tend to be stronger predictors of consumer intentions in collectivistic cultures compared to individualistic ones (e.g., Cho & Lee, 2015), and for individuals with collectivist values compared to those with individualistic tendencies (Ybarra & Trafimow, 1998). Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1b: Subjective norms positively purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products.

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior, reflecting an individual's belief in their ability to execute a specific action (Ajzen, 1991). PBC encompasses both internal factors, such as skills and knowledge, and external factors, such as resources and opportunities (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of this study, PBC pertains to the perceived ease or difficulty associated with purchasing inconspicuous luxury products. According to the TPB model, PBC is one of the three key predictors of purchase intention.

Previous empirical research has explored the role of PBC in various consumption contexts, including green consumption (Nguyen, 2019) and discrete food choices (McDermott et al., 2015). In the context of luxury consumption, Zhang and Kim (2013) found that PBC positively influences luxury consumption behavior by enhancing

consumers' confidence in their ability to afford and enjoy luxury items. Similarly, studies examining subtle luxury consumption have shown that PBC is a significant predictor of consumers' likelihood to choose inconspicuous luxury items (Ting, 2018). Consumers who feel confident in their ability to make thoughtful, restrained luxury purchases are more inclined to select subtle luxury products. This sense of control enables them to align their purchases with values such as discretion and subtlety, as opposed to conspicuous displays of wealth. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1c: Perceived behavioral control positively influences purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products.

1.7.1.2. Need for status

Holbrook (1999) conceptualizes status as a motivational construct that significantly influences consumer behavior, particularly in the context of luxury consumption. A substantial body of marketing literature has highlighted the central role of status as a key driver in luxury consumption (e.g., Mazzocco et al., 2012). According to Eastman et al. (1999), the need for status in consumption is a motivational process whereby individuals select products they believe will 'confer and symbolize status' for both themselves and those around them. This need for status is a powerful determinant of conspicuous consumption behaviors, as individuals aim to project a prestigious image to others.

Luxury products, as symbols of social status, are often perceived as indicators of wealth and success. Wealthier consumers, in particular, may allocate significant resources toward purchasing highly visible luxury items (Berger & Heath, 2007; Berger & Ward, 2010; Veblen, 1899). Luxury consumption serves multiple purposes, such as signaling wealth (Truong et al., 2008; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), showcasing personal success (Richins, 1994), affiliating with elite groups (Han et al., 2010; Truong et al., 2008; Vigneron, 1999), and adhering to social norms (Leibenstein, 1950). These motivations are commonly categorized into conspicuous consumption, snob appeal, and the bandwagon effect (Leibenstein, 1950).

Empirical research consistently supports the link between the need for status and luxury consumption. For example, Lee (2011) demonstrates that individuals with a high need for status exhibit stronger intentions to purchase luxury products. These consumers often seek luxury goods as a means of enhancing their social standing. Furthermore, luxury items are frequently used to bolster self-esteem and gain social validation (Truong, 2010).

The role of the need for status in influencing consumers' purchase intention for inconspicuous luxury products requires further exploration. Previous studies suggest that

individuals with a low need for status, often referred to as ‘patricians,’ tend to prefer inconspicuous luxury items (Han et al., 2010). Inconspicuous consumers are characterized by their avoidance of overtly displaying their social status, in contrast to those who engage in conspicuous consumption (e.g., Berger & Ward, 2010; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2004; Shove & Warde, 2002). Empirical research by Pino et al. (2019) indicates that U.S. consumers with a low need for status often engage in inconspicuous consumption. However, it is important to note that these studies were conducted in developed countries, which may not fully reflect the cultural dynamics present in developing countries like Vietnam.

In contrast, Vietnam, as a collectivist society with a developing economy, presents a distinct cultural context. Existing literature suggests that consumers in emerging markets, such as Vietnam, are more likely to purchase conspicuous luxury products, often driven by a desire for ostentation (Shukla, 2011; Wan, 2014). These consumers are more inclined to associate luxury brands with prestige and social hierarchy, in comparison to consumers in developed markets (e.g., Juan Li & Su, 2007; Shukla & Purani, 2012). This behavior can be attributed to cultural differences, where material possessions in developing economies are seen as a key indicator of personal value (Siahtiri & Lee, 2019). In these societies, there is a heightened concern for others' judgments (Jenkins, 2016), and consumers are strongly influenced by shared norms, collectivistic values, and the desire for social conformity (Heaney et al., 2005).

Several comparative studies highlight these cultural differences in the need for status. For instance, Wu et al. (2015) found that consumers in Taiwan (an emerging market) are more likely to view luxury brands as a means of signaling their social status than consumers in the United Kingdom (a mature market). Similarly, Juan Li and Su (2007) reported that luxury consumers in China (an emerging market) place greater emphasis on the opinions of their reference groups compared to consumers in the United States (a mature market). Moreover, studies have shown that consumers in collectivist cultures, such as those in emerging economies, tend to exhibit a higher need for status than those in individualistic cultures (Li & Lee, 2012). These findings suggest that cultural context plays a crucial role in the need for status regarding luxury consumption.

The role of the need for status in inconspicuous consumption remains underexplored across different economic contexts. A qualitative study by Nguyen et al. (2023) suggests that status-seeking is a significant driver of inconspicuous luxury consumption in emerging economies like Vietnam. As individuals in developing countries accumulate wealth, they increasingly invest in goods that reflect their achievements and

personal identity (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). In such economies, material possessions are often viewed as symbols of social standing and group affiliations (Nabi et al., 2019). Consumers in these regions are also particularly sensitive to societal judgments (Jenkins, 2016) and the need to maintain face (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998).

Further comparative studies between consumers in the United Kingdom and Taiwan (an emerging market) show that the latter group is more likely to perceive luxury products as a means of signaling social status (Wu et al., 2015). Similar findings have been reported in other emerging markets, including Morocco (Nwankwo et al., 2014) and Russia (Kaufmann et al., 2012). For urban Vietnamese consumers, the acquisition of status-signaling products is linked to enhanced life satisfaction and happiness (Mai & Tambyah, 2011). These observations suggest that the need for status may influence the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Need for status positively influences purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products.

Previous studies on individual behavior have consistently highlighted the significance of demographic factors in influencing both general and purchasing behaviors. Common demographic variables, such as gender, age, education, and income, are often incorporated in behavior research models as control variables. In the context of luxury purchase intentions, including inconspicuous luxury consumption, researchers have similarly employed demographic factors to account for variations in purchasing behavior. For instance, studies have examined the effects of gender (Kim, 2020), age (Amatulli et al., 2015), education, and income (Nwankwo et al., 2014) on luxury consumption patterns. Building on this foundation, this study proposes hypotheses regarding the relationship between demographic factors and the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products:

H 3a,b,c,d: The demographic characteristics of individuals, such as gender (a), age (b), education (c), and income (d), have an impact on the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

1.7.2. Antecedents of attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases

In the context of luxury consumption, the need for status can significantly influence an individual's attitudes and behaviors. According to Shukla (2012), luxury purchase behavior is 'subject to the pressure of social norms and the expectations of social institutional rules such as those arising from family and other reference groups. Luxury consumers believe that they can attain higher social status through the consumption of luxury products (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). Consequently, luxury

consumers may develop more favorable attitudes toward purchasing luxury products (including inconspicuous luxury items). This notion is supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which suggests that the need for status is positively correlated with attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases. According to Han et al. (2010), in the realm of inconspicuous luxury consumption, wealthier consumers often prefer subtle status signals that are only recognized within their social circles. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Need for status positively influences attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases.

In luxury marketing literature, the concept of self is of significant importance (Kastanakis, 2012), as an individual's self-concept—encompassing their perceptions, feelings, and thoughts about themselves—plays a key role in shaping luxury consumption behavior (Ko et al., 2019). Empirical studies have demonstrated that self-perception can influence the consumption of inconspicuous luxury products. For instance, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) found that individuals with an independent self-construal are more likely to engage in snob consumption, opting for less visible brands to differentiate themselves from others. In contrast, individuals with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to engage in bandwagon consumption, choosing visible brands in alignment with the consumption behaviors of others. Within the context of luxury consumption, self-construal has been shown to moderate various factors that influence purchasing decisions (Lee et al., 2021).

Self-construals have been identified as a key psychological self-concept that significantly influences consumer behavior (Ebaidalla & Malkawi, 2023). Previous research suggests that value systems, such as self-construals, play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, the specific impact of self-construals on the formation of attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury consumption remains underexplored. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by offering a novel perspective on consumer behavior, focusing on how self-construals influence attitudes in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption.

The concept of 'self-construal,' introduced by Markus and Gonzalez (1991), suggests that individuals' perceptions of their inner selves differ across cultures. Self-construal refers to the degree to which individuals perceive themselves as independent or interdependent with others in their social context (Markus & Gonzalez, 1991). The individualism-collectivism dimension, commonly used in theoretical frameworks of the self (Mai & Tambyah, 2011), positions individuals along a spectrum from independent

self-construal to interdependent self-construal (Singelis, 1994). In this study, these two perspectives are referred to as individualistic self and collectivistic self (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). Given Vietnam's economic transformation, varying levels of individualism and collectivism may coexist among consumers.

The individualistic self is characterized by a 'bounded, unitary, stable' sense of self, which is distinct from the social environment. Individuals with a strong individualistic self-construal prioritize autonomy, independence, and self-superiority. They value self-expression and uniqueness, focusing on specific attributes rather than relational or contextual factors. In the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption, consumers who emphasize distinctiveness are more likely to opt for subtle luxury brands (Lee et al., 2021). Individuals with an individualistic self-construal are inclined to engage in snob consumption, choosing luxury products that allow them to distinguish themselves from others.

In contrast, the collectivistic self is characterized by a 'flexible, variable' sense of self, which emphasizes external factors such as social status, roles, interpersonal relationships, group affiliation, and the ability to understand others' perspectives. Individuals with a collectivistic self-construal are more likely to rely on emotions when making judgments (Hong & Chang, 2015). These individuals prioritize social group dynamics over personal concerns and value interdependence in their relationships (Cross et al., 2011). Consumers with a collectivistic self tend to focus on collective goals, conformity, maintaining relationships, and fostering social harmony (Mai & Tambyah, 2011). They perceive themselves as interconnected with others, and their self-esteem is often shaped by harmonious interactions and adaptability to changing circumstances. Individuals with a strong collectivistic self are inclined to prioritize social group dynamics, seeking to maintain social connections and ensuring the well-being of the group. Since inconspicuous luxury products are typically not perceived as ostentatious or excessively costly (Lee et al., 2021), consumers with a higher collectivistic self may prefer these products as a way to maintain social harmony. Therefore, it is hypothesized that self-construals influence individuals' attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury consumption.

H5a: Individualistic self negatively influences attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases

H5b: Collectivistic self positively influences attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases

1.7.3. The role of ethical considerations in inconspicuous luxury consumption

In the field of contemporary luxury research, past studies suggest that ethics is associated with luxury consumption (Vanhamme et al., 2021). In addition, luxury goods can be a symbol that influences one's moral self-image (Stellar & Willer, 2014). Past research has also indicated a potential link between ethical issues and consumer choice of inconspicuous luxury products (Wu et al., 2017). Although ethical dispositions can shape consumer perceptions and luxury consumption behaviors (Vanhamme et al., 2021), the nature of the mechanism by which this occurs remains largely unknown. This raises the question: There is an ethical dilemma related to the purchase of luxury products. Does it exist in inconspicuous consumption? Do luxury consumers adopt inconspicuous consumption as a mechanism to address the moral concerns associated with conspicuous consumption? Can inconspicuous consumption with quiet luxury resolve consumers' moral dilemmas? Based on the above discussions, the author proposes that:

Proposition: Ethical considerations have a significant role in inconspicuous luxury consumption.

1.7.4. Theoretical framework

From the above discussions, the author proposes the initial research model as follows:

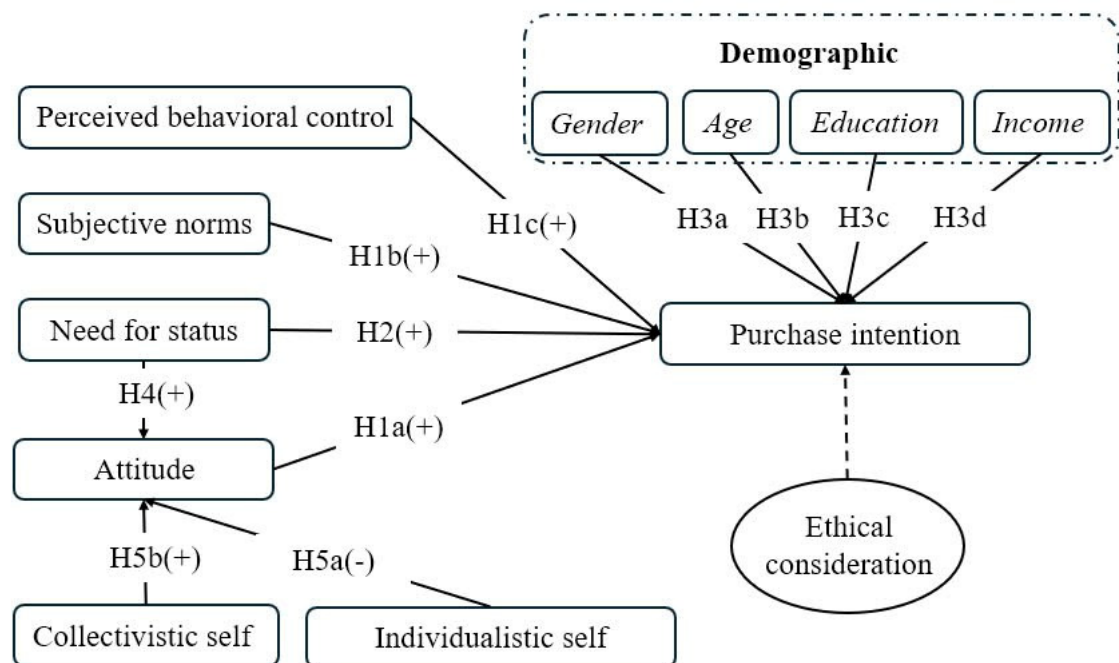


Figure 1.6: Proposed theoretical framework

The objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products, focusing on exploring the role of ethical motivations in this consumption. The following sections present the research methodology and findings to address the research objectives.

SUMMARY CHAPTER 1

In Chapter 1, the author begins by introducing and discussing the foundational concepts of luxury products, highlighting their distinct characteristics that set them apart from other goods in the market. The discussion further delves into the concept of conspicuous consumption, a behavior where individuals purchase high-status products to signal their wealth and social standing to others. In contrast, the author also explores inconspicuous consumption, where luxury goods are consumed in a more subtle manner, often for personal satisfaction rather than social display.

Following this, the author provides a comprehensive overview of the key research themes in the field of inconspicuous luxury consumption, exploring various academic perspectives on how consumers engage with luxury items in ways that are not overtly visible or attention-seeking. The chapter also addresses the antecedents influencing consumers' purchase intentions for luxury products, considering factors such as personal values, and social influences.

The literature review reveals significant insights, but also highlights several research gaps that have not been thoroughly explored in previous studies. These gaps lay the foundation for future research in the field. To address these issues, the author proposes a theoretical framework to guide the subsequent research. This framework is carefully selected based on its relevance to the topics discussed and its potential to offer new perspectives on luxury consumption behavior.

Finally, the chapter concludes with the introduction of an initial research model, which outlines the key variables and relationships that will be explored in the study. Alongside the model, the author also presents several research hypotheses, which are grounded in the theoretical framework and aim to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that drive inconspicuous luxury consumption. These hypotheses will guide the empirical investigation in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research context

2.1.1 Vietnam

Vietnam is a typical case of an emerging country and is considered one of Southeast Asia's fastest-growing and most promising consumer markets (Nguyen & Mai, 2019). As an emerging market economy of CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, and South Africa), the country presents an opportunity for luxury brands (Veloutsou et al., 2021). Collectivists often consider the impact of their behaviors on society and place importance on activities for the benefit of the whole society (Vitell et al., 2016). They are more likely to engage in ethical purchasing behaviors (Le & Kieu, 2019). Vietnam is a country associated with a Confucian heritage and collectivistic values, which strongly emphasize the importance of society and group (Nguyen & Mai, 2019). Consumers in Confucian societies also prefer public and visible luxury products (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). However, *Doi Moi* (i.e., economic renovation) in Vietnam has changed the traditional value systems and resulted in the coexistence of modern and traditional values in each consumer (Nguyen & Mai, 2019). Hence, researchers and marketers are keen to explore Vietnamese consumers' inconspicuous consumption practices and motivations driving this consumption phenomenon.

2.1.2 Luxury fashion industry

In this dissertation, the author introduces the context of the research by explaining why the luxury fashion industry was chosen as the focus for studying inconspicuous luxury consumption. The selection of this industry is based on several key reasons. *Firstly*, according to Berger and Ward (2010), luxury consumers exhibit stronger preferences for subtle signals in (a) product domains relevant to identity and (b) contexts where consumption is visible to others. Therefore, selecting the fashion industry allows the researcher to explore the nature of inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam more effectively. *Secondly*, Vietnam's luxury clothing industry has attracted foreign investors with its dynamic fashion scene. In Vietnam, the largest segment of the luxury market is the Luxury Fashion segment. According to Statista (2024), the projected market volume for luxury fashion products is expected to reach US\$769.30 million, with revenue in the broader Luxury Goods market anticipated to amount to US\$2,356.00 million (see Figure 2.1). As a result, focusing on the luxury fashion sector provides the author with easier access to a viable research sample. *Lastly*, a review of the literature

indicates that luxury fashion is particularly suitable for studying inconspicuous luxury consumption. For these reasons, the author conducts research on inconspicuous luxury consumption within the luxury fashion sector.

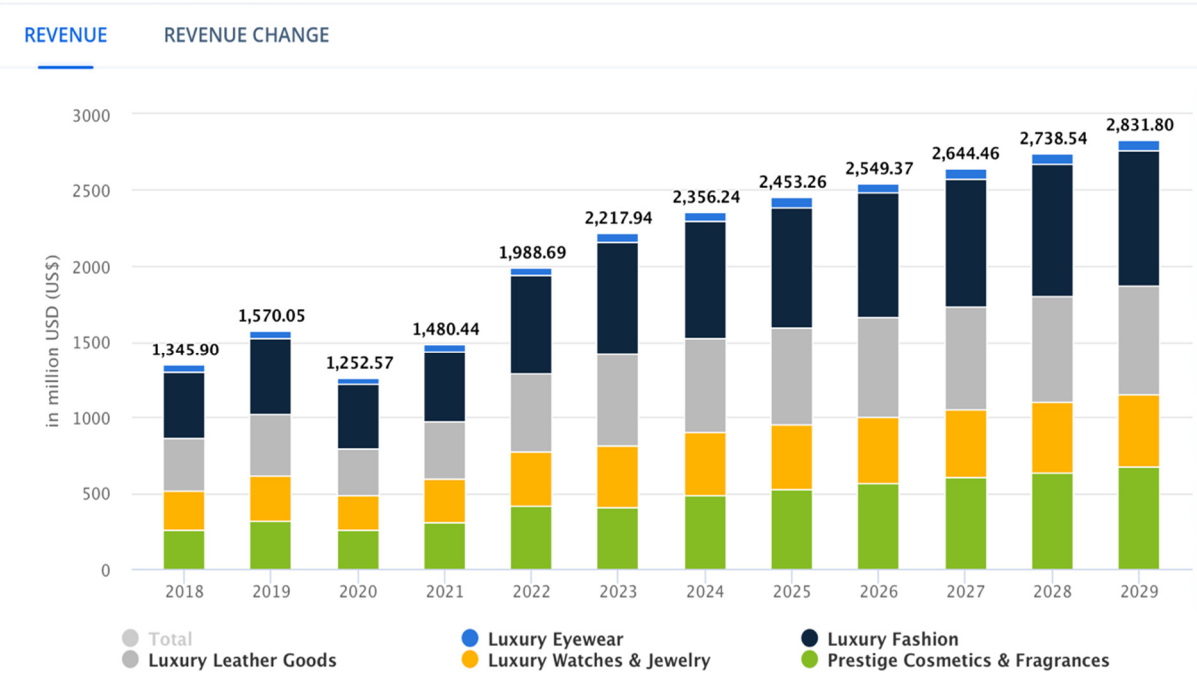


Figure 2.1: Revenue of luxury goods in Vietnam in 2024

Source: Statista (2024)

2.2. Research method design

This study aims to investigate inconspicuous luxury consumption behavior and antecedents influencing this behavior in the context of an Asian country by integrating The Theory of Planned Behavior and The Hunt-Vitell model. Hence, a sequential exploratory research mixed-methods study was conducted with Vietnamese consumers from 2020 to 2023. First, a qualitative research approach was undertaken to provide essential insights into the phenomenon of inconspicuous luxury consumption within the Vietnamese context. The objectives of this qualitative study are to understand how Vietnamese luxury consumers engage in inconspicuous consumption practices, identify the motivations behind this behavior focusing on the ethical perspective, and propose additional relationships to support the face validity of the theoretical framework. Then, a follow-up survey was conducted to examine antecedents of the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products in Vietnam. Building the theoretical framework was based on a comprehensive literature review and the findings from the previous qualitative study.

The author employs a sequential exploratory research mixed-methods study to address the research questions for several reasons:

First, mixed methods research integrates the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Fetters et al., 2013). Qualitative research is used to explore the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of a phenomenon, while quantitative research answers questions about cause-and-effect relationships. This dissertation aims to explore and understand how inconspicuous luxury consumption practices occur in Vietnam, as well as the motivational factors that influence the purchase intention of inconspicuous luxury products. Therefore, a qualitative study allows the author to conduct an exploratory investigation into these consumption practices, particularly in Vietnam, an emerging Asian market. Additionally, qualitative methods are effective in exploring key motivations behind inconspicuous luxury consumption (Silverman, 1998). On the other hand, a quantitative approach is useful for examining the antecedents of purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products.

Second, conducting mixed-methods research requires researchers to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data independently, followed by integration to provide a more comprehensive answer to the research questions in a single study (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The use of mixed methods with two types of data enables the author to gain a more holistic understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam. Therefore, the use of mixed research methods in this study is entirely appropriate.

The first phase, using qualitative methods, was conducted from 2020 to 2021. During this phase, the author employed in-depth interview techniques to collect research data. The in-depth interview with a semi-structured format is considered the most appropriate technique for exploring a new phenomenon (McCracken, 1988). This method has been successfully applied in research on inconspicuous luxury consumption (Makkar and Yap, 2018b). Through open-ended questions, personal experiences in the luxury consumption phenomenon with subtle signals are found in epistemological principles that consumers’ subjective narratives can convey their lived experiences (Thompson et al., 1994) and enable researchers to comprehend how individuals perceive the world (McCracken, 1988).

In the second phase, the author utilizes a quantitative research approach to examine the research model. This involves administering a survey questionnaire to gather data. Employing self-reported questionnaires from respondents is an effective method for testing the research model, as it is broadly accepted by top journals (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2020; Shukla et al., 2022) and fits well within the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption (e.g., Jiang et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2019b).

2.3. Phase one: Qualitative study

2.3.1. Sample selection

The main purpose of this phase is to explore the inconspicuous luxury consumption practices, particularly in Vietnam, an emerging Asian market, and the salient motivations driving this behavior. To serve this purpose, the author used purposive sampling to approach the potential participants (Patton, 2014). The informants were recruited based on their engagement with luxury goods for two years or more and the number of their recent purchases of inconspicuous luxury products during the past year before data collection. These criteria are important to identify consumers with inconspicuous consumption behaviors (Makkar & Yap, 2018a). This study employed the snowball sampling technique due to the specific characteristics of the target informants, who are high-income individuals and difficult to reach through traditional sampling methods (Noy, 2008). The process began by identifying initial informants through the researcher's personal and professional network. These first informants were selected based on their relevance to the study, specifically their experience with inconspicuous luxury consumption. Once the initial informants were identified, they were asked to refer others who fit the study's criteria, thus facilitating further connections. This approach allowed the researcher to build a network of informants who could provide valuable insights into the research topic while ensuring the sample remained relevant to the study's focus. The research team conducted a total of 42 in-depth interviews with Vietnamese luxury consumers through two rounds of data collection. Personal experiences in the luxury consumption phenomenon with subtle signals are found in epistemological principles that consumers' subjective narratives can convey their lived experiences (Thompson et al., 1994) and enable researchers to comprehend how individuals perceive the world (McCracken, 1988). The overall profile of informants varies in gender, age, occupation, educational background, living place, and involvement in luxury consumption. The profile of informants in the qualitative study is presented in Appendix 11.

2.3.2. Data collection and analysis

In this study, two rounds of interviews were conducted. We recruited ten informants in 2020 for the first round to gain a preliminary understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumption practices in Vietnam and the main groups of Vietnamese inconspicuous luxury consumers. Thirty-two informants participated in the second round in 2021, with the primary purpose of exploring factors driving

inconspicuous luxury consumption and with an emphasis on ethical motivations. The interviews lasted from 30 min to 1.5 hours and were conducted at informants' homes, coffee shops, or other places chosen by informants. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed within 24 hours of the interview.

For each interview, the author began by introducing the purpose of the study, followed by some ice-breaking questions to enable the informant to feel comfortable with sharing their opinions (see Appendix 1,2 for the Interview guides). The researchers gave some examples to benchmark informants for understanding inconspicuous and conspicuous designs in high-end luxury fashion. In the first round, the researchers asked informants to share their feelings and thoughts about their understanding, experiences, and preferences regarding inconspicuous luxury products, related consumption practices, and trends. The questions in the second round focused on motivations driving inconspicuous luxury consumption, with an emphasis on ethical considerations. The interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached when no new insights emerged.

The author followed a thematic procedure in data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process of open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to reveal common themes and patterns. First, the author generated preliminary codes to identify discrete ideas. Second, through axial coding, the author generated themes by categorizing similar codes. Finally, in selective coding, the author grouped the above themes into higher-level themes to understand the storyline of inconspicuous luxury consumption that emerged from the data. The author moved back and forth between these coding steps to (re)define themes and subthemes. During the data analysis process, the author had regular discussions with the supervisor until we reached a consensus to improve the results' trustworthiness.

2.4. Phase two: Survey

2.4.1. Sample and data collection

At this stage, the research aims to examine the factors influencing purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products. Therefore, in the survey, the author used a convenience sampling method. The survey targeted consumers who are Masters, doctoral students, and PhDs who are enrolled and teaching at universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The data was collected in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh city because these cities are among the most developed in the country, with the highest per capita income, and they also host a significant concentration of universities, attracting many individuals

with advanced education. These cities are suggested as an appropriate context for studying luxury consumption (Mai & Tambyah, 2011).

Initially, a questionnaire consisting of 39 items and five demographic questions was created using Google Forms. The link to the questionnaire was distributed to university faculty members, including PhD holders who are friends and colleagues, as well as to master's and doctoral students currently enrolled in universities. All respondents are high in education level since previous studies suggest that luxury consumers who purchase inconspicuous luxury products are well-educated (Han et al., 2010; Wu et al., 2017). Before responding, all participants were informed about the purpose and content of the survey. They were also briefed on confidentiality commitments and were given the option to decline participation if they were not comfortable.

According to Hair et al. (2014), to ensure reliability in analysis, the sample size should be at least 5 to 10 times the number of observed variables. After three weeks, 328 responses were collected, which falls within the recommended range of 5 to 10 times (approximately 9.4 times) the number of observed variables. Thus, the author concluded the survey and extracted the data for analysis.

2.4.2. Data analysis

The author applies a series of analytical techniques to test the research hypotheses, including:

- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Reliability Testing with Cronbach's Alpha: To identify the latent structure of variables and verify the reliability of the scales.
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA): Used to confirm the factor structure identified through EFA and ensure that the theoretical model aligns with the data.
- Hypothesis Testing using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): To evaluate the study's hypotheses.

These techniques enable the author to thoroughly evaluate the theoretical model and ensure the accuracy of the research conclusions. The following chapter presents the research findings for both qualitative study and quantitative studies.

2.4.3. Measures and Questionnaire development

A questionnaire was constructed with four distinct sections to address various aspects of the research. Section 1 provides an overview of the study. Section 2 details the commitments concerning the confidentiality of the information provided by participants. Section 3 consists of 39 items designed to measure a range of factors

relevant to the study. Section 4 includes five demographic questions, focusing on age, gender, education level, income, and location (see Appendix 3). The core items used to assess the factors were adapted from established studies and tailored to fit the specific domain, target population, and contextual requirements of the survey. The specifics of these adaptations are outlined as follows:

Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases scale

For the scale of **Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchase (ATT)**, according to Ajzen (1991); Armitage and Conner (1999), the ATT scale originally included seven items. However, during the development of the questionnaire, the author consulted with experts about the items in the scale and was advised to reduce three of the seven items because some items were difficult to distinguish when translated into Vietnamese. Therefore, the author adapted the ATT scale from Ajzen (1991), modifying it to include four items to fit the research context better. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘*Strongly disagree*’ to ‘*Strongly agree*’. The scale items used in this study are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The scale of Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchase

Variable	Items	Sources
Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchase	For me, buying an inconspicuous high-end fashion product over the next year period is pleasant	Ajzen (1991); Armitage and Conner (1999)
	For me, buying an inconspicuous high-end fashion product over the next year period is a reward	
	For me, buying an inconspicuous high-end fashion product over the next year period is good	
	For me, buying an inconspicuous high-end fashion product over the next year period is beneficial	

Subjective norms, Perceived behavioral control scales

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) and **Subjective norms (SN)** have been extensively explored in the theoretical literature. These two constructs are measured through various scales, with the scale developed by Ajzen (1991) being among the most widely utilized. Consequently, the author adopted the Ajzen (1991) scale for this study. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘*Strongly disagree*’ to ‘*Strongly agree*’. The measurement scale of each construct consists of four items, as below:

Table 2.2: The scale of Perceived behavioral control and Subjective norms

Variables	Items	Sources
Subjective norms (SN)	People who are important to me think I should purchase inconspicuous luxury products	Ajzen (1991)
	People who are important to me would purchase inconspicuous luxury products	
	People who are important to me want me to purchase inconspicuous luxury products	
	I feel under social pressure to purchase inconspicuous luxury products	
Perceived behavioral control (PBC)	Purchasing inconspicuous luxury products is beyond my control.	Ajzen (1991)
	I can control the purchase of inconspicuous luxury products.	
	Whether or not to purchase inconspicuous luxury products is entirely up to me.	
	There are many opportunities for me to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.	

Purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products scale

Regarding Purchase intention towards inconspicuous luxury products (INT), similar to the other TPB factors, Ajzen's (1991) measurement scale for **purchase intention** has been used in various research contexts, especially in studies of luxury product consumption (e.g., Lee & Kim, 2021; Zhang & Liu, 2020). Therefore, in this study, the author also used the scale from Ajzen (1991) and Armitage & Conner (1999) with three items: '*I intend to...*'; '*I plan to...*'; '*I want to...*'. The author noted that this scale captures only three levels of intention. Meanwhile, intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors influencing behavior; they indicate how hard people are willing to try and how much effort they plan to exert to perform the behavior (Madden et al., 1992). Therefore, the author added two more items from Madden et al. (1992): '*I will try to...*'; '*I will make an effort to...*'. Thus, the **INT** scale was expected to have five items. However, after consulting with experts, the author found that the items '*I will try to...*' and '*I will make an effort to...*' overlap and could confuse respondents, so the item '*I will try to...*' was removed. The remaining **INT** factor scale includes four items, as presented as below:

Table 2.3: The scale of Purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products

Variable	Items	Sources
Purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products (INT)	I intend to purchase inconspicuous luxury products	Ajzen (1991); Armitage & Conner (1999) Madden et al. (1992)
	I plan to purchase inconspicuous luxury products	
	I want to purchase inconspicuous luxury products	
	I will make an effort to purchase inconspicuous luxury products	

Ethical judgments scale

There are several scales to measure ethical judgments, including the Multidimensional Ethics Scale (MES) (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990) and the Consumer Ethics Scale (CES) (Vitell & Muncy, 1992). In this study, the author chose to use CES. The reason is that CES specifically focuses on measuring consumer ethics, while MES is a broadly applicable general measure scale that can be applied in a wide range of contexts (Babin et al., 2004). In CES, Vitell and Muncy (1992) classified various consumer actions (differing in ethicality) based on legality, active versus passive customer involvement, and perceived harm. This classification included the following actions: The first is ‘actively benefiting from illegal action,’ which relates to actions where the consumer actively and consciously engages in a questionable activity (e.g., drinking a cold drink in a store and not paying for it). The second is ‘passively benefiting,’ which pertains to actions where the consumer benefits from the seller’s mistake (e.g., receiving excess change and not saying anything). The third is ‘actively benefiting from deceptive but legal activities,’ which involves consumers actively engaging in acts that are not perceived as illegal by most consumers (e.g., not telling the truth when negotiating the price of an automobile). The fourth is ‘no harm, no foul’ actions that most consumers perceive as not causing direct harm to anyone (e.g., buying counterfeit products and copying/downloading software instead of buying). The fifth is ‘doing good/recycling’ behavior, involving charitable and environmentally friendly consumer actions (e.g., purchasing only from companies that treat their employees fairly and recycling cans/bottles, etc.).

In this study, the author chose to use the ‘doing good/recycling’ dimension to measure ethical judgments for several reasons: Firstly, among the five dimensions, three

dimensions (the actively benefiting, passively benefiting, and doing good dimensions) are better suited for measuring ethical judgments, as the remaining two scales are quite ambiguous for consumers. This ambiguity arises because consumers often believe that no harmful activities are acceptable, even though, in reality, such activities may cause harm to others (Vitell et al., 2015). Notably, the ‘doing good’ dimension is the most visible and ‘positive’ ethical dimension for assessing a consumer's ethical predisposition. It is suggested that if consumers believe an action is not wrong, they exhibit an ethical consumer predisposition. Secondly, collectivist individuals (such as Vietnamese consumers) are more concerned about the impact of individual actions on society and prioritize collective good over personal benefit (Vitell et al., 2015). Therefore, the more collectivistic values an individual holds, the more likely they are to value ‘doing good.’ Based on the above discussion, the author adapted the ‘doing good’ dimension with four items to measure ethical judgments. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘*Strongly disagree*’ to ‘*Strongly agree*.’ The scale for ethical judgments is presented in the table below:

Table 2.4: The scale of Ethical judgments

Variable	Items	Sources
Ethical judgments (EJ)	Returning to the store and paying for an item that the cashier mistakenly did not charge you for is the right thing to do	Vitell and Muncy (1992, 2005)
	Correcting a bill that has been miscalculated in your favor is the right thing to do.	
	Giving a larger than expected tip to a good waiter or waitress is the fair thing to do	
	Not purchasing products from companies that you believe don’t treat their employees fairly is the right action to take	

Need for status scale

Need for status (NS) was measured using the scale developed by Eastman et al. (1999). This scale measures the motivation to consume for status rather than actual status consumption behaviors (Tascioglu et al., 2017). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘*Strongly disagree*’ to ‘*Strongly agree*’. The detailed items are presented in the table below:

Table 2.5: The scale of Need for status

Variable	Items	Source
Need for status (NS)	I would buy a product just because it has status	Eastman et al. (1999)
	I am interested in new products with status	
	I would pay more for a product if it had status	
	The status of a product is relevant to	
	A product is more valuable to me if it has some snob appeal	

Individualistic self and Collectivistic self scales

The original scales for IS and CS were developed by Singelis (1994) and based on the scale of Singelis (1994), Mai and Tambyah (2011) modified a scale to measure **IS** and **CS** in the context of luxury consumption in Vietnam. In this study, the author chose to adopt Mai and Tambyah (2011) revised scale for the following reasons: First, a study by Mai and Tambyah (2011) was conducted on the consumption of luxury products, which aligns with the context of the author's research. Second, the IS and CS scales in Mai and Tambyah (2011) were adjusted for the Vietnamese consumer's context. This is one of the few studies that examine the impact of these factors in the context of Vietnamese luxury consumption—a developing country with cultural characteristics influenced by Confucianism. The measurement scale of each construct contains seven items and is presented in the table below:

Table 2.6: The scale of Collectivistic self and Individualistic self

Variables	Items	Sources
Collectivistic self (CS)	I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.	Singelis (1994)
	My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.	
	I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.	
	It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.	
	I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I'm not happy with the group.	
	It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.	
	Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.	

Variables	Items	Sources
Individualistic self (IS)	Without competition, it is not possible to have a good society	Singelis (1994)
	I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	
	My personal identity independent of others, is very important to me.	
	I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others.	
	Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.	
	I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.	
	Speaking up in public is not a problem for me.	

The measurement scales, after being adapted for the study, were translated from English to Vietnamese by two lecturers from Hanoi University of Foreign Languages (HANU) with ten years of experience in teaching English. They were subsequently back-translated into English by two British teachers who have taught English to Vietnamese students in Vietnam for over five years, ensuring that the original meaning of the scales was preserved. The Vietnamese version, after translation, was reviewed by a lecturer specializing in marketing to ensure that the terminology was translated appropriately. All items of the measurement scales were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, indicating '*Strongly disagree*' to 5, indicating '*Strongly agree*'.

2.4.4. Pilot test

Before going into the main study, the author did a pilot test to double-check the scales in real-world conditions. A convenience sample was collected for use in the pilot study. The doctoral candidate selected a university in Hanoi and, through the faculty members currently teaching there, distributed paper questionnaires to graduate students and doctoral candidates. A total of 145 questionnaires were distributed and collected. After screening, seven questionnaires were deemed invalid due to incomplete responses or consistent selection of a single option throughout. Consequently, these seven questionnaires were discarded, leaving 138 questionnaires for analysis. To test the reliability of the measurement scales, the author employed Cronbach's Alpha, supported by SPSS 23 software, to determine the internal consistency of the scales.

To assess the reliability of the scales used in the study, the author utilized Cronbach's Alpha. The key indicators considered were Cronbach's Alpha, Corrected Item-Total Correlation, and Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted. Among these, Cronbach's Alpha is the most critical; for a scale to be considered reliable, Cronbach's Alpha should be 0.7 or above. Next is the Corrected Item-Total Correlation; according to Hair et al. (2014), the values for observed variables should be at least 0.3 to ensure that these variables contribute to the overall factor. If this value is less than 0.3, the corresponding observed variable does not contribute significantly to the overall factor and should be removed from the scale. Lastly, Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted is used to suggest how the researcher might improve the scale's reliability. However, increasing the scale's reliability often requires removing certain observed variables, which could impact the integrity of the factor. Therefore, this indicator is used less frequently unless necessary. In other words, when Cronbach's Alpha is already satisfactory (greater than 0.7), removing items to increase Cronbach's Alpha is generally not needed.

The results of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability assessment for the scales are presented as follows:

Table 2.7: Cronbach's Alpha in the pilot test

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
INT's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.889				
INT1	9.899	7.975	.735	.865
INT2	9.920	8.088	.774	.850
INT3	9.913	7.773	.773	.850
INT4	9.942	7.880	.742	.862
NS's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.833				
NS1	12.420	11.734	.669	.789
NS2	12.159	11.317	.709	.776
NS3	11.500	12.850	.509	.834
NS4	12.058	12.391	.649	.795
NS5	11.949	12.516	.634	.799

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
CS's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.812				
CS1	17.826	19.064	.410	.811
CS2	18.493	17.113	.683	.763
CS3	18.435	17.240	.723	.758
CS4	18.580	16.946	.706	.759
CS5	17.739	19.785	.336	.822
CS6	18.362	16.612	.700	.758
CS7	18.783	19.850	.330	.823
IS's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.865				
IS1	20.551	20.132	.303	.891
IS2	20.297	17.159	.753	.830
IS3	20.362	17.255	.741	.832
IS4	20.841	19.945	.375	.879
IS5	20.225	17.022	.770	.828
IS6	20.181	16.514	.786	.824
IS7	20.370	16.935	.790	.825
ATT's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.821				
ATT1	9.746	5.928	.527	.825
ATT2	9.442	5.197	.676	.760
ATT3	9.551	4.965	.713	.742
ATT4	9.391	5.043	.665	.765
SN's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.787				
SN1	7.754	8.815	.360	.842
SN2	8.232	7.012	.703	.679
SN3	8.239	6.811	.676	.691
SN4	8.514	7.142	.664	.699

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PBC's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.763				
PBC1	9.812	5.906	.376	.809
PBC2	9.971	5.532	.560	.708
PBC3	10.007	5.029	.692	.637
PBC4	9.884	5.081	.652	.657
EJ's Cronbach's Alpha = 0.937				
EJ1	10.529	8.587	.872	.912
EJ2	10.543	8.746	.868	.913
EJ3	10.717	9.810	.818	.931
EJ4	10.645	8.654	.859	.916

Source: Author's survey data

The table above demonstrates that all measurement scales exhibit satisfactory reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.7. Specifically, the lowest Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.763 for PBC, while the highest is 0.937 for EJ. This indicates that the measurement scales possess good to excellent reliability, and therefore, there is no need to eliminate observed variables to improve the Cronbach's Alpha values of the factors. The table also shows that all Corrected Item-Total Correlation indices are above 0.3, with the lowest being 0.330 for the observed variable CS7, suggesting that all observed variables contribute to the factors. However, some observed variables, despite having Corrected Item-Total Correlation values above 0.3, are not excessively high (e.g., PBC1 at 0.376; SN1 at 0.360; IS1 at 0.303; IS4 at 0.375; CS7 at 0.330; CS5 at 0.336; CS1 at 0.410). The author will take note of these variables in the main study.

SUMMARY CHAPTER 2

In Chapter 2, the author thoroughly outlines the research methodology employed for this study, providing a clear framework for understanding how data was gathered and analyzed. The chapter begins by introducing the specific product sector chosen for the study, offering insights into the relevance and significance of this sector in the context of the research. Following this, the author delves into a detailed discussion of the research design, highlighting the decision to utilize a mixed-methods approach. The rationale for selecting this particular methodology is carefully explained, emphasizing its ability to capture both qualitative and quantitative data, which enhances the depth and comprehensiveness of the findings.

Next, the chapter breaks down the research into two distinct phases. The first phase focuses on the planning and preparation of the study, where the author explains the sampling procedures in depth, ensuring that the sample is representative of the target population. The second phase focuses on the actual data collection process, detailing the specific methods used to gather data from participants, such as surveys, interviews, or focus groups, depending on the study's requirements. The chapter also explores the data analysis techniques employed, explaining how the gathered data is processed and interpreted to draw meaningful conclusions. Throughout, the author emphasizes the importance of each methodological step in ensuring the validity and reliability of the study's outcomes. This thorough breakdown of the research methodology provides readers with a clear understanding of how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, the author focuses on presenting the research findings. In the first section, the author presents the qualitative research results, outlining the main themes: 1) Inconspicuous luxury consumption and a typology of inconspicuous luxury consumers; 2) Motivations driving inconspicuous luxury consumption. Based on the qualitative findings, the author adjusted the research model used in the survey to examine the factors influencing the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products. In the second section, the author presents the quantitative research results, which include the following steps: Description of the sample characteristics, descriptive statistics of the observed variables in the model, assessment of scales, and hypothesis testing.

3.1. Qualitative findings

3.1.1. *Inconspicuous luxury consumption and a typology of inconspicuous luxury consumers*

Inconspicuous luxury consumption is an emerging phenomenon
Subtle signals and an increasing number of Vietnamese luxury consumers are engaging in inconspicuous luxury consumption. A rising number of Vietnamese luxury consumers are engaging in inconspicuous luxury consumption. Within the luxury landscape, inconspicuous luxury consumers are ‘insiders’ who prefer sophisticated, unique, and subtle luxury brands (Berger & Ward, 2010). Similarly, our informants generally expressed their preferences for fashion clothing and accessories with subtle or low-key signals. They also demonstrated a strong belief in the uniqueness of the luxury products that are less visible to the mainstream, and they felt proud of this differentiation. Some respondents emphasized that their luxury items were only recognized by a small, sophisticated circle of fashion-savvy individuals. For instance, a 32-year-old female informant mentioned that the majority of people were unaware of the brand of her Chloe handbag, and only those with expertise in luxury fashion could recognize such subtle signals—something she took pride in.

In my opinion, more people are starting to realize that excessive boasting or showing off isn't a good look, so they're becoming less inclined to flaunt their luxury goods, even though they still use them. Honestly, what's the point of showing off luxury items? There are plenty of people out there who are wealthier than you. I still like luxury brands, but I prefer not to flaunt them because it can come off as a bit 'nouveau riche.' Though, there are still many people who haven't discovered these sophisticated, understated luxury brands that don't prominently display their logos (Female, 41).

This emergent theme is consistent with suggestions that there would be a shift from conspicuous to inconspicuous luxury consumption in developing countries when they become wealthier (Eckhardt et al., 2015). Our informants described the growing transition to consuming inconspicuous luxury items in Vietnam. Flaunting wealth to the public is no longer the case for many luxury consumers. The following comment illustrates this point:

Wealthy people often use their things very quietly. At first glance, their items may look very simple, but all the items are famous branded goods. In Vietnam, many [rich] people consume that way [using invisible luxury products]. It's just that they are secretive, so only some know their wealth. The consumption way of very wealthy people is not like others because they don't need to show off anymore. (Male, 35)

Typology of inconspicuous luxury consumers. The data suggests three groups of Vietnamese inconspicuous luxury consumers. These groups are classified based on the levels of inconspicuous luxury product involvement, which indicates the relevance of the product to inherent needs, values, and interests as perceived by consumers.

The first group could be labeled 'Inconspicuous luxury devotees,' which includes consumers who have their first luxury consumption experience with inconspicuous luxury goods and continue engaging with the subtle luxuries for various reasons. The following is a typical comment:

All the [fashion] items I use, like this Saint Laurent Tote bag, are those without logos [not easy to recognize the brand] [. . .]. The first item I used was already like that. It's a black handbag from D&G. I wouldn't say I like products that others, like the Burberry check pattern, can immediately notice. It looks so rustic [unsophisticated] [. . .]. Look at this bag (Saint Laurent Tote Bag), isn't it so elegant? I absolutely adore its refined beauty. (Proud look in the eyes.) Those bags with oversized logos, they just come off as so 'nouveau riche' (meaning wealthy but lacking sophistication and refinement). (Female, 31)

The next group of inconspicuous luxury consumers is labeled 'Transitional consumers.' This group experienced conspicuous consumption before enjoying inconspicuous luxuries. Our informants suggest that these consumers have long-time experience in luxury consumption, and their first luxury consumption experiences are with conspicuous items as a way to convey their status (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004). Because of the rise of counterfeit luxury products in the market (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2017), consumers may decouple from conspicuous luxury goods in favor of invisible ones:

Previously, consumers 'played' [consumed] luxury items; they frequently started with popular items [with conspicuous signals]. However, fake products are everywhere in Vietnam [items with famous trademarks are prominently displayed]. People are perplexed because gold and brass are together [...]. As a result, they have progressively moved to purchase inconspicuous items [fewer counterfeit products in the market]. (Female, 43)

Our final group of inconspicuous luxury consumers, labeled 'Situational consumers', includes those who consume both conspicuous and inconspicuous products. Our informants reported that they are flexible in luxury choices depending on their preferences and purposes. A 32-year-old female participant illustrated a flexible approach to luxury consumption, indicating that her purchase decisions were guided primarily by aesthetic appeal and situational appropriateness rather than by the presence or absence of logos. She explained that elegant and sophisticated items were chosen to boost her confidence in formal settings such as business meetings. In contrast, more vibrant and logo-bearing accessories were selectively purchased to complement specific outfits, particularly colorful dresses. Another informant illustrates her opinion as the below quote:

I personally prefer understated luxury [quiet luxury]. However, not everyone is familiar with this type of product. If my business partners have a more ostentatious taste, then I'd have to show off a bit as well [referring to using more recognizable luxury items]. But if they are knowledgeable and sophisticated, and they don't like people who flaunt their wealth, I will wear luxury products. They'll recognize it instantly, and their reaction will be a 'wow' [laughs with delight]. (Female, 42).

3.1.2. Motivations driving inconspicuous luxury consumption

Status seeking. Through our interviews, status-seeking has emerged as a salient motivation when consumers engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption. Many informants expressed their opinions that inconspicuous luxury products can uniquely convey the owner's status. Instead of ostentatiously displaying wealth, they feel proud of their high cultural capital in the luxury fashion domain, which can be recognized by important 'insiders'. They want to be a part of a more delicate and 'in the know' consumer class considered to possess a higher degree of taste and sophistication.

When I wear it [inconspicuous luxury bag], I want others to know what I'm wearing. It's pointless if I spent hundreds of millions dong on buying this bag, and only I know it... We have our communities [luxury consumers]. And I want to show my

connoisseurship, taste, and sophistication to them [insiders], but not to the masses. Because everyone [insiders] can afford it, displaying the wealth [bag with conspicuous signal] seems ridiculous. (Female, 40)

Aesthetics and functional seeking. Similar to Chinese luxury consumers (Wu et al., 2017), several of our informants expressed their strong preference for the aesthetics and function of inconspicuous luxury products. They contrasted some luxury products (conspicuous and inconspicuous) to explain their inconspicuous luxury choices.

Many prominent luxury items appear too rustic. Let's think about a pair of LV shoes with too many logo details or a Burberry T-shirt with the check pattern. They look cheap. Please look at a Dior shirt [Dior Shirt with bee embroidery]. It looks exquisite and sophisticated [this shirt is constructed with a point collar, hidden button placket, rounded hemline, and Dior's signature stitching]. I love the elegance! (Male, 32)

Differentiation seeking. Past research has pointed out that inconspicuous luxury consumers desire to differentiate themselves from the mainstream, such as the *nouveaux riches*, counterfeit consumers, luxury renters, and the poor (Wu et al., 2017). Our informants expressed similar opinions that consuming luxury goods with subtle signals can help distinguish themselves from the *nouveaux riches*, who presumed to have less knowledge of luxury brands and unquestioningly imitate the behaviors of the upper class. They also want to differentiate themselves from consumers who consume knock-offs and counterfeits. They stated:

...When my friends visit Paris, the first stop would be at Goyard's store. What messages do they want to convey when using a Goyard bag? Of course, it's the differentiation. The reason is that it is relatively easy for luxury consumers to own a Chanel handbag [with conspicuous signals]. Still, Goyard is different. It is a subtle brand symbolizing luxury and sophistication. Only some luxury consumers can understand Goyard's legacy and have a chance to own a Goyard bag. (Male, 40)

You know, counterfeits with famous brands such as LV or Chanel are available in the market [with visible signals]. If you want an LV handbag, 90% of your surroundings can have it, both authentic and fake. You won't be happy seeing someone carrying the same bag as yours, especially if it's a fake, right? Luxury connoisseurs prefer something other than LV's prominent products because there are too many counterfeits in the market. (Female, 29)

Ethical motivations. Besides the above common motivations, ethical considerations emerged as an interesting theme when exploring motivational factors

driving inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam. Through the lens of the Hunt-Vitell model, these ethical considerations are reflected in the ethical decision-making process. Consuming inconspicuous products is considered the most ethical alternative to luxury consumption (see the figure below for a conceptual framework).

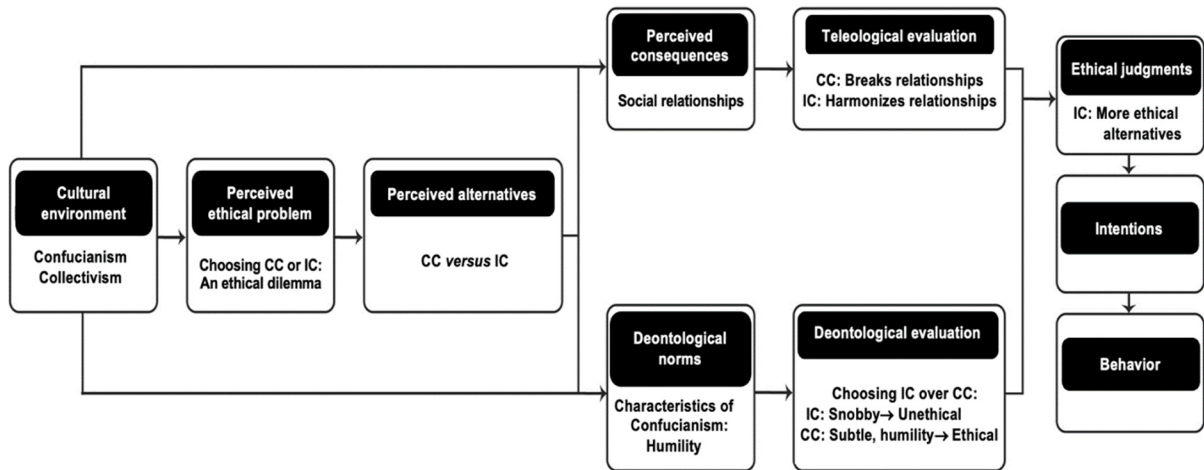


Figure 3.1: The process of ethical reasoning toward inconspicuous luxury consumption based on the Hunt-Vitell model.

Perceived ethical problems and alternatives. From the ethical perspective, we found that some luxury consumers faced a moral dilemma when choosing luxury products. Some informants strongly expressed the idea that the flaunting of a materialistic orientation is widely considered tasteless and morally objectionable, especially in economic crises. This is reflected in the following quote.

Agreeing that using luxury items is really enjoyable, but it's also better to be discreet, not too showy.....After the COVID-19 pandemic, while many people have to cope with economic difficulties and many are unemployed, showing off wealth ostentatiously seems unacceptable. In life, we should look around should know how our neighbors live. Should you dress flamboyantly to flaunt if your surroundings are in difficulties? Some people appear to be ridiculously extravagant. How offensive they are! (Female, 39)

Deontological evaluation. In the process of deontological evaluation, luxury consumers evaluate the wrongness and rightness of conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption implied by each alternative. Many informants expressed that with the dominance of Confucian characteristics such as thriftiness and humility, consuming luxury products with explicit signals is snobby and contradicts the virtue of humility.

Therefore, for them, consuming conspicuous products may violate moral norms, which are operated by Confucian values. In contrast, consuming subtle luxury products may help consumers eliminate the snobbery and possible guilty feelings associated with conspicuous consumption while following moral norms such as humility.

I find flaunting wealth very grotesque despite having to use it occasionally due to the circumstances. However, I do not feel comfortable either. I agree that if I have economic conditions, I can use luxury goods, but there are many wealthier people. If people don't show off, why should I brag? Hence, I often consume quiet luxury products. It is a better [choice] for me. (Female, 48)

Teleological evaluation. Confucianism's 'golden rule' guides individuals in considering the consequences of behavioral decisions related to harmony in their relationships with others in society. Hence, our informants suggested that in the process of teleological evaluation, luxury consumers evaluate the goodness or badness of consequences of conspicuous and inconspicuous consumption regarding their social relationships. Flaunting one's wealth through conspicuous consumption may break up some relationships. Meanwhile, consuming luxury products with subtle signals may help consumers to be less recognizable by mainstream observers. It also allows them to narrow (or at least hide) the wealth gap in relationships and enables them to communicate more seamlessly with other people irrespective of socioeconomic status. This helps avoid socially uncomfortable situations. Specifically, some informants strongly suggested that consuming inconspicuous products in certain situations is more ethical in the way that it builds better social relationships and facilitates harmony between different groups with different income levels (e.g., classmates or business partners). The following quotes illustrate this point.

...I think people [luxury consumers] need to pay close attention when using [luxury] branded goods. Understanding how to wear appropriate [luxury] items in different situations is a must. When I work with sophisticated and classy business partners, I often wear expensive but elegant [subtle] stuff to show my respect to them. Certainly, I believe they can recognize it [subtle luxury items]. In this case, being overly conspicuous in your wearing seems ludicrous. In general, we must know the norms and how to behave appropriately in different situations. (Female, 47)

...My friend is wealthy, but she is also very thoughtful and delicate. She always wears exquisite handbags in the yearly college class meetings with invisible signals. Although the bags look simple, I [insider] can recognize them immediately. The prices of these bags are at the premium level. Some classmates are wealthy, but some are still

living a difficult life. I think my friend's behavior [wearing invisible luxury bags] is right and smart. Friends get together and have fun with each other without thinking about the wealth distance. We always have a good time! (Female, 45)

After executing two kinds of evaluations, of which teleology seemed to be more emphasized, many informants came to the judgment that inconspicuous consumption is the most ethical alternative to luxury consumption. Consequently, an increasing number of luxury consumers intended to choose inconspicuous products instead of conspicuous counterparts and engage more in inconspicuous luxury consumption. It is noteworthy to emphasize the important role of culture in this ethical reasoning process, as indicated by Hunt and Vitell (2016).

Although our sample does not allow for demographic generalization, we suggest an indicative trend related to differentiation in age. The various ages of informants led to different motivations driving inconspicuous consumption (Wu et al., 2017). In our study, younger consumers (aged 20-35) tend to seek differentiation and aesthetics, while older consumers (over 35) are more concerned with status, aesthetics, and ethical issues.

The content above presents the research findings from the qualitative phase. These findings serve as the basis for the author to adjust the quantitative research model, which is presented in the following section.

3.1.3. Adjusted theoretical framework

3.1.3.1. Ethical judgments and inconspicuous luxury consumption

The qualitative research findings reveal that ethical considerations emerged as one of the primary motivations driving inconspicuous luxury consumption. Based on the literature review, the author identifies ethical judgments as a construct that represents the ethical considerations of consumers, making it an appropriate inclusion in the proposed research model. Indeed:

Trevino (1986), based on Kohlberg (1969) research, indicated that an individual's ethical judgment originates from their ethical predisposition. Accordingly, an individual's 'right-wrong' assessment depends on what they consider the foundation (e.g., personal rewards or punishments, societal or family expectations, 'universal values or principles') for their ethical evaluations (Trevino, 1986).

From a more specific perspective, when discussing the concept of ethical judgment, Hunt and Vitell (1986) highlighted that an individual's ethical predisposition influences ethical evaluation. According to Hunt and Vitell (1986), an

individual has two primary ethical orientations: deontological and teleological. Therefore, the way an individual assesses the morality of a behavior—whether based on the behavior itself or its intent—depends on whether they lean toward a deontological or teleological ethical orientation (Hunt and Vitell, 1986). Sharing this view, Forsyth (1980) also noted that absolutists evaluate the morality of behavior based on whether it aligns with universal ethical principles, while relativists reject universal principles when making ethical judgments (Forsyth, 1980). Furthermore, Hunt and Vitell acknowledge that every individual embodies both deontological and teleological tendencies. As a result, individuals rely on both external manifestations and internal intent when evaluating the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of behavior in general (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Therefore, whether a behavior is deemed ethical depends on whether the individual's ethical orientation leans more toward relativism or absolutism (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Thus, a person's general ethical predisposition can be recognized by how they evaluate the ethicality of behaviors in general or even a specific behavior.

Indeed, Vitell et al. (2015) assert that how an individual assesses whether a behavior is ethical reflects their ethical predisposition. According to them, ‘*If consumers believe that these potential actions are wrong, one might state that they have an ethical consumer predisposition...*’. Additionally, Yang et al. (2017) affirm that ethical judgment represents an individual's belief about whether a particular behavior is good or bad. In other words, an individual's ethical predisposition is evident through their evaluation of behaviors in general, or even a specific behavior (Vitell et al., 2015). Supporting this view, Chan et al. (2008) also found that the ethical predispositions of Chinese consumers were demonstrated through their assessment of a specific behavior.

Based on these arguments and the concept and analyses of Hunt-Vitell, the author defines *ethical judgment as the expression of an individual's ethical predisposition through their overall evaluation of behaviors in general, or even a specific behavior, as good or bad, based on both the external manifestation and internal intent of that behavior*. This is the concept of ethical judgment employed in this dissertation. In the context of luxury consumption, when people choose to consume quiet luxury products instead of conspicuous ones, they link the consequences of humility and empathy with their luxury choices.

The existing literature suggests that the terms ‘moral judgments’ and ‘ethical judgments’ are deemed synonymous. For example, conforming to numerous prior

investigations on ethical decision-making, Haines and Leonard (2007) propose the interchangeable use of the terms ‘moral’ and ‘ethical.’ This practice aligns with the terminology outlined by the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, where ‘ethics’ is illustrated as the philosophical exploration of morality. The dictionary also highlights the widespread interchangeable application of ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ to signify the subject matter addressed in this study (1995, p. 244).

According to Hunt and Vitell (1986), ethical judgments impact intentions and, subsequently, behavior. As mentioned above, in this study, ethical judgments are understood as the expression of an individual's ethical predisposition through their overall assessment of behaviors in general, or even a specific behavior, as good or bad based on the external manifestation and internal intent of that behavior. Numerous studies have shown that a consumer's ethical predisposition influences behavior related to ethical considerations (e.g., Valentine & Rittenburg, 2004; Chan et al., 2008). Within the luxury literature, there is a consensus that conspicuous consumption is perceived as ‘harmful and morally questionable’ (Goenka & Thomas, 2020). Consequently, individuals with strong moral convictions tend to avoid conspicuous consumption, as it is perceived to have detrimental effects on both themselves and society. Conversely, some consumers believe that engaging in inconspicuous consumption allows them to mitigate the consequences of social inequity, viewing subtle signals as less conspicuous to external observers. Inconspicuous consumers deliberately avoid items with overt brand identifiers due to a dislike of extravagant status symbols or a sense of guilt associated with ostentation. Hence, individuals with high ethical predispositions are likely to purchase quiet luxury products.

Additionally, previous studies suggest that the impact of ethical judgments on behavioral intention in different contexts is inconsistent (Yang et al., 2017). According to Hunt and Vitell (2006), when behavior and intentions are inconsistent with ethical judgments, feelings of guilt arise. Therefore, in the context of quiet luxury consumption, the author examines the role of ethical judgments on the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

Hypothesis 6: Ethical judgments positively influence purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products

3.1.3.2. Self-concepts and ethical judgments

Another topic proposed in this study is how self-concepts influence ethical-related issues within the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption. According to Hunt

and Vitell (1986), the Hunt-Vitell model posits various personal characteristics (e.g., value systems) as precursors to an individual's ethical decision-making process. However, to the author's limited knowledge, there is still a lack of empirical evidence demonstrating the relationship between personal characteristics and moral decision-making. Additionally, the research findings of Nguyen et al. (2023) suggest that self-concepts influence the ethical decision-making of Vietnamese luxury consumers. This discussion highlights a research gap concerning how self-concepts (individualistic self and collectivistic self) impact ethical judgments) in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption

Within this investigation, self-concepts emerge as an individual characteristic that influences ethical decision-making. Previous research contends that individuals with well-developed individualistic selves consider themselves by referencing their skills, traits, objectives, or qualities instead of relying on others' ideas, emotions, or behaviors. Conversely, individuals with highly collectivistic selves think about themselves or others, perceiving a strong interconnection between them and others (Singelis, 1994).

In the context of luxury consumption, even as a growing number of consumers express caution in purchasing luxury items that may showcase affluence during economic downturns and widespread unemployment, some still seek extrinsic luxury (Riad, 2011). Consequently, consumers seek alternative forms of luxury consumption that provide a rationale for their expenditures, helping them avoid feelings of guilt associated with their purchases (Davies et al., 2012). Certain individuals believe that inconspicuous consumption allows them to evade the consequences of social inequity and fosters a diminished sense of empathy for society, as subtle signals are less conspicuous to external observers (Berger & Ward, 2010). Ting (2018) proposes that social pressure from family, friends, or significant individuals significantly influences Malaysian consumers to opt for subtle luxury fashion items.

Hypothesis 7a: Individualistic self negatively influences ethical judgments

Hypothesis 7b: Collectivistic self positively influences ethical judgments

3.1.3.3. Final theoretical framework

After adjustments, the author proposes the final quantitative model as shown below. This model is used to support the quantitative research in the second phase.

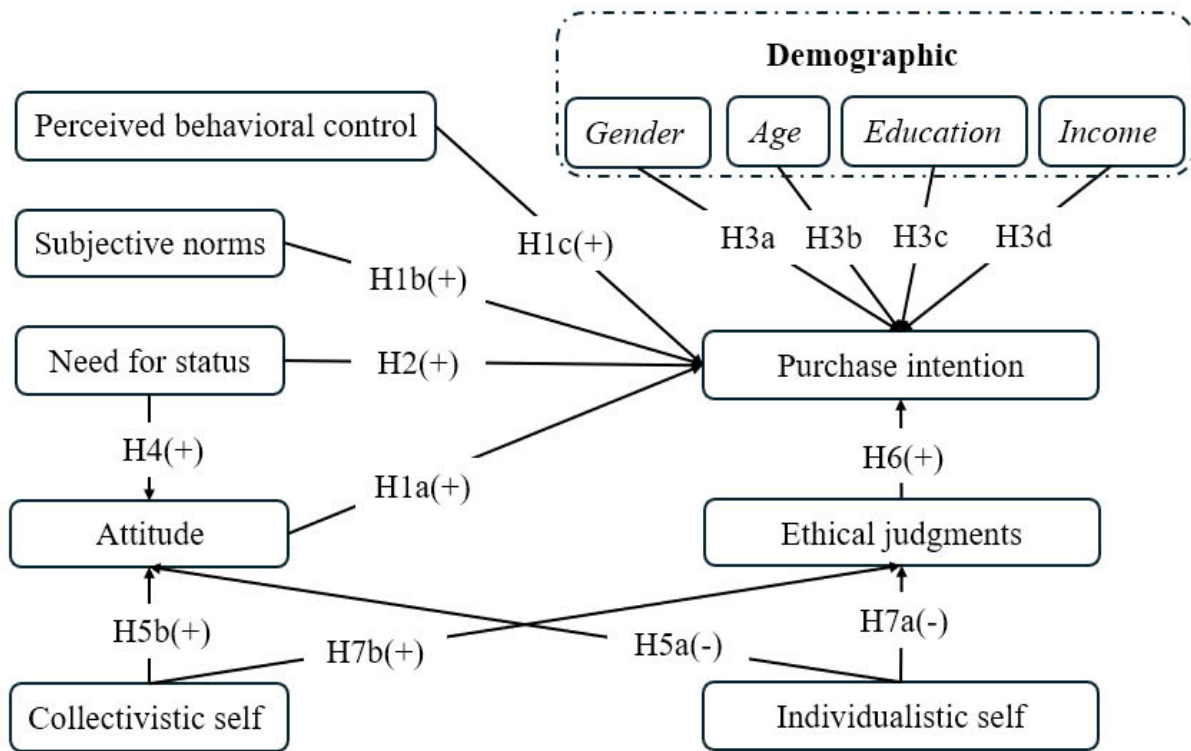


Figure 3.1: Adjusted theoretical framework

Source: Author

3.2. Survey results

3.2.1. Sample characteristics

The respondents included 141 men (43%) and 187 women (57%). In terms of age, the youngest participant was 25, and the oldest was 53. Among them, those aged 25-29 accounted for 27.4%, those aged 30-44 accounted for 65.5%, and those aged 45-53 accounted for 7%. Regarding educational background, there are 170 respondents with a bachelor's degree, representing 51.8% of the sample. Additionally, 101 respondents hold a master's degree (with the possibility of being enrolled in doctoral studies or employed), accounting for 30.8%. Finally, 57 respondents have a doctoral degree, comprising 17.4% of the total. In terms of income, 4.9% of participants had an income of 10 to under 15 million VND, 10.1% had an income of 15 to under 20 million VND, 40.2% had an income of 20 to under 30 million VND, 29.9% had an income of 30 to under 40 million VND, and 14.9% had an income of 40 million VND or more. The number of respondents from Hanoi accounted for 73.7%, while those from Ho Chi Minh City represented 26.3%. The profile of the respondents is described in the table below.

Table 3.1: Profile of respondents (Study 2)

	Items	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender		328	100.0%
	Male	141	43.0%
	Female	187	57.0%
Age		328	100.0%
	25-29	90	27.4%
	30-44	215	65.5%
	45-53	23	7.0%
Education		328	100.0%
	Have (a) bachelor(s) degree	170	51.8%
	Master's degree graduate	101	30.8%
	Doctoral degree graduate	57	17.4%
Income		328	100.0%
	Under 10 million VND	0	0.0%
	From 10 million VND to under 15 million VND	16	4.9%
	From 15 million VND to under 20 million VND	33	10.1%
	From 20 million VND to under 30 million VND	132	40.2%
	From 30 million VND to under 40 million	98	29.9%
	40 million VND and above	49	14.9%
Location		328	100.0%
	Hanoi	242	73.7%
	Hochiminh	86	26.3%

Source: Author's survey data

3.2.2. Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the factors in the model

Purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products* used to assess the current state of INT are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents ‘*Strongly disagree*,’ 3 represents ‘*Neutral*,’ and 5 represents ‘*Strongly agree*.’ Thus, while some individuals support and intend to make inconspicuous purchases, there are still individuals who do not intend to engage in this behavior. This is also reflected in the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables, ranging from 3.366 to 3.448. This result indicates that the intention to purchase inconspicuous consumer goods among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.2: Descriptive statistics of Purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
INT1	328	1.0	5.0	3.448	1.0154	-.317	.135	-.259	.268
INT2	328	1.0	5.0	3.421	.9767	-.192	.135	-.419	.268
INT3	328	1.0	5.0	3.366	1.0552	-.287	.135	-.269	.268
INT4	328	1.0	5.0	3.390	1.0752	-.352	.135	-.379	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author’s survey data

Need for status

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Need for status* used to assess the current state of NS are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair

et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents ‘*Strongly disagree*,’ 3 represents ‘*Neutral*,’ and 5 represents ‘*Strongly agree*.’ Thus, while some individuals are high in need for status, some other individuals are low in need for status. This is also reflected in the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables, ranging from 2.677 to 3.564. This result indicates that the need for status among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.3: Descriptive statistics of Need for status

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
NS1	328	1.0	5.0	3.564	.9995	-.520	.135	-.110	.268
NS2	328	1.0	5.0	3.341	1.0576	-.140	.135	-.665	.268
NS3	328	1.0	5.0	2.677	1.1303	.405	.135	-.599	.268
NS4	328	1.0	5.0	3.165	1.0153	-.035	.135	-.429	.268
NS5	328	1.0	5.0	3.149	1.0222	.112	.135	-.381	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author’s survey data

Collectivistic self

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Collectivistic self* used to assess the current state of CS are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents ‘*Strongly disagree*,’ 3 represents ‘*Neutral*,’ and 5 represents ‘*Strongly agree*.’ Thus, while some individuals are high collectivistic self, some other individuals are low. This is also reflected in the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables, ranging from 2.741 to 3.585. This result indicates that the collectivistic self-perception among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.4: Descriptive statistics of Collectivistic self

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CS1	328	1.0	5.0	3.518	1.0285	-.525	.135	.038	.268
CS2	328	1.0	5.0	2.945	.9784	-.126	.135	-.377	.268
CS3	328	1.0	5.0	3.024	.9016	-.023	.135	-.135	.268
CS4	328	1.0	5.0	2.884	.9540	-.064	.135	-.299	.268
CS5	328	1.0	5.0	3.585	.9667	-.560	.135	.240	.268
CS6	328	1.0	5.0	3.058	.9952	-.060	.135	-.364	.268
CS7	328	1.0	5.0	2.741	1.0211	.173	.135	-.455	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author's survey data

Individualistic self

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Individualistic self* used to assess the current state of IS are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents '*Strongly disagree*,' 3 represents '*Neutral*,' and 5 represents '*Strongly agree*.' Thus, while some individuals are high individualistic self, some other individuals are low. This is also reflected in the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables, ranging from 2.927 to 3.607. This result indicates that the individualistic self-perception among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.5: Descriptive statistics of Individualistic self

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
IS1	328	1.0	5.0	3.223	.9332	-.094	.135	-.277	.268
IS2	328	1.0	5.0	3.442	.9068	-.297	.135	.125	.268

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
IS3	328	1.0	5.0	3.399	.9098	-.262	.135	.037	.268
IS4	328	1.0	5.0	2.927	.8783	-.048	.135	.065	.268
IS5	328	1.0	5.0	3.573	.9158	-.542	.135	.410	.268
IS6	328	1.0	5.0	3.607	.9422	-.554	.135	.273	.268
IS7	328	1.0	5.0	3.402	.8689	-.232	.135	.246	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author's survey data

Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases* used to assess the current state of ATT are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents '*Strongly disagree*,' 3 represents '*Neutral*,' and 5 represents '*Strongly agree*.' Thus, while some individuals are good attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases, some other individuals think inconspicuous luxury purchases are not good. This is also reflected in the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables, ranging from 3.091 to 3.317. This result indicates that the Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.6: Descriptive statistics of Attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ATT1	328	1.0	5.0	3.091	.8113	.039	.135	.514	.268

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ATT2	328	1.0	5.0	3.317	.8550	-.245	.135	.445	.268
ATT3	328	1.0	5.0	3.183	.8621	-.189	.135	.455	.268
ATT4	328	1.0	5.0	3.296	.8784	-.206	.135	.340	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author's survey data

Subjective norms

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Subjective norms* used to assess the current state of SN are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents '*Strongly disagree*,' 3 represents '*Neutral*,' and 5 represents '*Strongly agree*.' Thus, while some individuals think social norms are important, some other individuals do not think that. This is also reflected that the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables, ranging from 2.899 to 3.579. This result indicates that the subjective norms among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.7: Descriptive statistics of Subjective norms

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
SN1	328	1.0	5.0	2.899	.9732	.123	.135	-.204	.268
SN2	328	1.0	5.0	3.293	1.0315	-.005	.135	-.637	.268
SN3	328	1.0	5.0	3.375	1.0678	-.080	.135	-.753	.268
SN4	328	1.0	5.0	3.579	1.0550	-.273	.135	-.720	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author's survey data

Perceived behavioral control

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Perceived behavioral control* used to assess the current state of PBC are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents ‘*Strongly disagree*,’ 3 represents ‘*Neutral*,’ and 5 represents ‘*Strongly agree*.’ Thus, while some individuals think social norms are important, some other individuals do not think that. This is also reflected that the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables, ranging from 3.229 to 3.323. This result indicates that the perceived behavioral control among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.8: Descriptive statistics of Perceived behavioral controls

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
PBC1	328	1.0	5.0	3.323	.9826	-.335	.135	-.081	.268
PBC2	328	1.0	5.0	3.244	.8994	-.221	.135	.112	.268
PBC3	328	1.0	5.0	3.229	.8776	-.272	.135	.457	.268
PBC4	328	1.0	5.0	3.277	.9083	-.281	.135	.288	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author’s survey data

Ethical judgments

Descriptive statistics of the observed variables of the *Ethical judgments* used to assess the current state of EJ are shown in the table below. The results indicate that the absolute values of Skewness and Kurtosis are all less than 2, suggesting that the observed variables follow a normal distribution and can be included in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014, p.66). The observed variables of the intention scale have response values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents ‘*Strongly disagree*,’ 3 represents ‘*Neutral*,’ and 5 represents ‘*Strongly agree*.’ The table reflects the relatively similar mean values of these observed variables,

ranging from 3.466 to 3.692. This result indicates that the ethical judgments among the surveyed group is not particularly strong, but rather at an average level.

Table 3.9: Descriptive statistics of Ethical judgments

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
EJ1	328	1.0	5.0	3.692	1.0433	-.284	.135	-.775	.268
EJ2	328	1.0	5.0	3.659	.9795	-.391	.135	-.264	.268
EJ3	328	1.0	5.0	3.466	.8702	-.051	.135	-.028	.268
EJ4	328	1.0	5.0	3.570	.9774	-.238	.135	-.285	.268
Valid N (listwise)	328								

Source: Author's survey data

3.2.3. Scale assessments

3.2.3.1. Validity by EFA and Reliability by Cronbach's Alpha

This section outlines the researcher's approach to exploratory factor analysis and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha. The process begins with exploratory factor analysis, which examines all factors simultaneously. Unlike Cronbach's Alpha, which is typically calculated for each scale and factor independently, exploratory factor analysis considers how observed variables relate to each other across different factors. As a result, some observed variables may align differently with factors than expected, prompting potential modifications to the scale items. If these adjustments are justifiable, Cronbach's Alpha should then be recalculated based on the revised scales incorporating these new observed variables. Therefore, initiating exploratory factor analysis prior to conducting reliability tests with Cronbach's Alpha helps to minimize unnecessary recalculations.

Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha

Based on the results of the exploratory factor analysis above, the scales were tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The results are presented in the following table 3.13:

Table 3.13: Cronbach Alpha

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of INT = 0.891</i>				
INT1	10.177	7.534	.763	.858
INT2	10.204	7.637	.783	.852
INT3	10.259	7.324	.767	.857
INT4	10.235	7.391	.730	.871
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of NS = 0.823</i>				
NS1	12.332	11.116	.583	.797
NS2	12.555	10.211	.691	.765
NS3	13.220	10.869	.517	.819
NS4	12.732	10.686	.645	.779
NS5	12.747	10.593	.656	.776
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of CS = 0.877</i>				
CS2	8.966	6.240	.720	.848
CS3	8.887	6.577	.719	.848
CS4	9.027	6.247	.747	.837
CS6	8.854	6.040	.754	.834
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of IS = 0.923</i>				
IS2	10.018	10.397	.782	.909
IS3	9.976	10.397	.778	.910
IS5	10.149	10.244	.803	.905
IS6	10.183	10.132	.796	.906
IS7	9.979	10.339	.841	.898
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of ATT = 0.890</i>				
ATT1	9.796	5.343	.726	.870
ATT2	9.570	5.029	.773	.852
ATT3	9.704	4.961	.786	.847
ATT4	9.591	5.019	.745	.863
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of SN = 0.850</i>				

Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of INT = 0.891</i>				
SN2	6.954	3.805	.694	.816
SN3	6.872	3.543	.741	.771
SN4	6.668	3.629	.726	.785
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of PBC = 0.826</i>				
PBC2	6.506	2.624	.658	.784
PBC3	6.521	2.526	.737	.706
PBC4	6.473	2.605	.655	.788
<i>Cronbach's Alpha of EJ = 0.925</i>				
EJ1	10.695	6.653	.841	.898
EJ2	10.729	6.926	.850	.893
EJ3	10.921	7.657	.800	.912
EJ4	10.817	7.061	.819	.904

Source: Author's survey data

The reliability test results in the table above show that all scales have good reliability, with the lowest Cronbach's Alpha value being 0.823 for the NS factor, and the highest being 0.925 for the EJ factor. The Corrected Item-Total Correlation values are all greater than 0.3, with the lowest being 0.517 for the NS3 observed variable and the highest being 0.850 for the EJ2 observed variable. Therefore, all observed variables have good correlations with the total score, and none of the observed variables need to be removed. The Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted values are all lower than the corresponding Cronbach's Alpha values, indicating that no observed variables need to be removed to improve the reliability of the scale. The detailed Cronbach alpha is presented in Appendix 6.

Additionally, the corresponding observed variables have converged well on the factors and meet the criteria for performing subsequent tests, including:

The first variable is 'Individualistic self' (denoted as IS), consisting of 05 observed variables: IS2, IS3, IS5, IS6, and IS7. The lowest factor loading is for the observed variable IS3 at 0.786, and the highest is for the observed variable IS7 at 0.966.

The second variable is 'Ethical judgments' (denoted as EJ), comprising 04 observed variables: EJ1, EJ2, EJ3, and EJ4. The lowest factor loading is for the observed variable EJ3 at 0.780, and the highest is for the observed variable EJ2 at 0.948.

The third variable is 'Attitude towards inconspicuous luxury purchase' (denoted as ATT), consisting of 04 observed variables: ATT1, ATT2, ATT3, and ATT4. The lowest factor loading is for the observed variable ATT2 at 0.774, and the highest is for the observed variable ATT3 at 0.865.

The fourth variable is the 'Collectivistic self' (denoted as CS), which includes 04 observed variables: CS2, CS3, CS4, and CS6. The lowest factor loading is for the observed variable CS1, at 0.759, and the highest is for the observed variable CS6, at 0.878.

The fifth variable is 'Need for status' (denoted as NS), comprising 05 observed variables: NS1, NS2, NS3, NS4, and NS5. The lowest factor loading is for the observed variable NS3 at 0.628, and the highest is for the observed variable NS5 at 0.776.

The sixth variable is 'Purchase intention towards inconspicuous luxury products' (denoted as INT), consisting of four observed variables from INT1 to INT4. The lowest factor loading is for the observed variable INT4, at 0.753, and the highest is for the observed variable INT1, at 0.846.

The seventh variable is 'Subjective norms' (denoted as SN), which includes three observed variables: SN2, SN3, and SN4. The observed variable SN2 has the lowest factor loading, at 0.778, while the observed variable SN3 has the highest loading.

The final factor is 'Perceived behavioral control' (denoted as PBC), comprising 03 observed variables: PBC2, PBC3, and PBC4. The lowest factor loading is for the observed variable PBC4 at 0.682, and the highest is for the observed variable PBC3 at 0.870.

Validity testing using Exploratory factor analysis

To perform exploratory factor analysis, a Promax oblique rotation was applied with Principal Axis Factoring, which is an approach that provides better factor analysis compared to orthogonal rotations like Varimax (Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, an Absolute value below 0.2 was chosen to ensure that any loading coefficient of the observed variables onto any factor greater than 0.2 is thoroughly considered. The initial results indicated that some observed variables needed to be removed from the scale due to low factor loadings or simultaneous loading onto multiple factors without any prominent factor (see Appendix 4). The excluded observed variables include: CS1: This variable loaded simultaneously onto two factors with factor loadings of -0.371 and 0.308, respectively; CS5: This variable loaded simultaneously onto two factors with factor loadings of -0.368 and 0.342, respectively; CS7: This variable loaded simultaneously onto two factors with factor loadings of 0.345 and -0.233, respectively; IS1: This variable had an exceedingly low factor loading of 0.272, which is below the acceptable threshold of 0.3; IS4: This variable loaded onto three factors simultaneously, with factor loadings of 0.298, 0.304, and -0.205,

respectively; SN1: This variable loaded simultaneously onto two factors with factor loadings of .280 and -.318, respectively; PBC1: This variable loaded simultaneously onto two factors with factor loadings of 0.301 and 0.380, respectively. These are also the observed variables that have been noted during the pilot test phase.

After consideration, the author decided to remove several observed variables. The results of the exploratory factor analysis (see Appendix 5) after removing these variables are as follows:

Table 3.14: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.886
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6827.938
	df	496
	Sig.	.000

Source: Author's survey data

The KMO index = .886 > 0.5 indicates that factor analysis is appropriate. Bartlett's Test Sig = .000 < 0.05 shows that the observed variables within the factors are correlated with each other.

Table 3.15: Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	8.994	28.107	28.107	8.685	27.142	27.142	5.533
2	3.859	12.059	40.166	3.516	10.986	38.128	4.840
3	3.246	10.144	50.310	2.899	9.060	47.188	5.890
4	2.192	6.851	57.162	1.933	6.039	53.227	4.551
5	1.880	5.874	63.036	1.534	4.793	58.020	3.261
6	1.616	5.049	68.085	1.281	4.002	62.022	5.901
7	1.258	3.930	72.016	.930	2.905	64.927	2.731
8	1.057	3.304	75.320	.714	2.230	67.156	5.346
9	.641	2.003	77.323				
...				
32	.148	.462	100.000				

Source: Author's survey data

The table above shows that, with Eigenvalues greater than 1, the survey data extracts eight factors, corresponding to an Extraction Sum of Squared Loadings of 67.156, which is greater than 50%.

Table 3.16: Pattern Matrix

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INT1						.846		
INT2						.804		
INT3						.836		
INT4						.753		
NS1					.647		.234	
NS2					.740			
NS3	.212				.628		-.276	
NS4					.713			
NS5					.776			
CS2				.759				
CS3				.761				
CS4				.795				
CS6				.878				
IS2	.813							
IS3	.786							
IS5	.819							
IS6	.824							
IS7	.966							
ATT1			.779					
ATT2			.774					
ATT3			.865					
ATT4			.791					
SN2							.778	

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
SN3							.853	
SN4							.783	
PBC2								.750
PBC3								.870
PBC4								.682
EJ1		.908						
EJ2		.948						
EJ3		.780						
EJ4		.830						

Source: Author's survey data

The results in the table above indicate that the observed variables converge on the factors along with the corresponding observed variables, with the factor loadings of these variables all greater than 0.5. There are two observed variables, NS1 and NS3, that load onto more than one factor simultaneously. However, the factor loadings of these two variables on the other factors are much smaller compared to the main factor, specifically 0.234 and 0.647 for NS1, -0.276, 0.212, and 0.628 for NS3. After consideration, the researcher decided to retain these two observed variables and will take note of them in subsequent tests.

3.2.3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis is conducted through two main steps: (1) testing the model fit indices and (2) assessing the model's discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability.

Model fit indices

According to Hair et al. (2014), the indices used to report the fit of the model must include at least three indicators: χ^2/df , CFI or TLI, and RMSEA. Specifically, χ^2/df should be less than 3, CFI or TLI should be 0.9 or higher, and RMSEA should be less than 0.06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The results in the table below show that $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.875 < 3$; CFI and TLI are both greater than 0.9, at 0.942 and 0.934, respectively; and the

final index, RMSEA, is 0.052, which is less than 0.06 (see the appendix 7). Therefore, it can be concluded that the model is a good fit.

Table 3.17: CFA and Model Fit Indicators

Index	Value	Cut off value	Conclusion
Chi-square (χ^2)	817.448		
Df	436		
χ^2/df	1.875	≤ 3	Acceptable
CFI	0.942	≥ 0.9	Acceptable
TLI	0.934	≥ 0.9	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.052	≤ 0.06	Acceptable

Source: Author's survey data

Reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity

To test the reliability, the Standardized Loading Estimates and Composite Reliability indicators were examined. According to Hair et al. (2014), for scales to have good reliability, the Standardized Loading Estimates should be greater than 0.5, with values above 0.7 considered ideal. Additionally, the Composite Reliability values for the factors must also be greater than 0.7. The test results show that most of the Standardized Loading Estimates are greater than 0.7. Only the observed variable NS3 has a value of 0.557, which is relatively low and significantly different from the values of other observed variables (Appendix 8). The Composite Reliability values are all greater than 0.7, with the lowest being 0.810 for the NS factor and the highest being 0.923 for the IS factor. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reliability of the scales in the model is ensured. The CR values are presented in the table below.

To test convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were examined. Hair et al. (2014) assert that to ensure the convergent validity of the factors, the minimum AVE value must be 0.5. Table 3.8 shows that the AVE value for NS does not meet this criterion, being $0.49 < 0.5$. The AMOS24 software suggests removing the observed variable NS3 to increase this value. Additionally, as the previous test indicated, the Standardized Loading Estimates for NS3 are quite low, differing significantly from other observed variables. Furthermore, removing this observed variable still ensures the reliability of the scale through Cronbach's Alpha testing ($0.819 > 0.7$ – see Table 3.15). Therefore, the author decided to remove this observed variable and re-test for reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity.

Table 3.18: Reliability, Convergent validity, Discriminant validity
Test - The first round

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	IS	EJ	ATT	CS	NS	INT	SN	PBC
IS	0.924	0.708	0.191	0.926	0.841							
EJ	0.926	0.758	0.186	0.928	-0.431***	0.871						
ATT	0.89	0.669	0.422	0.894	-0.352***	0.350***	0.818					
CS	0.877	0.641	0.19	0.878	-0.280***	0.303***	0.390***	0.801				
NS	0.826	0.49	0.206	0.841	-0.007	-0.024	0.311***	0.097	0.7			
INT	0.892	0.673	0.381	0.895	-0.390***	0.348***	0.617***	0.355***	0.454***	0.821		
SN	0.851	0.655	0.154	0.855	0.086	-0.01	-0.226***	-0.392***	0.033	-0.051	0.809	
PBC	0.83	0.62	0.422	0.845	-0.437***	0.333***	0.650***	0.436***	0.140*	0.517***	-0.282***	0.787

Source: Author's survey data

The results of the second test after removing the observed variable NS3 show that most Standardized Loading Estimates are now greater than 0.7. Two observed variables, NS4 and NS5, have Standardized Loading Estimates less than 0.7 but still significantly above the cut-off value of 0.5, at 0.669 and 0.679, respectively (see Appendix 9). The table below also shows that the Composite Reliability values are all greater than 0.7, with the lowest being 0.819 for the NS factor and the highest being 0.926 for the EJ factor. Therefore, the reliability of the scales in the model is ensured.

Table 3.19: Reliability, Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity
Test - The second round

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	IS	EJ	ATT	CS	NS	INT	SN	PBC
IS	0.924	0.708	0.191	0.926	0.841							
EJ	0.926	0.758	0.186	0.928	-0.431***	0.871						
ATT	0.89	0.669	0.422	0.894	-0.352***	0.350***	0.818					
CS	0.877	0.641	0.19	0.878	-0.280***	0.303***	0.390***	0.801				
NS	0.819	0.533	0.235	0.832	-0.06	0.008	0.314***	0.088	0.73			
INT	0.892	0.673	0.381	0.895	-0.390***	0.348***	0.617***	0.355***	0.485***	0.821		
SN	0.851	0.655	0.154	0.855	0.086	-0.011	-0.226***	-0.392***	0.091	-0.051	0.81	
PBC	0.83	0.62	0.422	0.845	-0.437***	0.333***	0.650***	0.436***	0.154*	0.517***	-0.283***	0.787

Source: Author's survey data

For testing convergent validity, the AVE values with a cut-off value of 0.5 were used. The table above shows that all AVE values are greater than 0.5, with the lowest

AVE value for the NS factor (improved by removing the NS3 observed variable) being 0.533 and the highest for the EJ factor with an AVE value of 0.758. Thus, convergent validity is ensured.

To test discriminant validity, the Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Square Root of AVE (SQRTAVE), and Inter-Construct Correlations were used. According to Hair et al. (2014), to ensure discriminant validity, MSV values must be smaller than the corresponding AVE values, and SQRTAVE values must be greater than the Inter-Construct correlation values. The table above shows that MSV values are smaller than the corresponding AVE values, and SQRTAVE values are greater than the Inter-Construct Correlations values. Therefore, discriminant validity is ensured.

3.2.4. Structural model analyses

3.2.4.1. Model fit indicators

Before testing the research hypotheses, the structural equation model was also assessed for model fit. The results in the table below show that the model fit indices are all at a good level. Specifically, the χ^2/df is $1.604 < 3$; both CFI and TLI are greater than 0.9, at 0.956 and 0.949, respectively, and RMSEA is $0.043 < 0.050$.

Table 3.20: Model fit testing

Index	Value	Cut off value	
Chi-square (χ^2)	816.455		
df	509		
χ^2/df	1.604	≤ 3	Acceptable
CFI	0.956	≥ 0.9	Acceptable
TLI	0.949	≥ 0.9	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.043	≤ 0.05	Acceptable

Source: Author's survey data

3.2.4.2. Hypothesis testing

The table below shows that the independent variables in the model explain a considerable amount of variation in the dependent variables. Specifically, the two factors IS and CS explain 23.2% of the variance in the dependent variable EJ ($R^2_{EJ} = 0.232$); the three factors IS, CS, and NS explain 33.1% of the variance in the dependent variable ATT ($R^2_{ATT} = 0.331$); and the nine factors ATT, SN, PBC, EJ, NS, Gender,

Age, Income, and Edu explain 76.6% of the variance in the dependent variable INT ($R^2_{INT} = 0.766$) (see Appendix 10)

Table 3.21: Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis				Standardized Estimate	t-value	P	Results
$R^2_{EJ} = 0.232$							
H7a	MJ	<---	IS	-0.382	-6.434	***	Supported
H7b	MJ	<---	CS	0.205	3.511	***	Supported
$R^2_{ATT} = 0.331$							
H5a	ATT	<---	IS	-0.259	-4.535	***	Supported
H5b	ATT	<---	CS	0.326	5.438	***	Supported
H4	ATT	<---	NS	0.291	4.933	***	Supported
$R^2_{INT} = 0.766$							
H1a	INT	<---	ATT	0.214	5.102	***	Supported
H1b	INT	<---	SN	0.003	0.085	0.932	Rejected
H1c	INT	<---	PBC	0.071	1.562	0.118	Rejected
H6	INT	<---	EJ	0.083	2.283	0.022	Supported
H2	INT	<---	NS	0.213	4.851	***	Supported
H3a	INT	<---	Gender	-0.231	-5.833	***	Supported
H3b	INT	<---	Age	0.24	5.565	***	Supported
H3c	INT	<---	Income	0.105	2.268	0.023	Supported
H3d	INT	<---	Edu	0.239	5.653	***	Supported

Source: Author's survey data

Firstly, the hypothesis testing results show that, as expected, both factors, IS and CS, affect EJ. The strongest and most negative effect on EJ is from IS, with $\gamma_{EJ<IS} = -0.382$ and t-value = -6.434, meaning that for each standard deviation increase in IS, EJ decreases by 0.382 standard deviations. Conversely, CS has a weaker and positive effect on EJ, with $\gamma_{EJ<CS} = 0.205$ and t-value = 3.511, indicating that for each standard deviation increase in CS, EJ increases by 0.205 standard deviations. Therefore, the hypotheses H7a and H7b are supported.

Next, the hypothesis testing results shown in the table above indicate that, as expected, all three factors, IS, CS, and NS, play important roles as antecedents of ATT. Among them, CS has the strongest effect with $\gamma_{ATT<CS} = 0.326$ and t-value = 5.438, meaning that for each one standard deviation increase in CS, ATT increases by 0.326

standard deviations, followed by NS with $\gamma_{ATT<-NS} = 0.291$ and $t\text{-value} = 4.933$, which means that for each one standard deviation increase in NS, ATT increases by 0.291 standard deviations. The weakest and negative effect on ATT is from IS with $\gamma_{ATT<-IS} = -0.259$ and $t\text{-value} = -4.535$, indicating that for each standard deviation increase in IS, ATT decreases by 0.259 standard deviations. Therefore, the hypotheses H4, H5a, H5b are supported.

Finally, the impact of the factors in the model on the most important dependent variable, INT, will be examined. The hypothesis testing results shown in the table above indicate that only seven factors—ATT, EJ, NS, Gender, Age, Income, Edu—affect INT. Among factors ATT, EJ, and NS, ATT has the strongest impact, with $\beta_{INT<-ATT} = 0.214$ and $t\text{-value} = 5.102$, meaning that for each standard deviation increase in ATT, INT will increase by 0.214 standard deviations. The second strongest effect is from NS on INT, with $\gamma_{INT<-NS} = 0.213$ and $t\text{-value} = 4.851$, indicating that for each standard deviation increase in NS, INT will increase by 0.213 standard deviations. The third strongest effect is from EJ, with $\beta_{INT<-EJ} = 0.083$ and $t\text{-value} = 2.283$, showing that for each standard deviation increase in EJ, INT will increase by 0.083 standard deviations.

The test results indicate that demographic factors significantly influence the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products among Vietnamese consumers. Among these, Age has the strongest positive impact, with $\gamma_{INT<-Age} = 0.240$, $t\text{-value} = 5.565$. This suggests that as individuals age, their intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products increases.

Next is the positive effect of Education (Edu), with $\gamma_{INT<-Edu} = 0.239$, $t\text{-value} = 5.653$. This finding implies that Vietnamese consumers with higher educational attainment tend to have a greater intention to engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption

The third factor is Gender, which exhibits a negative effect, with $\gamma_{INT<-Gender} = -0.231$, $t\text{-value} = -5.833$. This result indicates that men are more likely than women to show an intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

Lastly, Income exerts a positive influence on intention, with $\gamma_{INT<-Income} = 0.105$, $t\text{-value} = 2.268$. This suggests that as income levels increase, Vietnamese consumers are more inclined toward inconspicuous luxury consumption

Therefore, hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d are supported.

Contrary to expectations, SN and PBC do not have a statistically significant relationship with INT, with $\gamma_{INT<-SN} = 0.003$ and $t\text{-value} = 0.085$; $\gamma_{INT<-PBC} = 0.071$ and $t\text{-value} = 1.562$. Therefore, the hypotheses H1b and H1c are rejected.

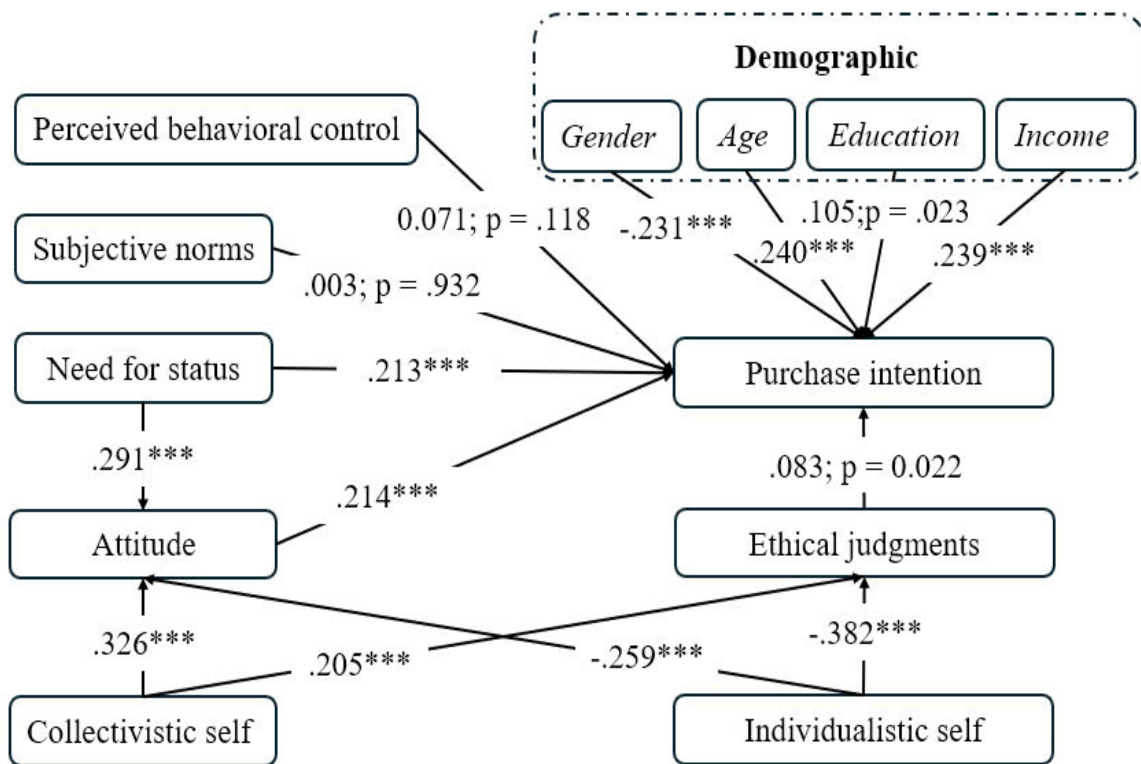


Figure 3.3: Hypothesis testing results

Source: Author's survey results

SUMMARY CHAPTER 3

In Chapter 3 of the dissertation, the author presents the comprehensive research findings derived from both phases of the study. The chapter begins by detailing the qualitative research results, which are organized around two main themes that emerged from the data. These themes provide significant insights into the underlying patterns of consumer behavior related to luxury products. Building upon these qualitative findings, the author further refines the initial research model, incorporating new research hypotheses that were identified through the analysis. This development allows for a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing luxury consumption, offering a clearer direction for subsequent research.

Following the qualitative analysis, the author presents the results from the quantitative phase of the research. This section covers a variety of important aspects, including the structure of the sample, the reliability of the data, and the discriminant and convergent validity of the measurement tools used. The author also discusses the results of model testing, providing a detailed analysis of the statistical techniques employed and the outcomes obtained. These findings offer robust evidence that supports the revised research model, further strengthening the study's overall conclusions.

The chapter concludes by laying the groundwork for the following chapter, where the author will delve into a more in-depth discussion of the research findings. In that section, the author will not only interpret the results but also highlight the study's significant contributions to the existing academic literature. Additionally, the practical implications of the findings will be explored, offering valuable insights for practitioners and stakeholders in the field of luxury consumption.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Research results and Discussions

4.1.1. *Research results*

This dissertation describes the phenomenon of inconspicuous luxury consumption in the context of Vietnam—a developing country with Confucian values. The research findings indicate that inconspicuous luxury consumption is emerging in developing countries, similar to trends observed in developed nations. Additionally, the results show that the need for status is a prominent motive behind inconspicuous luxury consumption. Ethical considerations (e.g., Ethical judgments) emerge as a new emerging motivation in the decision-making process of luxury consumers in developing markets. The research data reveal that, among the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude toward inconspicuous luxury products has a positive impact on purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products. In contrast, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control do not affect purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury purchases. Finally, self-concepts (collectivistic and individualistic self) are considered to play a significant role in shaping ethical judgments and attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases.

4.1.2. *Discussions*

In the section below, the author discusses the research findings derived from the two studies presented above.

4.1.2.1. *The practice of inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam*

The exploratory study demonstrates that inconspicuous luxury consumption is practiced in developing markets (Wu et al., 2017) just as in mature markets (Han et al., 2010; Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2018). The research findings indicate that the practices and preferences of Vietnamese luxury consumers have evolved significantly. For instance, our data reveal that 'situational consumers' constitute a significant portion of our informants among the groups engaged in inconspicuous luxury consumption. These consumers tend to acquire different luxury products to gain approval in social situations. This aligns with the concept of situational luxury consumption, where the context of specific social interactions influences consumer behavior (Shao et al., 2019a). Such behavior is consistent with the idea that inconspicuous luxury consumption serves as a means to navigate social hierarchies and achieve social validation in both developing and mature markets (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). The findings of this study contradict

the results of Jiang et al. (2021), who argued that inconspicuous luxury consumption is less appealing to high power distance belief (PDB) consumers, such as the Vietnamese.

4.1.2.2. The influence of ethical issues on inconspicuous luxury consumption

Ethical issues in luxury consumption have been explored in a growing body of literature, reflecting the increasing relevance of moral considerations in consumer behavior (De Klerk et al., 2019; Vanhamme et al., 2021). Our study contributes to this line of inquiry by examining the role of ethical judgments in the decision-making process regarding inconspicuous luxury consumption—a relatively underexplored area within the domain of ethical consumerism. The findings from our qualitative data reveal that Vietnamese consumers tend to adopt a teleological ethical orientation, focusing on the consequences and societal implications of their consumption choices rather than adhering strictly to deontological norms, which emphasize adherence to moral rules or duties regardless of outcomes. Specifically, respondents often justified their preference for inconspicuous luxury products based on considerations such as modesty, social harmony, and the desire to avoid perceptions of arrogance or inequality—values deeply rooted in Confucian and collectivist cultural contexts (Hofstede, 2001; Kim & Johnson, 2014). This behavioral tendency stands in contrast to findings by Vitell et al. (2001), who observed that consumers generally rely more on deontological principles when forming ethical judgments and behavioral intentions. In our context, however, ethical considerations appear to be outcome-oriented and socially contextualized, suggesting a divergence potentially shaped by Eastern cultural norms and emerging market dynamics. Moreover, the quantitative results from our study support the proposition that ethical judgments positively influence purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products. This is a notable departure from earlier studies, such as Davies et al. (2012), which argued that luxury consumption is largely insulated from moral concerns, with consumers often suspending ethical considerations in favor of brand prestige or hedonic gratification. Our findings indicate a shift in consumer ethics within the luxury domain, particularly in emerging markets like Vietnam. As consumers become more socially conscious and culturally aware, especially in the face of rising inequality and sustainability discourse, the ethical dimension of luxury consumption—traditionally seen as a moral blind spot—is gaining prominence (Kapferer & Michaut-Denizeau, 2014).

4.1.2.3. The influence of the need for status on inconspicuous luxury consumption

Both the qualitative and quantitative results show that the need for status affects inconspicuous luxury consumption. The finding suggests that consumers in emerging markets like Vietnam tend to buy luxury items to display their social status, even if these

products are subtle and not easily recognized by the mainstream. This result aligns with previous studies indicating that the need for status can positively influence intentions to purchase luxury goods (Latter et al., 2010). In developing countries, consumers tend to engage in luxury consumption driven by the need for status, even when the products are inconspicuous. This behavior contrasts with consumers in developed countries (Han et al., 2010; Pino et al., 2019). It may differ from practices in mature markets, where many luxury consumers might no longer need to flaunt their wealth to distinguish themselves from the masses. As discussed above, inconspicuous luxury products are still considered luxury items by nature. Therefore, they satisfy the buyer's need to assert their status through ownership and use. Additionally, inconspicuous luxury purchases not only provide a sense of 'class' through the product's value but also through the acknowledgment of those who are knowledgeable about the product—those who have used and have extensive experience with it. This class is derived from knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, consumers of inconspicuous luxury products may also be perceived as wealthy yet modest by those around them. In cultures with high collectivism, such as Vietnam, where Confucian ideals are prevalent, modesty is regarded as a sign of good character, wisdom, and class. According to Eckhardt et al. (2015), inconspicuousness is a new form of conspicuousness. Thus, the need for status positively influences Vietnamese consumers' intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury items.

4.1.2.3. The influence of TPB constructs on inconspicuous luxury consumption

First, the research findings show that attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases has a positive impact on purchase intention toward inconspicuous luxury products. Similar to previous research on general behavior and purchasing behavior (e.g., Zhang & Kim, 2013; Phau et al., 2015), attitudes towards inconspicuous luxury purchases also positively influence the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products. In other words, individuals with a positive attitude towards inconspicuous purchasing are more likely to engage in inconspicuous buying. However, there is a difference in the research results (for example, Ting, 2018) regarding the lack of influence of subjective norms on the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products. This can be explained by the very nature of inconspicuous purchasing, which involves inconspicuousness. Consumers are not merely purchasing luxury items without overt display, but they also wish to keep their luxury purchases private and avoid discussing their endorsement or rejection of such behavior. Moreover, because they are well-informed about luxury products and inconspicuous luxury items, they are confident

in their choices and may not care about the opinions of those around them. Recommendations, encouragement, or social pressure regarding the purchase of these products are unlikely to influence individuals, particularly if they perceive that the advisors or influencers possess less expertise or knowledge about the products compared to themselves. If there is any influence, it will come from individuals of the same or higher status who have achieved a high level of luxury consumption, but such individuals are not numerous around them. Therefore, subjective norms do not impact the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

Second, the hypothesis testing results indicate that Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) does not influence the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods. This suggests that the intention to purchase such products is not contingent on whether consumers perceive difficulty in acquiring them. These findings are consistent with the research of Jain et al. (2017) and contradict the findings of Zhang & Kim (2013). The lack of influence of PBC on purchase intention may stem from the perception that inconspicuous luxury products are relatively accessible in the Vietnamese market. Particularly in today's context, the increasing ease and convenience of purchasing from international websites enable consumers to acquire the inconspicuous luxury items they desire swiftly. Moreover, as previously analyzed, consumers who intend to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods are often highly knowledgeable about these products. They buy them out of a passion for the items, driven by expertise and deep understanding. Such consumers are aware of the challenges involved in accessing and purchasing inconspicuous luxury goods. In fact, these difficulties may even enhance their purchasing intention by acting as a mechanism to signal exclusivity and sophistication. The perception of difficulty can serve as a way for consumers to assert their status, showcasing that only they are capable of 'hunting' these rare products. Thus, whether consumers perceive it as easy or difficult to purchase inconspicuous luxury products does not significantly influence their purchase intention in the Vietnamese context.

4.1.2.4. The influence of self- concepts on ethical judgments and attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases

The results investigate that self-concepts is an important predictor of trait morality or, the tendency of individuals to engage in ethical judgments in inconspicuous consumption of Vietnamese luxury consumers. The research results indicate that the factor with a negative effect on ethical judgments is the individualistic self. This means that individuals with higher levels of individualistic self have lower ethical judgments. This finding is consistent with previous research (e.g., Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Park et al.,

2022). Individualistic self-concept can lead to moral blind spots and a reduced focus on relational and communal responsibilities, potentially resulting in more self-centered ethical judgments. An individualistic self might lead to ethical behavior that is less aligned with communal values, implying that personal gain and self-interest can overshadow broader moral considerations (Rest, 1988). Individuals with an individualistic self make decisions based on personal integrity and fairness, valuing individual rights and justice. This result may stem from the nature of individualistic self and ethical judgments. Individuals with high individualistic self are often those who are more self-focused, emphasizing themselves and viewing themselves as superior to others. They tend to exhibit constant competitiveness, ready to fight for their prominence, uniqueness, and distinctiveness. They may even disregard considerations of right or wrong, prioritizing the expression of their self and their superiority. Hence, highly individualistic self individuals are less likely to consider the impact of their decisions on others or whether these decisions violate social norms.

The result also indicates that the second factor influencing ethical judgments in a positive direction is the collectivistic self. This means that individuals with a higher collectivistic self tend to have higher ethical judgments. This research result is consistent with some previous studies (Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Cojuharenco et al., 2011). The positive impact of the collectivistic self on ethical judgments may stem from the characteristics of this factor. Individuals with a high collectivistic self are described as those who focus on external relationships. The higher collectivistic values an individual has, the more likely the tendency to 'do good'. They often seek to maintain interpersonal relationships within their group and have the ability to understand others' perspectives. As a result, they tend to comprehend, judge, and engage in higher ethical behavior. They are likely to return money if a seller gives them extra change, and they might even boycott individuals or businesses that treat others unfairly. In other words, individuals with a high collectivistic self will tend to have higher ethical judgments.

The data also show that the individualistic self has a negative effect on attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases. This means that individuals with a higher individualistic self tend to have a less favorable attitude toward purchasing inconspicuous luxury products. This result is similar to previous studies (Park & Levine, 1999). While the individualistic self emphasizes ostentation, individuals with a high individualistic self are inclined to express themselves or, at the very least, view themselves as superior to others; therefore, they tend to favor more conspicuous consumption. Consumption behaviors that do not immediately showcase their status,

such as inconspicuous consumption, are less likely to be supported by them. Additionally, inconspicuous luxury consumption behaviors are more likely to lead to them being perceived as 'ordinary' by others. Moreover, because these products are difficult to distinguish as genuine or authentic, the 'risk' of being perceived as consuming 'fake' products increases, affecting their self-image. As a result, they are likely to oppose or even boycott such behavior.

Regarding to collectivistic self, the research findings show that the collectivistic self has a positive impact on attitude toward inconspicuous luxury purchases. That means highly collectivistic self individuals have a more favorable attitude toward purchasing inconspicuous luxury products (Park & Levine, 1999; Barkin et al., 2020). Individuals with a high collectivistic self-construal are more likely to favor inconspicuous luxury items that align with their values of modesty and relational harmony. The positive impact of the collectivistic self on the attitude toward inconspicuous luxury chase aligns well with the context of inconspicuous purchasing. Clearly, individuals with a high self-construal tend to focus on developing relationships among group members and building and reinforcing the group's cohesion. Purchasing conspicuous luxury goods could result in them standing out within the group, increasing the risk of being perceived as different from others in the group. Therefore, purchasing inconspicuous luxury products is an ideal solution for them if they still wish to consume high-end products. In other words, the collectivistic self positively affects attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases.

Vietnamese consumers with a high need for status have a positive attitude toward purchasing inconspicuous luxury products. As discussed earlier, inconspicuous consumption is often associated with the context of luxury product consumption. Typically, luxury goods serve as status symbols, so individuals with a high need for status are likely to purchase more luxury items. Therefore, it is entirely reasonable for the need for status to influence attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases positively. However, previous studies have shown that consumers of inconspicuous luxury goods often have a low need for status (Han et al., 2010; Pino et al., 2019). This discrepancy may be due to differences in the research context. Previous studies were conducted in developed countries, while this study was conducted in Vietnam—a developing country characterized by Confucian values and high collectivism. Consumers in developing countries often tend to consume products that display their status. Additionally, differences in research results might be attributed to the dynamics of status symbols. Indeed, status symbols change over time and can vary by context. Status symbols are not limited to financial wealth but can also shift to cultural capital

(Han et al., 2010). To recognize inconspicuous products, consumers need a certain level of understanding about the products. In other words, only those high in cultural capital can recognize and evaluate luxury products subtly and the ‘class’ of the buyer. Quiet luxury products with small or hidden logos and brand features may still be identified by consumers who are familiar with these products. They often perceive such products as more refined and require cultural capital to recognize. Consumers with high cultural capital (referred to as connoisseurs) can identify a product as a genuine luxury, which ordinary people might not realize—this reflects admiration among individuals of a higher status. Thus, those with a need for status are likely to favor inconspicuous buying behavior. Future research could clarify the role of consumer perceptions of status in the intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products.

4.2. Contributions

4.2.1. Theoretical contributions

From a theoretical perspective, the findings enrich the luxury consumption literature by providing insights into inconspicuous luxury consumption practices in Vietnam, a representative emerging Asian economy strongly influenced by Confucian values.

First, this dissertation makes a significant contribution by uncovering the ethical motives—particularly ethical judgments—that drive inconspicuous luxury consumption. By employing the Hunt-Vitell Theory, it provides a robust framework for understanding how ethical considerations shape these consumption behaviors. This research extends the luxury consumption literature by addressing a critical gap: the often-overlooked role of ethical motivations in consumers' decision-making in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption, especially in the Asian countries. The literature review highlights that while ethical dilemmas are more commonly associated with ostentatious luxury consumption, their relevance to inconspicuous luxury has been largely neglected. However, the qualitative findings of this study reveal that ethical decision-making, mediated through mechanisms such as deontological and teleological evaluations, positions inconspicuous luxury products as a morally superior choice. For Vietnamese consumers, ethical judgments strongly influence their preference for and intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods, reflecting their desire to align consumption with personal and societal ethical standards. The results from large-scale quantitative research further confirm that ethical judgments are a significant predictor of purchase intentions for inconspicuous luxury products. This finding not only enhances theoretical understanding but also offers actionable insights for brands and policymakers to develop strategies that resonate with ethically motivated luxury consumers.

Second, one of the key contributions of this study is the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Hunt-Vitell Model in examining inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam. These models have traditionally been applied separately to explore consumer decision-making processes. However, this study is among the few that combine these two theoretical models to investigate consumer behavior. While TPB is a classical model for investigating consumer decision-making, it often overlooks the ethical dimension of consumer behavior. In contrast, the Hunt-Vitell Model captures how consumers make decisions in situations involving ethical considerations. The integration of these two models provides a deeper understanding of inconspicuous luxury consumption from an ethical perspective, offering a new and important lens through which to examine consumer behavior. The research findings indicate that combining these two theoretical frameworks is highly appropriate, as it clearly highlights the role of ethical judgments in the luxury purchase decisions of Vietnamese consumers.

Third, this dissertation offers empirical evidence regarding self-concepts, namely the collectivistic self and individualistic self, that shape the ethical judgments of Vietnamese consumers related to inconspicuous luxury consumption. To the author's knowledge, this is among the few studies empirically demonstrating how value systems impact individual-level ethical decision-making. This contribution is crucial for understanding consumer ethics in emerging markets, where new behaviors may necessitate adaptation to fit local cultural and economic contexts.

Fourth, the study highlights the crucial role of the need for status in the intention to buy inconspicuous luxury products in developing nations. In diverse cultural settings, luxury consumers show varying levels of need for status when participating in inconspicuous consumption. Although previous literature has confirmed the importance of the need for status in relation to luxury products overall, earlier research has suggested that luxury consumers often acquire inconspicuous luxury items not mainly for signaling status. The results of this study indicate that, in developing countries, luxury consumers pursue luxury products with status-driven motives, even when these products are subtle in nature.

Last, the research confirms the presence of inconspicuous luxury consumption within developing countries like Vietnam, making it one of the few studies on inconspicuous luxury consumption in a developing nation. This study contributes to the development of a broader theoretical framework for understanding inconspicuous luxury consumption in the context of Vietnam—a representative emerging Asian

economy strongly influenced by Confucian values. It provides empirical evidence that can be used to refine existing theories and develop new ones, particularly in the context of emerging markets (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Specifically, the study fills the research gaps by offering new insights into how Vietnamese consumers make decisions regarding inconspicuous luxury products and how they practice inconspicuous consumption. This is significant because past research has explored inconspicuous luxury consumption primarily in mature markets and has largely overlooked emerging Asian markets.

The research results also answered the research questions that the author proposed previously.

RQ1: How do Vietnamese luxury consumers practice inconspicuous consumption?

Although in developing countries with collectivist influences, consumers tend to favor conspicuous luxury products, the findings of this study have shown that inconspicuous luxury consumption not only exists but is also becoming more prevalent in developing nations like Vietnam. Consumers tend to prefer inconspicuous luxury products with subtle signals in their luxury consumption habits. In the Vietnamese market, the research results have identified three categories of consumers who engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption based on their level of attachment to inconspicuous products. Specifically: ‘Inconspicuous luxury devotees’ – consumers who engage with inconspicuous luxury products from the very beginning of their luxury consumption experience; ‘Transitional Consumers’ – those who start their luxury consumption experience with conspicuous products but gradually shift towards exclusively using inconspicuous luxury items; ‘Situational Consumers’ – consumers who tend to use both types of products, alternating between inconspicuous and conspicuous luxury, depending on the situations.

RQ2: What motivates them to engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption?

By conducting an exploratory qualitative study, the author uncovers several underlying motivations behind inconspicuous consumption. Specifically, the findings reveal that Vietnamese luxury consumers engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption to seek status, aesthetics, differentiation, and ethical motivations. Among these identified drivers, status-seeking emerges as the primary and most prominent motivation influencing Vietnamese consumers to opt for inconspicuous luxury products. Notably, moral considerations have also become one of the reasons why consumers choose quiet luxury products.

RQ3: Do and how do ethical considerations play roles in shaping inconspicuous luxury purchase intention?

Building on the findings of Study 1, the results of Study 2 confirm the role of ethical judgments in shaping the intention to consume quiet luxury products. Ethical judgments have a direct influence on the intention to engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption. Therefore, ethical judgments play a crucial role in predicting consumers' behavior toward the consumption of inconspicuous luxury products.

RQ4: Do and how does the need for status play roles in shaping inconspicuous luxury purchase intention?

The exploratory findings from Study 1, along with the comprehensive survey results from Study 2, indicate that the need for status continues to play a significant role in shaping the intention to consume quiet luxury products. Among the proposed factors, the need for status exerts the most direct and powerful influence on the intention to engage in inconspicuous luxury consumption. Therefore, the need for status serves as a crucial predictor of consumers' behavior toward the consumption of inconspicuous luxury products.

RQ5: Do and how do self-concepts (i.e., collectivistic self and individualistic self) play roles in shaping ethical considerations and consumers' attitudes in the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption?

The research findings reveal that self-concepts (collectivistic self and individualistic self) influence attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases and consumers' ethical judgments. The individualistic self negatively impacts both attitudes and ethical judgments, while the collectivistic self exerts a positive influence on both aspects. These results, therefore, affirm the role of self-concepts in shaping attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases and ethical judgments within the context of inconspicuous luxury consumption.

RQ6: How does the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Hunt-Vitell model explain purchase intentions towards inconspicuous luxury products?

This study contributes to explaining purchase intentions towards inconspicuous luxury products by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Hunt-Vitell model. The TPB framework highlights the influence of attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control on purchase intentions. The Hunt-Vitell model adds an ethical dimension by emphasizing how ethical judgments impact decision-making. This model complements TPB by showing how ethical beliefs guide consumption

choices beyond personal preference, aligning with social expectations and moral standards. The integration of TPB and the Hunt-Vitell model provides a comprehensive understanding of how both behavioral and ethical factors shape luxury consumption. This approach offers insights into the evolving role of ethics in purchase decisions, especially in emerging markets like Vietnam, where cultural and societal values play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior.

4.2.2. Practical contributions

The results of both qualitative and quantitative research indicate that issues related to ethics and the need for status play a significant role in consumers' decisions to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods. Additionally, demographic factors also have certain effects on the intention to buy inconspicuous luxury items. Based on these findings, the author suggests the following managerial implications:

Firstly, given the strong and positive influence of the need for status on both attitudes towards and intentions to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods, managers can enhance communication strategies in three key areas: (i) Emphasize the luxurious and prestigious aspects derived from the brand, material, design, and even the scarcity of the product. Since the nature of inconspicuous luxury products still involves luxury elements, they inherently carry features that reflect the status and sophistication of the buyer and user, such as elegant design, superior quality, and exclusivity, which enhance the user's status; (ii) Highlight the 'sustainability' of status, which stems from the user's knowledge and expertise. One of the key characteristics of inconspicuous luxury products is their subtlety and the consumer's understanding of the product. Only those who are truly knowledgeable and well-informed about the product can recognize it as a branded item. This expertise and knowledge largely come from long-term, familiar usage of the product, which individuals with high and sustainable status typically possess; (iii) Emphasize the subtlety and discretion of the product and the status derived from this subtlety and discretion, such as 'Products exclusively for connoisseurs.' In Western countries, where individualistic cultures prevail, status can be displayed through overt shows of wealth and self-expression.

In contrast, in East Asian countries like Vietnam, such displays often do not garner admiration. They are frequently viewed negatively, with terms like 'pretentious' and 'nouveau riche' used to describe such behavior. Individuals in countries influenced by Confucianism, including Vietnam, tend to respect those who exhibit 'humility' and hold in higher regard those who are both 'wealthy' and 'humble,' akin to the proverb 'the fuller the ear of rice, the lower it bows.' This humility itself is seen as a higher form

of status than that derived from the luxury of the product. Subtle consumption thus facilitates this form of status. These actions and communication strategies not only enhance consumers' intentions but also address the deeper issue of changing their attitudes toward inconspicuous luxury purchases.

Secondly, the following implications arise from the influence of ethical judgment on purchase intention towards inconspicuous luxury products. Consumers with a deontological (duty-based) moral judgment are likely to have a higher intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods. These individuals tend to evaluate morality based on actions, leading them to be particularly cautious about their external behavior. In Vietnam, as well as in countries heavily influenced by Confucianism, acts of ostentatious superiority are often considered morally questionable. Therefore, managers could emphasize messages that frame modesty as a moral virtue, such as 'putting others down does not elevate you,' to increase consumers' intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury products. These messages are somewhat similar to the previously suggested messages but differ in their nature. While the earlier messages aim to enhance status through modest behavior, these messages focus on modesty as a moral quality and maintaining the face of others.

Thirdly, the influence of the collectivistic self and individualistic self suggests several implications for market segmentation for businesses in this sector and luxury products more generally. Marketing campaigns for inconspicuous consumer products should target individuals with a high collectivistic self. In contrast, marketing efforts for conspicuous luxury products should focus on individuals with a highly individualistic self. In other words, the target market for inconspicuous consumer products should be customers with a high collectivistic self.

Lastly, businesses can leverage findings on the impact of demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and income to segment the market, choose target markets and positions, and develop marketing mixes for inconspicuous luxury products. Businesses can segment the market by gender and should focus more on men, as this group tends to have a higher intention to purchase inconspicuous luxury items. Additionally, age can be a good segmentation criterion, with businesses potentially concentrating on older age groups, as they have a higher tendency to engage in inconspicuous purchases compared to younger groups. Purchase intention for inconspicuous items is also influenced by education, with individuals having higher education levels generally showing a greater inclination towards such purchases. Businesses can segment the market by education level and should target individuals

with higher education. Moreover, companies could craft marketing messages aimed at highly educated individuals, portraying inconspicuous consumption as a smart choice and behavior for the knowledgeable. Additionally, income levels suggest that marketing managers set price strategies for inconspicuous products. Businesses might set high prices, even higher than typical luxury products, to attract these individuals.

4.3. Limitations and further research directions

This research acknowledges several limitations that create avenues for further exploration into the influence of ethical judgment and need for status on purchase intentions for inconspicuous luxury products. Firstly, this study focuses exclusively on luxury fashion products. Future research could investigate inconspicuous consumption across diverse luxury categories to enrich the understanding of inconspicuous consumption behaviors. For instance, luxury automobiles and timepieces represent valuable categories for further examination.

Secondly, this study was conducted in major Vietnamese cities, specifically Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Future research may extend to other urban areas within Vietnam for broader generalizability. Additionally, this study concentrates solely on the Vietnamese market, a developing economy with Confucian and collectivist cultural values, where ethical considerations strongly shape consumer behavior. Cross-national research on ethical influences on inconspicuous luxury consumption could further illuminate the role of cultural factors in consumer decision-making.

Thirdly, although many external factors can affect consumers' inconspicuous luxury consumption, this study focuses on cultural factors (such as collectivistic and individualistic self) and social factors (such as social status). Future research could explore the impact of business marketing activities. It could also consider other cultural dimensions at the individual level that were not covered in this study.

Lastly, regarding methodology, Study 2 employed a convenience sampling approach, resulting in an uncontrolled variation in respondents' cultural capital concerning fashion. Furthermore, the degree of inconspicuousness is subjective and influenced by individual cultural capital. Future research might incorporate cultural capital as a moderating variable to more precisely examine intentions toward inconspicuous luxury consumption.

SUMMARY CHAPTER 4

In Chapter 4, the author provides a comprehensive discussion of the research findings, building upon the results presented in Chapter 3. This chapter delves deeper into the significance of the findings, connecting them to the broader body of literature discussed in earlier chapters. The author not only analyzes the implications of the results but also explores how they expand existing knowledge, particularly in the area of inconspicuous luxury consumption. The chapter emphasizes the unique contributions of the study to this emerging field, offering fresh insights and perspectives that further enrich the literature. Additionally, the author discusses how the findings align with the study's initial objectives and provide clarity to the research questions that were outlined in the introduction. By thoroughly addressing the research aims, the chapter ensures that the study's contributions are well contextualized and relevant to both academic discussions and practical applications in the luxury consumption domain.

CONCLUSIONS

Investigating inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam is crucial due to the nation's distinctive socio-cultural and economic environment. As an emerging economy with a swiftly growing middle and upper class, Vietnam has experienced a change in consumer habits, particularly a rising fascination with luxury goods. Influenced by Confucian values that emphasize modesty, humility, and collectivism, the cultural setting fosters a unique framework where luxury consumption may be more understated as individuals navigate the balance between social status desires and cultural moderate expectations. Moreover, as globalization progresses, examining how Vietnamese consumers perceive and engage with luxury, diverging from more overt displays, can yield important insights for researchers and the luxury sector. Thus, studying inconspicuous luxury consumption in Vietnam not only addresses a vital research gap but also aids in creating marketing strategies that resonate with Vietnamese cultural values and buying behaviors.

The research findings demonstrate that inconspicuous luxury consumption is a growing trend in Vietnam, with Vietnamese consumers increasingly favoring inconspicuous luxury products. From an ethical perspective, the study highlights the crucial role of ethical judgments in shaping intentions to purchase inconspicuous luxury goods, a relationship rooted in cultural characteristics. Additionally, the results indicate that Vietnamese consumers are driven by a high need for status when purchasing inconspicuous luxury items. This contrasts sharply with previous studies in developed countries, where consumers opt for inconspicuous luxury products due to a lower need for status.

Drawing from these findings, the author has proposed several marketing strategies for luxury brands to expand in the Vietnamese market. Additionally, the author highlights significant contributions this dissertation has made to the literature on inconspicuous luxury consumption and suggests future research directions in this area.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide for the first round of data collection

Topic: An exploratory investigation of inconspicuous luxury consumption in the context of Vietnam

Mục tiêu: Khám phá hiện tượng Tiêu dùng xa xỉ kín đáo trong thị trường tiêu dùng Việt Nam

- Anh/chị có thể giới thiệu đôi chút về bản thân anh/chị (công việc, trình độ học vấn, thói quen mua sắm, sở thích thời trang....)
- Sản phẩm được tính là xa xỉ đầu tiên AC mua là gì? AC thường mua những loại sản phẩm nào? Tần suất mua các sản phẩm? Có tiêu chí gì đặc biệt trong việc lựa chọn sản phẩm không? Có thương hiệu thân thiết nào không? AC thường mua sản phẩm từ nguồn nào?
- Anh chị hãy kể về lần mua sản phẩm cao cấp gần đây nhất? Kể về hoàn cảnh mua hàng? Cảm nhận của anh chị thế nào về sản phẩm và trải nghiệm mua sắm đó?
- Nghiên cứu này tập trung ở thói quen mua sắm sản phẩm thời trang hàng hiệu, AC nghĩ như thế nào về việc mua sắm hoặc chi tiêu cho các sản phẩm, dịch vụ cao cấp?
- Các sản phẩm các AC mua có thường dễ được nhận biết bởi người xung quanh không (hoặc mua đồ đắt nhưng nhìn qua thì không biết được. Những đối tượng nào biết AC đang dùng đồ hàng hiệu? Người thân, bạn bè hay nhận xét thế nào về việc AC sử dụng các sản phẩm này? AC thường sử dụng sản phẩm hàng hiệu trong hoàn cảnh nào?
- AC có suy nghĩ gì việc những người AC gặp sử dụng các sản phẩm giả, nhái....?
- AC nghĩ gì về việc dùng đồ đắt tiền/hàng hiệu đối với hình ảnh cá nhân của bản thân trong xã hội không?
- AC có quan tâm tới những giá trị, đặc tính của sản phẩm mình dùng ngoài thương hiệu không?

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for the second round of data collection

Topic: An exploratory investigation of inconspicuous luxury consumption in the context of Vietnam

1. Mục tiêu 1: Khám phá hiện tượng Tiêu dùng xa xỉ kín đáo trong thị trường tiêu dùng Việt Nam

- Anh/chị có thể giới thiệu đôi chút về bản thân anh/chị (công việc, trình độ học vấn, thói quen mua sắm, sở thích thời trang....)
- Sản phẩm được tính là xa xỉ đầu tiên AC mua là gì? AC thường mua những loại sản phẩm nào? Tần suất mua các sản phẩm? Có tiêu chí gì đặc biệt trong việc lựa chọn sản phẩm không? Có thương hiệu thân thiết nào không? AC thường mua sản phẩm từ nguồn nào?
- Anh chị hãy kể về lần mua sản phẩm cao cấp gần đây nhất? Kể về hoàn cảnh mua hàng? Cảm nhận của anh chị thế nào về sản phẩm và trải nghiệm mua sắm đó?
- Nghiên cứu này tập trung ở thói quen mua sắm sản phẩm thời trang hàng hiệu, AC nghĩ như thế nào về việc mua sắm hoặc chi tiêu cho các sản phẩm, dịch vụ cao cấp?
- Các sản phẩm các AC mua có thường dễ được nhận biết bởi người xung quanh không (hoặc mua đồ đắt nhưng nhìn qua thì không biết được. Những đối tượng nào biết AC đang dùng đồ hàng hiệu? Người thân, bạn bè hay nhận xét thế nào về việc AC sử dụng các sản phẩm này? AC thường sử dụng sản phẩm hàng hiệu trong hoàn cảnh nào?
- AC có suy nghĩ gì về việc những người AC gặp sử dụng các sản phẩm giả, nhái....?
- AC nghĩ gì về việc dùng đồ đắt tiền/hàng hiệu đối với hình ảnh cá nhân của bản thân trong xã hội không?
- AC có quan tâm tới những giá trị, đặc tính của sản phẩm mình dùng ngoài thương hiệu không?

2. Mục tiêu 2: Tìm hiểu cơ chế/ động cơ dẫn tới hành vi ILC của người tiêu dùng Việt Nam

- Xung quanh AC có ai dùng đồ hàng hiệu không? Thường là những nhãn hiệu nào? AC thấy những món đồ đó có hợp với họ không? Theo AC điều gì khiến họ sử dụng đồ hàng hiệu? Anh chị đánh giá thế nào về việc dùng hàng hiệu của những người này?
- Khi mua sắm các sản phẩm hàng hiệu, Anh chị cảm thấy như thế nào? (chú trọng yếu tố ethical trong hành vi ILC)
- Với AC, giá trị vật chất hay giá trị tinh thần quan trọng hơn?
- Bên cạnh việc mua sắm đồ sản phẩm thời trang, AC quan tâm tới các sản phẩm/dịch vụ cao cấp nào khác? VD: chăm chút hình thể, chăm sóc sức khỏe, chọn trường tốt cho con cái, tăng cường du lịch.....
- Ngoài những sản phẩm thời trang hàng hiệu, anh chị có chi tiền cho những sản phẩm cao cấp nào nữa không? (Có thể sử dụng lại các câu hỏi ở phần 2)

Appendix 3: Survey questionnaire

PHIẾU CÂU HỎI

Số phiếu:.....

Xin chào Quý vị!

Chúng tôi đang thực một nghiên cứu khoa học về ý định tiêu dùng sản phẩm **thời trang cao cấp kín đáo** của người tiêu dùng Việt Nam. Chúng tôi rất mong nhận được sự cộng tác của quý vị. Chúng tôi xin **cam kết giữ bí mật** các thông tin cá nhân và chỉ sử dụng cho mục đích nghiên cứu.

Trong nghiên cứu này, sản phẩm thời trang cao cấp được hiểu là các sản phẩm quần áo, giày dép, túi xách, nữ trang, phụ kiện... may sẵn (ready-to-wear) tới từ các thương hiệu thời trang do các nhà thiết kế nổi tiếng sản xuất, như: Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel, Dior, Balenciaga, Armani, Yves Saint Laurent, Burberry, Hermès, Prada.....

Các sản phẩm thời trang cao cấp kín đáo là các sản phẩm thời trang cao cấp có dấu hiệu nhận biết **thương hiệu ẩn đi hoặc khó nhận biết hơn bình thường**. Ví dụ:

Sản phẩm kín đáo



Chỉ có một logo in chìm LV của thương hiệu Louis Vuitton

Sản phẩm dễ nhận biết



Da in logo LV với các họa tiết truyền thống của hãng Louis Vuitton

Xin chân thành cảm ơn sự hợp tác của Quý vị!

Quý vị đang sống tại tỉnh thành phố nào?

☐ 1 Hà Nội

☐ 2 Ho Chi Minh

☐ 3 Khác

Câu 1: Quý vị hãy thể hiện quan điểm của mình bằng cách đánh dấu (X) vào ô thích hợp (từ mức ‘Rất không đồng ý’ đến mức ‘Rất đồng ý’).

	Rất <u>không</u> đồng ý	<u>Không</u> đồng ý	Bình thường	Đồng ý	Rất đồng ý
Đối với tôi, việc mua một sản phẩm thời trang cao cấp kín đáo trong khoảng thời gian một năm tới là điều thú vị.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Đối với tôi, việc mua một sản phẩm thời trang cao cấp kín đáo trong khoảng thời gian một năm tới là một phần thưởng.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Đối với tôi, việc mua một sản phẩm thời trang cao cấp kín đáo trong khoảng thời gian một năm tới là điều tốt	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Đối với tôi, việc mua một sản phẩm thời trang cao cấp kín đáo trong khoảng thời gian một năm tới là có lợi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Những người quan trọng đối với tôi nghĩ rằng tôi nên mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Những người quan trọng đối với tôi sẽ mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Những người quan trọng đối với tôi muốn tôi mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi cảm thấy bị áp lực xã hội để mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Việc mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo nằm ngoài tầm kiểm soát của tôi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi có thể kiểm soát việc mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Việc mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo hoàn toàn phụ thuộc vào tôi	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Có nhiều cơ hội cho tôi để mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

	Rất không đồng ý	<u>Không</u> đồng ý	Bình thường	Đồng ý	Rất đồng ý
Tôi dự định mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi lên kế hoạch mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi muốn mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi sẽ nỗ lực để mua các sản phẩm xa xỉ kín đáo.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi sẽ mua một sản phẩm chỉ vì nó thể hiện địa vị xã hội của người dùng	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi quan tâm đến các sản phẩm thể hiện địa vị xã hội của người dùng.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi sẽ trả nhiều tiền hơn để mua một sản phẩm nếu nó thể hiện địa vị xã hội của người dùng.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Giá trị thể hiện địa vị của một sản phẩm có ý nghĩa đối với tôi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Một sản phẩm trở nên có giá trị hơn đối với tôi nếu nó thu hút những người ưa thích sự nổi bật.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi thường cảm thấy rằng các mối quan hệ của tôi với người khác quan trọng hơn thành tựu cá nhân của tôi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Hạnh phúc của tôi phụ thuộc vào hạnh phúc của những người xung quanh tôi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi sẵn sàng hy sinh lợi ích cá nhân của mình vì lợi ích của nhóm mà tôi tham gia.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Đối với tôi, việc duy trì sự hòa hợp trong nhóm là rất quan trọng.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi sẽ ở lại với một nhóm nếu họ cần tôi, ngay cả khi tôi không hài lòng với nhóm.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Đối với tôi, việc tôn trọng các quyết định của nhóm là rất quan trọng.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

	Rất không đồng ý	<u>Không</u> đồng ý	Bình thường	Đồng ý	Rất đồng ý
Ngay cả khi tôi không đồng ý mạnh mẽ với các thành viên trong nhóm, tôi tránh tranh cãi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Theo tôi, không có sự cạnh tranh, sẽ không thể có một xã hội tốt đẹp.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi thích sự độc đáo và khác biệt so với người khác ở nhiều khía cạnh.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Danh tính cá nhân của tôi, độc lập với người khác, là rất quan trọng đối với tôi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi thích làm việc trong những tình huống có sự cạnh tranh với người khác.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Việc có thể tự chăm sóc bản thân là một mối quan tâm hàng đầu của tôi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Tôi thích trực tiếp và thẳng thắn khi đối diện với những người mà tôi mới gặp	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Nói lên ý kiến của mình trước công chúng không phải là vấn đề với tôi.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Trở lại cửa hàng và thanh toán cho một món hàng mà nhân viên thu ngân đã vô tình không tính tiền cho bạn là hành động đúng đắn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Thông báo cho cửa hàng để sửa hóa đơn đã bị tính toán sai có lợi cho bạn là điều đúng đắn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Típ nhiều hơn mong đợi cho một nhân viên phục vụ tốt là hợp lẽ phải	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Không mua sản phẩm từ các công ty mà bạn tin rằng không đối xử công bằng với nhân viên của họ là hành động đúng đắn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Câu 2: Xin Quý vị hãy cho biết thông tin về cá nhân mình bằng cách đánh dấu ‘x’ vào ô phù hợp. Thông tin này sẽ chỉ được sử dụng cho mục đích phân tích số liệu và sẽ được đảm bảo bí mật.

1. Giới tính:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Nam	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Nữ	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Khác
2. Năm sinh của quý vị:			
3. Trình độ học vấn:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Tốt nghiệp PTTH trở xuống	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Tốt nghiệp Thạc sỹ	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Tốt nghiệp Đại học/Cao đẳng	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Tốt nghiệp Tiến sỹ	
4. Thu nhập bình quân hàng tháng của Quý vị (từ tất cả các nguồn):	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Dưới 10 triệu đồng	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Từ 20 đến dưới 30 triệu đồng	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Từ 10 đến dưới 15 triệu đồng	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Từ 30 đến dưới 40 triệu đồng	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Từ 15 đến dưới 20 triệu đồng		
		<input type="checkbox"/> 6 Trên 40 triệu đồng	

Để giúp cho việc nghiên cứu thuận lợi hơn, nếu có thể Quý vị cho biết tên, địa chỉ liên hệ:

Tên của Quý vị:

Địa chỉ của Quý vị:

.....

Số điện thoại:

Xin chân thành cảm ơn sự hợp tác của Quý vị!

Appendix 4: EFA (Round 1)

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.896
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square	8014.783
Sphericity df	741
Sig.	.000

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
INT1	.673	.703
INT2	.706	.727
INT3	.653	.676
INT4	.654	.641
NS1	.557	.540
NS2	.587	.619
NS3	.536	.582
NS4	.508	.512
NS5	.503	.565
CS1	.542	.453
CS2	.625	.648
CS3	.620	.621
CS4	.636	.649
CS5	.475	.415
CS6	.659	.729
CS7	.312	.218
IS1	.294	.212

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
IS2	.687	.690
IS3	.674	.658
IS4	.381	.289
IS5	.723	.734
IS6	.710	.722
IS7	.756	.775
ATT1	.602	.619
ATT2	.702	.707
ATT3	.714	.761
ATT4	.625	.648
SN1	.452	.396
SN2	.603	.629
SN3	.617	.646
SN4	.648	.698
PBC1	.600	.546
PBC2	.559	.578
PBC3	.646	.750
PBC4	.555	.555
MJ1	.751	.794
MJ2	.756	.813
MJ3	.689	.704
MJ4	.718	.749

Extraction Method:
Principal Axis Factoring.

Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
	Total	% Variance	of Cumulative %	Total	% Variance	of Cumulative %	Total
1	10.701	27.439	27.439	10.343	26.521	26.521	7.088
2	3.962	10.159	37.598	3.613	9.263	35.784	5.819
3	3.574	9.164	46.762	3.188	8.174	43.957	5.333
4	2.280	5.845	52.607	1.998	5.124	49.081	6.926
5	2.171	5.567	58.174	1.794	4.600	53.681	3.175
6	1.707	4.378	62.552	1.353	3.470	57.151	6.680
7	1.280	3.283	65.835	.946	2.427	59.577	3.265
8	1.095	2.809	68.644	.737	1.890	61.467	7.147
9	.882	2.261	70.905				
10	.850	2.179	73.083				
11	.827	2.121	75.204				
12	.674	1.729	76.933				
13	.645	1.655	78.587				
14	.619	1.588	80.176				
15	.596	1.528	81.703				
16	.502	1.287	82.990				
17	.487	1.250	84.240				
18	.462	1.184	85.424				
19	.448	1.149	86.573				
20	.427	1.094	87.667				

21	.377	.966	88.634				
22	.362	.928	89.562				
23	.342	.878	90.440				
24	.332	.852	91.292				
25	.315	.808	92.100				
26	.307	.786	92.886				
27	.304	.779	93.665				
28	.293	.752	94.417				
29	.275	.705	95.122				
30	.231	.593	95.715				
31	.224	.575	96.290				
32	.217	.558	96.848				
33	.213	.546	97.394				
34	.205	.525	97.919				
35	.185	.474	98.393				
36	.176	.451	98.843				
37	.158	.406	99.250				
38	.152	.389	99.639				
39	.141	.361	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Factor Matrix^a

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INT1	.619		.310				-.399	
INT2	.629	.226	.378				-.361	
INT3	.615		.272				-.405	
INT4	.562	.285	.339				-.311	
NS1	.248	.350	.507		.250			
NS2	.234	.499	.432		.265			
NS3		.674				-.305		
NS4		.456	.369		.228	-.213		
NS5		.462	.351		.307	-.327		
CS1	.607							
CS2	.486		-.443	.227	.303	.222		
CS3	.565		-.223	.237	.341	.246		
CS4	.518		-.384		.343	.249		
CS5	.546				.254			
CS6	.495		-.339	.255	.466	.265		
CS7	.248		-.303					
IS1	-.423							
IS2	-.600	.382		.381				
IS3	-.617	.371		.347				
IS4	-.420							
IS5	-.622	.443		.354				
IS6	-.613	.439		.323				

IS7	-.580	.414		.442			
ATT1	.580	.318			-.308		-.217
ATT2	.693	.208			-.291		-.225
ATT3	.645	.285			-.319	.249	-.262
ATT4	.615	.243			-.337	.222	-.205
SN1	-.478		.353				
SN2	-.273		.581			.388	
SN3	-.256	-.227	.585			.356	.209
SN4	-.237	-.316	.655			.290	
PBC1	.640				-.344		
PBC2	.558				-.206		.386
PBC3	.660				-.300		.426
PBC4	.609				-.207		.321
MJ1	.525	-.399		.521		-.257	
MJ2	.485	-.416		.549		-.261	
MJ3	.564	-.373		.442			
MJ4	.558	-.385		.464		-.237	

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

a. 8 factors extracted. 9 iterations required.

Pattern Matrix^a

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INT1						.858		
INT2						.810		
INT3						.848		
INT4						.756		
NS1					.647		.241	
NS2					.734			
NS3	.231				.628		-.289	
NS4					.700			
NS5					.763			
CS1	-.371	.308						
CS2		.788						
CS3		.759						
CS4		.785						
CS5	-.368	.342						
CS6		.914						
CS7		.345					-.233	
IS1	.272							
IS2	.857							
IS3	.809							
IS4	.298						.304	-.205
IS5	.857							
IS6	.862							
IS7	.991							

ATT1				.778				
ATT2				.772				
ATT3				.911				
ATT4				.807				
SN1							.280	-.318
SN2							.796	
SN3							.824	
SN4							.786	
PBC1				.301				.380
PBC2								.821
PBC3								.933
PBC4								.729
MJ1			.911					
MJ2			.945					
MJ3			.784					
MJ4			.839					

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Structure Matrix

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INT1	-.395	.323	.261	.471	.283	.835		.439
INT2	-.373	.313	.322	.486	.380	.845		.432
INT3	-.358	.324	.288	.483	.258	.820		.449
INT4	-.251	.252	.267	.537	.326	.784		.416
NS1				.240	.678	.373	.205	
NS2				.236	.771	.378		
NS3	.273		-.219		.634		-.321	
NS4				.250	.708	.272		
NS5					.740	.245		
CS1	-.574	.481	.358	.389		.431		.436
CS2	-.217	.789	.206	.317		.230	-.363	.360
CS3	-.300	.780	.301	.368		.356		.402
CS4	-.262	.798		.309		.300	-.325	.401
CS5	-.543	.481	.394	.269		.328		.374
CS6	-.268	.845	.251	.264		.245	-.226	.307
CS7		.393					-.343	
IS1	.381	-.355		-.280		-.236		-.338
IS2	.822	-.246	-.356	-.277		-.373		-.407
IS3	.809	-.297	-.359	-.317		-.359		-.439
IS4	.371	-.246		-.285		-.223	.357	-.409
IS5	.854	-.288	-.388	-.301		-.383		-.419

IS6	.845	-.276	-.420	-.289		-.343		-.406
IS7	.864	-.240	-.325	-.267		-.293		-.366
ATT1	-.245	.337		.775		.419	-.300	.519
ATT2	-.382	.361	.336	.832		.575		.564
ATT3	-.303	.337	.280	.866	.244	.523		.531
ATT4	-.299	.298	.289	.803	.201	.463		.534
SN1	.296	-.406		-.387		-.269	.443	-.531
SN2		-.276					.783	-.292
SN3		-.266		-.208			.797	-.257
SN4		-.349		-.212			.827	-.261
PBC1	-.450	.298	.348	.605		.461	-.221	.669
PBC2	-.329	.331		.468		.368	-.297	.747
PBC3	-.388	.373	.309	.569		.467		.856
PBC4	-.416	.360	.269	.498		.394	-.213	.743
MJ1	-.394	.284	.889	.267		.316		.298
MJ2	-.360	.234	.898	.265		.274		.264
MJ3	-.437	.310	.834	.345		.348		.334
MJ4	-.429	.287	.861	.330		.348		.323

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Appendix 5: EFA (Round 2)

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.886
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square	6827.938
Sphericity df	496
Sig.	.000

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
INT1	.659	.699
INT2	.697	.728
INT3	.641	.676
INT4	.640	.643
NS1	.537	.536
NS2	.571	.620
NS3	.518	.580
NS4	.495	.519
NS5	.490	.564
CS2	.601	.635
CS3	.610	.638
CS4	.624	.669
CS6	.604	.693
IS2	.673	.681
IS3	.667	.667
IS5	.708	.727
IS6	.694	.717
IS7	.749	.800

ATT1	.591	.627
ATT2	.691	.718
ATT3	.679	.735
ATT4	.612	.653
SN2	.564	.609
SN3	.603	.686
SN4	.634	.708
PBC2	.540	.573
PBC3	.614	.765
PBC4	.531	.560
MJ1	.740	.789
MJ2	.747	.816
MJ3	.677	.713
MJ4	.706	.746

Extraction Method: Principal Axis
Factoring.

Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	8.994	28.107	28.107	8.685	27.142	27.142	5.533
2	3.859	12.059	40.166	3.516	10.986	38.128	4.840
3	3.246	10.144	50.310	2.899	9.060	47.188	5.890
4	2.192	6.851	57.162	1.933	6.039	53.227	4.551
5	1.880	5.874	63.036	1.534	4.793	58.020	3.261
6	1.616	5.049	68.085	1.281	4.002	62.022	5.901
7	1.258	3.930	72.016	.930	2.905	64.927	2.731
8	1.057	3.304	75.320	.714	2.230	67.156	5.346
9	.641	2.003	77.323				
10	.535	1.671	78.995				
11	.495	1.548	80.542				
12	.483	1.509	82.051				
13	.455	1.421	83.473				
14	.446	1.393	84.866				
15	.416	1.300	86.166				
16	.385	1.202	87.368				
17	.370	1.156	88.524				
18	.340	1.061	89.586				
19	.337	1.054	90.639				
20	.314	.982	91.621				

21	.308	.962	92.583				
22	.300	.938	93.521				
23	.281	.879	94.401				
24	.243	.758	95.159				
25	.239	.747	95.906				
26	.230	.719	96.626				
27	.215	.671	97.297				
28	.193	.604	97.901				
29	.187	.585	98.486				
30	.175	.546	99.032				
31	.162	.506	99.538				
32	.148	.462	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Factor Matrix^a

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INT1	.642	.217	.235				-.387	
INT2	.660	.256	.301				-.351	
INT3	.641	.212	.201				-.389	
INT4	.596	.307	.251				-.313	
NS1	.278	.420	.447		-.227			
NS2	.272	.553	.350		-.256			
NS3		.667				-.294		
NS4	.228	.507	.285		-.244			

NS5		.502	.282		-.328	-.293		
CS2	.459		-.505		-.269	.250		
CS3	.558		-.305		-.313	.291		
CS4	.493		-.455		-.341	.285		
CS6	.471		-.387		-.418	.306		
IS2	-.579	.388		.393				
IS3	-.600	.384		.371				
IS5	-.602	.439		.369				
IS6	-.596	.429		.341				
IS7	-.567	.422		.472				
ATT1	.588	.277			.337			-.207
ATT2	.707				.324			-.224
ATT3	.659	.273			.335		.222	-.247
ATT4	.628	.224			.367			
SN2	-.245		.598			.386		
SN3	-.224		.627			.392	.248	
SN4	-.208	-.203	.703			.301		
PBC2	.545							.398
PBC3	.652				.302			.449
PBC4	.594				.221			.338
MJ1	.539	-.398		.518		-.227		
MJ2	.505	-.412		.554		-.237		
MJ3	.582	-.383		.439				
MJ4	.576	-.392		.460				

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

a. 8 factors extracted. 12 iterations required.

Pattern Matrix^a

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INT1						.846		
INT2						.804		
INT3						.836		
INT4						.753		
NS1					.647		.234	
NS2					.740			
NS3	.212				.628		-.276	
NS4					.713			
NS5					.776			
CS2				.759				
CS3				.761				
CS4				.795				
CS6				.878				
IS2	.813							
IS3	.786							
IS5	.819							
IS6	.824							
IS7	.966							
ATT1			.779					
ATT2			.774					
ATT3			.865					
ATT4			.791					
SN2							.778	
SN3							.853	

SN4							.783	
PBC2								.750
PBC3								.870
PBC4								.682
MJ1		.908						
MJ2		.948						
MJ3		.780						
MJ4		.830						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Structure Matrix

	Factor							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
INT1	-.366	.258	.466	.301	.304	.833		.421
INT2	-.342	.322	.481	.289	.399	.847		.416
INT3	-.335	.286	.475	.315	.281	.819		.424
INT4	-.225	.265	.532	.235	.346	.786		.409
NS1			.253		.679	.382	.212	
NS2			.254		.773	.392		
NS3	.290	-.219			.632		-.320	
NS4			.262		.715	.278		
NS5					.738	.258		
CS2		.207	.313	.787		.223	-.369	.340
CS3	-.256	.298	.371	.787		.351		.393
CS4	-.217		.298	.813		.288	-.335	.366

CS6	-.223	.250	.265	.826		.243	-.229	.283
IS2	.820	-.357	-.261	-.203		-.367		-.366
IS3	.813	-.360	-.301	-.268		-.351		-.402
IS5	.849	-.384	-.283	-.255		-.374		-.375
IS6	.843	-.417	-.273	-.231		-.335		-.378
IS7	.884	-.322	-.258	-.217		-.286		-.334
ATT1	-.215		.782	.331	.212	.414	-.272	.499
ATT2	-.345	.333	.836	.342	.223	.569		.537
ATT3	-.270	.281	.853	.323	.277	.511		.505
ATT4	-.269	.289	.805	.276	.227	.454		.519
SN2				-.288			.770	-.260
SN3				-.279			.822	-.213
SN4			-.210	-.369			.834	-.242
PBC2	-.298		.456	.331		.359	-.268	.748
PBC3	-.354	.306	.554	.360		.454		.870
PBC4	-.382	.268	.488	.334		.384		.744
MJ1	-.371	.886	.254	.266		.306		.270
MJ2	-.340	.899	.254	.211		.268		.250
MJ3	-.422	.838	.337	.299		.343		.307
MJ4	-.409	.860	.324	.276		.341		.295

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Appendix 6: Cronbach's Alpha of the Factors

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.891	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
INT1	10.177	7.534	.763	.858
INT2	10.204	7.637	.783	.852
INT3	10.259	7.324	.767	.857
INT4	10.235	7.391	.730	.871

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.823	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
NS1	12.332	11.116	.583	.797
NS2	12.555	10.211	.691	.765
NS3	13.220	10.869	.517	.819
NS4	12.732	10.686	.645	.779
NS5	12.747	10.593	.656	.776

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.877	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
CS2	8.966	6.240	.720	.848
CS3	8.887	6.577	.719	.848
CS4	9.027	6.247	.747	.837
CS6	8.854	6.040	.754	.834

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.923	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
IS2	10.018	10.397	.782	.909
IS3	9.976	10.397	.778	.910
IS5	10.149	10.244	.803	.905
IS6	10.183	10.132	.796	.906
IS7	9.979	10.339	.841	.898

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.890	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ATT1	9.796	5.343	.726	.870
ATT2	9.570	5.029	.773	.852
ATT3	9.704	4.961	.786	.847
ATT4	9.591	5.019	.745	.863

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.850	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
SN2	6.954	3.805	.694	.816
SN3	6.872	3.543	.741	.771
SN4	6.668	3.629	.726	.785

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.826	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PBC2	6.506	2.624	.658	.784
PBC3	6.521	2.526	.737	.706
PBC4	6.473	2.605	.655	.788

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.925	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
MJ1	10.695	6.653	.841	.898
MJ2	10.729	6.926	.850	.893
MJ3	10.921	7.657	.800	.912
MJ4	10.817	7.061	.819	.904

Appendix 7: CFA model fit

Model Fit Summary

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	92	817.448	436	.000	1.875
Saturated model	528	.000	0		
Independence model	32	7076.817	496	.000	14.268

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.057	.868	.841	.717
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.266	.260	.212	.244

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.884	.869	.943	.934	.942
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.879	.777	.828
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	1.000	.000	.000

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	381.448	304.777	465.929
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	6580.817	6312.194	6855.873

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	2.500	1.167	.932	1.425
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	21.642	20.125	19.303	20.966

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.052	.046	.057	.296
Independence model	.201	.197	.206	.000

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	1001.448	1022.101	1350.405	1442.405
Saturated model	1056.000	1174.531	3058.711	3586.711
Independence model	7140.817	7148.000	7262.193	7294.193

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	3.063	2.828	3.321	3.126
Saturated model	3.229	3.229	3.229	3.592
Independence model	21.837	21.016	22.679	21.859

HOELTER

Model	HOELTER .05	HOELTER .01
Default model	195	204
Independence model	26	27

Minimization: .032

Miscellaneous: .441

Bootstrap: .000

Total: .473

**Appendix 8: Standardized Regression Weights:
(Group number 1 - Default model) – Round 1**

			Estimate
IS2	<---	1	.817
IS3	<---	1	.816
IS5	<---	1	.852
IS6	<---	1	.840
IS7	<---	1	.880
EJ1	<---	2	.886
EJ2	<---	2	.891
EJ3	<---	2	.843
EJ4	<---	2	.862
ATT1	<---	3	.773
ATT2	<---	3	.851
ATT3	<---	3	.848
ATT4	<---	3	.798
CS2	<---	4	.786
CS3	<---	4	.789
CS4	<---	4	.819
CS6	<---	4	.809
NS1	<---	5	.704
NS2	<---	5	.807
NS3	<---	5	.557
NS4	<---	5	.700
NS5	<---	5	.709
INT1	<---	6	.833

	Estimate
INT2 <--- 6	.859
INT3 <--- 6	.807
INT4 <--- 6	.781
SN2 <--- 7	.765
SN3 <--- 7	.823
SN4 <--- 7	.839
PBC2 <--- 8	.741
PBC3 <--- 8	.864
PBC4 <--- 8	.751

**Appendix 9: Standardized Regression Weights:
(Group number 1 - Default model) – Round 2**

			Estimate
IS2	<---	1	.817
IS3	<---	1	.816
IS5	<---	1	.852
IS6	<---	1	.841
IS7	<---	1	.880
EJ1	<---	2	.886
EJ2	<---	2	.891
EJ3	<---	2	.843
EJ4	<---	2	.862
ATT1	<---	3	.773
ATT2	<---	3	.851
ATT3	<---	3	.847
ATT4	<---	3	.798
CS2	<---	4	.786
CS3	<---	4	.788
CS4	<---	4	.819
CS6	<---	4	.809
NS1	<---	5	.738
NS2	<---	5	.822
NS4	<---	5	.669
NS5	<---	5	.679
INT1	<---	6	.833
INT2	<---	6	.858

	Estimate
INT3 <--- 6	.807
INT4 <--- 6	.781
SN2 <--- 7	.765
SN3 <--- 7	.823
SN4 <--- 7	.838
PBC2 <--- 8	.741
PBC3 <--- 8	.864
PBC4 <--- 8	.751

Appendix 10: Hypothesis testing

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EJ	<---	IS	-.436	.068	-6.434	***	
EJ	<---	CS	.225	.064	3.511	***	
ATT	<---	IS	-.219	.048	-4.535	***	
ATT	<---	CS	.265	.049	5.438	***	
ATT	<---	NS	.244	.049	4.933	***	
INT	<---	ATT	.287	.056	5.102	***	
INT	<---	SN	.003	.041	.085	.932	
INT	<---	PBC	.088	.056	1.562	.118	
INT	<---	EJ	.083	.036	2.283	.022	
INT	<---	NS	.239	.049	4.851	***	
INT	<---	Gender	-.390	.067	-5.833	***	
INT	<---	Age	.364	.065	5.565	***	
INT	<---	Income	.087	.038	2.268	.023	
INT	<---	Edu	.263	.047	5.653	***	
IS2	<---	IS	1.000				
IS3	<---	IS	.988	.055	17.869	***	
IS5	<---	IS	1.072	.062	17.284	***	
IS6	<---	IS	1.074	.062	17.273	***	
IS7	<---	IS	1.033	.057	18.209	***	
EJ4	<---	EJ	1.000				
EJ3	<---	EJ	.869	.045	19.512	***	
EJ2	<---	EJ	1.038	.048	21.652	***	
EJ1	<---	EJ	1.100	.051	21.464	***	
ATT1	<---	ATT	1.000				

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
ATT2 <--- ATT	1.161	.073	16.000	***	
ATT3 <--- ATT	1.174	.073	16.047	***	
ATT4 <--- ATT	1.116	.075	14.852	***	
CS2 <--- CS	1.000				
CS3 <--- CS	.928	.063	14.801	***	
CS4 <--- CS	1.011	.066	15.286	***	
CS6 <--- CS	1.040	.069	15.046	***	
NS1 <--- NS	1.000				
NS2 <--- NS	1.187	.093	12.801	***	
NS4 <--- NS	.857	.083	10.301	***	
NS5 <--- NS	.879	.084	10.500	***	
INT1 <--- INT	1.000				
INT2 <--- INT	.960	.053	18.211	***	
INT3 <--- INT	.973	.059	16.418	***	
INT4 <--- INT	1.022	.068	15.088	***	
SN2 <--- SN	1.000				
SN3 <--- SN	1.112	.078	14.252	***	
SN4 <--- SN	1.101	.077	14.270	***	
PBC2 <--- PBC	1.000				
PBC3 <--- PBC	1.109	.080	13.845	***	
PBC4 <--- PBC	1.009	.079	12.785	***	

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate
EJ <--- IS	-.382
EJ <--- CS	.205
ATT <--- IS	-.259
ATT <--- CS	.326
ATT <--- NS	.291
INT <--- ATT	.214
INT <--- SN	.003
INT <--- PBC	.071
INT <--- EJ	.083
INT <--- NS	.213
INT <--- Gender	-.231
INT <--- Age	.240
INT <--- Income	.105
INT <--- Edu	.239
IS2 <--- IS	.814
IS3 <--- IS	.802
IS5 <--- IS	.864
IS6 <--- IS	.842
IS7 <--- IS	.878
EJ4 <--- EJ	.862
EJ3 <--- EJ	.841
EJ2 <--- EJ	.892
EJ1 <--- EJ	.888
ATT1 <--- ATT	.771
ATT2 <--- ATT	.850

	Estimate
ATT3 <--- ATT	.852
ATT4 <--- ATT	.795
CS2 <--- CS	.786
CS3 <--- CS	.791
CS4 <--- CS	.815
CS6 <--- CS	.803
NS1 <--- NS	.747
NS2 <--- NS	.837
NS4 <--- NS	.630
NS5 <--- NS	.642
INT1 <--- INT	.842
INT2 <--- INT	.840
INT3 <--- INT	.787
INT4 <--- INT	.812
SN2 <--- SN	.771
SN3 <--- SN	.828
SN4 <--- SN	.830
PBC2 <--- PBC	.752
PBC3 <--- PBC	.854
PBC4 <--- PBC	.751

Squared Multiple Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate
ATT	.331
EJ	.232
INT	.766
PBC4	.565
PBC3	.730
PBC2	.565
SN4	.689
SN3	.685
SN2	.594
INT4	.659
INT3	.619
INT2	.706
INT1	.709
NS5	.412
NS4	.396
NS2	.701
NS1	.557
CS6	.645
CS4	.664
CS3	.626
CS2	.617
ATT4	.631
ATT3	.726
ATT2	.722
ATT1	.595

	Estimate
EJ1	.788
EJ2	.796
EJ3	.707
EJ4	.742
IS7	.770
IS6	.708
IS5	.746
IS3	.643
IS2	.663

Appendix 11: Profile of informants

Order	Gender	Age	Occupations	Living place
Round 1: September – December 2020				
1	Female	32	Director of branding at a beverage firm.	Hanoi
2	Male	38	Director of sales at real estate company	Hanoi
3	Female	42	Manager in a publicly traded firm	Hanoi
4	Female	50	Freelancer	Hanoi
5	Female	43	Businesswoman	Hanoi
6	Female	31	Director of an advertising agency	Hanoi
7	Female	41	Program's Co-Ordinator	Hanoi
8	Male	37	Official	Hanoi
9	Male	25	Businessman	Hanoi
10	Male	35	Government officer	Hanoi
Round 2: Ferbruary– April 2021				
11	Female	54	Designer	Hanoi
12	Female	39	Sales director at a megamall	Hanoi
13	Male	45	Director of an architectural company	Hanoi
14	Female	42	Owner of a fashion store	Hanoi
15	Female	46	Lawyer	Hanoi
16	Female	19	Student	Hanoi
17	Female	45	Highschool teacher	Hanoi
18	Female	20	Student	Hanoi
19	Female	40	Doctor	Hanoi
20	Female	28	Marketer	Hanoi

Order	Gender	Age	Occupations	Living place
21	Female	20	Student	Hanoi
22	Female	26	Officer	Hanoi
23	Female	38	Lecture	Hanoi
24	Female	32	Doctor	Hanoi
25	Female	48	Primary school Teacher	Hanoi
26	Female	23	Student	Hanoi
27	Male	32	IT manager	Hanoi
28	Female	30	Government officer	Hanoi
29	Female	25	Accountant	Hanoi
30	Female	42	Businesswoman	Hanoi
31	Male	36	Interpreter	Hanoi
32	Female	49	Lecture	Hanoi
33	Female	33	Director of a bank	Hanoi
34	Female	45	Businesswoman	Hanoi
35	Male	40	CEO of a garment company	Hanoi
36	Female	30	Director assistant	Hanoi
37	Female	34	Head of Human Resources Department of a bank	Hanoi
38	Female	56	Director of a public company	Hanoi
39	Male	29	CEO of a growing startup company	Hanoi
40	Female	29	Financial advisor	Hanoi
41	Female	47	PR director	Hanoi
42	Female	53	Recruitment director	Hanoi