Exploring the role of Country of Origin for Luxury Personal Care Products in India

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Abstract

Indian consumers are widely using luxury brands primarily in the personal care segment. The number of high net worth individuals has increased, awareness is enhanced and individuals are concerned about their looks and presentation. This paper explores the factors that consumers consider while buying luxury personal care products; additionally, it also explores the effects of country of origin on consumers' behaviour in the same segment. We carried out qualitative research in two phases; first, focus group discussions were conducted in two metro cities, Mumbai and Delhi. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights from the respondents. The study found that brand promise and value, packaging, customization and quality of the product are the factors that influence luxury consumers' behaviour. They prefer online media for exploring the products. Country of origin as well as social media had a very low impact on their behaviour for luxury personal care products; social media being a mass medium, there is no exclusivity in these platforms. We have developed a conceptual model that can help marketers of such products develop better strategies.

Keywords: Luxury Products, Country of Origin, India, Luxury Personal Care Products
1. Introduction:
The luxury market has a double-digit annual growth rate globally. It is predicted that worldwide revenues of luxury products would grow faster than the global Gross Domestic Product, GDP. The growth is primarily observed in emerging countries such as Brazil, Russia, India and China as they account for 11% of the global sales; this is expected to grow by 16% over the next five years (Luxury Goods in India, 2013). The present volume of sales of luxury personal care products in India is INR 6 billion (Euromonitor International, 2014). Moreover, India is specifically becoming the increasingly preferred destination for luxury brands, besides China. The Indian luxury market is projected to reach $14.7 billion by 2015 (Jha, 2013). India has several luxury brands such as Burberry, Hermes, Gucci, Dior, Louis Vuitton, etc. with a high market share. Additionally, the number of high net worth individuals has increased in India and they prefer luxury brands. Indian consumers who buy luxury products are knowledgeable, ambitious and are willing to spend on these brands (Jain et al., 2012). It provides a good platform for luxury brands as consumers are excited about this concept. Luxury brands are primarily in all the product categories such as apparel, accessories, automobiles and personal care category. India is a promising market for luxury brands (Euromonitor, 2013) and therefore, brands are keen to explore it.

Beauty and personal care products consistently perform very well in the Indian markets. The value percentage growth in the premium personal care products from 2007-2012 was 207.3% and in 2013, it grew by 25.8%. Moreover, this segment is expected to grow by 30-35% (KPMG, 2014) this year. The primary consumers of these products are from the urban markets; these consumers are concerned about personal grooming. Urban males are also focused on their looks and appearance and consciously select luxury products for their grooming. It is expected that this category will continuously grow as consumers are increasing their focus on personal grooming. Consumers are willing to buy these products as they feel that this category provides a good value proposition. Globalization has also served as a catalyst as it has helped in increasing the level of awareness of international brands among consumers (“Beauty and Personal Care in India”, 2013). However, in India, there is a high potential and several opportunities to explore this untapped segment as there are just a few brands. There are no Indian luxury brands in the personal care segment. There are primarily international brands with few outlets in India.

Luxury branding is widely studied in literature the focus is primarily on different cultures (Eng & Bogaert, 2010), experience of consumers and their motives (Venkatesh et al., 2010), intentions towards purchase (Amatulli & Guido, 2011) and the Indian consumer’s behaviour (Jain et al., 2012). However, there were a few studies on Indian luxury consumers and in our literature view, we could identify only one study (Godey et al., 2012) on country of origin that was related to India. This study was conducted in seven countries and India was part of the entire research project and focused on the effect of country of origin on luxury purchase decisions. It is an unusual phenomenon that luxury brands have foreign origin and do not have an Indian heritage. There is a dearth of knowledge in comprehending motives and drivers of consumers in India. This paper captures Indian luxury consumers and understands the role of country of origin in their purchase decisions primarily for the personal care category. This study focuses on understanding and analysing the consumer perceptions on luxury brands and the drivers that
motivate the Indian consumers to purchase luxury personal care products.

In the subsequent section, we will review the literature on luxury, luxury brands and purchase behaviour, cue utilization as a theoretical framework, country of origin, country image and consumer ethnocentrism. After reviewing the literature in the following sections, we propose objectives, research methodology which includes study 1 and 2, empirical results, proposition and conceptual model developed from the data, discussion, implication and scope for future research.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Luxury
Luxury can be defined as the concept of seeking happiness via consumption. This was initiated originally by the western countries but eventually was used by the other nations as well. Luxury can be defined as a state of comfort or elegance with the high price (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998) and artistic (Roper et al., 2013) and experiential in nature (Berthon et al., 2009). There are various definitions about luxury by different scholars. They have defined luxury as comfort, extravagance, splendour, lavishness, and opulence (Hallott, 2013). Luxury also represents quality, uniqueness, high price, exclusivity, heritage and speciality (Berthon et al., 2009). Consumers perceive luxury to be novel and exclusive, and satisfaction can be derived from rarity (Cervellon, 2013). Luxury brands have to always modify their strategies according to the consumer preferences and global demand (Daswani & Jain 2011).

Consumers focus on exclusivity in luxury which evokes esteem and respect. Additionally, high prices are perceived to be an evidence of excellent quality by consumers. Moreover, Phau and Prendergast (2000) support this argument with the statement that brands that induce exclusivity and have renowned and established identity are termed as luxury brands. They have high brand awareness, excellent perceived quality and are able to retain sales and consumer loyalty. The benefits that the consumers derive from luxury brands are hedonic, symbolic, experiential and functional. The consumers' intention to use the products for pleasure is referred to as hedonic, symbolic and experiential. Physical attributes of the products, performance, and quality and craftsmanship elements are related to functional dimensions of luxury brands (Berthon et al., 2009). Luxury brands are consumed due to two drivers - personally and socially oriented attributes (Truong, 2010). Interestingly, Kapferer (1998) found that consumers perceived that excellence, beauty and distinctiveness of the products are important dimensions to adore luxury brands. The worth of a luxury brand is confirmed by its inherent characteristics such as outstanding performance, classiness, intrinsic values and high quality. Additionally, the luxury market consists of affluent as well as non-affluent consumers (Hader, 2008) as the latter also aspire for these upscale brands. Consumers have different purchase behaviours while buying luxury brands. There are different motives and drivers that influence their decisions.

2.2 Luxury Brands and Purchase Behaviour
Traditionally, the primary motive of purchasing luxury brands was to show off or to impress others, which was considered to be the principles of luxury brands marketing management (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). The concept of luxury branding has evolved from the theory of impression management to the fact that consumers have an internal urge to create a favourable social image by their purchases (Mandrik, 1996; Sallot, 2002). The two outcomes of this behaviour are social
salience and social identification. Social salience is an effect where the brand is a symbol of tastefulness and importance for the consumer. Social identification is an effect where the brand is considered as a common sign for social groups. Marketers also used this theory while developing strategies for luxury brands by reducing the utilitarian element and displaying upfront the noticeable achievement and enhancement of sociality by emphasizing on “buying to impress others”.

There are two views about luxury brand consumption—socially oriented and personally oriented. Socially oriented views focus on the 'show off' attitude while personally oriented views emphasize that luxury is being consumed by consumers for personal satisfaction. Personal orientation was theorized by Wong and Ahuvia (1998) and it was found that luxury consumption is associated with self-directed hedonic experience, private meanings of the products and analysis of the products by individual-based standards. Literature of luxury branding has also moved from “buying to impress others” as stated by many studies (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999) to personal consumption. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the elements of personally oriented luxury consumption such as self-directed pleasure, self-gift giving, congruity with internal self, quality assurance and independent self-construal in detail to understand the consumers comprehensively.

2.2.1 Luxury Brands and Self—Directed Pleasure

Self-directed pleasure has been defined as an important element which individuals perceive in creating their own hedonic experience. This experience is intensive and impulsive yet self-determined (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Le Bel and Dube (2001) stated that self-directed pleasure features the feelings of bliss, contentment, and ecstasy for the self that is contrasted to the relational qualities of caring, love and interpersonal warmth which dominate other-directed pleasure. Moreover, there are two types of pleasure developed from the hedonic experience—personalized and socialized. Interestingly, Vigneron and Johnson (1999) proposed that consumers with stronger personal orientation may seek self-directed pleasure from luxury-brand products. When seeking self-directed pleasure, consumers attend only to sensuous and affective gratifications for the self, and the luxury-brand product that has affective values catering to the consumer’s personal preference would be acquired. Additionally, Kucukemiroglu (1999) empirically verified this concept among different segments of consumers with different lifestyles and found that self-directed pleasure is a statistically significant dimension in luxury consumption.

2.2.2 Luxury brands and Self-gift Giving

Self-gift giving as a form of self-communication was conceptualized by Mick and Demoss (1990). It is related to inordinate indulgences, which specially mean to satisfy the self’s own dreams and aspirations. A framework was later developed by Roth (2001) to describe how consumer objects are used by people to attain “affective” goals. The study also discovered “affective consumption” for depicting the behaviour of self-gift giving. It denotes positive feelings to achieve the goal and leaving the negative affective state. Moreover, there are four types of affective consumption, namely, recovery, relief, sensation and fulfilment.

The strategies for improving the negative mood are relief and recovery, and better feelings can be accomplished by sensation and fulfilment. The decision making rationale is self-gift regardless of the
type of affective consumption. According to mood theorists, consumers who are in a bad mood buy luxury products to work on the negativity. Interestingly, when consumers want to celebrate, then again they would like to indulge in luxury with a strong emotional state (Luomala, 2002). Additionally, it was found in the luxury brand consumption behaviour that “by the self for the self” is a precursor of personal orientation (O’Cass & Frost, 2002). Individuals consume luxury as a self-gift and not for impressing others. The integration of affective consumption theory and mood regulation theory demonstrate that self-gift giving can be an antecedent of personally-oriented luxury consumption.

2.2.3 Congruity with Internal Self
There are primarily two types of self - external (social) and internal (private). The external self is associated with the way other individuals perceive the person. The internal self is related to the individual and how the person perceives him or herself. These two facets constitute the totality of self but variations in the personality traits may make one element to be more dominant in decision making (Sirgy & Johar 1999).

According to Doherty and Schlenker (1991), high private-conscious consumers exhibit a stronger personally oriented disposition towards the product’s image. Recently, Puntoni (2001) also confirmed that there is a significant impact of self-congruity on luxury-brand purchase. The findings indicated that consumers, who are more private-conscious and stronger in personally oriented disposition, will buy a luxury-brand product primarily due to the congruity between their internal self and the image of the product.

2.2.4 Luxury Brands and Quality assurance
Superior quality is an important attribute of luxury products. Consumers perceive that prestige and premium price offers better quality of luxury products as compared to non-luxury items (O’Cass & Frost 2002). Hafstrom, Chae and Chung (1992) identified that ‘perfectionism and high-quality consciousness’ consumers are highly concerned about product quality and are inclined to buy luxury brands mainly due to their perceived excellence in quality and performance. Luxury brands are usually not purchased for the conspicuousness of the brand name but for the excellent product quality (Gentry et al., 2001). Moreover, consumers do not buy counterfeit luxury brands as they have inferior quality. It is known as “the quality assurance effect”, which is utilitarian in nature and is considered by many luxury consumers while making the purchase decision. Miquel, Capilliurer and Aldas-Manzano (2002) further confirmed that consumers who give emphasis on quality are inclined to buy prestige-brand products over store-brand products. They perceive that quality differs in both the categories. Therefore, it can be stated that consumers select prestige brands because of high quality and factors such as ‘buying to impress others’ do not affect their purchase behaviour. These findings also support the view that quality assurance is an antecedent of personally oriented luxury-brand consumption.

2.2.5 Luxury Brands and Independent self-construal
Social psychologists say that independent self-construal allows the individuals to define objectives and prioritize personal goals over group goals. Independent self-construal deals with the characteristic of having a separate, unique and decontextualized self that allows people to participate in the world by expressing their own thoughts, feelings and actions. The emphasis is on personal goals,
personal achievement and appreciation of unique characteristics.

In short, individuals with independent self-construal exhibit a propensity to be individualistic, egocentric, autonomous, self-reliant and self-contained. They assess themselves on a merit basis, take care of themselves and enjoy being unique and different from others. This is also associated with the personal orientation towards luxury-brand purchase (Gudykunst & Lee 2003). Therefore, it is important to understand how independent self-construal is a primary element for luxury-brand consumers who focus on self-directed consumption goals.

It is very important to note that the studies primarily come from developed countries and with the Western perspective. They are not from emerging countries such as India. There is much less focus to understand the Indian market and its consumers in spite of the fact that there would be 400,000 HNIs by 2015 with a collective wealth of $2.6 trillion (ASSOCHAM, 2013).

2.2.6 Luxury brands and Indian Consumers

Indian consumers evaluate luxury brands by aesthetics, value and style. It helps the brands to develop a long-term association with the consumers (Som, 2011). Indian consumers grow up in a social environment and are concerned about their image in society (Schultz and Jain, 2013). Indian consumers also admire innovations with historical importance as they make decisions via values and culture (Atwal & Kahn, 2009). They are influenced by western nations but have customs and rituals from the Indian culture (Schultz and Jain, 2013). Additionally, Indian luxury consumers have two categories - global Indians who have ‘old’ money and young Indians who have ‘new’ money. The global Indian indulges in luxury for personal satisfaction while the young Indian consumers luxury due to high peer pressure and to appear to be flamboyant. They are more tech savvy and use more digital media while consuming luxury than the global Indian (Schultz and Jain, 2013). Moreover, Indian consumers are emotional and portray their emotions about luxury products extensively on digital platforms; for instance, they make purchases with their friends and it is primarily known as “we purchase” (Schultz and Jain, 2014). They also use three mediums for their luxury consumption - TV, mobile and computer. They read blogs to initiate discussions (Schultz and Jain, 2014) and websites, apps, sitcoms and Twitter to accumulate further information about luxury brands (Jain et al., 2014). They also like sophistication and comfort primarily when they shop alone. Additionally, they use their internal cue for assessing quality, self indulgence and symbolic characteristics for luxury brands (Jain et al., 2012). It can be inferred that consumers emphasize on product traits and brand involvement. In our literature review, we have identified that many studies have focused on basic elements of products but only one study has emphasized on country of origin and its effect on Indian consumers, which is another crucial area of brand involvement.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Cue utilization framework helps in encapsulating the effect on brand familiarity which deals with the direct and indirect association of brand and consumer experience (Campbell & Keller, 2003). This theory states that consumers use multiple cues to frame judgments about brands to evaluate the product quality (Olson, 1972). The cue utilization theory defines the two cues that influence the purchase decision: extrinsic and intrinsic. The extrinsic cues are related to the consumer. These cues are associated with brand, packaging, characteristics, quality, price,
brand and country of origin. However, intrinsic cues are the basic characteristics of the products and cannot be changed as easily as physical elements need to be modified. Country of origin is the external cue that is used by the consumers while making evaluations.

2.4 Country of Origin
Earlier the term “Made in” was used by many companies and organizations to state the origin of the products and brands. However, now “country of assembly”, “country of design” is extensively used in marketing communication strategies after globalization (Lee et al., 2013). Many multi-national companies and organizations have shifted manufacturing from their own country to various nations in the world (Godey et al., 2012), primarily to reduce the cost and attain a competitive advantage. Companies develop a standardized process for products and manufacture brands in different countries. It can be inferred that products are manufactured in one country and are branded and standardized in another nation causing a great deal of fussiness among the consumers (Snaiderbaur, 2009).

Country of origin is the extrinsic cue that affects the assessment pattern of consumers for various products and brands (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Consumers' cognitive, affective and normative thinking is influenced by country of origin as they associate it with product quality, value of the product, perceived risk and purchase intentions. Additionally, many meta-analysis and empirical studies have identified country of origin as an influence on the actual purchase of the consumers (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). The name of the country becomes the categorical cue as it facilitates consumers in processing the information. It is also cognitive in nature as it encapsulates the brand origin and different products developed in a nation. It can be stated that consumers assess the products and brands according to the stereotypical beliefs about the countries. Interestingly, when several nations are involved in the product, consumers are able to differentiate between country of origin and manufacturing nation (Lee et al., 2013).

Country of Origin is considered to be a very important aspect for a luxury brand. It needs to be investigated crucially in consumer behaviour primarily for luxury brands. These brands are from the high involvement category and the purchase decision is carried out scientifically and in a thoughtful manner as consumers pay extra over the basic products.

A brand, in a way, represents the history of a firm. It has been widely accepted as the representation of ‘the memory’ of a firm, encompassing the research activities, innovations, process technologies, or any other investment carried out by the firm over time. However, brands can be used by customers as a channel or means of expression of their individualism, attitudes, and needs. Moreover, the brand defines how the product is perceived by the customers. Brand creates imagery in the mind of the consumer and associates it with the country of origin. Consumers' purchase intentions are primarily studied with the three parameters - 1. the fundamental components of the brand and the specific functions it performs; 2. the relational dimension of the brand and brand personality; and 3. the brand experience. Additionally, it has been examined that the interplay between the brand and the country of origin affect the perceptions and purchase intent of the individuals. According to Haubl and Elrod (1999), perception of a brand can be enhanced when the country of origin is visible to the consumers. The images also influence the perception
about country of origin (Busacca, Bertoli & Molteni, 2006). The perceived country of origin helps in shaping the personality of the brand. Therefore, it is important to intersect country of origin and brand for effective understanding of the concepts. The brand interactions and the country of origin are important, especially for global brands as they may have different country of manufacturing/assembly and country of design or origin. Pecotich and Ward (2007) identified that a brand can develop a holistic image by using the various elements and familiarizing consumers with it. Country of origin takes precedence over the brand as it formulates the perception about product quality.

Maheswaran (1994) also indicated that the country of origin is used by the consumers while evaluating products as it indicates product quality. The degree to which the country of origin affects evaluations is determined by the strength of the attribute information and level of expertise of the consumers. Consumers need clear information about country of origin as it helps them in developing decisions about the brand. They do not like unclear and ambiguous information about country of origin of the brand. Moreover, it can be inferred that country of origin acts as an external informational clue for consumers' perceptions and evaluations of the product (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). The country of origin acts as a signal of product quality and influences the consumers' perceptions about the brand value and associated risk (Phau & Chao, 2008).

Research on the country of origin is also primarily focused on consumers' quality evaluations and intentions to purchase a product (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999). Price is another element that is important besides quality when country of origin is discussed because it represents “the amount of money we must sacrifice to acquire something we desire” (B.Monroe, 2003). Another reason for focusing more on price is that it identifies to what extent consumers’ perceptions of different countries of origin are dissimilar as it is reflected in the amount that the consumers pay for various product categories (D.Jaffe & D.Nebenzahl, 1993). The studies identified that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for branded products associated with a country of origin which has a favourable image as compared to the products from a nation that has a less familiar image. It gets further reflected in the actual purchase as well (Fischer et al, 2012).

Research about country of origin and luxury branding is primarily focused on developed nations such as US and Australia (Guhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000) but according to our knowledge, there are no exclusive studies on emerging markets such as India. There are different stereotype images about various countries and it influences the consumer perception about the brands (Lotz & Hu, 2001).

2.5 Country Image

The image of the countries are developed in terms of these elements - historical, economic and political (Nagashima, 1970). The image of the country also gets affected by the workmanship, prestige, design and innovation (Roth & Romeo, 1992). Moreover, a country’s image also influences the consumer’s purchase decisions. Some studies found that the country of manufacture is more important than the quality and price of the brands (Lantz & Loeb, 1996). Consumers have a positive image about developed nations and perceive a good image about the countries which produce products of good quality (Lee et al., 2013).
A cross cultural study between Australia and US found that there was no difference in consumers’ attitude pertaining to luxury brands as both the nations are renowned globally. However, China was considered to manufacture low quality products, which influences consumers’ purchase decisions even in other countries (Lee et al., 2013). It would be crucial to comprehend what would be the role of the country of origin and image for luxury brands primarily for other emerging markets such as India.

Some research studies discussed consumer ethnocentrism as it is associated with the assessment of purchasing products developed in a foreign country while having the image of the nation (Sharma et al., 1995). It was found that consumers with high ethnocentrism would buy products from their own nation (Paciolla & Mia, 2011).

2.6 Consumer ethnocentrism
Consumer ethnocentrism is the loyalty consumers have with brands and products manufactured in their own nation. Consumers relate this with a sense of belonging and acceptability among the group members. Consumers evaluate products on the basis of product traits and quality that are developed in their own country with the brands manufactured by other nations. It can be inferred that consumers with high ethnocentrism will not consider products manufactured by foreign countries as it may adversely affect the economy of their own country due to rise in unemployment. These individuals also feel that it is not patriotic to buy products manufactured abroad. However, consumers with a non-ethnocentric perspective do not lay emphasis on the country of origin as they do not evaluate the product with this dimension. They appreciate and have a positive attitude about foreign brands. It affects the country’s image and the level of industrialization (Lee et al., 2013).

3. Research Objectives:
The major research objectives are:
1. To identify the various factors considered for purchasing luxury personal care brands for existing and prospective consumers.
2. To determine the role of the country of origin for luxury personal care brands on existing and prospective consumers while making purchase decisions.

4. Research Methodology:
Qualitative case based methods were undertaken such as consumers’ perception, attitude and behaviour towards luxury personal care products and role of the country of origin in purchase decisions. This method is used when theories and principles are not established (Yin, 2003). These methods were chosen against quantitative tools as the authors wanted to gain an in-depth understanding and explore a new area which was not structured or organized (Sliver et al., 2013). Earlier, research on Indian consumers found that conventional Indian values and consumption pattern have transformed as collectivism gives way to individualism (Jain et al., 2012).

4.1 Study 1:
This study consisted of focus group discussions where the objective was to generate insights that would help in understanding the needs, perceptions, opinions, attitudes and factors related to luxury personal care brands. We also aimed to study the role of the country of origin on consumers for luxury personal care brands. Focus groups were chosen for this study as they were based on group interaction; this also helped participants to respond and discuss the issues in a
comprehensive manner (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Focus groups are more commonly used in qualitative research (Malhotra & Dash, 2011) as it provides valuable information primarily while examining consumption phenomena.

4.1.1 Protocol
Initially, secondary research from literature was carried out on luxury brands, which included studies of emerging markets such as India. The research involved the exploration of existing literature on luxury brands (Kapferer, 1998), the concept of country of origin (Lee et al., 2013), and its role in consumer behaviour (Jain et al., 2012).

A discussion guideline was developed according to the existing literature and the research objectives. The discussion protocol was drafted in three phases: first, a general discussion about luxury; second, perceptions, drivers, experience and expectations to purchase luxury personal care products, role of the country of origin in buying these products and third, aspirations and expectations from Indian luxury personal care products.

Projective techniques such as word association and image association were also used during this discussion to identify the level of awareness of the respondents with regard to luxury brands, the country of origin of these brands and purchase drivers of personal care luxury brands.

4.1.2 Sample Characteristics
Respondents in the age group of 18-30 of both genders who mainly buy luxury personal care products were purposively sampled to participate in the focus group discussions. A total of four focus groups were conducted in Mumbai and Delhi with eight individuals in each group. These two cities constitute 80% of luxury brand sales in India (Amarnath, 2012).

4.1.3 Process of Conducting
Discussions were carried out at a central location in the city to facilitate respondents to reach the venue on time. Systematic biases were reduced by identifying neutral locations for the respondents. All the discussions were carried out for 90 minutes so that comprehensive views could be captured. The focus group discussions were conducted by the second author to maintain the quality and consistency in the sharing of views and perspectives.

4.2 Study 2:
In the second study, the second author conducted in-depth interviews, which helped in providing comprehensive information about a particular individual's thoughts and ideas. Additionally, the study aimed to understand the consumption pattern, purchase behaviour and purchase decision of individual consumers for luxury personal care brands. We also studied the role of country of origin on individual consumers' purchase decisions via in-depth interviews. Some of the issues that participants hesitated to discuss in Focus Group Discussions (FGD) could be discussed in in-depth interviews (Boyce & Neale, 2006). This technique was utilized as it encapsulated a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. This study was carried out after Study 1 as the interview protocol was drafted after understanding the findings of the previous research.

4.2.1 Protocol
Interview guidelines were developed according to the research objective, existing literature and findings...
from the FGDs. The questions were primarily on luxury personal care brands and specifically on country of origin and its role in purchase decisions of the consumers. Consumers were also asked to share their expectations about Indian luxury personal care products as it could generate deeper insight in the existing literature.

4.2.2 Sample Characteristics
Respondents were in the age of 18-30 years and interviews were conducted in Delhi and Mumbai as these two cities are the capital city and financial heart of the country respectively. A total of 20 in-depth interviews were conducted by the second author. We used the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) for this study. It helps in exploratory studies where data is gathered, codes are extracted from the text and are grouped together to formulate categories and theory. Furthermore, when the information gets saturated from the respondents, data collection is considered complete. After 20 interviews, the data collection process was completed as it was felt that there was data saturation. In a qualitative study, there is always a “diminishing return” point and a higher amount of data collection does not always produce a higher amount of information (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003).

4.2.3 Process of Conducting
All the interviews were conducted by the second author to maintain the quality and consistency in the data. Interviews were audio recorded with the due permission of the respondents. Interviews were conducted in three phases; 1. primary drivers for purchasing luxury personal care products; 2. role of country of origin and views; 3. perceptions and expectations of Indian luxury personal care products.

5. Empirical Results
The data was collected by conducting focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. All the discussions and interviews were audio taped and transcripts were developed for further analysis. The data were further analysed by thematic content analysis and open coding. Verbatim transcripts, notes and observations were analysed to address the research objectives. Authors carried out word-by-word analysis; categories, codes and themes were formulated after comparison and classifications (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Authors developed it independently and subsequently it was compared and analysed to comprehend the consumer behaviour.

6. Thematic Content Analysis:
6.1 Definition of Luxury
Luxury was primarily related to good quality by all the respondents in the focus group and in in-depth interviews. All respondents believed that they expected a luxury brand to provide good quality and it should be offered beyond the brand promise. They mentioned that they trusted luxury brands to offer quality beyond the expectations of the consumers.

The consumers of luxury defined it as an experience and feeling of indulgence. They stated that the reason they used luxury was for self-indulgence and the experience of feeling special and exclusive. Luxury means classiness, elegance and exclusivity to them.

They believed that it would describe their identity and would grab the attention of other people. It will define and reflect their personality.

“It has a lot to do with indulgence and feel good factor” 
(23, Female, Delhi)
“It is something that promises quality and reflects my personality” (23, Female, Mumbai)

6.2 Characteristics associated with Luxury Brands
Respondents felt that luxury brands should be sophisticated, elegant, classy, expensive and artistic. However, the potential users considered it to be aspirational. A respondent from Mumbai stated, “I think a luxury brand would be out of this world, something I aspire to own and something which no one else will have.” The respondents believed that luxury brands have a very high aspirational value and they would like to experience the exclusivity. Another respondent mentioned, “The experience of a luxury brand should be an engrossing process; the more number of senses it touches, the better it is for me” (Male, 24, Mumbai). Interestingly, many respondents expected a luxury brand to have a story or a heritage around it so that they could understand the product in an effective manner. They believed that luxury brands are exclusive and unique so heritage could add more value to the brand.

6.3 Image reflection through Luxury Brands
“It should be worth it if I am spending extra money on it,” said a respondent (Female, 22, Delhi), who believes that despite the quality, experience and good packaging being the obvious characteristics and expectations from a luxury brand, it should be able to deliver what it promises and should provide value for money. The respondents would like to derive pleasure from luxury brands.

“It will give me a sense of accomplishment” (Male, 23, Delhi).

“It is something which differentiates me from the masses” (Female, 23, Mumbai).

The respondents stated that they feel good, elegant and classy. They also mentioned that they start believing in themselves while consuming luxury brands. There were some differences in responses from Delhi and Mumbai. Respondents from Delhi believed that luxury products would help them in conspicuous consumption and it would reflect their image to be exclusive and unique among their peers and friends. However, respondents from Mumbai stated that they would feel sophisticated and would associate a sense of accomplishment with themselves. They exclaimed that they would feel proud of themselves and would be happy with their identity.

Respondents perceived that people who consume luxury are classy, sophisticated, exclusive and elite. Respondents believed that they are respectable and trustworthy.

“It is a materialistic world; I would like to own a luxury brand and want people to look up to me.” (Male, 24, Delhi)

6.4 Perception of Personal Care Luxury Brands
“Personal care luxury brands are sophisticated, classy, caressing and enriching. The thought of using these brands gives me an adrenaline rush” (23, Male, Delhi).

Most respondents believed that personal care luxury brands are very sophisticated, elegant, caring, authentic, and deliver their promise. There were many brands that they could recall as it was on the top of the mind such as Body Shop, Clinique, Forest Essentials, Lush, Neutrogena, Estee lauder and Mac.

All the respondents perceived personal care brands in the luxury segment to have high quality and long lasting effects based on the consumers’ needs. A
respondent stated, “It was perfect how these brands targeted each problem separately; for example, different products for pimple care, and dry skin, which helped in keeping specific products for specific problems”.

The respondents expected these brands to have exceptional technology in the products so that they would be able to deal with their personal problems. They mentioned that they believe in investing in personal care products because their personal hygiene and care are important to them.

Moreover, women knew more about personal care luxury brands than men. Interestingly, when projective techniques such as word association and image association were carried out to understand the subconscious level of the consumers, it was identified that women consumers were more aware about brands and the country of origin of luxury brands than men. Men were not aware about most brands and could not associate with them. For their grooming needs, they sought advice from women. To summarize, level of awareness of luxury personal care products is higher among women than men.

**Proposition 1: Women are more aware about luxury personal care brands than men**

### 6.5 Key Purchase Drivers

There were mainly two categories of drivers; extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic elements comprise of brand promise and value, packaging, customization and country of origin. Intrinsic dimensions were quality where fragrance, colour, ingredients were important for the respondents to buy luxury personal care products (Refer Fig. 1).

#### 6.5.1 Brand Promise and Value

Many respondents perceived brand promise and brand appeal as the important drivers in their purchase decision of a luxury personal care brand. They stated that the brand appeal and promise need to be connected with their lifestyle and should be credible and believable. Respondents stated that the endorsements undertaken by the brand may have an impact on the buying decisions.

#### 6.5.2 Packaging

Packaging of the product is another factor that would be considered by the consumers for purchasing luxury personal care brands. Many respondents emphasized “elaborate” or “interesting” packaging, that would be really attractive as it could encourage them to buy the product.

> “The aesthetics and outer beauty matter a lot and an interesting packaging would definitely attract me,” stated a respondent (23, Female, Mumbai).

Respondents also stated that they would like the packaging of the product or the brand to be very exquisite and good as they would be proud of the product and they would be ready to explore it further.

#### 6.5.3 Customization

All respondents mentioned that exclusivity was an important factor for luxury personal care products as they would like to feel unique and special. They mentioned that if the brand would be personalized or customized according to their needs and requirements, then it would be easier to purchase the products. Respondents stated that they do not want to use a brand which someone else uses as the ‘special effect’ does not exist. Personalization or customization plays an important role in developing exclusive and
unique feelings among the consumers.

It was also identified that women consumers are more involved in the process of buying a personal care luxury brand. They carry out thorough analysis of the brands and products. On the contrary, male consumers do not undertake evaluations and comparisons and put in less time and efforts for this products category. Hence, it can be stated that purchase behaviour of these products varies with gender.

**Proposition 2: Personal care luxury purchase behaviour differs on the basis of gender**

Furthermore, men use women’s knowledge and expertise to buy these products as they are conscious about their personal grooming. It was also identified that men were influenced by women’s knowledge of luxury personal care brands as it was comprehensive and up-to-date. They mentioned that they trust women and considered their choices in these categories. Therefore, it can be stated that women have a key role in affecting the purchase decision of men for luxury personal care products.

**Proposition 3: Women have a significant role in influencing the purchase decision of men for luxury personal care products**

6.5.4 Country of Origin

Country of origin for the brand was not an important factor in the purchase decision. Many respondents said that they were not aware of the country of origin of various brands. This may be due to lack of research by consumers. However, some respondents were aware of the country of origin of luxury personal care products but felt that it was not the deciding factor for purchase. They mentioned that country of origin adds an extra value to the brand appeal and its promise, and helps in understanding the product history and heritage. It also reflects the technology used by the brand. However, respondents would also consider a product from an unknown country if the brand has a global presence, is known in their peers groups and promises good quality and excellent brand appeal. Interestingly, respondents would also not make a conscious effort to go online to identify the country of origin. They would be happy if their peers accept the brand. Respondents are open to experimenting with new brands and are not concerned about the country of origin. To summarize, country of origin plays a small role in the purchase of luxury personal care by consumers.

**Proposition 4: Country of origin is not a key driver in purchasing personal care luxury brands**

6.5.5 Quality

The quality of the product is very crucial and for most respondents, it is the intrinsic key driver for purchase of luxury personal care products. Many respondents believed that as they have to pay a higher price for luxury products than for mass brands, they expect the product to be of high quality. Interestingly, respondents mentioned that they did not mind splurging on a personal care luxury product of supreme quality. They also perceived that these products use the latest technology to deliver superior quality. They associate personal care products at a very personal level; for instance, with their skin, hair, etc. Respondents also emphasised that good fragrance, attractive colour and ingredients are important elements that are considered while purchasing luxury personal care products.
6.6 Low Impact of Social Media
Respondents stated that they do not trust social media for luxury personal care products. They believe that digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. do not have credibility for luxury personal care brands.

“Social Media influencing my purchase decision? Not really!” (23, Male, Delhi)

“I like to visit blogs and read user reviews but (they) do not act as a catalyst in my purchase decision.” (24, Female, Delhi)

They believed that luxury personal care products are individualistic in nature and they cannot trust the views posted on these platforms as they are specific to individual requirements. Therefore, they want these brands to connect with consumers in an exclusive way.

“Using social media is too main stream. I would expect a personal care luxury brand to do something exclusive.” (Female, 24, Delhi).

Respondents do not connect themselves with social media for luxury personal care products. However, they might read some blogs or user reviews to gather information. Hence, it can imply that social media usage as a promotional tool does not affect the purchase decision of consumers for luxury personal care products.

Proposition 5: Social media as a promotional tool plays a low role in influencing personal care luxury users

6.7 Preference of online forums
Respondents discussed that if personal care luxury brands had their exclusive websites and pages, it would engage them more and would be appreciated. Respondents visit websites or blogs to gather information about the brand and the products. They mentioned that they would love to know about the variants, ingredients and user reviews on the products and brands. They stated clearly that social media websites would not influence their purchase decision but the user reviews and blogs are an important source of information gathering.

All respondents felt that exclusive online forums for personal care luxury brands would enable the luxury personal care brands to maintain their exclusivity. Therefore, exclusive websites can be developed by luxury personal care products as they influence the purchase decision of the consumers.

Proposition 6: Exclusive websites of luxury personal care brands would affect consumers’ purchase decisions

6.8 Indian Luxury Brands in Personal Care Segment for the Future
Respondents stated that there could be a few personal care luxury brands originating from India. They were ready to explore the Indian luxury personal care products. Many respondents mentioned that they would prefer new brands to capitalize on the heritage, exclusivity and specialty of India. They perceived that if the brand relates to India and its proposition as a country, then it would appeal to the consumers in its true sense. Respondents cited the example of Ayurveda and natural herbs. They all agreed that they prefer natural products as it would suit their skin in an effective way as compared to artificial ingredients.
The other factors they would prefer in an Indian brand would be its promise, proposition and appeal. They all responded that it is very important for these brands to market and communicate in a way that would appeal to the consumers. It is essential for the brands to have a global presence for these consumers. Moreover, respondents also emphasized the need for good quality in these product categories. Therefore, it was identified that Indian luxury brands in the personal care segment would be preferred by the respondents because they believe that the Indian brands would know their requirement in an effective way. However, there are pre-requisites such as quality and brand image that needs to be associated with these brands.

“India is famous for Ayurveda. I only prefer to use natural and herbal products and would not mind using an Indian brand which has a proposition of being natural and ayurvedic” (23, Female, Mumbai).

“I would buy an Indian brand if it’s marketed well, has an exclusive appeal and something which I can relate to. In fact, if it matches the level of luxury to other brands, I would prefer it, because being Indian, it will understand my Indian skin tone better” (23, Male, Delhi).

To summarize, Indian consumers would prefer luxury personal care products from their own country as the companies would understand the nuances and expectations of the individuals in a comprehensive manner.

**Proposition 7: Indians would prefer brands originating from their own country in the luxury personal care segment in future.**
7. Discussion
The present study found that consumers believe that luxury is about good quality, beyond promise, elegance, exclusive and feeling of indulgence. These elements match with the literature (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998) as these are the basic traits of luxury products. However, the present study adds a new dimension towards the perception of luxury. This study found that luxury describes the identity of the individual, reflects the personality and image of the person. This change has taken place because consumers are particular about their image and relate it with the brands and products they use, and Indian consumers have moved from conspicuous consumption to individualism (Jain et al., 2012) and the theory of impression management (O’Cass & Frost, 2002) does not hold for consumers for luxury personal care products. Moreover, luxury personal care products were related to sophistication and classiness as these categories intimate to the consumers. This purchase is more related to personal orientation and self-directed hedonic pleasure (Coulter et al., 2003). These consumers are more quality conscious and believers of perfectionism (Hafstrom, Chae, & Chung, 1992).

The present study has extended the cue utilization theory (Campbell & Keller, 2003) by adding more elements to extrinsic and intrinsic elements. The key drivers of purchasing luxury personal care products were extrinsic such as brand value, packaging, customization and country of origin, and the intrinsic element included quality. This study found that there is less influence of country of origin and social media on consumers when they buy luxury personal care products. This finding contradicts with the literature of country of origin that mentioned that country of origin is related to the product quality (Maheswaran, 1994), perception (Busacca, Bertoli & Molteni, 2006) product evaluation (Verleg & Steenkamp, 1999) and purchase (Agraval & Kamakura, 1999). Consumers are more concerned about the value that the product delivers and its acceptance in their peer groups as they more educated and learned. Additionally, this study found that consumers would need exclusive websites of luxury personal care products as they carry out extensive analysis of brands. Furthermore, this study found that women are more aware of luxury personal care products and play a leading role in developing purchase decisions of men to buy these products.

Lastly, the present study found that Indian consumers are open to luxury personal care products from their own country in future. However, they would need natural ingredients, good quality, global presence and high acceptance in their peer groups. It implies that Indian consumers are non-ethnocentric and do not evaluate products on the basis of country of origin (Lee et al., 2013).

8. Implications
8.1 Managerial Implications
The present study found that consumers emphasize on projection of image, identity and personality while using luxury brands. These elements can be added to the branding approach along with elegance, exclusivity and classiness while developing campaigns. Different story boards can be developed that can project the image of users. The present study found that brand promise and value, packaging and customization are important for the consumers. These elements can become appeals of advertising campaigns for these products as consumers would like it. Additionally, the present study found that quality - primarily fragrance, colour and ingredients - are important for the consumers. These elements need to be used by luxury personal care brands and could be communicated by
advertising campaigns. However, this study found that country of origin is not an important dimension for consumers as they prefer a good product irrespective of its origin. These findings are important for brand managers as they can draft the branding and communication strategies accordingly. Moreover, this study found that women prefer beauty and elegance in the products so exclusive campaigns can be developed with aesthetic appeal to target this segment. This study found that women also play a crucial role in influencing the purchase decisions of men. Advertising campaigns can be developed where women's smartness and knowledge of these products could be reflected. This study found that awareness about luxury personal care brands is less among men as compared to women. Campaigns can be developed to increase the awareness about these brands among men by making more involving and engaging ads. Additionally, this study found that consumers would need exclusive websites for these products that could be more detailed and comprehensive. Interestingly, this study found that influence of social media would be less on consumers for luxury personal care products and therefore, these platforms can be used for developing a relationship with the consumers and not for marketing the brands. Lastly, Indian consumers are open to luxury personal care products of their own country and this is an excellent opportunity for companies. However, they would like good quality, global appeal and acceptance in their peer groups. Luxury personal care products could be developed from India with natural ingredients; they can expand their presence to a global level through digital media and can be connected and engaged with the networks of individual consumers to have a better impact.

8.2 Scholarly Implications
This study helps different scholars to work on cue utilization framework for various products and services such as apparels, automobiles, hotels and spas. This framework would help in understanding the effect of country of origin on consumers. Scholars can also develop individual studies on different elements that have emerged from this study such as brand promise, packaging, personalisation and quality. Moreover, there could be a study on effect of image and identity of the consumers on their purchase decisions as this research identified that these are important elements for the consumers. Scholars can also develop exclusive studies of men and women as their awareness levels and orientation for luxury personal care brands are different. Scholars can study the usage of social media and digital platforms for luxury personal brands as the present research found they do not like social media but would need exclusive websites. Lastly, an exclusive scholarly study can be developed for Indian luxury personal care products where consumers and the industry perspective can be undertaken as this research found that respondents are eager to experiment with these brands.

9. Limitations and Scope for Future Research
This research forms the starting point of future studies on personal care luxury brands as the dimensions, drivers and propositions were derived from qualitative research. Future studies can be developed to test these elements quantitatively. This study was carried out on luxury consumers of personal care products who were in the age group of 18-30 years. This study can be extended to an older age group and a comparative study would help to understand the differences and similarities in both age groups. The present study focused on only two Indian metro cities. A similar study can be conducted in other metro and
non-metro cities to generate a deeper understanding about the domain.

It can be further extended to luxury services such as hotels and spas. Furthermore, this study found that there is a key influence of reference groups on the purchase decisions so exclusive studies can be undertaken to understand this effect and how it works and develops the networks as it would help the brands to engage well with the consumers. Additionally, this study found that there was low impact of social media but consumers would need exclusive websites for luxury personal care products. It would be interesting to understand the media consumption habits of the luxury consumers as their usage pattern would help the marketers to develop the strategies accordingly.

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