



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

# **How Can French Luxury Brands Adapt In-Store Experiences for Chinese Customers?**

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Católica Porto Business School

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Final Dissertation presented to Universidade Católica Portuguesa in order to  
obtain the master's degree in Marketing

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# Abstract

The present dissertation investigates how French luxury brands can enhance their in-store experiences to better cater to Chinese customers. Through interviews with Chinese luxury consumers and French luxury retail professionals, the study identifies key preferences, challenges, and strategies for creating an optimal shopping environment.

Chinese luxury consumers value personalized and attentive service, a luxurious store environment, and staff proficient in Mandarin to enhance comfort and communication. They also emphasize the importance of feeling welcomed and respected, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive staff training.

French luxury retail professionals acknowledge the diverse needs of Chinese customers, ranging from urban shoppers familiar with luxury brands to rural tourists prioritizing brand recognition. The importance of Mandarin-speaking staff, culturally relevant products, and a welcoming store environment is underscored as essential strategies for attracting and retaining Chinese clientele.

The study concludes that by investing in cultural sensitivity training, employing multilingual staff, and incorporating Chinese cultural elements into store design and marketing, French luxury brands can create a more inclusive and satisfying shopping experience for Chinese consumers, fostering long-term loyalty, and enhancing overall customer satisfaction. Future research should explore additional perspectives and digital strategies to further understand and cater to this important market segment.

Keywords: Chinese luxury consumers; French luxury brands; In-store experience; Heritage; Retail environment; Customer service; Brand identity.



# Resumo

A presente dissertação investiga a forma como as marcas de luxo francesas podem melhorar as suas experiências em loja para melhor satisfazer os clientes chineses. Através de entrevistas com consumidores de luxo chineses e profissionais do retalho de luxo franceses, o estudo identifica as principais preferências, desafios e estratégias para criar um ambiente de *shopping* ideal.

Os consumidores de luxo chineses valorizam um serviço personalizado e atencioso, um ambiente de loja luxuoso e funcionários que dominem o mandarim para aumentar o conforto e melhorar a comunicação. Também sublinham a importância de se sentirem bem-vindos e respeitados, destacando a necessidade de dar formação aos empregados para uma maior sensibilidade cultural.

Os profissionais franceses do retalho de luxo reconhecem as necessidades diferenciadas dos clientes chineses, que vão desde os compradores urbanos familiarizados com as marcas de luxo até aos turistas rurais que dão prioridade ao reconhecimento da marca. A importância de as lojas terem empregados que falem mandarim, de oferecerem produtos culturalmente relevantes e um ambiente de loja acolhedor são sublinhadas como estratégias essenciais para atrair e reter os clientes chineses.

O estudo conclui que, ao investir na formação em sensibilidade cultural, ao empregarem colaboradores multilingues e ao incorporarem elementos culturais chineses no design e no marketing das lojas, as marcas de luxo francesas podem criar uma experiência de compra mais inclusiva e satisfatória para os consumidores chineses, fomentando a lealdade a longo prazo e aumentando a satisfação geral dos clientes. A investigação futura deve explorar outras perspetivas e estratégias digitais para compreender melhor e satisfazer este importante segmento de mercado.

Palavras-chave: Consumidores de luxo chineses; Marcas de luxo francesas; Experiência de loja; Herança; Ambiente de retalho; Serviço ao cliente; Identidade da marca.



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# 1. Introduction

The Chinese luxury market has emerged as a global powerhouse in recent years, driven by a vast customer base and an increasing demand for luxury products (Bain & Company, 2024). This phenomenon has captured the attention of French luxury brands, which are keenly observing the evolving tastes of Chinese consumers. The urgency for these brands to adapt is underscored by the critical need to understand the Chinese market's unique consumer behaviours and cultural nuances, which significantly influence purchasing decisions.

The evolving landscape presents a complex challenge for French luxury brands: balancing their traditional brand identity with the contemporary demands of the Chinese market. This transformation is particularly evident in the realm of physical retail, where creating compelling in-store experiences is paramount. These interactions are critical in shaping consumer perceptions and fostering brand loyalty.

This thesis aims to explore the intersection of traditional French luxury branding and the evolving preferences of Chinese consumers, focusing on how these two dimensions can be harmoniously integrated. The primary objective is to identify specific cultural and behavioural nuances that differentiate Chinese consumer expectations from those typically catered to by French luxury brands. By doing so, the research seeks to develop strategic insights into how French luxury brands can tailor their in-store environments to be more inclusive and appealing to the Chinese market.

The investigation is guided by specific research questions. Firstly, this research aims to understand "How do cultural values and consumer behaviours of Chinese luxury buyers differ from those in traditional Western markets?". This question aims to uncover the unique cultural factors influencing Chinese consumer preferences and how these impact their purchasing decisions within

the luxury sector. Moreover, this research aims to uncover “What specific in-store experiences do Chinese consumers seek that differ from the traditional offerings of French luxury brands?” This research question explores the experiential aspects that Chinese consumers prioritize, such as personalization, digital integration, and cultural resonance, and assesses how these elements can be incorporated into French luxury retail environments. Additionally, the thesis seeks to answer, “What strategies can French luxury brands implement to align with the modern Chinese consumer's values and preferences while maintaining their brand heritage?” This question focuses on identifying actionable strategies that French brands can employ to adapt their branding, marketing, and customer service practices to better connect with Chinese consumers. Through these research questions, this thesis aims to bridge the gap between traditional French luxury branding and the contemporary desires of the Chinese market, ultimately providing a framework for French luxury brands to remain relevant and successful in this dynamic and rapidly changing landscape.

## 2. Literature review

Chinese consumers should become the dominant nationality in luxury and are expected to represent between 40% to 45% of global purchases by 2025, driving a significant portion of the global luxury market (Bain & Company, 2021). Bridging the gap between the established French brand identity and the evolving preferences of Chinese customers in French stores requires a carefully tailored approach. This literature review explores previous studies focusing on the cultural factors and other relevant aspects that influence the consumer behaviour of Chinese luxury shoppers and discusses the strategies that French luxury brands can follow to create a more inclusive in-store experience.

### 2.1 Global Credibility and Reputation of French Luxury Brands

In the intricate tapestry of global luxury, the prestige of French luxury brands stands as an indelible mark of quality. This reputation, forged through centuries of meticulous craftsmanship, has established French luxury as a beacon of quality and authenticity (Pouillard, et al, 2023). To truly grasp the fascination that Chinese customers hold for these brands, one must delve into the very essence of what makes French luxury so admired on the global stage.

French expertise in luxury goods is highly valued globally. The "Made in France" label serves as a reassurance and guarantee of quality for luxury customers. In an academic survey, 84% of respondents globally—and notably 90% of Chinese customers—express a firm belief in the exceptional quality of French luxury goods (Baschet-Vernet, 2022). This confidence seems to not only reflect the products themselves, but a recognition of the attention to detail and the cultural significance embedded in each item.

Thus, the international acclaim of French luxury, enhanced by the enduring promise of the "Made in France" label, provides a crucial insight into why Chinese customers are attracted towards these brands. It is a testament to the power of reputation and the universal language of quality, which together create an unspoken connection between the French ateliers and the discerning Chinese consumer.

## 2.2 Psychological Traits and Motivations of Chinese Luxury Customers

The analysis of the main psychological traits of Chinese luxury consumers provides valuable insights into what motivates their buying decisions. Understanding what drives Chinese luxury consumers—whether it's their sense of value, social influences, or desire for uniqueness—is crucial to attract one of the largest international customer segments that visits French luxury boutiques each day.

According to Zhan (2012), there are three key psychological drivers behind luxury consumption in China's middle class: value consciousness (VC), susceptibility to normative influence (SNI), and need for uniqueness (NFU). This study states that Chinese consumers increasingly view luxury as a valuable investment rather than mere extravagance, suggesting that French brands should emphasize craftsmanship and durability in their in-store experiences. Social norms also significantly shape consumer preferences, meaning that aligning with cultural values and societal expectations can enhance brand appeal. The need for uniqueness, the third driver identified, adds another layer of complexity to the equation. Chinese consumers, while drawn to the prestige of well-known luxury brands, also seek products that set them apart from others. This desire for

exclusivity calls for a delicate balance between the heritage of French luxury and the modern need for personalization (Zhan, 2012).

Categorizing consumption motivations into social and personal drivers further enriches this understanding. When purchasing luxury goods, consumers are driven by specific motivations. These motivations can be categorized into two types: social luxury consumption and personal luxury consumption (Zhang, 2022). Social luxury consumption is related with the desire to display social status, while personal luxury consumption is focused on achieving psychological satisfaction and seeking quality and experience. In China, luxury consumers are primarily driven by the desire for the products themselves, whereas in Western developed countries, luxury consumers are more experience-oriented, using luxury goods to relax and enjoy life (Zhang, 2022).

It is also important to highlight the relevance of the retail environment, which can reinforce the feelings of safety and familiarity and make customers feel more secure in their purchasing decisions. Nunes de Almeida (2013) underlines the need for luxury brands to focus on offering exceptional customer service tailored to the specific needs and expectations of Chinese customers and emphasize the role of knowledgeable salespeople who can bridge cultural gaps (Nunes de Almeida, 2013).

Understanding the main psychological traits and the consumption motivations of Chinese Luxury customers is essential to determine how French Luxury brands can create compelling in-store experiences and fostering long-lasting relationships with them.

## 2.3 Digital Platforms for Chinese Customers

As previous highlighted, in the rapidly evolving world of luxury retail, understanding and adapting to the unique preferences of Chinese consumers has become an essential pursuit for French luxury brands. The integration of digital

platforms into everyday life in China can potentially open new avenues for luxury brands to engage with their Chinese customers, offering a blend of convenience, cultural resonance, and deep consumer insights.

The creation of Alipay in 2004, which surpassed PayPal as the leading mobile payment platform by 2013, represents more than a mere technological achievement; it symbolizes the intersection of convenience and cultural adaptation within the Chinese market (Leracitano, 2023). Alipay's potential points out that digital payment platforms are not just financial tools but gateways to consumer behaviour insights. Meanwhile, Tencent's WeChat Pay, launched in 2013, seamlessly integrated with the widely popular WeChat messaging app, exemplifies the fusion of social interaction and financial utility, offering brands a unique access point to the everyday lives of their customers (Leracitano, 2023). In this symbiotic relationship between social media and payment systems, luxury brands are afforded the opportunity to better understand multifaceted layers of their audience's spending habits.

Yet, it is not only the data obtained through these digital payments that shapes the in-store experiences for Chinese customers. The 2018 'Ink Library' campaign by Chanel, which artfully employed WeChat to showcase the brand's China wind products, is a good example of the power of culturally resonant digital storytelling (Liu, 2022). This campaign, which aligned seamlessly with the consumption habits of Chinese consumers, underscores the potential for digital platforms to amplify brand exposure while fostering a deeper connection with the audience.

In China, e-commerce is characterized by integrated platforms that seamlessly blend shopping and social interactions. Unlike consumers in other regions who frequently visit official brand websites, Chinese shoppers are more inclined to explore products through platforms like Taobao, Aiki, or WeChat, which function as "Super Apps" (Tagliabue, 2022).

The previous studies mentioned show how digital platforms such as Alipay and WeChat Pay can offer more than just transactional features; they are indeed a rich repository of consumer data that offers very valuable insights for luxury brands. As Chinese consumers increasingly favour these apps over traditional brand websites, French luxury brands need to consider how these preferences influence their overall customer journey. This shift highlights the need to adapt in-store experiences to align with the expectations of Chinese customers towards an omnichannel strategy to fulfil their desire for a more interactive and integrated shopping environment. By examining the data gathered by these platforms on consumer behaviours and preferences, French luxury brands will be able to understand more clearly the dynamics of the Chinese luxury market.

## 2.4 Key Dimensions of Store Atmosphere Valued by Chinese Customers

Exploring the intricate relationship between cultural factors and customer experience within the luxury retail sector provides an important framework for understanding how French luxury brands can effectively cater to the evolving needs of Chinese consumers. As these brands seek to maintain relevance and competitiveness in a globalized market, the adaptation of in-store experiences to align with Chinese cultural specificities is fundamental.

The increasing emphasis Chinese consumers place on the overall shopping experience marks a significant shift in luxury retail dynamics, stimulating the development of academic research. According to previous studies, Chinese consumers are not only influenced by the quality of the products but also driven by the desire for exclusive and personalized experiences (Roll, 2020). It is therefore important to analyse how luxury brands are responding by

enhancing in-store experiences, through tailored customer service, exclusive VIP events, and special privileges designed to cater to the desires of affluent Chinese shoppers.

The physical layout and design of retail spaces play an equally crucial role in shaping the in-store experiences of Chinese consumers. Store environments that facilitate ease of navigation and comfort through well-placed merchandise, spacious aisles, and clear signage are more likely to foster impulse purchases (Yang et al., 2022). The sensory appeal of a store, enhanced by elements like natural lighting, cosy seating, and soothing music, can create a space where Chinese customers feel comfortable and inclined to extend their shopping experience. Moreover, the critical role of customer service in shaping in-store experiences for Chinese consumers cannot be overstated. The need for Mandarin-speaking staff and culturally sensitive service practices, highlights the significant differences in service expectations between Chinese and French consumers (Yang et al., 2022). This aspect of service delivery invites further research into how luxury brands can effectively train and equip their staff to meet the unique needs of Chinese customers, thereby enhancing the overall shopping experience.

Academic sources previously cited emphasize the complex connection between cultural factors and customer experience in luxury retail, particularly for French luxury brands. Chinese shoppers increasingly demand not just high-quality products but also exclusive, personalized experiences, making cultural sensitivity and customized service essential to their shopping experience. These dynamics challenges French luxury brands to rethink their in-store strategies, questioning every aspect of their shopping experience from store layout to customer service with the aim to better resonate with Chinese cultural values. Tracking the needs of Chinese luxury consumers who come to France seeking unique shopping experiences through literary studies push forth perspectives that move the industry forward.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Approach

Understanding the evolving preferences of Chinese luxury consumers and the challenges they face within French brick-and-mortar stores is crucial for French luxury brands to maintain a competitive edge in the global market. This section outlines the methodological approach used in this thesis to investigate how French luxury brands can adapt their in-store experiences to be more inclusive for Chinese clientele in France.

This study takes a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews. Understanding the complex tastes and cultural expectations of Chinese luxury buyers is made easier with the help of qualitative research, which is appropriate for probing subjective experiences, attitudes, and perceptions (Bhandari, 2023). This flexibility is essential in this research context because it enables participants to elaborate on their expectations and experiences related to luxury retail in France, which may uncover unanticipated elements influencing their beliefs and actions.

The research uses two different interview sets to obtain data: one set consists of Chinese luxury consumers, while the other includes French luxury retail professionals. Including Chinese luxury consumers and French luxury retail professionals in the research is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the luxury market. Chinese consumers offer insights into purchasing behaviours and cultural influences unique to their market, while French professionals provide perspectives on retail strategies and industry trends. Both interviews ensure that the questions are relevant to the views and experiences of both groups. The interviews, developed with two different guidelines, contain

open-ended questions that invite participants to comment on their experiences and perspectives.

The analysis will consider both the perspectives of Chinese consumers and French luxury retail professionals. Besides generally exploring the factors of a positive in-store experience for the Chinese consumers, a focus is placed on identifying convergence and divergence in the viewpoints of customers and professionals. For instance, are there any common themes emerging around what constitutes a positive in-store experience? Are there any specific challenges or opportunities that both groups acknowledge?

Prior to the interview, informed consent was obtained from each participant. A guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity during the whole research process was provided to participants.

### 3.1.1 Interviews with Chinese Luxury Consumers

A purposive sampling technique, combined with convenience sampling through personal contacts, was used to select three Chinese consumers who live in France and/or often buy luxury goods there. To ensure a comprehensive representation of perspectives, the sample encompasses diverse ages and backgrounds. The interviews explore the participants' aspirations in this area, their impressions of French luxury brands and their experiences shopping in French luxury boutiques. Important questions involve explaining what influences their opinions of French luxury companies, describing what kind of in-store encounters they would like to have in France, and identifying the cultural components that are essential to their luxury retail experiences (interview script in Appendix A).

The first interview is with Customer 1, a former master's student at Pollini and NEOMA Business School in International Luxury Management, originally

hails from China but has spent a significant part of her life abroad, including over eight years in New York. Her career journey includes working in the gaming industry and luxury management, reflecting her diverse interests.

The second interviewee, a 35-year-old marketing executive from Shanghai, China, is passionate about fashion and luxury goods. She frequently travels to various fashion capitals, including Paris, to indulge in her interests, typically shopping for luxury items in France about twice a year. These trips are strategically planned around major fashion seasons and sales events, emphasizing her methodical approach to luxury shopping. Her favourite French luxury brands include Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Hermès, which she admires for their timeless elegance, impeccable craftsmanship, and rich heritage. The quality and design of these brands consistently meet her expectations, making them her preferred choices.

The third interviewee a 28-year-old investment manager from Shanghai, China, is deeply passionate about fashion and luxury goods. He visits France at least twice a year for both business and leisure, each trip involving shopping for luxury items, resulting in about four to five shopping experiences annually. His favourite French luxury brands include Louis Vuitton for its timeless yet innovative designs and impeccable craftsmanship, Hermès for its classic elegance and luxurious feel, and Balenciaga for its edgy, modern aesthetic that aligns with his personal style.

### 3.1.2 Interviews with French Luxury Retail Professionals

The two interviews with professionals working in the luxury industry, as boutique managers, provide a contrast to the clients' perspectives. These interviews center on industry perspectives on the opportunities and difficulties associated with modifying in-store experiences to appeal to Chinese customers.

Additionally, these experts were asked about current tactics used to serve this group as well as their effectiveness. Possible interview outcomes include determining the main obstacles to serve Chinese affluent customers in French luxury retail spaces, outlining opportunities to improve the in-store experience catered to this group, and assessing the efficacy of current Chinese consumer-focused initiatives (interview script in Appendix B).

In the first interview with Carole Labrune, a luxury retail expert in Paris, with 37 years of experience in the French luxury retail sector, shared her perspective on the preferences and challenges of Chinese clientele in French luxury stores. Labrune worked for Chanel, Scherer, Moschino, and Leonard Paris - current role at Rue Faubourg Saint-Honoré boutique.

The second interview is with Chiara Luongo, a professional with 14 years of experience in the French luxury retail sector, provided valuable insights into the in-store experience for Chinese clientele and areas for improvement. Luongo is a store manager of the Boutique Leonard Paris, in Cannes. She has extensive experience in luxury retail, working for brands like Delalangerie and Majestic. She values working with beautiful products and has a strong affinity for the items she sells.

## 3.2 Sample Characterization

*Table 1: Description of participants*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Representative quote</b>
Customer 1	Female	Student	"If I see they're genuinely treating me like a guest, then it's more likely for me to buy something."
Customer 2	Female	Marketing Executive	"I prefer a traditional in-person boutique experience when buying luxury products because it allows me to see, touch, and try on the items before making a purchase. The ambiance and personal interaction in the boutique add to the overall luxury experience."
Customer 3	Male	Investment Manager	"My ideal in-store experience would start with being warmly greeted by the staff as soon as I walk in. I like it when the staff are friendly and attentive but not overly pushy. It's important for me to feel welcomed and valued right from the start."
Professional 1	Female	Store Manager	"Chinese consumers love gifts and are drawn to accessories and small products like notebooks and umbrellas, as they often buy to give to family and friends."
Professional 2	Female	Store Manager	"So for me, you also have to have an idea of how to approach the customer, how to shake hands, words that you can say or not, because it's really a separate universe."

## 4. Results and Discussion

The interviews with Chinese luxury consumers, Angelina Li, and two anonymous individuals, provide a comprehensive perspective on their preferences, challenges, and ideal shopping experiences. In contrast, the insights from French luxury retail professionals, Carole Labrune and Chiara Luongo, offer a view from the industry side, highlighting their strategies and observations regarding Chinese customers.

### 4.1 Personalized Customer Service

One of the central themes emerging from the interviews is the critical role of personalized customer service in enhancing the luxury shopping experience for Chinese consumers. This theme resonates across the perspectives of both Chinese consumers and French retail professionals.

Customer 1, a former master's student in International Luxury Management, highlights that immediate and attentive service from staff significantly enhances her shopping experience. She values being recognized and assisted promptly and appreciates small gestures such as offering water on hot days. This sentiment is echoed by the other Chinese consumers interviewed. Customer 2 emphasizes the importance of warm greetings and knowledgeable advice from staff, which contribute to a luxurious shopping atmosphere. Similarly, Customer 3 values attentive service and respectful interactions that make the shopping experience feel exclusive.

The feedback from French luxury retail professionals reinforces this theme. Carole Labrune and Chiara Luongo both stress the importance of having staff trained in delivering high levels of personal attention. Without such staff, creating a genuine connection can be challenging, even with the aid of

translators. Luongo also highlights the necessity of understanding cultural nuances and providing tailored services to meet the expectations of Chinese consumers. She notes that Chinese clients have different cultural practices, such as specific greetings and preferences for privacy, which should be respected and accommodated.

These observations are consistent with the literature (Nunes de Almeida, 2013), which underscores personalized service as a fundamental component of luxury retail experiences. As mentioned in the literature review, luxury consumers need to have a high level of personalized attention that goes beyond transactional interactions. This includes tailored recommendations, storytelling of the brand and a genuine effort from staff to meet individual needs. The interviews reflect this sentiment by showing that personalized service is not just an added value but a necessity for attracting and retaining Chinese customers. French luxury retailers, therefore, should invest in training staff to deliver exceptional, individualized service, creating memorable experiences that foster brand loyalty.

## 4.2 Language Proficiency and Cultural Sensitivity

Language proficiency and cultural sensitivity are recurring themes that significantly impact the shopping experience for Chinese consumers. The ability to communicate in Mandarin and understand Chinese cultural practices is crucial for creating a welcoming environment.

Customer 1 recalls a positive experience with a Mandarin-speaking sales assistant who provided excellent service and personalized attention. This experience underscores the value of having staff who can communicate effectively with Chinese clients. Both Customer 2 and Customer 3 express a

preference for Mandarin-speaking staff, noting that it enhances their comfort and overall shopping experience.

French luxury retail professionals also recognize the importance of language and cultural understanding. Carole Labrune highlights the challenges posed by the language barrier, noting that her boutique does not currently have Mandarin-speaking staff. She cites this as a significant obstacle in building relationships with Chinese clients. Labrune's observation that luxury brands like Louis Vuitton have successfully addressed this issue by employing Mandarin-speaking staff and providing culturally sensitive service further illustrates the importance of this factor. Chiara Luongo similarly emphasizes the need for Mandarin-speaking staff. This approach not only improves communication but also ensures that Chinese consumers feel valued and respected. This observation aligns with extant literature (Yang et al., 2022), which discusses how cultural factors can impede the development of customer relationships in luxury retail.

Overall, the interviews reveal that language proficiency and cultural sensitivity are vital for delivering a high-quality luxury shopping experience. French luxury boutiques should invest in staff training to ensure effective communication and understanding of Chinese cultural practices, enhancing the shopping experience for this important clientele.

### 4.3 In-Store Experience and Environment

The in-store environment plays a crucial role in shaping the luxury shopping experience for Chinese consumers. The interviews reveal varying preferences for store design, ambiance, and layout.

Customer 1 values well-located boutiques with multiple luxury stores nearby, prioritizing convenience over store design. She appreciates a store's location and the presence of other luxury boutiques, as it minimizes travel. While

the store's design is less critical to her, she does value a welcoming and comfortable environment.

In contrast, Customer 2 emphasizes the importance of elegant décor, spacious layouts, and a serene ambiance. She values a well-organized store layout, soft music, and a calm atmosphere that enhances the luxury shopping experience. Similarly, Customer 3 prefers a sleek, modern store with high ceilings, minimalist displays, and comfortable seating areas. He appreciates a sophisticated atmosphere with a pleasant fragrance and gentle background music.

French luxury retail professionals also recognize the importance of creating a welcoming store environment. Carole Labrune notes that the design elements of the boutique should reflect Chinese aesthetics, such as incorporating floral patterns and comfortable seating areas. Chiara Luongo highlights the need for a modern, well-organized store layout with clear signage in multiple languages, including Mandarin. Both professionals agree that a well-designed store environment contributes to a more enjoyable shopping experience and aligns with the expectations of Chinese consumers.

This focus on the in-store environment aligns with the literature's (Yang et al., 2022), emphasis on the importance of creating an inviting and aesthetically pleasing retail space. According to this literature review, consumers are highly attuned to the physical attributes of a store, including its layout, décor, and overall ambiance. The literature suggests that a well-designed store environment not only enhances the shopping experience but also reinforces the luxury brand's image.

The interviews suggest that French luxury boutiques should focus on creating an inviting and sophisticated in-store environment. This includes paying attention to store design, layout, and ambiance to meet the diverse preferences of Chinese clients and enhance their overall shopping experience.

## 4.4 Cultural Adaptation and Product Offerings

Cultural adaptation and tailored product offerings are essential for catering to the preferences of Chinese consumers. The interviews reveal that Chinese shoppers appreciate products and experiences that resonate with their cultural values.

Customer 1 values unique product offerings and pricing advantages in France. She appreciates finding exclusive items not available in China, which enhances her shopping experience. Similarly, Customer 2 suggests that French luxury brands could improve their appeal by incorporating elements such as Lunar New Year decorations and special edition products celebrating Chinese culture. Customer 3 also notes that Chinese clients favour products that reflect their cultural preferences, such as items inspired by Chinese aesthetics or collaborations with Chinese designers. He suggests that French luxury brands could better cater to Chinese consumers by understanding and incorporating cultural elements into their product offerings.

French luxury retail professionals also emphasize the importance of cultural adaptation. Carole Labrune notes that younger Chinese clients tend to favour simpler designs and muted colours, while older clients prefer vibrant prints and patterns. She suggests that French luxury brands should adapt their product lines to reflect these preferences and incorporate design elements that resonate with Chinese aesthetics. Chiara Luongo highlights the need for size adjustments and product variations to meet the specific needs of Chinese clients, such as offering smaller sizes and floral patterns.

Overall, the interviews indicate that cultural adaptation and tailored product offerings are crucial for attracting and retaining Chinese consumers. French luxury brands should focus on understanding and incorporating Chinese

cultural preferences into their products and store experiences to enhance their appeal to this important market segment.

## 4.5 Shopping Interactions

Shopping preferences and behaviour are key themes that influence the luxury shopping experience for Chinese consumers. The interviews reveal a preference for in-person shopping over online purchases, as well as specific behaviours and expectations during the shopping process.

All Customers interviewed prefer in-person shopping for luxury items, valuing the tactile experience of seeing, touching, and trying on products before making a purchase. They appreciate the ability to interact with staff and receive personalized service in-store, which enhances the overall luxury experience. This preference is driven by the need to assess product quality and fit, as well as the desire for a more personal and immersive shopping experience. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of accepting Chinese payment methods, such as Alipay and WeChat Pay, to streamline transactions and enhance convenience. They also highlight the need to minimize queues and avoid long waits, which can detract from the luxury experience. Customer 1 specifically mentions that queuing contradicts the luxury experience and should be minimized to ensure a smooth and enjoyable shopping process.

French luxury retail professionals also recognize the importance of in-person shopping for luxury goods. Carole Labrune notes that Chinese clients often visit boutiques after researching products online, highlighting the need for a seamless integration between online and in-store experiences and suggests that accepting UnionPay cards and providing high-level in-store service, including refreshments and detailed product explanations, can improve the shopping experience for Chinese clients. Chiara Luongo notes that an improved website

showcasing a wider product selection can attract customers and provide pre-visit information, further enhancing convenience and efficiency.

This focus on practicality aligns with the literature's discussion (Tagliabue, A, 2022), regarding the importance of addressing logistical factors in luxury retail. The literature emphasizes that convenience and efficiency are critical for meeting the expectations of luxury consumers, especially what concerns digital platforms, who often seek seamless and hassle-free shopping experiences.

Overall, French luxury boutiques should focus on deliver a high-quality luxury shopping experience by accepting preferred payment methods, minimizing queues, maintaining a sophisticated store environment, and providing efficient and personalized service by understanding the specific preferences and behaviours to enhance the overall experience for Chinese consumers.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. Main Findings

From the interviews with Chinese luxury consumers and French luxury retail professionals, several general conclusions can be drawn regarding the expectations, challenges, and strategies related to the luxury shopping experience for Chinese clients in France.

Chinese luxury consumers highly value personalized and immediate service. They appreciate being recognized, promptly greeted, and assisted attentively. Personalized gestures, such as offering refreshments, telling the history about the product, and remembering their shopping history, significantly enhance their shopping experience and loyalty to the brand. The need for immediate attention underscores the importance of staff being available and responsive as soon as the customer enters the store.

Language proficiency, particularly the ability to communicate in Mandarin, is crucial for enhancing the shopping experience of Chinese consumers. Positive interactions with Mandarin-speaking staff greatly improve comfort and satisfaction levels. Both consumers and professionals recognize the importance of employing Mandarin-speaking staff and incorporating cultural sensitivity into training programs. Understanding cultural preferences, such as the significance of gifting and the preference for certain designs, also plays a key role in catering to Chinese clients effectively.

The environment and design of luxury stores are important to Chinese consumers. They prefer a quiet, elegant, and well-organized store environment with spacious layouts and a calming atmosphere. The presence of subtle decor, gentle background music, and clear signage in multiple languages, including Mandarin, enhances their shopping experience.

Negative experiences, such as feeling ignored, unwelcomed, or judged based on appearance or ethnicity, significantly deter Chinese consumers from shopping. These experiences highlight the need for better staff training to ensure that all customers feel valued and respected. Retail professionals acknowledge the challenges posed by language barriers and the importance of training staff to be culturally sensitive and inclusive.

French luxury retailers recognize the need to adapt their strategies to meet the expectations of Chinese clients. This includes employing Mandarin-speaking staff, offering culturally relevant products, and providing personalized services. Retailers also emphasize the importance of integrating digital platforms, such as websites and social media, to attract customers and provide pre-visit information. The use of Chinese payment methods like Alipay and WeChat Pay is also crucial for facilitating transactions.

The interviews reveal a diversity among Chinese luxury consumers, ranging from affluent urban customers familiar with luxury brands to time-constrained tourists from rural areas. Retailers need to develop differentiated strategies to cater to these diverse segments. Urban customers are drawn to tax advantages and unique product offerings, while rural customers prioritize brand recognition and often shop in large department stores.

Chinese consumers demonstrate strong brand loyalty to the brands that consistently meet their expectations in terms of quality, design, and service. However, they are also open to exploring new brands that align with their style and preferences. This underscores the importance of maintaining high standards and continuously evolving to attract and retain loyal customers.

To improve the global shopping experience for Chinese customers, French luxury stores should invest in cultural sensitivity training, employ multilingual staff, and offer tailored customer service strategies. Incorporating Chinese cultural elements into store design and marketing, providing detailed product information, and ensuring an inclusive and respectful approach can significantly

enhance the shopping experience and foster long-term loyalty among Chinese luxury shoppers.

The interviews highlight the importance of personalized service, cultural sensitivity, and strategic adaptations in enhancing the luxury shopping experience for Chinese consumers in France. By addressing these key factors, French luxury retailers can create a more welcoming and satisfying environment for their Chinese customers, ultimately driving customer loyalty and satisfaction.

## 5.2 Managerial Implications

As French luxury brands seek to enhance their in-store experiences for Chinese customers, the role of effective management becomes increasingly critical. The growing significance of Chinese consumers in the global luxury market demands a strategic approach that goes beyond traditional retail practices.

Managers need to prioritize staff training to ensure sales assistants provide personalized and immediate service to Chinese customers. This includes recognizing repeat customers, remembering their preferences, and making small gestures such as offering refreshments. Personalized customer service fosters loyalty and encourages repeat business. Staff should be trained to balance attentiveness without being overbearing, creating a welcoming atmosphere that makes customers feel valued.

Given the importance of Mandarin proficiency, managers should invest in hiring Mandarin-speaking staff or providing language training for existing employees. Additionally, cultural sensitivity training is essential to help staff understand and respect Chinese cultural norms and preferences. This training should cover greeting customs, the significance of gifting, and preferences for certain designs and colours. By doing so, staff can provide a more tailored and

respectful shopping experience, which is crucial for customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Managers should focus on creating a quiet, elegant, and well-organized store environment. This includes thoughtful store layouts, calming background music, subtle decor, and clear multilingual signage. The environment should reflect the luxury brand's identity while making it easy for customers to navigate and find products. Comfortable seating areas and private fitting rooms can further enhance the shopping experience. Managers should regularly review and update store design elements to ensure they meet the expectations of Chinese luxury shoppers.

Managers must identify and address any practices that may lead to negative customer experiences, such as ignoring customers or judging them based on appearance or ethnicity. Staff performance should be monitored, and feedback from Chinese customers should be actively sought and acted upon. Managers should implement regular training sessions to reinforce the importance of inclusivity and respectful behaviour. This proactive approach can help prevent negative experiences and improve overall customer satisfaction.

Managers should consider incorporating elements that appeal specifically to Chinese customers, such as special edition products celebrating Chinese culture, Lunar New Year decorations, and marketing materials in Mandarin. Hosting events that celebrate Chinese festivals or collaborating with Chinese designers can also enhance the brand's appeal. Additionally, managers should leverage digital platforms like WeChat for customer engagement, providing updates on new collections and maintaining continuous communication with Chinese customers.

Managers need to develop strategies that cater to the diverse segments of Chinese luxury consumers. This involves recognizing the differences between affluent urban clients and rural tourists. Tailored marketing and service strategies should be developed for each segment. For example, urban clients may

appreciate unique product offerings and tax advantages, while rural clients may prioritize brand recognition and convenience.

Managers should focus on integrating digital platforms to complement the in-store experience. This includes having a robust e-commerce presence and utilizing social media to engage customers. Online features such as appointment bookings and virtual try-on tools can provide added convenience. Additionally, the store's website should be informative and user-friendly, showcasing a wide product selection to attract customers before their visit.

To foster brand loyalty among Chinese consumers, managers should ensure that their stores consistently deliver high-quality products and exceptional service. Loyalty programs and exclusive offers for repeat customers can further strengthen this bond. Managers should also stay attuned to emerging trends and preferences within the Chinese luxury market to keep their offerings relevant and appealing.

Managers should ensure that their stores accept Chinese payment methods like Alipay and WeChat Pay, facilitating smoother transactions for Chinese customers. Additionally, understanding the tax refund process and communicating it effectively to customers can enhance their shopping experience and encourage higher spending.

Given the growing importance of the Chinese luxury market, managers should prepare for an increasing influx of Chinese customers. This involves continuously updating staff training programs, enhancing store designs, and staying ahead of market trends. Managers should also study the successful strategies of leading luxury brands that have effectively captured the Chinese market to replicate and adapt these strategies within their own stores.

By addressing these managerial implications, luxury retailers in France can significantly improve the shopping experience for Chinese customers, fostering loyalty and driving growth in this valuable market segment.

### 5.3 Limitations and future research

This thesis has a few limitations, just like any other research project. This study focuses on Chinese consumers in France, and as such, it is possible that the results cannot be applied to the larger global Chinese luxury consumer market. Chinese luxury shoppers in different regions, such as China, other parts of Asia, or North America, might have distinct preferences, behaviours, and expectations. Therefore, the findings might not be universally applicable to Chinese luxury consumers.

Additionally, this study is restricted to the viewpoints of retail personnel and customers. While these perspectives are crucial, they represent only a fraction of the ecosystem influencing luxury retail experiences. There are also barriers to accessing professional advice in the industry, which can limit the comprehensiveness of the research. For instance, obtaining insights from high-level marketing specialists, cultural consultants, and luxury brand strategists can be challenging due to their busy schedules, proprietary information concerns, and the competitive nature of the industry.

Another limitation is the focus on Chinese luxury customers who frequently shop in France. These customers may have different preferences compared to those who shop less frequently or who shop in other international luxury markets. Their experiences and expectations might be influenced by their familiarity with French culture and retail environments, which may not reflect the broader Chinese luxury consumer base.

A significant limitation of this study is the very small sample size of only three Chinese customers. With such a limited number of participants, many aspects of the customer experience and preferences may have been left out, and the research may not have reached theoretical saturation. This small sample size restricts the

generalizability of the findings and limit the depth of insights that could be gained from a more comprehensive sample.

Future research could address these limitations by broadening the scope to include perspectives from various stakeholders in the luxury industry, such as cultural consultants, marketing specialists, and luxury brand strategists. These experts can offer deeper insights into the cultural nuances and marketing strategies that can enhance in-store experiences for Chinese clientele. Additionally, future studies could explore the experiences of Chinese luxury shoppers in other major luxury markets, such as New York, Tokyo, and Hong Kong, to compare with those in France.

Longitudinal studies could also be beneficial in observing how Chinese luxury consumer preferences and behaviours evolve over time, particularly in response to global economic trends and shifts in consumer culture. Incorporating digital and omnichannel strategies in the research could provide a more holistic view of how luxury brands can adapt to the changing landscape of retail, ensuring that both online and in-store experiences are tailored to the needs of Chinese consumers.

Moreover, investigating the impact of specific cultural elements on shopping behaviour, such as festivals, holidays, and traditional practices, could offer valuable insights into seasonal and event-driven consumer preferences. Finally, collaboration with academic institutions and industry associations could facilitate access to a broader range of professional advice and data, enriching the research with diverse perspectives and expertise.

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## 7. Appendix

### **A. Interviews with Chinese Luxury Consumers**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Inês Marques and I am a student at Católica Porto Business School and NEOMA Business School. This interview is part of my research on how French luxury brands can improve the in-store experience for Chinese clientele. Your participation will help me to understand what makes a positive shopping experience for you and identify areas where French luxury brands can improve.

1. Tell me about yourself. (Age, occupation, country, and city of residence, etc.)
2. How often do you shop for luxury goods in France?
3. What are some of your favourite French luxury brands and why?
4. Describe your ideal shopping experience in a French luxury boutique. (e.g., how the boutique looks)
5. Describe your ideal in-store experience when shopping for luxury goods in France. Consider factors like the store atmosphere, how you are greeted by staff, and the ease of finding what you're looking for.
6. What aspects of the in-store environment are most important to you? (e.g., store layout, staff interaction, product presentation)

7. Do you ever feel intimidated or unwelcome in French luxury stores? Why or why not?
8. Have you ever had a negative experience shopping for luxury goods in France? If so, please elaborate. Tell me what made the experience negative and how it could have been improved.
9. How important is it for you that salespeople speak Mandarin during your luxury shopping experience? Does language proficiency influence your feeling of welcome and comfort in the store?
10. Do you feel that French luxury stores cater to the needs of Chinese consumers? Why or why not? Are there specific strategies that stores could follow to be more welcoming or accommodating to the Chinese clientele?
11. Are there any cultural aspects that French luxury brands could incorporate to make the shopping experience more welcoming for Chinese customers? Consider, for instance, things like design elements, marketing materials, or special events.
12. Do you prefer a deep interactive online shopping experience (e.g., booking appointments online, virtual try-on) or a traditional in person boutique experience when buying luxury products? And why?
13. If you prefer online shopping experience which platforms do you prefer?

14. Do you usually look products online before entering in the boutique?
15. How loyal are you to the brands you shop for?
16. Is there anything else that you would like to add or any additional suggestion that you would like to make so that French luxury stores can improve the global experience they offer you?

## **B. Interviews with French Luxury Retail Professionals**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Inês Marques and I am a student at Católica Porto Business School and NEOMA Business School. This interview is part of my research on how French luxury brands can improve the in-store experience for Chinese clientele. Your participation will help me to understand what makes a positive shopping experience for you and identify areas where French luxury brands can improve.

1. Tell me about yourself and your role in the French luxury retail sector.
2. How long have you been working in this industry?
3. What are the biggest challenges for attracting and retaining Chinese luxury consumers in French stores?

4. How do you think the in-store experience can be improved for Chinese customers?
5. Do you see relevant differences in the shopping behaviour of Chinese consumers compared to other nationalities? If so, how? What are the main differences that you perceive?
6. What current strategies are your stores using to target Chinese consumers? (e.g., Mandarin language, staff training, services, marketing) If yes, how effective are these strategies in your opinion?
7. Does your brand incorporate design elements or marketing strategies that resonate with Chinese consumers?
8. Do you have staff specifically trained in Chinese cultural sensitivity?
9. How do you integrate digital platforms into the in-store experience? If so, which ones do you use?
10. How do you receive feedback from your Chinese consumers?
11. In your opinion, what are the most important strategies French luxury brands need to consider when adapting their in-store experience for Chinese consumers?
12. Have you noticed any generational differences in the preferences of Chinese luxury shoppers?

13. How do you see the future of French luxury retail evolving in relation to the Chinese market?
  
14. What are some successful examples you've seen of French luxury brands catering to the Chinese market?
  
15. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience working with Chinese clientele in French luxury retail?

## **Interview Angelina Li**

**[Inês Marques]**

Hello Angelina, Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Inês Marques and I am a student at Católica Porto Business School and NEOMA Business School. This interview is part of my research on how French luxury brands can improve the in-store experience for Chinese clientele. Your participation will help me to understand what makes a positive shopping experience for you and identify areas where French luxury brands can improve.

**I would like you to tell me about yourself. (Age, occupation, country, and city of residence, etc.)**

**[Angelina Li]**

Okay, so my name is Angelina. I was a master's student at Polimi and NEOMA Business School in the Master International Luxury Management. I'm from China and I don't know what else do you want to know, but like pretty much I spent half of my life outside of China, actually. So I spent eight and a half years in New York from high school to my under graduation and then I worked a bit in Shanghai and I came back home. I even did a little bit of gaming industry. And then I moved out and then that's and then go back to like luxury. I like it, but I don't want to become my occupation, you know, because in luxury, you have a lot of more categories other than just fashion. So that's why I decided to pursue a further way in terms of like in the luxury management instead of like just doing fashion.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How often do you shop for luxury goods in France?**

**[Angelina Li]**

So the thing is, if I'm in France, then it's kind of frequent, you know? Because for me, I can do tax refunds. So then obviously you're going to buy a lot. But then when you're outside of it, you kind of just like, you know, whenever you go back and then like get a chance to like travel, then of course I will shop a lot.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Okay, perfect. And my third question is, what are some of your favourite French luxury brands and why?**

**[Angelina Li]**

You got me there. Because my favourite is not French. Right now, I did buy a lot from Chanel and Hermès. You know, if I walk into Hermès, I'm more likely to buy accessories. Like I bought a lot of shoes. I bought a lot of, you know, like jewels and then sometimes clothes. But then I don't really purchase bags from them. I have a lot of slippers from them. I think it's just the fact that like, for me buying their bags, there's so much restriction. And then because I think Hermès system in terms of clients, they have a different like, what is it called again? Like they have a different tracking system. Like for example, if you have an account in Milan, it's a different account from you having one in France. So it's like by country. And then so for me, the issue is if I'm just buying traveling, you know, I cannot just build up my profile in one day. But then like, you know, for Chanel, of course you can buy. I buy watches from them. I buy jewelry from them. And then you'll buy shoes and then my leather goods, you know, like the bags.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Describe your ideal shopping experience in a French luxury boutique. (e.g., how the boutique looks)**

**[Angelina Li]**

Okay, so I would say the fact that if I walked in and then, you know, you dress nicely today, which that happens to me, someone will come up to you and then be like, okay, can I help you with something? You know, like, oh, would you like to see this? Would you like to see that? And then normally, like the best part is that if someone did notice you, if it's a hot summer, they give you some water, you know, and then they try to understand your need, like this is our latest collection, check this out. But then they first understand you, you know, have you shopped from us? What did you usually buy? You know, a lot, and then move on to, okay, yeah, but maybe this suits you, that suits you, you know? I don't really care about the design of the store, but more like the location, you know, like if I can go into a street where it has everything, yeah, I don't have to like go around and then look for it, you know, if they're located in a nice area where it's just like, not just their own store, but there's also other stores, then perfect. Oh, and other thing, if there's no people lining up outside, I will go in. If there's a queue, I won't go in. I'm not going in.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Describe your ideal in-store experience when shopping for luxury goods in France. Consider factors like the store atmosphere, how you are greeted by staff, and the ease of finding what you're looking for.**

**[Angelina Li]**

Okay, so one thing that I noticed about myself is the attitude of the staff. Yeah, so it's like, if I can see that they're genuinely treating me like a guest, then it's more likely for me to buy something. But sometimes, you know, like there's the guard outside, and then they will be really strict with you, you know, like, okay, if you have an appointment at this time, you cannot come in earlier. You know, like those type of things bothers me a lot. So if you have these type of things, and then I'm going to be like, okay, you know what, never mind. You're not like the

only one that I can buy from. So then it's really about the attitude that they gave you. For example, I know this is not France, but then just an example, you know, like in Milan, the Cartier staff are so, I don't know, like, they're just so busy. But then you don't know what they're, what are they busy for. And then they cannot, they don't have time to answer your questions. And then they're wandering around the entire store, but they don't talk to you. And then with that sense, I would just leave, you know.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Okay, so for you, the most important thing is the staffing direction to you, the right direction. Yes, yes. And do you ever feel intimidated or unwelcome in French luxury stores?**

**[Angelina Li]**

Yes. Like Dior. I feel like people at Dior, they're just so cocky. Like everybody thinks that they're the best in that sense. Like, for example, they really don't care whoever that comes in will be their next guest. And that's my issue. You know, because like, they really don't care. Because normally, unless you're a loyal customer, they know your face, right? But then if you just go in and then, for example, for me, I mean, I have an Asian face. So, then I don't speak French. And then obviously they're going to be like, okay, this is a tourist. They will think that I'm a tourist, you know. And if they see you not dressing nicely, you know, if I just walk in with T-shirts and shorts, you know, like nothing branded on me. And then they're going to be like, okay, yeah, you just want to come and watch. And then you're going to be like, okay, and then you're going to have me pick up like, I mean, five bags, and then you're not going to buy anything. Like sometimes because there are tourists like this, you know, because they've been through a lot. They don't want to waste time.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Have you ever had a negative experience shopping for luxury goods in France? If so, please elaborate. Tell me what made the experience negative and how it could have been improved.**

**[Angelina Li]**

When I walk into the store of Dior, and then the store was not even packed. And then there's no one greeting, no one caring. And then if you ask for help, and then they're like, okay, okay, my colleague is going to be right with you. But then there's no one coming to me, never. And then the funny thing is I walked out and then I walked next door to Chanel, to their jewellery store. And then I bought a watch. And then the moment that I walked back, people come to me directly. That's terrible. Like for you to prejudge someone before they even ask for help, you know?

**[Inês Marques]**

**How important is it for you that salespeople speak Mandarin during your luxury shopping experience? Does language proficiency influence your feeling of welcome and comfort in the store?**

**[Angelina Li]**

To be fair, like people speaking Mandarin doesn't matter to me. Uh, but then one very interesting thing is that there's one time I shop at Louis Vuitton in that department store and then, uh, with my mom actually, and then we waited a little bit and then for a Chinese girl to come and serve us. And then, so she starts to talk to me about, okay, what do I do? And then why I'm in France and all that, you know? And then at the end of the day, just because we're like the same nationality and whatsoever, and then we bought a bag and then she gave me a lot of samples for, uh, perfumes. And then, so that makes me feel like, oh my

God, like, like she does do care. Like, okay, even though she knows that I'm not like a long-term client, because I'm going to graduate and I'm going to leave France, but then she still treats me nicely, you know? Because, uh, all the other time that I got samples, uh, from a luxury store are normally the times that when I buy, like, for example, lotions, you know? Like, or any other thing, they're not like, not that you buy a bag and they give you a perfume sample, you know? Because it's not related. So that time was like, okay, yeah, it was kind of nice. So I wouldn't say that, like, to be fair, it doesn't matter if they speak Chinese, but when they speak and then when they do see me as like a homecoming people, oh my God, then it's the best feeling.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you feel that French luxury stores cater to the needs of Chinese consumers? Why or why not? Are there specific strategies that stores could follow to be more welcoming or accommodating to the Chinese clientele?**

**[Angelina Li]**

Uh, I will say, I think the number one thing about Chinese people being one of the huge customer base of a French luxury brands is that number one, we can do tax refund. The pricing competition is crazy, you know, in terms of a bag that I buy here and then a bag that I buy overseas, completely different. So that automatically make a drive. It's really more expensive. It's not like this is crazy. And then the second thing is that the variances of the product is way more than what we have here. And then the selection are different because the French market will select the product that are more towards like the local market, but then same, the same thing in China, you know, so you will find, you will find bags that are the most best selling in China, but you don't find them in here. But as well, you find the unique like version, you find the like special pieces in France that they don't sell in China. I think the reason why we buy a lot from France is

also because what you guys have is something that we don't have. And that's why we buy. But then also another thing is that I felt like people like the French market should just start to understand because a lot of times what I feel is that as a Chinese, you go to a luxury store, there's only two situations you will face. One situation is that they ignore you completely. They really don't care. And the second situation is that they see you because you're Asian, because you're Chinese, you are going to buy. And then they start to like help you. But at the same time, the funny thing is they don't really give you the lecture in terms of like, okay, why should you buy this bag? Because la la la is made out of this leather, etc. What's the story behind it? They don't care. They don't explain to you the storytelling of the products. They don't because they know that you know, because they understand the fact that like Chinese customer, when they go purchase, they normally have a goal. You know, so like a lot of my friends or a lot of people that I know is that they went to a store, they show them a picture. They're like, okay, this is what I want. If you have it, if you have it, I go buy it. And then so since it's because of that, they just eliminate the process of explaining. That's bad.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Are there any cultural aspects that French luxury brands could incorporate to make the shopping experience more welcoming for Chinese customers? Consider, for instance, things like design elements, marketing materials, or special events.**

**[Angelina Li]**

I think in the product, they have to give, like, like I said, you know, in terms of like stories, you know, in terms of the experience, they need to give more. And then another thing is that like, we really don't like queuing. The Chinese people are the type of customers who loves lining up to buy luxury goods. However, in

my opinion, in terms of like people who do have the purchase ability, like queuing is not luxury. You shouldn't have me waiting outside to buy a bag. That's so stupid. And then also another thing is that when you walk into Chanel, like there are times that I cannot touch a product. Oh, yeah, because like when you walk into Chanel, normally they will say like, okay, do you like to put your name down? And then a personal assistant will come and help you. Like this is a luxury experience, right? But meanwhile, when I'm waiting, I cannot touch anything because I don't have a personal assistant. But then at the same time, you cannot just have me walk around and do nothing. I cannot sit down because I don't have a seat. And then you don't give me water because there's no way to put it. And then I walk around. Okay, fine. But then you don't let me touch anything. So how can I shop? I just waste like 20 minutes in the store to wait for one of your people to come to me and say, hi, how can I help you? But no, me waiting for 20 minutes is not luxury.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you prefer a deep interactive online shopping experience (e.g., booking appointments online, virtual try-on) or a traditional in person boutique experience when buying luxury products? And why? Do you usually look products online before entering in the boutique?**

**[Angelina Li]**

In-person and in-person only. Because I feel like since I'm spending a lot of money, you know, if you buy a bag, it's at least 3,000, 4,000 euros already. And then if I must spend that much money and I don't see it, I don't touch it, I don't try it on, how would I know if my money is spent well? I like to just go to the boutique and purchase in the boutique because the thing is, nowadays, when I look online, you know, I see something that I like and I go to the boutique and

they don't really have it. So I'm wasting my time twice. So I'd rather just go and see what's available and then out of what's available, what do I like? And then I'll just buy that one.

[Inês Marques]

**How loyal are you to the brands you shop for?**

[Angelina Li]

Um, I am pretty loyal, I would say. Like, because the brand that I like the most are actually Fendi and I shop a lot in them. Okay. And then I just buy, buy, buy, buy, buy. And then like, and then also it's funny because I only buy one of their bags. I only buy baguettes. But then the thing is, for example, if I don't see anything that I like this season, I will buy nothing. But if I, I really love one season, I will buy everything. So there are times I spend a lot in one year and I don't spend in another year.

[Inês Marques]

**Is there anything else that you would like to add or any additional suggestion that you would like to make so that French luxury stores can improve the global experience they offer you?**

[Angelina Li]

One thing, one thing that I really, really like, you know how we actually only use WeChat as a communicating platform? Yes. So, and then like normally when you go to a, you know, like when you go to a store and then they have Chinese sales assistant, right? They will always add you on WeChat. And then you always get to see what's available or what's new in store on their profile. But funny thing is when I was in Milan, this is the ever first time an Italian guy has a WeChat. And then I think he's a store manager. And then I think it's only because he knows so

many people come to Milan to buy Bucciariati. And then that's why he created WeChat. And then he added me on WeChat. And that's the first time I even shop at Bucciariati my entire life. But just because he added me, and that makes me think that, oh my God, I'm going to go back to him. Yeah. So it's like, even though you're not Chinese, but it doesn't mean that you cannot have a WeChat. So when you can have a WeChat, like you're able to communicate to Chinese customers through that channel. I think it's perfect because you don't have to even speak the same language because in WeChat, we have the auto-translation. So then it's like, it's the best way for you to keep contacting your client from my opinion. Because for example, since I don't live in France, right? And I live in China. And then in China, we are blocked from Google, from YouTube, from Instagram, from everything. And then we cannot use them, you know?

I'm able to call you because I have a VPN. So then if I don't have a thing, if I don't have an app to break the firewalls, I cannot call you right now. In that sense, for a brand that they have, for a salesperson to have a WeChat is extremely important because I get to see what's available in the French market right now.

**[Inês Marques]**

Perfect, Angelina. I think we are great. Thank you so much for your perspective.

**[Angelina Li]**

Thank you so much too for having me. You too. Have a good afternoon.

## **Interview Chinese Consumer 1**

**[Inês Marques]**

**Tell me about yourself.**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

My name is [redacted], and I am a 35-year-old marketing executive living in Shanghai, China. I have a passion for fashion and luxury goods, and I enjoy traveling to various fashion capitals around the world, including Paris.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How often do you shop for luxury goods in France?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

I typically shop for luxury goods in France about twice a year. I usually plan my visits around the major fashion seasons and sales events.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What are some of your favorite French luxury brands and why?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

Some of my favorite French luxury brands include Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Hermès. I appreciate their timeless elegance, impeccable craftsmanship, and the heritage that each brand carries. The quality and design of their products consistently meet my expectations.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Describe your ideal shopping experience in a French luxury boutique.**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

My ideal shopping experience in a French luxury boutique would involve a beautifully designed store with elegant décor, spacious layouts, and a serene ambiance. The boutique should feel luxurious and exclusive, with a curated selection of products displayed tastefully.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Describe your ideal in-store experience when shopping for luxury goods in France.**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

In my ideal in-store experience, I would be warmly greeted by friendly and professional staff who make me feel valued. The store atmosphere should be calm and inviting, with soft music playing in the background. I appreciate when staff members are attentive without being overbearing, offering assistance and knowledgeable advice when needed. I also value the ease of finding products and trying them on without any hassle.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What aspects of the in-store environment are most important to you?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

The most important aspects of the in-store environment for me are the store layout, staff interaction, and product presentation. A well-organized store with a thoughtful layout makes it easier to navigate and find what I'm looking for. Positive and respectful staff interaction enhances the shopping experience, and beautiful product presentation adds to the allure of luxury shopping.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you ever feel intimidated or unwelcome in French luxury stores? Why or why not?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

Occasionally, I do feel intimidated or unwelcome in some French luxury stores, especially if the staff appears indifferent or unapproachable. This can make the shopping experience less enjoyable and discourages me from making a purchase.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Have you ever had a negative experience shopping for luxury goods in France? If so, please elaborate.**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

Yes, I have had a negative experience where the staff seemed disinterested and unhelpful. I felt ignored and had difficulty getting assistance with finding the right size for a product. Improving staff training to ensure they are attentive and courteous could have made the experience better.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How important is it for you that salespeople speak Mandarin during your luxury shopping experience?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

It is quite important for me that salespeople speak Mandarin during my luxury shopping experience. Language proficiency greatly influences my feeling of welcome and comfort in the store. It allows for clearer communication and makes the entire process smoother and more enjoyable.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you feel that French luxury stores cater to the needs of Chinese consumers?  
Why or why not?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

I think French luxury stores are starting to cater more to the needs of Chinese consumers, but there is still room for improvement. Some stores have Mandarin-speaking staff and payment methods like Alipay and WeChat Pay, which are positive steps. However, more can be done to understand and accommodate the preferences and cultural nuances of Chinese clientele.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Are there any cultural aspects that French luxury brands could incorporate to make the shopping experience more welcoming for Chinese customers?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

French luxury brands could incorporate elements such as Lunar New Year decorations, special edition products celebrating Chinese culture, and personalized marketing materials in Mandarin. Hosting events that celebrate Chinese festivals or collaborating with Chinese designers could also make the shopping experience more welcoming.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you prefer a deep interactive online shopping experience or a traditional in-person boutique experience when buying luxury products? And why?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

I prefer a traditional in-person boutique experience when buying luxury products because it allows me to see, touch, and try on the items before making

a purchase. The ambiance and personal interaction in the boutique add to the overall luxury experience.

**[Inês Marques]**

**If you prefer an online shopping experience, which platforms do you prefer?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

When I do shop online, I prefer platforms like the official brand websites, Tmall Luxury Pavilion, and Net-A-Porter. These platforms offer a reliable and premium shopping experience.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you usually look at products online before entering the boutique?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

Yes, I usually browse products online before visiting the boutique. It helps me get an idea of what I want to look at and try on in person.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How loyal are you to the brands you shop for?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

I am quite loyal to the brands I shop for. Once I find a brand that consistently meets my expectations in terms of quality, design, and service, I tend to stick with it.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Is there anything else that you would like to add or any additional suggestion that you would like to make so that French luxury stores can improve the global experience they offer you?**

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

I would suggest that French luxury stores continue to invest in cultural sensitivity training for their staff and incorporate more personalized services for Chinese customers. Offering exclusive products or experiences tailored to the Chinese market, as well as maintaining a strong online presence with interactive features, would also enhance the overall shopping experience.

**[Inês Marques]**

Thank you so much for your time and for your perspective, it was a pleasure!

**[Chinese Consumer 1]**

You're welcome, Ines. Hope I could contribute for your thesis. Goodbye.

## **Interview Chinese Consumer 2**

**[Inês Marques]**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Inês Marques and I am a student at Católica Porto Business School and NEOMA Business School. This interview is part of my research on how French luxury brands can improve the in-store experience for Chinese clientele. Your participation will help me to understand what makes a positive shopping experience for you and identify areas where French luxury brands can improve.

**Tell me about yourself. (Age, occupation, country, and city of residence, etc.)**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Hi, my name is [redacted]. And I'm 28 years old and, I live in Shanghai, China. I work in the finance sector as an investment manager, which, you know, keeps me pretty busy. But, in my free time, I'm really passionate about fashion and luxury goods. I particularly enjoy exploring, uh, luxury collabs and brands that have modern, cutting-edge designs. It's like a way for me to express my personality and, you know, stay connected with global trends.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How often do you shop for luxury goods in France?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Oh, um, I visit France at least twice a year. Usually, it's for a mix of business and leisure trips. And, um, each time I'm there, I make sure to, like, carve out time to shop for luxury goods. So, I'd say I end up shopping in France about, um, four to five times a year. It's, um, always a highlight of my trips.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What are some of your favorite French luxury brands and why?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Hmm, well, some of my favorite French luxury brands include, um, Louis Vuitton, Hermès, and Balenciaga. Louis Vuitton stands out for its timeless yet innovative designs and, you know, the quality craftsmanship is just impeccable. Hermès, on the other hand, has this classic elegance that really appeals to me. Their products feel incredibly luxurious. And then there's Balenciaga, which I love because of its, um, edgy and modern aesthetic. It, like, fits perfectly with my personal style and, um, I always find their designs really exciting.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Describe your ideal shopping experience in a French luxury boutique. (e.g., how the boutique looks)**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

So, um, my ideal shopping experience in a French luxury boutique, as a Chinese luxury client, would be in a space that's, sleek and modern but also has, like, a touch of classic elegance. I imagine walking into a boutique with high ceilings and an open layout, which gives a sense of, um, grandeur and space. The floors would be made of polished marble, and the walls would have subtle yet sophisticated decor, maybe with some modern art pieces or elegant mirrors that add to the luxury feel. The boutique would have spacious areas where products are meticulously displayed on stylish, minimalist shelves and stands. Each item would be given enough space to be appreciated without feeling cluttered. There would be dedicated sections for different types of products, like bags, shoes, clothing, and accessories, so everything is easy to find and explore.

I would love to see, um, some elements that reflect an appreciation for Chinese culture, like perhaps a special section highlighting products inspired by Chinese

aesthetics or, you know, collaborations with Chinese designers. This would make the shopping experience feel more personal and, um, welcoming. There would be comfortable seating areas with plush chairs or sofas, maybe in rich fabrics like velvet or leather, where I can sit and relax while considering my purchases. These areas would have coffee tables with fashion magazines or some light refreshments like water or, um, even traditional Chinese tea or champagne. The staff would offer to bring products to me in these seating areas, so I can see them up close and try them on in comfort.

The atmosphere should be calm and inviting, with soft lighting that highlights the products beautifully without being too harsh or too dim. The lighting would be adjustable, creating a warm and welcoming ambiance. Maybe there would be some gentle background music playing, something soothing and sophisticated that enhances the shopping experience without being distracting.

It's important that the store feels luxurious but also, you know, welcoming. The staff would be attentive and professional, greeting me warmly as soon as I enter and offering assistance without being intrusive. They would be knowledgeable about the products and able to provide detailed information and personalized recommendations. I would appreciate it if some staff members could speak Mandarin, as it would make communication easier and the experience more comfortable.

The overall experience should feel exclusive and tailored to my needs, making me feel valued and appreciated as a customer. Special touches, like recognizing my previous purchases or offering personalized services, would go a long way in, you know, building a lasting relationship and ensuring I look forward to returning to the boutique every time I visit France.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Describe your ideal in-store experience when shopping for luxury goods in France. Consider factors like the store atmosphere, how you are greeted by staff, and the ease of finding what you're looking for.**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, my ideal in-store experience would start with, you know, being warmly greeted by the staff as soon as I walk in. I like it when the staff are friendly and attentive but not overly pushy. It's important for me to feel, um, welcomed and valued right from the start. A simple, genuine greeting in Mandarin would, um, immediately make me feel more comfortable and appreciated.

The store atmosphere should be serene and sophisticated, with a nice fragrance in the air and some gentle background music playing. This creates a relaxing and luxurious environment that enhances the overall shopping experience. I'd appreciate if the scent and music are carefully chosen to evoke a sense of elegance and calm, helping me to feel, um, at ease as I browse through the store.

It's important that the products are well-organized and easy to find. Clear signage in multiple languages, including Mandarin, would be very helpful. This would make it, um, easier for me to navigate the store and find what I'm looking for without any confusion. I like when, um, there are distinct sections for different types of products, like bags, shoes, clothing, and accessories, which helps in making my shopping experience more efficient and enjoyable.

I appreciate when the staff are knowledgeable and can provide detailed information about the products. It's great when they can, um, answer my questions confidently and offer insights into the craftsmanship, materials, and unique features of the items I'm interested in. If they can also share stories about the brand or the inspiration behind certain collections, it adds an extra layer of, um, appreciation and connection to the products.

Having personalized recommendations based on my preferences would be a big plus. For instance, if I've shopped there before, it would be, um, wonderful if the

staff remember my previous purchases and suggest new items that complement my style. This shows that they value me as a loyal customer and are attentive to my tastes and needs.

Additionally, I would, um, love it if the staff could offer some tailored services, like arranging for a private fitting room where I can try on clothes in a comfortable and private setting. Maybe even offering refreshments like water, coffee, or, um, traditional Chinese tea would be a nice touch. This level of personalized service makes the experience feel more exclusive and special.

The experience should make me feel, um, valued. It's not just about buying products, but also about enjoying the process and feeling like a VIP. Every detail, from the greeting to the atmosphere to the service, should contribute to making my shopping experience memorable and enjoyable, ensuring that I leave the store feeling satisfied and eager to return.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What aspects of the in-store environment are most important to you? (e.g., store layout, staff interaction, product presentation)**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, I'd say the most important aspects of the in-store environment for me are, um, the store layout, staff interaction, and, you know, product presentation. The layout should be, um, spacious and easy to navigate, with, like, a clear organization that makes it, um, simple to find what I'm looking for. Staff interaction is, um, crucial – I appreciate, you know, friendly and knowledgeable staff who can offer, um, personalized service without being, like, intrusive. And product presentation is, um, very important – I like it when items are displayed, um, beautifully and, you know, are easy to browse and touch.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you ever feel intimidated or unwelcome in French luxury stores? Why or why not?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, sometimes, yeah. I think it can happen when, um, the staff aren't very friendly or, you know, they seem to, like, judge customers based on their appearance. There have been times when, um, I felt like I wasn't taken seriously, maybe because I look younger or, um, because I'm Asian. It's, um, not a great feeling, and it definitely affects, you know, my shopping experience.

There have been instances where I've walked into a luxury boutique, and, um, the staff didn't greet me warmly or, you know, they seemed to be more attentive to other customers. It's, um, disheartening when you feel like you're being judged based on superficial factors like your age, ethnicity, or the way you're dressed. I sometimes feel that, um, there's an assumption that younger customers or those who don't fit the typical image of a luxury shopper might not be serious buyers, which is, um, quite unfair.

For example, um, there was a time when I visited a high-end store in Paris, and the staff, um, barely acknowledged my presence. They seemed to be, um, more focused on other customers who were, you know, older or perhaps dressed more traditionally. I tried to get assistance, but the staff were, um, quite dismissive and unhelpful. This made me feel, um, very unwelcome and uncomfortable.

It's, um, important for luxury stores to recognize that their customer base is diverse and, you know, to treat all customers with respect and attention. When the staff are, um, trained to be inclusive and attentive to everyone, it creates a much more positive and inviting atmosphere. I've also noticed that, um, when staff can speak Mandarin, it helps a lot in making me feel more at ease and valued as a customer. It shows that the store is, um, making an effort to cater to its international clientele, which is, um, really appreciated.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Have you ever had a negative experience shopping for luxury goods in France? If so, please elaborate. Tell me what made the experience negative and how it could have been improved.**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, yes, I've had a negative experience once. I remember, um, walking into a luxury store in Paris and, um, the staff were just not very welcoming. They didn't greet me and, um, seemed to ignore me while they, you know, attended to other customers. It felt, um, really uncomfortable and, you know, made me feel like I wasn't valued as a customer. To improve, I think, um, the staff should be trained to treat all customers equally and, um, ensure that everyone feels welcome and appreciated.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How important is it for you that salespeople speak Mandarin during your luxury shopping experience? Does language proficiency influence your feeling of welcome and comfort in the store?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, it's pretty important to me. While I do speak English, um, I feel much more comfortable, you know, discussing details and making decisions in Mandarin. When salespeople can, um, speak Mandarin, it definitely makes me feel more welcome and, you know, at ease. It's, um, a big plus if the store can cater to, you know, the language preferences of its customers.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you feel that French luxury stores cater to the needs of Chinese consumers? Why or why not? Are there specific strategies that stores could follow to be more welcoming or accommodating to the Chinese clientele?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, I think French luxury stores are, like, getting better at catering to Chinese consumers, but there's still room for improvement. Some stores do have Mandarin-speaking staff and, you know, accept Chinese payment methods, like Alipay and WeChat Pay, which is great. This definitely makes the shopping experience more convenient and comfortable. But, um, I think more can be done in terms of understanding Chinese consumer preferences and cultural nuances. For example, offering more personalized services could make a big difference. Chinese consumers often appreciate a high level of personal attention and, um, tailored recommendations. Training staff to recognize and remember frequent customers, noting their preferences, and offering personalized shopping experiences can make Chinese clients feel more valued.

Celebrating Chinese festivals, like Lunar New Year or Mid-Autumn Festival, with special events or limited-edition products, would also be a great strategy. It shows an appreciation and respect for Chinese culture and can create a deeper connection with Chinese consumers. These events can be, um, advertised in advance through WeChat or Weibo, which are popular platforms among Chinese consumers.

Having marketing materials in Mandarin is another way to make Chinese clients feel more welcome. This includes, um, in-store signage, product descriptions, and promotional materials. It can also be helpful to have a Mandarin version of the store's website and mobile app, making it easier for Chinese consumers to browse products and services online before visiting the store.

Additionally, understanding Chinese cultural preferences can be crucial. For instance, many Chinese consumers prefer gold and red as they are considered

lucky colors, and they might be more inclined towards products that, um, incorporate these colors or design elements. Also, offering products that cater to Chinese tastes, such as smaller-sized clothing or special collections that, you know, resonate with Chinese aesthetics, can be very appealing.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Are there any cultural aspects that French luxury brands could incorporate to make the shopping experience more welcoming for Chinese customers? Consider, for instance, things like design elements, marketing materials, or special events.**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, definitely. I think incorporating, you know, elements of Chinese culture could make the shopping experience more welcoming. For instance, um, having marketing materials in Mandarin, celebrating Chinese holidays like Lunar New Year with special events or, um, limited-edition products, and, you know, using design elements that resonate with Chinese aesthetics. Even small touches, like, um, offering tea in the store, can make a big impact.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you prefer a deep interactive online shopping experience (e.g., booking appointments online, virtual try-on) or a traditional in-person boutique experience when buying luxury products? And why?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, I actually enjoy both, but if I had to choose, I'd say I prefer the traditional in-person boutique experience. There's just something special about, you know, being able to see and touch the products, and interacting with the staff. It makes the shopping experience feel more luxurious and personalized.

When I shop in-person, I can fully appreciate the quality of the materials, the craftsmanship, and the intricate details of the products. This tactile experience is, um, irreplaceable and really enhances my connection to the items I'm considering. Plus, the ambiance of a well-designed luxury boutique, with its elegant decor and soothing music, adds to the overall sense of indulgence and sophistication.

Interacting with the staff is another key factor. In a boutique, I can, um, ask questions, get instant feedback, and receive personalized recommendations based on my preferences. The staff can, you know, share stories about the brand or the specific products, which enriches the shopping experience. This level of personal attention and service is something that, um, really makes the in-person experience stand out for me.

However, I do appreciate having the option to book appointments online or use virtual try-on tools, especially when I'm busy or unable to travel. These online features can be very convenient. For example, being able to, um, book an appointment ensures that I'll have dedicated time with a sales associate, which can make the shopping trip more efficient and focused. Virtual try-on tools are, um, useful for getting a sense of how an item might look on me before I go to the store.

Having a strong online presence with interactive features also helps when I'm doing, um, initial research. I often like to browse products online, read reviews, and see what's new before making a trip to the store. This way, I have a better idea of what I'm looking for and can, you know, make the most of my in-person visit.

**[Inês Marques]**

**If you prefer an online shopping experience, which platforms do you prefer?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, when I do shop online, I prefer using platforms like, um, Farfetch, Net-a-Porter, and, you know, the official websites of the luxury brands. These platforms, um, offer a wide selection of products and, you know, often have exclusive items that aren't available in-store. They also, um, provide detailed information and high-quality images, which is, um, really helpful when shopping online.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you usually look at products online before entering the boutique?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, yes, I usually do. I like to, um, research products online before visiting the boutique. It helps me, um, get a sense of what's available and, you know, make a list of items I'm interested in. This way, um, I can make the most of my time in the store and, you know, focus on the products that caught my eye.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How loyal are you to the brands you shop for?**

**[Chinese Consumer 2]**

Um, I'd say I'm pretty loyal to the brands I shop for. Once I find a brand that, um, resonates with me and consistently delivers, you know, high-quality products and great service, I tend to, um, stick with them. However, I'm also, um, open to exploring new brands, especially if they, you know, offer something unique or, um, align with my style.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Is there anything else that you would like to add or any additional suggestion that you would like to make so that French luxury stores can improve the global experience they offer you?**

**[Consumer 2]**

Um, I think, overall, French luxury stores do a great job, but, um, there's always room for improvement. I'd suggest, um, continuing to focus on personalized service and, you know, making sure that all customers feel welcome, regardless of their background. Also, um, embracing more cultural diversity in, like, marketing and store experiences could make a big difference. And, um, of course, ensuring that staff are, you know, well-trained and, um, can communicate in multiple languages would be, um, really beneficial.

## **Interview Carole Labrune**

**[Inês]**

Good afternoon Carole, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Inês Marques and I am a student at Católica Porto Business School and NEOMA Business School. This interview is part of my research on how French luxury brands can improve the in-store experience for Chinese clientele. Your participation will help me to understand what makes a positive shopping experience for you and identify areas where French luxury brands can improve.

**My first question is, if you can tell me yourself and your role in the French luxury retail sector and how long have you been working in this industry?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

Hello Ines, is a pleasure! So, I've been working in the industry for 37 years. I started in Chanel but I was more in haute couture than in retail sales. Then I went to Scherer for 10 years, at Révillon Les Fourrures. Then I was asked to re-open Moschino, the showroom, and the boutique in Paris but after we sold the boutique. Mr. Tribouillard, the creator of Leonard, passed by my boutique, I knew him for a long time. And one day he said to me, Carol, would you like to take care of the Faubourg boutique? And that's how I got here. Very, very good. In the boutique, we don't necessarily have the same customers, we have more Chinese clients from Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, people who have a lot of money, who are even richer than some Russians or Saudi Arabians. These clients know Leonard and they come to buy here because they have the lower taxes, they pay 30% less, the products are more interesting, and there are more and different products.

Then I have also the other kind of Chinese clients. When I say the other kind of Chinese clients, it's the tourist clients who come with 50 people with them. They

don't have much time to spend going to boutiques, so they can't spend so much time in the boutiques like French people, in the street of Faubourg Saint-Honoré or in the Avenue Montaigne, their time it's too short. So, in fact, they take them to the big stores, such as Printemps, Galleries Lafayette, where there are all the brands and they can spend all of their money in all the brands in the same place. From what I've seen, not my customers, because they have a lot of money and that's not the case, but when it's Chinese who come as a family, the whole family gives them money and they must buy brand stuff in each brand and sometimes they arrive with 10,000 euros in cash on them. That's why there have been problems, because there were people who had spotted that they had a lot of species and often they were stolen.

So we adapt to the Chinese clientele here, but I have to admit that I mostly have people who have a lot of money. I don't have the others, it's very rare. It's better because they know the product, they know the luxury, it's easier. The others, most of the time, you can't believe it, they come from the countryside, and even if they have purchasing power because there are many of them, it's not the same thing at all, they don't have manners.

**[Inês Marques ]**

**What are the biggest challenges for attracting and retaining Chinese luxury consumers in French stores?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

We don't have, because my Chinese clients know the products, but what attracts them a lot is everything that is an accessory. All the small products, whether it's an umbrella, a Kleenex box, a little notebook, that's what attracts them. Because the more choices there are, the more they can make gifts. In fact, that's why they come to buy, they like to give gifts for the family.

That's it, they love gifts. They're going to offer perfumes, they're going to offer little notebooks, even umbrellas, a little thing. Whereas me, the other customers I have, they come to get dressed, to buy. So they buy a lot when they come. These are customers who have a lot of purchasing power.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How do you think the in-store experience can be improved for Chinese customers?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

In fact, it's complicated because the problem is not to bring them to my boutique, for example. It's the time. They have very little time to go everywhere. And so that, without the car arriving in a street that's spread out, there's too much distance for them to be able to do everything at once. That's the problem. So if we want to adapt them, it's only the big stores. You also have, well, accessories, ready-to-wear, food, wine.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you see relevant differences in the shopping behavior of Chinese consumers compared to other nationalities? If so, how? What are the main differences that you perceive?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

So, I'll tell you, when they're Chinese from the countryside, they hardly understand English, they only speak Chinese and they often have translators. They're very poorly educated. But really, from every point of view, they spit on the ground. I'm not exaggerating. There's a big multi-brand of watches at Boulevard des Capucines called Bucherer, which is very famous, they make all the brands, the big brands, such as Audemars Piguet. There are watches at all

prices. The security guards at the entrance, they run with the umbrella doors because they spit everywhere in the shop. That's the difference. I don't have these Chinese clients. I have the others type of clients, and they're like American customers, Saudi Arabian customers, Dubai customers, they're educated. They're cultivated. It's not the same thing at all. So there are two kinds of Chinese tourists. It's not the same. But it happens sometimes to have the others. It's complicated. It's not easy. There's the language barrier, they don't understand French, even less English. So it's very difficult.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What current strategies are your stores using to target Chinese consumers? (e.g., Mandarin language, staff training, services, marketing) If yes, how effective are these strategies in your opinion?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

In fact, in my boutique all the staff speaks English fluently, most of the time, there is no language problem. But, for example, when I was at Chanel, it was at the very beginning of the Chinese tourists, we hired saleswomen who spoke Mandarin. So, that's it. To be able to speak to these people, because at the time, they didn't speak English. It was very complicated. It wasn't like now. So we hired saleswomen who spoke Chinese. There are still big brands like Dior or at Louis Vuitton, that there is always at least one or two saleswomen who speaks Japanese and other who speaks Chinese. We don't need it because my clients speak English very well and we don't have a problem with that. But in other brands, I think they do. So, for example, for customers, it's a plus. So, it's a plus for the Chinese.

It's not necessarily for the Japanese because the Japanese who come here, it's the same, they are very cultured. It's not the same way to sell to a Japanese. You must be very discreet, you put the product down, you let it decide quietly. It can take

hours. And in the end, he'll tell you, I'll take it. If you put pressure on him, if you jump on him, if you ask him what he wants and all that, it doesn't work, they leave. So, the Chinese are different. The Chinese, in fact, you have to take care of them and try to explain to them if we don't speak the same language, it's more difficult, but try, by gestures, anything, and they want us to take care of each other.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Does your brand incorporate design elements or marketing strategies that resonate with Chinese consumers?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

Yes, because, in fact, they love flowers, both Japanese and Chinese, they love flowers. And we have always, always attracted Japanese, Chinese, and Asians in general because that's the essence of Leonard. That's what attracts them. We even made tunics that looked like Chinese tunics a long time ago. So we have always been very turned towards Asia, we will say.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you have staff specifically trained in Chinese cultural sensitivity?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

No, not here. In fact, we never had at Leonard's, because it's a small shop. At Versace, I had 30 vendors, it had nothing to do, with Moschino the same. It was big shops, here it's a small shop. At Versace, it wasn't the same thing. But here, there are three of us. I don't think there have ever been more people in the boutique than three people.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How do you integrate digital platforms into the in-store experience? If so, which ones do you use?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

In fact Mr. Tribouillard never wanted to distribute perfumes in the big distribution. So, we sell the perfumes with the clothes. It's almost a footprint because, in addition, they were really created for clothes, for collections. So, for us, the perfume is integrated into the boutique completely. Then, the brand puts it on the website and the clients either know the perfume and they order it, or they don't know it and there's no possible that they take the risk of not liking it, so they come to the boutique. The website, it always brought us customers. They see the product and then they come to the boutique to try. In fact, Inês, when you have an expensive product, when you sell a dress for 4,000 euros, even if the client knows she can return it, be refunded, there are some who prefer to try it because it's an expensive product. It's not like buying a T-shirt from Zara where it doesn't matter if you fail. That's the difference.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How do you receive feedback from your Chinese consumers?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

In fact, we don't have many Chinese clients who come back. We know that the clients will not come before 2025. We have the Singaporeans, Hong Kong, all that, who travel but the others don't come back. That's why the big stores have difficulties because they haven't come back yet. They don't have the right now to leave China. In fact, Chinese clients usually they come, they go around Europe, that's it. My Chinese customers who come every year always come back at the same time. There are even some Chinese clients that I know very well, so I send them the photos of the clothes on my WhatsApp and then the secretaries send

the photos to the Chinese client who wants to buy the product and as I know her size she says which models of clothes that she wants. After they make a transfer and we ship the clothes. But they know the brand, they are clients here.

**[Inês Marques]**

**In your opinion, what are the most important strategies French luxury brands need to consider when adapting their in-store experience for Chinese consumers?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

There are cards that they pay in the currency, in the Chinese currency where it doesn't impact us and it arranges and reassures them. Then there is the service, if they go to big stores, it's true that it helps them to have someone who speaks their language rather than a translator who translates we don't really know what because we don't speak Chinese and they don't speak French so we don't know if it's true. That's a plus, it's certain. Singapore, Hong Kong, when they come, I offer them champagne, a coffee if it's in the morning, it's another approach, it's not the same at all. They are sensitive to that because it's pure and hard luxury.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Have you noticed any generational differences in the preferences of Chinese luxury shoppers?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

Let's say the oldest is from the 40s to the 70s they buy the models printed ones. On the other hand, all the young people when you see them in the street there are no more printed ones at all. They buy brands where there is only without no prints, more clothes from the same color. The older generation prefers flowers. Chinese clients spend their money differently. In fact the younger might buy less

ready-to-wear and more accessories. They may have the smallest budget and so they buy more accessories than clothes.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How do you see the future of French luxury retail evolving in relation to the Chinese market?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

I think we can really develop it but it's complicated. It depends which Chinese we are talking about. If you have the Chinese bourgeoisie who is used to traveling, going to all the countries in the world, buying luxury everywhere, it's different from those who come from the countryside, who come to visit Europe and who don't know anything. It's not the same approach in fact.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What are some successful examples you've seen of French luxury brands catering to the Chinese market?**

**[Carole Labrune]**

Hermès does it because Hermès still has a lot of goods in China, so they probably have strategies to attract Chinese. In Leonard we did it because we started to open boutiques in China but the Chinese is still very hard to make loyal more than other nationalities. If tomorrow there is a brand who is talked everywhere, they will go and see if they like it and they will buy. But also they will leave the brand where they usually buy to easily. So, I think, and there is a brand that has a lot of Asian brands, it is Louis Vuitton. All the bags, now the ready-to-wear, it's huge.

The ready-to-wear have mostly young people. In all the *maisons*, that's what we hope, that it is the young Chinese people who take over and who buy luxury,

because, unfortunately, the old generation either disappears or gets old and the demands are not the same, the desires are not the same. So, that's what it takes to take over., it must be the young people.

But then, you also must create cheaper products so that these young people can buy in a brand, get used to buying, etc. And then, depending on the evolution of their situation, they will continue to buy or not. That's why often there are big *maisons* that create a second line, cheaper, more affordable, easier for younger generations.

**[Inès Marques]**

**Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience working with Chinese clientele in French luxury retail?**

**[Carol Labrune]**

For us, with Chinese customers, it's going well since I still have the chance to have rich Chinese customers, so it's different. So, we have a good approach with the Chinese.

**[Inès Marques]**

Thank you very much, Carole.

**[Carole Labrune]**

You're welcome.

## **Interview Chiara Luongo**

**[Inês Marques]**

Good afternoon Chiara, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Inês Marques and I am a student at Católica Porto Business School and NEOMA Business School. This interview is part of my research on how French luxury brands can improve the in-store experience for Chinese clientele. Your participation will help me to understand what makes a positive shopping experience for you and identify areas where French luxury brands can improve. **So, my first question if you can tell me yourself and your role in the French luxury retail sector and how long have you been working in this industry?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

So, I've been working for the retail sector for, let's say, 14 years. I worked for Delalangerie.

I don't know if you know the house. I was in Mondeuse and then I became a store manager. I also worked for Majestic, I was in Beauty Center. So, I had a little dive into the luxury industry, which I really liked, because you have beautiful discoveries, because there is a negligent clientele who knows beautiful products. I like to work with beautiful products. It's something that fascinates me. And above all, I like to work with products that I like, that I must have an affinity for, otherwise I can't sell.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What are the biggest challenges for attracting and retaining Chinese luxury consumers in French stores?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

We don't work in the same way as the boutique in Paris, even working with the same brand. The clientele is not the same, the products, we use the same products, but there is a different search, that's it too. Yes, exactly. So, what I notice immediately about this clientele is that they really look at the prices a lot. That's it, they make a huge difference compared to the prices at home and the prices here. So, normally, you have a price difference between, let's say, 200, 300 euros. It's cheaper.

So, for me, it's politeness. It's really very important, because when they come in, it's true, even the little bow, the hello, the hands together, because we understand that they are not European. Also, I feel that they need a certain freedom. That is to say that a Chinese clientele doesn't need you to be behind the customer to be able to try to sell. They really want to feel free, and it's them who ask you about the size, about the models. In the boutique today for example, the clients wanted to be free, there was the husband and the wife, so they really wanted to be free. Respect is very important too. And really, the softness in the words, in the gestures, even in the explanation of things, of the material, of the story.

Often, I ask if they know the brand, and in this case, the clients, it was the first time, they told us, yes, it was the showcases and the color that brought us in. So, I explained a little bit about the brand, I explained that we were a beautiful French company, that we were bought by Japanese, that we work with silk, with embroidered flowers. So, they like that.

They like that we take care of them, that we tell them stories, and that we don't put them aside. But I think it's something that they must ask for.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How do you think the in-store experience can be improved for Chinese customers?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

So, for me, it would be important to be able to at least speak a little bit of the language.

So, in the case of today, he had the daughter, and I spoke in English, but she didn't understand much and so, it was their daughter who translated from English to Chinese. So, that's still a handicap. I think that in the stores today, the language is very, very, very important.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Do you see relevant differences in the shopping behavior of Chinese consumers compared to other nationalities? If so, how? What are the main differences that you perceive?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

So, for me, they know what they want. The clients that come today to the boutique, the husband and the wife, I couldn't advise, the language handicap, and also because they were both accomplices, and in fact, the lady went into the cabin, and it was the gentleman who was outside the cabin, and it was the gentleman who decided for the lady. Whereas with Europeans, the husband sits down, he stays there, he drinks his coffee, the little glass of water, and you are an accomplice with the client. I proposed models, but I felt that the lady was annoyed, and it was the gentleman who decided. So that's something that I noticed that with the French, or the Europeans, you don't notice at all. The European woman, she is there, and she asks you for advice. Then, of course, it's the gentleman who pays, so she will show in the second part of the sale to the gentleman, but it's first we who choose the models in relation to the form, in relation to the colors. So there are more requests for advice, which I don't find with the Chinese.

**[Inês Marques]**

**What current strategies are your stores using to target Chinese consumers? (e.g., Mandarin language, staff training, services, marketing) If yes, how effective are these strategies in your opinion?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

Ah well, as I told you, we don't have many. There is no one here in the store who speaks Chinese or Mandarin or Japanese. In the last two years when Mr. Inoue who bought the company Leonard, I see that there are a little more people going into the store in relation to Japan, in relation to China. So it's true that I tell myself at this point, we're not really prepared, to receive the Chinese clients, because here in the South of France, for me, it's a novelty the Chinese clients. And that's true, it's still a clientele that's going to develop more and more because Mr. Inoue is opening more and more stores in Japan. There, I had, a month ago, a client very important who had bodyguards and I think she was, she came from Japan. Madam, she didn't speak French at all. She had already bought in Japan, so the things we sell in Japan, we don't sell them here. She was wearing models that I had never seen in my life. And it's true that we did the translation with bodyguards and in fact, you lose this intimacy of exchange with the client and you go through an interlocutor so you lose a little bit, there is no intimacy, the client she didn't enter the cabin, you don't really know what she's looking for because, well, indeed, there is someone who does the translation for you. So, I almost understood how she was dressed, that she wanted tunics, pants, so you propose but it's true that the language becomes a handicap.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Does your brand incorporate design elements or marketing strategies that resonate with Chinese consumers?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

Yes, yes, for example, I find since the entry of Mr. Inouye in the company, even with Mr. Tribouillard we are already developing, we're going to enter sizes from 34, so I think strategically speaking, a Chinese clientele, it's true that she will have more chance to find the size because they are small and they reach size 44, that our European clientele reaches size 48 and I also say even compared to the shapes of a classic dress, there is a change. The dresses, they are longer, and they are more closed, not all models, but there is really the classic dress from Leonard, more for an Asian clientele. The flowers, in fact the prints are different, we saw it already last winter with our creative designer, there was a print, that was in the archives and in fact, the flowers, they were very minuscule, they were really small. So that too, it's something that I found in our collection our know-how, which also changes.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How do you integrate digital platforms into the in-store experience? If so, which ones do you use?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

Well, I think the website is very poor. There are a lot of clients, but there are a lot of clients who, unfortunately, don't have a clear vision of everything we have in the store, because it's very limited. We only have the Leonard Paris website, and then we have the PrestaShop. So on the PrestaShop, we do the orders, we manage the orders with you, with Paris. But I think the website really needs to be improved. That's very important. And to supply it a little more, to put more of the models that we know work. And above all, customers, even at a certain age, they call us, they go on the Internet. Up to 50, 60 years old, it's okay too. Really try to change something, but make it simpler, even for the customer.

**[Inês Marques]**

**How do you receive feedback from your Chinese consumers?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

Today, for exemple, they thanked us, because we were very grateful, because we really tried to help them, even with the language disability, as much as possible, to respond to their requests, to present as many articles as possible, to understand the form that the lady wanted to buy. So we got very positive feedback, precisely because we have a little problem with communication. There are some who come in, I won't hide it from you, who look a little bit and tell us, no, we don't want to be disturbed. I think they just look and then they come out. They don't really want to buy, but just the curiosity to come and see the boutique in Cannes. But otherwise, the customers who buy, it's true that they are very satisfied with our service.

**[Inês Marques]**

**In your opinion, what are the most important strategies French luxury brands need to consider when adapting their in-store experience for Chinese consumers?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

Get to know their way of presenting themselves, of speaking with the customers. So their culture, that's very important because they don't have our culture at all. They are very respectful people. So for me, you also have to have an idea of how to approach the customer, how to shake hands, words that you can say or not, because it's really a separate universe. So I think it's very important to be able to develop, apart from their language, but to really develop the exchange that you

can have with a Chinese clientele. Because it's not the same sales protocol that you have with Europeans.

**[Inès Marques]**

**Have you noticed any generational differences in the preferences of Chinese luxury shoppers?**

For me, they are younger. But I think it's more the 40s. Today's clientele is 40 years old.

**[Inès Marques]**

**How do you see the future of French luxury retail evolving in relation to the Chinese market?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

First, we are very developed in China and Japan. So for me, it would be interesting to have feedback in relation to sales, how it is in their country, to be able to prepare ourselves at a behavioral level if there is a Chinese client coming in. I think we really need to prepare ourselves because I think that in relation to Mr. Inouye's strategy, which is developing Asia more and more, I think that the clients who come here will come here more and more in boutiques. And we need to be prepared, we need to have a training. For me, we need to be trained in relation to that.

You go to Hermès, you have, I think, 40% of the clientele is Chinese. But they must like the brand. And our brand, Leonard, it's starting to be known by a younger chinese clientele.

And then I have a sales protocol, like everyone else, but really, we would like to conquer them and have the client come back next year. There are sales strategies that we have to apply with them.

**What are some successful examples you've seen of French luxury brands catering to the Chinese market?**

So you have Louis Vuitton, is incredible. Also Dior, they buy a lot of Dior. They also buy Céline. Hermès, they buy a lot. It's really the three brands that I can tell you, they buy all the time. All the time.

**[Inês Marques]**

**Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience working with Chinese clientele in French luxury retail?**

**[Chiara Luongo]**

I think its all.

**[Inês Marques]**

OK. Perfect. Thank you very much, Kiara.

**[Chiara Luongo]**

It was a pleasure. I hope I answered your questions.